



This is a peer-reviewed, final published version of the following in press document and is licensed under Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 license:

**Wang, Chi-Mao, Maye, Damian ORCID logoORCID:
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4459-6630> and Woods, Michael
(2026) Planetary Rural Geographies, Hope and Geopolitics: A
Response to Feng and Dong and to Sidaway and Wójcik.
Dialogues in Human Geography.
doi:10.1177/20438206261492800 (In Press)**

Official URL: <https://doi.org/10.1177/20438206261492800>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/20438206261492800>
EPrint URI: <https://eprints.glos.ac.uk/id/eprint/16527>

Disclaimer

The University of Gloucestershire has obtained warranties from all depositors as to their title in the material deposited and as to their right to deposit such material.

The University of Gloucestershire makes no representation or warranties of commercial utility, title, or fitness for a particular purpose or any other warranty, express or implied in respect of any material deposited.

The University of Gloucestershire makes no representation that the use of the materials will not infringe any patent, copyright, trademark or other property or proprietary rights.

The University of Gloucestershire accepts no liability for any infringement of intellectual property rights in any material deposited but will remove such material from public view pending investigation in the event of an allegation of any such infringement.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR TEXT.

Planetary rural geographies, hope and geopolitics: An authors' response

Dialogues in Human Geography

1–5

© The Author(s) 2026



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/20438206261492800

journals.sagepub.com/home/dhg



Chi-Mao Wang¹ , Damian Maye² , and Michael Woods³

Abstract

This authors' response engages with the commentaries of Feng and Dong and Sidaway and Wójcik on our article, 'Planetary Rural Geographies'. In response to Feng and Dong, we clarify our treatment of 'hope' in our planetary rural geographies framework and elaborate our position distinguishing ontological relationality from ethical responsibility, arguing that more-than-human relational ontologies do not diminish the distinctive ethical responsibilities humans bear toward multispecies worlds. Drawing on indigenous worlding, more-than-human geography and agri-food studies, we further argue that planetary rural geographies adopt an inductive and practice-based approach to hope, grounded in situated forms of care rather than abstract ethical prescriptions. In response to Sidaway and Wójcik, we highlight geopolitical dimensions of planetary rural geographies and note correspondences with a parallel planetary turn in geopolitics. Prompted by their vantage point of Singapore, we also discuss the intersection of planetary rural geographies and planetary urban geographies.

Keywords

Planetary rural geographies, geopolitics, more-than-human, rural–urban relations, planetary urban geographies

Introduction

Our article on planetary rural geographies (Wang et al., 2025) was intended to provide a platform upon which the approach could be elaborated and debated by others. Accordingly, we welcome the commentaries by Feng and Dong (2026) and Sidaway and Wójcik (2026) as contributions in this spirit, albeit from different analytical perspectives. Feng and Dong critically engage with our characterisation of the rural as a 'space of hope', questioning how 'hopefulness' is constructed and understood, and proposing an emphasis on 'situated hope'. Sidaway and Wójcik add a geopolitical dimension to planetary rural geographies, examining the geopolitical histories of Singapore to enrich

our understanding of the intertwined processes of planetary ruralisation and urbanisation. In this response, we address points raised by the two

¹Department of Bio-Industry Communication and Development, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

²Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire, Francis Close Hall Campus, Cheltenham, UK

³Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth, UK

Corresponding author:

Chi-Mao Wang, Department of Bio-Industry Communication and Development, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan (R.O.C.).

Email: chimaowang@gmail.com

commentaries, focusing on the conceptualisation of hope and the critique of human exceptionalism; the formulation of an earthly geopolitics; and the intersection of planetary rural geographies and planetary urban geographies.

Rural spaces of hope: beyond the ontological and ethical dualism

Feng and Dong contend that our treatment of hope in Wang et al. (2025), notably positioning the rural as a ‘space of hope’, contains a tension in which we aspire to transcend anthropocentrism but fall back on human epistemic authority to determine which rural practices qualify as ‘hopeful’. They argue that this tension risks constructing a new evaluative hierarchy. Instead, they propose the concept of situated hope that starts not from theoretical principles, but from empirical analysis of actually existing practices that interrogates how they come to be considered as hopeful.

In responding to this critique, it is helpful to restate and clarify several points about our original argument. First, our essay built on earlier ripostes to Brenner’s (2014, 2018) ‘planetary urbanisation’ thesis, notably Gillen et al. (2022) and He and Zhang (2022), which made the case for a counter-vailing planetary ruralisation, but in our view underplayed the centrality of the *planetary* component. A key objective in our original essay was thus not to assert a new ‘asymmetry within’ (i.e. more-than-human over anthropocentric) but instead to align planetary rural geographies with broader planetary thinking. This necessarily reframes the ‘planetary rural’ as referring to agencies *embedded in relations with* nonhuman entities that determine the capacities of rural societies and economies to manage, prepare and prosper in times of uncertainty, drawing on ontological concepts already well-established elsewhere (Büscher, 2022; Clark and Szerszynski, 2021; Tsing, 2015; Verne et al., 2025).

