CRITIQUE AND COMPLEX GEOGRAPHIES: THE LIMITS OF EXPERIENCE IN COLLABORATIVE REGIONAL PLANNING

Bruno Latour has suggested that critique, as a practice which often seeks to assess and intervene in the local injustices caused by broad social categories used by administrators and policymakers, is out of steam—and just when it seems to be needed most. However, this paper suggests such a problem may not be because of a lack of coherence in the critical project as much as a function of the geographies usually in question in spatial practices. While criticism continues to outstrip its traditional limits and engage complex systems and objects, regional planners, policymakers, and researchers are increasingly engaged in collaborative visioning processes which assess the limits of local scales of experience and imagination. The region, my paper suggests, may be returning to its role as a utopian space where resource distribution adequate to local government considerations may be more effectively coordinated (as it has operated in the past for critics), and more as an area which serves to inquire about the social limits of
local experience and agency: an area which provides actors that fill out the broad social categories of critique.

Presenting the results of a comparative policy analysis of several U.S. Metropolitan Planning Organizations’ collaborative visioning planning processes, and relating a history of regions in the emancipatory imagination of critics like Frederic Jameson, Iris Marion Young, and others, this paper considers how regional thinking continues to be a forum and field for critical spatial practice. Engaging with the work of Paul Claval, Latour, Judith Innes, as well as phenomenologists of space and geographers, this paper seeks to reframe the question about the effectivity of criticism of the built environment around expanding locally engaged critical practices into interactions and transactions between different jurisdictions and geographies.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

  Michael Johnduff is a graduate student in the Masters of Community and Regional Planning department at the University of Oregon. He received his Masters’ in English at Princeton University. His research focuses on regional planning and the place of communication and information sharing in collaborative planning and governance.