ACME An International Journal for Critical Geographies

Critical Geographies (A Collection of Readings) Two Decades On: A Conversation with Harald Bauder and Salvatore Engel-Di Mauro

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Abstract

In this conversation, Harald Bauder and Salvatore Engel-Di Mauro reflect on *Critical Geographies: A Collection of Readings*—an open access collection published in 2008 by Praxis (e)Press, which was then the book publishing arm of *ACME*. Bauder and Engel-Di Mauro begin by reflecting on their experiences editing and releasing the collection, situating these experiences in relation to conditions of academic knowledge production and shifting formations of critical and radical geography at the time. Consideration of those conditions and formations then remain central throughout the conversation, which further interweaves

broader discussions of pedagogy, competing notions of impact, the politics of publication and citation, and more.

Keywords

academic knowledge production, critical geography, critical pedagogy, critical praxis, impact

Introduction

This roundtable conversation jumps off from reflections on *Critical Geographies: A Collection of Readings*. Published in 2008 by Praxis (e)Press as an open-access text,[1] *Critical Geographies* (hereafter called "the collection") contained more than 700 pages comprised largely of previously published pieces selected and curated to represent the origins, major currents, and breadth critical geography up to that point. The collection was noteworthy in several respects. It emerged at a moment when "critical" and "radical" approaches and voices had made substantial headway in geography as a field even while the meaning, contents, and boundaries of such approaches were still very much taking shape and up for debate (and still are!). In this context, the collection took stock and reflected some of the deeper histories of core conceptual and political turns, topical threads, and debates which characterized critical geography over the course of its development. At the same time, the collection was a response to several emerging trends which were re-shaping scholarly publication in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In direct opposition to the increasing enclosure and inaccessibility of scholarly knowledge (resulting from private publishing and paywalls, but also increasing specialization and narrowly specialized writing) amid the broader proliferation of open access information, the collection took the form of a free, online 'reader' style text created as a resource for teaching and instruction, assembled with advanced undergraduate students in mind.

Assembling this collection and making it freely available was no small feat. That work was undertaken by two people—Harald Bauder and Salvatore Engel-Di Mauro—who were both early-career scholars and members of the *ACME* editorial collective in the early 2000s. They imagined, established a survey-based process for assembling, and produced the collection in conjunction with their roles at the journal. Praxis (e)Press, which published the collection,

[1] While the site originally hosting the publication, which included specific links to each chapter, is no longer functional (though it is viewable via Wayback Machine: https://web.archive.org/web/20171017044751/http:/www.praxis-epress.org/CGR/contents.html), a PDF of the entire collection is available here: https://open.library.ubc.ca/soa/cIRcle/collections/ubccommunityandpartnerspublicati/52387/items/1.0443822. Thanks to the University of British Columbia library for hosting that collection. For reference, a table of contents showing all the pieces that were included in the collection is provided in an appendix at the end of this interview. To ensure that it never becomes digital ephemera, we would encourage readers to download, store, and widely share the collection on course pages and elsewhere.

was also a part of *ACME's* operations at that time, publishing several then novel open access books in its limited run.[2]

In the conversation below (lightly edited for clarity), current *ACME* editorial collective member Christian Anderson invites Bauder and Engel-Di Mauro to reflect on the experience of assembling the collection, among other collaborative projects in which the two participated in related contexts at that time, some of which are also discussed below. As the discussion reveals, reflection on the process of undertaking this work itself further connects to questions and insights about the state of critical geography, notions of "impact", limitations and possibilities for scholarly communication, the ways in which "critical" theoretical orientations may or may not translate into critical pedagogical and institutional practices, and more. Rather than simply reflecting the past, what emerges is very much a conversation about present and future modes which critical geographical praxis might yet pursue in connection to ongoing struggles.

On the origins of the collection and authors' rights

Christian Anderson: I'm excited about this conversation! Obviously, we'd like to hear about the collection and how it came about, and the relationships to *ACME*. But I'd also be curious to get your perspective on how things have changed, your feelings about academic publishing, about the state of critical geography, and more. We might as well start by hearing a bit about how you came to join the *ACME* collective, and how it aligned with your values, your priorities, the kinds of things you wanted to be doing in the field, and that sort of thing, and from there how the two of you connected and how this *Critical Geographies* collection came about.

Salvatore Engel-Di Mauro: Harald, you should start because I think you were there earlier than I!

Harald Bauder: Sure! So, this all started in the very early 2000s when I was a postdoc at the University of British Columbia where Caroline Desbiens was a PhD student—Lawrence Berg was involved in the journal, but I don't think he was at UBC yet at this point. Caroline was one of the founding people behind *ACME*, along with Pamela Moss. So, I was right there as an observer when *ACME* started, and knew about it from the very beginning. And I was always very impressed. I thought, always, "This is exactly what critical geographies needs—its own journal, run according to its own principles; a collective, non-corporate open access journal." It also fit the times, I think, as open access publishing was becoming increasingly available. We were fed up—probably not to the extent we are now, but we saw it coming!—with the way that corporations were starting to use the internet to appropriate the work and knowledge that scholars and others were producing. So, it was the right time, and I thought this was a wonderful initiative. I felt that being a part of this would be time well spent. So I took the opportunity to join the editorial team. In the early days, I was also able to secure support from the Geography Department of the University of Guelph, where I started working as an Assistant Professor right after that postdoc, to cover typesetting for the journal.

[2] Again, the original links to the four books published by Praxis (e)Press are currently not functional but are available via Wayback Machine here: http://web.archive.org/web/20180628034814/http://www.praxis-epress.org/availablebooks/books.html

I also thought it was important that *ACME* was publishing in different languages—as you still do, of course. I was excited to contribute German language editing to the project, knowing that there were colleagues in Germany that were eager to publish. I knew there was an eager and important additional network, or call it a market, that we could tap into by adding other languages. And I think, Salvatore, you did the same thing with Italian shortly thereafter.

