# 1

# Radical Theory/Critical Praxis: Academic Geography Beyond the Academy?

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## Introduction

For the past thirty five years, geographers have systematically engaged with and developed radical and critical theories of social, economic and environmental issues, and undertaken critical praxis.  Pioneered in the late 1960s as a reaction to the politically sterile and peopleless quantitative geography and a desire to enact fundamental changes to the organisation and structures of society, radical geography engaged with Marxist theory to envisage a new kind of human geography (see Peet 1977).  As a consequence, at this time there was hyperbole about revolutions of relevance (Dickinson and Clarke 1972) and 'social responsibility' (Prince 1971).  In Britain, such 'revolutions' were set against a context of geographical concern for the impoverished dating from the inter-war years and increased concern about the 'Third World'.  In America, protest against the Vietnam war, and numerous civil rights demonstrations and rioting concerned with the impoverishment of urban populations and race relations provided similar impetus.  According to Dickinson and Clarke (1972) this radical shift in emphasis and ideology of research (not necessarily methodology) was driven by three main aims: (1) to highlight socially relevant issues at 'home' as well as abroad; (2) to place greater emphasis on the ends rather than the means of research; (3) and to strive to influence those making policy, in addition to the general public.  This is encapsulated in David Smith's (1976, 84) impassioned plea:

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We are beginning to realize that masses of numerical data and sharp analytical tools are not in themselves enough: basic mechanisms for resource allocation and real-income distribution must be changed if spatial inequality/discrimination/injustice is to be reduced or eliminated. This, in its turn, requires changes in personal and professional values. We cannot retreat into abstract analysis and ethical neutrality. The real world requires involvement in social change, for we are among the 'actors' ourselves. As part of the problem, we must participate in the solution.

In many ways, however, the intended shift in the actor status of geographers manifested itself in two main forms – on the one hand, the radicalisation of both the writing of academics and the material taught to students (who in turn would go forth into the world and make change) and, on the other, via engagements with policy and policy makers, with geographers seen to be 'the best equipped intellectually to interpret social goals in terms of planning outcomes' (Blowers 1974, 36). In contrast, participation, specifically related to notions of action and activism, appears to have been somewhat restrained, particularly in terms of direct contact and co-operation with those traditionally deemed to be 'under study' or 'the victims'. In other words, social change would be directed by geographers distant from the locales and people whose lives they wished to transform, with their attention being directed at those in power, specifically those who could change policy, and to the students who would become the next generation of policy makers and shakers. Only a few geographers, such as Bill Bunge (1971, 1973) and Bob Colenutt (1970), appeared to take the step 'onto the streets'.

Fuller (1999) notes how, in developing his 'geobiography' of his home area in Detroit, Bunge achieved a 'redefinition of the research problematic and intellectual commitment of the researcher away from a smug campus career, to one incorporating a dedicated community perspective which pivots around what Howe (1954) in another context called a 'spirit of iconoclasm'' (Merrifield 1995, 57). This redefinition, however, was an uncomfortable process. Through the embrace of such a perspective, Bunge's 'critical positioning' (Merrifield 1995, 52) manifested itself through an awareness that his 'life had been spent buried in books', and a desire to 'bring global problems down to earth, to the scale of people's normal lives' (Bunge 1979, 170 cited in Merrifield 1995, 53). As Merrifield highlights, the interaction between Bunge and the Detroit locals, his integration with them, became defined in terms of survival, or 'the fragile thread binding logic, ethics and politics' (1995, 54). To a degree pre-empting debates that would follow, Bunge, through his awareness of his positionality in relation to the Detroit community, questioned the ability of the researcher to empathise and situate him/herself within an impoverished community. This was encapsulated within his acceptance of the 'big important gaps' that would exist as a result of his inability to situate himself outside of his past. In particular, he recognised that the route of 'survival' would involve emotional difficulty, an honest political and intellectual commitment to the expedition, and dogged determination (Merrifield 1995).

Geographers' engagement with Marxism and limited forms of radical praxis continued throughout the 1970s, particularly after the publication of David Harvey's influential 'Social Justice and the City' (1972), accompanied by other projects that drew on alternative theories of social justice (e.g. Smith 1977). However, in the 1980s, radical geographers' preoccupation with Marxism began to wane (though it remains a central

philosophical position in the discipline; see Castree 1999, Smith 2000, Harvey 2000, and Merrifield 2003) as interest developed in other critical social theories, notably structuration theory (e.g. Thrift 1983; Gregory and Urry 1985), political economy (Peet and Thrift 1989), realism (Sayer 1984) and feminism (e.g. Massey 1984; Women and Geography and Study Group 1984). Of these, feminist geography, in particular, drew attention back to issues of praxis, raising fundamental questions concerning ontology, epistemology and methodology.

As summarised by the Women and Geography and Study Group (1997), throughout the 1980s and early 1990s feminist geographers examined, in detail, ways of knowing, ways of asking, ways of interpreting, and ways of writing (also see Jones et al. 1997; Moss 2002). Through its theoretical focus on the imbalance of power-relations in society, particularly but not exclusively in relation to patriarchal relations, feminist praxis concerns not only studying those relations but challenging them, seeking an academic praxis that is emancipatory and empowering for the participants in the research. This recognises that the research process itself is loaded with power-relations between researcher and researched that need to be carefully thought about and negotiated. Here, there is a need for the researcher to adopt a reflexive stance, considering their own positionality and how it might be mitigating the research being undertaken. This reflexivity recognises that the production of knowledge is situated, shaped by the values and knowledges of the researcher and the complex social relations that exist between researcher and researched. Of course, these ideas posed a serious challenge to traditional conceptions of research as objective, value-free and impassionate and not unsurprisingly were, and have continued to be, hugely influential across the discipline. As a consequence, feminist praxis has been drawn on widely by those undertaking research in relation to other oppressed groups and issues.