Second, we specifically positioned the rural as a ‘space of hope’ where ‘hopeful’ responses to planetary crises could be found. We did not seek to adjudicate on what counts as ‘hope’ or to elevate certain forms of hopeful practice over others. The examples

we cited included normative practices rooted in indigenous, southern or eastern cosmologies that conceive humanity and nature differently to western thought, but these are not the only forms of hopeful responses to planetary crises. A research agenda for planetary rural geographies should include empirical investigation of practices that might constitute a ‘space of hope’, and Feng and Dong’s notion of situated hope could be a valuable tool for this, especially the injunction to examine where claims for desirable futures originate and how they acquire legitimacy. However, to qualify as a planetary perspective, such analysis must also interrogate how such practices encompass planetary connections and responsibilities.

Third, following the work of more-than-human geographers and multispecies scholars (Buller, 2016; Celermajer et al., 2021; Chao et al., 2022), our argument was careful not to conflate ontological relationality with ethical responsibility (Srinivasan, 2022). Recognising that humans and more-than-human beings are ontologically entangled does not negate the distinctive ethical responsibilities that humans bear in responding to, caring for, and making decisions that affect more-than-human lives (Lorimer, 2022). This distinction is well-established within more-than-human scholarship. In agri-food studies, for example, scholars such as Tony Weis, Henry Buller, Gareth Enticott and Emma Roe draw on more-than-human perspectives not to advocate an ontological idealism that erases human responsibility, but rather to critically examine the socio-technical assemblages through which agricultural systems generate harm for nonhuman lives (Buller and Roe, 2018; Enticott and O’Mahony, 2024; Weis, 2013). Their work demonstrates that acknowledging relational ontologies does not preclude normative critique; instead, it provides a stronger basis for rethinking human ethical obligations within multispecies worlds.

Attending to human responsibility also aligns our approach with indigenous worlding perspectives, which invite us to learn from multispecies ways of living and caring. This is fundamentally an inductive rather than a normative or deductive approach. Accordingly, planetary rural geographies do not

prescribe an abstract ethical framework in advance. Instead, they seek to learn from the situated practices, knowledges and experiences of local people and farmers, while creating space for their voices to shape more-than-human futures (e.g. see Wang et al., 2026; and Krzywoszynska, 2024 on soil carbon markets). In this respect, our approach shares considerable common ground with the notion of situated hope advanced by Feng and Dong: we begin with situated practices rather than a pre-given philosophical doctrine. We therefore welcome their intervention both in the spirit of epistemic pluralism and given our shared epistemologies for situated rural place-making.

Geopolitics and planetary rural-urban relationality

Sidaway and Wójcik (2026) contend that geopolitics is largely absent from our account in Wang et al. (2025), despite our narrative arc of spaces of crisis, conflict and hope evoking terms that are commonly associated with geopolitical concerns in academic discourse. This is a fair observation, although we would argue that geopolitics is implicit in our framework if not explicit. We may have foregrounded examples of place-based politics in the section on the planetary rural as a space of conflict, but we might equally have cited cases of cross-border disputes over water resources, transnational campaigns against deforestation or hunting endangered species, lobbying at climate or biodiversity summits that feature imagery or even people transposed from a rural context, or the U.S.'s recent raising of tariffs on imports from Canada in retaliation for smoke from Canadian wildfires crossing the border – all geopolitical expressions of the rural as a space of conflict in planetary crises.

Moreover, our approach to planetary rural geographies closely aligns with work that has introduced planetary thinking into geopolitics and international relations theory, emphasising the more-than-human constitution of geopolitical assemblages (Berkenbosch et al., 2026; Dodds, 2021; Hansmann and Dittmer, 2026; Yusoff, 2017) and extending geopolitical analysis to atmospheric,

oceanic and subterranean contexts (Elden, 2021; Peters et al., 2018; Yusoff, 2017). These contributions go beyond conventional geopolitics to evoke an 'earthly geo-politics', understood as the politics of heterogeneous earth relations (Clark, 2014; Dalby, 2014; Koopman et al., 2021), in which political life is constituted through the material and volumetric relations of the Earth. The shift in perspective allows rural places to be understood not simply as the backdrop or outcome of geopolitical change, but as constitutive sites where geopolitical relations are continuously produced, negotiated and transformed, and as such are integral to understanding planetary rural geographies.

The narrative presented by Sidaway and Wójcik themselves arguably reflects more conventional geopolitical concerns but is no less instructive or thought-provoking. Taking the global city and city-state of Singapore as its vantage point, the narrative could have been deployed in support of the planetary urbanisation thesis. That it is instead positioned with regard to planetary rural geographies is gratifying and significant. The choice of framework consciously rejects claims that the rural spaces entangled in Singapore's geopolitical relations are merely extensions of city space to be understood through urban theory. Rather, it emphasises hybridity, acknowledging that discursive ideas of rurality impinge on geopolitical strategy, and affording agency to more-than-human rural actors, including capacities to disrupt and destabilise.

