

Eclectic radical geographies: revisiting the early *Antipodes*

by Chris Philo (draft)

Introduction

Today I want to return us to the earliest days of a 'radical geography', and more particularly to the earliest days of radical geography's textual incarnation in the pages of the journal *Antipode*. This is a journal with which we will all be familiar, and it is a journal which has been a crucial reference point for someone such as myself since undergraduate days in the early-1980s. Moreover, I have long been fascinated with the first few volumes of the journal which appeared between 1969 and the mid-1970s, when it had the character of an 'underground' production, something dangerous, and also a wonderfully anarchic feel with its chaos of formats, typefaces, curious marginal drawings, aphorisms, adverts, and the like. This fascination has never gone away, and this AAG session (celebrating thirty years of radical geography) seems like an ideal occasion for me to voice a few thoughts about what took place on the pages of those initial volumes. These are the thoughts of an outsider, someone who was not around to be involved in the project at the time, and I realise that there may well be people here today who were around and involved (and who could hence speak far more authoritatively about the ambitions, practices and personalities of the journal's infancy).

To anticipate, my simple claim is that we could valuably pay heed to the 'eclectic radical geographies' displayed in *Antipode* over the period. I suspect that many of us never knew about, have forgotten about or are just inattentive to the sheer diversity of possibilities for a geographical radicalism which coursed through the earliest issues. Maybe I am just becoming an antiquarian, obsessed by past traces of geographical knowledge in all of its forms, but I am actually of the strong conviction that there is much to be learned here: that these elements of geography's *ur*-history have resonances with much that we are presently debating under a heading such as 'critical geography', and that there are important implications to be drawn out from an engagement with the discipline's immediately 'pre-Marxist' phase for what we might now make of entering a supposedly 'post-Marxist' phase. I am not going to do more today than hint at such resonances and implications, but I do hope to give some worthwhile pointers.

Surprises in the pages of the early *Antipodes*

I want to leave aside the social-institutional context out of which *Antipode* emerged, and I also want to overlook what might be termed the 'sociology' of the journal (who was involved editing and writing papers, which individuals, groups and networks, how was production, marketing and distribution organised, etc.?). Rather, I want to concentrate on the pages themselves as windows on a remarkable moment of excitement in human-geographical thought-and-action. It is salient to remember that the journal's full title was (and still is) *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography* -

not *Antipode: A Journal of Radical Geography*, as it is so often misnamed (eg. Gregory, 1978, p.174) - hinting that the search was on for many 'radical' (oppositional, different) ways of doing geography, rather than for any one single, unitary version of 'radical geography'. The eclecticism of the early search, the adventure and spirit of the many different avenues travelled in the process, was arguably flagged up quite clearly in this initial choice of name for the journal.

The first issue did indeed appear in August, 1969, and its first editorial, by Ben Wisner, set out the eclectic store of the journal:

Thus *Antipode* reaches its reader in its present form: [a]n aggregate of exploratory attempts to ask value questions within geography, question existing institutions concerning their rates and qualities of change, and question the individual concerning his [*sic.*] own commitments. Each author wends his own way. We are united by filaments in some cases, strong bonds in others.

(Wisner, 1969, p.i)

The first paper after the editorial, by David Stea and entitled 'Positions, purposes, pragmatics: a journal of radical geography' (a shade confusingly), stressed the goal of contributing to 'radical change' - to the overturning of institutions which stifle attempts at creating 'a more viable pattern for living' - but also left open the question of what exactly this new geography would look like:

New questions must be asked and new approaches formulated before we can begin to think in terms of solutions. That the geographer can contribute to this process in a significant way is evident to us; just *what* he [*sic.*] can contribute is still at issue. The purpose of this journal is to answer the latter query.

(Stea, 1969, p.2)

And in this and following issues a range of different attempts to answer Stea's query did indeed surface, as I will discuss presently, and no clearer indication of this diversity can be found than in the second issue (August, 1970) where a 'call for papers' to go in an proposed theme issue on 'Survival and radical geography' indicated the wish 'to print alternatives - the people's geography, survival geography, humanistic (lovin') geography, radical geography'. What an intriguing if curious set of partners in crime: this must be one of the first (the first?) published references to 'humanistic geography' (appearing here in *Antipode!*), and what of these enticing other possibilities, 'the people's geography' (anticipating Harvey's 1984 call for just such a geography) and 'survival geography'?