In the 1990s, feminist and political-economic approaches were themselves complemented by, or re-worked in relation to (or in some cases replaced by) postmodern (e.g. Soja 1995), poststructuralist (e.g. Doel 1999), postcolonial (e.g. Blunt and McEwan 2002) and psychoanalytic (e.g. Sibley 1995; *Social and Cultural Geography* 4, no. 3) theories. In the main these approaches work as theoretic critiques of academic practice and society, rather than driving 'on the streets' empirical research. This is not to say that, as Dempsey and Rowe (this volume) argue, that they cannot be used as theoretic toolkits for underpinning activism or other kinds of praxis, but that such radical use is relatively rare (also see Houston and Pulido 2002; Sibley this volume). Indeed, postmodern approaches have been criticised severely for their eschewal of the concept of 'truth' which is seen to create a political field in which justice and rights become slippery and relative (see Mitchell, this volume). Similarly, poststructural approaches have been criticised for their supposed undermining of organised resistance as they destabilise the very categories (e.g. class, gender, race, sexuality) around which mobilisation might occur (Knopp 1995).

In contrast, and partly as a reaction to the perceived retreat into the ivory tower away from both policy and the streets, other radical/critical geographers from the mid-1990s on have begun to explore more activist-led research. Here, there has been a concern with the academic/activist divide, surprisingly a previously little discussed interface (see Kitchin and Hubbard 1999). Indeed, despite Bunge's 'step onto the streets', until this time few geographers had married their empirical research, activism and writing strategy. This has started to change, with for example, Chouinard (1994), Routledge (1996) and Maxey

(1998) arguing that academics have a social responsibility, given their training, access to information, and freedom of expression, to make a difference on the ground (rather than contribute from a distance). As Chouinard (1994, 5) argued this move to activist/academic identity:

> means putting ourselves 'on the line' as academics who will not go along with the latest 'fashion' simply because it sells, and who takes seriously the notion that 'knowledge is power'. It means as well personal decisions to put one's abilities at the disposal of groups at the margins of and outside academia. This is not taking the 'moral high ground' but simply saying that if you want to help in struggles against opposition you have to 'connect' with the trenches.

This is not necessarily to say that activist research is 'better' or morally superior than that conducted at a distance, but rather that it should be considered as a serious potential course of action (Kitchin and Hubbard 1999).

This focus on academics as professional activists (rather than activism being seen as separate from academia and conducted away from the university) has been accompanied by an exploration of participatory approaches to research (e.g. Fuller et al. 2003; Kesby 2000; Kitchin 1999). Again building from feminist praxis, participatory action research, for example, aims to build a deontological approach (judges research according to whether the researcher would wish it upon herself/himself, and whether the participants are treated with the respect due to them) by joining with a group to explore a particular issue and to effect an action, some social change. Here, the group takes an active role in the whole research process, from ideas to hypotheses to data generation to analysis and interpretation, to writing the final report, to using the findings to lobby for change. The role of the academic, then, is not simply as expert but as primarily as enabler or facilitator, and the role of the participants is one of co-researcher or co-activist. This arrangement allows the research to become more reflexive, reciprocal and representative (Kitchin 1999). Here co-researcher expertise is acknowledged as equal but from a different frame of reference than the academic, with co-researchers occupying insider positions (their knowledge on a particular subject is tacit, practical led, from first hand experience) and academics occupying outsider positions (they have specialised skill, systematic knowledge, are theory led, and based upon second-hand experience). Such a research strategy works to empower participants with skills and places the academic in the community.

In crude terms, we would posit that these rapid changes in theoretical underpinnings of critical/radical geographical research are due to the disciplinary trend, evident from the late 1960s onwards, of geographers increasingly drawing theoretical inspiration from across the social sciences (rather than natural sciences to which it had traditionally looked). Consequently, geography's theoretic development has largely mirrored changes occurring in other disciplines (although often occurring later and in quicker succession), and this was particularly the case from the late 1980s onwards with the so-called 'cultural turn' (see Philo 1991; Hubbard et al. 2002). The nature of these theoretic changes meant that the preoccupation with capital as the dominant shaper of society, evident in the 1960s and 70s, was replaced with a broader focus on different forms of power from the 1980s onwards. As such, structuralist and materialist accounts were complemented or replaced by theories more sensitive to human agency, relationality, and

contingency. Further, an emphasis on studying the geographies experienced and created by the majority was supplemented with a focus on those groups on the margins of contemporary society. In both cases there has been ontological and epistemological shifts that has required new ways of thinking about methodology and praxis, foregrounding issues of positionality, reflexivity, situatedness, empowerment, and so on.

While this extremely generalised, potted history and crude explanation glosses over complex theoretical developments and debates within the discipline, it illustrates the present-day diversity of theoretic allegiances and praxis of radical and critical geographers. So what unites them? Why group them together at all? We would contend that what unites them is their ideology – a shared commitment to: expose the socio-spatial processes that (re)produce inequalities between people and places; challenge and change those inequalities; and bridge the divide between theorisation and praxis. In other words, radical and critical praxis, while a form of applied geography, differs from what is commonly held to be applied geography (as typified by the journal of that name) because of its ideological intent; its challenge rather than support of the status quo. As such, it stands in opposition to calls from non-radical/critical geographers for the discipline to become more 'relevant' and 'applied' by serving the interests of the state and business through consultancy (exemplified by Ron Martin 1999, or by Reg Golledge in his *AAG Newsletter* columns 2000-01). The differences between approaches lie in how they conceptualise the ways in which inequalities should be theorised and exposed; what kind of change is required (from liberal ideas of inclusion through to radical and fundamental societal restructuring); and how theory should be made to work. In this book we are predominately interested in the latter – the extent to which geographers are making a difference, why this may, or may not be the case, and perhaps, most crucially, illustrating ways in which geographers can make a difference beyond the academy

These questions seem to have gained salience in recent years, particularly the former. As noted, above, there is a large literature that has focused on forms of critical praxis. This has been complemented more recently by published papers (e.g. Blomley 1994; Chouinard 1994; Castree 2000) and a number of conferences and conference sessions that have started to question the difference geographical praxis makes – the degree to which it actually changes the world. Indeed, we think it is fair to say that there are a growing number of radical/critical geographers who have become increasingly dissatisfied with the rhetorical but perceived inert nature of much radical/critical geography, and who are asking whether the ideals, and ideological aims and objectives envisaged by the pioneer radical geographers, and taken up by successive waves of radical/critical geographers, have been realised in any kind of meaningful way. Many are now asking whether radical/critical geographers have really managed to move beyond the academy to become engaged in policy debates or emancipatory praxis with everyday people in everyday places who face prejudice and oppression. Has the development of radical/critical geography all been in vain, a purely ideological, theoretical project that fails to deliver on its ideological intent?