SAED: Yeah, that's right. So I joined *ACME* in 2003, a bit later than Harald I believe. And all of the reasons that Harald just cited where similar for me. I was—I really am still!—quite perplexed by the state of academic publishing, and *ACME* was responding directly to many of my concerns and hopes. And the idea of *ACME* as an intellectual collective was very important to me as well, just to be in a space of mutual support and exchanging ideas in ways that were not available to me in the institutions where I where I was working. I was in Central Wisconsin at the time, and it was very difficult to actually get into conversations of any really critical, much less radical nature in my department. Not to disparage anybody, but it wasn't exactly like a center of intellectual ferment for critical geography back in the early 2000s, at least not in my experience. But one thing that was true then and has remained constant is the importance of, as we used to call it, 'shareware', or, you know, the free exchange of information. *ACME* was one outlet—one of the very few in geography at the time, if not the only one if I recall correctly—where all of these values and priorities were being put into practice and put at the center of a knowledge exchange and publishing model.

When I saw a call for editors advertised, I jumped at the opportunity as soon as I could, you know, hoping that *ACME* would accept me! And it did turn out to be quite fantastic being able to work towards shaping some of the critical geography that was coming out at that time in a direct way and within this kind of structure. I was exposed to things that I would have never experienced otherwise. I suspect that if one were to have been an editor at one of the mainstream of geography journals at the time—and this is something that speaks to Harald's own work on professionalization (Bauder, 2006)—it would have been a much more distanced kind of practice that would not have enabled directly politically oriented work. Perhaps that's changed a bit now, but not widely. At that time of course *Antipode* was also a major outlet, but it was becoming more difficult to publish and engage there. They were a bit overwhelmed themselves with the volume of submissions they were starting to receive as really the only critical or radical alternative, and they were also trying to negotiate some of the fierce debates that were going on at the time between different factions on the left. *Political Ecology*, I think, was just coming out as well, and it was, and still is, an open access journal. In any case in terms of developing critical geography in itself, this is what attracted me to *ACME* and the context in which it pretty quickly became one of the main outlets.[3]

I'll also say that the multiple languages aspect was also very important to me—this is largely still not done, except maybe with abstracts, and it's extremely valuable. And I'd further connect that aspect to the International Critical Geography Group (ICCG. See The ICCG statement of purpose, Peake and Barnes 2014, for more context related to the ICCG) because there was a connection there. Caroline and others were involved in the ICCG as well, and in some respects, I found that my involvement in the ICCG group linked seamlessly to what was

[3] *Political Ecology* was founded in 1994, remains in existence, and is supported by University of Arizona. See https://journals.librarypublishing.arizona.edu/jpe/site/About/

going on with *ACME* as an explicitly "international" journal. The ICCG was also struggling to remove barriers, not just related to language, but also, you know, those resulting from world historical structures and power differences, political boundaries and all sorts of related things that geographers and scholars in general are very much still grappling with.

So *ACME*, for me, played an important role as a main outlet for this international critical work in all of these different registers, and I was excited to be a part of that.

CA: Already so many details I'm tempted to dig into there—maybe we can circle back. But related to the contexts you've just described, I'd love to hear how the *Critical Geographies* collection came about. What needs were you trying to address with this collection? What demands were you trying to respond to in relation to some of the issues and contexts you just laid out?

HB: I can say that one thing I was afraid of at that time—and this is what we imagined the collection as countering—was that there would be a corporate for-pay compendium on critical geographies put out by one of the big private publishers that would then be sold for hundreds of dollars and marketed to students. You could feel that there was some pent-up demand for this. There had been these compendiums and readers for urban geography, urban studies, social theory, and so on, and it was seemingly very fashionable and profitable to come out with these readers and charge a lot for them. Putting together a collection like this and offering it in this form was a way to pre-empt that from happening to critical geography.[4] And I thought the best thing would be to be proactive and do it ourselves according to the principles that we already had in *ACME*—principles that would also reflect and uphold some of the values of critical geographies as a field and carry them through to practice. So we got together, Salvatore and I. And I don't remember exactly how that happened, so correct me if my memory is wrong!—but I think at that point you were already in the collective and I approached you and asked whether you might want to do this together. And you said yes, and then we thought about how we would go about doing this, and then just did it one step at a time.

SAED: That sounds right.

HB: And I think initially, in terms of content, we decided to put out a call to the *ACME* editorial collective and International Advisory board asking what people thought should be included in the collection. We got some good ideas and some foundational material based on that, and then kept building from there. We thought a lot about the shape of the field and how to present it. And we had a lot of ideas about what should be in the collection based on that. But then it turned out that copyright issues were a huge factor in what we could and could not include. Because this was a "reader"-style collection, what we were looking at were all pieces that were of course originally published by other, mostly corporate outlets—they held the copyright, and this collection would be recirculating them for free. So this part of the challenge directly underscored some of what motivated the project in the first place: here was valuable, critical, potentially transformative knowledge and information that had—except

[4] Routledge has had a "Critical Geographies" book series, which contains 17 titles published between 1999 and 2014, https://www.routledge.com/Critical-Geographies/book-series/SE0390. Critical geographies for-profit collections include *Critical Geographies of Resistance* (Hughs 2023), *Handbook of Critical Geographies on Migration* (Mitchell, Jones, and Fluri 2020) among others.

in the case of very old works that were now in the public domain—become the private property of corporations that made their profits precisely through this kind of enclosure. Figuring out how to include things that had suffered this fate was difficult. For some of the more recent pieces we basically had to trick the publishers, which we did by contacting the original authors and asking the authors to help us secure copyright for us. That worked in many cases because most of the publishing agreements had this clause in there that while the journal owns the rights, authors can republish their work in their own edited volumes, which was treated as a special circumstance. So, once we identified a piece we might like to include, we wrote to the original authors and asked that they submit a request to republish in a compendium; many of the staff answering on behalf of the publishers may mistakenly have assumed this was the author's own volume without realizing that Salvatore and I were the editors. We secured many confirmations that we could republish that way, and we had it in writing. But that only worked with some publishers, and many of these requests didn't work out that way, so private interests still very much shaped what we could include.

