

M U N I

Radical geographies and the criticism of global political economy

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What is radical geography?

- It challenges non-critical geographical approaches, mainly spatial-analytical science
 - underlying social and economic inequalities must be addressed
 - power dynamics and socioeconomic structures shape spatial arrangements
 - inherently political and aligns itself with social justice movements
- The ultimate goal is not just to explain or understand the world but to change it
 - transformative spatial practices can lead to more equitable and sustainable spatial arrangements

Focus of radical geographers

- Issues such as inequality, oppression, and environmental degradation through a geographical lens
 - research on housing inequality, gentrification, environmental racism, access to resources, access to services, ...
- Concepts such as class struggle, exploitation, and the uneven development of different regions
- The pursuit of social justice, seeking to understand and mitigate the spatial manifestations of injustice

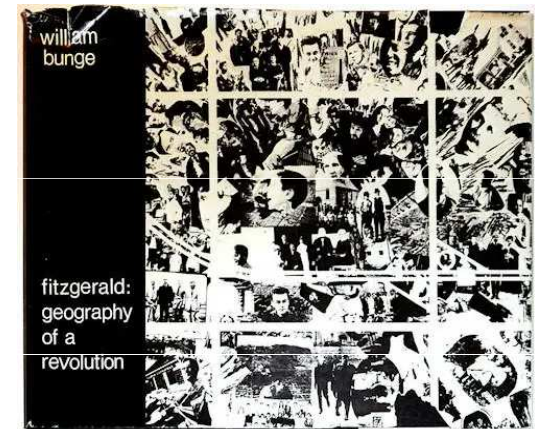
Beginnings: the context of 1970s

- Civil rights movements and anti-war protests
- Urban unrest
 - often linked to racial and economic injustices
- Crisis of Fordism
 - mass industrial production and consumption model falters and gives rise to mass unemployment
- Neoliberal policies start to expand
 - deregulation, privatization, and austerity
 - huge impact on lower classes and poor people
- Environmental concerns
 - pollution, resource depletion, and ecological degradation

First radical attempt

- Detroit Geographical Expedition by William Bunge in 1968

- rooted in the analysis of spatial patterns and participant observation



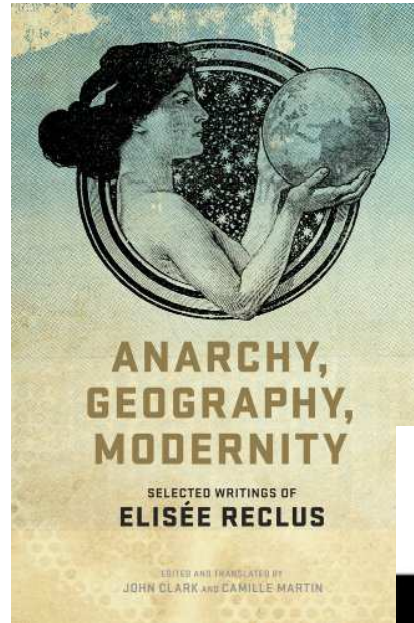
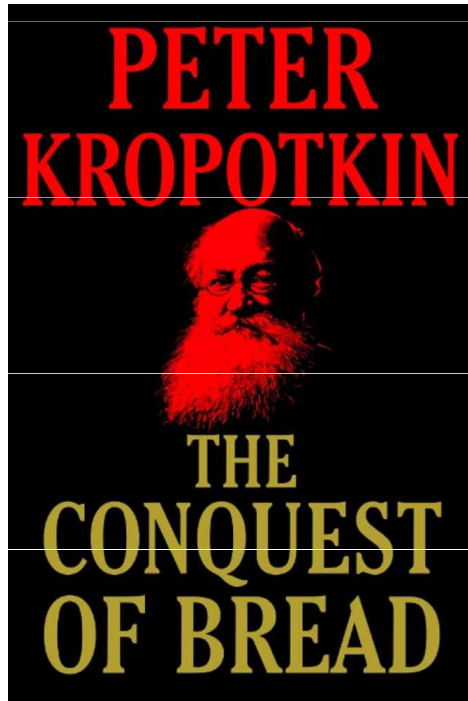
- The goal was to discover inequalities and injustices in poor neighborhoods and then to find ways how to confront them in cooperation with the locals
- this involved policy lobbying, direct support to poor households, and analysis of urban problems