## Radical/critical geography beyond the academy?

Of course, the extent to which radical/critical geography fails to make a difference beyond the academy, depends on what is meant by 'beyond the academy', what is meant by 'difference', and how success is measured!

For us, engaging with pursuits 'beyond the academy' means engaging in academic-related activities that take place beyond the immediate confines of the university; some kind of interaction with the wider community. Of course, in these terms, nearly all research is conducted 'beyond the academy'. As noted, what differentiates radical/critical geography is that rather than simply wishing to study, it wishes to change – to make a difference. Again, as already noted, applied geography similarly aims to affect change. However, whereas applied geography reproduces the status quo, radical/critical geography challenges it. The difference radical/critical geography aims to make, then, is to transform, in emancipatory and empowering terms, social relations. And this is where the concern over the extent to which radical/critical geography makes a difference lies – whether the difference radical/critical geographers make is through their academic praxis.

As Kitchin and Hubbard (1999) note, there is much anecdotal evidence, for example evident on the Critical Geography Forum mailing list, that many who would identify as radical or critical geographers are involved in seeking to make a difference beyond the academy through pursuits that aim to enact social, political and economic change. For example, as hunt saboteurs, anti-roads protestors, green activists, charity workers, homeless advocates, and so on. In addition, there are those that are involved in local politics as local councillors, lobbyists, community representatives, magistrates, and so on. Moreover, as Maxey (1999, this volume; see also Routledge, this volume) argues, given that our social world is produced through everyday acts and thoughts that we all engage in, and that activism is a process of reflecting and acting upon this condition (for academics informed by their work), at one level all geographers (indeed everybody) are activists. Geographers then are making a difference beyond the academy! Moreover, and as all the chapters in this volume illustrate, they are undoubtedly using their skills and knowledges as academics in undertaking these roles.

That said, there still seems to be some scholarly 'distance' maintained between geographers' activism and their teaching, research and publishing activities; some boundary that stops their activism and academic roles becoming one (or at least substantially overlapping). In this sense, geographers' radicalness still seems curtailed, set a distance, and little expressed through their academic praxis. Here, critical praxis seems to consist of little else beyond pedagogy and academic writing. Potentially it might consist of calling for changes in policy. It may consist of research praxis that aims to be more reflexive or emancipatory or empowering (changing the conditions of the research process but rarely seeking wider social change). But it rarely consists of a marriage between academic and activist roles, in which one's private and professional attempts to change the world are not divided into distinct and separable roles and tasks.

## Threats to critical praxis

If radical/critical geography as critical praxis has largely failed to move out of the classroom or the pages of journals and books, or beyond research strategies that aim to be more reflexive or situated, then it seems reasonable to ask why? How is it, that privately many radical/critical geographers are activists, yet there empirical research and their activities as academics is largely divorced from such a role? We feel that, alongside many other negative forces at work on a variety of scales, there are two main reasons, both structural.

On one level, shifting from academic to activist/academics arguably works to diminish the role and power of the academy. As Bourdieu (1988) has noted, the distinction between the 'ivory tower' and the world beyond has been an important strategy in maintaining the pedagogical authority of education, an authority that is seen to be compromised when academics attempt to bridge these two worlds. Taking academic practices and insights beyond the academy and making them available in sharable, doable ways undermines the system which provides and maintains academics' power. It also undermines the value of academic knowledges as opposed to alternative ways of gaining understanding. Hence, while critical/radical geographers acknowledge that academic knowledge(s) are produced, situated and politicised, we would argue that they frequently seek to maintain the division between 'gaze' and action in an attempt to (re)assert their academic credentials (Kitchin and Hubbard 1999; Wilton, this volume). Others, for example, Don Mitchell (this volume), seek to maintain the distinction by drawing clear boundaries that demarcate the role of academics. For him, an academic's primary role is to be an 'academic' – a producer of knowledge – not an activist; it is to supply the theory and observations to be used by activists in challenging the status quo, not to become an activist.

At a different level, the political economy of the education sector has been undergoing steady restructuring given the pressures of neoliberal imperatives. In general terms, there has been a corporatisation of universities, with the adoption of management practices from competitive businesses and the ethos of flexible accumulation dynamics. Universities now compete against one another for 'customers' (e.g. students, public and private research monies) through their 'products' offered (e.g. courses, skilled staff), and also seek ways to generate their own income (e.g. patents, campus companies, consultancy, endowed chairs) to fund their activities. In effect, universities are part of the growing 'knowledge economy'. Moreover, there has been a drive to transform public universities from sites of learning per se to institutions that more directly serve the wider interests of state, industry, and the public (see Bassett 1996; Mitchell 1999; Readings 1996; Castree and Sparke 2000). Accompanying this shift has been a drive to make these institutions more 'open' and accountable to the public. Here, the issue of tangibility and visibility is important – to be able to demonstrate accountability in some kind of quantifiable way. Consequently there has been the introduction of discourses of corporate accountancy, where educational activities and outputs are quantified and counted around a parallel discourse of 'excellence' (Castree and Sparke 2000). As Demeritt (2000, 313) states:

> the neoliberal discourse of public accountability has sought to make accountability synonymous with cost-effectiveness, public needs with the demands of paying customers, and public relevance with wealth generation and the research needs of policy making.

