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Decentering the Subject, Psychoanalytically: Researching Imaginary Spacings through Image-Based Interviews

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Since the more-than-human turn, geographers have increasingly called for a decentering of the human subject by breaking away from a classically modern understanding of subjectivity and by treating humans as one of many players. In this article, we offer an alternative way of decentering the subject by following the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Far from being subject-centered, psychoanalysis aims to understand the subject as a radically decentered and fragile production, which is only secured through what Lacan calls the *imaginary*. The imaginary combines two realms—image and imagination—and focuses on how the subject generates a sense of the self through spatial identification with images. Based on image-based interviews conducted in Singapore, Vancouver, and Berlin following the method of photo-elicitation, we demonstrate how this imaginary subject can be empirically investigated. We identify five stages in the interviews that help us retrace how the subject establishes an imaginary relationship with an image as well as how it is confronted with the fragile constitution of this relationship. We conclude by emphasizing the potential of image-based interviews to investigate the decentering of subjects and explore ways in which geographers can further decenter the subject psychoanalytically. **Key Words:** decentering, imaginary, photo-elicitation, psychoanalysis, qualitative methods.

... as subjects, we are literally called into the picture, and represented here as caught.

—Lacan (1998, 92)

One of the most significant changes in human geography over the last two decades is the place it assigns to the human subject. In the course of the “ontological turn,” “material turn,” and “posthuman turn,” geography went from “rethinking the ‘human’ in human geography” (Whatmore 1999) to “decentering the human in human geography” (K. Anderson 2014). Calls to decenter the human subject dominate much of today’s disciplinary agenda and draw their strength from renewed attention to objects, nonhumans, and all kinds of other more-than-human actors (for an overview, see also B. Anderson and Harrison 2010; K. Anderson 2014; Ash and Simpson 2016; Simpson 2017; Kinkaid 2021). Overall, what unites the various approaches introduced to human geography in the last two decades, from actor-network theory, nonrepresentational theory, and object-oriented philosophy to new materialism, speculative realism and postphenomenology, is “a move away from a subject-centered approach to experience” (Ash and Simpson 2016, 53).

The subject is not entirely eliminated but still maintains a place, albeit decentered, in human geography. In fact, a number of more-than-human geographers, especially from the field of cultural geographies, have written about subjectivity in recent years (see Wylie 2010; Dawney 2013; K. Anderson 2014; Larsen and Johnson 2016; Simpson 2017). More-than-human approaches do not want to abandon the subject altogether because their problem is not “the human,” as such, but a particular

kind of (human) subjectivity: “the thinking subject: the *cogito* (I think) that Descartes identified as ontologically other than matter” (Coole and Frost 2010, 8; see also K. Anderson 2014). It is this subject that geography has vehemently attempted to decenter in the past two decades, a supposedly rational, independent, and free vision of the human being that places itself above and not beside other beings. What more-than-human geographers call for, then, is not a geography that simply rejects the human subject but one that gives it its proper—that is, decentered—place. As Dawney (2013) put it, “the subject needs to resurface as a decentered site, a site through which to explore the affective webs of relation that give shape to lives, and through which sense is made of lives lived. In repositioning the subject at a decentered centre, it can become a catalyst for academic knowledge production” (635).

In this article, we argue for an alternative way of decentering the subject in human geography following the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. This might sound surprising, because psychoanalysis seems to be one of those approaches that is primarily, even exclusively, centered on the human subject. How can such an approach teach us anything about decentering the subject? Sigmund Freud already recognized the significant role of decentering for psychoanalysis in his famous comparison of psychoanalysis with the Copernican turn. With Copernicus, humans already had to learn “that our earth was not the centre of the universe but only a tiny fragment of a cosmic system”; with psychoanalysis, “human megalomania” suffered again, as it “seeks to prove to the ego that it is not even master in its own house, but must content itself with scanty

information of what is going on unconsciously in its mind” (Freud 1981, 284–85). Lacan embraced this idea to develop a radically decentered concept of the subject. Subverting, or rather extending, the Cartesian *cogito*, Lacan (2006) stated, “I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not thinking” (430). Psychoanalysis therefore decenters the human subject, not only with regard to more-than-human others (as this was already done by Copernicus) but with regard to the human itself: psychoanalysis decenters the subject from within by understanding the (unconscious) subject as being situated outside the (conscious) mind.