SAED: I'll also just add that sometimes we couldn't find authors, or they were no longer with us. In those kinds of cases, we had to seek permission directly from publishers themselves, as they were now the ones who technically owned the texts. And the results of those kinds of negotiations also varied widely by publisher.

HB: Yes, those cases were tricky and revealing of the way the rights actually work. It was also interesting that many of the authors themselves were not aware of these aspects of publishing—the politics, the privatization, and the logistics and ownership structures. Even some very seasoned, well-known academics ended up being surprised. Many were not aware that they didn't necessarily have control over their own work, whether and how it could be republished, and who could benefit from it. There were a couple of instances where authors were actually quite outraged that they—their work—couldn't be included, and there were many things we really wanted to include but couldn't. We all learned a lot from that experience!

It's also interesting to think that some of what ended up being included just came down to whatever individual happened to be in the position that handled those kinds of requests for different publishers when they came in. There were some people that we worked with over and over—one who just okayed every request that we made, like they were on our team! But there were others who seemed to enjoy being gatekeepers and denying us.

In any case, these were the constraints. But we tried to balance things as well as we could. We had discussions about what kinds of articles we wanted to include and what kinds of themes we wanted to address. We wanted to have a wide range of representation of various approaches to critical geography. And we definitely wanted this to appeal to students, so not too heavy on the kind of theory that would be over the head of many students. We wanted this to help students to understand and engage critical geographies, not to make them afraid of it, which a lot of theory and jargon sometimes does.

Anyway, that's what I remember from the process!

SAED: Something that I'd also just mention: There was also plenty of line by line editing that we had to do to include older texts that were not available in digital format. We scanned them,

which was not very precise at that time, then had to check them line by line. That's something people might not even think about anymore![5]

CA: I hadn't even considered that—that's important archival work, making sure some of those older texts are accurately reproduced and easily available!

Can I ask, did you have any authors who had actually managed to retain the copyright for their own work? I know a few academics who always at least try to retain their own rights to redistribution. But I also know it's not something many of us think much or critically about.

HB: I don't recall anyone who had managed to do that.

SAED: Yeah, I cannot recall anyone who had done that either.

CA: Not unusual in academic publishing, I guess!

SAED: Before we go on, I just want to be sure this is clear: This was Harald's initiative, and I just volunteered! Really, Harald was very astute about how to go about all of this and about understanding these details and finding loopholes that I was not aware of. So, for me it was actually even more of a great learning process. I think the same year we started putting the collection together, we published an editorial in *Antipode* called "Knowledge Grab" (Bauder and Engel-Di Mauro, 2008) that analyzed how corporations were appropriating our scholarly work, often with the active consent of many academics and the support of academic institutions, embracing and enforcing the enclosure of the knowledge we produce. So critical geographers were coming at these issues around the political economy of publishing from different angles at that time. And in hindsight, this initiative from Harald was really important, because there have since been a whole slew of these kinds of "readers"—or maybe they call them "handbooks"—that do this kind of compendium work, but in a privatized format that most people can't even access or afford. Lots of them are hard back because they are marketed directly to libraries, which—when libraries are using funding to re-purchase information that's already been published, and keeping all of it behind various access walls—is its own questionable political economy of publication, worth really thinking critically about.

In any case, at the point when I came on board, Harald had already articulated the rationale for the collection and what the aims were. It was then a matter of dividing the work according to our respective areas of expertise. And that's reflected in the organizational categories that you see in the reader. So, if there are any faults with the parts related to political ecology, GIS and critical GIS, for example, you know I I'm to blame! At that time, though, I think I was actually a bit more knowledgeable about what was coming out and what various graduate programs were doing and teaching. I doubt I'd be able to achieve the same thing now. It would take much more effort to survey the field, maybe because there is just so much more content, maybe because I'm removed from having to do that kind of survey work, maybe both.

On "impact" and pedagogical intent

SAED: One thing that remains interesting to think about is that while I have a vague sense that there've been quite a few people who benefited from this collection, it has always been hard

[5] Here Harald and Salvatore thank Christine O'Loughlin, an intrepid undergraduate research assistant who helped tremendously with some of this arduous work!

to get a definitive understanding of the impact it has had—certainly harder than it would have been had it taken a different form that had been marketed, tracked, quantified, and so on. We did get sporadic emails! But it's been hard to gauge what the full impact has been. Perhaps one of the problems has also been that the collection—even though it was hosted on the Praxis (e)Press site for over a decade—never had a permanent online home, let alone one that we could at least track in terms of the number of downloads and so forth. As it is, I don't have a great sense of whether we had the kind of impact we were hoping to have.

I also think these issues of impact resonate with this question of the knowledge grab, author's retaining rights, and academic publishing. There is definitely a lot we could still think critically about in relation to the political economy of academic publishing and the way our research and writing are siphoned into the private sector. Many of us are not aware of our own rights. Nor was I when I started this work, and I was learning as I was going through it. I will also say that being a part of the *ACME* collective was also quite helpful in preparing me to think about and negotiate some of these questions.