In the UK, for example, this has led to the development of a massive accounting culture/industry, including the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), peer-review of funded projects, teaching quality audits, and assessment of postgraduate programs, with rewards in the way of financial incentives to those who perform well under the designated criteria and penalties of restricted funding or exclusion from funding lines for those that perform poorly.

This drive towards a 'free market-economy' educational sector through increased productivity, efficiency and accountability is having a number of effects on the ways in which universities operate, work loads and work conditions, and types and amounts of outputs. For example, it is increasingly common for individual departments to become cost centres and the university to operate as an internal market, where all activities – time, output, teaching, administration and so on – are quantified and balanced, and costs paid for lighting, heating, room space and so on. In addition, it is common for staff to be set levels of 'approved' productivity: targets on the number of articles and in which journals, or targets for research monies and from what sources. Moreover, in some cases, institutions are pressuring staff to adopt certain kinds of research profiles, namely that which is seen to be more applied, instrumental, practical, socially 'relevant' (e.g. relates to policy), and marketable to government and business, devaluing 'pure', basic, and, more crucially, in relation to arguments set out above, activist research.

Furthermore, it is evident that the university labour market is going through some profound changes. In particular, there has been a marked increase in the employment of contract staff and informal employment of postgraduates. In the UK, it is estimated that forty percent of all academic posts are contract positions on fixed term, short term or rolling, renewable contracts, and 82 per cent of all new posts are on a contract basis (Shelton et al. 2001). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) reports that in the US, non-tenure track faculty now account for approximately 50 per cent of all appointments in the university sector, and about 38 per cent of all faculty appointments are part-time posts (cited in Yates 2000). These contract posts are often poorly paid, insecure, with few rights and benefits; they are often undervalued, marginalised and exploited within institutions despite their central role in the delivery of teaching and completion of research projects (Shelton et al. 2001). This uncertain environment, we would contend, breeds conformist and 'safe' research.

Against this background, and somewhat ironically, arguments have been made concerning the lack of critical geographies focusing on the university and academy itself (see Castree 2002). For example, there has been little analysis of how the university disciplines the disciplines (and the academic actors within) through webs of power. There has been little analysis of what might be termed the performative and politicised 'dance of the academic', wherein academics can be perceived as being caught in a series of different 'dances' (teacher, supervisor, mentor, administrator, committee member, chairperson, researcher, writer, editor, reviewer, adviser, examiner, manager, conference organiser, activist), set to different 'tunes' (university, students, colleagues, collaborators, contributors, publishers, committees, academic bodies, research and funding agencies, research participants) (see Kitchin 2004). Finally, there has been little analysis of how the modern academic has been coerced into unquestioningly self-disciplining and exploiting their own labour for gain, what these 'gains' might be, or perhaps more importantly, who ultimately benefits.

These two structural constraints, the desire to maintain the power of the academy in knowledge production and the desire to shape the education system for the purposes of the status quo, work to delimit and limit the work of radical/critical geographers. They pressure academics to produce certain kinds of knowledge and to undertake particular kinds of praxis. As noted, this pressure is enforced through the application of penalties. These range from constrained promotion (see Sibley, this volume) and failure to secure

tenure, to unofficial censorship (through papers being rejected), and so on. In other words, as Cloke (this volume) discusses, being an activist/academic can be an uncomfortable position, it is a role that can be constraining, it is a role that can position one awkwardly within a department/discipline that values some kinds of research more than others, and it is a role that can limit or curtail a career. That said, for many people it is increasingly a role that is seen as worthwhile and imperative – the outcomes override the limitations. Moreover, and again as many of the chapters herein illustrate vividly, they are finding interesting and creative ways to make their efforts 'count' inside the academy as well as outside, through, for example, commodifying their activism into academic products, securing research funding for their activist projects, or finding ways to balance different roles.

## The conference, the book

It is within the context outlined above that the 'Beyond the Academy? Critical Geographies in Action' conference was convened at Northumbria University in September 2001. Through paper presentations and workshops delegates explored issues surrounding the potential for, and pitfalls of, putting critical geography into action, and the politics, ethics and practicalities critical geographers face in feeding into policy, engaging in activism, undertaking consultancy work, contributing to local/national debates/politics, and in striving to engender change in local communities. Inspired by this conference, and including a number of contributions by its participants, plus other commissioned chapters, this e-book brings together a number of academics who have (1) been involved in contemporary debates over how successful radical/critical geographers have been in providing ideologically-grounded, engaged praxis, (2) started to think through how a more 'relevant' set of geographies can be enacted, and (3) sought to make a difference through their own critical praxis beyond the academy. Authors were invited to write about their own work beyond the academy, and to reflect on three issues in particular: the notion of what it means to be a radical/critical geographer (in the context of ideological and epistemological positions and the constraints of societal and institutional changes); concerns, tensions, contradictions and pitfalls of working beyond the academy; and the ways in which re-radicalised radical/critical geographies can (and do) make differences in the world at large. The following chapters, then, provide a series of discursive interventions into the nature and practice of radical/critical geographies, questioning how it might develop in productive ways that fulfil its ideological intent.

