



Spaces of the Past, Histories of the Present: An Interview with Stuart Elden and Derek Gregory

Stuart Elden¹

Department of Geography, Durham University
stuart.elden@durham.ac.uk

Derek Gregory¹

Department of Geography, University of British Columbia,
derek.gregory@geog.ubc.ca

Álvaro Sevilla-Buitrago¹

Departamento de Urbanística y Ordenación del Territorio
Universidad Politécnica de Madrid
alvaro.sevilla@upm.es

Abstract

The ontologies of space and territory, our experience of them and the techniques we use to govern them, the very conception of the socio-spatial formations that we inhabit, are all historically specific: they depend on a genealogy of practices, knowledges, discourses, regulations, performances and representations articulated in a way that is extremely complex yet nevertheless legible over time. In this interview we look at the logic and the patterns that intertwine space and time — both as objects and tools of inquiry — through a cross-disciplinary dialogue. The discussion with Stuart Elden and Derek Gregory covers the place of history in socio-spatial theory and in their own work, old and new ways of thinking about the intersection between history and territory, space and time, the implications of geography and history for thinking about contemporary politics, and the challenges



¹ Creative Commons licence: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works

now faced by critical thought and academic work in the current neo-liberal attack on public universities and the welfare state.

...we need [history] for life and action, not as a convenient way to avoid life and action, or to excuse a selfish life and a cowardly or base action. We would serve history only so far as it serves life...

Friedrich Nietzsche (1874)

On the Use and Abuse of History for Life

ÁLVARO SEVILLA: I have taken the liberty to use these oft-quoted sentences from the start of Nietzsche's second *Untimely Meditation* because I believe they can help to open up our conversation by introducing one of its thorniest issues. As you know, this work is a furious diatribe against German Historicism, paradoxically built on the foundations of a defence of the need of history for life, for action.

By no means do I wish to uncritically revive this text, which I think is littered with controversy. One of them, and not least, is the specific position of this appeal for operative historiography at a crucial time of upheaval in German history — it was written in 1874 —, in the twilight of a century that had predated on the past in search of meanings with which it could build its present. It is this specific problem, i.e., an awareness of the need for history and, at the same time, the inseparable difficulty of identifying exactly how it is necessary, which has encouraged us to meet up for this debate.

Despite the diversity of your original academic and disciplinary contexts, both of you share a common approach to history *in a minor key* from very early on in your career, as an aid in broader effort to understand a range of dimensions and modes of production of space — I will borrow Lefebvre's concept in order to find a common arena for your different approaches.

In short, despite being 'foreigners' in the strange country of the past, you have sailed its seas in search of answers and questions, thus pointing to the need for historical analysis as an indispensable tool in your work. Why did you choose history in your research? In other words, beyond your personal circumstances, what role does history play in understanding the production and conception of space? Why a history of the production of space, why a spatial history of society?

DEREK GREGORY: I was trained as an historical geographer at Cambridge, and I suspect I've retained much of that sensibility in my subsequent work. The past is always present, of course, in precarious and necessarily partial forms: it has material presence, as object and built form, as archive and text, and it also haunts

the present as memory and even as absence. Because the past is always fragmentary, then, and because it casts such shadows over our own present, it needs to be constantly re-constructed and interrogated. In my own work I'm interested in history for two main reasons. The first is that I'm drawn to the doubling of continuity and change; I don't think history is episodic, divided into phases, and so I want to recover the unevenness of transformation: its jagged edges in time and space. The second is that I'm seduced by the normative power of history — what E.P. Thompson (1978:234) once called the desire to reach back and shake Swift by the hand (or Walpole by the throat) — that enables us to identify those values and responses that are worth recovering and enlarging in our own present (and, by extension, to disclose those vestiges of the past that ought to have been consigned to the dustbin of history). For both these reasons, I admire Lewis Mumford's *The City in History*: for all its problems, it opens up a crucial nexus between cities, power and space that has a dense and rich materiality about it.

I confess that over the years I have become much less enthralled by Lefebvre's work, and still less by most readings of it. *The Production of Space* remains a wonderfully suggestive book, but I don't think it survives a close encounter with the archive or the field (both crucial sites for any vigorously critical history) and I'm deeply skeptical of any general 'history of the production of space'. There is, of course, even more going on in that book than an argumentation sketch of such a project — I'm thinking of the subterranean attacks on Foucault, Lacan and others — but it is probably Foucault who has provided me with more insight into the conduct of a 'spatial history' than anyone else. I'm not thinking of any conceptual repertoire here — though his 'history of the present' is the most economical way of capturing my own interest in the past — and I'm certainly aware of complaints about his obsession with metropolitan France. But it is his way of working — the insistently empirical, concrete nature of his inquiries — and the lyrical quality of his writing that I admire. He has also made me more keenly aware (even than Lefebvre) of the central role of vision and visibility in contemporary spatializations.

I see that in the last two paragraphs I've switched between 'historical geography' and 'spatial history', and each of these terms has their own genealogy, but it is pointless to promote one over the other. Much more productive, I think, is to allow them to bleed into one another. My present work on modern war would be impossible without either of them.

STUART ELDEN: My first degree is in politics and modern history, and I'd see almost all my work as falling under the general heading of the history of ideas. The history of ideas approach can be found in the accounts I've offered of particular thinkers and also in my ongoing work on the history of the concept of territory. Even my work on the 'war on terror' was historical in several respects.

Like Derek I'd certainly see Lefebvre and Foucault as important. But the question mentioned Nietzsche and I'd like to backtrack a bit. Nietzsche was the first thinker I worked on in detail. The first chapter of my PhD thesis was on Nietzsche — the remaining chapters were on Heidegger and Foucault. This became the book *Mapping the Present* (Elden, 2001), though the Nietzsche material was largely dropped with some parts put into the other chapters. The second *Untimely Meditation* was probably even more important than *On the Genealogy of Morality* for my thinking about these issues. And Heidegger is, for me, the thinker that links them all together. The only place in *Being and Time* where Heidegger treats Nietzsche at length is a discussion of the second *Untimely Meditation*. Nietzsche offers the striking definition of classical philology as untimely: 'to act against the time and so have an effect on the time, to the advantage, it is to be hoped, of a coming time'². Foucault's notion of a 'history of the present' is there in germ; but while Nietzsche orientates the critical approach to history to the past, it is Heidegger who points it to the present.