HB: I'd like to pick up on this question of impact that Salvatore just raised. I'm generally suspicious of the way "impact" predominantly gets framed and mobilized as a term, but there's a lot worth thinking about in relation to the term as well. For this edited collection, we got very little feedback about whether it was actually used and useful, whether it was worth our effort—those should be important aspects of "impact", right?! Sometimes we got an email, or somebody said at a conference that they really liked the reader. But really it went up on the internet and we heard about it again when it disappeared—which recently happened. Then people would write to say, "Where's the link? I've been using it in my class for years, but now I don't have access anymore." And I had to say, "I don't know!", which I guess is one of the potential issues that needs to be thought about with open-access collective publication—where does the work live, where is it hosted in this kind of structure, and who or what institutions are responsible for preserving and keeping it accessible? That's how I found you, Christian: writing to *ACME* to ask what happened to the link.

At the same time, I don't actually have the desire to measure impact in most of the ways it's usually practiced. I think we need be mindful that we don't want to participate in and reproduce "Audit Culture," as Lawrence Berg et al. call it (Berg et al., 2016), and all of the pressures, anxieties, and so-called efficiencies that come with it. But I am interested in thinking about how things like this—and how different forms and mediums of knowledge—travel, land, take hold, shift thought and are practiced, and so on. That's a different way of thinking about impact.

This collection was really made for students, so that they could learn and have free access to knowledge. It was meant to land in classrooms and spark conversations and different ways of thinking there. And to me that's always been really important—to realize that our impact comes not through publishing but ultimately through teaching and learning in different spaces, through shaping minds and social practices, even through shaping practices in relation to institutions and modes of public engagement, and not least in relation to knowledge and research themselves. And of course that's serious political work, too. Salvatore and I actually published on this—making these kinds of arguments—in a piece in *Antipode*. What did we call ourselves? Was it the "Cynical Geographers Collective"? (see Cynical Geographer Collective, 2011)

SAED: Yeah!

HB: Right. The point is, I think the question of how knowledge gets used; what kinds of practices and forms of learning are useful and vital to shape—that is how we should be thinking about impact even if that's really hard to measure. That was an objective of this collection—to put something on the table that would actually be useful for teaching, and that would have an impact on people's thinking and practices, that might even change student's trajectories in terms of the ways they think about and engage knowledge, critical thought, the political, and so forth. *That* was the objective. How do you measure that? I have no idea! Should that even be measured? Maybe not! It would be nice to know that a collection like this was actually used in that way—and frankly, I don't know whether it has been—but the point and the goal remain the same.

CA: Well, I can offer one affirming data point! As a PhD. student at the CUNY Grad center in the 2000s, I taught more than a dozen undergrad classes, and I used the collection in several ways in different classes. In one "Geographical Thought and Theory" class at Hunter College—a small upper division seminar kind of thing—we used the collection as really the main text. Students in that class were quite effusive about how different pieces in the collection and thinking them in relation to one another helped them realize the richness of the field, but also the way that different "turns" within critical theory had unfolded and been situated in conversation with one another. I ended up teaching it almost genealogically, going through sort of chronologically and focusing on when different points of emphasis and turns entered the debates, what contexts they were responding to, how different pieces picked up threads from each other and the history of the discipline, and what each piece was asking us to think about in those contexts. We really tried to focus on what each new turn did to unsettle and refigure established questions, invite or prod us to think differently about where we were thinking from, and in that way think closely about the epistemological underpinnings of knowledge production in geography and beyond. I don't consider myself particularly skilled or creative as an instructor or an epistemological-genealogical thinker, and my memory is that the collection itself was curated in a way that basically invited us to work through the pieces in that way. In any case, I know everybody in that room felt like they had a sort of "a-ha!" about the connections between theory and scholarly knowledge, history, context, positionality . . . place and space, of course!—all the things critical geography asks us to think carefully about. And, of course, all of that is also ultimately political as well, opening up all kinds of further questions about what future knowledge might or should look like, what other kinds of questions, critiques, positions, and voices might bring what needed "turns" moving forward and so on. I don't know if that's how you intended it to be used, but I—and I think students, too—found it very effective.

This is also why I was excited to help facilitate this conversation! Small sample size, but in my experience the collection did have an impact on people's—again, students, but also mine as an instructor—intellectual formation, their capacity for critical-political thought, and their understanding of positionality in relation to knowledge.

SAED: Well, then, excellent damage done on our part!

HB: Exactly what we wanted.

SAED: Exactly. That was the aim, absolutely. And I just want to reiterate the pedagogical intentions that that were behind the effort. This actually connects directly to the alternative

impact factor that we devised in that "Cynical Geographers" *Antipode* piece: a social impact factor which actually has statistical measurement tools. It's kind of tongue in cheek, but you could devise, you know, a very different impact factor based on social impact, on pedagogical impact, on opening up critical capacities. These kinds of considerations get steamrolled and buried in relation to what currently counts as impact. And this gets right to the political stakes in how impact is even defined. But yes—the possibility for classroom and broader pedagogical or institutional impact could be the starting point for so much more! I hope that anybody who reads this conversation will take that to heart and consider these kinds of impact a priority in terms of what we can do politically in and through work in this field.

CA: That feels like a really important point. So—just thinking about how these kinds of things might get published and circulated—what can you tell me about Praxis (e)Press, the virtual publisher of this collection. What was that? Was it a vehicle for just this collection or was it bigger than that? I always assumed it was like something you carved out within the *ACME* infrastructure to create space for these kinds of publications. Tell me if I'm wrong!

