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Where is justice in geography? A review of justice theorizing in the discipline

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Abstract

Justice has long been central to geographic research but attention to the concept itself has been less explicitly theorized within the discipline. This article specifically traces the ways in which justice has been theorized within human geography. The review identifies commonalities among justice applications within geography, suggesting a shift beyond distributive and ideal theories of justice toward those explicating injustices coming more from bottom-up approaches. At the same time, it identifies the tendency of geographers to approach the concept of justice through normative-political approaches rather than normative-analytical justifications of socio-spatial phenomena. The paper illustrates the value of both approaches to justice theorizing but cautions that geographers should continue to justify the use of the concept within their work to avoid attenuating it. In ending, the paper illustrates how justice-oriented geographers can continue to identify why justice is central to their scholarship.

KEYWORDS
geographies of justice, injustice, justice, justice theorizing

1 | INTRODUCTION

The appeal of justice within human geography has been long standing. Geographers have used the term since the early twentieth century, but it was not until the radical turn of the discipline in the late 1960s that the concept of justice itself was substantively developed (Smith, 2000). Throughout these past 5 decades, an enormous body

of geographic research has identified justice to be central for understanding socio-spatial phenomena. Justice has framed environmental studies (Hobson, 2006; Stanley, 2009; Walker, 2009; Walker & Bulkeley, 2006), the politics of climate policy (Bailey, 2017; Fischer, 2015), environmental justice (EJ) and its intersection with racism (Goodling, 2020; Pulido, 2000, 2017; Pulido & De Lara, 2018), racial justice (Faria et al., 2019; Hamilton & Foote, 2018), feminist approaches to gender justice (Wright, 2010), food studies (Bedore, 2010; Moragues-Faus, 2017), health geographies (Rosenberg, 2014; Valentine, 2003), landscape studies (Mitchell, 2003a, 2007, 2008; Egoz, 2011; Egoz & De Nardi, 2017; Mels, 2016; Mels & Mitchell, 2013; Olwig & Mitchell, 2009; Setten & Brown, 2013), and legal geographies (Delaney, 2016). And there has been a particular focus on justice at the scale of, and focusing on, the urban (Dikeç, 2001; Fainstein, 2010; Fincher & Iveson, 2012; Harvey, 1992, 2009; Heynen et al., 2018; Marcuse et al., 2009; Merrifield & Swyngedouw, 1995; Mitchell, 2003b; Soja, 2010). The ontological and epistemological, as well as empirical and normative-theoretical, diversity of this body of scholarship evades easy categorization.

While the implication of justice remains ubiquitous within the discipline, recent critiques have noted the lack of normative justice theorizing within this research. Such arguments suggest that the concept is used more often than not without justification, by emphasizing social justice in practice rather than elucidate or rationalize what and why certain relations or processes are justified or unjustified (Hopkins, 2021). As Clive Barnett notes, (2017, 317–318), although some geographers argue for a need to "justify the substance of normative [justice] standards, it is more common to assert the primacy of practice as the arena in which the value of justice arises, so that analytical attention is given to the investigation of explicit struggles against injustice." In this way, the use of justice and injustice in geographic research tends to recognize instances of wrong-doing, harm, and inequity, for instance.

There are good reasons why justice theorizing is not as common in geographic research, however. As a more descriptive and empirically-oriented discipline, critical human geography has tended to eschew justice theorizing for being too foundational, in the sense that philosophical and normative justice theorizing establishes ideal or "perfect" theories. As such, some see the concept of justice as something "always aspirational (if not utopian), occasional, fleeting and fragile" (Delaney, 2016, 269). But so too does much justice theorizing find within itself a natural limitation when framed within liberal discourse. As Pulido and De Lara (2018, 77) argue, justice-oriented scholarship rooted in the liberal tradition which necessarily works through "process-oriented and juridical state solutions" often reify structural injustices and harms, such as those facilitated by racial capitalism and colonial dispossession. As a predominantly liberal concept, skepticism toward justice theorizing by many critical geographers is understandable.

Despite its limitations, justice nonetheless remains a point of focus for much political-geographic work. In a telling epistolary essay on justice, geographers Barkan and Pulido (2017) discuss the "unknowablility" of justice, acknowledging a general inability to articulate what, exactly, is meant by the term. While justice may be difficult to determine finitely, Barkan and Pulido nonetheless find justice an apt and motivating political virtue around which to organize. Such a sentiment resonates with others who similarly are critical of liberal justice theories yet find value in what justice theorizing helps bring to research and to political action (Harvey, 1996). The open-ended meaning of justice can thus also be its strength, by connecting many different justice struggles together in a push for more collective political action.

