
In the mid-1970s, the Department of Geography at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Burnaby, a suburb of Vancouver, emerged, almost overnight, as a hotbed of radical exploration, education, and praxis. Ron Horvath, who came as a visiting professor in 1974, suggests that it constituted the biggest mass of radical geographers in the English-speaking world at the time. SFU was to play an important role in the development of Anglo-American radical and critical geography, yet this story is easily overlooked, as it has not been documented. Indeed, a 1990 survey of the Department’s history makes only passing reference to the moment (Hayter 1990). Our most immediate goal in this chapter is to describe what happened at SFU, particularly from the perspective of those who were active participants. While not seeking to romanticize the radical era, we believe it deserves better recognition. Memories and interpretations differ: we have tried our best to be even-handed in our account. This is not intended as a history of the department during the 1970s (human geography at SFU during this formative period in its history was also more than radical geography), nor are we able to provide a full accounting of all those who participated in the ‘radical convergence’ or were peripherally affected.

Our motivation in documenting this story also reflects a desire to understand the history of an institution in which we work. Indeed, for one of us (Nick), the radical 1970s still cast a residual shadow when he arrived at SFU in 1989, particularly in light of its subsequent unraveling and suppression. Mention of “theory,” for example, was met with
a muttering under the breath from some quarters, given its supposed association with radicalism. Michael Eliot-Hurst, the leading faculty member involved with the moment, was in poor health, and had been marginalized, retiring in 1989 and dying a decade later in relative obscurity.

Beyond documenting this moment, we ask a number of questions. Most immediately, we center on the distinctiveness of the radical moment at SFU, asking who was involved, what happened, and how it was lived, tracing the importance of a number of radical moments of learning, praxis, and politics, specifically the Vancouver Local of the Union of Socialist Geographers (USG), and the Vancouver Geographical Expedition (VGE), while also noting the role of early feminist geography. SFU was not, of course, an immaculate conception. As we show, it was shaped by its institutional context, both in relation to SFU’s creation as a new university in the mid-1960s and also to its particular departmental culture. Of, course, in turn, this new context provided a physical space in which various actors coalesced to produce knowledge in and through certain power structures. We also consider SFU as one node in a wider circuit of radical geography, particularly within Canada and the United States. Thus we also ask: how was the radical moment at SFU shaped by its socio-spatial relationships in this network? What came to SFU through these connections, how did SFU shape the network, and with what consequences?

The Convergence

The radical moment at SFU was short and intense, with few obvious precedents. From around 1973 to 1976, radicals at SFU Geography engaged in a period of avid exploration, engagement, and creativity. Len Evenden, a sympathetic if non-self-declared radical
faculty member at the time, described the emergence of what he called a “swirl” of ideas and activities. A radicalized group of graduate and undergraduate students propelled the swirl, working with some younger and visiting faculty. It revolved around particular initiatives (the VGE and the Vancouver Local of the Union of Socialist Geographers, in particular) and benefited from either the direct engagement of some more senior faculty members (particularly Eliot-Hurst, Chair from 1971–1975) or the tolerance of others, notably cultural geographers Ed Gibson and Phil Wagner, and social geographer Bob Horsfall.

It was the students who were most directly active, however. Bettina Bradbury, a History graduate student at the time, remembers the experience of exchanging radical ideas with graduate students from all over the world as incredibly exciting, noting her and her partner John Bradbury’s radicalization happened through engagement with other students, rather than faculty, learning Marxist analysis through marathon pub conversations. Colm Regan, also a graduate student at the time, noted that the internal strength and inner resolve of the graduate students was crucial in maintaining radical energy, even after the end of Eliot-Hurst’s Chairship.

The energy and vibrancy of the period was palpable, as participants read, debated, and organized. Bob Galois, another graduate student, prefers the term “critical mass” to describe the manner in which a crucial threshold of people and energy was reached as people came together. There was lots of work, “but you just got wrapped up in it” noted Galois, although graduate theses often suffered as a consequence. Susan Williams, an undergraduate, notes that while it consumed evenings and weekends beyond her already heavy student load, “we were excited about the idea that change was going to happen.”
was grueling (*Capital Volume II* nearly “killed me,” she recalls), but there was a sense of camaraderie and activity driven by a sense of higher purpose, and a “feeling that you were on a … journey together” to change the world. As we note next, many participants described the experience as formative and life-changing.

The motivations that drew participants into this convergence were clearly varied. Some arrived with a radical background, while others came from conservative educational and cultural settings. Susan Williams describes being drawn in through her experiences in Eliot-Hurst’s classes, contact with the radical TAs attached to these classes, and engagement with the Geography Student Union, which also was progressive in orientation.

Radical energy was directed at geography as a discipline, but also beyond. Several participants noted the importance of a group mentality. For Colm Regan,

> there was a sense of us-and-them, there was a sense of challenging the establishment … challenging people like [Richard] Hartshorne, and people like that, establishing that geography had been in the service of imperialism… There was a lot of piss and vinegar politics. </quote>

Regan also recalled interminable conversations as to whether people identified as “radical” or “socialist,” noting that “we were all branded as socialists by the outsiders.”

For many, the goal was to confront the “establishment,” including its disciplinary manifestations. One manifestation of this critique – and a clear statement of a binary between the establishment and its alternative – comes from a 1973 *Antipode* paper by Eliot-Hurst, entitled “Establishment geography: or how to be irrelevant in three easy
lessons.” He characterized “establishment geography” as a delusional, pervasive, and quasi-religious sect of devout believers, shored up by such powerful infrastructures as textbooks, academic meetings, graduate training, and departmental structures. He lamented how its longstanding roots in imperialism and capitalism had been now enhanced by the embrace of quantification and “the deification of prescriptive scientism” (Eliot-Hurst 1973: 41). In the new geography, we "find the rigor needed to guide the ‘planes to North Vietnam, but alas also, the mortis” (Eliot-Hurst 1973: 42, his emphasis). In its place, he called for an “antiestablishment geography” that debunks and demystifies establishment geography, develops alternatives to the positivist orthodoxy, engages with human equity and wellbeing, politicizes students, and lives its theory.\textsuperscript{11}

Yet the radical moment ended almost as quickly as it began. In 1975, Michael Eliot-Hurst suffered what appeared to be a nervous breakdown, thought to be related to issues in his personal life. He went on medical leave just before his term as Chair ended. The new Chair, a physical geographer, was no sympathizer of the radical project. The positions of some radical visiting faculty were not renewed. Eliot-Hurst’s graduate students, central to the swirl, were assigned new advisors. When Alan Mabin arrived in late 1975 as a graduate student, he described a sharpening environment of conservative constriction, driven by budget cuts and an institutional desire to “shut things down”\textsuperscript{12}. Unsurprisingly, when Fran Walsh, who had been an MA student in 1970–1971 returned to SFU in 1978, it was to what he called a “pacified” department\textsuperscript{13}.