HB: I honestly don't know exactly. It already existed. I think it was Lawrence Berg's brainchild. Before we published this collection, there was already a book that the (e)press had published.[6] So I always saw it as something like the book publishing branch of the *ACME* collective. Whether it was formally set up like that I'm not sure. But it already existed, and I think we were the second or third book they published and then there were a couple books thereafter. It didn't publish the kind of volume that the large private or university press did. But there were some really good books published there.[7] I wonder what happened to it, because these books were very well put together. They had some good critical geography heft, so I hope that we can find them again and keep them in circulation.

CA: We do have all of them as PDFs, but if I recall the online versions—at least yours—actually had everything sub-linked to a table of contents on a central page so that you didn't have to like scroll through or even download the entire PDF to find the piece you were looking for. In any case, I'll bring this question to the *ACME* collective and see what we can be done to at least keep these in circulation. These publications—and the press itself!—do seem like valuable things have an active record of, if not to revitalize and reboot.

SAED: Yeah, that'd be great. If I recall, Levi Gahman was responsible early on for doing a lot of the editing work along with Lawrence. Their insights would be useful for understanding the history of this (e)Press initiative.

CA: We'll have to follow up on that!

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[6] *Radical theory/Critical praxis: Making a difference beyond the academy?* (Fuller and Kitchin, 2004)

[7] Praxis (e)Press published four books in total:
Radical Theory/Critical Praxis (2004, available at http://web.archive.org/web/20170804164821/http:/www.praxis-epress.org/availablebooks/radicaltheorycriticalpraxis.html),
In-Between Infrastructure: Urban Connectivity in an Age of Vulnerability (Young, Wood, and Keil 2011, available at http://web.archive.org/web/20170804150641/http:/www.praxis-epress.org/availablebooks/inbetween.html), and *Information and Communication Technology Geographies: Strategies for Bridging the Digital Divide* (Gilbert and Masucci, 2011, available at http://web.archive.org/web/20170628021721/http:/www.praxis-epress.org/availablebooks/ictgeographies.html); the collection being discussed in this interview, *Critical Geographies: A Collection of Readings,* was published in 2008.

On present conditions, what has changed, and what would need to be done differently to produce such a collection today

CA: Meanwhile, another question I'd put to you: If you were to put a collection like this together today, would you do anything differently? Would you think differently about deciding what to include? I suppose we've already suggested that today it might not work or might need to work a lot differently because there are more demands on people's energy and attention, incentive structures are different, institutions are frayed or broken, everybody's drowning in email, the knowledge grab is worse, and so on and so on. So how, if at all, might putting this kind of thing together have to work or work differently today, and what does this tell us about the state of the field, of publishing, and so forth?

HB: So, everything that you just mentioned—I think those would be reasons to do it! Salvatore and I—it's been what, almost 20 years since we did the work that led to this. I don't feel that I'm as well connected to the field and its developments anymore. What I would do is pass it on to the next generation, maybe starting with the *ACME* collective, and see what they come up with!

CA: An incitement!

SAED: How cruel!

Seriously though, I would say I have the same problem of not being as linked up as I used to be. At this point, I fear I would do a poor job and would have to devote a great deal of time just catching up to what has been done more recently. But I do think putting together a collection of this nature would be a much greater effort now, not just because the field has continued to grow and evolve, but even just in terms of negotiating copyright for pieces. I think the private sector has caught on to some of the tricks we used the first time around. It would be interesting and telling to see how all of that would play out now. But it would take a lot of work.

But back to Harald's point that the things you were mentioning, Christian, are precisely the reasons to do this, I do think this gets at something really important. Since the 2000s, the level of precarity and all-around strain has really worsened even more. It was already bad during those days. But now? I mean just to give one example: I am someone with a very secure post in a relatively stable public institution. But in my role as department head, I have been operating without an administrative assistant because of institutional administrative issues and different forms of austerity, and I'm doing all kinds of very time- and attention-intensive things that, back in the first years of the 2000s, I wouldn't have dreamed could take so much energy or could be considered a reasonable part of a university faculty job. At this point, I can't even imagine having the extra hours that would be needed to catch up on the field, let alone get a collection like this together. And I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling this sort of time, attention, and energy bind in the wake of the ransacking of university resources away from what a university is supposed to be doing, which is maintain an infrastructure and conditions for intensive teaching and knowledge production. I can only speak to the US situation and in the particular experiences I've had in the US. Here it's been budget cuts and more budget cuts and more, steadily increasing student to instructor ratios, with more time and attention demands on all faculty—even lecturers and part timers—more administrative demands on existing faculty members, and so forth. So, I do think those aspects you were touching on, Christian, create conditions where it's just much less likely that anyone would take the time

and energy to create this kind of collection—especially in an open-access format and in this kind of form that may not even "count" for anyone's professional purposes. Everyone's got less time and more administrative work. And we've got to publish certain things if we want to keep our jobs or get raises to keep up with costs of living. It's even more of a dilemma than it used to be, I think, in all these respects.

And that's not even getting to the other part of your question about the process of deciding what to include! That would now be a really, really challenging question. It may also be a really good challenge as well! My sense is that just the range and scope of what could be considered "critical geography" has multiplied tremendously. And what used to be barely touched upon is now front and center. Well, ok, front and center may be an exaggeration! I'm thinking of black geographies, for example, or work on settler colonialism, queer geographies, and so forth. And maybe a bit of a plug for myself in some respects, and for Rebecca Lave, but the critical physical geography perspective we have today was just not there yet in the early 2000s—that has really exploded in more recent years. GIS and Geovisualization? We were barely scratching the surface at that point. There was work on all of these things when we were putting the collection together, but much, much less. And all of these topics further connect to broader issues and political struggles that have become quite acute. So the collection would really need to be expanded, and there would probably just need to be a much greater number of pieces and a whole different approach to selecting and curating them.