With Lefebvre, my feeling is that he needs to be rescued from his interpreters. To read *The Production of Space* through the lens of the first chapter — the spatial 'triad', etc. — is such a reductive reading. It's the historical reading we find in the rest of the book that is, I think, more useful — one of my regrets about my book on Lefebvre (Elden, 2004) is that I didn't stress this nearly enough. There are undoubtedly all sorts of historical errors in his account, but it raises some really helpful questions. The way he utilizes some of these ideas in his work on the state, where he moves away from a history of space and undertakes something of a spatial history — as he also did in his accounts of 1871 and 1968 — is also really helpful for me.

I'd suggest that it's the questions these thinkers raise that is their key legacy. Almost everything Foucault says about territory is at best misleading, but the ways he brings up these issues has been very productive. And I think it's that kind of historical approach, or sensibility, that I have taken from them. I find it impossible to think about something without wondering what the words being used mean and meant, how it came to be understood in that way, what configurations of people, place and power produced that state of things. These are fundamentally historical questions, and the relation between words, concepts, and practices crucial to the work I do.

AS: Let me now move the dilemma posed in my first question to another level of analysis. I would like to project the duality between continuity and change suggested by Derek onto the very ways of thinking about the relations between past and present at key moments in the course of the 20th century. Foucault's notion of the 'history of the present' has been mentioned, and the connections with Nietzsche

² Elden's translation.

and Heidegger's work have also been pointed out. Viewed from a different perspective, however, we are talking about works that belong to historically diverse structures of thought, which seem to require a more precise division.

Stuart has drawn our attention to the rift between Nietzsche and Heidegger's critical approaches to history. Just a couple of years after *Being and Time*, but from opposite ideological coordinates, Antonio Gramsci wrote about the present as a 'criticism of the past' in his *Prison Notebooks*³. Although he showed a new sensitivity towards the relationship between the two — aware of how the present *drags along* part of the past —, in his discourse history is clearly regarded as a project for social transformation, as an agenda for the future. This logic, inscribed in the diagram of the historical project of modernity, could also be considered to embrace a whole range of contemporary disciplinary landscapes that are directly related to the conception and production of space — I am not just thinking of the desire to move beyond the past and the spatial revolution of the between-war avant-garde architecture and town planning, but also a wide range of applied geographies, territorial strategies and policies, etc.

With Heidegger we face a quite different line of thought, which perhaps may be read more easily in later philosophers, especially in the ideas developed by Gadamer in the late 1950s and early 1960s. His understanding of historical consciousness as 'the privilege of modern man to have a full awareness of the historicity of everything present and the relativity of all opinions' (Gadamer, 1979:89) points to a reflexive position: '[t]his historical consciousness now knows how to situate itself in a reflexive relation with itself and with tradition; it understands itself by and through its own history. *Historical consciousness is a mode of self-consciousness*' (Gadamer, 1979:101, original emphasis). This *interpretive drift*, an inclination towards the principle of the fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*) — as opposed to the active and sometimes violent *production* of new horizons of meaning — became common in social theory in subsequent decades.

These shifts in the way we perceive history, from the historical project to a reflective stance, from a 'criticism of the past' to the 'history of the present', are part of a range of forces that have also dragged along the apparatuses for the production of space, at least in its most obvious, banal symbolic aspects — of course, I am thinking of the more trivial dimension of post-modern architecture. But to what extent do you think these epistemological upheavals, these *révoltes logiques*, affect the structural aspects of the production of territory or, in a deeper

³ «How the present is a *criticism* of the past, besides [and because of] 'surpassing' it. But should the past be discarded for this reason? What should be discarded is that which the present has 'intrinsically' criticized and that part of ourselves which corresponds to it. What does this mean? That we must have an exact consciousness of this real criticism and express it not only theoretically, but *politically*. In other words, we must stick closer to the present, which we ourselves have helped create, while conscious of the past and its continuation (and revival).» (Gramsci, 1992:234, original emphasis).

sense, the very way we regard and rethink socio-spatial relations? How are these shifts in the connection between time, space and society viewed from the perspective of your own discipline?

SE: This is a difficult question for me to answer, not least because of my lack of engagement with the work of Gramsci and Gadamer. (I confess I was probably put off Gramsci by my experience in politics and international relations departments, where neo-Gramscianism was quite the thing, though I'm not sure how much this actually relies on Gramsci.) I've really read both as commentators on other authors — Gadamer on Heidegger, but also Gramsci on Dante and Machiavelli — rather than for their work in itself. I'm sure this is my loss. The way that you frame Gramsci certainly positions him as part of a long lineage of Marxist thought, of history as a means of social transformation. I tried to make a similar argument in my reading of Lefebvre. Lefebvre is a thinker of the possible, both in terms of *what made things possible* — a historical question — and *what might be possible* — a political one — . Gadamer's remarks on historical consciousness sound very interesting, and could be traced back to the impact Heidegger's lectures on Aristotle and in particular the notion of *phronesis* (φρόνησις) had on him. He discusses that in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Gadamer, 2008).

I'd struggle to make a case that these different ways of thinking about history have made an impact on the production of space. Indeed, phrased as I just have, this would have a rather unpleasantly deterministic air. I don't think that's quite what you're driving at, but there is a risk in seeing epistemological changes as somehow leading those in practice. In my own work, at the moment, I'm interested in trying to trace how ways of thinking about space interrelate with spatial politics, particularly in terms of territory, but this is of course never a straight-forward causal relation, but one muddled and muddled by all sorts of contingencies. I think this is important work, obviously, but it's difficult. Trying to work through, in detail, how discussions in texts influence political actions is extremely tricky. It's easier the other way round of course, but even there you can't entirely reduce an argument to context. Take John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*, for example. It needs to be understood in terms of his critique of Filmer, as the work of a Calvinist, an Englishman, in terms of colonialism and so on. There has been a long running debate about when this text was written. It had been thought it was written shortly before its 1690 publication, and so should be seen in relation to the 1688 Glorious Revolution. Then Peter Laslett (1988) produced compelling evidence that it actually dated from earlier in that decade, and was thus a product of the Exclusion crisis. It was not a justification of a revolution that had happened, but a demand for one to be brought about. And yet, while I completely support arguments to read texts in contexts, there is something about any text that transcends that.