Given the diversity of approaches toward justice theorizing within the discipline, this review seeks not to advocate one approach over another, but, rather, to review what value different approaches to justice theorizing hold for geographic research. It focuses on how justice is understood within the geographic literature primarily over the last 3 decades, to illustrate how geographers have engaged, and could engage, with conceptualizing justice. By emphasizing justice theorizing specifically, the paper does not appraise how geographers have more broadly approached social justice in practice (for good overviews, see Waterstone, 2010; Heynen et al., 2018; Hopkins, 2021). The review finds that within geographic research on justice, the concept itself is less approached through practical reasoning and justification than it is used to normatively express contempt for problematic situations and to guide political action. The paper ends by reiterating how further engagement in justice theorizing meaningfully contributes to political-geographic research.

2 | JUSTICE THEORIZING IN GEOGRAPHY

There has been a range of political geographic approaches to theorizing justice since geographers began substantively addressing the concept. Much of this work tends to identify normative positions on justice by explicating how injustices take place "on the ground" (Fincher & Iveson, 2012). Less common are approaches which draw from philosophic and political theories to justify a normative position. That is, there is a difference between normative-political approaches to justice and normative-analytical and philosophical approaches. This section examines these differences in justice theorizing to explicate how the content of justice is given meaning in geographic research.

Not until the late 1960s through the radical turn of the discipline did geographers begin to account for theories of justice in their work. David Harvey's (2009 [1973]) well known foray into liberal theories of justice epitomizes the critical approach to justice theorizing within early radical geography. Working through the liberal theory of John Rawls' (1999 [1971]) "justice as fairness," Harvey adopted Rawls' difference principle of fair distribution toward a regional analysis of "territorial justice," a re-distributive analysis which required "a form of spatial organization that maximizes the prospects of the least fortunate region" (2009, *p*. 110). To find territorial justice within this liberal paradigm, Harvey noted, would require "a just distribution justly arrived at" (2009, *p*. 98), one able to account for the difference in distribution of public goods over space. Harvey abandoned liberal theories of justice in the second half of the book, adopting a Marxist approach which was critical of justice theories which emphasized distribution as the substance and procedure of justice. From this perspective, he argued that liberal theories did not recognize that "production *is* distribution and that efficiency *is* equity in distribution" (2009, *p*. 15). In doing so, Harvey moved away from developing a territorial conception of (liberal) justice, although as we will see, he did not altogether abandon justice theorizing.

After Harvey's *Social Justice*, little explicit theorizing of justice within geographic research happened for nearly 2 decades. Although Gordon Pirie's (1983) use of the term "spatial justice" inquired as to whether there *could* be an explicitly spatial conception of justice, it was not until the early 1990s that justice theorizing became more common within geographic scholarship. The exceptional work of Iris Marion Young (1990) and Nancy Fraser (1997), whose substantive critiques of mainstream liberal justice, provided geographers new and critical perspectives to justice. In particular, Young insisted that justice scholarship needed to move beyond matters of distribution alone and that more substantive attention was needed to show how oppression and domination was maintained over, and experienced by, non-dominant groups (1990, pp. 35–68). Key to Young's perspective on justice was an understanding of how the particularities of social *difference* could be simultaneously promoted through more universal values of self-determination and self-development. Young's arguments—as well as those of Nancy Fraser, Allison Jaggar, and Susan Okin—provided a fundamental advance in justice theorizing which helped geographers better articulate how space and the social relations producing space mattered to conceptions of justice beyond distributive (territorial) justice alone.

The critical work of Young and Fraser inspired a boon of justice theorizing within geography throughout the following decades. In direct conversation with Young's emphasis on difference, David Harvey (1992, 1996) set out to theorize justice as geographical difference. Although Harvey was hesitant of the universalizing aspects of justice, to develop a politically useful conception of justice, he noted, required some type of normative principles which simultaneously account for how justice principles oppress some group identities while reinforcing dominant ones. To take difference into account meaningfully, a conception of justice needed "to tell the difference between significant and non-significant others, differences and situatedness … [that] help promote alliance formation on the basis of similarity rather than sameness" (*p*. 361). Harvey thus added to Young's (1990, pp. 48–63) well known "five faces of oppression"—exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence—a sixth: "eco-generational," which recognized that "the necessary ecological consequences of all social projects have impacts on future generations as well as upon distant peoples" (1992, *p*. 600). Harvey thus did not reject the need for justice theorizing outright, but instead sought to situate the political value of justice in its geographic and socio-economic contexts.