The note of surprise that I sound here is one that I want to echo through the rest of my paper. It may just be me, or at least it may just be as a result of learning about the recent history of human geography in a certain way (ie. one that consistently sets apart radical geography and humanistic geography as entirely counterposed routes out of spatial science), but there is so much that continues to surprise me as I read the earliest *Antipodes*. The chief surprise concerns the eclecticism, of course, but surprises also crop up in the details, in the names of those contributing, in the things said and not said, in the connections drawn which would probably never be so today. In what follows now, I draw upon a close reading of the first thirteen issues from August, 1969

to February, 1975, albeit paying special attention to the first seven issues up to and including March, 1973. I can show a basic listing of the early issues taken from a later issue of the journal itself (note that there was some variation in the number of issues produced each year).

A pre-Marxist phase?

Let me begin by immediately tackling the question of Marxism and Marxist geography in the pages of *Antipode*, since in part my own surprise concerns the extent to which the early *Antipodes* were *not* Marxist. Now, I would argue that human geography's explicitly Marxist turn in the early-1970s was absolutely crucial, a breakthrough which was decisive in raising the banner of a fresh, conceptually-sophisticated and politically-committed approach to human geography (whichever variant of Marxist theory and practice was involved). The pivotal role of *Antipode* in this breakthrough to Marxism cannot be doubted, but it must be acknowledged that it was only in the fifth issue (July, 1972), with the publication of David Harvey's seminal paper on 'Revolutionary and counter-revolutionary theory' (reprinted in Harvey, 1973, Chap.4) and the accompanying commentaries such as Steen Folke's paper on 'Why a radical geography must be Marxist', that the journal really began to acquire a Marxist cast. In subsequent issues Marxist theorisation and politics swiftly became much more prominent, notably with the special issue on 'Ideology and environment' edited by James Anderson (December, 1973), with the Richard Peet and David Harvey editorial entitled 'From this spark will come a flame' (July, 1974) and (most obviously) with the special issue explicitly devoted to 'Marxist geography' (February, 1975). A number of highly significant and much-loved exploratory pieces of Marxist-geographical analysis graced the pages of these issues in the early- to mid-1970s, and such contributions, taken together, definitely created an equation between *Antipode* and a Marxist take on radical geography.

Yet, prior to the July, 1972 issue - and even immediately after that - Marxist geography was very much a minority offering in the journal, and in fact Marx received virtually no name-checks at all until Harvey's 1972 paper. The first major thinker to be referenced in the paper, at the outset of Wisner's first editorial, was in fact not Marx but Ghandi:

Ghandi writes that at some point an ancient sage must have for the first time appreciated the meaning of *ahimsa* (non-violence) when he first formulated and confronted the question, '[s]hall I bear with those who create difficulties for me, or shall I destroy them?' This is a question of deep significance for those who would launch a radical journal and for those who read it.

(Wisner, 1969, p.i)

Interestingly, with these words Wisner anticipated what was to become a prime axis of debate in the journal, one in which the 'revolutionary' and seemingly violent implications of adopting a Marxist perspective tangled with the more 'reformist' and non-violent recommendations of non-Marxist geographers. Two papers in the first issue played out something like this debate, with Richard Peet introducing 'A New Left geography' (Peet, 1969) energised by a commitment to swift 'radical change' in

society at large which might mean dismantling existing systems and institutions, while Richard Morrill discussed 'Geography and the transformation of society' (Morrill, 1969) and called for 'transformation through non-revolutionary means' within 'the existing political structure'. Similar exchanges were later to be played out in the journal between Harvey (on the one side) and the likes of Morrill and Brian Berry (on the other), but a telling difference was that Harvey began to couch his arguments in a Marxist vocabulary entirely *absent* from Peet's agitations for a 'New Left' tendency in geography. I am intended not to criticise either Harvey or Peet here, merely to highlight that in 1969 Peet was not yet fueling his geography with a keen Marxist theory and praxis.