It is fair to say that this book has been subject to some of the structural constraints we outline above. As editors, our initial impulse was to seek a publishing contract with a major publisher – to capitalise on the academic value of the conference papers by commodifying the knowledge expressed within a book that would be valued by university administrators (as a recognisable, 'legitimate' product). Yes, we got carried away in the 'academic moment'. To that end, we identified the papers and the authors that we thought would hold currency (and which fitted together to provide a coherent text) – itself a deeply political exercise – and approached prospective authors and wrote a book proposal. Rather than simply approach a publisher, however, and after some reflection, we decided to consider a variety of different outlets and proposed these to the prospective authors to let them help decide how the book would be published. The vast majority favoured publication in the *Antipode* book series (with RAE and tenure issues being a predominant

factor in a number of potential contributors minds). The other options were a Praxis (e)Press book, or a special issue of various journals. The response, not from the *Antipode* book series editor, but from Blackwell was indicative of trends in the publishing sector. The publisher felt that while interesting and worthy, it was not prepared to test its commercial viability through publication – a 'radical' book series that needed to be mainstream! Fortuitously, the rejection by Blackwell eased our growing unease at publishing the papers in a fashion that reproduced the structures that many of the papers critiqued. Indeed, we were increasingly uncomfortable with the paradox concerning the relationship between the subject matter, themes, rationale and spirit of the original conference, and how these ideas would be disseminated – it was, very much, a 'wake-up call'. The favoured second choice had been a Praxis (e)Press book and we now (more comfortably) pursued this line, despite issues about 'currency'. It is fair to note that some authors did drop out at this point and others expressed concern as to the degree to which their work would be seen to 'count' by those who counted. To this end a number of key issues, notably quality and focus were worked through with the supportive and enthusiastic help of Lawrence Berg and Pamela Moss.

Taken together the authors provide a quality and focused, wide-ranging engagement with the intersections of theory and praxis, academy and beyond, within the context of the ideological bases of radical/critical geographies. In the chapters that follow, the authors use their own experiences of research, activism, consultancy and teaching – their attempts to make a difference beyond the academy – to illustrate their arguments (with many, if not all of the authors taking a strongly reflexive tone, interrogating their own thoughts and practices as a vehicle for thinking through what it means to work from an overt ideological position that seeks to make a difference). As one might expect, there are many recurring themes, but there are also marked contrasts.

## The chapters

In the next chapter, Don Mitchell, approaches the issue of intervening beyond the academy from a markedly different perspective than the chapters in the remainder of the book. In short, Mitchell provides a robust call for academics to contribute to social change by effectively doing (and doing effectively) what we are employed to do – 'good and important, and committed work, within the academy'. This call is grounded in Mitchell's ongoing critical examination (and simultaneous protestations) of the way the US Supreme Court's 'Public Forum Doctrine' (which allows for restrictions to be placed on the 'time, place, and manner' of protest) acts as a 'massive abridgement' of the right to (free) speech and assembly in the United States. He reflects on his experiences of presenting often detailed and technical material concerning this abridgement to a range of audiences, arguing that their reactions have varied from intrigue (outside the US) to getting 'mad' (inside the US), with many American audience members noting that the material presented had enabled them to make a (previously unrecognised) link between their own experiences in conducting protest as activists, and the latent actions/strategies of seemingly cunning and oppressive local authorities. As such, and by drawing a parallel to the work of Karl Marx (whose 'goal was to instruct and agitate') Mitchell argues that 'sometimes what activists and other non-academics most need is thorough academic analysis', especially that which 'provides a new way of seeing, a new way of understanding the social and power relations within which people live and work'. Mitchell's desire to, essentially, do

his job (well) via what may be considered to be 'fat empirics' (see Martin 2001; Wilbert and Hoskyns, this volume), is strongly informed (and compelled) by recognition of 'what has been bequeathed us' through previous struggles inside the academy (by the likes of Bill Bunge and Jim Blaut), struggles which continue to allow academics the time and space to think and act. As he argues, 'my power resides precisely in the time that I have to think and to read and to write – to engage in the 'force of abstraction' – and then to use all that, to teach, both in the classroom and through writing and lecturing', a (non-apologetic) consequence of which, he admits, is having very little time available for more direct activism. This desire is also linked to the need to plug the gap generated by a 'defeatist postmodernism' that has removed 'truth' as a 'goal of radical, progressive, revolutionary change'. As such, Mitchell stresses the need for revelations of truths ('as best we can know them at this time, and in this place') via the uncovering of any truth's constituents, and their moulding into 'convincing accounts of how the world works'. For Mitchell, this is radical work, getting 'to the root or origin', in that, 'without radical research, the chances of radical results are diminished'.

In Chapter Three, Jessica Dempsey and James Rowe challenge Mitchell's argument in two ways. First, while still recognising the role of academics as theory-makers, they seek to make explicit the links between radical theory and critical, activist praxis, and second by examining and advocating poststructuralist means of enacting progressive social change and politics. In essence, their chapter is a plea for a 'collegial rethinking of theory's role in social movements'. Far removed from being another shot fired in the so-called 'theory wars', Dempsey and Rowe hope to make a difference through an impassioned focus 'on how a number of poststructural insights can help activists and movement participants in their day-to-day struggles' through the ability of such insights to 'enliven the left by helping academics practice theory differently'. They attempt to do this by 'unpacking' a poststructuralist approach (based around the work of Foucault and Deleuze) that speaks to issues of engagement and relevance through the notion of 'theory-as-tool-kit'. Here, the key purpose of theory is 'intensifying struggle', which in itself accords it a 'deep resonance with activist knowledge production'. Here, and echoing Paul Routledge's chapter, both 'theory-as-tool-kit' and 'activist knowledge production' are guided by a necessary appreciation of the political terrain, detachment from which means that the 'theorist loses touch with the political spaces they should be interrogating, and the constituencies they should be dealing with'. Dempsey and Rowe suggest that the 'tool-kit' approach also offers an important caveat to the utility of poststructuralist thought. They suggest that 'there are times when poststructural insights are useful to movements, and times when they are not … . Left movements have different theoretical needs at different times, and thus require different theoretical tools'. As such, and while recognising that poststructuralist theory cannot provide all the necessary tools, Dempsey and Rowe seek to outline three particular problems faced by Left activists and movements in which poststructuralist insights are particularly useful: the replication of exclusions that activists and movements are seeking to counter, by the activists and movements themselves; tension between strategic and moral vision; and the essentialization of the 'enemy'.

