

Neil Smith's Long Revolutionary Imperative

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Abstract: Whether writing about gentrification or nature, the production of space or the politics of scale, uneven development or public space, globalization or revolution, the geographer Neil Smith was nothing if not provocative. Neither *Festschrift* nor hagiography, this special issue of *Antipode* critically engages Smith's work—not to unpick the rich tapestry, but to draw the threads out and spin them on in new directions. Consisting of newly commissioned essays by comrades from across the human sciences, it considers the entire range of Smith's oeuvre. This paper introduces the essays by offering not only some thoughts about Smith's intellectual contributions generally, but also new insight into the role he played in *Antipode*.

Keywords: Neil Smith, history of geography, revolution, knowledge production

Introduction

Neil Smith was born in 1954 in Leith, Scotland, something he was always proud of. And he passed away on 29 September 2012 in New York, a city he also came to love. Smith started his formal geographic training at the University of St Andrews under the mentorship of Joe Doherty, who would through the entirety of his life be a dear friend and close confidant. After completing a PhD at Johns Hopkins University, where he worked with David Harvey, Smith got his first faculty position at Columbia University, and then in the Department of Geography at Rutgers between 1988 and 2000. He then moved to the Graduate Centre at the City University of New York, where he was Distinguished Professor (in the Anthropology program)

until his death. As often happens when individuals who make important contributions to any community pass away, there was a great deal of grieving, celebration, and confusion when Smith died. All of this served to collectively memorialize his achievements, but also helps to consolidate his contributions and his intellectual legacy moving forward, so that his ideas can continue to be pondered, critiqued, adapted, and otherwise put to work. Smith's legacy is mixed, but his contributions certainly continue to help us understand the spatial politics that enable differential social power relations to unevenly shape the worlds we inhabit. At the same time, his contributions foster a revolutionary creativity that can be the wellspring for tactics, approaches, and strategies for tackling uneven development and its attendant injustices head on. There has already been a fair bit written about Smith's contributions and legacy (see Castree 2004; Cowen et al. 2012; Mitchell 2014). Despite the fact that Smith detested hagiography, as Don Mitchell (2014) observes in his extended essay about Smith's life and work, and a point that we reiterated to this project's contributors, we thought it was important to not only offer some thoughts about Smith's intellectual contributions generally, but also specifically offer some insight about the role he played in *Antipode*.

After Smith's death, Mitchell became the literary executor of his estate and spent countless hours organizing and reading Smith's wide-ranging catalog of letters, notes, and other archives. Those who knew Smith are aware that he built extensive archives with a keen eye, and produced substantial archival marginalia. Mitchell knew what we were doing, and generously shared with us a series of letters—yet to be made public (and given some of the personal details included might not ever be)—that shed light on Smith's unique role in the life of *Antipode*, and beyond. These letters led us to another set of letters between Doherty and Smith, and to oral history interviews with Joe Doherty and Eric Sheppard (the two edited *Antipode* together from the mid 1980s to the early 1990s). For this brief introductory essay, these archives were a veritable font of information to think with.

There was one letter, however, which stands out as perhaps the most interesting and prefigurative of any archival document we have seen. The 13-page, hand-written letter from Smith to Doherty, dated 8 December 1979, offers incredible insight into who Smith was, and who he was going to become. In it, Smith describes his early struggles with Marx and Harvey's interpretation of Marx while in the midst of offering Harvey extensive comments on a draft of *The Limits to Capital* (Harvey 1982). He connects this to his own political activism at the time in Baltimore. He talks about, as a graduate student, teaching two courses at Morgan State University (an important historically black college in Baltimore) and one at Johns Hopkins, and how it took a toll on his efforts to write. And, he talks about *Antipode*, which at the time he was heavily involved in, more so, perhaps, than most realize. We use this one letter to structure the introduction to this special bundle of essays, but also to offer some insights into Neil Smith beyond those that have emerged since his death.