Institutionalization of RG

- Clark University in 1969
 - Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography
 - Union of Socialist Geographers
 - James Blaut, Richard Peet
 - at first a lot of different perspectives: anti-colonial, socialist, anti-racist, anarchist („re-discovery“ of geographical anarchist roots: Elisée Reclus, Peter Kropotkin)

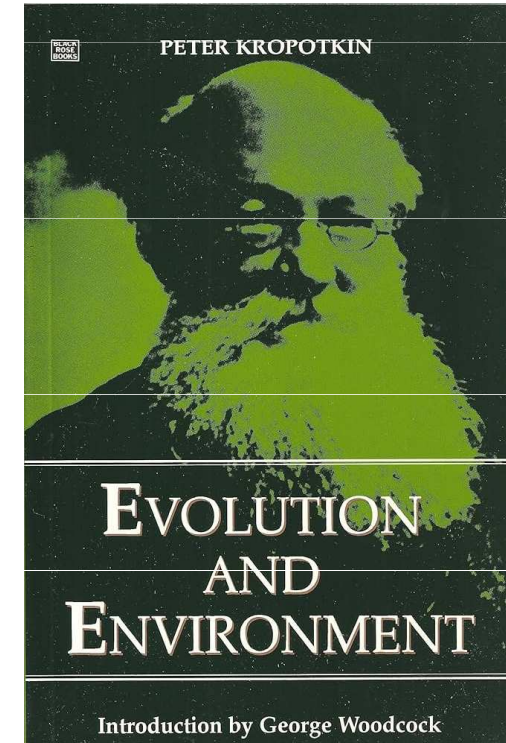
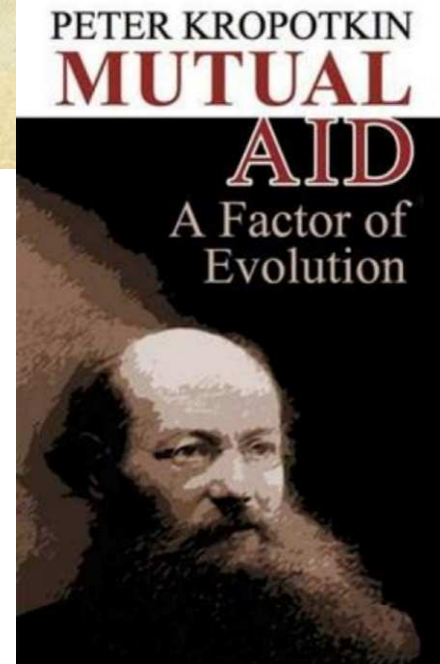


Early radical geographers



L'Homme et la Terre - Livre IV

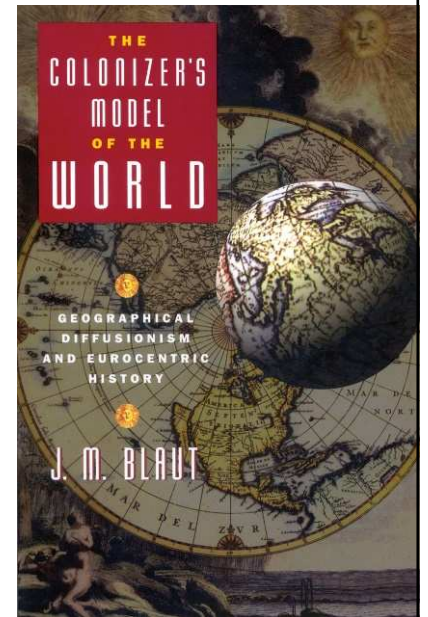
Elisée Reclus



James M. Blaut (1927-2000)



- Activist, radical, anti-colonial, anti-Eurocentric
- Economic, political, cultural, historical geographer
 - research on agricultural micro-geography (geographical activity of villagers), cultural ecology, theory of nationalism
- Rejection of the "European Miracle"
- Criticism of Eurocentric history and geographical diffusionism
 - *The National Question: Decolonising the Theory of Nationalism* (1987)
 - *The Colonizer's Model of the World* (1993)
 - *Eight Eurocentric Historians* (2000)



Richard Peet (1940 - ?)