This focus on theory though holds potential dangers. In the chapter that follows, David Sibley poignantly and critically reflects on his career as an academic through a psychoanalytical exploration of the 'madness of institutions'. Specifically, he strives to make sense of how his story of research and writing has entailed a shift from ethnography

and involvement with excluded minorities (Gypsies in particular) towards a (now more negatively perceived) increased concern with theory.  Sibley notes that his initial contact with Gypsies appeared to him to be 'quite distinct' from an academic life that (at that time) 'was devoted to obscure exercises in spatial analysis'.  Moreover, any desire to fuse the two together was truncated by a belief (now adjudged as arrogance) that few academics would be motivated to get involved with such issues 'as a result of reading anything I might have written'.  Despite this, reservations were (nervously) cast aside, and with one eye at least on the need for what he terms, 'academic legitimacy', Sibley embarked on the process of striving to inform his experiences through drawing on 'good enough' theory.  The problem, as the remainder of the chapter highlights, is that 'there is no such thing as 'good enough' theory when theories have to be continually produced' as a necessary element in the academic accumulation process; the pressures to enter into the theory production process, and the various 'rewards' received as a result, meant that Sibley found himself 'unable to resist a move from practical involvement to theoretical elaboration', shifting 'from people to texts'.  Looking back, Sibley interprets this 'tendency' as being inescapably intertwined with changes in the university system and its increasing deference to market forces.  Here he draws upon psychoanalysis to expose 'the madness of taken-for-granted everyday practices' within universities, and the processes of institutional change that have lead to the formation of 'strong boundaries and hierarchies as a defence against environmental uncertainty – disorder and chaos' – put crudely, the wrong type of 'research'.  Through these processes of change, Sibley argues that universities are increasingly characterised by the vertical organisation of activity, with power controlled at the top, and with a myriad of systems of surveillance, accountability and control being employed to 'keep a check on deviance and resistance'.  As a result, long term involvement with communities has become increasingly discouraged, penalised, offered lip-service, or just made plain near impossible as a result of what Sibley describes as 'a kind of psychosis which accompanies the increasing insulation of academic institutions as they focus increasingly on production and the creation of value, narrowly defined by the state and the market.'  As Sibley concludes, 'Geography, like other increasingly insulated disciplines, becomes part of the problem and the case for resistance becomes more compelling'.

Similarly, in Chapter Four, Chris Wilbert and Teresa Hoskyns reflect upon the recent invocations of yet another apparent 'crisis' in social and cultural geography, and human geography more generally, a crisis borne out of the very real threat to the 'houses of knowledge' enacted by university restructuring programmes.  They suggest that crisis may be compounded by a perceived lack of contact between the inhabitants of these houses and the 'real world', but that, in particular, it may be seen to relate to the perceived irrelevance of human geography to policy needs/wants at all scales, and the lack of, or nervousness surrounding 'critique' in such work.  Here they contend that, despite suggestions that there has perhaps never been a more potentially fruitful time for geographers to get involved in policy work, such work lacks a political cutting edge.  For Wilbert and Hoskyns, this lack of cutting edge relates to 'a disavowal that critique can be, indeed should be, a central aspect of engaging in policy, or indeed any other work'.  What follows, by way of Adorno and his work on legitimacy and critique, is a stinging attack on the limits of current 'relevant' geographical enquiry.  They argue that the conjoining of theory and practice is all to often 'accidentally' lost, that critique is all too often constrained/dismissed in the face of the perceived need for it to be acceptable, constructive

and responsible (read cuddly, not too radical/dangerous, and neoliberalist-embracing), and that 'relevant' work is all too often equated with being 'legitimate', where legitimate dictates 'who is legitimately seen to be able to engage seriously in critique, as well as what kinds of things can be legitimately critiqued and how'. It would be all too easy (and ironic) for such views to be dismissed as yet another attack on the call for more 'relevant' public policy work, but the authors are clear that they 'are not against policy focused geography per se'. What they do object to, however, is the way much policy work seemingly accepts the status quo in return for RAE ratings and research income, how supposedly 'participatory' initiatives are all too often undermined from their very beginning, and how radical alternatives become mired within notions of 'relevance' that 'seem narrow, exclusionary and morally judgmental without being reflexive about the situatedness of such judgments'.

The following chapters describe the ways in which their authors have sought to be 'relevant' without necessarily succumbing to the neoliberal agendas rife in contemporary university settings. In noting the desire of many academics to make some kind of difference beyond the academy whilst remaining rooted within it, Keith Halfacree identifies two main forms of approach than can facilitate exploration of the pitfalls, problematics and potentials of such an undertaking. These are to reflect personally on our own practices (as a number of authors elsewhere in this collection have chosen to do), and/or to undertake 'sympathetic critique of the trials and tribulations of high profile radical academics'. It is the latter that forms the basis for his chapter, where he outlines, and reflects upon, the experiences of the 'two Georges', McKay and Monbiot, who have researched and commentated on 'DiY culture' in a range of media. Halfacree notes how, in spite of good connections to the groups they engage with, reception of their work 'has often been quite hostile'. Reflection on the hostility directed towards the work of George McKay leads Halfacree to compare attempts by 'committed' academics to balance academic and activist identities (essentially by seeking to remove the dualistic/binary of academic and activist, becoming both, and thereby opening up space for 'meaningful critical engagement'). He reflects upon the reception such attempts can receive from critics, who 'operate within a more absolutist and dualistic framework', where one can be either activist or academic, not both. This leads Halfacree to suggest that George McKay's work is seen as largely academic and attacked either for being inappropriate due to its academic nature or, conversely, for not being academic enough. Similarly, interpretations of the work and experiences of George Monbiot leads Halfacree to draw upon Bauman's distinction between academics as 'legislators' or 'interpretors'. Halfacree uses this work to identify that the critical hostility afforded to George Monbiot emanated from his perceived, and negatively viewed, shift from 'interpretor' (as a journalist) to a position as internal 'legislator' to a DiY movement that prides itself on its non-hierarchical nature. Ultimately, Halfacree's analysis illustrates that different strategies and tactics for the balancing of academic research and activism all hold certain difficulties. However, he suggests that reflection on our roles and identities, and how they may be interpreted can help to identify and ward off more obvious pitfalls.