In philosophy, a debate has just begun about whether the posthuman call for a decentering of the subject bypasses the subject of psychoanalysis. Against the stance of more-than-human approaches to decenter the subject qua Cartesian *cogito*, Lacanian philosophers highlight that “such a subject was already decentered long ago ... by psychoanalysis” (Sbriglia and Žižek 2020, 7). In this article, we take up this thought and apply it to the potential of psychoanalytically decentering the subject through and within geographical research. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that this is by far not the first attempt in human geography to take the psychoanalytic decentering of the subject into account—in fact, when geographers began to decenter the subject, they openly drew on insights of (Lacanian) psychoanalysis (see Pile and Thrift 1995; Blum and Nast 1996; Pile 1996). This influence of psychoanalysis remains largely neglected, however, in the canon of more-than-human approaches in geography. In this article, we therefore want to bring the psychoanalytic legacy of decentering the subject back to light.¹

We focus on Lacan’s concept of “the imaginary,” which has been one of the early entry points for geographers to engage with the works of Lacan in the 1990s (see Rose 1995; Blum and Nast 1996; Pile 1996), but is still sometimes considered as “rarely given any formal theoretical inflection” (Gregory 2009, 282) in geography. We offer such a formal theoretical inflection by focusing on the role of the image as a defining criterion of the Lacanian imaginary that has often been neglected in favor of its illusory and phantasmatic dimension. Through the imaginary, Lacan developed the idea that the subject is based on spatial identification, internalizing an external image to establish an utterly decentered self-identity. We theoretically reflect on Lacan’s imaginary as an approach to the “spacing of the subject.” This phrase stems from Simpson (2017), who used it as the main aim of every geographical decentering of the subject: “‘spacing’ is taken as an active and ongoing process, a movement of differing and deferral, where ‘the subject’ is always already in relation to what it is not, always emerging from these relations, but where such relations are by no means

fixed or certain” (6). We seek to show how the Lacanian imaginary is perfectly suited to this “spacing of the subject” and that psychoanalysis therefore deserves more than a side note and instead should be equally considered “[o]ne of the key drivers in thinking critically about the subject in geography” (Simpson 2017, 3). Subsequently, we demonstrate how Lacan’s decentered subject can be empirically investigated based on image-based interviews conducted between 2018 and 2020 in Singapore, Vancouver, and Berlin, that applied the method of photo-elicitation. By focusing on the image of a room that was used in all of the interviews, we identify five stages in the interview process—description, interpretation, identification, questioning, and traversal—to retrace how the interviewees establish an imaginary relationship with the image to generate a coherent self-image as well as how they are confronted with the fragile constitution of this relationship. We conclude by emphasizing the potential of psychoanalysis to investigate the spacing of the subject as a way to allow geographers to further engage with the intrinsic relationship between image, fantasy, and space.

Lacan’s Imaginary Spacing of the Subject

A basic entry point into psychoanalysis is the splitting of the subject. Psychoanalysis assumes that humans are fractured, inconsistent, and conflicted beings rather than complete, consistent, and stable ones. Against this background, Lacan aimed to understand how the subject develops and maintains a conception of the self in the first place, what Freud called the “ego.” The ego is the realm of the “I” (*moi*) and denotes the domain of psychoanalytic thinking most closely linked to everyday understandings of identity or individuality. Lacan (1991b) considered this realm “the seat of illusions” (62), because it allows the subject to construct a coherent sense of the self. To better understand how the subject generates this illusionary sense of the self, Lacan introduced “the imaginary” as one of the three main registers through which he unfolded his theory of the subject (next to the symbolic and the real). The imaginary allows the subject to imagine itself by providing it with an image of unity, coherence, or completeness, despite its inconsistent configuration. For Lacan (2013, 35), then, imaginary basically means a linkage between image and imagination:

Imagination
Image

At the origin of the imaginary, Lacan situated the “mirror stage,” the moment when the child looks into the mirror and starts to assume that it is seeing “itself” (and not just a reflection). This moment is crucial for Lacan, because he insisted that humans

are born with a fragmented body, a “body in pieces,” and that it is only after the mirror stage that they conceive a coherent and consistent, yet “orthopedic,” image of the self: “[T]he mirror stage is a drama ... and, for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an ‘orthopedic’ form of its totality” (Lacan 2006, 78).