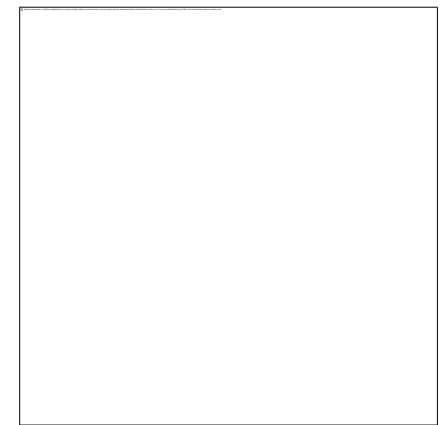


- Radical and Marxist, social justice advocate
- Social and economic geographer
 - research on the geography of power, political ecology, liberation ecology, development geography, critical policy studies
- Critique of the inequities produced by capitalist development, highlighting how wealth and power are unevenly distributed across different regions
 - capitalist exploitation leads to environmental degradation and disproportionately affects marginalized communities
 - mainstream development theories and institutions perpetuate global inequalities

Domination of Marxist geography

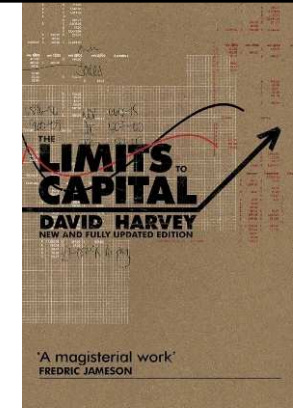
- Grounded in Marxist theory
 - focus on concepts such as historical materialism, class struggle, dialectics of socioeconomic formations and spatial structures
- Capitalism produces and transforms space, creating landscapes that reflect and reinforce social inequalities
 - conflicts between different social classes influence the organization of space
 - critique of the capitalist exploitation of natural resources
 - studies of urbanization because cities are sites of capital accumulation and class struggle

David Harvey (1935 - ?)



- Social, economic and urban geographer
 - research on cities and socio-economic inequalities, geographical reworking of historical materialism into historical-geographical materialism
- *Social Justice and the City* (1973)
 - inequalities are spatially manifested in cities: segregation, inadequate housing, uneven access to services
 - criticism of the role of urban planning and policy in maintaining inequalities
 - spatial justice: social justice cannot be achieved without considering the spatial organization of society
 - capitalism exploits urban spaces for profit, leading to gentrification, displacement, and other forms of spatial injustice

