

Emerging Conversations in Critical Internationalization Studies

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we introduce our special issue, “Internationalization for an Uncertain Future: Emerging Conversations in Critical Internationalization Studies.” In addition to reviewing the individual contributions to this issue, we also consider emerging areas of inquiry in the field of critical internationalization studies (CIS), and invite consideration of how the field might responsibly confront the challenges, complexities, and possibilities that emerge in efforts to imagine and practice internationalization otherwise in today’s complex, uncertain, and unequal world.

Keywords: critique, complexity, complicity, internationalization otherwise

Internationalization has been deemed central for addressing the challenges of an increasingly complex, uncertain, and unequal world. Through institutional strategies, policies, pedagogies, and practices, internationalization has been mobilized as a means to prepare students, produce useful knowledge, and generate solutions for the proliferating challenges our interconnected planet. Further, it has largely been framed as a neutral and inevitable process, coalescing around an “internationalization imperative” (Buckner & Stein, 2020) that emphasizes practical questions about how institutions should internationalize, rather than ethical and political questions about why, in whose name, for whose benefit, and to what end they should internationalize. Yet a growing number of critical voices have expressed concern that mainstream approaches to internationalization not only reflect but also potentially naturalize and reproduce already uneven geo-political, economic, and epistemic relations.

Emerging out of the Critical Internationalization Studies Network and lively conversations at a conference sponsored by the Spencer Foundation in June 2020, this special issue of *The Journal of International Students* examines recent developments and identifies the limits and edges of existing debates in the field of critical internationalization studies (CIS). Together, the articles elucidate CIS's internally diverse research agenda, identify future priority areas, and propose possible pathways for internationalization to be reimagined in the service of addressing shared global challenges in more equitable, sustainable, and ethical ways. In this introduction to the special issue, before we briefly review the insights offered by each contribution, we offer our own reading of contemporary conversations in CIS, and identify some of the emerging questions at the edges of the field.

SETTING THE SCENE: DIVERGENT APPROACHES TO CRITIQUE

Scholars and practitioners in critical internationalization studies draw attention to the risks of reproducing uneven global power relations, colonial representations, and extractive resource flows in mainstream approaches to internationalization. Beyond problematizing and complicating the overwhelmingly positive and depoliticized nature of internationalization efforts, they also put forth new possible approaches to international engagements, pedagogies, and forms of knowledge production. Many CIS scholars and practitioners emphasize critical approaches to the internationalization of higher education, which is the focus of this special issue, while others are located in different areas of education and beyond, such as foundations of education, global (citizenship) education, teacher education, human rights education, sociology of education, Indigenous education, history of education, and more.

Once marginal, critical perspectives on internationalization are increasingly mainstream, drawing the attention of key figures in internationalization scholarship like Hans de Wit, who wrote in 2014, "internationalisation in higher education is at a turning point and the concept of internationalisation requires an update, refreshment and fine-tuning taking into account the new world and higher education order" (p. 2). Nonetheless, for many scholars and practitioners, a significant amount of effort is spent articulating the basic critiques and issues with mainstream internationalization within our institutions and scholarly conversations, leading to a lack of space for deeper, more reflexive engagements with the complexities, challenges, complicities, and contradictions that are involved in attempts to mobilize critical approaches to internationalization in both theory and practice.

The search for such a space led Sharon to found the Critical Internationalization Studies Network (criticalinternationalization.net) in 2018. The CIS network brings together scholars, practitioners, educators, students, and organizations that are interested in reimagining dominant patterns of relationship, representation, and resource distribution in the internationalization of education. The network seeks to foster engagements across critical perspectives, facilitate collaborations, and exchange knowledge and resources.

It is often the case that people assume when they have a shared issue of concern, they also have the same analysis of the problem, and the same proposed response or solution. In fact, however, there are many different ways of conceptualizing the same

basic problem, and many different ways of addressing it. While these differences may be flattened for strategic purposes of solidarity in certain circumstances, confusions and tensions tend to arise when they go unnoticed and unnamed. Apart from the need to identify and understand the implications of these differences, another issue that seems to get lost in many critical discussions is that of complicity – specifically, the complicity of CIS scholars in the very internationalization processes that we critique.