I also want to sound a slight note of caution about the ways we think and rethink social/spatial relations. There can be a slightly dangerous tendency to rush to the new — the new theorist, the new theory, the new set of questions — without fully digesting the old. In some respects this is the strength of geography as a discipline: it can be incredibly open to new ideas in a way that many other disciplines are not. But in other respects this is a real weakness. I've said before that it strikes me as regrettable that so few geographers have done the work of translating, editing and introducing the thinkers that are now so ubiquitous in our references. But it's also the lack of books like David Harvey's *The Limits to Capital* (1982) — a major work in both ambition and execution. Nothing quite like it has been done by a geographer for any of the poststructuralist thinkers, and I think that's a missed opportunity.

So I'm actually interested in a more historical question, not so much how we should understand social/spatial relations, or the relation between time, space and society, but how have these been understood at different times and in different places. To try to capture something about those modes of thought and practice is, to my mind, often more empowering than proposing some new way of understanding them now.

DG: The distinction Álvaro draws is an interesting one, though I'd also want to position all three authors you mention — Gramsci, Heidegger and Gadamer — in (complex) relation to fascism in the 1920s and 30s, because this underscores the ways in which epistemological mappings are entangled with political horizons. There's nothing axiomatic about those entanglements, of course, and I share Stuart's reluctance to posit a linear movement from epistemology to politics (or vice versa). Mapping their interpenetrations — and ruptures — requires careful, critical and contextual readings that are remarkably rare in my own field.

SE: I would like to add a brief note here. Having worked on Heidegger, and his politics and thought, I know how difficult it is to show these kinds of entanglements. My *Speaking Against Number* book (Elden, 2006) is probably the most difficult thing I've written, and certainly to read, and this would be reflected in my sense that it is the least read of my works. It attempts to show how Heidegger's political actions are not something that are separate from his thought, but deeply intertwined. The Heidegger of the 1920s grapples with thinking political community, or more specifically *Mitsein*, being-with, and this is part of the key to his political action. And yet, if you read the Heidegger-Karl Jaspers correspondence (Heidegger & Jaspers, 2003), it's clear that his own political activism came out of thinking about the purpose of the modern university and proposals for its reform. That's worth reflecting on carefully.

DG: In any case, the general distinction to which the question drew our attention spirals beyond these authors. Seyla Benhabib (1986) once identified two moments in any critical theory — the *explanatory-diagnostic* and the *anticipatory-utopian* — that animate not only Gramsci's writings but also Marxism more generally. I think it's clear that explicitly spatial interrogations of the project of modernity have produced a series of forensic investigations of the spatial (trans)formations of capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy and so on that surely qualify as explanatory-diagnostic, but (with the exception of David Harvey) there has been much less progress in mobilizing 'criticism of the past' to think beyond the present and redeem the anticipatory-utopian impulse. This is ironic, because the thrust of the spatial turn has been to transcend the idea that space is what Foucault once dismissed as 'the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile' (Foucault, 1980:70), and recent theorizations have done much to advance ontogenetic conceptions of space — ways of thinking about space as process, as performance — that go beyond the ideas that can be glimpsed in Marx or in Foucault. And yet, when it comes to politics as project — to interventions that, in your terms, pursue 'an agenda for the future' — then the motions and rhythms of space seem to judder to a halt and we lock ourselves back in the spatial prison from which we had only just escaped.

There are many reasons for this, but one of the most acute is the changing spatiality of the academy itself. Following David Livingstone's luminous recovery of what he calls 'the spaces of science' (Livingstone, 2003), we have become much more sensitive to the significance of the multiple spaces within which geographical knowledges are produced and through which they circulate. But we have done remarkably little to expose the deformations of the (late) modern corporate university itself. I don't mean that critical analyses don't exist — they do — but most of us simply exchange them with one another. Collectively we have been remarkably slow at taking advantage of new forums and new media to produce new critical publics. Here too we could take lessons from Harvey! At a moment when the very idea of the public university is under sustained assault in North America and Europe, it is important to insist on the non-instrumental vitality of critical thought (which is not the 'critical thinking' marketed by most universities). But we must also engage with wider audiences; 'speaking truth to power' means more than answering back to our masters, and the spatial turn has to be resolutely outwards not inwards.

While Gadamer has much to teach us about hermeneutics, I don't think this has to involve any 'fusion of horizons'. I still find Donna Haraway's reflections (1988) on 'situated knowledge' one of the most suggestive ways of thinking about the spaces in which and through which knowledge is produced. Her sharpest point is that reflexivity is always conditional, self-consciousness always partial and provisional, because all knowledge is produced by someone from somewhere; precisely because we cannot see our own situatedness, we are compelled to enter into conversations with others because it is only through dialogue that we begin to

understand — to re-cognize — our own prejudices and limitations and start to do something about them. But this is not about the fusion of horizons; choices must still be made. We form allegiances with some, solidarities with others, even as we recoil from still others. This is why we need public conversations not lectures, and why the spatial turn requires us to identify and invent spaces of such unimagined possibility.

AS: But it seems we are still a long way from a minimum consensus on the potential role of spatial practices in opening up the political or, conversely, about the capacity of our political actions on the disclosure of social space. For example, it seems telling that Ernesto Laclau, a key figure for our comprehension of these critical alliances suggested by Derek, has stated that ‘[p]olitics and space are antinomic terms’, that ‘[p]olitics only exists insofar as the spatial elude us’ (Laclau, 1997:68) and, in its place, favours time and history as the main vectors of the political⁴. In other words, the insistence on privileging this temporal dimension in the work of Laclau and other authors seems to articulate or manifest a continuous *return of the historical repressed* in a period that has proclaimed the supremacy of space. So history and historiography are still holding their central role in the social production of meaning, despite the repeated announcements of history's death in recent decades. As we have seen, your own work is good evidence in this regard.

I will now try to develop this idea by closing the outline of the history of philosophy of history we have pursued so far, and locating it in the spatial epistemologies of contemporary social theory. As Jameson suggests, post-modern praise of space has been accompanied by a parallel devaluation of the historicity of social processes. In France, Foucault's spatial proposition — which, we must remember, originally emerged from a dialogue with *Annales* and always maintained a delicate balance with the historical dimension — became further radicalized in the philosophies of the event and becoming initiated by Deleuze. More recently, Alain Badiou has taken the same line, diverging further from the historical perspective, warning against the ‘terrible union of historians’⁵, and stating that ‘History does not exist’ (Badiou, 1985:18; 2009:190), which betrays the author's intended meaning when taken out of context, but nevertheless provides a glimpse of the anti-historicism implicit in his approach. In the English-speaking world, the time span that links Hayden White's analysis of historiography's narrative status (White, 1973; 1978) to Keith Jenkins' extreme position and his ‘endist’ proposals (Jenkins, 1991; 2009) has shaken the foundations of academia and raised a concerted howl of angry protests among professional historians.