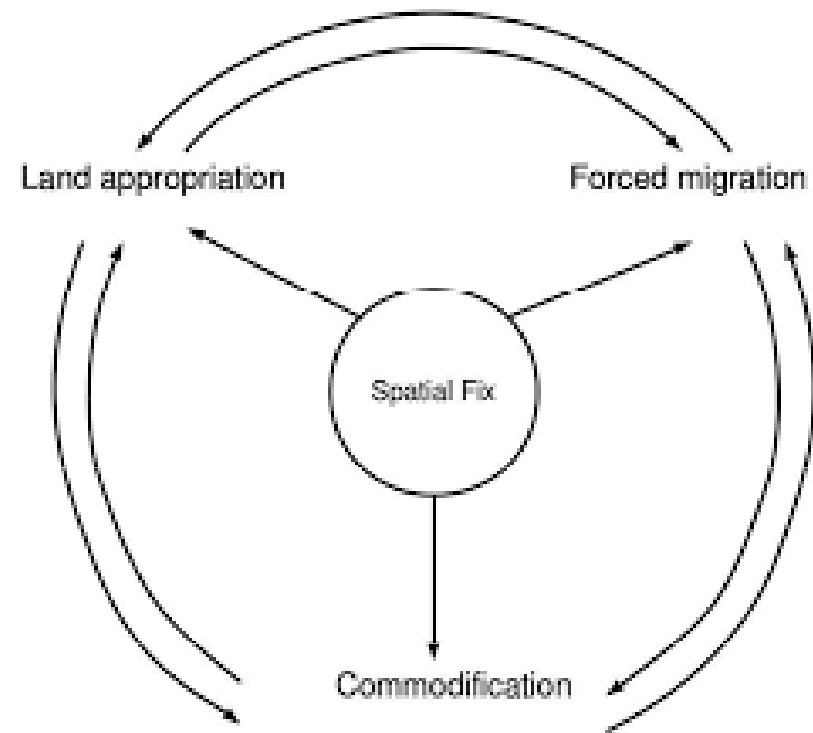




– *The Limits to Capital* (1982)

- the tendency of capitalism is to produce crises of overaccumulation, where surplus capital cannot find profitable investment opportunities, leading to economic crises and forcing capital to seek new spaces for accumulation
- concept of the „spatial fix“: capital resolves crises by expanding into new geographical areas or restructuring existing spaces; it temporarily alleviates overaccumulation but often leads to new forms of spatial inequality and conflict
- financial markets and instruments become central to the accumulation process, leading to speculative bubbles and financial crises
- uneven geographical development is an inherent feature of capitalism, driven by the search for profit
- critique of neoliberalism

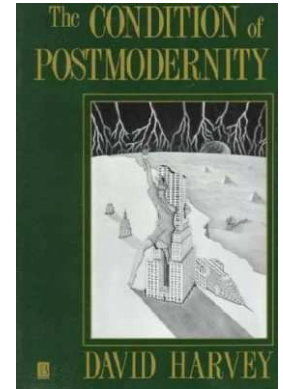




**THERE IS, IN SHORT, NO 'SPATIAL FIX' THAT
CAN CONTAIN THE CONTRADICTIONS OF
CAPITALISM IN THE LONG RUN.**

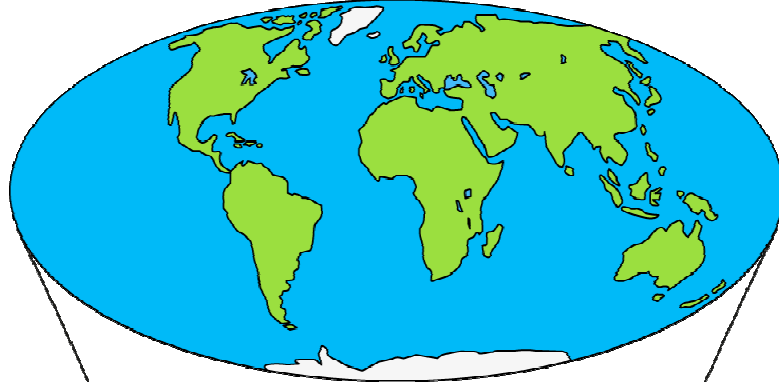
- DAVID HARVEY -

– *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (1989)



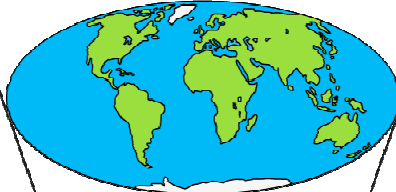
- postmodernity within the context of late 20th-century global changes: the rise of neoliberalism, globalization, and technological advancements
- time-space compression phenomenon accelerates the pace of life and reshapes spatial relationships
- the shift from Fordist-Keynesianism, characterized by mass production and state intervention, to a regime of flexible accumulation, which involves more adaptable production processes, labor practices, and market strategies
- deregulation, privatization, and market-oriented neoliberal reforms exacerbate social inequalities and reshape urban and regional development into more spatially unjust forms
- postmodern fragmentation of cultural expressions and identities, driven by consumerism and media saturation, is often an obstacle to a radical change

1500 - 1840



BEST AVERAGE SPEED OF HORSE-DRAWN COACHES AND SAILING SHIPS WAS 10 M. P. H.

1850 - 1930



STEAM LOCOMOTIVES AVERAGED 65 M.P.H
STEAM SHIPS AVERAGED 36 M. P. H.