Although the ego, for Lacan, depends on a projection of the self in the mirror, it does not require a mirror in the literal sense of the term: “all sorts of things in the world behave like mirrors” (Lacan 1991a, 49). What it takes is an image through which the subjects are able to perceive themselves; in other words, an image through which the subjects get caught up in the lure of spatial identification. The early Lacan work also uses the term *imago* to clarify this point. Imagos are external images with which an individual identifies to establish an imaginary identity. Imagos function as our images of who we are (ego) and who we want to be (ideal ego). The individual, for Lacan, thus only assumes an identity through decentering one’s self via the image of the other. As emphasized in one of the early milestones introducing Lacan to human geography, “Subjectivity [for Lacan] is spatially and ontologically *decentered*; the subject is shaped literally from the *outside in*” (Blum and Nast 1996, 564, italics in original). It requires spatial identification with an outer image to become oneself. Otherwise, strictly speaking, the subject (qua ego) does not exist: “The subject is no one. It is decomposed, in pieces. And it is jammed, sucked in by the image, the deceiving and realised image, of the other. ... That is where it finds its unity” (Lacan 1991a, 54).

The whole point of Lacan’s imaginary is to understand how the individual generates an imaginary space of the self by tying together its intimate fantasies (of coherence, unity, stability, etc.) with an external image. Lacan spoke of this process as a “drama” because the imaginary superimposes identification with alienation: “Alienation is constitutive of the imaginary order. Alienation is the imaginary as such” (Lacan 1997, 146). Although the subject can establish self-identity only through its identification with an external image, this image never becomes “fully” part of the self. The imaginary therefore makes it structurally impossible for the subject to achieve “full” self-identity due to the impossibility of a complete internalization of the image: “To Lacan, this proves that the imaginary is not very well accommodated in human beings. A human being can couple his or her image to basically any object in the environment; no object is perfectly suitable to complement a human being’s self-image” (Nobus 1999, 116).

Lacan offered us a weak notion of self-identity based on the impossibility of an ultimate linkage between imagination and image. For Lacan,

psychoanalysis therefore stands in ultimate opposition to every attempt to strengthen the ego, commonly known as “ego-psychology,” which Lacan (2006, 336) considered the “antithesis” of any true psychoanalysis, whose ultimate aim is not a strengthening but a weakening of the ego and all areas affected by it: “Not only is the conscious identity or individuality (or ego) of the subject dramatically decentralized and deprioritized—viewed in fact as a type of symptom or mirage—but so is the whole field of meanings and (self-)understandings premised upon such an egoic (or ‘imaginary’) basis” (Hook 2018, 4). By offering us a decentralized and deprioritized notion of the (ego of the) subject, Lacanian psychoanalysis becomes an ultimate forerunner of what is usually claimed to be the insight of the more-than-human turn. If decentering the subject, in human geography and elsewhere, means “to treat the figure of the thinking human subject ... [as an] always-fragile production” (K. Anderson 2014, 14), we insist on the psychoanalytic traversal of the ego as a fruitful approach to fulfill this task.

Getting Caught up in the Lure of Spatial Identification

One should always provide a little illustration for what one discusses.

—Lacan (2013, 34)

We now demonstrate how geographical research can empirically scrutinize this decentered subject as a spacing maneuver. In an ongoing research project that engages with emotional and affective dimensions of security-related geographical imaginations, our research team conducted 169 interviews in Berlin, Vancouver, and Singapore with people from a variety of social classes and age groups to speak about the security-related issues and challenges they face in their urban everyday lives. We chose to focus on security and insecurity in our research because they are crucial contributors to the construction of various subject positions (based on age, class, gender, etc.) and are part and parcel of geographical imaginations of urban life. Therefore, we scrutinized the (in)securing aspects emanating from housing and home-making (Pohl et al. 2020) and analyzed the importance of geopolitical positioning with respect to political caesuras for everyday perceptions of security (Genz et al. 2021; for an overall summary of this project’s research agenda, see also Helbrecht et al. 2022). What we want to focus on in the following is the methodological approach used in our research, specifically how the use of images in the interviews gave us access to the intimate space of self-positioning.

The interviews followed the approach of photo-elicitation, which is one of the two main strands of



Figure 1 The image of the “empty” room. Fabrizio Bruno, 2018. Courtesy of the artist.

image-based interviews, often defined in contrast to “reflexive photography” (Harper 2002). Although photo-elicitation is certainly not new to geographers and is even considered alongside reflexive photography as “well established and time-honored staples in the photography toolkit of geographers” (Sanders 2020, 101), we extend the scope of previous uses of this method by demonstrating that photo-elicitation is particularly suited to investigating the decentering of the subject. Photo-elicitation allows us to reveal how subjects internalize an external image by using it as a fantasy screen for projecting their desires. In reflexive photography, the subject already identifies with the image when entering the interview (because it is the interviewee who takes the photographs used in the interview); in photo-elicitation, the researcher actively participates in the process by which the interviewee gets decentered, creating an imaginary unity through the image of the other.