⁴ For a critique, see Massey (2005:44) and Dikeç (2005:179).

⁵ Badiou, Alain (2004), “Foucault: continuité et discontinuité”, *Le célibataire: Revue de psychanalyse*, no. 9: *Le pouvoir chez Lacan et Foucault*, cit. in Toscano (2004).

However, if we shift these disputes to the actual *flesh* of the material space of cities and territory, the temperature of this debate drops, or at least takes on a secondary dimension. Because even if we read our cities and their histories metaphorically, as texts, they are revealed as *true* texts, far removed from the politics of fiction analyzed by White; open, if you will, to further disputes over meaning — new encodings, new territorializations —, but whatever the case, ‘written in stone’. In turn, this leads us into a dilemma about the contemporary nature of these urban texts and the type of interpretation they require. Derek has mentioned Lewis Mumford, and I would like to refer to him as a contrasting figure for the idea I have in mind. At the beginning of *The Culture of Cities*, he writes: ‘Cities are a product of time. They are the molds in men's lifetimes which have cooled and congealed, giving lasting shape, by way of art, to moments that would otherwise vanish with the living [...]. In the city, time becomes visible’ (Mumford, 1997:4). Although these ideas are suggestive and relevant to the problem at hand, Mumford's text seems to greet us from a faraway place which could disrupt a potential recovery for our contemporary interpretations. The date of this text — 1938 — is possibly a clue to understanding its distance from Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, written in 1940. Just two years between the two texts ... but also the start of WWII. Despite the beauty of Mumford's images, it is the ruined landscape traversed by Benjamin's *Angelus* which best fits our current view of the spatiality of today's political conflicts: looking no further afield, your recent work comes to mind — Stuart's *Terror and Territory* (2009a) or, in the case of Derek, *The Colonial Present* (2004) and *Violent Geographies*, the latter co-edited with the late Allan Pred (Gregory & Pred, 2007) —. What issues and concerns led you into this line of investigation? At what level do you read these experiences in relation to the problems we are dealing with and the history of spatial historiographies?

Whatever the case, if space has been an opportunity for historiography in the 20th century — in different ways, from Braudel to Foucault —, is it conceivable to think that even today, history and the way it is told can be an opportunity for a reinterpretation of territory, for opening a path to this new spatial praxis mentioned at the beginning? In other words, if post-modernism and post-structuralism were a chance to recover spatial categories in social theory, could critical historiography as a continuous contestation of the present be a core ingredient in the construction of meaning for the new politics of the multitude after modernity?

DG: I don't understand why the views of people on space and the spatial who have never tried to conceptualise the terms are taken seriously; Laclau is an irrelevant distraction. So too, I think, is any attempt to prise time and space, history and geography apart, and to *a priori*-tise one over the other. If philosophers have trouble with that, then so much the worse for Philosophy. Much of this nonsense would be set to rest if we went back to Stephen Kern's marvelous account of *The*

culture of time and space 1880-1918 (Kern, 1983) and explored some of his suggestive theses in more depth and detail. Of course the very nomenclatures of the First World War and then the Second mark the significance of the temporal — I'm thinking of the horror at the Great War being recast as the *First World War*, with the terrifying implication that it was not unique but merely one of a series — but they also mark the spatial — the global: these were identified as 'world' wars — and so it's scarcely surprising that early modernism (a landscape that includes figures like Benjamin) should also have been driven by a quest to visualize the spatial in new terms that could transcend the planar geometries of contemporary geopolitics. In short, the arguments about a modern obsession with time and a postmodern obsession with space seem at best overwrought and at worst actively unhelpful: so much is lost in cramming historical geographies into those two overstuffed trunks.

Mumford is indeed relevant here, but I read the relation between *The Culture of Cities* and *The City in History* rather differently. In *The Culture of Cities*, published just one year before the Second World War broke out, Mumford included 'A brief outline of hell' in which he turned the *Angelus* towards the future to confront the terrible prospect of total war. Raging against what he called the 'war-ceremonies' staged in the 'imperial metropolis' ('from Washington to Tokyo, from Berlin to Rome' (Mumford, 1997:273): where was London, I wonder? Moscow?), Mumford fastened on the anticipatory dread of air war. The city was no longer the place where (so he claimed) security triumphed over predation, and he saw in advance of war not peace but another version of war. Thus the rehearsals for defence (the gas-masks, the shelters, the drills) were 'the materialization of a skillfully evoked nightmare' (Mumford, 1997:275) in which fear consumed the ideal of a civilized, cultivated life before the first bombs fell. The 'war-metropolis', he concluded, was a '*non-city*' (Mumford, 1997:278). After the war, Mumford revisited the necropolis, what he described as 'the ruins and graveyards' of the urban, and concluded that his original sketch could not be incorporated into his revised account, *The City in History*, simply 'because all its anticipations were abundantly verified' (Mumford, 1961:556). He gazed out over the charnel-house of war from the air — Warsaw and Rotterdam, London and Tokyo, Hamburg and Hiroshima — and noted that '[b]esides the millions of people — six million Jews alone — killed by the Germans in their suburban extermination camps, by starvation and cremation, whole cities were turned into extermination camps by the demoralized strategists of democracy' (Mumford, 1961:557).

I'm not saying that we can accept Mumford without qualification, still less extrapolate his claims into our own present, but I do think his principled arc, at once historical and geographical, is immensely important. In now confronting what Stephen Graham (2010) calls 'the new military urbanism' we need to recover its genealogy — to interrogate the claims to novelty registered by both its proponents and its critics — as a way of illuminating the historical geography of our own present. I'm just finishing *War Cultures*, in which I explore the modalities of

contemporary war — what one commentator has called ‘the everywhere war’ — and plot the mobile contours of its dispersed, fractured and distributed battlespace within which cities are pivotal sites. I focus on the performance (not the production) of three sorts of space: the abstract space of the target, the alien space of the enemy Other, and the lethal-legal space of the exception. Each of these has its own history, but taken together they work to establish the rhetorical claim that the conduct of war by advanced militaries is now surgical, sensitive and scrupulous. To turn those propositions into problematizations it is absolutely essential to recover both their genealogies and their geographies. I’m pursuing this still further in my new project, *Killing Space*, which is a genealogy-geography of war from the air. I’m examining three key episodes: the combined bombing offensive against Germany in the 1940s, the US air war over Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in the 1960s and 70s, and the US drone wars over Afghanistan and Pakistan. It’s already clear to me that the ‘line of descent’ is much more complicated than conventional histories have acknowledged, and that the spaces through which these campaigns have been conducted spiralled far beyond the bomb sites themselves. My hope is that by mapping those wider spaces it will be possible to interrupt the kill-chain itself: after all, by the time we crouch beneath the bombs and recover the victims it’s too late. We need to understand how bombing from the air is made at once *possible* and *permissible* — and the two are closely connected.