1950'S

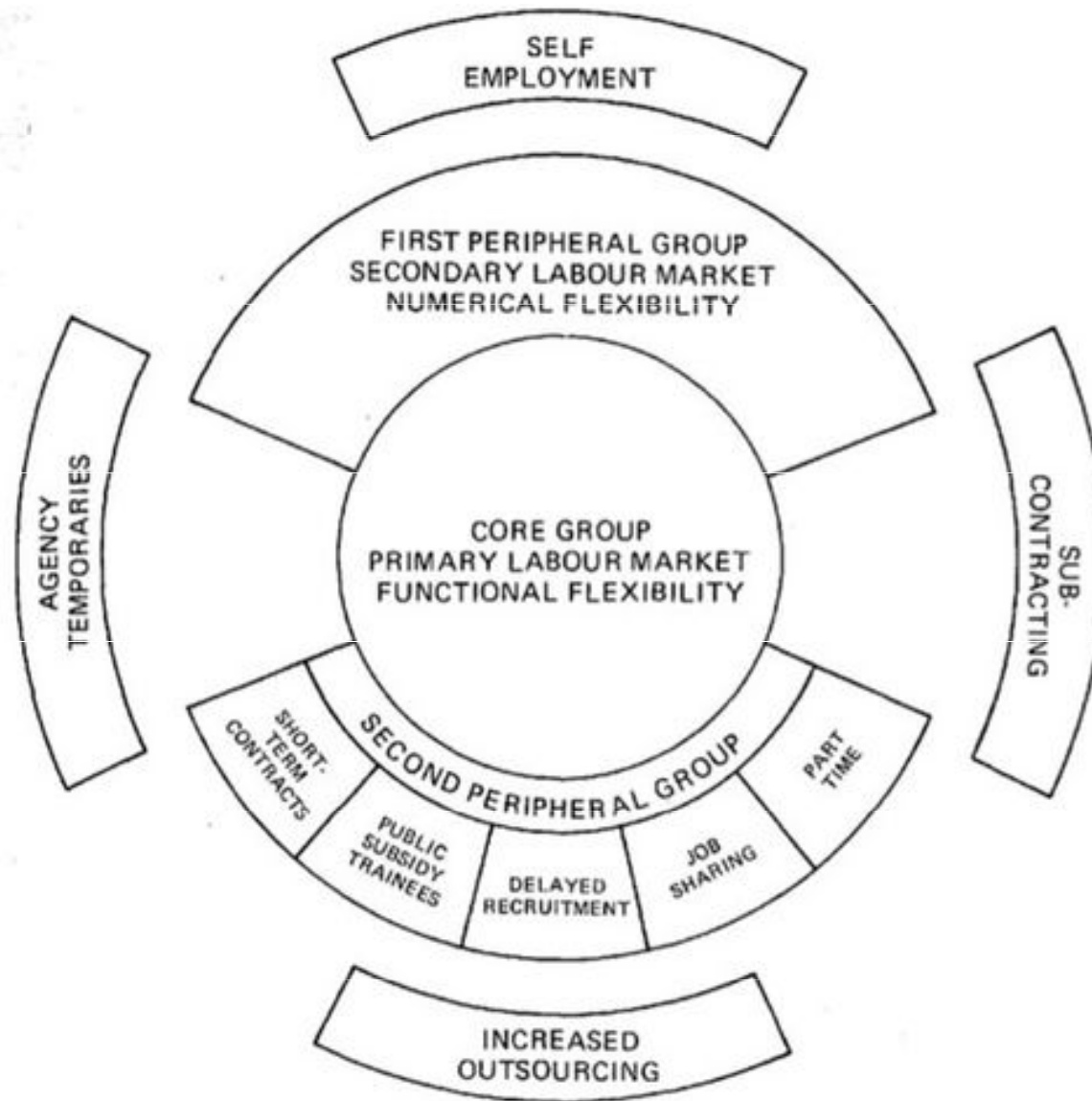


PROPELLER AIRCRAFT
300 - 400 M. P. H.