Hunting for Marx in the early issues

The same is true of the early *Antipodes*. From my reading it does not appear that Marx was mentioned at all in the first issue, and it is only in the context of a relatively minor point made by James Blaut about 'Marx's distinction between merchants and capitalists' (in the course of his remarkable 'Geographical models of imperialism' paper: see below) that Marx was cited in the journal's second issue (August, 1970). This second issue concentrated on matters of research methodology (see below), and so the omission of Marx here is perhaps less surprising in retrospect than it is from the third issue (December, 1970), a special issue on 'The geography of American poverty' edited by Peet (although the expressed intention of this latter issue, to provide materials suitable for the teaching of poverty issues in US universities, colleges and high schools, would perhaps have militated against mentioning Marx even had the authors been starting to consult his writings). (Rather more should ideally be said about *Antipode's* engagement with the geographies of poverty at a variety of worldly scales.) The fourth issue (November, 1971) was another special issue, this time on 'Access to essential services' edited by Robert Earickson, and once again Marx is absent from what can be classed as a very conventional-looking set of papers. Indeed, a few papers here (notably by Sumner, by Symons and by Lankford) were barely distinguishable from spatial-scientific treatments of health care geography, while the issue also included a paper by Anne Buttimer, soon to become much better known as a humanistic geographer, wherein her own values fed into a distinctly non-Marxist observation on how:

responsibility for a whole range of services should not rest primarily with public agencies; rather efforts should be made to revive the traditional welfare functions of family, neighbourhood and more personal institutions.

(Buttimer, 1971, p.31)

This issue did have appended two papers on the 'Detroit Geographical Expedition' (Colenutt, 1971; Horvath, 1971), however, and these tackled a particular experiment in practical radical geography (one sometimes linked to Marxist ideas) whose shadow hung heavy over the earliest *Antipodes* (see below: note various other papers and items on advocacy geography throughout the early *Antipodes*): and yet there was still no explicit mention of Marx. The issue also concluded with a wonderful 'map' of 'Where you're at in geography, or could be' drawn by Jack Eichenbaum and Nancy Shaw, and it is revealing that, despite hinting at a politicised consciousness on the

part of the cartographers and despite even offering an extremely early reference to 'gay geography', no place was found on the map for an explicitly named 'Marxist geography'.

Two special issues with Marxist credentials in certain respects, but virtually never mentioning Marx or his ideas and politics - social engineering (Olsson): some Marxist themes, but a different approach (spatial science meets fuzzy logic and radical probability theory: see also Stea, 1970), and also with a more surreal turn provided here less by Olsson and more by Eichenbaum - Appalachia (Hankins): a kind of radical regional geography, one infused with 'labourist' readings of class struggle, taking seriously vehicles for expressing resistance / solidarity (like folksong and music) much as would a New Left British social historians such as E.P. Thompson or Raymond Williams (a remarkable and I suspect almost entirely forgotten issue, but raises possibilities well worth pondering in the present: also links between materialist and cultural analysis) ...

Two themes: more surprises and some resonances

For the rest of the paper, drawing out two sets of themes from these early issues for critical inspection: to continue sounding a note of surprise about what we actually find in the early *Antipodes*, but also continuing to hint at resonances with many more recent debates within 'critical geography'.

Humanistic philosophies and methodology

- Kates (1969), ethical questions of undertaking survey research using face-to-face questioning of people about their hazard perceptions / invading people's privacy, signalled that concerns about methodology might be raised in a radical journal ...