For our research project, several photographs were used that not only depict different scales and types of space (from rooms and squares to borders and outer space) but also leave room for “free associations.” Apart from the selection of images, the interviews followed a very open approach, with the images being shown to the interviewee one after the other as broad questions are asked like, “What do you see in this image?” or “What feelings does this image trigger?” In the following, we provide a type of best-case scenario for this research method. Therefore, we arranged several moments from the 169 interviews in a way that allows us to differentiate what we consider five elementary steps for researching the imaginary spacings of the subject through image-based interviews. We describe the following five stages in more detail in what follows:

1. Description: The interviewee describes the manifest content of the image.
2. Interpretation: The interviewee tries to make sense of the image.
3. Identification: The interviewee develops an imaginary relationship with the image.
4. Questioning: The interviewee questions the meaning of the image.
5. Traversal: The interviewee loses the connection to the image.

In the following, we focus on only one of the images used in all three cities, often as the first image to begin the interview (Figure 1). When looking at this image, interviewees often started with a description of the various objects shown in this image (Stage 1). Most prominently, there is the bed in the center, but there are also blankets, books, a backpack, electricity, some other belongings, and a large photograph of a woman holding a camera, all spread out on the floor around the bed. Although the room was often initially described as full of things, many interviewees nonetheless pointed to a certain “emptiness” that distinguished this image. For instance, when asked what they saw in the image, one immediate response was, “an empty, tiled room” (Ber19_35).

After first carefully describing the interior of the room, another interviewee stressed more emphatically that it was the absence of humans that turned the room into an empty room:

So one looks into a room: white walls, tiled, one sees a bed, a single bed. ... I don't know, some clothes are lying around and a box, a big picture on the wall on the right, cables, sockets, books. But

it's relatively dark I would say. Yes and empty. So no people in the picture. (Ber41_17)

The reason why this image was quite appealing for many interviewees is that it revolves around an absence, a lack, and that fantasy is needed to cover this lack. As one of the interviewees aptly pointed out when looking at the image, "This is a place where one wants to know what poor person actually lives there" (Ber30_15). Against this background, many interviewees, after describing the manifest content of the image in the first stage of the interview, quickly started to fantasize about the person who might live in this room (Stage 2):

This picture shows me a bachelor's bedroom. It's kind of messy. ... I think this is a young man's room, and I think he is struggling with life. Yeah, that's my feeling. (Van15_57)

A very tiny room, very simple. ... She lives a very simple life. ... Maybe a student. I can see books. I can see things all over the place what a student normally does. (Sing05_499)

The assumptions regarding the specific shape of the owner of this room diverged just as widely as the ideas about what kind of room this is. Is this a place someone calls home or only a short-term overnight accommodation? Is it owned by a woman or a man? Is its resident going through a rough time or is this just a messy place of a student? Although the interviewers did not provide a clear answer to this question, instead insisting on the ambiguity inherent to this image, we emphasize that at this stage of the interview, most of the interviewees had developed quite a precise idea about who owns the room pictured in the image by using their imagination. A compelling example of how fantasy comes into play to give meaning to the image is this quote from Vancouver. When the interviewee was asked what she saw in the image, she said:

It's very emotional. What I see in this picture is somebody who doesn't have a lot of money but has a lot of strong personal connections. I see that, you know, I don't know if it's a man and that's the girlfriend [pointing to the photograph next to the bed] or somebody they really admire, but there's obviously some connection there and I think that's [pointing to the blanket next to the bed] where a dog would sleep. ... I see somebody who has not very much but yet is connected to people and pets. (Van10_96)

After the absent owner of the room has taken shape in the interviewee's imagination, we enter a next stage of the interview (Stage 3), in which we shift from image to imago and the interviewee gets caught up in the lure of spatial identification. Now the image

is no longer just an image but becomes something through which the interviewees face themselves to establish their self-identity. This moment of spatial identification, where the image is internalized by the subject and considered as part of the self, functioned primarily in two ways: either through an emphasis on the similarities between the empty room and the interviewee's own way of life or through an insistence on the differences between the two. For instance, when asked what he felt when looking at the image, one interviewee from Berlin stated,