1960'S



JET PASSENGER AIRCRAFT
500 - 700 M. P. H.

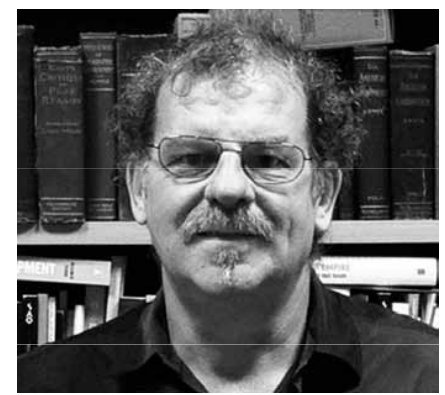


– *The New Imperialism* (2003)

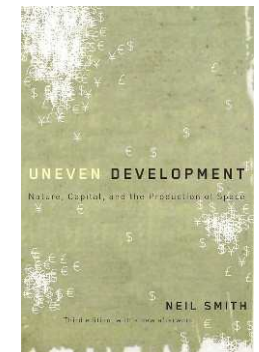
- concept of the „accumulation by dispossession“: privatization, commodification, financialization, and the management and manipulation of crises systematically transfer assets from the public and vulnerable populations to capitalists
- contemporary global capitalism exhibits characteristics of a new imperialism
- globalization under neoliberalism has intensified imperialist practices, as multinational corporations and international institutions like the IMF and World Bank impose policies that benefit the Global North at the expense of the Global South
- the Iraq War as an example of new imperialism because it was driven by the desire to control oil resources and assert geopolitical dominance



Neil Smith (1954 – 2012)



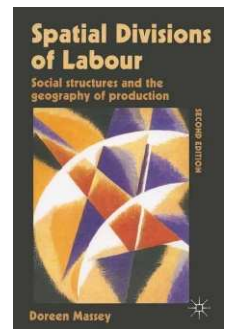
- Economic and urban geographer, student of David Harvey
- nature is socially constructed through capitalist processes
 - commodification of nature
 - differences between first, second, and third nature
 - *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (1984)
- Urban gentrification as „creative destruction“
 - existing communities are uprooted to make way for new developments that cater to wealthier populations, reinforcing social inequalities



Doreen Massey (1944 – 2016)



- Economic geographer, later feminist and poststructuralist geographer
- Spatial divisions of labor differentiate regions and spaces and allocate their specific roles in the production process
 - highlighting the interconnection of the global and the local
 - *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production* (1984)
- The rise of transnational production networks creates new spatial divisions and inequalities, impacting workers in both developed and developing countries
 - concept of „power geometry“ for contemporary globalization

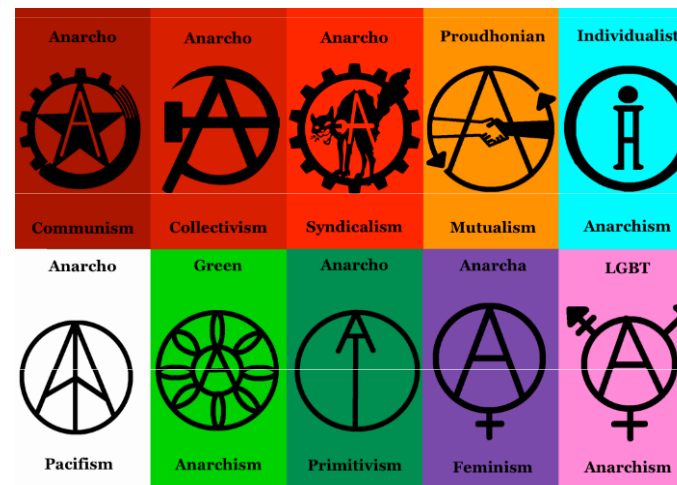


Feminist interventions into Marxist geography

- Traditional Marxist models often focus predominantly on class struggle while neglecting the role of gender in shaping social relations and economic dynamics
 - by considering multiple axes of identity (gender, race, class, and sexuality, ...), feminist perspectives deepen the understanding of how economic systems and spatial structures contribute to social inequalities
 - the importance of recognizing unpaid labor, such as domestic work and caregiving
 - reproductive labor is essential for capitalism to function
- Critique of the public/private divide
- Neoliberal economic policies exacerbate gender