The remaining chapters, to varying degrees, all take Halfacree's first path and seek to reflect critically on the nature of developing and nurturing radical theory and engaging with critical praxis. Set against the recent calls (Castree 2002) for increased scrutiny of what happens inside the academy, and in supporting the suggestion of a 'mental border' that perhaps delimits geographers from 'thinking differently about the possibilities and

limits of the university-based experience', Paul Routledge's chapter focuses on possible strategies that geographers might draw upon in 'being political'. Noting his own attempts to conduct critical collaborative research that simultaneously encompasses a politics of representation (deconstructing state/elite discourses and practices) and a politics of material engagement (via involvement in networks beyond the academy), Routledge begins by drawing upon Sun Tzu's strategies of 'terrain' and 'knowing others'. The first strategy directs Routledge (through the work of Bauman and Bourdieu concerning the role and position of academics) to explore meaningful interventions both within and beyond the terrain of the (post)modern academy, whilst the latter leads him to reflect on issues of ethics and power within collaborative activist-oriented academia (or indeed, academic-oriented activism) through what he terms a 'relational ethics of struggle'. Here, Routledge suggests that such a relational ethics is 'attentive to the social context of the research and the researchers situatedness with respect to that context … [and is] about an intimate and critical knowledge of one's (institutional, personal) terrain, the (cultural, political, economic) terrain of others … knowing other with whom we collaborate as well as we can, [and is] enacted in a material, embodied way'. In so doing Routledge espouses a critical geography that necessitates (simultaneous and complimentary) interventions across multiple 'terrains', that is flexible to changing environments, states of affairs, and events, and which is 'strengthened through a politics of affinity born out of knowing others across academic and activist borders'.

Paul Cloke's chapter develops these ideas further and reflects on the author's participation in a longstanding social action project in a South African township, addressing the dilemma of how easy it is to talk and write about human geographies of ethics and justice compared to the difficulties of living out those geographies in our everyday practices. In so doing, Cloke begins by stressing that boundaries between, academy/non-academy, professional/personal, research/everyday life are essentially fluid and dynamic, leading him to question where 'beyond the academy' is! However, rather than focusing on these binary divisions, Cloke seeks to explore the processes of moving into 'contact spaces', spaces that can just as equally be formed through everyday life as through research projects or a committed focus on undertaking 'applied work'. Indeed, the discussion that follows concerns his own involvement in a project that started out as 'definitely non-research, and was never intended as fodder for conference talks or even book chapters!'. As such, the chapter revolves around two 'essentially intermingled contexts' – the development of a post-colonial partnership between a church community in Bristol and groups from the Khayelitsha township in the edge of Cape Town, South Africa, and an academic concern with dealing with otherness. After describing, and reflecting upon the development of the partnership, Cloke explores Auge's concepts of 'sense of the other' and 'sense for the other', suggesting that development of the latter within human geography is (and has been) constrained by issues of academic professionalism which mediate against long-term, longitudinal, action-based research. Despite this, however, Cloke asserts that the contexts of academia and commitments beyond are impossible to disentangle for any ethically responsible and grounded academic. Crucially, and as Cloke passionately explores in the remainder of his contribution, it is this inability to disentangle that potentially affords hope for the development of an appropriate sense for the other, with Cloke envisioning a human geography in which living ethically and acting politically can be essentially intertwined with a sense for the other in a sensitive, committed and active approach to the subject.

Likewise, Pamela Moss' chapter engages with recent discussions concerning the importance of reflexivity with regard to how critical geographers might contribute to effecting change within radical social movements. In so doing she lucidly documents her own experiences as an activist striving to effect change (which 'is not about 'out there', wherever 'out there' is; it's about right here, right now, wherever here and now are') through her participation within the Women's Housing Group (WHG). In so doing, Moss identifies three 'tensions' (structural, institutional, and personal) that have arisen through the interactions of the group. Reflection on these tensions, and the 'politics of local politics', Moss argues, has facilitated a more nuanced account of the claim, 'the personal is political', a closer critical scrutiny of the process through which change can be effected, a deeper and more productive understanding of how local politics work, and better consideration of how 'praxis effects change in places that matter…the here and the now that must be traversed before enacting the liberatory capacity of a feminist (or critical) politics'.

Continuing the reflexive theme, Rob Wilton then explores the role and ethics of research and the researcher, with a reflexive focus on issues surrounding collaborative research. Wilton uses his own collaboration with a psychiatric consumer/survivor group in Hamilton, Ontario, to reflect on recent debates within the field of disability studies concerning the merits (or otherwise) of research by non-disabled actors on/with disabled people, alongside an engagement with Pierre Bourdieu's call for a reflexive and politically engaged social science. In doing so, he raises key questions (informed by the shared thrust of these literatures) concerning the need for a social science that is simultaneously committed to effecting social change, whilst also being 'mindful of the need for a critical distance between researcher and the group with whom (s)he works' so as to maximise 'scientific legitimacy' and the positive impressions this can herald amongst some recipients of research work. In essence, Wilton explores the tricky question of 'going academic' (as opposed to going native – see Fuller 1999), and the benefits or otherwise that it can offer when working in collaboration with traditionally researched communities. In discussing his experiences Wilton argues that the balancing of such political engagement and scientific autonomy is a risky business, epitomised by the necessary process of 'translation' from experience(s) into scientific discourse (with reflexivity being necessary in order to 'ensure that the limits of the logic of theory are made explicit'), but also often exposed via the danger of reproducing the privileged position of academic discourse. However, with certain audiences, and in certain circumstances, Wilton argues that such distancing can have positive outcomes, and may be a positive strategy that can effect change beyond what maybe would have been achieved through overt and publicly recognized collaboration.