For instance, in both of our cases, the fiscal health of our employer institutions in Canada, and thus, our own continued employment, are heavily dependent on the continued flow of tuition fees from international students, which is many times higher than the tuition charged to domestic students. As Nick Mitchell (2015) writes in his reflections on the emergence of critical ethnic studies, “There is nothing about our position in the academy, however marginal, that is innocent of power, nor is there any practice that will afford us an exteriority to the historical determinations of the place from which we speak, write, research, teach, organize, and earn” (p. 92).

Thus, beyond the articulation of critique itself, there is a need within CIS discussions to both clarify the distinctions between divergent critical perspectives, and deepen our engagements with the limits, circularities, and difficulties of engaging with the harms of internationalization from a critical lens given that we are also complicit in those harms. Several years on, de Wit’s observation about internationalization remains prescient, and yet we might also revise it slightly – acknowledging that critical approaches to internationalization are themselves plural, and these approaches should themselves be continually subject to “deep questioning” in ways that take into account “the new world and higher education order,” *as well as* old colonial continuities, and the limits of critique itself (see Stein, 2019).

One way of deepening conversations about internationalization is to articulate and engage with the different possibilities that divergent approaches to internationalization offer, as well as the limitations of each approach. Sharon’s work in CIS has largely focused on fostering agonistic engagements between these different approaches (see Andreotti, Stein, Pashby, & Stein, 2016; Pashby, da Costa, Stein, & Andreotti, 2020; Stein, 2015, 2017a, 2017b, 2019, 2020, 2021, forthcoming; Stein & Andreotti, 2016, 2021; Stein, Andreotti, & Susa, 2019; Stein, Andreotti, Bruce & Susa, 2016). Although there are myriad ways of framing these approaches, below we briefly summarize them according to their perceived purpose of internationalization, their guiding orientation or intention, and the extent to which they advocate for reforming the existing social, political, and economic system:

- 1) **Internationalization for a global knowledge economy** (*no reform*): Ensure the continuity of business as usual within the existing system; incentivize individual competition for limited positions within the global middle class, and institutional competition for limited resources within the global higher education landscape.
- 2) **Internationalization for the global public good** (*minor reform*): Make the existing system more efficient and inclusive by changing policies and practices; transfer knowledge from the Global North to the Global South, and expand access to western higher education institutions, as forms of international aid.

- 3) **Internationalization for global equity** (*major reform*): Denaturalize the enduring uneven colonial flows of knowledge, resources, and people within the existing system, which tend to heavily benefit the Global North, and middle and upper classes within the Global South; substantively transform that system by redistributing power and resources, and centering marginalized perspectives.
- 4) **Internationalization otherwise** (*beyond reform*): Rethink presumptions about the continuity, reformability, and desirability of the existing system; seek changes that can reduce harm in the short-term, and foster experimentation with alternatives in the long-term within/against/beyond existing institutions.

Apart from internationalization for a global knowledge economy, one can find varieties each of these approaches within the CIS field. Particularly within CIS discussions, internationalization for a global knowledge economy is widely understood to be the dominant position within most institutions of higher education, especially in the Global North. While not always stated plainly in policy and practice, institutional and state-level actions and priorities indicate an outsized emphasis on the economic implications of international learning and engagements, with little or no consideration of educational goals (McCartney, 2020). Internationalization for the global public good is also widely found in existing institutions, and its focus on international education as “aid” is presumed to be an important counterpoint to the focus on international education as “trade” held by those enacting internationalization for the global knowledge economy. However, from the perspective of internationalization for global equity, both of these two approaches problematically center and universalize western knowledge and paternalistically presume the exceptionalism and benevolence of western higher education institutions (McCartney, 2016). The internationalization for global equity approach tends to be marginalized within existing institutions, or included only in tokenistic ways. Internationalization for global equity efforts tend to be oriented toward shifting from inclusion-based to redistribution-based approaches to addressing enduring global inequalities, and thereby reforming the existing system in more substantive and transformative ways. Yet those operating from within this approach do not always apply their analysis self-reflexively in order to consider their own complicity in the systems they critique.

