

SPATIAL HISTORIES OF **RADICAL** **GEOGRAPHY**

NORTH AMERICA AND BEYOND



EDITED BY **TREVOR J. BARNES** AND **ERIC SHEPPARD**

WILEY

Spatial Histories of Radical Geography

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Spatial Histories of Radical Geography

North America and Beyond

Edited by

Trevor J. Barnes and Eric Sheppard

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We dedicate this book to the community of scholars, students and activists who raised the flag to, shaped, and carried radical geography forward to its present wonderfully variegated state, and to future radical thinkers Charlotte and Jonah.

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Series Editors' Preface

The *Antipode Book Series* explores radical geography “antipodally,” in opposition, from various margins, limits, or borderlands.

Antipode books provide insight “from elsewhere,” across boundaries rarely transgressed, with internationalist ambition and located insight; they diagnose grounded critique emerging from particular contradictory social relations in order to sharpen the stakes and broaden public awareness. An *Antipode* book might revise scholarly debates by pushing at disciplinary boundaries, or by showing what happens to a problem as it moves or changes. It might investigate entanglements of power and struggle in particular sites, but with lessons that travel with surprising echoes elsewhere.

Antipode books will be theoretically bold and empirically rich, written in lively, accessible prose that does not sacrifice clarity at the altar of sophistication. We seek books from within and beyond the discipline of geography that deploy geographical critique in order to understand and transform our fractured world.

Vinay Gidwani
University of Minnesota, USA

Sharad Chari
University of California, Berkeley, USA

Antipode Book Series Editors

Preface

The idea for this book, marking the 50th Anniversary of *Antipode: A Journal of Radical Geography*, was hatched when one of us (Sheppard) was completing an essay with Linda Peake, commissioned for a putative edited book by Lawrence Berg.¹ Our essay sought to deconstruct the Clark University-centered history of Anglophone North American radical geography that is commonly narrated. Realizing that some of the early figures of the 1960s generation of radical geography had passed or were rapidly aging, Sheppard approached Barnes to tap his experience in interviewing first generation quantitative geographers and narrating their history. For both of us, it felt exciting to extend this methodology to the history of radical geography that had so profoundly shaped our lives. But the project felt too big. Gradually, we recruited others, notably that included bringing their own ideas to the project. We were able to benefit from a workshop in Vancouver in 2013 with Nik Heynen, Audrey Kobayashi, Linda Peake, Jamie Peck, and Bobby Wilson, funded by the Antipode Foundation. When we finally brought this project to the 2016 San Francisco Association of American Geographers' annual meeting, the enthusiastic response from an engaged audience, including ghosts emerging from radical geography's deep past, encouraged us to bring the project to print. Over the years, we broadened this multi-nodal account to also incorporate voices from beyond Canada and the U.S., recruiting a second round of authors. Notably, virtually no-one who we asked declined to participate; Linda Peake was unable to help with the editing, but contributed her own chapter. Authors went beyond any temptation to craft second-hand accounts, interviewing early radical geographers and digging into gray literatures and departmental archives. Thus this book took some time to come together as a final product. The result, we think, catches the complex spirits of these times before they fade into the past, and their influence on the contemporary discipline is lost to memory.

Note

- 1 Our cover image captures this history by melding the very first Antipode cover with the latest.

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We would like to acknowledge a \$6,000 grant from the Antipode Foundation, making possible an early workshop that brought energy to this collective. We also wish to thank the many interviewees contacted during the research reported here for their willing and informative collaboration, as well as Matt Zebrowski, cartographer in the UCLA Department of Geography, for his help with improving some of the images.

Introduction

Trevor J. Barnes and Eric Sheppard

*'Something Better Change,' The Stranglers (1977)*¹

Both of us have lived our entire academic lives under the aegis of radical geography. In 1971, Sheppard, a geography undergraduate at Bristol University, remembers the newly hired junior lecturer, Keith Bassett, having freshly returned from completing an M.A. degree at Penn State University, carrying into the classroom to show students a stack of *Antipodes* he recently brought back from America. Renowned for sardonic humor, even Bassett cracked a hopeful smile, unabashedly enthusiastic, when he showed and talked about *Antipode* and the new movement of radical geography in America and its possibilities.