In the letter to Doherty, Smith shares with excitement that he has figured out a plan for his dissertation. He then proceeds to outline some of the most important ideas that he would grapple with from the end of the 1970s through 2012. Three pages of the letter include a detailed sketch of how Smith envisioned the structure of his dissertation project. It mentions 10 chapters and the project's tentative title:

“Uneven Development and Capital Accumulation”. Like many enthusiastic PhD students, Smith recognizes that his vision was ambitious, perhaps overly so, and says as much to Doherty: “Clearly, that’s a handful for a dissertation, but whether the dissertation ends up being only a part of it or not, this is the project I am working on”. Interestingly, there is no mention of “nature” in the outline to Doherty, which is of course one of the key ideas many people associate with Smith’s work, especially his early work, and it looms large in his brilliant *Uneven Development* (Smith 1984a). The absence of “nature” and perennial questions about the “coherence” of *Uneven Development* were clarified on 26 March 2009 at the Las Vegas meeting of the American Association of Geographers in a session celebrating the 25th anniversary of the book. In a not uncommonly self-deprecating way, Smith shared that at “some point” during his PhD Harvey, his supervisor, proclaimed that it was time for him to be done; that he needed to just pull together what he had been working on, call it a dissertation, and “get on with it”. Interesting, then, was the fact that the dissertation Smith (1982a) graduated with was titled “Uneven Development: The Production of Nature Under Capitalism”, despite his original outline to Doherty having nothing in it about “nature”. Laying the draft overview next to the table of contents of the actual book, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*, first published in 1984 (and re-issued in 1990a and 2008a), it becomes clear that what he envisioned writing in 1979 was condensed in the second half (Chapters 4–6) of the book.

Smith had, of course, already written about nature elsewhere, most importantly in two papers published in 1980—one with Phil O’Keefe in *Antipode* and one by himself in *Science and Society* (Smith 1980; Smith and O’Keefe 1980). Foreshadowing the sentiment he shared with Doherty—“whether the dissertation ends up being only a part of it or not, this is the project I am working on”—in the conclusion of the *Antipode* essay, Smith and O’Keefe (1980:38) proclaimed:

As with nature, a sophisticated understanding of how space is produced depends on an equally sophisticated understanding of the capitalist mode of production. Space and place are produced as part of the mode of production. An understanding of *uneven development* is therefore central.

Doherty, after Smith’s death, relayed to us that:

The whole thing [writing the dissertation] took place in four months essentially. He hadn’t written anything substantive really ... he’d written a lot ... nothing that could be directly related to the PhD, and then he kind of suddenly got the notion that he needed to finish it and just sat down and in four months wrote the damn thing. And of course this was in his head, it was obviously in lots of notes because he was a serious note taker. My sense is that Neil, in the end, went for the practical rather than the spectacular, if you see what I mean, with regard to the PhD, because he took David’s [Harvey] advice that what he needed to do is get this thing written and satisfy the examiners, and then move on and publish the book. Which in some ways I think was quite substantially different from the actual PhD ... But my sense is also that the book itself actually lacked some of the radical, perhaps even speculative work that Neil wanted to put into it. So there was always a sense in which his revolutionary ardor was kind of, a little bit, compressed, subdued perhaps, in some of his former publications. Even in *Uneven Development* I think that was the case.

When asked, at the 2009 Las Vegas AAG, about the origins of *Uneven Development* and the motivations to mobilize Marxist geography, Smith offered a glimpse into the connections between political theory and the ultimate objectives he had in mind for his work, and also just how arduous that labor was:

The book is of its period, where we were actually discovering Marx, and I think that comes through in every dense paragraph, every dense sentence, every dense phrase in the book, for which I apologize. But, I think the density of it is very much about the voice, that was, “how do you take Marx and make it relevant to geography?”, and that was such a political project, I think, 25 years ago for us. In retrospect, I am going to defend that project tremendously. I think it was an extraordinary project to do. Because what Marx did for us was to give us the ability to connect, among other things, a language of nature and a language of space and a language of uneven development in terms of people’s lives, working, trying to be involved in the social reproduction of daily life. So, that’s where the voice comes from, and I think if it doesn’t quite get to the more concrete kinds of questions in 1984, you have to understand it was ingrained in this deep reading of Marx.

While he wrestled with Marx, the ideas of uneven development and the various other issues busy PhD students must contend with, Smith was also helping shape a certain “radical journal of geography”, which we turn to now.