The attention to difference in geographic accounts of justice did not end at Harvey. Don Mitchell's (2003b) work on homelessness and public space, for instance, argued that the struggle to maintain the presence of public spaces,

spaces of representation that enable difference to flourish as a necessary component of urban life, are fundamental to a socially just city. For him, public space is the space of justice; "It is not only where the right to the city is struggled over; it is where it is implemented and represented" (*p*. 235). And in this sense, public space functions as "a gauge of the *regimes* of justice extant at any particular moment" (ibid). David Smith (1994, 2000) sought to connect moral and ethical reflection around what constituted the good life with justice theories, invoking a need to better assess geographic differences for understanding human well-being. Influenced by feminist and communitarian theories of justice, Smith (1998) understood moral reasoning to be useful for informing our understanding of scale, particularly, through an ethic of care, asking how our capacity to "care" may inform a more egalitarian theory of justice.

These approaches to justice theorizing within geography represent a common concern with advancing critiques of mainstream principles justice. Not only were early distributive theories of liberal justice, and universalizing theories more broadly, shown to neglect much in their framing of the objects and subjects of justice, but there was more substantive attention given to the role of oppression and domination in creating injustices as well as how moral reasoning could open new epistemological approaches for geographic thinking. Such concerns have been particularly pronounced within three geographic sub-fields throughout the last 3 decades which are highlighted in the following section.

2.1 | Landscape, environmental, and spatial justice

Emerging out of landscape studies, the concept of landscape justice focuses on the struggles over the production and maintenance of landscapes. Within this scholarship landscape has been defined as many things; it is commonly understood as scenery or a viewpoint, as cultural representation, and as humanly transformed environment (Jackson, 1984; Olwig, 2002; Sauer, 1925). More recent and critical studies argue that landscapes are not merely humanly transformed environments but humanly produced. Historical materialists, for instance, argue that landscapes must be understood for how capital and labor shape landscape while in turn how landscape mediates capital-labor relations (Henderson, 2003, Mitchell, 2003a, 2008; 2012). As Mitchell (2008, *p*. 45) argues, landscape "is the spatial form that social justice takes." Landscapes are thus also understood as social spaces imbued with uneven power relations. From this perspective, justice emerges through struggle over the production of landscape.

Landscape scholars have engaged with justice theorizing through the related approach of moral reasoning. As Setten and Brown (2013, 244) note, landscapes "work to (re)produce certain identities and ways of life, and become a spatial configuration of particular people's legitimacy and moral authority." The notion of "moral landscape" underscores this relationship between landscapes and moral values and judgments. Moral landscapes "concern how particular symbolic and material landscapes both shape and reflect notions of 'right/wrong', 'good/bad', 'appropriate/inappropriate', and 'natural/unnatural' in relation to particular people, practices, and things" (Setten & Brown, 2009, 191). Such moral implications relate to justice in that landscapes provide a medium through which to understand from where values are derived and reinforced. For some, therefore, landscape functions as an "infrastructure" with the potential to promote well-being as an indicator of more just relations (Egoz & De Nardi, 2017).

Some landscape scholars have begun to follow from political philosophy in applying justice concepts to the field. Reflecting on Iris Marion Young's (2000) and Nancy Fraser's (2008) insistence that *representation* be central to the concept of justice, Tom Mels (2016) similarly observes that "Landscape … [is] not just a cultural representation but the material expression of the struggle over justice, polity and the peoples' cry and demand for a place of representation" (2016, 416). Landscape should not be understood "as the passive receptor of social processes and relations, but in a sense as part and parcel of the very condition of justice" (Mels, 2016, 423). Breaking from the landscape tradition of cultural representation, Mels argues that specifically *political* representation is indispensable to understanding how landscapes materialize struggles over justice. Thus, studying the processes producing landscapes provide a way of assessing and politicizing injustices through landscape research.