Overall, though, as I'm thinking about it, this could also lead to some really interesting and generative discussions. What are the things that would need to be included, and how would you categorize as well as link and think across them? In our collection, I think there were 4 sections: "Critical Reflections," "Space and Society," "People and Environments," and "Representing the Earth Surface." Do those categories still make sense? Would they need to be overhauled in relation to current struggles and what has shaped up within geography in relation to these struggles and other contemporary shifts? Those seem like they could be useful questions, not least, as we've been saying, pedagogically and epistemologically. Maybe a grad class should do this as an exercise!

HB: This is an interesting question, definitely. Because I also wonder if the whole form would need to change to better reflect the ways that people engage with and share information now. The way people create and circulate knowledge is evolving rapidly. In our collection, the individual chapters were just hyperlinks to PDFs of traditional journal articles of the kind that, these days, people—including myself!—don't have as much of an attention span or time for sifting through.

CA: I could joke that the collection might best be curated in Instagram or Tic Tok form now!

HB: That could be great! But yes, that's part of the challenge. We do have different media to communicate now, and there are all kinds of different forms of storytelling. I say storytelling because this is not just about conveying, or lecturing, or that kind of older imagination of knowledge transmission or transfer. It's about other ways of presenting and engaging information and, if you will, different methodologies for learning, thinking and imagining together. Even co-creating. There has also been major progress in incorporating Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowledge creation. So, I'm not so sure whether this format would work again, and maybe it shouldn't. This would also be a generative question. The kind of

structure bundling together different pieces into different thematic sections works for periodicals and selling stuff, you know, and these publishing corporations still come out with stuff in this kind of 'reader' or 'handbook' format. Usually the idea there is to get a collection together with a few big names involved and sell it to libraries and students. But I don't actually think there's much of an audience that reads that stuff, let alone uses it for anything 'critical' or transformational.

In any case, if someone were to do this again, you'd really have to think about the best medium. What's the best format to reach the intended audience? What is the best way to try and realize some of these ideas of broader impact we were just talking about. These are challenging questions, but they also present opportunities.

SAED: And it would have to be more than 2 people doing the work, for sure! I mean just having several people working on the format-medium angle alone could be plenty of work, aside from the work of selecting—maybe even producing—content and getting copyright.

HB: If we are too slow, AI will probably do a rapid version of this for us.

CA: It's true! ChatGPT could whip up some highly detailed but soul crushing distillations of key turns and ideas in critical geography. And it would require no copyright negotiation!

But ok, this is interesting. It sounds like you are saying this would now require a different process—one that wouldn't be just like, you know, "Here are some greatest hits article- length pieces, packaged and republished as-is." Instead, what I hear you saying is that, today, something like this collection might best be produced by convening a group of people—maybe also soliciting specific people—to help figure out not only what kinds of things should be included, but also how to frame and present material in multiple formats, possibly different media. I can see that being rich and very useful—especially if it's aimed at undergrad students—but also very labor intensive. For critical geographers who have competing demands and worry that this kind of thing wouldn't "count" as much as traditional publications, what would the incentive be to undertake or participate in this kind of effort?

HB: I think the important part is, again, that the goals are pedagogical. It's made for students, for teaching and learning, and for the classroom rather than for the sake of just churning something out or reaching other academics in your field. There are already plenty of things that academics create to fill pedagogical niches, and many of them are incentivized in different ways. But most of them are not as useful—and certainly not as critical!—as they could be. There are so many faculty who have deep teaching experience. We have a strong sense of what works in learning environments and what clicks with our students. And we also have an idea what kinds of materials might make the labor of teaching not only easier but more satisfying, especially in this metrics-driven kind of environment where pressures to perform and get strong evaluations have become higher and higher. So, the opportunity would be to put something together that connects all of the above—that appeals to students and that helps instructors offer engaging, critical ideas and reach more students. If an updated collection like this was done well, ticked those boxes, and became widely used, there would definitely be professional benefits for the people who created it.

It's also really important here to think about how the terrain of teaching is shifting. The physical classroom is not what it used to be, and classes are increasingly hybrid or online.

CA: True.

SAED: And the variety of institutional circumstances is increasing as well—my sense is that these are wider and more diverse than they were before. If you're in a research intensive, "Research One" institution in the US, of course, professional demands are going to be exorbitant, not on teaching, but on publishing in, you know, the least readable and least read outlets in terms of who's actually being reached! But in a place like a four-year, primarily undergraduate institution, or even a two-year institution, this could be one way in which people could secure a post—by publishing open access, then "claiming" it and making the professional case based on this work, the expertise and skill it required, its grounding in accessible pedagogy, collaboration across broader scholarly networks, and so forth. So you would have a set of materials that were more accessible for undergraduate students, and you would have a collaborative scholarly undertaking that could be useful for getting professional posts renewed, even possibly counting toward tenure, depending on the institution and the framing. Obviously, that would be a tougher case to make at highly research-intensive institutions, but the case could be quite different in the many different types of institutions beyond them.

At the same time, there are political-professional questions here that are not new. We had many discussions related to these kinds of issues at *ACME* back in the 2000s. We were coming from a range of different institutional situations, and for some people the kind of work we were trying to do would be aligned with their professional needs and goals while others felt like the kinds of things *ACME* was experimenting with was totally unrewarded professionally if not possibly professionally risky. For example, there was a conversation we had a number of times about whether or not *ACME* should be indexed for different kinds of searches and search engines. Some of us really felt pressured to make sure the work we were doing was as visible and circulated as possible, no matter what that took, and that pressure was usually a result of people feeling they needed to be able to professionally justify and affirm the labor they were undertaking. But for others of us some of the trade-offs that lead to greater visibility and circulation—and arguably greater "impact" in the sense we were talking about earlier—were out of step with the political goals of the journal. That side recognized the issues around needing work to "count" and be visible but felt there might be other ways to accomplish that. It required a lot of solidarity work among us to think collectively about how to deal with this—how to facilitate publishing and other avenues that enabled people to keep their jobs, you know, without necessarily jeopardizing principles and political goals. And those questions are never settled—instead, they have intensified. Working through them takes a great collective effort but can also be hugely powerful and rewarding. That's one of the things that I think, in hindsight, we were trying to figure out in the early days of *ACME*, and that's not what you have in most journals or in many institutions—a sense of, let alone an explicit commitment to, mutual support, to try one's best not to put other people in situations more difficult than they already are, and so on. Those issues certainly haven't become any less salient over time!