Smith’s Contributions to *Antipode*

Smith published both his first and his last substantive journal articles in *Antipode* (Smith 1977a, 2010). During his life he published as much in *Antipode* as any other journal (a total of nine, including Smith 1979a, 1987a, 1991a, 2000a, 2002, 2005a; Smith and O’Keefe 1980). Of course, he was also very committed to other journals. He published seven times in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (Smith 1987b, 1987c, 1995, 1996a, 2000b, 2001; Smith and Desbiens 1999), six in *Progress in Human Geography* (1979b, 1990b, 1992a, 1994, 1998a, 2008b), five times in *Political Geography* (1984b, 1988a, 2005b, 2006a, 2006b), three times in the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (1987d, 1987e, 1988b), twice in *Social Text* (1992b, 1998b), twice in *The Professional Geographer* (1982b; Mitchell and Smith 1990), and once each in a number of other journals. It also is worth noting that his undergraduate thesis (Smith 1977b) provided the substance for his second publication in *Antipode* (1979a; see also Smith 1979c).

As the record shows, Smith was a guest editor of the journal in 1979 for volume 11, issue 3. Later he was co-editor for a longer period, between 1986 and 1987, while the journal was in an important moment that the archives suggest almost spelled the end. Those who know the history of *Antipode* know that it has had rough periods, like all journals probably, but there were moments during the 1980s in which those most closely aligned with it thought there was a real possibility that it would have to stop publishing as a result of a series of logistical issues related to production, distribution, and the maintenance of the funding stream to keep things going. While no doubt many people contributed to the decisions that ultimately prevented it from folding, Smith played his part too.

Thus, a letter from James Anderson, who was an early contributor to the journal, to Dick Peet, written on 31 March 1980, relays what Anderson thought was a consensus feeling about the sentiments of *Antipode's* supporters outside the US. Anderson suggests that the:

long-standing feeling that people outside N. America have difficulty getting it [*Antipode*] on time at least was reinforced this year when issues edited in Ireland and Scotland failed to arrive for the [IBG] conference. It is felt that an inadequate distribution system has seriously detracted from *Antipode's* impact outside N. America.

Anderson went on to say that:

[g]enerally it is felt that the time has come for *Antipode* to “change gear”, editorially and administratively, if it is to develop its full potential, and particularly if those of us not on the East Coast of N. America are to contribute seriously to its development beyond occasional “guest editorship”.

That Smith was keenly aware of this sense of disquiet is evident from the 8 December 1979 letter to Doherty, where Smith devotes a whole page to what was going on at *Antipode*. He describes the results of discussions about how the editorial structure of the journal was poised to change in response to concerns that it was being managed in too localized and insular a way. He says that a new three-tier editorial system would be adopted, with (1) an editorial committee of three or so people at Clark who will oversee day-to-day work; (2) an editorial board that will be composed of “big names for sake of prestige”; and (3) a “management board” (in scare quotes with “?!” after it), which was to be composed of people at Johns Hopkins, Clark, and McGill, who would meet approximately twice a year at the Union of Socialist Geographers meetings to do the “actual editorial work”. He speaks about the importance of all this being implemented by Phil O’Keefe. We also have access to a series of other letters and memos that get into these kinds of editorial minutia. While this is not the place, these sorts of details seem important from a “history of geography” perspective because they give us firsthand insights into the labor that goes into intellectual production and offer a deeper sense of how critique prompts changes, at a granular level, in the production and distribution of knowledge, especially self-proclaimed political or “radical” knowledge (see Hague 2002, for instance).

Jumping ahead to 1984, in a letter written on 25 January to Doherty, we see evidence of the “behind the scenes” role Smith played in the evolution of the journal in a way not captured in other historical accounts. Smith writes:

On to happier subjects. I talked to James Anderson about *Antipode* while in London and both of us were a bit concerned about its future. Eric Sheppard is supposed to take it over but the situation is not at all clear. We are looking around still, for a publisher but having nothing firm yet. Both James and I wondered (although we obviously have no official “authority”) whether you would be interested in taking it over as an editor. We thought that this would be a mutually rewarding relationship: *Antipode* would have a reliable committed editor and *functioning* [original emphasis] editorial board, and you would have a means of being less isolated.