Certainly, Barnes was enthusiastic when in 1976 as a second-year undergraduate in geography and economics at University College, London (UCL), he held in his hands for the first time a copy of *Antipode*. It felt as if he was doing something illegal, perusing a smuggled underground publication, probably best done under the bed covers, read with a flashlight.² The librarians in the Geography Reading Room at UCL treated it as seditious at least. It was kept behind the counter in a sturdy wooden cabinet under lock and key. The journal could be signed out but for just two hours and read at only designated tables under the scrutinizing gaze of the library beadle. Although such constraints permitted only relatively short snatches of reading, *Antipode* captured brilliantly the riven England in which Barnes lived, of strikes, protest marches, and Orwellian grimness. It connected even to punk rock, born during that same mid-to-late 1970s

dyspeptic period, and the background music of Barnes' undergraduate and, on occasion, academic life (Barnes 2019). *Antipode* looked like a punk publication, a fanzine of radical geography. The early issues were home-made, DIY publishing, its typographical-error-strewn contents bound between one punk discordant garish cover or another: electric yellow, vibrant scarlet, pulsating green, shimmering gold. Bernard Sumner, a member of the band *Joy Division*, after first hearing punk rock said, it was "terrible. I thought [it was] ... great. I wanted to get up and be terrible too" (quoted in Marcus 1989: 7). Reading *Antipode* for that first time made Barnes also want to get up and be terrible, but to be great too: to be a radical geographer.

Our edited volume is a history, or rather a set of histories of radical geography. It includes the beginning of *Antipode* and its lurid covers (Huber *et al.*, this volume), but also much, much more. Geographically, the central focus of the book is the United States (US) and Canada. The first nine (long) chapters of the collection – Part I, Histories of Radical Geography in North America – are concerned with the emergence and practices of radical geography at a set of specific U.S. and Canadian sites (six chapters are mostly about the U.S., three mostly about Canada). The last five shorter chapters – Part II, International Perspectives – offer a set of histories, experiences and reflections about radical geography undertaken outside the U.S. and Canada: France, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, and the U.K. Radical geography in the U.S. and Canada had some influence in all those places, but it was not the same in each, and exactly how it influenced was a consequence of specific prior conditions – political, social, cultural, institutional, intellectual – found in each place, as well as often the presence of catalytic individuals. There certainly was no simple process of spatial diffusion. Even if it is granted that the most recent form of radical geography developed first in the U.S. and Canada,³ it did not steamroll across the world, crushing native intellectual traditions, turning every place into Clark or Johns Hopkins Universities. Rather, its course was contingent and variable, geographically and historically. Radical geography requires sensitive historical and geographical narration, a central purpose of this volume.

Historically, the volume covers the period from the origin of radical geography in the U.S. and Canada sometime during the mid-1950s through to its intellectual consolidation in the early 1980s. We begin in the mid-1950s with the first stirrings of radical activism by U.S. geographers, although hinged not around class but race. Audrey Kobayashi (this volume) recounts the involvement of the geographer Thelma Glass, based at the University of Alabama, in the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955–1956 (best associated with Rosa Parks). Race continues as a key theme during the early-to-mid-1960s albeit within the unlikely formal