In her chapter, Perla Zusman views Anglo-American debates on academy and activism from a distance. Drawing on her reading of these debates, her activism as a member of madeinbarcelona, and her role as an academic in Spain and Latin America, she reflects on what it means to be an academic/activist. While, she notes, critical geography grew rapidly in Latin America in the 1980s in response to democratic transitions occurring at that time, since then critical analyses have concentrated on neoliberal policy, often from limited epistemological positions. As a result, activism and the academy are viewed as separate enterprises. That said, for her, the division between activism and academia is a false one. Rather than activism being a deliberate and strategic choice, often arising from fieldwork, which then has to worked into an academic agenda, she suggests that activism

should 'evolve out of a commitment to question political, social, and economic conditions'. The problem of activism arising from fieldwork or being taken back into the academy is that the central focus of any analysis tends to be the academic themselves rather than the activist movement. For her, activism cannot be seen as a sole, academic pursuit as it is built collectively as a horizontal process. As such, drawing boundaries around its enactment is a fruitless exercise – any actions are collective, as are any knowledges produced. To bring activism into the academy and to frame (and exploit) it in individual terms is therefore to do an injustice to its collective production. She illustrates the collective nature of activism by detailing resistance to urban transformation in the city of Barcelona where local residents and professionals, including academics, have come together to challenge the authorities' plans. Within this collective action academic activity was seen as one (collective) tool amongst many.

Melissa Gilbert and Michele Masucci's chapter details their work with poor communities in North Philadelphia in striving to develop and sustain service learning courses underpinned by community information technology needs. From an initial goal of community engagement via course interaction, Gilbert and Masucci detail the evolution of a 'program of integrated research, instruction and community outreach that [has] worked to support community, student and faculty empowerment, whilst balancing community and student needs in the long term'. Their work draws on critical pedagogy and seeks to rethink and revision the role of the university with regard to promoting social change in the local community. Here Gilbert and Masucci argue that such critical pedagogy necessitates 'moving beyond mere intellectual understanding of social inequality towards adopting an active role in mitigating social inequality' – in short, praxis is key. As such, Gilbert and Masucci document how their university's resources have been opened up in order to address community resource issues. They contend that for the students involved, more meaningful educational experiences have been forthcoming, facilitating (and encouraging) a more active role in their research, whilst for the faculty, research, teaching and community involvement have been elided around a set of research questions focused on issues of gender workload and resource equity. As the authors argue, these developments, through the critical pedagogic approach, have illustrated 'a viable alternative to a more isolated environment'; however, they conclude by arguing for 'community outcomes' to take their place alongside more traditional criteria for educational outcomes as until this happens outreach will be considered as less worthy than other academic pursuits.

Finally, examining how critical geographers can enact and engage in political movements, Larch Juckes Maxey forwards the notion of reflexive activism. Drawing on the Gandhian notion of Satyagraha and critical work on reflexivity, Maxey defines reflexive activism in inclusive terms as everyday reflection and practice through which we try to change the world in positive ways. This encompasses anything from direct action to simple individual actions. For Maxey, seeing activism in heroic terms closes off participation and creates situations of win or lose. Moreover, it creates tensions and splits within activist movements that act in negative, rather than positive, ways. Instead he argues we need to recognise the different energies and commitments that people can contribute. Within this framework, the boundary between activism and academia becomes blurred – they are both aspects of being and acting in the world, of seeking to make a difference (through protest or teaching or writing, etc.). That said, Maxey notes that activism is often seen to be a pursuit that is at odds with the current agenda of universities

and their sponsors.  To him, however, reflexive activism allows neoliberal agendas to be resisted and challenged and creates a means by which academics can negotiate the tensions in their work and contribute in diverse ways to activist movements.  In the latter half of the chapter he illustrates his arguments with respect to his involvement in three grassroots groups.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have sought to outline a historical context and provide a broad picture of contemporary debates concerning the development and trajectory of radical/critical theory and praxis within geography.  In particular we have concentrated on examining the extent to which radical/critical geographies ideological intent is presently being realised – whether radical/critical geographies do make a difference beyond the academy – and detailing the structural threats to different forms of critical praxis.  While we would acknowledge that many academics do contribute to wider society in all kinds of ways, we would contend that it is often in roles divorced from their research and praxis. While ideological rhetoric often eludes to academia seeking social, political, environmental change, the mechanisms through which this change is to occur are often conservative in nature, limited to teaching, writing academic articles, and occasionally policy work (that often reinforces the status quo rather than challenging it).  It is change sought through a traditional academic role, which in itself reproduces notions of what it means to be an academic.  Within this context, the marriage of academic and activist often seems alien.  The academic theorises and suggests, but the move 'onto the streets' or 'into the community' as an academic/activist is limited.  This is not to suggest that no such forays occur, with perhaps the most sustained critical praxis beyond the academy enacted by feminist geographers.  But it is to suggest that the ideological intent of much radical/critical geography is stifled, its potential unfilled and limited to the classroom and the pages of journals (not that these are not worthy pursuits – they are – but that they are only two out of many possible courses of action).  The chapters that follow all engage with this theme – how radical/critical geography can realise its ideological potential; how radical theory can be translated into critical praxis in ways beyond teaching and writing. Taken together they provide many useful insights into the role of radical/critical geographers both within the academy and beyond, the different ways in which academics can seek to make a difference, and provide lessons based on their own forays at realising the ideological intent of radical/critical geographies.

To end this chapter we would like to extend an invite and a challenge.  The invite is to join with the contributors in exploring the ways in which radical/critical geographers can make a difference.  The challenge is to help develop inclusive and, what we might call, 'active radical/critical geographies'; geographies that move beyond the academy in a multitude of ways – ways that challenge and redefine what academics are and do.

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