Anarchist geography returns

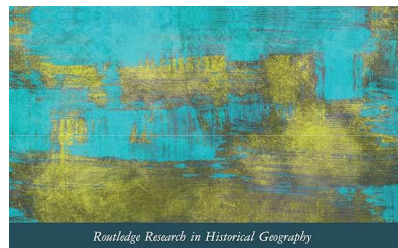
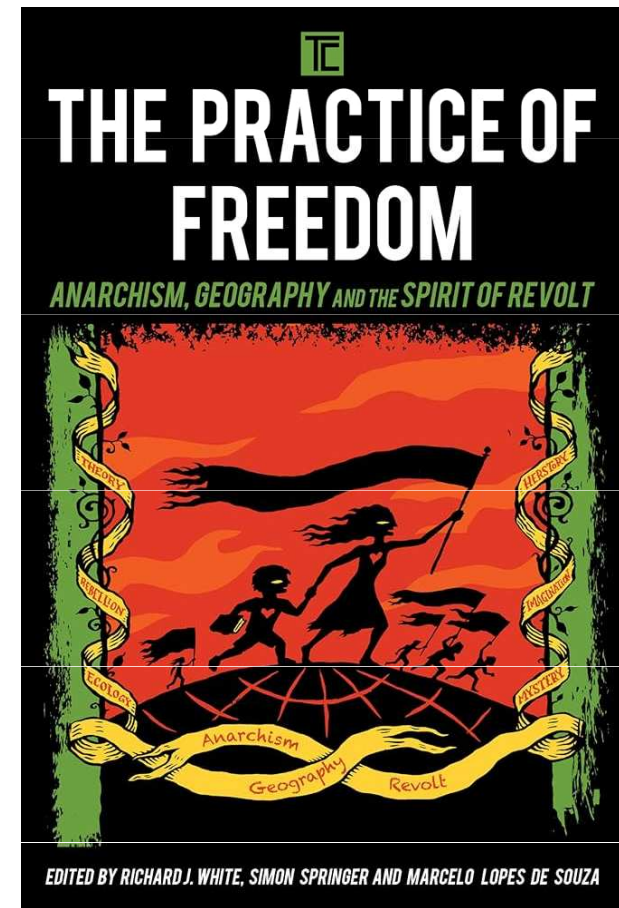
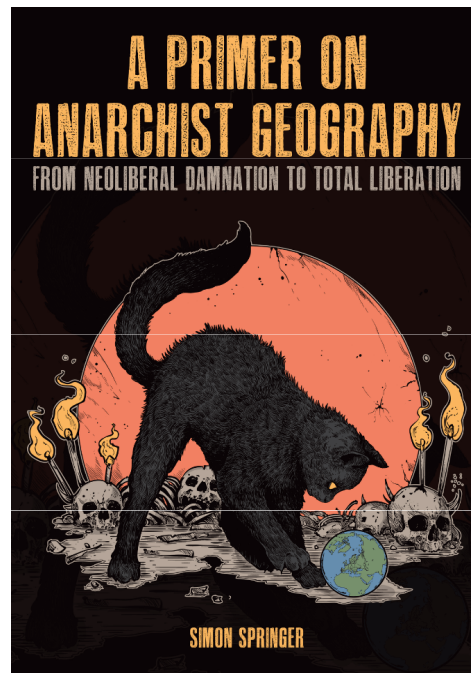
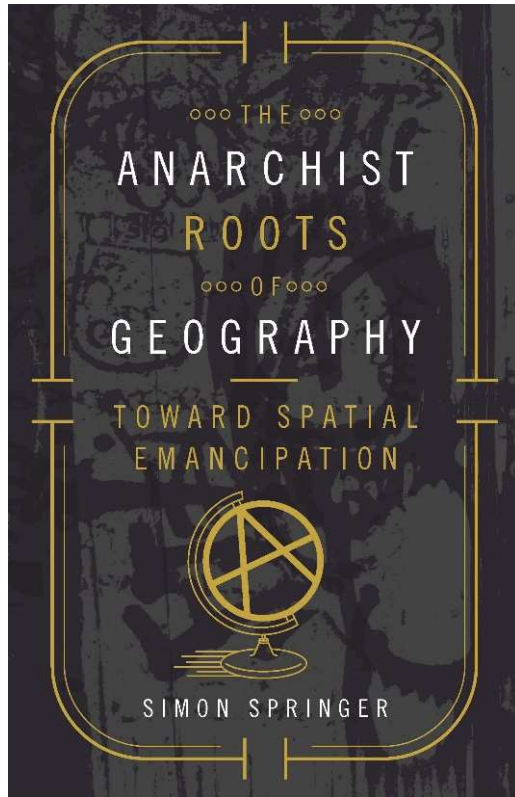
- In the 21st century radical geography re-discovers anarchist tradition again
- Anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian
 - Not only critiques of neoliberal capitalism but also of the inherently coercive nature of state and corporate authority
- Promotion of anti-hierarchical perspectives
 - Participatory knowledge creation
 - Intersectionality and interconnectedness of struggles