Closely connected to landscape justice is that of EJ. The EJ movement has been around since the late 1970s/early 1980s and the movement's politics have traditionally informed EJ's approach to justice theorizing. Robert Bullard's (1983, 1996) early work is well known for analyzing the disproportionate siting of hazardous waste facilities near people of color in the U.S. Much EJ scholarship that directly engaged with theories of justice beyond Bullard has continued to emphasize the distributive focus of liberal justice. Given the emphasis on distributive principles, a plurality of ways of theorizing justice were missing from early EJ scholarship. As David Schlosberg (2007) notes in his survey of justice theorizing in EJ, in addition to environmental maldistributions, "a lack of recognition, limited participation, and a critical lack of capabilities, at both the individual and group level, all work to produce injustice" (2007, 39–40). He urged that justice theorizing in EJ move beyond liberal distributive approaches.

Reflecting the emphasis on distributive justice within EJ research generally, geographic approaches to EJ early on also focused on distributive assessments of justice (Reed & George, 2011). Acknowledging the distributive focus within geographies of EJ, Walker (2009, 615) argued that "the simple geographies and spatial forms evident in much 'first generation' EJ research [were] insufficient and inadequate to the tasks of both revealing inequalities and understanding the processes through which these are (re)produced." Given that the concept of justice exceeds distributional concerns alone, including those of recognition and procedure, for example, Walker (2009, 629) argued for geographic research in EJ to "identify the ways in which geography, and specifically the spatial, is intertwined with a pluralized understanding of the scope and meaning of EJ."

Geographic approaches to EJ have responded to this call and have since expanded beyond distributive notions of justice. Influenced by broader developments in justice theorizing on recognition, representation, participation, and well-being, EJ scholarship in geography has empirically and theoretically examined a variety of topics. It has examined, for example, how misrecognition and marginalized participation affects the assessment of socio-environmental risk management (Holifield, 2012); "performative enactments of justice," in which justice comes into being not through the "application of pre-defined rights, but rather as arising out of diverse practices that seek to realign prevailing spatial politics" (Hobson, 2006); and the potential for incorporating capabilities theories of well-being into EJ, an approach which stresses that individuals' inability to function is of central normative concern for understanding injustice (Edwards et al., 2016).

While this diversity of approaches collectively move beyond a singular focus on the distributive, they should also be understood as a turn away from applying ideal theories of justice and toward a more "action-theoretical" understanding of justice, one where justice claims are assessed through socio-ecological struggles "from below" (Yaka, 2019). Such an approach is central to the work of Laura Pulido whose contribution to EJ is well known within and outside of geography. Pulido has been adamant that the normative content of justice within EJ cannot be "contained" (Barkan & Pulido, 2017). That is, she dismisses the development of ideal justice concepts for their inability to adequately redress, particularly, environmental racisms. Pulido (2000) directly connected EJ to environmental *racism* by illustrating how the socio-spatial forms of white privilege structured social-environmental relations. More recently, her work has approached environmental racism "as a function of racial capitalism," by underscoring the complicity of the state within environmental racism (Pulido, 2017, 530). As such, Pulido is critical of justice theorizing which seeks to develop justice through liberal frameworks. As Pulido and De Lara (2018, 92) argue, "rights-based strategies that seek recognition and redress from the liberal state only validate the underlying injustice of racial capitalism and colonialism." Here, justice is less likely to be understood through explicit normative theorizing on its content, but, rather, something that emerges out of movements which address the limits of the liberal state, for instance.

The shifts in theorizing justice within landscape and EJ literature to a large extent reflect the transitions within the spatial justice literature. Like landscape and EJ, spatial justice arguably began by focusing on allocating territorial equity of goods and services among urban regions. However, the spatial justice literature quickly moved away from distributive theories to make more explicit ontological explications of spatiality and how spatial processes enable injustice. Following Harvey's *Social Justice and the City*, geographers became critical of such territorial accounts of justice, or as G.H. Pirie put it, theories which simply sought to identify "justice in space" (1983, 469). Rather than identify social injustice in space, Pirie thought an explicitly spatialized understanding of justice could function as a

useful framework of analysis for evaluating social justice, as a means of "spatial judgement." Pirie did not go on to develop a theory of spatial justice, but his original use of the term foreshadowed the coming dialectical analysis of space together with social justice.