Finally, internationalization otherwise challenges all three of the previous approaches to internationalization in their assumption that the existing system can and should be reformed. Largely inspired by decolonial critiques, this approach to internationalization suggests that this system is both inherently harmful and unsustainable, and thus that any approach to internationalization articulated and enacted from this system will be harmful and unsustainable as well. This approach therefore strategically advocates for reforms in the short-term, but it recognizes the limits and contradictions of those reforms, and does not assume that the system can or should be sustained in the long-term. Instead, it emphasizes possibilities for re-imagining internationalization beyond what is possible within the existing system, while recognizing the deep difficulty of doing so given both material limitations as well as the challenges of imagining outside dominant frames. Thus, it is assumed that

internationalization otherwise is not a predetermined approach to internationalization but an ongoing process of: unlearning dominant modes of knowing, being, and relating; experimenting ethically with efforts to know, be, and relate otherwise; learning from both the successes and failures of those efforts; and repeating the process again – each time hopefully interrupting old mistakes, while undoubtedly making new ones in the process. The internationalization otherwise approach is generally only found within small pockets of mainstream institutions, as well as in informal educational programs and communities that are outside of those institutions.

In an attempt to invite generative engagement within and across these approaches, we can pose a series of questions to those interested in CIS: *What does each approach assume, allow, and foreclose? What does internationalization look and feel like in each approach? Where do your practices and thinking, and the practices and policies of your institution, fall on this map? Where would you like them to be? What are the possible barriers to, and complexities, of change in your context?* By sitting with these questions, we might foster more generative and reflexive conversations across difference within the CIS field. It might also prepare us to engage with the possibilities offered by these different approaches in more strategic and socially and ecologically responsible ways in our practice, depending on what is possible within any given context.

While it is important to acknowledge that each of these approaches offers something, and each has limitations, it is also important to emphasize that they hold different institutional weight, and even different weight in conversations within the field of critical internationalization studies. Internationalization otherwise is arguably situated at the furthest edges of the field, often either unintelligible to or misunderstood by those seeking minor or major reforms. Whether or not one agrees with its analysis and proposition, it is arguably worthwhile for us to sit with the question of why it is so difficult to understand what is proposed within the internationalization otherwise approach, let alone to imagine what it might actually look and feel like in practice.

One way of responding to this question is that, despite their many differences, the three other approaches to internationalization that we have reviewed are all invested in the promises of certainty, universality, authority, continuity, and exceptionalism that are offered by our existing system – which is characterized as a modern/colonial system from the perspective of the internationalization otherwise approach. Indeed, decolonial analyses point out that these promises are only secured for some people at the expense of other people (disproportionately racialized and Indigenous), and other-than-human beings. It may be that internationalization otherwise is marginalized in part because it questions the desirability of these promises in unsettling and uncomfortable ways. Yet the current COVID-19 context, compounded by many other overlapping contemporary global challenges, might prompt us to consider the feasibility of these promises as well, and to self-reflexively question our investments in them (see Stein, forthcoming; Stein & Silva, 2020).

THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF THE CIS FIELD

While we wanted to orient this special issue around emerging issues and questions in the critical internationalization studies field, we find that in order to understand where we might be going, we should also understand where we are now, and where we have been. We briefly review each of these in this section, and note that collectively, the contributions to this special issue touch on each of these issues, and more. Then, we offer a general reflection on the direction of the CIS field.

Where Have We Been, and Where are We Going?

By now, there are at least three established, interrelated areas that are the subject of critical inquiry within CIS: economism, or the sense that internationalization efforts are oriented primarily by economic concerns while social and ecological justice remain at best secondary and often tokenistic concerns (e.g., McCartney & Metcalfe, 2018; Stier, 2011); eurocentrism, or the concern that both curricula and research within Western and even many non-Western institutions continue to be dominated by Western ways of knowing, being, and relating (e.g., George Mwangi & Yao, 2021; Kramer, 2009; Tikly, 2004); and racism, or the fact that international students, staff, and faculty are the target of interpersonal and institutional racism as well as xenophobia, ethno-nationalism, and linguistic discrimination (e.g., Brown & Jones, 2013; Lee & Rice, 2007). Despite the important scholarship and conversations that exist about these areas, each requires further inquiry and examination, particularly in relation to the complexities, paradoxes, and challenges that inevitably emerge in efforts to interrupt harmful patterns and practices.

There are at least three areas that are currently gaining increased attention within the CIS field: climate change, or questions about how internationalization is related to the reproduction of ecological unsustainability (including but not limited to questions of the role of mobility in greenhouse gas production) (e.g., Crumley-Effinger & Torres-Olave in this issue); settler colonialism, or questions about how internationalization relates to decolonization and Indigenization in contexts characterized by ongoing domestic colonization, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand or the US (e.g., Leenen-Young & Naepi in this issue); and shifting geopolitics, or questions about the impacts of increasingly nationalistic governments and immigration policies, and the anticipated shift of the “center” of internationalization from the West to “the Rest” (e.g., Vital & Yao in this issue).