\textbf{<H1>\textit{The Union of Socialist Geographers}}

The convergence crystallized around a number of often overlapping nodes of radical learning, praxis, and politics. The Vancouver Local of the USG played a pivotal role. As
Bettina Bradbury described it, the Local was “central to everything that was going on… it was the intellectual life of us and our fellow graduate students… it was a framework through which to think everything, and a heart of a kind of sociability”\textsuperscript{14}. For Colm Regan, the USG aimed to demonstrate that radical geography was more than a theoretical construct, but was relevant to the struggle by “building a practice of socialist geography”\textsuperscript{15}.

The wider emergence of the USG, and its international scope, are more fully documented by Linda Peake (this volume). Committed to the radical restructuring of society in accord with the principles of social justice, the USG played an important role in the radicalization of the discipline within the English-speaking world. It was formed at a gathering in Toronto in 1974, associated with the Toronto Geographical Expedition. Many SFU people attended this first gathering (the sign-up sheet lists 34 people, with nine from British Columbia: SFU faculty Eliot-Hurst and Ron Horvath presented at the associated symposium). Reportedly, Eliot-Hurst provided the departmental van to allow SFU participants to cover the 4,300 kilometers from Vancouver. SFU participants appear to have been active in shaping the terms of reference for the USG, including suggestions that one of the goals of the organization should be agitating for staff and student parity in departmental decision-making.

Notwithstanding its Toronto origins, “SFU was prepared to put in work to build it,” noted Regan\textsuperscript{16}. A Vancouver Local was established at a meeting on September 10, 1974. A discussion ensued on the focus of the USG: should it be confined to the academy, or engage in agitation within the community? Eliot-Hurst suggested that the two were inseparable if the USG were truly socialist, as the goal for members would be
revolutionary change as human beings first, then as geographers. Debate ensued concerning the “bourgeois nature of geography, the need for a socialist alternative within the discipline, [and] the development of revolutionary geographic theory.”

The Vancouver Local was many things, but three distinct foci can be identified: reading groups; producing the USG Newsletter; and developing conferences that would be run in parallel with more conventional academic meetings. This initiative of the Vancouver Local became a mainstay of USG organizing, piggybacking paper sessions onto CAG and AAG conferences (while maintaining an important distance from such “establishment” events). Fortuitously, the Canadian Association of Geographers annual conference convened in Vancouver in May 1975, where a parallel USG gathering was organized with papers on labor, imperialism, the Toronto Geographical Expedition, and anarchism. Many SFU radicals participated, including Colm Regan, Fran Walsh, Ron Horvath, John Bradbury, Michael Eliot-Hurst, Nathan Edelson, Alison Hayford, and Peter Walsh, as well as visitors from outside, including David Harvey and Jim Blaut. The Vancouver Local also organized a five-hour field trip of “working class Vancouver,” with an accompanying 14-page guide written by USG and VGE members. Fran Walsh returned to Vancouver for the gathering, and experienced the meeting as one of intense discussion, debate and “a great sense of enthusiasm and camaraderie.” While one contemporary observer noted an “in-group,” potentially exclusive, attitude, he relished the manner in which the USG sessions drew growing numbers of participants, while the rest of the CAG “dabbled in jargon and ‘old boy network’ name dropping” (Gerecke 1975: 9). There was lively discussion over the focus and scope of the USG. An Annual General Meeting (which reportedly extended over several nights) included extensive,
albeit unresolved examination of logistics and organization: “Perhaps in a year … we will elect someone to travel the continent, disseminating information about the USG (a full-time traveling minstrel). Until that time, just talk to the person on your left” (Anonymous, 1975a: 17).

Such parallel conferences played a crucial role as sites for maintaining and invigorating the USG network, as we note next. In this pre-Internet age, maintaining connections beyond such gatherings required other forms of communication. Crucial in this regard was the development of the USG Newsletter. The Newsletter was initiated at the Vancouver meeting in 1975, with the Vancouver Local electing to take the lead. An SFU editorial collective produced five substantial issues of the Newsletter before the McGill Local (including many former SFU students) took over in late 1976. Under Vancouver editorship, the Newsletter came to provide summaries of annual USG meetings, updates on the activity of the Vancouver Local, bibliographies on particular themes, satire, course outlines with a socialist approach, and, particularly early on, free-standing articles that included an exegesis on Marx’s theory of circulation. Hopes for “ideological eye opener” sections, in which extracts of geographical writing were to be subjected to ideological critique, did not take off. In its last issue, the editorial group reflected on the difference between the Newsletter and the journal Antipode. While complementary, the former was seen as offering a space for shorter articles and more avowedly Marxist in orientation. Antipode was described as offering a “radical” political perspective, whereas the Newsletter was ‘explicitly for socialist geography’ (Anonymous 1976a: 1). Nevertheless, the Vancouver Local also edited a volume of Antipode
(published in 1976), including papers by local participants Bob Galois, John Bradbury, Jim Overton, Peter Usher, Colm Regan and Fran Walsh, and Phil Wagner.  

The Vancouver USG Local was much more than a newsletter editorial board, however. It became a focus for shared learning, engagement, and socialization, drawing in a large number of SFU participants, mostly graduate and undergraduate students, with the former taking the intellectual lead. There were monthly meetings, and people were reportedly frowned upon if they didn’t show up. Minutes reveal a remarkable array of activity: discussions of course proposals, local politics, engagement with other organizations, planning for the Newsletter or the special issue of *Antipode*, beer purchases, discussions of Chomsky on alienation, prison seminars, correspondence from radicals outside Vancouver, and Hallowe’en party planning.

Of crucial significance was the role that the USG Local provided in allowing participants to engage in forms of collective learning. It is easy for us, 40 years on, to take for granted the availability of a corpus of radical social theory from which to draw. This was not evident in the mid-1970s, given the relatively recent radical turn in geography (Harvey’s influential *Social Justice and the City* only appeared in 1973). While some faculty were sympathetic, the graduate program at the time was far from sophisticated, and self-education through organized reading groups became crucial. For Lee Seymour, a Teaching Assistant: “We learnt from each other”.