Nearly 2 decades later, Mustafa Dikeç advanced a notion of justice which sought to illustrate the spatial dimensions of justice/injustice. Dikeç's (2001, 1787–1788) notion of spatial justice had it that "the very production of space … not only manifests various forms of injustice, but actually produces *and* reproduces them (thereby maintaining established social relations of domination and oppression)." He noted both a *spatiality of injustice*, which "implies that justice has a spatial dimension to it, and therefore, that a spatial perspective might be used to discern injustice *in space*," as well as an *injustice of spatiality*, which "implies existing structures in their capacities to produce and reproduce injustice *through space*" (pp. 1792–1793). Dikeç stressed that the emphasis of spatial justice ought not to be "on space per se, but on the *processes* that produce space, and, at the same time, the implications of these produced spaces on the dynamic processes of social, economic, and political relations" (*p*. 1793, emphasis added). Here spatial justice was a means of evaluating how injustices not only took place in space but how the formation of space itself affected social relations in unjust ways.

Ed Soja's (2010) *Seeking Spatial Justice* further asserted the necessity of space in theorizing injustice and is the work most connected to the term "spatial justice." Like Dikeç, Soja asserted that space is to some extent constitutive of injustice, arguing that "the spatiality of (in)justice … affects society and social life just as much as social processes shape the spatiality or specific geography of (in)justice" (2010, 5). More so than Dikeç, however, Soja argued that justice has a "consequential geography, a spatial expression that is more than just a background reflection or set of physical attributes to be descriptively mapped … the geography, or "spatiality," of justice … *is an integral and formative component of justice itself*" (2010, 1, emphasis added). For Soja, injustice *cannot* be understood without an understanding of its underlying spatial relations.

A supplement to Soja's rendering of spatiality was the interpretation of spatial justice from urban planning scholar Peter Marcuse. Marcuse (2009) agreed with the premise that space and social relations are dialectically intertwined, but he did not concede that space actively produced injustice itself. Instead, and more concretely, Marcuse (2009, 3) suggested five propositions which could lead to identifying spatial injustice. The first was that spatial injustice has two cardinal forms: "the involuntary confinement of any group to a limited space—segregation, ghettoization—the unfreedom argument" and "the allocation of resources unequally over space—the unfair resources argument." The second was that spatial injustice is "derivative of broader social injustice." The third, "social injustices always have a spatial aspect, and social injustices cannot be addressed without also addressing their spatial aspect." The fourth, "spatial remedies are necessary but not sufficient to remedy spatial injustice—let alone social injustices." And finally, because it is relative to social injustice, spatial injustice "is dependent on changing, social, political, and economic conditions." While Marcuse largely followed the socio-spatial dialectic, he guarded against the implication that spatial injustices were fixable through spatial remedies alone, suggesting that a focus on spatiality in isolation cannot correct for injustices alone, given that they derive from histories of social, political, and economic relations.

Like the landscape and EJ literature, therefore, spatial justice has sought to develop insights into how certain aspects of spatial relations exemplify injustices on the ground. In general, these three approaches share in their rejection of idealized accounts of justice and instead examine more situated accounts of injustice (Barnett, 2011). As such, they usefully develop critical geography's normative attention to the ways in which space produces injustices broadly conceived. However, due to how these approaches center on struggles of injustice, little of this scholarship focuses on the normative content of what is or is not just in itself. Rather, these approaches to justice provide normative explanations of how space, places, and natural environments enable or produce social injustices broadly conceived in order to illustrate how socio-spatial injustices are about struggles for recognition, representation, self-determination and well-being.

A final identifiable approach to justice theorizing in geography, however, argues for the need to pay closer attention to how justice is defined and how it is evaluated. The final section addresses these perspectives.

2.2 | Justifying normative geographies

Throughout the past 2 decades geographers have argued for more engagement between the moral and the political (Olson, 2018). Some, for instance, have called for more ethical reflection on what constitutes the good life (Smith, 2000) and to more deeply rationalize what constitutes well-being and human flourishing (Olson & Sayer, 2009). Along these lines, a few geographers have argued for more ethical and normative attention to theorizing justice as well. What is different about these more recent appeals to justice theorizing is that they tend to reject the ideal theories constituting earlier distributive theories in geography. In doing so, they offer further normative development of the relationship between justice and the spatial.