Finally, there are three emerging areas of critique that indicate where we might be headed in CIS: presumed benevolence, or concern to ensure that those offering critiques are not engaged in “moves to innocence” (Mawhinny, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2012), but rather practicing self-reflexivity, humility, and accountability in relation to their own complicity and ongoing investments in the problematic patterns that they identify and seek to interrupt (e.g., Hernandez in this issue); quick solutions, or the need to interrupt the perceived imperative to offer simplistic, immediate, concrete answers to complex problems that often end up addressing the harmful symptoms, but not their root causes and layered complexities (e.g., Suspitsyna in this issue); and simplistic framings, or the concern to interrupt the tendency to draw attention to the

problems of internationalization through morality tales with a clear “victim”, “villain”, and “victor” that fail to attend to the often messy, contradictory, and context-specific dimensions of marginalization and complicity in harm (e.g., Beck; Buckner et al. in this issue).

To summarize the present state of critical internationalization studies, we can also observe four general developments. The first is that there is an increased mainstreaming of critiques of internationalization, not only by leaders within the internationalization field, but also in terms of their uptake by institutions. The second is the paradoxes that result from this mainstreaming itself, as the institutionalization of critique can either enable new possibilities for mobilizing more generative approaches to practices, policies, and strategic plans, or result in tokenistic, performative commitments to justice that ultimately allow for the continuity of business as usual. Often one finds that both of these things are work within the same institutional context, in contradictory ways. The third is that, despite the growing interest in critical approaches to internationalization and growing dissatisfaction with mainstream approaches, we find the continued prioritization of financial over ethical and political concerns. Finally, overall, we find continued invisibility of the modern/colonial imaginary that encompasses both mainstream and even many critical approaches to internationalization, and difficulty of interrupting this imaginary.

Interrupting Colonial Patterns and Habits

Each of the established areas and emerging developments reviewed above is worthy of further scholarly study, and consideration of their implications for practice. Yet we might also consider the limits of engagements and interventions that focus exclusively on the intellectual dimensions of change, and that offer narrow, normative prescriptions about what is to be done. These limits are related to at least two things.

The first limit is related to the fact that achieving epistemic consensus is increasingly impossible in our contemporary context, given the cacophony of competing ideas and conversations from all directions, aided by fast-moving technologies that make it easy to access and selectively consume information (Bauman, 2001). None of this means that intellectual work is unimportant; quite the contrary. However, rather than prescribe normative frameworks, CIS might seek instead to prepare people to make their own critically informed, contextually relevant, and socially accountable decisions as they encounter multiple, contradictory perspectives. Beyond reframing our approach to critique, we might also consider that intellectual interventions alone may be inadequate for preparing people to navigate the complex contemporary landscape of internationalization, and higher education in general. It is no longer the case, if it ever was, that we can change people’s behaviors by changing their minds. This then relates to the second limit, which is informed by recent insights offered by the affective turn (Ahmed, 2012; Taylor, 2013; Zembylas, 2018), and the relational turn (Ahenakew, 2016, 2019; Jimmy et al., 2019; Whyte, 2020) in critical and decolonial scholarship. These “turns” suggest that racism and colonialism are reproduced in our institutions not only in intentional, conscious ways, but also through often unconscious patterns and habits of knowing, being, and relating that are rooted in desires for and perceived entitlements to exceptionalism,

universalism, authority, innocence, and certainty. In the context of internationalization, these patterns and habits tend to reproduce unequal, paternalistic and extractive relationships between dominant and marginalized communities, simplistic solutions to complex problems, and ethnocentric imaginaries of education, knowledge, justice, responsibility, justice and change.

To address these colonial patterns and habits will require a concerted commitment by those working in the CIS field, as they can be extremely difficult to even identify, let alone interrupt. This is because addressing these pattern and habits is not a matter of simply describing a problem and prescribing a solution, but rather requires interventions that interrupt our satisfaction with the promises and pleasures that they offer, and that invite people into a deeper practice of self-reflexivity (in the affective domain), and a deeper, more visceral sense of accountability to others (in the relational domain). Our further challenge is to do this in generative, uncoercive ways that mobilize new possibilities, rather than shut down the conversation or devolve into a toxic competition for who can offer the most critical perspective.