This is me when I was sixteen again. That's sort of what my first apartment was like, not quite as bad maybe. ... It was glorious. I'm a man, you know. At that time, everything still worked with the ladies. Perhaps things were less complicated in those days, I don't know. (Ber03_66)

Whereas this man in his sixties emphasized the similarities between the empty room and his first apartment by nostalgically thinking of the time when he was still a teenager and things were supposedly "less complicated" than today, another interviewee from Singapore, a woman in her mid-thirties, contrasted the empty room with her current apartment to highlight that she desires a clean and personal environment to enjoy herself:

[M]y place is different. I have a very small room but I keep it neat—yeah, but I keep it neat. Because when I sleep in a neat place, especially when on my day off, in the morning I will make my bed nicely so when I come back I see my room with my pillow and my doll is waiting there [laughs]. It's nice. Then I come in because I'm tired from outside. (Sing06_39)

In these cases, the image establishes a realm of the "ideal ego." Here, the empty room opens the fantasy space for an "identification with the image in which we appear likeable to ourselves, with the image representing 'what we would like to be'" (Žižek 1989, 116). Regardless of whether the image functions in contrast to, or in support of, the subject's imaginary self-identity, it is thus crucial to insist that the interviewees enter a self-decentering process through which they establish a coherent sense of themselves. At this stage, the image "undermines our position as 'neutral,' 'objective' observer, pinning us to the observed object itself. This is the point at which the observer is already included, inscribed in the observed scene—in a way, it is the point from which the picture itself looks back at us" (Žižek 1991, 91).

After the third stage of the interview allowed us to grasp the subject's imaginary self-identity as spatially and ontologically decentered—the subject as shaped from the outside in—we entered a next stage of the interview (Stage 4), in which the interviewees

were confronted with the alienated nature of their decentered self. Shortly after the interviewees came to their first conclusion about what they saw (of themselves) in the image, many of them delved deeper into the empty room and stumbled across certain details that did not fit. Like a detective who enters a crime scene to scan its superficial appearance for clues to what really happened there, the interviewees began unmasking “the imaginary unity” of their own imago by discovering “inconspicuous details that stick out, that do not fit into the frame of the surface image” (Žižek 1991, 53). The detail interviewees mentioned most often was the photograph of the woman with a camera leaning against the wall next to the bed.

So what doesn't fit in there is the big picture with the woman with the camera. (Ber40_53)

So, if the picture of the woman were not there, I would simply say that this is the room of a person who has just moved in, who just can't really afford a lot of furniture yet or who really likes a sort of minimalism, and just doesn't want to have any furniture at all, except for a bed, and that's not even a real bed. But the thing with the big picture is a bit strange. (Ber35_27)

For many interviewees, the picture of the woman holding a camera rendered the empty room suspicious. If this room is a person's home, why is the picture not hung on the wall? If the person only sleeps here temporarily (e.g., while the rest of the apartment is being renovated), why put the picture there in the first place? If the owner of the room is poor, how can she or he afford this picture and not sell it? Who is that woman? Is she just a random model or someone the person knows? Is the person admiring her? Is this the home of a stalker? All of these questions raised in the interviews testify to the weak linkage of imagination and image, which is why the interviewees suddenly find themselves at this stage confronted with a realm of total ambiguity. The picture of the woman is “the detail that ‘does not fit,’ that ‘sticks out’ from the idyllic surface scene and denatures it ... and thus opens up the abyss of the search for a meaning” (Žižek 1991, 90–91). Although the interviewees were initially convinced that they knew the meaning of the image of the empty room, they are now faced with the impossibility of “really” knowing what this image is about. Instead of opening a fantasy “space wherein they could project their nostalgic desires, their distorted memories” (Žižek 1991, 9), the image now points to the alienated condition of the imaginary. From now on, the interviewee might be able to see everything, or rather nothing, in the image. As captured in one example from Berlin, the interviewee stumbled from one detail of the room to another

just to come to the desperate conclusion that he cannot say what he is looking at:

This might be an old building. Although the tiled wall doesn't fit. No, and the plugs do not fit either. That's something else. It could be a garage, I don't know. It could be anything. I don't know, I really don't, I don't know. It could be anything. ... My fantasy is going wild right now. (Ber03_66)