Clive Barnett has been particularly involved in justice discourses within the discipline and has been critical of the lack of attention to the content of justice within geographic research. For instance, he has noted, that geographers have been "rather averse to spending much time on normative questions about whether and how and why observable patterns of inequity, discrimination, or unevenness are actually unjust" (Barnett, 2016, 112). At the same time, he acknowledges that geographers need not develop "fully fledged, rationally justified account[s] of justice" (Barnett, 2011, 248), given that geographers already give normative attention to justice by examining struggles from the ground up. As such, Barnett guards against ideal justice theorizing, while still urging that more effort be spent rationalizing what is meant by the use of the concept of justice. He advocates a more relational approach to justice theorizing, one which understands that "practices of justifiability are central to identification of injustice *as* injustice" (Barnett, 2016, 117). Such a normative commitment to recognizing processes and experiences of *in*justice follows recent political and moral philosophies of justice.

In his most recent work, therefore, Barnett (2017) argues that rather than developing an ideal or perfect theory of justice, geographers would benefit by evaluating injustice through critical evaluation. Influenced by the work of Iris Marion Young, Nancy Fraser, and Amartya Sen, Barnett understands justice as something "developed not to satisfy an ideal model but in relation to situated expressions of injustice … a condition that is approached through processes of *re*pair, *re*dress, *re*paration and *re*distribution" (*p*. 248). Justice, then, ought not be understood as a set of ideal principles, but arrived at through the process of deliberative-democratic evaluation. As such, he follows Jürgen Habermas and Rainer Forst in suggesting that injustice be understood through democratic deliberation, particularly by prioritizing the process of evaluating claims of oppression and domination.

Barnett suggests that geographers are well-positioned to examine the situation and emergence of claims of injustice. Given that claims of harm emerge from somewhere, evaluating claims requires an examination of "the situated contexts in which grievances and harms are generated, recognized, problematized, and acted upon" (2017, 17). Particularly apt for Barnett is that this includes assessing the spatial relations of everyday political actions, such as those expressed in "spaces of mobilization, demands, deliberations, compromises, deal making, decisions, delivery, accountability, and revision" (*p*. 277). Such "ordinary" political relations here are included as potential spaces of justice and injustice, spatial relations which can be evaluated to better situate the conditions of injustice.

Other recent normative approaches to analyzing justice seek to be able to evaluate human well-being by measuring it. Israel and Frenkel (2018) have developed a metric which evaluates injustices based on the notion of equality of life chances and opportunities. Such a metric of well-being follows from the "capabilities approach" developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum (Sen, 1992, 2009; Nussbaum, 2000, 2003, 2011). Rather than develop principles of "perfect" justice, the capabilities approach seeks to identify indicators or thresholds to evaluate human well-being. Based on this approach, Israel and Frenkel developed a notion of spatial justice which evaluates how "socio-spatial structures and personal characteristics (i.e. living environment, habitus, and [cultural] capital forms) … may impair equality of capabilities" (2018, 659). For them, measuring spatial justice is a means to assess the scales at which freedom of opportunities are structured into the social relations producing space. "The extent to which these capabilities are equally distributed in space will define whether a given spatial arrangement is (un)just" (Israel & Frenkel, 2018, 648). Without a metric that measures the "justness" in a given place, they suggest, the ability for policy-makers to act and correct for injustices is limited.

The normative approach that Israel and Frenkel argue is needed in justice theorizing ideally examines causes of injustice beyond a description of disparities of equality in well-being. They argue that equality (in capabilities) is determined by "two socio-spatial structures: the 'living environment' and 'the means to achieve personal freedoms'" (Israel & Frenkel, 2020, 3). As such, capabilities are "determined by a person's relative position in social space and a particular living environment … Or in other words, the quality and quantity of capital forms available to him or her in a given time and space" (Israel & Frenkel, 2020, 4). An individuals' capabilities are here understood to be influenced by the condition of living environments. Such a metric brings the concept of justice closer to empirical measurement, they suggest, by measuring inequality in and between specific places through a normative qualification of what constitutes well-being. For them, equality of capabilities—equality in well-being—constitutes the substance and normative goal of justice scholarship.

Such normative approaches to justice within geography at once reject ideal models of justice theorizing while at the same time insist that further definition be given to the concept of justice as its used in geographic research. Such appeals to theorizing justice may be at odds with the other normative approaches previously mentioned, but not necessarily so. The conclusion analyzes how these approaches collectively advance justice scholarship in geography.