Colm Regan noted that the corpus of “radical geography” was very eclectic, at least to begin with, but became increasingly theoretical and rigorous. However, participants note a variety of other threads and themes, including an interest in imperialism. One product was the massive *Study Papers on Imperialism*, an 87-page
document prepared for a mini-course on Marxist perspectives on geography at the 1976 AAG meetings. Eliot-Hurst also became preoccupied with Maoism. According to Susan Williams: “someone was always reading the New Left Review”\textsuperscript{22}. Baran and Sweezy, Poulantzas, Althusser, Mandel and Kropotkin were in the air.\textsuperscript{23}

Participants describe the ethos of the Local, including its reading groups, as internally supportive and communal, without a competitive spirit. They describe “hot-housing” student’s theses if they were struggling to complete them, and convening “dry runs” of paper presentations to ensure the maintenance of quality to the “external” community. People worked together at a radical bookstore, and some shared accommodation, notably in a house at 2057 Napier Street on Vancouver’s Eastside.

\textbf{<H1>The Vancouver Geographical Expedition}

The Vancouver Geographic Expedition was a manifestation of earlier Expeditions in Toronto and Detroit (Heyman 2007, Heynen and Barnes 2011). Merrifield (1995) notes that the expedition movement emerged from the turbulent era of the late 1960s, motivated by a desire for social relevance and a rejection of establishment geography. Bill Bunge developed the idea with Gwendolyn Warren, establishing the Detroit Expedition in 1969. It drew from Geography’s positivistic tools, but with an insistence on bringing geography to the scale of people’s lives through an anti-racist and anti-capitalist lens, coupled with a conscious subversion of the “expedition” label from nineteenth-century colonialism (see Warren \textit{et al.}, this volume). Theory and practice were mobilized, with the use of field manuals and data reports, and the promotion of community activism and local empowerment in the “base camp community” (Horvath 1971: 2016).
Bunge moved from Detroit, establishing an Expedition in Toronto in October 1972 (Stephenson 1974), expressing greater optimism concerning the radical potential of Canadian students: “Youth is crushed in the United States, unlike Canada where some spirit remains” (Bunge 1977a: 1). Bunge had first visited SFU in 1969 (Bunge 1969: 29), returning in Spring 1973 to outline the Expedition ethos to a larger audience of 200 students. He expressed its desire to document and contest the expansion of “machine space” (Horvath 1974) at the expense of plant, animal and human life, particularly that of children. In August, 1973, six SFU students went to observe and participate in Toronto, and exploratory work in Burnaby, New Westminster, and East Vancouver began in the autumn of that year. It was decided to focus on the Grandview area of East Vancouver, because of its already existing political organization, its proximity to SFU, and its experience of urban change. The focus would be on transport, housing, and recreation (including documenting traffic flows and accidents, and developing children’s journey to school routes to reduce accident rates). A manifesto was outlined in January 1974, advocating an emphasis on engaging the city through physical presence and residency rather than abstract forms of visualization, also calling for attention to the dangers of machine space upon ‘life’ (notably that of children), and a desire for community engagement (Anonymous 1974: 1). The overall goal was ambitious:

<.quote>[w]e are geographers committed primarily to the betterment of living conditions in a particular region of the City of Vancouver. We believe that local residents should have a decisive level of control over the destiny of that community and that changes adversely affecting those residents without providing significant benefits to the community should be opposed. As social and physical
and historical scientists we have a commitment to the general extension of theoretical knowledge. But as citizens of Vancouver our primarily [sic] interest must lie with the betterment of its people’s living conditions (Edelson 1974: 7).

By February 1974, some 20 undergraduate students had become involved. Supportive professors encouraged students in their classes to engage with the project, and offered advice. Graduate students also participated, offering assistance (Figure 4.1). In April 1974, the Expedition moved its HQ from the SFU Burnaby campus to the house on Napier Street (which was in in the Grandview-Woodlands neighborhood). Several expedition members expressed an interest in becoming permanent residents; the plan was that the house would become a meeting, working, and resting place to help develop local contacts. One outcome was a report on children’s recreation prepared by Susan Barry, Gwen Robbins, and Tom Phipps (available from authors). It provided systematic observations of children’s use of the neighborhood, also documenting the many physical impediments to children’s play (such as the lack of accessible play areas), as well as crucial resources for children (Figure 4.2).

[insert Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 here]

**Figure 4.1** Nathan Edelson, Suzanne Mackenzie, Colm Regan – VGE 1975. Source: SFU Graduate Studies Calendar 1975–76, 63. Used with permission of Simon Fraser University.

**Figure 4.2** Machine space, Vancouver Geographical Expedition. Observations of children’s movement on March 5 1974 at different times of the day. Source: unpublished VGE report by Susan Barry, Gwen Robbins and Tom Phipps). Reproduced with permission.

The Vancouver Expedition had disbanded by the spring of 1975, however, ushering in an extensive post-mortem regarding its merits and weaknesses that revealed some of the
fault-lines within the radical convergence more generally. An anonymous autocritique argued that it had outlived its usefulness and lacked revolutionary rigor, describing it as a loose coalition of ‘politically and theoretically inexperienced left liberals, socialists and even conservatives’ (Anonymous 1975b: 14), lamenting that ‘we were unable to contribute significantly to class struggle’ (14) in the Grandview area. Yet it was argued that the data gathered in the project had been used by community groups and tenants’ organizations when responding to the housing crisis, wage controls and the tightening of social services. VGE researchers had provided information to Grandview and East End activists concerning urban property ownership, had written newspaper articles, participated in seminars concerning proposed plans to make Vancouver an “Executive City,” created the first computerized landlord data bank available to Vancouver residents, and helped demystify some of the expertise surrounding urban data and decision making. While the Expedition’s work on tenant organizing “will not solve the housing crisis, … it can effectively provide a number of people with both a window revealing the underlying processes of capitalist development and the organizational experience necessary for its radical transformation” (Anonymous 1975b: 14).

A positive spin was provided by a later commentator, which noted the valuable role of students in the development of social struggle: “[s]tudents and profs have to get over this ‘academic guilt complex’ and get serious about the skills they have and how they should put them into practice” (Arnold 1976: 32). Conversely Nathan Edelson and Colm Regan argued that time could have been better spent by students on the hard work of reading theory: “Being a student – being a Marxist student – is serious political activity, it
requires a good deal of time and energy” (Edelson and Regan 1976: 33). They also criticized the focus on the neighborhood scale:

<T>hrough an overconcentration on issues of consumption (housing, light, facilities etc.) we often avoided dealing with the place of exploitation in the production process itself. Hence much of our work, despite our intentions, never really successfully integrated the place and functions of a given community within the larger context of a city under capitalism (33).</T>

Foreshadowing her later interests Suzanne Mackenzie, then an undergraduate, argued that the problem was a failure to see capitalism as an integrated social system that encompasses both “community” and “work place issues” (Mackenzie 1976: 33).