At the same time, the urbanity of Singapore is inescapable. As much as we assert the existence of planetary ruralisation, we cannot claim Singapore for the rural. As such, Sidaway and Wójcik's intervention prompts us to think about the intersection of planetary rural geographies and planetary urban geographies. The latter concept here is different to planetary urbanisation, shorn of its totalising imperative. It is rather a parallel to planetary rural geographies, applying the same principles from planetary thinking to the study of the urban. This is perhaps the missing piece from our original article, recognising that planetary structures and systems involve both rural and urban assemblages that are intrinsically entangled with each other, without giving priority to either.

ORCID iDs

Chi-Mao Wang  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5125-230X>

Damian Maye  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4459-6630>

Michael Woods  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3813-4138>

Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the National Taiwan University, Economic and Social Research Council, National Science and Technology Council (Taiwan) (grant number F115000047, ES/W000210/1, MOST 110-2923-H-002-003-MY2, NSTC 115-2410-H-002-046 -MY2).

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Berkenbosch K, Stoffelen A and Bono F (2026) More-than-human geopolitics: How fishing shapes cross-border relations in the Gulf of Saint-Malo. *Geopolitics* 31(1): 288–312.
- Brenner N (2014) *Implosions/Explosions*. Jovis.
- Brenner N (2018) Debating planetary urbanization: For an engaged pluralism. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 36(3): 570–590.
- Buller H (2016) Animal geographies III: Ethics. *Progress in Human Geography* 40(3): 422–430.
- Buller H and Roe E (2018) *Food and Animal Welfare*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Büscher B (2022) The nonhuman turn: Critical reflections on alienation, entanglement and nature under capitalism. *Dialogues in Human Geography* 12(1): 54–73.
- Celermajer D, Schlosberg D, Rickards L, et al. (2021) Multispecies justice: Theories, challenges, and a research agenda for environmental politics. *Environmental Politics* 30(1-2): 119–140.
- Chao S, Bolender K and Kirksey E (2022) *The Promise of Multispecies Justice*. Duke University Press.
- Clark N (2014) Geo-politics and the disaster of the Anthropocene. *The Sociological Review* 62(1_suppl): 19–37.
- Clark N and Szerszynski B (2021) *Planetary Social Thought: The Anthropocene Challenge to the Social Sciences*. Polity Press.
- Dalby S (2014) Environmental geopolitics in the twenty-first century. *Alternatives* 39(1): 3–16.
- Dodds K (2021) Geopolitics and ice humanities: Elemental, metaphorical and volumetric reverberations. *Geopolitics* 26(4): 1121–1149.
- Elden S (2021) Terrain, politics, history. *Dialogues in Human Geography* 11(2): 170–189.
- Enticott G and O'Mahony K (2024) Feeding time(s): Patient Urgence and the careful temporalities of antimicrobial resistance. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 7(3): 994–1014.
- Feng X and Dong X (2026) Whose hope? Normative asymmetries in planetary rural geographies. *Dialogues in Human Geography* this issue.
- Gillen J, Bunnell T and Rigg J (2022) Geographies of Ruralization. *Dialogues in Human Geography* 12(2): 186–203.
- Hansmann VR and Dittmer J (2026) A land between solid and fluid: Situating permafrost within more-than-human geopolitics. *Political Geography* 129: 103575.
- He S and Zhang Y (2022) Reconceptualising the rural through planetary thinking: A field experiment of sustainable approaches to rural Revitalisation in China. *Journal of Rural Studies* 96: 42–52.
- Koopman S, Dalby S, Megoran N, et al. (2021) Critical geopolitics/critical geopolitics 25 years on. *Political Geography* 90: 102421.
- Krzywoszynska A (2024) You can't manage what you can't measure': Regenerative agriculture, farming by numbers, and calculability in soil Microbiopolitics. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 7(4): 1691–1710.
- Lorimer J (2022) Is this the humanism we have been looking for? *Dialogues in Human Geography* 12(1): 74–78.
- Peters KA, Steinberg PE and Stratford E (2018) *Territory Beyond Terra*. Rowman & Littlefield International.
- Sidaway J and Wójcik D (2026) Planetary Singaporeanization: Geopolitics within planetary rural/urban geographies. *dialogues in human geography* this issue.

- Srinivasan K (2022) Crafting scholarly alliances for multi-species justice. *Dialogues in Human Geography* 12(1): 79–83.
- Tsing AL (2015) *The Mushroom at the end of the World: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton University Press.
- Verne J, Marquardt N and Ouma S (2025) Planetary futures: On life in critical times. *Geography Compass* 19(1): e70015.
- Wang CM, Ingram J, Simmonds P, et al. (2026) Soil carbon markets for climate change mitigation? Pragmatic economists and matters of concern. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*: 0308518X261453753. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X261453753>.
- Wang CM, Maye D and Woods M (2025) Planetary rural geographies. *Dialogues in Human Geography* 15(3): 394–413.
- Weis T (2013) The meat of the global food crisis. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 40(1): 65–85.
- Yusoff K (2017) Geosocial Strata. *Theory, Culture & Society* 34(2–3): 105–127.