These are particular projects, and I’m reluctant to use them as templates for a ‘new politics’. But I do believe that any serious politics has to concern itself with challenging the nexus between the possible and the permissible: otherwise ‘the continuous contestation of the present’, as you put it — a marvelous phrase — will be stilled. And I think that silent complicity will be even deeper if we fall into the trap of prising time from space, history from geography.

SE: I don’t have much to say about Laclau or Jameson, but I would say that there is a danger in the idea that other disciplines need to go through a ‘spatial turn’. Geography, with the exception of the work of historical geography, has always struck me as having a very poor sense of history, and especially of its own history. This is perhaps especially the case in terms of its engagement with theory. Geographers are very limited in terms of how they grasp the historical — and even geographical — contexts that the thinkers they read came out of. They are interrogated, appropriated and used as if they are colleagues down the corridor, or people at the latest conference: effectively rendered our neighbours and contemporaries. And even in historical geography, there has been a narrowing of the temporal extent being pursued: Keith Lilley and David C. Harvey have been doing some work recently looking at the centuries which work is focused on, and there has been quite a dramatic shift to post-Enlightenment thought. This is a terrible shame. If I have no time for ‘the end of history’, non-existence of it, or challenge to it, nor do I want to allow people to think it is sufficient to go back a few decades or even centuries. I’m currently reading Adam T. Smith’s *The*

Political Landscape: Constellations of Authority in Early Complex Polities (2003), and it shows just how much can be achieved by taking a long view and wide gaze. Smith, though, is an anthropologist.

Now *Terror and Territory* was, of course, a very contemporary book, even though I made some effort to go some way back before September 11th 2001, and to look at the post-World War II in part and post-Cold War world in more detail as a context. But *The Birth of Territory*, which is the planned title for the book I am now bringing to a conclusion, goes as far back as ancient Greek myth and tragedy. *Terror and Territory* came about, in part, through a wish to make explicit how the historical approach I was taking in the longer book could be used to shed light on what was happening around us today. I do believe that seeing how things were produced helps us to understand where we are and where things might be going. A shortening of our historical horizons — either completely, or to a limited period — leads to an impoverished grasp of the present. It was also an attempt to move beyond the abstract theoretical debates of work on Heidegger, and an attempt to try to speak to a broader audience. I've been encouraged by the way the book has been received, though my sense to date is that it is being read by more academics, rather than outside the academy.

I'd certainly underline Derek's comment about the problems of priority and separation between time and space, history and geography. To be honest, some geographers need to take part of the blame for the claim that space had been consistently devalued, only to swing too far the other way to attempt to rebalance things. Derek is right to mention Stephen Kern's book: it was one my PhD supervisor Mark Neocleous insisted I read as a counterbalance to some of the claims that I was so enthusiastic about in the mid 1990s. To turn more explicitly to your last question, if critical historiography is an opportunity to think about the present, then I suppose I'd say that the present is both a spatial and a temporal category. That was part of the argument of *Mapping the Present*. Foucault's 'history of the present' is a challenge that I don't think we've yet really risen to; what I tried to show there was that his history was always already spatially attuned.

AS: I would like to focus some of these aspects on your own work more deeply and ask you several questions individually. For Derek, I would like to venture a personal interpretation, which I hope you will correct it if it is misguided. Let us look at *The Colonial Present* (Gregory, 2004), for example, which you began with a direct acknowledgement of a moral and intellectual obligation to bear witness to the ongoing spatial processes in the aftermath of 9/11, a momentum that is still continuing today.

That present was the trigger for your inquiry, but the counternarrative you proposed to understand it was primarily historical. You looked back to understand the present day context of war-torn geographies in Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq, not in the contrasting light of a peaceful past or a balance upset by the 'war on terror',

but rather via a rich genealogy that detected within that present the spatial Orientalism of the colonial past and the tensions of the Western empires: a whole constellation of geographical imaginations that permitted and reported on the spatial practices deployed by the coalition. All the same, perhaps some of the theoretical resources you used were not new in your work. As you mentioned, your previous work on the cultures of travel to Egypt also sought to understand the ‘performances that were made possible — authorized, articulated — through these imaginative geographies’ (Gregory, 2004:xiii). More recently, you have used a similar approach, albeit with different tools and references, to grapple with the historical-spatial genesis of territories of exception like Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib (Gregory, 2006b; 2007).

It seems logical to think that the common thread in these texts is a desire to be *histories of the present*, to force us to broaden our gaze and discover traces, wounds and breaths of the past in today's spatial practices. I know I am asking too much of you, but I would like you to try to historicise this type of approach for us, to the extent that you can. How did you begin to deal with these approaches and how they have evolved over the past few years? How do you retrieve the input from other fields of social theory — the ideas of Edward Said, Giorgio Agamben, etc. —, and then articulate them? How do they steer your current research into today's ‘war cultures’ and the genealogy of aerial warfare? In particular, with respect to the latter line of inquiry, I would like to return once again to Mumford: he often explained the way the construction of the city has been influenced historically by its defence mechanisms, to the point that, with the advent of gunpowder, defensive walls, he claimed, signalled the end of the city. Has your research identified similar dynamics in the modern world? Broadening our panorama of conflicts from wars to other forms of antagonism, could we hypothesize about the possible filiation of the city's historical development to military-police regulations?

DG: I don't think the counter-narrative in *The Colonial Present* was primarily historical — at least, that wasn't my intention — and I hope it can also be read, in full and equal measure, as geographical. In addition to measuring the long shadows of colonialism, imperialism and Orientalism, I was also seeking to bring three spaces of conflict into relation one with another — Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq — and to offer, in a rudimentary way, the sort of contrapuntal geography that Edward Said (1993) outlined so suggestively in *Culture and Imperialism*.