CA: Yes, those kinds of issues are still certainly plenty tough, and it does feel really useful to think about forms of collectivization that could help mitigate—here we are focusing a lot on publication, the circulation of information, and perhaps pedagogy, but we could probably imagine many others. Perhaps another conversation!

On the changing shape, breadth, and efficacy of critical geography

CA: Meanwhile, it strikes me that you've both now said you don't feel like you have a good handle on the field to the degree that maybe you used to or that would be needed to pull off this kind of collection again. And you seem to be narrating that as if there may well be other people who do have such a sense for the whole breadth of critical geography even if you don't. But I wonder if what you are feeling and naming is actually that the field has proliferated so much that we should probably question anyone who says they have a firm handle on the whole thing. This gets back to the idea that, if one were to try to produce a collection like this again, it would really require a group of differently situated people and a thoughtful process to grasp the breadth of the field and figure out what forms would make the most sense given the aims. More broadly, though, the implication seems to be that critical geography and it's sub-parts have proliferated and expanded to the point where many of us think of ourselves as niche players rather than generalists… which I guess could also intensify many of the issues we've been discussing around the limited ambition and reach of most academic communication, the challenges of pushing back against impact metrics, the risks that this kind of generalizing work can only be undertaken by well-resourced private interests instead of overburdened scholarly collectives, etc.

SAED: I think you're right. Even by the time I entered the scene in the 90s geography had already pressurized into becoming very specialized and losing breadth, even losing breadth within specialty. I'm partly thinking of the professionalization pressures that came with the rise of GIS, which many departments used to pitch geography as a quite specific and technical career path. In any case, it felt like the critical breadth that a geographer might have once been expected to have started to narrow—I certainly felt this in physical geography—and it increasingly seemed like the kinds of jobs that were out there were tied to relatively specific kinds of knowledge and problem areas. Which again just makes me wonder whether we managed to capture the breadth of Critical Geography and the different subfields in the reader we put together 20 years ago. With so little feedback, it's possible we didn't have a sense for the breadth of the field then, either!

CA: Anybody reading this should consider this a solicitation: If you read or used this collection, please write to us, and let us know how Harald and Salvatore did! How did you experience and use it? How did it land with students and others? What feedback do you have?

SAED: I'd be interested to know!

HB: Me too!

You know, maybe it's the institution I'm in, or the people I'm surrounded by, but it also feels to me that critical geography has become more and more commonsensical in the discipline as a whole. When I was a PhD Student, there was, of course, *Antipode*. There was "radical" geography and there was Socialist geography, both deeply influenced by the legacy of the cold war. But these did not feel anywhere close to the mainstream. But that shifted somewhere in the mid-2000s. I remember at one AAG annual meetings I attended around that time, one of the specialty groups—Socialist Geography—was having an intense discussion about changing its name. There was this tension within the group about what name would best reflect the kind of work people were increasingly doing. Some said socialist geographies, in keeping with all the Marxist critiques that had been so important, really for decades by that

point. But others said critical geographies as a way of being a little broader and reflecting broader critical turns in social theory. Actually, Salvatore, you were president at that time!

SAED: I was! I was directly involved in those discussions. And they were intense.

HB: Eventually, I think it was me who suggested at the meeting, "Why don't we just call ourselves the Socialist *and* Critical Geography specialty group, or something like that?" You could sense at that time that there was this, not really conflict, but just trying to work out what the emerging identity was. So critical, radical, Socialist—those maybe came to matter less when contrasted with the rest of geography, which was very reactionary. Critical became the watchword, to different degrees. I remember having a discussion with colleagues in the early 2000s, shortly after I got my first tenure track job, and everybody suddenly saying, "I'm critical." "Oh? Me, too!" "Yeah, I'm critical too!" Most of us didn't have a deep understanding of critical theory 30 years ago, but it has since become almost mainstream in geography. Now I would rarely call myself a Critical Geographer anymore because it's kind of ubiquitous and part of everything I do, there is rarely any need to distinguish myself in that way anymore.

SAED: Can I add to that? Because that's my impression as well. I've been in discussion with Ben Wisner[8] lately about this issue, and out of that conversation with him came a lot of insights about how the canon has changed and has been changed. What might be taken for granted now, we could not take for granted a couple of decades ago. That is a positive development in so many ways. And it's the product of a lot of work and struggle that should not be forgotten. It took a tremendous effort by a lot of people who were not necessarily rewarded for it. So, headway has been made, definitely, in terms of critical currents having wider influence on the shape of the field, especially at high theoretical levels.

At the same time, I've been in 4-year colleges that do not have grad programs all of my career, and from that perspective I can also see that many of the critical sensibilities are just not permeating into 2 and 4-year colleges, where most faculty might not even be familiar with even the most prominent critical work. They might know nothing about foundational or recent work in Black geographies. Queer geographies might be completely foreign. And the standard textbooks being used would leave a lot to be desired in both human and physical geography. There are a few things that we would only have dreamed of having back in the nineties that are now pretty standard even in these places, like just even talking about relations of power, for example--that's a win! But how that is framed and where that gets taken is another matter. In terms of actual critical ideas getting implemented in the classroom? Incorporated into actual practices within departments and institutions? That's another matter altogether.