In order for CIS to continue to grow and mature as a field, we will also need to develop radars for when we are reproducing these patterns and habits ourselves, and cultivate intellectual, affective, and relational capacities for having difficult conversations about the complicities and complexities inherent to our work. After all, while critique is important, it does not absolve us of our implication in the colonial patterns and practices that we ourselves reproduce systemically and interpersonally, and that are reproduced by the institutions that pay our salaries. We might therefore supplement existing approaches to critique with efforts to identify the limits of old, increasingly untenable and harmful promises and horizons of hope and change, and facilitate the emergence of new, previously unimaginable possibilities while maintaining a commitment to humility, self-reflexivity, and discernment.

INTERNATIONALIZATION FOR A COMPLEX, UNCERTAIN, UNEQUAL WORLD

In our complex, uncertain, and unequal world, we can summarize five primary overlapping challenges that any scholars and practitioner of internationalization will likely confront: 1) The systemic colonial violence that underwrites the maintenance of the dominant social, political, and economic system and its institutions (which is premised on racialized exploitation and expropriation); 2) The inherent ecological unsustainability of our existing system (which is paradoxically premised on infinite growth and “natural resource” consumption on a finite planet); 3) The intensification of multiple “wicked problems”, such as political polarization, extreme weather, biodiversity loss, labour precarity, mass migration, the cancellation of civil, human, and labour rights, and global health crises (which are rooted in long-standing patterns of systemic violence and ecological unsustainability, but which represent exponential growth in their scope, scale, and complexity); 4) The intellectual, affective, and relational difficulties of “imagining otherwise” when faced with the intensification of wicked problems (which is reinforced by a lack of stamina and capacities for addressing uncertainty, complexity, and complicity and perceived entitlements to certainty, exceptionalism, universality, innocence, authority, and control); and 5) The

difficulty of facing the depth and magnitude of the wicked problems of the present (which tends to be amplified by our tendency to over-estimate our capacity and readiness to appropriately and accountably address those problems).

What kind of internationalization would be adequate to the task of preparing people to respond to these challenges in more sober, mature, discerning, and accountable ways? Each approach to internationalization reviewed above might have its own, situated response to this question. In the end there is no fixed answer, just many partial, imperfect propositions in the short-term (each of which may reproduce some colonial patterns, or create new ones), and the long-term work of examining the limits of the existing system and asking how we got here, why it is so difficult to imagine otherwise, and how we might experiment responsibly and self-reflexively not just with alternative approaches to internationalization, but alternative thinking about alternatives (Santos, 2006). The contributions to this special issue both gesture toward the limits of our existing frameworks, and push us toward this kind of alternative thinking.

CONTRIBUTIONS IN THIS ISSUE

The issue is organized around these two paired missions of identifying existing limits and pushing towards alternative thinking in the field of critical internationalization studies. For example, Leenen-Young and Naepi (2021) invite the field to more intentionally bring together histories of colonization with histories of internationalization. In their effort to weave together these often siloed conversations, they expand the field by reconstructing the history of New Zealand's colonial education programs in the Pacific. They trace the construction of New Zealand's educational empire in the Pacific, including the framing of colonial education as a "gift" and the attempted replacement of Indigenous knowledges. Ultimately, they demonstrate that this colonial history it is the foundation for contemporary internationalization efforts in the region, and situate contemporary internationalization efforts in New Zealand as an extension of that history.

The special issue also features several articles that push CIS scholars to more intentionally address race and racism in the critical study and practice of internationalization. Buckner, Lumb, Jafarova, Kang, Marroquin, and Zhang (2021) examine how the notion of diversity is mobilized in institutional internationalization strategies at 62 higher educational institutions in Canada, the USA, and the UK. As part of their analysis, the authors innovatively examine images from the strategy documents to show that institutions use international students to portray their campuses as diverse even as they fail to acknowledge the institutional and systemic racism that those students are likely to face. As a result, the authors show that the strategies situate whiteness as the norm in student populations, instrumentalize the race of international students in institutional marketing, and obscure the role of institutions themselves in the racism that international students face. By extension, Buckner et al. encourage CIS to remain attentive to the ways in which race and racism can be (re)produced in all facets of the internationalization process.