This was unfamiliar territory to me, partly because so little of my previous work had involved a direct address to the present — I knew how to undertake historical research, in both the archive and the field, but contemporary critique seemed to require a new way of working. This involved constructing and interrogating a dispersed, largely electronic archive that multiplied every time I looked at the screen, with new avenues of possible inquiry opening at every turn. I

knew how to undertake close textual reading, of course, and I was becoming familiar with the reading of images too, but this new archive placed considerable burdens on my old habits of mind. The same was true on a conceptual terrain. I knew my Giddens and my Habermas, but I didn't see either of them helping me here. I suppose I might have made something of Giddens's reflections on war and violence but their contours were far too generalized to map the sheer density of the conflict zones that captured my attention, and Habermas's recent writings retained a triumphant Eurocentrism that was part of the problem rather the solution. Said was an indispensable guide, of course, and we were in close touch in the final stages of my work, but I was as much (perhaps more) influenced by his political essays on Palestine than his earlier anatomies of Orientalism. You say that the theoretical resources I used were not new, but most of them were new to me: I did return to Foucault, more often than might be immediately apparent, but I did so with a series of new questions opened up Agamben and Mbembe in particular.

I've continued to be interested in the tense relations between those last four thinkers, and I've tried to exploit that tension to understand the spatialization of military violence. I put it like that, 'exploiting the tension', because I think some of the most creative intellectual work is located in the spaces between different theoretical positions — after all, no single system has the monopoly of important questions or of satisfactory answers — and because I think the most powerful ideas are carried in substantive solution and transformed by the concrete situations in which they are put to work. I have no interest in engineering some Grand Theoretical System to be installed anywhere — still less in ransacking the world for 'examples' that are grist to its conceptual mill.

My subsequent work on late modern war addresses what you felicitously call its 'spaces of dispersion' more directly. Many commentators have made much of the temporalities of the 'war on terror' or 'the long war': Tom Englehardt's excoriating essays on the American way of war constantly return to the claim that 'the norm for us [US!] is to be at war somewhere at any moment' (Englehardt, 2010:2), Andrew Bacevich identifies what he calls the 'Washington rules' that have propelled the United States 'into a condition approximating perpetual war' (Bacevich, 2010:16), while Dexter Filkins (2008) speaks simply of 'the forever war'. But there is a powerful sense in which late modern war is also 'the everywhere war'. Similarly, Saskia Sassen (2010) has argued that cities around the world are becoming key sites for the prosecution of what she calls 'multi-sited war' — as both central places in the war zone (Baghdad, Kabul) and as displacements of the space of war (London, Lahore) — and Stephen Graham's brilliant account of *Cities under Siege* (Graham, 2010) sharpens the same point. Both of them incorporate a temporal address too, of course: Sassen speaks of a conjunction between 'new wars' and 'new terrorism', and Graham writes of a 'new military urbanism'. But my own project departs from their work in at least two ways.

First, the claim of 'newness' needs to be interrogated more vigorously — not only because it needs historical substantiation but also because it is so often used

by the protagonists of late modern war to defend and extend its excesses. I've already said that advanced militaries now routinely claim to have an unprecedented capacity to wage war in ways that are surgical, sensitive and scrupulous, but — here it is Janus not Mars who presides — precisely because their opponents do not possess such capacities (or sensibilities) we are urged to allow those advanced militaries new latitude to prosecute the war on their own, markedly less surgical, sensitive and scrupulous terms.

Second, I think the focus on cities — which is of course important — is too restrictive, which makes me reluctant to accept your invitation to extend Mumford's reflections on war and the city. Rather, I want to understand how the nature of war is changed by the different spaces through which it is conducted, and more particularly how the militarization of politics works to disperse its violent practices around the world — and so to sustain 'the everywhere war'. Two quick examples might make this clearer. The supposedly secret war being fought by the CIA in Pakistan raises a series of vital questions about the legal regimes that purport to regulate war: this is a war in all but name being waged as an annex to the war in Afghanistan by a civilian agency not a military in which the legal rights and protections afforded to non-combatants are either contested or ignored by both the United States and Pakistan. Or again, the drug war being fought across the US/Mexico border: the President of Mexico has repeatedly represented this as a direct challenge to the state — although when Hillary Clinton described it as an insurgency there were howls of protest — and many of the techniques developed in Afghanistan and Iraq have been repatriated to escalate the militarization of the border. In both cases military violence is dispersed beyond any conventional battlefield or war zone, and its character is modulated by the compound spaces through which it is conducted. If, as Herfried Münkler (2005:3) suggests, 'war has visibly lost its well-defined contours' — he means that in a conceptual sense — this is in no small measure a result of the borderlands where it is fought.

AS: Stuart, reading your work, one cannot help but recall Lucien Febvre's imperative that we must be 'suspicious of the words of the past' (Febvre, 1983:146): a concerted effort for accuracy in the terminology makes you interrogate the texts for their exact meaning, trying to *situate them*, insert them in their proper place and moment, in the appropriate space-time. All the same, even though your books move through primarily conceptual landscapes, your interpretations of authors like Kant, Heidegger, Lefebvre, Foucault or Sloterdijk, to name a few, suggest an other-spatiality that is extremely appealing, even at the most material level of its potential implementation.

Without ruling out this line of research — you are preparing a tour through the logic of the worlds in authors like Kostas Axelos, Alain Badiou or Quentin Meillassoux —, your latest books, *Terror and Territory*, and especially the forthcoming *The Birth of Territory*, seem to be pointing in a new direction. In this

case, it is not only a question of distilling the spatialities that are embedded in the work of specific authors, but also of reconstructing the genealogy of the concept of territory — which, in your opinion, is taken for granted all too often, and regarded as an ahistorical and non-controversial concept. So, you focus on the evolution and formation of a single concept while at the same time, as you mentioned earlier, you expand the scope of your analysis to trace the multiple conceptions that are responsible for its construction, from ancient Greece to the 17th century. That is undoubtedly an extremely interesting intellectual adventure, so I would like you to dwell on it briefly: what are the key moments in that journey? Can you anticipate your main conclusions? What do you mean when you talk about territory as a ‘bundle of political technologies’? Your journey stops right at the dawn of capitalism. Can we expect to see an extension that brings together the temporal extremities of *The Birth of Territory* and *Terror and Territory*?

Incidentally, I think that search is attractive, not only because of its ability to explain our modern way of understanding territory, but also because it is an opportunity to recover the ideas that were lost along the way, or even more, the ones that were expelled from the field of the possible, as Michel de Certeau puts it, to rescue ‘what, at a given moment, has *become* unthinkable in order for a new identity to *become* thinkable’ (Certeau, 1988:94). Perhaps in that sense, this work maintains the ability to open our minds up to other ways of perceiving spatiality that we discussed previously, translating them and bringing them into other disciplines that are directly involved with the material production of space.