Bunge visited the VGE Expedition house in the winter of 1975. It was not a happy meeting. Participants lamented Bunge’s overbearing personality. As Susan Williams put it: “Bunge was ‘a bit of a wingnut. It was his way or the highway.” In a letter in the USG Newsletter Bunge noted that “We were mutually appalled by each other” (Bunge 1977b: 19). He noted Lenin’s directive to be self-critical, no matter how gleeful it leaves our enemies, and then declared that the VGE was doomed from the start, lamenting its lack of community control: “The VGE gave the impression that the intellectuals talked a lot and the community either said nothing or the intellectuals never got within ear shot” (Bunge 1977b: 42). Moreover, Bunge criticized the adoption of a permissive politics that did not match what he defined as community mores and norms, given the presence of gay participants in the VGE: “[t]he atmosphere [of the Expedition] suggested that it was bad manners not to be liberal towards homosexuals… [However] any behaviour that seriously insults local mores is unacceptable …” (Bunge 1977b: 19). The Vancouver USG
Newsletter editorial collective (Anonymous 1977) pushed back, pointing out a number of errors in his analysis, while also advocating for a more general discussion on sexuality and socialism.

**Feminist Geography and the Radical Project**

The radical project at SFU was largely driven by men, both as faculty and students. As Bettina Bradbury describes it, in a retrospective commentary (2015: 263), “Geography as a discipline was a tough nut for women to crack.” She notes that when she arrived at SFU there were no female professors in Geography or her home discipline of History:

> And in those early 1970s, one male professor thought it completely acceptable to complain to me … over a beer, that having just remarried he had no idea how to relate to women students any more as he could no longer sleep with them (263–264).</quote>

Yet Bradbury, along with several other determined women, began to carve out an important space for women’s voices and feminist perspectives more generally, within the radical convergence at SFU. There were some important precedents for this. The SFU chemist Maggie Benston had published a highly influential paper in 1969 in *Monthly Review* that was among the first to apply a Marxist analysis to the oppression of women. Moreover, in 1973, the department ran a one-off class in the Geography of Gender (one of the first in Canada), coordinated by faculty member Bob Horsfall. While it was not repeated, and reportedly generated a “few hackles and a few guffaws” from male faculty (Lebowitz et al. 2008: 179), student interest in the class was useful in lobbying for the
successful formation of the Women’s Studies department at SFU, one of the first for-
credit programs in Canada.

Yet, emergent feminist perspectives were clearly on the margins of the radical
project in SFU Geography. For example, a session on “alternative perspectives in
geography” was organized at the CAG meetings in 1975, which included a paper on
indigenous peoples in the Canadian north and a presentation by Alison Hayford entitled
“The Geography of women,” exploring the roles of women within capitalist society and
noting that Geography had excluded women from the field of research. The USG
disassociated itself from the session on the grounds that there was no guarantee that its
papers would be socialist, while condescendingly commending the authors for

Nevertheless, “a socialist women’s reading group” was formed within the USG
Local later that year, including Suzanne Mackenzie, Bettina Bradbury, Lee Seymour,
Barbara Horvath, Mary Ogilvie, and Susan Williams. Participants noted their desire to
engage with feminist theory through a socialist lens, while creating a space for women’s
voices to be heard. As Lee Seymour notes, “we got pissed off with the men… We were
trying to find our voice”27. Concerned that men were having all the space, there was a
desire for a women’s-only reading group. There was no feminist literature within
geography, obviously, so participants remember reaching out to identify relevant
material, such as that of Maggie Benston, or sociologist Dorothy Smith. This folded over
into personal relationships, Lee Seymour noted: “We all began to challenge the men and
demand more in the relationship we had with them.”
Relations with the broader group were not always easy. For Lee Seymour, there was some resistance to feminist ideas within the USG Local, given the centrality accorded a class analysis. However, she noted that some were more sympathetic to a feminist analysis, and that any disagreement was amicable, also noting the galvanizing presence of many “strong women”\textsuperscript{28}. Yet participants clearly struggled to be counted. Bob Galois noted that many male Marxists were “unenlightened” regarding gender issues, also remarking that “lots of hormones were flying around at the time.” At the USG meetings that paralleled the 1976 CAG meeting at Laval, Lee Seymour, Suzanne Mackenzie and Alison Hayford presented papers at a poorly attended panel session: One of the participants reported at the time that “the fact that we were women and socialists resulted, we suspect, in many people not taking us seriously,” it being noted that

<quote>Women’s success or the success of women studying women in all disciplines is still defined by men, on their terms and according to their criteria. In Geography in particular, the study of women by women is still treated as a joke (Anonymous 1976b: 10).</quote>

Yet the participants had the last laugh. Bettina Bradbury suggested that the experience was important, shaping her future career as a historian who considered herself both feminist and socialist. While sadly we do not have her own testimony, it is worth considering the influence of the SFU experience on Suzanne McKenzie, who went on to an important, though tragically curtailed career, as “the first women geographer in Canada, and one of the first in the world, to develop a substantive research programme in geography and gender” (Anonymous 1999). Her socialist-feminist analysis and her belief that feminist geography was ‘a living, pulsating tool for analysis into social change’
(Peake 2015: 258) were surely influenced by her deep involvement in the SFU convergence.

**<H1>Swirling Outwards: SFU’s Radical Moment in Context**

Despite Edelson and Regan’s argument for a more studious and less locally-engaged approach to radical geography, we have suggested that the radical moment at SFU was deeply embroiled in its local contexts, within SFU and in Vancouver. Yet, when considering the radical moment, it is important to step back from the daily ferment of reading groups, thesis-writing support groups, internecine politics, conference organizing, and community expeditions to also place it within the larger context of higher education in Canada and the United States, and within the development of radical geography across the two countries. In the following sections we turn to the institutional context of SFU as a new 1960s university, with its own vision of what might be called “mainstream” or “liberal” radicalism, exploring how this influenced what was happening among its geographers at the time. We will then scope out further to discuss SFU Geography’s place in the circuit of traveling people and ideas that, through the 1970s, disseminated radical geographical ideas across the US and Canada. In this context, it is important to consider how the radical moment at SFU was shaped by its relationship with this network and by what came to SFU through these connections, as well as how SFU geographers shaped the network.

**<H2>A “mainstream radical” campus**

Simon Fraser University’s original campus was built in only two years (1963–1965) to serve the growing demand for university education among a suburbanizing baby boom population that had, since the end of the Second World War, expanded in settlements
eastwards down the Fraser Valley from the original urban core of Vancouver. Its architecture, as Figure 4.3 suggests, was a form of modernist brutalism – “weird and futuristic,” according to Alan Wallace, one of the radical students (quoted in Peake, this volume).