- second issue (August, 1970) devoted to methodological issues - Wisner (1970) asks about 'radical methodology'; radical subject-matters treated in an orthodox manner or radical (new) approaches to whatever subject-matter - four papers (Blaut, Stea, Goodey, Morrill) all attempt to apply existing methods to radical subject-matters, but the interest of these four papers tends to lie (in retrospect) less in methodology *per se* and more in concepts deployed - Horvath (1970) writes a paper entitled 'On the relevance of participant observation'; surprise, here in the second issue of *Antipode* we encounter a sustained discussion of a qualitative methodology claimed by many as essential for humanistic geographers (S. Smith, 1984) - and the surprise does not stop there because Horvath's paper is followed by a response from Ted Relph (1970), objecting to its claims on phenomenological grounds (and of course Relph was then developing his own phenomenological version of what would soon be classed as humanistic geography) - moreover, Relph's paper is followed by one from Newman (1970), who was in fact replying to Kates's paper from the previous issue, but clearly spells out a humanistic orientation declaring that 'the worlds of self and meaning are a private existential mystery' / urging us to embrace 'a philosophy of wholeness, one which concerns itself with expanding the locus of individual freedom and identity' - and then all of these papers are linked together by a complex discussion by Amaral and Wisner (1970) entitled 'Participant observation, phenomenology and the rules for

judging sciences: a comment', which expressly draws upon Edmund Husserl's phenomenology (indeed, it can be said that *Antipode's* first serious engagement with a 'great' intellectual occurs here, with Husserl not Marx), and develops a fascinating notion of 'participant-experience' rooted in the researcher's active confrontation of 'values, intentions, hopes and day-dreams' found in the flow of everyday intersubjective life conduct - amazing that this paper is never quoted in reviews of humanistic geography; amazing that it is the first major theoretical piece to appear in *Antipode*...

- also grounded 'action research': Bunge's example, along with discussions of work done by 'advocacy planners' (including interviews) - note Wisner's interview with Ruby Jarrett (1969), and his suggestion of needing to take a cue from her 'robust expressions of 'folk geography'' - note Wisner's interview with Lisa Peattie (in this key second issue, 1970), citing Bunge, playing up the advocate's delicate role of enabling change but avoiding becoming 'manipulative' - and then Amaral and Wisner (1970) explicitly connect up advocacy geography to their borrowings from phenomenology and specification of what 'participation-experience' may entail - I would argue that there was here a *big vision* of a new kind of geography: Wisner was clearly seeking to synthesis a number of possibilities to generate something genuinely new (a 'radical methodology') - and his synthesising ambitions become stunningly apparent in his 'Editor's note' after Stea's (1970) paper seeking to apply a Bayesian statistics approach to 'the geographical distribution of police brutality', wherein he declares that 'what advocacy research, participant observation and Bayesian statistics have in common is *immersion in the situation*' ...

A post-colonial sensitivity?

- Blaut's (1969) contribution to the first issue, entitled 'Jingo geography', which complains bitterly about 'ethnocentrism' in academic geography, and teases out the 'imperialism' (the lingering imperial mind-set) which stains so much geographical research and scholarship - remarkable quote:

Geography as a whole is contaminated with this most jingoistic prejudice. The field, after all, was born and raised in the homelands of imperialism, and until recently there was little of it elsewhere; hence, no countervailing force from a non-white, non-Western, non-imperialistic geography (and from the West itself only a tiny and occasional dissent). Thus, the modal academic geographer is white, Western and probably an honest believer in the rightness of some form of imperialism (perhaps under a different name).

(Blaut, 1969, p.10)

Such a paragraph could easily be lifted, I would wager, from the most recent of writings about post-colonial geography: from the writings of those reflecting on academic geography's long-term complicity with the twin projects of Western imperialism and colonialism, and on how geography has been very much a 'white' discipline containing few (disallowing all but a few) meaningful inputs from geographers of colour. (See also paper by Stewart, 1969, finding 'ethnocentrism' in geography textbooks dealing with Africa.) Subsequently, Blaut wrote his paper on

'Geographic models of imperialism' (Blaut, 1970), which began with the proposition that 'all of Western science and historiography is so closely interwoven with Western imperialism that the former can only describe and justify the latter' - develops the notion of 'ethnoscience', basically the intellectual products of a given 'culture' which are indelibly bound up with that culture's place / role in the world - roundly criticises a white, Western, European 'ethnoscience', but then wonders about trying to construct an alternative 'Third World ethnoscience' in which Western intellectual products are purged of their 'most flagrant imperialistic biases' and enriched with 'Third World data' - quite involved reasoning here, and touches on an argument about a 'slave-based, extra-European origin of the factory system' (including a sort of dig at Marx for his Eurocentricism in this respect) - also references Fanon's view of the Third World throwing up new knowledge, 'a new theory of man [*sic.*]' - we might worry about the details and terms, to be sure, but there can be no doubt that in effect Blaut is contemplating a dramatic post-colonial manoeuvre, striving to smooth the way for those outside of the West to speak back to / radically to transform the thinking of the white intellectual establishment anchored in the metropolises of the West ...