structure of the Association of American Geographers, involving both geographers of color like Don Deskins and Harold Rose, and white geographers like Jim Blaut, Ron Horvath, and Richard Morrill (Kobayashi; and Peake, both this volume). Also in the early 1960s, issues of race and activism were central to William Bunge's work in Detroit that began in the academy, at Wayne State University, but shifted to his own black inner-city neighborhood of Fitzgerald and to community activists like Gwendolyn Warren (Warren *et al.*, this volume). In 1969, *Antipode* was founded at Clark University (Huber *et al.*, this volume). Initially eclectic in its topics and approaches, by the mid-1970s it became increasingly aligned with a Marxism focused on capital and class, and best associated with David Harvey at Johns Hopkins University (Sheppard and Barnes, this volume). That said, even during this period there were other radical geographical organizations and publications, such as the Socially and Ecologically Responsible Geographers (SERGE) (founded in 1971) and its journal *Transition*, as well as the Union of Socialist Geographers (USG) (established 1974) and its *Newsletter* that typically published on a broader range of topics and approaches than *Antipode* (Peake, this volume). It was also then that radical geography expanded and consolidated in centers outside Clark and Johns Hopkins: Simon Fraser University in Vancouver (Blomley and McCann, this volume), the U.S. Midwest (Lauria *et al.*, this volume), Quebec (Klein, this volume), and the University of California, Berkeley (Peck and Barnes, this volume). By the early 1980s with the publication of David Harvey's 1982 Marxist theoretical compendium, *The Limits to Capital*, radical geography had unquestionably arrived.

It wasn't as if radical geography was then set in stone, however, 1982 was just the end of the beginning. For the form that radical geography took from the early 1970s to the early 1980s especially in *Antipode*, and associated with classical Marxism, began to braid and diverge. Elements of the older Marxist geography were taken apart, critiqued, some thrown out, others joined with new elements, and put together again in novel combinations. This new version, increasingly known as critical geography, more and more became how human geography in the round was done (Castree 2000). The subsequent capaciousness and variegation of critical geography makes telling its story more difficult compared to the earlier radical geography, however. Presenting its history will likely require many volumes, many editors, and many contributors. We very much hope it will be undertaken, but it is not our project. While individual chapters in this book trace how earlier events helped shape critical geography, and our Conclusion will explicitly recount the relation between radical and critical geography, this volume is limited to the early development

of radical geography. While we realize this period is only part of a larger story, it is no less necessary to recount, and has some urgency.

There already exist some excellent individual essays about the early history of radical geography. These tend, though, either to give the complete North American story based on secondary literature (often found in textbooks like Cloke *et al.* 1991, ch. 2, or Johnston and Sidaway 2016, ch. 6), or to focus on just one element or episode or individual within it (for example, on William Bunge's contribution found in Merrifield 1995, or Heyman 2007). In contrast, our volume intends to provide not only the larger North American story of radical geography, but also to follow its relationship with selected places outside that core (the purpose of Part II). Further, rather than resting on secondary literature, many of the chapters draw on primary material. In this sense, the book aims to provide both the broader view and specificity, a larger story arc infused by history but also geography.

The use of primary source material in this volume is especially important. While the authors in our volume sometimes draw on traditional material archival sources (for example, in Huber *et al.* and Norcup, both this volume) a lot of information is gleaned from oral histories conducted with leading protagonists (for example, in Kobayashi, and Peck and Barnes, this volume). In part, the reliance on oral history is necessitated by a lack of formal archival sources. Materials relating to histories of radical geography have never been systematically collected, but remain scattered, found in people's garages, or forgotten filing cabinets in university departmental basements. Of course, oral histories have their problems. Memories are fallible – Hemingway said memory is never true – they are only one person's view, they can't capture large-scale historical, political, social and geographical events, and they are unsuitable for relating abstractions, conceptual schema, and dialectical niceties. They must be triangulated with other kinds of information, as our authors do. But given the dearth of other sources, oral histories remain one of the most important bases for telling histories of radical geography. Further, with aging and death – the earliest radical geographers are now in their eighties with Bunge, Deskins, and Rose having all recently passed, and Blaut and the relatively young Neil Smith (at 58) having died some time ago – the ability to gather this type of information is itself diminishing.

There is one other distinctive feature driving the organization of this collection. While we are concerned to provide histories of early radical geography, we want just as much to provide geographies of it too. John Agnew and David Livingstone (2011: 16) contend we must “think geographically about geography, and thereby ‘geographizing’ geography itself.” This book is an attempt to do just that. Strangely, this has often

been a missing element in histories of the discipline told by geographers. The geographical setting becomes at best only color and background atmospherics for the history. The essays in this volume make a stronger claim, however: Geography goes all the way down. That imperative explains why we organized the book geographically, by place and nation. Running throughout the collection of essays are three fundamental organizing geographical ideas, making this book not just a history but also a geography of radical geographical knowledge.