Those kinds of contexts in mind, I do think critical geography still needs to be in existence as a term, because it's still doing needed work. I mean, we do still have basically State Department stenography-geography, as far as I'm concerned, in many aspects of introductory textbooks, especially in terms of global and world regional or world systems content. And there is a great deal of work to be done in introductory environmental geography, which is much of what I teach, as well. I mean, I have had to devote entire sections

[8] A founding figure in critical environmental geography and political-ecology whose 1978 *Antipode* article, "Does Radical Geography Lack an Approach to Environmental Relations?," was the first featured in the "People and Environments" section of the collection.

of classes to debunking Hardin,[9] still, which is, to me, astonishing. I have to debunk Jared Diamond and his brand of clash of civilizations environmental determinism, which also shows up frequently in mainstream geography books. From that perspective, and with respect to the structural-institutional arrangements that channel so many of our productive energies and relationships, something like a critical geography perspective—even if that's an imprecise term—is still very much needed even if perhaps in different ways than in the past. Even when you go to AAG meetings or ICG meetings where it might feel like radicals are a major voice, it's still true that the majority of geographers work in places and institutions that are not part of all that, and they are where most students get exposed to geography. These different kinds of levels and contexts are important to keep thinking about. At the national level and the research level, we have seen shifts. But how far have these shifts really seeped into teaching, institutional organization, undergraduate education, 2- and 4-year institutions? My sense is that there is still plenty of work to do there, and that has always been what a collection like this is also meant to be for!

CA: I wish we could have more conversations like this across different institutional spaces and contexts!

Synthesis and the need to keep expanding critical praxis

CA: Ok, just to synthesize a little bit: on the one hand, I hear you talking about the progress that has been made, especially in terms of the expansion of different critical and radical approaches and the way they have unsettled and reshaped 'the canon'. But I'm also hearing this interesting concern about where these shifts have hit and how they are—and are not—being taken up in different contexts. It sounds like you are saying critical and radical geography have made great headway at the level of high theory, in many national and international conversations, and in many institutions that have graduate programs. A lot of the cutting-edge work is happening at these levels. But it then sounds like your sense is that these shifts are not necessarily occurring in or even reaching other places in the discipline—in 2- and 4-year schools, in actual institutional and pedagogical practices—which is also where the majority of students would ostensibly encounter and potentially be shaped by geographical thought and work. And just to tie back further to earlier parts of our conversation, to me this also connects directly to the need for new and different modes of communication that can differently convey information and tell stories in ways that transform things, maybe especially by fostering experimentation with different modes of engagement and different practices. Which all circles back to what was interesting about this collection in the first place, and what might still be of interest and import in putting something like this together in the present. So maybe part of the renewed call that I'm hearing is that—beyond the progress that has already been made at the level of theory and the expansion of the

[9] Garrett Hardin coined the idea of the "Tragedy of the Commons" wherein the desires of individuals to maximize their own prosperity and would cause commons to be over-used and degraded. His example was a common field where livestock could graze. Hardin argued that, because each livestock owner would have individual incentives to graze as many livestock as possible, such a field would quickly become over-grazed. His proposed solution was privatizing ownership over and therefore limiting access to the field, as a way of preserving it. Hardin's argument can be 'debunked' because it has no supporting evidence (Hardin never provided any), it confuses the commons with open access, it obscures actual causes (privately owned cattle brought to a common pasture), and purposely denies—as attested by commons researchers, anthropologists, and others, including geographers—the effectiveness of collective management in preventing over-use.

discipline—we also need to take care of the roots of critical geography at the level where it might hit a lower division student at a 2- or 4-year college and through our own institutional and pedagogical practices.

SAED: This will probably sound a little too old school, but to go back to that discussion about changing the name of the Socialist Geography specialty group to the Socialist and Critical Geography group, some people wanted to excise the name Socialism. In hindsight, I think it's good thing that didn't prevail, because in the last decade there has been a revival of that term, especially related to questions about how to reach the working class and, certainly, people who are not represented at the highest level of universities. Connecting with these groups can't and won't happen just at the highest levels, at the level of high theory. And it's a lot to ask all the people teaching undergraduates at lower levels to do the work of trying to translate and broker the critical and radical concepts and ideas that come from high theory. That is a lot of effort, not rewarded, sometimes even punished. So, really, it could be potentially very powerful and a great service to have much, much more work that is approachable—not to mention accessible—where the majority of people are at. Again, this is not something that individuals or a couple individuals should reasonably be expected to take on as could take on as a responsibility—it would need to be a broadly collective undertaking on multiple fronts.

Separate but related—many graduate programs now effectively deskill graduates in terms of communication and their ability to connect and communicate ideas to regular people. You come out speaking a strange insider language. I know that happened to me and I've been trying to recover since! So, we also can't expect that people will come out of their graduate work suddenly able to talk and chew on ideas with ordinary students, let alone people where community organizing is happening, in front-line communities, or down at the union hall. That takes a lot of work and skill that most of us don't have. Which gets back to questions of impact and arguments about the need for different modes of communicating and co-thinking in and beyond the different spaces we are working in.

CA: Another argument for different understandings of impact! And I don't think this was too old-school of a thing to say, Salvatore, because the issue you are pointing to also connects directly to questions about how we reach first generation students, non-traditional and working students, students with different learning needs, students coming from different cultural contexts, and so much more. At my 4-year campus, those are very pressing, very current questions.

SAED: That's an important point. And those kinds of students—and the communities they are connected to—seem like exactly the people that critical geography should be for!

Also, glad if I'm not yet too old-school!

HB: Agreed on both accounts!

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