SE: Yes, a ‘suspicion of the words of the past’, but perhaps more appropriately, a suspicion of the translations of the words of the past. I know that translation happens within languages as well as between languages, and that to make sense of thinkers with a historical or geographical distance it is all too tempting to render them into terms that make sense today. I try to take a somewhat different approach, where we seek to understand them within the context that produced them and that they produced. I do seek to be — if not quite accurate — at least faithful. Inevitably I fail, but I think this is an approach that is worth failing with. But I’m not simply trying to retrieve the thinkers, but rather to try to open up ways that we might work with them.

I will be returning to more contemporary conceptual material when I’ve finished *The Birth of the Territory*. Yes, the world is my focus, but what I don’t want to try to do is offer a history of the concept, or even what you nicely call a ‘tour through the logic of the worlds’ of these thinkers. I want to avoid a thinker-based approach, and even a topic-based one. Instead I want to take six cuts through contemporary debates and events. At the moment the idea is to have chapters with single-word titles — violence, fossils, earth, wound, volume, play — and use these as hooks on which to hang a range of discussions of how we conceptualise, practice

and name the world, and in particular to challenge the idea that globalisation is deterritorialisation.

I don't see the territory books as pointing in a different direction. Instead, I've come to think of my books as operating as two loose trilogies. The first three (Elden, 2001; 2004; 2006) were works of social/spatial theory, focusing on specific thinkers. Then the conceptual tools I'd tried to develop in relation to those thinkers have been put to work in three books that are basically all about territory. *Terror and Territory* was an explicitly political book; *The Birth of Territory* is historical; *The Space of the World* is philosophical. In different ways then, each book is an attempt to think about political-spatial issues, but with a recognition that doing so is transformative to the approach being used. *Terror and Territory* has been largely discussed within geography, but I'd certainly see it as a geographical or spatial challenge to international relations; *The Birth of Territory* tries to show how the history of the state or political theory is transformed if we take the question of the relation between place and power as a guiding theme. Similarly I hope the book I plan to write will offer a somewhat distinct perspective on some philosophical questions about the world.

Much of *The Birth of Territory* doesn't discuss territory in a narrow, specific sense. I really don't think it makes sense to talk of 'territory' until around the middle of the fourteenth century. It's not just that there is no classical Greek word that means this, or that *territorium* is an exceedingly rare word in classical Latin — not that these are minor points — but that even when words that have geographical-political senses are used, concepts explicated or practices occur, something different is going on. I try to work through these shifts as best I can, to try to show how things were differently ordered at different times and places. As such there are a range of discussions that might appear to be tangential to the key focus of the book, but I want to avoid any teleological impulse or a Whiggish narrative. So I like the idea of the "ideas that were lost along the way".

In this book, and in paper recently published in *Progress in Human Geography* (Elden, 2010b), I try to make a case for understanding territory in a somewhat broader set of relations than is usually the case. So I try to suggest that a political-economic focus on land, or a political-strategic emphasis on what is effectively terrain are, in themselves, insufficient. They are crucial elements, undoubtedly, but I argue that we need to take the political-legal much more seriously, and to address the political-technical. In the latter it's an attempt to think about what was made possible by technological developments — cartography, navigation aids, land-surveying techniques, developments in warfare, population statistics, etc. — and equally why states and other political actors invested so much resource in their expansion and application. In terms of the political-legal, somewhat schematically, I try to argue that there are three key moments: the translation of Greek political thought into Latin and the changes this allowed in the arguments of secular rulers and their theorists against the papacy; the rediscovery of Roman Law and in particular its use in the city-states of the Italian peninsula in

the fourteenth century; and the debates between constituent parts of the Holy Roman Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the wake of the Reformation. Given that by technologies Foucault means something more than merely the technological, but arts or rationalities more generally, this is part of what I'm trying to get at with the idea of territory as a political technology or a bundle of technologies.

I'm aware that I will be upsetting some of the historical materialists out there for neglecting capitalism. But I think the case can be made that capitalism — and nationalism, for that matter — emerges within a spatial-political framework that pre-exists it. I just don't find the political-economic sufficient to address the kinds of questions that need to be answered. In addition discussions of feudalism, while important, don't seem to really get to grips with what for me is a fundamental question: if property in land was so important to the middle ages, why did it have such a weak sense of territory?

I don't plan to write a book that fills in the gap between the *Terror and Territory* and *The Birth of Territory*. In a way, if *The Birth of Territory* shows how the modern notion of territory was produced, both *Terror and Territory* and *The Space of the World* show how it is being challenged and transformed today — without, I think, being superseded. The period between seems to me to be much less interesting conceptually. There were all sorts of disputes over territory, including wars, colonization, nation-building and so on, and multiple fundamental transformations to the political-geographical ordering of the world, but much less change in terms of the political-spatial conceptual framework that those things took place within.

AS: In conclusion, I would like to discuss the previously mentioned issue of the necessary socialization of our theoretical output. In recent decades, social theory has undergone a number of turns: a linguistic turn, a spatial turn, a cultural turn, a performative turn, some threaten to take an emotional turn... You know, it seems that we can expect intellectuals to start to 'twist & shout' at any moment! Although the dance will obviously remain confined to the academy, and paradoxically, every turn seems to move our work further away from the streets. *Non vitae, sed scholae discimus...*

It was in this sense that I previously suggested the potential of historiographical narratives for bridging this gap. We know about a wide range of activism and local practices that show us the extent to which the reconstruction of the historical geographies of everyday life — especially when they are histories of dispossession — are effective in mobilizing people, for example in bringing together an entire heterogeneous, unstructured neighbourhood around a common chronicle. Here the discursive potential of historiography, its ability to build up meaning from the fragments of the past, reappears as an opportunity to question the established order of things. I think the translation of that experience to the

theoretical level would be tremendously productive, but for some reason we find that difficult. We even encounter strong resistance to this sort of effort within the university: just look at the way historians like the late Howard Zinn, engaged in this Brechtian effort to write history in the ‘jargon of the market place’, have sometimes been treated by their colleagues.

So it seems necessary to return to the city and break free of the ‘Platonic banishment of poets’ we sometimes seem to be confined to by academia. If one normally regards this dedication to public service as a moral imperative, in the current situation there is an urgent need to also regard it as strategic, pragmatic action. As anyone could have guessed, the great global crisis is leading to big local cutbacks in the already pusillanimous welfare states of Western countries, and the public university is one of the targets. The socialization of our work is no longer just a question of ethics or political commitment — it is also the necessary search for an audience that will make it useful and productive.