[insert Figure 4.3 here]

**Figure 4.3** Radical architecture. Source: SFU *Graduate Studies Calendar* 1975–76, 2. Used with permission of Simon Fraser University.

Its locally based architect, Arthur Erickson, deliberately intended that SFU contrast with the University of British Columbia (50 years SFU’s elder) in both form and function. Whereas UBC sat on the far Western edge of Greater Vancouver, SFU was built to the east, on a largely undeveloped mountaintop in Burnaby. UBC’s campus was as traditional in its organization as it was spectacular in its ocean-side location. Departments and faculties at UBC were housed in their own separate, self-contained buildings, spread out across a sprawling campus, which Erickson found “appalling [with] … [n]o place for students.” For him, its architecture consisted of “a jumble of cacophonous, rambling personal statements…fortress[es] set up against the intrusions of rival disciplines – jealous enclaves with no exchange” (Erickson quoted in Stouck 2013: 184).

In contrast, SFU was to be a modernist, idealized reinterpretation of the academies of Greece, defined by interconnected spaces that would encourage as much interaction among students as possible. Its rough concrete structure was unitary in design, with its sections all connected into a single low-slung complex – a “single-structure campus,” as *Architectural Forum* put it in a favorable review at the time (quoted in Stouck 2013: 196). This ideal resonated with the vision of Gordon Shrum, a former UBC administrator charged by the British Columbia provincial government with establishing
the new university. His long, sometimes tense, affiliation with UBC (Fotheringham 1965) motivated him to distinguish SFU through innovations in pedagogy and administration. SFU was to be a campus for students and, ideally eventually a campus by students, in the sense that its spaces would encourage interaction and new ideas, nurture the energies that emerged from random meetings and unusual combinations of students and faculty, facilitating deeper learning and ongoing (re)thinking about higher education itself. As we will see, however, this ideal was soon tested (and found wanting) by the political radicalism of students and faculty.

Fifty years later, SFU is branded as a “radical campus” (Johnston, 2009), with references to political radicalism domesticated and combined with nods to Erickson and Shrum’s depoliticized radicalism by the University’s marketers. Yet, in SFU’s first decade, back before the concrete had fully set, as Bob Galois evocatively put it, the two visions were in distinct tension. This tension was perhaps best highlighted by the concerns of the radical geographers. Their efforts at community engagement in the VGE and their internationalism through the USG contrast with the attractiveness Shrum found in the Burnaby Mountain location – a place he saw as “largely removed from the normal world” (Johnston 2009: 43).

**Political radicalism shaking SFU’s foundations**

Contemporary worldly concerns motivated intellectual debate and political activism on campus, nonetheless: not just in Geography but other departments as well. For example, one of the University’s experiments in interdisciplinarity was to create a single department of Political Science, Sociology, and Anthropology (PSA), whose founding Head was the Marxist sociologist Tom Bottomore. Tensions within the department and
between the politically left-leaning portion of its faculty and the University’s administration, around academic freedom, student involvement in decision-making, and control of hiring decisions, created a crisis. Over 100 students who had occupied the administration building in late 1968 were arrested, a prolonged faculty strike ensued in 1969, and PSA subsequently was abolished and replaced with more traditional, separate departments: Archaeology, Sociology and Anthropology, and Political Science. Five years after the University’s founding, the concrete was beginning to harden.

The decision to break up PSA had consequences for the Department of Geography, toward which a number of the PSA students gravitated, seeing it as a haven of left radicalism at a time of University. This no doubt added to the momentum of “the swirl.” Perhaps as a result of the various influences that converged in the department’s classrooms, offices, and hallways at this time, political radicalism was varied and dynamic in SFU Geography in the late 1960s and first half of the 1970s, as the examples discussed above emphasize. Another aspect of the story, however, is how these left political radicalisms were protected and nurtured in an institution that, despite the lofty goals of its founding, had proven itself willing to implement top-down hiring decisions, surveillance of what was being taught in individual classrooms, and the wholesale dismantling of departments that did not toe the line.

Michael Eliot-Hurst was a key catalyst in harnessing the institutional resources of a mainstream radical institution to help develop left radical geographical praxis. Hired as a mainstream economic and transportation geographer in 1965, Len Evenden recalls that Eliot-Hurst had remained peripheral to early debates among the Geography faculty over the intellectual focus of the department, until he was politically radicalized during a 1969
sabbatical at California State University, Northridge, where he experienced state surveillance of campus activities\textsuperscript{30}. Wendy Eliot-Hurst, Michael’s partner, played an important role\textsuperscript{31}. A PSA grad student, she was an active member of the USG Local, and may have influenced Michael’s radicalization\textsuperscript{32}.

Eliot-Hurst influenced the radical swirl in three ways. First, his published work, including critiques of mainstream geography (Eliot-Hurst 1973), gained the attention of colleagues elsewhere and attracted radical graduate students to SFU. Second, he was a remarkable, innovative undergraduate teacher in a department where professors taught many courses, large and small. His introductory human geography course became legendary – always over its circa 500 student capacity, with 10–12 Teaching Assistants, unregistered students sitting in the aisles, and, at one point, two technicians assigned to manage its multiple audio-visual aids (film, tapes, slides). Looking back, Ron Horvath\textsuperscript{33} identifies him as the “fertilizer for radical ferment” among the students, Bob Galois recalls his “all singing, all dancing, multimedia” lectures as “amazing, pedagogically,” and Nathan Edelson calls them “magnificent.” When Fran Walsh, coming from a conservative Irish background, attended Eliot-Hurst’s class, “the earth moved.” For Galois, teaching was Eliot-Hurst’s main strength.\textsuperscript{34}

Third and perhaps most important to both the rise and demise of the radical moment in SFU Geography, was Eliot-Hurst’s role in departmental governance. He became heavily involved in administration upon returning from California, exhibiting skill and innovation, or Machiavellian guile depending on one’s perspective, at a time when room for maneuver was lessening. He certainly seemed to value concentrating power – he was simultaneously department chair and chair of the Graduate Studies
Committee – as well as opening departmental decision-making to undergraduate and graduate students, who were appointed with voting rights to all departmental committees. With Eliot-Hurst in charge, departmental space and resources were available to all students, but particularly the radical group – who Evenden 35 dubbed the “red guard.” Edelson remembers the large amount of departmental space afforded to the students, including a large space that acted as a ‘student union’ with library, seminar, meeting, and study space 36. With Eliot-Hurst as benefactor to the radical students and faculty, resources also were available to bring in speakers, produce the USG Newsletter and the issue of Antipode, while vans and a departmental credit card were available to fund conference trips, including to the funding meeting of the UGSC in Toronto, mentioned above.