Suspitsyna (2021) pushes CIS in a similar direction in her discussion of racism and biopolitics in internationalization of higher education. She urges scholars to

recognize the neocolonial and racist underpinnings of the internationalization of higher education in the USA, and argues that in the era of COVID-19, these trajectories have deadly consequences. She situates racism as a biopolitical tool, and demonstrates that higher education institutions play a role in the uneven distribution of vulnerability in the context of COVID-19 as its effects across populations are highly stratified by race and nationality. Suspitsyna challenges CIS scholars to attend to how both COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement point to the white supremacist underpinnings of US higher education and thereby also bring attention to the longstanding injustices of internationalization into clearer relief. In opposition to the repressive biopolitics that she identifies, she proposes a new orientation for higher education based on the possibilities of an affirmative biopolitics in service of the common good.

While these three pieces gesture to the limits of the existing CIS literature, two more articles in this issue invite scholars and practitioners to consider their own complicity in the wicked problems in which internationalization is entangled. Vital and Yao (2021) reflect on their personal experiences as doctoral students, and the process of elite socialization that occurs at universities in the Minority World (i.e., the Global North). They use the academic hood that is draped on graduating doctoral scholars as a metaphor for the intellectual imperialism and methodological nationalism and exceptionalism into which these scholars are socialized. By drawing on their experiences they remind CIS scholars that we are (unevenly) implicated in the violence of the very systems that we are trying to critique. Though our academic training and socialization may have made our complicity invisible to us and our colleagues, our standing within a colonial higher education system is very visible to the communities impacted by this violence. They use the hood metaphor to explain how this positionality is shrouded from the view of scholars themselves, and call on us to be more reflexive in how we understand and position ourselves as critical scholars, and how we socialize doctoral students.

Crumley-Effinger and Torres-Olave (2021) similarly turn a critical lens on scholars themselves in their examination of the role of “hypermobility academic elites” in anthropogenic climate change. Much like the point Vital and Yao make about the academic hood, Crumley-Effinger and Torres-Olave argue that the systems of prestige and promotion that many academics take for granted contribute to behaviors that have a negative ecological impact. They urge scholars to accept more responsibility for these actions both individually and collectively, by changing their own behaviors but also by challenging these “common-sense” patterns of academic achievement and evaluation that promote and reward hypermobility. They offer a vision of what CIS scholars might be able to achieve together if they attended not only to their own individual impact or “footprint”, but also their “handprints” on the institutions and systems within which they work.

Finally, two articles in this special issue push CIS scholarship towards new theoretical horizons to generate novel thinking and innovative strategies for the field. Hernandez (2021) brings the affective turn to CIS, arguing that the field should take the emotional landscape of internationalized higher education more seriously, particularly in relation to issues of race and racism. During interviews with students and staff members in Switzerland, Hernandez invited participants to discuss ideas of

diversity and internationalization and paid close attention to the way they narrated and displayed their emotions around race and racism. His work offers an important new angle for understanding the complexities of racism on internationalized campuses, and contributes to a new dimension in CIS, adding layers to our understanding of internationalization as a lived and felt reality.

In the final entry of this special issue, Beck (2021) takes up the challenge identified in this introduction, to reimagine internationalization. She looks to the field of post-development studies to propose “post-internationalization,” which she explains is not an alternative internationalization, but “an alternative *to* internationalization.” Post-internationalization challenges CIS scholars to recognize that international education has long been embedded in Euro-American imperialism and Western-centric ideas of economic development and growth. But Beck also offers a new vision for the future, an alternative to internationalization that can emerge from post-internationalization, which she describes as a new commons. The spirit of a new commons is inspired by post-development literature, but is animated in Beck’s piece by the concept of degrowth, and the role a radically reimagined international education could play in developing a relational, sustainable future.

Taken together, the issue illuminates the cutting edge of the field of CIS in 2021, but also orients the field toward generative future directions for scholarship and activism. Though the work is intellectual and academic, the articles are linked by their sense of praxis, and the need to be responsive to the multiple compounding crises that, taken together, are likely to exacerbate existing colonial relations, and ultimately threaten the continuity of human life on the planet. The urgency of this work drives all of these authors, and shapes the tone of every piece in the issue. It is clear that we will not solve the challenges we now face with more scholarship alone; however, it is also clear that we cannot hope to create the change we so desperately need without both considering the complexity and scale of overarching challenges, and identifying opportunities to strategically intervene in our particular contexts. This was the spirit of the conference that inspired this special issue: a space not just to share new ideas, but also to build new kinds of relationships that can contribute to socially and ecologically accountable action now and in the future. Hopefully readers will take these pieces as attempts to contribute to strategy, but also as invitations to deepen conversations that can help inspire new relationships and the kinds of collectives that are necessary as we move into an uncertain future.

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