Of course, as the historical record shows, Doherty did indeed agree to come on as the journal's co-editor, and this letter from Smith was very likely the impetus. This detail is important as it was under the editorship of Sheppard and Doherty that *Antipode* was on the verge of shutting down and made the move to Basil Blackwell to continue operating. In a letter from Smith to Doherty, dated 10 March 1988, Smith begins in a way that many early career scholars will appreciate when he says: "Yes, things have been quite crazy here. The tenure decision is due in a month, and while everyone assures me that it's no problem, you never know ..." Toward the end of the letter, Smith writes:

On *Antipode*, I really think we are going from strength to strength. You and Eric really are working out well ... I would support four issues a year and smaller print, and indeed a reshuffling of the editorial board. Would it be appropriate for you and Eric to talk over deletions and additions ...?

Smith went on to suggest several people for the board.

In a letter from Sheppard to Smith dated 21 March 1988—keeping in mind that Smith still would not have yet heard if he was to be awarded tenure at Rutgers—Sheppard wrote that:

part of the agreement under which Blackwell agreed to take over publication of the journal [starting in 1986 with volume 18, issue 1] was that *Antipode* would provide a subsidy of some \$8,000 a year for the first two years of operation. According to our records you contributed to raising these funds during the first year, and we have raised only about one quarter of the total subsidy promised to Blackwell's.

The letter went on to say that "[i]n order to reach our goal, and free *Antipode* from financial obligations to the publisher, we need your help".

In a letter from Doherty and Sheppard to Smith dated 4 October 1988, the "growing crisis" at *Antipode* becomes more clear when they start their letter by saying that:

[w]e are writing to you because a crisis has developed in the relationship between *Antipode* and Basil Blackwell. As you will recall the original agreement called for us to subsidise Blackwell for two years ... So far, far we have been able to raise about \$6,500 of the \$16,400.

Later in the letter Doherty and Sheppard wrote that:

[i]n late July, Blackwell responded to demand both the balance of the subsidy AND greatly increased subscription rates: threatening in effect to discontinue publishing the journal in 1989 unless we agreed to their "suggestions". In conversations we have determined that they are very serious about the threat to stop publishing.

Five years later, after many more exchanges, Doherty and Sheppard wrote to Smith and other editorial board members on 4 March 1993 saying:

Antipode's transition to a commercial publisher was difficult at times and, according to the publishers, its future was at one point questionable in terms of financial viability. However, with contributions to the "fighting fund" from yourselves and a variety of other sources, the journal survived and went on to grow and develop.

These letters shed vital behind-the-scenes insight into the stresses progressive journals like *Antipode* have to withstand during periodic contract negotiations. However, the only existing public record of Smith talking about his time at *Antipode* came per invitation that went to all former editors when we were creating the journal's first website in 2006. It is worth sharing an extended extract from Smith's reflection, given how he recounts so little of his involvement with the journal relative to the archival record. It a gripping story of the exhilaration, exhaustion, vibrant materiality of giving shape to the journal's issues, each a collective labor of love. Here is Smith:

I was an accidental editor of *Antipode*. It all happened while I was a graduate student in Baltimore. Baltimore was exciting, but I was in an engineering school and the geography department was filled with sewage engineers and economic systems analysts while all I wanted to do was read Marx and urban theory. I plunged into political organizing but academically, strange as it may now seem, graduate student life there in the late 1970s was a little isolated from the excitement of a burgeoning "radical geography". Toronto or Vancouver, for sure, but especially Worcester, Mass.—that was the place to be. Partly because it produced *Antipode*, but also because for some still unfathomable reason a critical if motley mass of radicals, feminists, socialists, environmentalists, and all-round malcontents had colonized its School of Geography, Clark Geography seemed to be the center of the radical universe, geographically speaking, and I used to visit whenever I could, especially during the period when a visiting Phil O'Keefe was filling in for Dick Peet as editor. It was then that I accidentally co-edited a single volume of the journal.