Fundamentally, Eliot-Hurst’s time as chair was both intellectually and materially crucial to the development of the radical swirl. Yet he was neither the intellectual center nor the daily driver of radical thinking within the group. As Colm Regan argues, “He created this strand of energy … but never really controlled it … Michael created the space that we were able to fill in.37” For Edelson, Eliot-Hurst’s way of operating was a learning moment: “I learned a lot from the way he handled power,” particularly regarding how institutional resources could be turned to support radical visions38. Yet Eliot-Hurst’s way of handling power was also divisive, and he eventually overstretched and broke the alliances among the faculty that allowed his practices to flourish. His decision to put students on the salary review committee, with the ability to vote on whether faculty would receive salary increases, is often cited as the final straw for many, although both
Evenden and Horsfall\textsuperscript{39} say they had no problem with the practice. Bob Galois sums up Eliot-Hurst as “slightly chaotic, creative and divisive.”\textsuperscript{40}

\textit{<H2>Class consciousness: Students learning and creating radical geography}

If Eliot-Hurst created the space for many radical activities, other continuing and visiting faculty, including Bob Horsfall, Ron Horvath, and Jim Overton, supported students as they combined their intellectual interests and political convictions. Eliot-Hurst’s secretary, Barbara Shankland also played an important role. Hailing from a Scottish coalmining family, she supported the radical moment. The undergraduate students were also crucial figures. They were special in many ways, with an average age higher than elsewhere. Alan Mabin recalls that he was younger than the average age of his students when he taught a class in 1977\textsuperscript{41}. Like students across the campus in its early years, the geography undergraduates had life and work experience and, for the most part, working class backgrounds. They were socially conscious, high quality, and worked extremely hard, Evenden remembers, especially in their upper-level research and field-based courses\textsuperscript{42}. They created an exciting milieu; both former faculty and graduate students comment on how much they learned from the undergraduates.

The undergraduate student group in the department was called the Geography Student Union. This name, which persists today, speaks to the politics of the students in the University’s early years. The GSU produced a Newsletter, the first issue of which (GSU 1972) called for enhanced student input in departmental affairs and proposed an “anti-calendar” (a means of “exposing worthless courses and professors”), which was eventually produced. The GSU Newsletter also offered an extensive critique of the “true role of the capitalist university,” identified as the promotion of bourgeois ideology, with
the imperative that students not be exposed to revolutionary socialist consciousness. Geography, as an academic discipline, was presented as deeply implicated in this agenda: geographers were the most conservative of social scientists, due to their “poor intellectual caliber …, the stultifying effect of geographic training on the recipient, the basically boring content of geography as presently taught and the political naivety of geographers” (GSU 1972: 5).

According to a number of our interviewees, these were the words of students influenced by a particular form of Western Canadian radicalism that grew out of the province’s largely rural landscape of resource-extractive industries, mixing environmentalism, anarchism, and the Wobblies’s trade unionism with the experiences of feminists, American draft-dodgers, and religious non-conformists. Thus, Suzanne Mackenzie, who received her undergraduate degree in 1976 and was a strong force among the radical students at SFU, came from a family that was heavily involved in the union movement in the Kootenay region of British Columbia.

**<H1>Convergence and Connections: Radical SFU Geography, in and of the World**

The local confluences and connections that produced radical SFU Geography – the gravitational pull attracting students who had been shaken loose by disruptions across campus or were looking for perspectives not offered by their own departments, the radical openness that attracted undergraduate students to Eliot-Hurst’s and others’ classes, the undergraduate and graduate interaction and common purpose – were all entwined with places and people further afield.

**<H2>Radical convergence**
Numerous people had come to SFU from elsewhere in the world. One group was comprised of political exiles of one sort or another. Some came from the Republic of Ireland, frustrated by the Irish university system’s conservatism. Fran Walsh had been an early migrant, but returned to University College Dublin to complete a PhD after his SFU MA, from where he encouraged local students Colm Regan and Alan Wallace to travel to SFU. Walsh then took a job at Maynooth, establishing a critical presence in geography that has persisted. Leaving Ireland was an attractive opportunity for Regan. SFU, where he stayed from 1974–1976, was the most attractive option because of its reputation, offering an escape from what he and others saw as a conservative regional historical geography approach in Ireland that had nothing to say about the situations in Northern Ireland, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere. Alan Mabin escaped the circumstances – and the draft – in South Africa. He already had learned of SFU as a result of reading Eliot-Hurst’s publications, and communicating with him and David Harvey. While he moved first to Ohio State, he quickly decided that the west coast would be a better fit and picked SFU. Funded by Ohio State to attend the CAG/USG meeting in 1975, he stayed with Galois and met many of the other radicals. SFU’s openness at that time hit those from more conservative locations “like a wall of water,” as Evenden put it. This new radical environment energized them tremendously: a ‘cataclysmic’ change as Regan put it.

A second group of incomers gravitated toward Burnaby Mountain, to a great extent as a result of SFU having been noticed by radical geographers elsewhere (in part through Eliot-Hurst’s published commentaries, as Mabin’s story suggests). David Harvey played an instrumental role in the moves of Bob Horsfall, hired as an Assistant Professor at SFU in 1970, and Nathan Edelson, who arrived in 1972 to work on a PhD with Eliot-
Hurst. Harvey knew them at Johns Hopkins and the University of Pennsylvania, respectively, and wrote recommendation letters for their applications. Bettina Bradbury, the historian who had come to SFU from New Zealand with her geographer husband John, recalls how this convergence created an “incredibly exciting time,” with graduate students from all over the world exchanging radical ideas.\(^46\) John Bradbury researched the fate of British Columbia’s rural and remote resource towns and was politically active both in founding SFU’s Local of the USG and in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the building of a Chevron oil refinery at the foot of Burnaby Mountain. According to Galois’s obituary of John (Rose and Galois 1988: 174), the Bradburys were central figures among the radical group in those “heady disputatious times.” Bettina remembers that she spent a great deal of time with the geographers and was radicalized by other students, not the faculty. For her, it a “transformative experience” that laid the basis for an academic career grounded in socialist and feminist analysis.\(^47\)

The travels of these individuals and others like them were also framed by the conjunctural context of the time, as Ron Horvath notes. This was a time when radicalism was appearing in multiple and differentiated ways – some muted, some more vibrant. It was a time that witnessed a

<quote>general growth of rebelliousness among young people … associated with flower power, hippie and pop culture, drug use, the peace and protest movements (anti-Vietnam War, civil rights, women’s rights) etc. [and the] massive growth of the international socialist movement among students in 1968.\(^48\)</quote>

Alan Mabin argues that SFU’s emergence as a radical center must be thought of in the context of similar “new peripheral universities, like University of Western Cape in
South Africa and Nanterre in France. Their important role in struggles over social change was based, he contends, on their self-image as special, different, non-elite institutions that attracted leading radical intellectuals, like Tom Bottomore and Michael Eliot-Hurst at SFU. Bob Galois echoes this point when describing the attraction of SFU in 1969: it was fresh, it was new, it had lively radical politics. It was “in tune with the times,” but also with the place: it was very definitely not the United States. For Colm Regan, “the States wasn’t an option. Clark or Berkeley didn’t figure on our map at the time.”