3 | CONCLUSION

This review has shown how geographers have approached theorizing the concept of justice primarily throughout the last 3 decades. It reflects how geographers continue to emphasize concepts prominent within justice theories (e.g. recognition, participation, representation) while at the same time it indicates that scholars continue to hold differing positions on how and why justice theorizing contributes to geographic research. Broadly accepted within geographies of justice literature is the desire to expand conceptions of justice beyond re-distributive theories specifically and ideal theories more generally. Instead, geographers have shifted to theorizing *injustices*, following normative political philosophy's attention to non-ideal theorizing, which has allowed for critical geographers to explain the socio-spatial injustices present through many different struggles. Such normative political work extends through many subfields of political geography and situates the production of spaces, places, and environments with political, social, economic and ecological injustices.

Yet, differences in normative approaches to justice theorizing remain within geographic scholarship. There continues to be a relative lack of normative theorizing of the concept of justice itself—approaches which justify and rationalize why something is or is not just. To not justify an evaluation of a given situation risks deflating the specificity of injustice claims when scholars do not articulate *why* processes or relations are just or unjust. At the same time, the political work that has highlighted examples of injustice (e.g. environmental injustice) can and have led to actionable changes without needing to have developed fully-fledged accounts of justification.

I suggest the tension between normative political and normative analytical work in geographies of justice scholarship is productive for justice-oriented scholarship. While I agree that the shift away from ideal theories is a useful move for broadening the scope of justice scholarship, suggesting that anything is injustice could also reduce the analytical as well as political utility of the concept. What seems necessary for geographers focused on justice in their scholarship is to engage in the analytical process of *justifying*, rationalizing how and why something is unjust. Importantly, this process may not be as far away from political geographic scholarship as it may seem.

Given the healthy intermingling of practice and theory in geographies of justice, I find Alison Jaggar's approach to justice useful for bridging political and analytical work in philosophies of justice. Through a straightforward categorization, Jaggar (2009, 2) suggests that an account of justice can provide answers to the structural questions of justice, by addressing what she refers to as the "where," "when," "who," "what" and "how" of justice. She states that (*p*. 2):

1. "Where?" asks what is the domain or sphere of life within which the moral demands of justice apply.
2. "When?" asks what are the social circumstances within which the demands of justice have application.

3. "Who?" asks which entities should be regarded as subjects of justice, meaning who or what are entitled to make justice claims deserving moral consideration.
4. "What?" asks which entities should be regarded as objects of justice, meaning which kinds of categories of things should be distributed in a just manner.
5. Finally, "How?" asks which principles are the most morally appropriate for guiding the allocation of various objects to various subjects in various circumstances.

To answers these questions, it is critical to give reasons—to rationalize-—why a particular answer concerns justice or injustice. In other words, it requires addressing the question of why something is about justice, not some other political virtue.

Jaggar's categories frame justice-oriented scholarship in two important ways. First, they open up approaches to justice that exceed mainstream distributive/liberal approaches alone, by asking: who is not a subject of justice in a given situation and why should they be? Or, what is not an object of justice but ought to be and why? Such a framing enables researchers to rationalize why something is unjust within and outside of liberal frameworks. Jaggar notes, for example, how women were for centuries not included as *subjects* of justice within mainstream discourse, nor was the domestic sphere understood to be a relevant *domain* of justice. So too have people of color not been subject to justification, and in many ways, continue to be outsiders as subjects of justice. Significantly, normative claims of injustice need not be derived from liberal theories alone. Much normative-political and philosophical work in the feminist and Marxist traditions, for example, are skeptical of liberal frameworks but still develop normative commitments against sensed injustices (Geras, 1992). A second reason these five framing questions are useful is that they allow empirical knowledge to inform an analysis of injustice. Jaggar (2009, 12) urges that the analytical task of justification must be informed by empirical description from "real world" events. Such normative political-analytical synthesis is not uncommon to political geographers. For, geographers remain attuned to how sensed experiences of inequity, oppression, and domination, for instance, are socially and spatially situated and produced.

Whether or not we follow Jaggar's categorizations to guide our analyses, it seems crucial that scholars provide reasons as to *why* justice is a central concept in their work. To be able to provide reasons for why the thing being researched is about justice serves another purpose. It forces us to address *whether* our research is about justice specifically. Justice may not always be the guiding political virtue appropriate to situate the problems we are analyzing. Not all socio-spatial relations are about justice or injustice. With this in mind, it is important that geographers continue to address why justice is the appropriate concept for framing their assessments. Doing so will better ensure that justice cannot be simply understood ideally or as perfect theories. And it is in this vein that justice theorizing may guard against idealist principles which do not express the very real injustices reflected in the spaces in which geographers study.

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