- if the post-colonial critique is also about exposing the erasure of the presence, contribution and voices of people of colour who now live in the West, then *Antipode* also included a number of papers which were post-colonial in this sense - notably Donaldson's (1969) paper tellingly entitled 'Geography and the Black American: the white papers and the invisible man', trawling through numerous geography textbooks on North America available to university, college and school children, and finding that black America is almost completely unacknowledged - similar material in Goodey's (1970) account of 'The role of the Indian in North Dakota's geography', touching on the erasure of native Americans from basic texts on North Dakota history and geography, as well as reflecting on an alternative model of geographers 'as researcher-advocates working in teams along with lawyers and other professionals in support of Indian demands' ...

- and what surprised me for all sorts of reasons was a notice in the July, 1972 issue (the one containing Harvey's famous paper) reporting a symposium on 'Black perspectives on geography', and containing the following statements:

Can Geography, as a set of concepts and tools, be of relevance in solving the problems of the Black American community? ...
Geography, a relatively new profession for the black academic, and dominated by a white epistemological framework, is faced with the problem of dealing with a black community which is becoming aware of its own lived-world experience and values. This inconsistency between the Black Imagination and the Geographical Imagination was perhaps the major impetus behind the organisation, by black students, of a symposium

(Anon, 1972, p.42)

The provocative claims here about tensions between 'the black imagination' and 'the geographical imagination', the kinds of terms which might well today be used in this connection, surely point to a post-colonial problematic; as too do later questions such as 'are the current models in use adequate for our needs and goals?' and 'can we

delineate a black perspective in geography?' As part of the eclectic radical geographies swirling through the early pages of *Antipode*, therefore, issues to do with the 'whiteness' of a 'colonial' discipline rang clear, but did so alongside what might now readily be termed a postcolonial dynamic concerned to 'de-whiten' and 'de-colonise' the ideas and practices of the discipline.

Concluding comments

- other contents of the journal that deserve comment, such as Jeremy Anderson's (1969) arguments in the first issue about the moral problems of remote sensing (the invasion of the self through surveillance technologies, particularly given military involvement in RST) - such as the first stirrings of a feminist geography in the exchange between Burnett (1973) and Breugel (1973), and then in the excellent but sadly neglected paper by Hayford (1974) on 'The geography of women' - such as Ley's (1974) spirited proposal of a Christian perspective on 'good and evil in the city', contra a Marxist approach - such as the distinctly strange paper by Bunge (1973) in which he seeks out a utopian environment in the West Indies for the poor black children of Detroit - such as Eliot Hurst's (1973) all-defeating assault on the citidals of 'establishment geography' - and the list could go on. (And it should of course also include the first stirrings of a Marxist geography in the pioneer papers by the likes of Anderson, Blaut, Buchanan, Docherty, Folke, Massey, Slater, Walker.) ...

- but I hope that I have said enough to jog a few memories, prompt a few wry smiles, wet a few appetites, etc. in reconstructing something of the highly eclectic radical geographies present in the earliest issues of *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography* - I have found it genuinely instructive and even chastening to re-read these issues, and to realise just how much the most up-to-the-minute conceptual and political issues being tackled by current human geographers were indeed pre-figured in the early *Antipodes* - and not only were such issues prefigured, the geographers involved actually made strides, suggested possibilities, spotted pitfalls, etc. that have great resonance with, even lessons for, what we are often attempting to think through now - it is a pity that collectively we as geographers do forget so much, when maybe, just maybe, we actually did not do so badly at inventing the wheel the first time around (at least in the example of *Antipode*) ...