Trips to Clark mixed extreme work with extreme recreation and were always followed by exhilarating fatigue. A certain spatial division of labour obtained—writing and reading group meetings, editing and journal assemblage in the School of Geography or in student flats around the town, and fun in Moynihan's Bar down Main Street. But we were socialists not capitalists and the division of labour was fluid: there was fun at work, while not a few ideas, sentences and fuzzy political plans saw first light at Moynihan's. The buzz about the School of Geography was palpable and there was a certain collectivity among many people's projects. The boundaries between *Antipode*, someone's PhD dissertation, and the writing up of research projects were not always clear, at least to me; indeed there was a sense abroad that the oppressive US system of academic tenure could be outfoxed quite simply by a little socialist cooperation whereby each paper written by an individual in this undefined group would be submitted with a host of authorial names, and we would all benefit ...

In this context, *Antipode* was a quite different journal from today. Articles were submitted, certainly, but just as likely someone would say: "Hey, we should do a piece about X. Who could do that?" A phone call would be made or a couple of letters sent, or else an unsuspecting someone in the hall was roughly grabbed by the collar, escorted to Moynihan's, and injected with the idea of writing the article that had so excited those who came up with said idea. Political visuals—Who could design an ambitious cover? Who could draw a biting cartoon for such and such an article by 5 o'clock this afternoon (OK, next week)?—were omnipresent before the revolution of the image in the humanities and social sciences. And then there was production. As many others will surely relate, production was a messy business involving typed "skins", mimeo machines, and ink everywhere. The thrill of getting a new issue in your hands, of sensing yourself on the cutting edge (even if the content was highly uneven) was only dimmed by the

recognition that the mailing list, pens, and piles of large envelopes in the corner meant a mailing party and another late night. So many to mail. Why was such a radical rag so damned popular?

I was not only an accidental editor. I was a peripatetic editor. I did serve later on the editorial board when such an official thing was inaugurated and kept contributing that way. But actually, I was only really a weekend editor. I think I left Clark the Monday after we put together volume 11(3) with no sense that my name would appear on the cover as co-editor, and I was quite surprised when the bright white and red volume appeared in my Baltimore mailbox.

Public Intellectual Pursuits and Activism

Few have characterized *Antipode* as a vehicle for public intellectuals (see Waterstone 2002, for instance). This is in part because, as per Smith's confessions about his early struggles with Marx, the journal has aspired to be a place of theoretical innovation pushing the ways in which geographers (and others) go about framing a heterodox radical politics. So it is an interesting corollary to ponder Smith's efforts at public intellectual endeavor and how it related to his ongoing activism.

The archives illustrate what many of us came to know as the roots of Smith's earliest thinking, blended with the activism he was engaged in as ideas took shape. The urge to praxis, indeed the revolutionary imperative, redolent of Smith's career shines through in the 8 December 1979 letter to Doherty, the same letter we foregrounded at this introduction's outset: "Although I've spent all this time [the first six pages of the letter] going on about intellectual work", Smith writes:

that's only because I'm finally getting back into it now. I've spent much more time since August getting an ISO [International Socialist Organization] branch together here [in Baltimore]. It's a bit of an irony because I'm so green myself. But I just felt the necessity both personally and for the movement ... My job is to be the *Socialist Worker* coordinator for the branch. I love it.

As far as we can tell, Smith was a founding member of the Baltimore ISO, and at a time when he was teaching at Morgan State.

It is interesting to scrutinize contemporary work in the *Socialist Worker* in relation to Smith's political engagements in Baltimore. One of the most far-reaching, persuasive voices is that of Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor who, in a 2011 essay titled "Building a multiracial Occupy movement", suggested that the "blanket criticism of Occupy as 'too white' ignores the way in which the movement, though it varies greatly from city to city, is actively grappling with how to include all of the 99 percent". Connecting the themes of space, place, nature, class, race and gender Taylor writes:

In Oakland, for example, activists renamed their encampment Oscar Grant Park to honor the young African American man who was shot in the back and killed by police almost three years ago. Atlanta renamed its park after Troy Davis ... Too often, the core

organizers in many cities, those who constitute an informal leadership, are young white men. While this may have been where the movement started in particular locales, there is no justifiable reason for it to remain that way.