- The first is place, by which is meant the internal conditions at a site that enter into and shape the production in this case of radical geographical knowledge. Place might affect knowledge through: a specific geographical relation among participants, for example, between homeplace and workplace, or, as Peck and Barnes (this volume) explore in their chapter on Berkeley, the collapse of the two; or as a particular site of investigation that then structures the development of a conceptual framework, for example, the relation between Baltimore and David Harvey's theoretical agenda (Sheppard and Barnes, this volume); or as a specific mix of pressing social issues found in a given urban neighborhood, along with the presence of galvanizing, energetic individuals eager to take them on, the case in Detroit's inner-city Fitzgerald neighborhood during the late 1960s (Warren, Katz, and Heynen, this volume).
- The second is geographical connectivity. Knowledge does not remain fixed in place but circulates, moving from one site to another. Further, the very process of circulation reshapes the ideas that circulate. This is partly because they interact with other ideas, partly because they are interpreted differently in different locations, and partly because they are put to diverse uses at the various sites among which they travel. This is especially clear in Part II, but it also occurs as radical geographical knowledge travels within the U.S. and Canada, for example, as the idea of industrial change moves from the U.S. East Coast to the U.S. West Coast (Peck and Barnes, this volume); or as the idea of the "geographical expedition" is taken from Detroit to Vancouver and later to Sydney (Blomley and McCann, this volume); or as the idea of the circuit of capital migrates from Baltimore to Quebec City (Klein, this volume).
- The third is geographical scale. We focus especially on cases where radical geographical knowledge is originally articulated at one scale, say, the urban (e.g., Baltimore), or the region (e.g., the San Francisco Bay Area), but then scales up and is applied nationally, or globally. While this bears particularly on theoretical concepts and frameworks, it also applies to the very project of radical geography. It

begins at select urban sites like Detroit, Worcester or Baltimore, but scales up, becoming a global movement, replete with international conferences and journals, drawing readers and participants from around the world.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four parts. In the first and longest section we lay out what we call the conditions of possibility for the development of radical geography in the U.S. and Canada. We describe the social, cultural, political, and intellectual ferment of the “long 60s”⁴ that provided fertile ground for the development of radical geography and set out some of key moments in that unfolding development (further elaborated in subsequent chapters). Second, we describe some of the tensions within the project of radical geography, often there from the beginning, which contorted and disrupted it, making it heterogenous, preparing it for what it was to later to become. Third, we discuss the rationale for the organization of the book, providing capsule descriptions of each chapter. Finally, we provide a short Conclusion.

“You Say You Want a Revolution:”⁵ American Radicalism and Radical Geography During the Long 1960s

In writing about the social sciences since 1945, Roger Backhouse and Philippe Fontaine (2010a: 11) make use of the idea of “the degree of [disciplinary] permeability to social change.” They categorize academic disciplines according to their differential social porosity, that is, their internal responsiveness to social events, movements, and interests that lay outside the academy. They argue that social permeability is highly variable by discipline. Some subjects like economics have hermetically sealed themselves from outside social change. While other subjects, including geography, act more like sponges, continually sopping up society’s discharge, leaks and spillage, which shape its internal structure and intellectual agenda.

That social porosity can change over time, however, as was the case for geography. Before the Second World, geography was isolated, seemingly immune from social change, doing its own thing. As Neil Smith (1989: 92) argued, geography’s strange hybrid form that rolled into one subject natural science, social science and humanities had isolated the subject, given it “a museum-like existence,” as if it were some rare entity preserved under glass. From the mid-1950s, however, that glass was smashed. As Smith (1989: 9) puts it, “The museum perimeter” that had been “jealously fenced by a ring of [past] conceptual distinctions, [which] kept geographers