**A necessary stop on the circuit**

SFU was clearly on the map for radical geographers in North America. It was part of a network that, like all such networks, was produced and reproduced through the mobilization of ideas and information being communicated through the USG Newsletter, the flows of graduate students and junior professors, but also the travels of major figures in this emergent field. Harvey, Bunge, Blaut, Milton Santos, and Yi-Fu Tuan – radical geography’s “Johnny Appleseeds” (Akatiff 2011: 10), or traveling minstrels, as the USG Newsletter had it (Anonymous 1975a: 17) – each visited SFU, some more than once. In May 1975 the front page of the SFU student newspaper, *The Peak*, ran the headline “Socialist geographers come to SFU” (Figure 4.4). The accompanying article anticipated the upcoming second meeting of the USG and the arrival on campus of Blaut and Harvey. It also noted that SFU hosted the largest USG local, formed the year before. Drawing on an interview with Colm Regan, *The Peak* announced that, “[e]stablishment geography has always been incapable of explaining or solving most of the problems in modern
capitalist society” whereas, the USG was “intent on reconciling geography and reality” *(The Peak 1975: 1).*

[insert Figure 4.4 here]

**Figure 4.4** Socialist geographers come to SFU. Source: *The Peak* [student newspaper], May 22, 1975.

The role of conferences as “convergence spaces” and in the transfer of ideas (and ideals) is well known (Temenos 2016). Yet it is important to emphasize that they also play the important role of developing and nurturing “weak ties” (Granovetter 1973): the loose bonds of acquaintance and trust that connect geographically dispersed groups of people together into communities of common purpose. In the context of radical praxis, the productive role of conferences is not merely granted by the powers that be, but is taken and (re)made. As Regan notes,

<quote>
This was about saying, “feck this,” we can organize our own conferences … If you wait for the establishment to give you permission, you will never get it. You get your permission with making your own space. We also wanted to work through our own arguments, our own debates, create an alternative site of energy.⁵²</quote>

This networking work was crucial to Susan Williams’s experience. She was heavily involved in producing the USG Newsletter and attending the CAG/USG meetings, also presenting at the conference. For her, it was a somewhat “scary” experience, but this was tempered by the communal work in advance, where the group edited and practiced one another’s papers⁵³.

The USG, at SFU and beyond, was a group on a mission: “wrapped up in providing … mutual aid (spiced with great parties and fierce arguments) across multiple
[radical] traditions” (Harvey 2015) at conferences that linked them up with fellow travelers from elsewhere. As Williams recounts, they “we were exposed to students from across North America through USG. We felt like we were part of a network, with a strong presence at CAG and at the AAG in New Orleans and New York”\textsuperscript{54}. Similarly, for Regan these meetings, especially the Chicago AAG, “gave us a sense of coherence. … Meeting other people, gave strength and energy to go on. Gave a sense of a movement, not just autonomous sites of energy. But now there was a newsletter, partnerships, exchanges, not just \textit{ad hoc} engagement. Cross fertilizing was important.\textsuperscript{55}” These connections lasted beyond students’ sojourn at SFU: Thus, Susan Williams moved on to McGill, where she built on her USG contacts to maintain “lots of connections with Clark and to Laval, via another CAG meeting”\textsuperscript{56}.

Conferences were only part of the circuit, however. Other crucial elements included the travels of leaders in the field, visiting various campuses across Canada and the United States to give talks and hold seminar discussions. By 1973–1974, Horvath says, SFU was the biggest mass of radical geographers in the English-speaking world and a “necessary stop on the circuit” for leading figures\textsuperscript{57}. They brought differences in perspective, in how they engaged with faculty and students, and in how they conveyed their ideas, triggering different impacts among the group at SFU. According to Horvath, Bunge had a tense relationship with many of the students he met at SFU (as discussed above), whereas Blaut was the most effective interpersonally and able to persuade numerous students of his ideas on development geography and dependency theory. Harvey, more analytical and academic than Blaut, was also influential. His visit triggered the yearlong (1975–1976) \textit{Capital}/Marx reading group, involving approximately 25
participants. In short, the networking work of students and faculty at SFU tied the department into a wider community, but also fundamentally shaped how radical geography developed.

**<H1>Down from the Mountain: Legacies and Limits**

The most sustained and recognized influence in an academic discipline involves ongoing publishing in the academic literature. David Harvey (2015) has recently reflected on this:

> Survival in the discipline was an issue [at the time]. Having pushed the door open we had somehow to keep it open institutionally in the face of a lot of pressure to close it. … I was from the very beginning determined to publish up a storm and I did emphasize to my students and all those around me who would listen that this was one (and perhaps the only) way to keep the door open. It was more than the usual publish or perish. For all those suspected of Marxist or anarchist sympathies, it was publish twice as much at a superior level of sophistication or perish. … Many of my colleagues in the radical movement, those with anarchist leanings in particular, did not care for that choice (for very good reasons) with the result that many of them, sadly, failed or chose not to consolidate academic positions.

The radicals at SFU were distributed on both sides of this line. Some published significantly throughout their academic careers, while also teaching, mentoring, and so on. Alan Mabin, for example, became a productive scholar, working in a variety of development fields. He notes the powerful importance of the SFU experience on his writings in the 1980s (e.g., Mabin 1986). Among those who remained in academia, Fran Walsh, argues that he was “a different person” when he left SFU. Bettina Bradbury, says her “work would not have been what it was without” SFU, finding her path difficult thereafter. Rejected for a position in History at McGill because “they said I was ‘too feminist’ and ‘too socialist.”’ Suzanne MacKenzie went on to have an important career as a socialist feminist:
Over more than two decades, her numerous books and articles exploring how women’s lives shaped and were shaped by their social environments have become a beacon for and an inspiration to a whole generation of feminist geographers. She has influenced profoundly the ways that gender is now understood in Canadian universities (Anonymous 1999: 105).