Anarchist geographical horizon

- The significance of everyday practices and grassroots movements in shaping spaces of resistance
 - encouraging the reappropriation of space for community building and self-organization
- Prefigurative politics
 - the change must be happening **now**, even if it is just small steps
 - insurrection more useful than (Marxist idea of) revolution

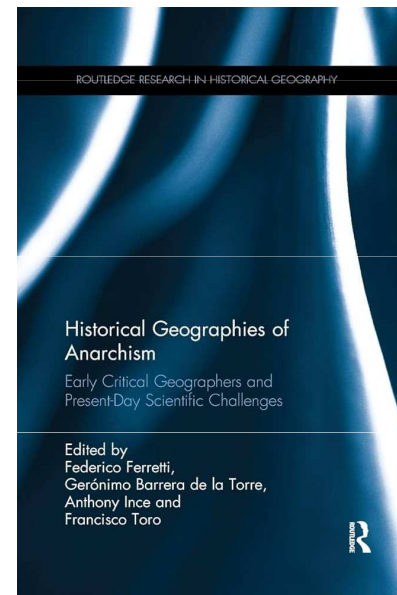
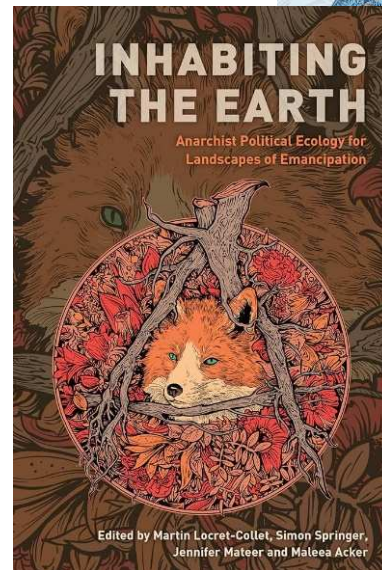
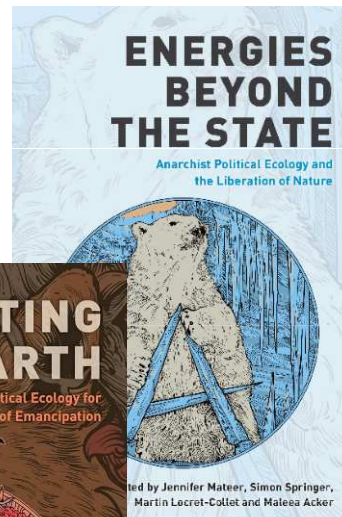
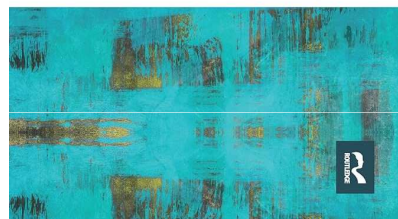




ANARCHY AND GEOGRAPHY

RECLUS AND KROPOTKIN IN THE UK

Federico Ferretti



MUNI