The empty room loses its fantasmatic presence and the image is exposed as “a screen masking a void” (Žižek 1989, 141). This final stage of the image-based interview (Stage 5) mirrors Lacan's notion of the final moment of the psychoanalytic treatment when the subject “traverses the fantasy” to experience “the fact that the fantasy-object, by its fascinating presence, is merely filling out a lack” and that “[t]here is nothing ‘behind’ the fantasy” (Žižek 1989, 148). The moment when the interviewee stated that his “fantasy is going wild” is precisely when he traversed the fantasy, the moment “when the coordinates of the fantasy space are lost via hysterical breakdown” (Žižek 1991, 66), so that the image of the empty room turns out to be the lure it always was.

Where Is the Subject?

“Questions around the subject and its decentering have become increasingly established as matters of concern for human geography” (Simpson 2017, 9). Although most geographers today refer to the advantages of more-than-human approaches, with the rising interest in decentering the subject, our article emphasizes psychoanalysis as a suitable approach for geographers to fulfill this task. We thus aim to enrich the recent interest of geographers in a decentering of the subject with a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective, because it has much to offer for “displacing the thinking human subject” (K. Anderson 2014, 5).²

Far from being subject-centered, psychoanalysis engages the subject as an always-fragile and decentered production, which we cannot approach directly but only by taking into account how the subject relates to others. We find the truth of the subject not by digging deep down into its mind but rather by searching for the subject's most intimate kernel as being located outside of the subject. “This is what the Lacanian notion of ‘décentrement’, of the decentered subject, aims at: my most intimate feelings can be radically externalized” (Žižek 2008, 141; see also Kingsbury 2007). The imaginary constitutes a key category to further develop this thought, because it allows us to take into account how the self is based on a spatial interweaving of imagination (inside) and image (outside). A psychoanalytic approach

therefore situates decentering not only in the relationship between humans and nonhumans but also within the human and its spacing (it)self. The problem for psychoanalysis is not so much that there are other actors besides humans who have agency but rather that humans themselves have no genuine agency over themselves as they are shaped literally from the outside in.

In our case study, we carved out five typical stages within the interviews that allow us to elaborate the functioning of the imaginary spacing of the subject:

1. Description: In this stage, the interviewees focus on an “objective” description of the image by pointing out what they see.
2. Interpretation: The interviewees try to make sense of the image through their fantasy.
3. Identification: The interviewees pass over from looking at the image to being looked at by the image. At this stage, image and imagination are successfully linked and the image functions as a mirror through which the interviewee gets caught up in the lure of spatial identification.
4. Questioning: The interviewees are confronted with the inconsistent and fragile nature of the linkage of image and imagination by stumbling across details in the image that do not fit and thus derail the imaginary relationship.
5. Traversal: The interviewees lose their connection to the image and thus “traverse the fantasy” that formerly provided the image with meaning.

Of course, not every image-based interview passes through all five stages, but we consider all stages crucial for engaging the decentering (i.e., spacing) of the subject psychoanalytically. Only when the imaginary space between the ego and the image is not only established in the interview but also traversed can we successfully demonstrate how fantasy both orients and disorients the subject (Pohl 2020). Following on from this, we hope to stimulate further research in geography that aims at decentering the subject through image-based interviews, as the image can function both as a realm of spatial identification that secures the subject by offering a sense of identity, as well as opening up the possibility of engaging with the ultimately inconsistent and illusory configuration of that identity. Since “all sorts of things in the world behave like mirrors” (Lacan 1991a, 49), there are numerous images geographers could use to trace the imaginary spacings of the subject. How does the subject identify with media representations and virtual spaces, from commercials to pictures posted on social media? How do images of artistic expression, from fine art to street art,

function as reflections of the ego and the ideal ego? In what forms of political images can the subject be mirrored? These and many other questions could in the future become part of a geography dedicated to the decentering of the subject. ■

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Notes

¹ By drawing on psychoanalysis with regard to its methodological implications for human geography, we follow up on a debate in *The Professional Geographer* (Healy 2010; Kingsbury 2010; Pile 2010; Proudfoot 2010; Thomas 2010).

² Psychoanalysis does not necessarily remain at the margins when geographers review the accounts of how the discipline engaged the subject in the past. In a paper titled “Where Is the Subject?,” Pile (2008), for instance, insisted on the role psychoanalytic theory plays, and

should play, in geographical thinking of the subject, which is why we adopt his title for our conclusion.

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