Nonetheless, as Nathan Edelson notes, SFU did not produce many radical PhDs in the end, making it “an asterisk” in the history of the discipline.

Others chose a hybrid route, moving beyond academic publishing by choice or otherwise. Walsh, while maintaining an academic career, became involved in an Irish NGO focusing on foreign ownership of natural resources, which shaped legislation to increase taxation rates and controls on such ownership, and became active within the Workers’ Party. Bob Galois remained an academic, engaging in important research on colonialism, for example, but in a teaching position at UBC. Colm Regan also became involved in the NGO world. Alan Mabin returned to apartheid South Africa, and became involved in setting up an NGO working for poverty eradication. Lee Seymour, one of those who pioneered feminist geography at SFU, set up Marxist-feminist study groups in St. Johns, Newfoundland. She helped to found the Newfoundland Association for Full Employment, worked with a local women’s center and transition house, and worked for Oxfam Canada and Amnesty International. SFU “had a formative, catalyzing effect,” she said. “I’ve been active all my life... [My time there] was totally formative in terms of my value system ... A huge legacy. Huge.” Thus, SFU’s legacy exceeded the academy as Seymour and others went on to live radical geography and make radical geographies in their own no less significant ways.

As with any such movement, its legacy is defined both by the paths it clears and the limits it fails to transcend. The question of limits must also be acknowledged. Thus,
Galois notes the general silence among other SFU radical geographers regarding settler colonialism. Imperialism was a focus, he notes, but there was little recognition of the history of the land upon which Vancouver sits and of the tension of holding radical conferences on unceded native land\(^\text{63}\). Horvath notes that the new environmentalism didn’t figure greatly in radical discussions\(^\text{64}\). Terry Simmons, an early member of Greenpeace, remembers being reprimanded for engaging with “fuzzy-wuzzy environmental issues.”\(^\text{65}\) Nathan Edelson points to how the group missed the unraveling of Fordism and the emergence of neoliberalism, even as these unfolded around them in the mid-1970s\(^\text{66}\). The critical analysis of race among what was an overwhelmingly white project was also a significant silence (see Kobayashi, this volume).

While it is important to document this story, it has relevance for radical geographers today. Indeed, learning this history was significant for several current graduate students at SFU (mostly in Geography, as well as Urban Studies), who formed the interdisciplinary Place + Space collective in 2016. While the motivations for this collective are broad, its members nevertheless note the influence of SFU’s radical moment, learning from its absences, and omissions, (e.g., its whiteness, or the need to ensure continuity beyond the presence of individual members) while being inspired to fill its remaining gaps. Like the earlier movement, the current collective is student-led, and like the USG, both outward-facing, building solidarity with other groups, and inwardly supportive:

<quote>While there might not be any direct line between the two “moments”, knowing SFU geography’s radical history has definitely helped some of us feel an extra sense of institutional belonging …. There are conditions of radical possibility that exist at SFU, and we think that it is no coincidence that a collective like ours formed here. For some, it was very exciting to find out about the radical past of the Geography department at SFU, and it made us feel super</quote>
enthusiastic about the possibilities for us to challenge conventional structures.\footnote{67}

In that sense, they note, “we like to think that the legacy of the radical movement is still ‘alive’ within us.”
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We gratefully acknowledge the willingness of our many interviewees to share their memories of this important moment. Thanks to Len Evenden, Lee Seymour, Alan Mabin, and Proinnsias Breathnach for their comments on an earlier draft, which also benefited from the editorial eye of Eric Sheppard. Earlier versions benefited from feedback at presentations at AAG (San Francisco, 2016) and at SFU (2016). Various documents relating to this episode, kindly shared by participants, have been archived (http://atom.archives.sfu.ca/union-of-socialist-geographers-2), hopefully to be made available in digital format soon.

Ron Horvath, interviewed by McCann (by phone), Australia, July 2015.

Why the story has not been properly documented is an open question. Some suggest its deliberate erasure from collective memory. Others, comparing it to radical schools such as Clark, point to the fact that there were few who went on to tell the tale within the discipline. Many of those who participated went on to important forms of activism and political engagement, but not within Geography. While it did foster some significant and productive scholars, two in particular – John Bradbury and Suzanne McKenzie – died tragically young.

Len Evenden and Nathan Edelson, interviewed by Blomley and McCann, Burnaby, August 2015.

Bettina Bradbury, interviewed by Blomley (by phone), New Zealand, July 2015.

Colm Regan, interviewed by Blomley (by phone), Ireland, June 2015.

Personal communication, October 11, 2016.

Susan Williams, interviewed by Blomley (by phone), Newfoundland, September 2015.

Williams, 2015

Regan, 2015.

For Bob Galois, an Althusserian ideological critique of the discipline was a motivation. He was intent on uncovering Geography’s hidden politics, and recovering anarchist alternatives, notably the work of Reclus and Kropotkin (interviewed by Blomley and McCann, Vancouver, May 2015).

Alan Mabin, interviewed by Blomley and McCann, Burnaby, October 2015.

Fran Walsh, interviewed by Blomley (by phone), Ireland, July 2015 (Fran Walsh subsequently switched to using the Gaelic version of his name, Proinnsias Breathnach).

Bradbury, 2015

Regan, 2015.

Minutes of meeting of Vancouver local of Union of Socialist Geographers, September 10, 1974. Copy available from authors.

Email from Fran Walsh to Linda Peake, March 24, 2011 (copy with authors).

Galois’s article on Kropotkin is particularly significant, one of the first English language articles on Geography’s anarchist past, seeking to rediscover “alternative traditions in geography which have either been eliminated from the discipline or emasculated beyond recognition” (1976: 13).

Lee Seymour, interviewed by Blomley (phone), Halifax, September 2015.

Regan, 2015.

Williams, 2015.
The geographical dimension of the convergence was somewhat diffuse. While the goal was disciplinary in focus for some (such as uncovering Geography’s subaltern histories, like nineteenth century anarchism), many respondents were hard-pressed to explain the specifically spatialized characteristics of their critique, and noted that much of their reading (especially Marx) was more general in orientation. Indeed, Eliot-Hurst (1980) would insist that by privileging space as a category while ignoring its fetishistic qualities, radical geography was inherently diversionary and bourgeois.

These notes derive from the unpublished comments of Nathan Edelson (1974).

A local SFU trained college instructor, Jim Sellers, engaged in an interesting precursor to the VGE, deploying geography students to engage in “grass roots” research (Sellers 1973).

Notably Bob Horsfall, who ‘enforced’ an organizing session at his home based on his own community organizing experience in Baltimore (interviewed by Blomley and McCann, Burnaby, July 2015).

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