There are powerful resonances here with Smith's reply at the Las Vegas AAG when asked about the connections between *Uneven Development* and the politics that helped inspire his argument:

The question of social reproduction seems to be more important to me than ever and the environmental justice movements are the ones bringing it out. They know the production of nature very directly about how it affects their lives and it seems to me that's the kind of bottom-up connection that we need to be making. It's communities of color living in toxic waste dumps, it's people living in polluted environments in cities all over the place. I think the point of the environmental justice movement is that you learn from the bottom up about what an environmentally just production of nature looks like. They're living in produced nature. But I think the tragedy for us, and I think in geography it's a particular thing, we have an opportunity to change that; we have this quite sophisticated set of ideas about political ecology, which tend to be very international but don't connect to the environmental justice movement. And the environmental justice movement doesn't connect to the more internationally focused political ecology movement.

Katherine McKittrick—who had Smith as an external member of her PhD committee—brought his work into conversation with black studies, and geographers such as Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Clyde Woods, and Gillian Rose. Smith's work provided a grammar for thinking through how race informs uneven development, including "Black Geographies". In *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, after some set up discussion regarding Smith's work on deep space and scale, McKittrick (2006:83) says: "Smith's argument is particularly salient here because it refuses a finality in what I have mentioned above—about oppressive discursive and capitalist constructions of black womanhood—without erasing how place and identity are mutually constructed under bondage. More clearly, the scale of the body is a site of racial-sexual differentiation, which holds in it struggle over being, making the self, and what Donna Haraway (1988) calls 'situated knowledge'" (see also Mitchell and Smith 1990).

We can move from these notions of situated knowledge to consider Smith's efforts at public intellectualism, or put differently, talking about the politics of the day with larger groups of individuals than academic geographers. In a 2006 article in *Antipode*, titled "Geography's New Public Intellectuals?", ex-editor Noel Castree wrote about the aspiring public intellectualism of efforts by Smith, as well as those of Harvey and the Retort Collective (which includes the geographer Michael Watts). Of Smith, Castree (2006:401) wrote that he:

has been less forthcoming about his intended audiences, but reading between the lines I'd suggest he now sees himself as having the profile to reach well beyond geography and even critical social science more generally. In this regard, it's arguably telling that playwright and essayist Tariq Ali is one of Smith's dust-jacket endorsers [for *The Endgame of Globalization*].

Castree goes on to suggest that Smith's public intellectualism as evidenced in *The Endgame of Globalization* (Smith 2005c) (although he perhaps should also have discussed Smith's [2003] *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*, given that it was awarded the *L.A. Times* Book Prize for biography, which suggests a particular kind of "traveling") was largely based on the fact that he is "academically very secure and there is little or no professional risk in him writing ... 'not conventionally academic' books or essays" (2006:405). There is clearly some logic to Castree's career path argument. However, assessing "a life's work" after that life has ended, it is possible to tell a different story, one that stands in contrast to Castree's.

Smith was, we would argue, always politically motivated to reach broader audiences. This is evident from a range of other writings that he started to publish long before his reputation would have "carried" in outlets that were unconventional for human geographers. The first that jumps out—"Expertise: Making M/other Nature"—appeared in the internationally influential magazine *Artforum* (Smith 1989a). Another piece, published in the same year, was an essay on Tompkins Square in *Portable Lower East Side* (Smith 1989c), an outlet perhaps more local (it published "gritty, memorable short stories and articles reflecting the area's geographical context and artistic sensibility"). There was a related piece, "Tompkins Square Park Timeline", in the catalog for artist Krzysztof Wodiczko's exhibition "New York City Tableaux: Tompkins Square, the Homeless Vehicle Project" (Smith 1990c), as well as a piece on gentrification seemingly meant for an activist audience in an edited collection titled *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism* (Smith 1991b). Several years later, Smith (1996b) published an essay on the revanchist city in *Polygraph*, arguably another effort to reach beyond the discipline (it's a magazine of "visually-driven essays" that "incites water cooler discussion about complex topics"). After the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina, the US Social Science Research Council brought together a group of scholars to write accessible essays for an online forum on the causes and consequences of the storm. Smith (2005d) wrote his "There's No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster" for this. It has circulated widely within academic and activist circles alike.

Given his career-spanning attention to revolutionary political thought, it should not have been surprising when for *Antipode's* 40th anniversary collection, *The Point is to Change It*, Smith was invited to write what would be one of the last essays published while he was living. Smith's willingness to engage in this 40th anniversary project, and the personal support he offered to successive *Antipode* editors seeking to develop a more encompassing definition of radical geography even as he retained his personal commitment to Marxism, underlined his commitment to the ongoing search for a more humane future. "The revolutionary imperative" (Smith 2010) helped bring his intellectual aspirations full circle if in an abbreviated way.

The Long Revolutionary Imperative

In the 8 December 1979 letter to Doherty, in the outline of what would be his dissertation, Smith's concluding chapter was tentatively titled "Logic of revolution". Its discussion includes notes about "uneven development under socialism?" and the

possibilities of “collective ownership.” Smith contends that, “the logic of revolution begins from within capitalism but necessitates a workers’ movement to carry the logic into practice”. We encounter this in *Uneven Development*, albeit in a modified form, when Smith (2008a:89) writes that the:

struggle for socialism is the struggle for social control to determine what is and is not socially necessary. Ultimately it is the struggle to control what is and is not value. Under capitalism, this is a judgment made in the market, one which presents itself as a natural result. Socialism is the struggle to judge necessity according not to the market and its logic, but to human need, according not to exchange-value and profit, but to use-value.

Smith turned to the idea of “revolution” toward the end of his life. Doherty told us:

my impression is this is what he was working on when he died ... the whole notion of revolution ... It’s a shame he didn’t have a couple more years to write all that up because I think it would have been extraordinarily influential, even perhaps more influential than *Uneven Development* and work on gentrification in terms of identifying ways forward in the neoliberal bind we’re currently finding ourselves.

While Smith was always interested in revolution as a political strategy, toward the end of his life he began to write about revolution and revolutionary theory in a more determined and deliberate way. A series of late writings indicate he was clearly building momentum and working to integrate the notion into whatever he was working on. Closing the third, and what would be final, afterword to *Uneven Development* (authored in 2007), Smith wrote:

One of the stunning things about the present is the extent to which the prospect and affect of revolutionary social change have been blanked from the imaginary of political possibility. It may not be too optimistic to begin again to encourage a revolutionary imaginary (2008a:266).

In concluding his *Antipode* essay, “The revolutionary imperative”, Smith invoked C. L.R. James, declaring:

Revolution may ... come like a thief in the night, but if there is going to be a heist on capitalism, the thief needs to come with a few tools. Some tools are intellectual ideas; others are tools of the imagination about other possible worlds; still others are our human bodies, but most importantly they are social and political organization for a more humane future (2010:64).

In the very last essay he published while alive, which was a response to a forum published in *New Political Economy* (2011) that resulted from a panel on the 25th anniversary of *Uneven Development* at the 2009 Las Vegas AAG (see Prudham and Heynen 2011), Smith wrote:

Some of the patterns of uneven development, global to local, were predictable in the early 1980s but many others were not. When we made the decision to issue a third edition [of *Uneven Development* in 2008], I was on the edge of thinking that a new book was really what was required. Yet it seemed like a massive task. I do think this would be a highly useful project today. Yet so much work has been done in the last 25 years that it would be an immense challenge (2011:264).

He went on to say:

The central argument I would still like to make is that we need to understand the varied patterns and processes of uneven development across scales. Nowhere was this more obvious than in the ways that a mortgage crisis in the United States became an almost immediate economic and financial meltdown. Even more to the point, this has become a social crisis for that part of the world not already in social crisis; for those already in social crisis it only became much worse. In many ways, and linking together some of these commentaries on the book, it is the social crisis, orchestrated via the local/global economy, that is the crucial point. The answer will be equally social (and political).

This special collection of essays offers great insight into how Smith contributed not just to the tradition of Marxist political economy that has become so recognizable within geography, but also the nuanced and complicated ways his politics opened the doors to so many other possible ways of thinking about politics, society, nature, and geography. They are testament to a life animated by and, in spite or perhaps because of its many vicissitudes, exemplary of the long revolutionary imperative and the political, social and spatial imaginaries it engenders.

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