Whatever the case, this *popular turn* is by no means problem-free. How can we overcome the internal resistance of academic structures? How can we imagine and activate the reception of social theory? Do the current institutions — from university departments to books and journals —, have the ability to accommodate this effort, or do we need to think up new channels? And specifically, in relation to historiographical practice and spatial histories, what is the threshold that separates the socialization of history from its vulgarization? How should we negotiate that? Is it worthwhile to go on thinking in these terms? In the current situation, considering the effectiveness of the narrative, one cannot know whether the historian should persevere in her academic career, or instead look for a job as a screenwriter in the film industry; you know, there is still a lot of mileage to made from the preamble, ‘What you are about to see is based on real events...’

SE: I’m rather limited in what I can say in response to this last set of questions. I’m all-too-aware of the time I’ve spent in rare-books rooms over the past several years. When I have ventured out to talk about this work, it has been to almost exclusively academic audiences. These are increasingly diverse and worldwide, but they are academic nonetheless. I am beginning the process of sending this work to publishers, and I am aiming for an academic press. In a sense that’s an interesting position to be in, since *Terror and Territory* was a deliberately very engaged book, motivated by an anger about a world situation that I felt I had something useful to say about. Generally I find myself more politically motivated than I have been for some time. As a long-term, but very disillusioned, member of the British Labour party, I think I find it easier when they are in opposition. I haven’t done anything for the party since 1997, but have never quite been driven to resign. Not even the Iraq war did that.

If there is a justification for the historical work, in terms of its politics, then one point would be that it would not have been possible, *for me*, to write *Terror*

and Territory without having done a lot of the historical work. I have been working on *The Birth of Territory*, on and off, for over a decade. The last time I set it aside for a period was to write *Terror and Territory*. But more generally, it is to try to understand how the current state of territory was produced, why it was not inevitable, and that it might not be eternal. It seems to me that only a much more adequate understanding of its emergence can help us understand the contemporary moment.

The line about films is amusing, and there has certainly been a reinvigoration of interest in the historical epic over the last decade, perhaps dating from Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*. I've watched plenty of these films, in part because of my interest in the periods being depicted. Yet a very modern sensibility runs through many of them, not simply in terms of the cinematic techniques deployed, but also in their reimagining of classical and medieval stories in the eyes of the present. This is true in many registers, but perhaps especially in terms of geopolitics, which has led to some fairly suspect re-readings or re-imaginings of the fall of Troy, Alexander the Great, *Beowulf*, the crusades, King Arthur and so on. The *Beowulf* film was a spur to write about Beowulf the poem (Elden, 2009b). Some of the films on the more recent past have been better, perhaps notably those coming from outside of Hollywood such as *Downfall*, *The Baader-Meinhof Gang* and *The Lives of Others*. Of the more historical ones, I particularly liked *Mongol: The Rise of Genghis Khan*. But given the interest in the historical — and this can be equally found in popular books of fiction and non-fiction alike — perhaps academics with an interest in the historical are missing a trick. Yet who among us has the prose style and popular sensibility to pull it off?

In terms of the political situation of the academy, one of the reasons that I started a blog⁶, which I'd been debating doing for some time, was the closure of the Middlesex University philosophy department. I felt, in a small way, that I could act as a bridge to geography in terms of informing people about what was going on. Because I was living in London at the time, for the first time in fifteen years, I was able to visit the occupation and go to a couple of the rallies. I'm not making any big claims for this, or for the blog, but it's been an attempt to re-engage a little. I do think we are seeing a fundamental challenge to the idea of higher education in the UK, and there is a very serious anger felt.

But we are faced with a problem. If we now try to make a case for why the arts and humanities really matter now, it is going to look like special pleading. We will appear simply to be protecting our own positions. But a case for why these fields of human knowledge matter is long overdue. There is a systematic violence that produces a situation where universities are forced to close popular programs, where students from certain socio-economic backgrounds have more opportunities and certainly more freedom of choice in their degree choices than others, are less

⁶ <http://progressivegeographies.com/>

crippled with debt and less compromised by part-time jobs, and where the dictates of the market and submission to metrics take the lead.

DG: Since *The Colonial Present* I've become much less committed to academic publishing and academic audiences. I'm aware that, in the course of writing the book, I lost my 'academic voice' — which is about more than footnotes, of course: the book bristles with them simply because so many readers of the manuscript wanted to know how I knew that — and I'm in no hurry to retrieve it. We have a duty to engage with audiences beyond the academy — not only to write for them and talk to them, but also to respond to and learn from them. This doesn't mean dumbing down, or even sacrificing academic respect. You mention Howard Zinn (I was in close touch with him before his untimely death too, over his recollections of being a bombardier in World War II), but what would you say about other historians, like David Cannadine, Niall Ferguson or Simon Schama? I have my arguments with all of them — especially Ferguson — but the accessibility of their work means that many, many more people, inside and outside the academy, can have their issues with them too.

This shouldn't have to be said, but we also have a duty to engage with our students. This does not reduce to writing textbooks, and I'm desperately saddened at the way in which Geography has been flooded with the things. Here the lure of your 'market-place' is at its most pernicious. I share Stuart's repugnance at what is happening to higher education in Britain, but what he sees, rightly, as a 'fundamental challenge' to the very idea of higher education isn't new: it's the logical culmination of a thoroughgoing neo-liberalization of higher education in the UK (and elsewhere) — the commodification not only of knowledge but of teaching and learning — from which a significant number of academics have profited considerably over the years. Your appeal to the historical geographies of everyday life is an important one, I think, but we shouldn't lose sight of the everyday lives of our students — and the ways in which they have been narrowed and confined over the years in no small measure through our own actions and inactions.

Three things seem especially important to me. The first is to continue to unpick the seam between the arts, the humanities and the social sciences: much of the most creative work has been doing that for an age, but it ought to become much more common. My worry is that the assaults of neo-liberalism will produce a rearguard action to militarize the borders of the social sciences and sacrifice the arts and humanities. The second is to think much more visually — to treat images and illustrations not as decoration or embellishment but as vital resources that enable us to 'image-ine' the objects of our analysis: to see them otherwise. Most of my own writing now begins from (rather than results in) public presentations, in which I use combinations of images as a storyboard literally to form my argument. The third is to cultivate new, open media that will foster the creation of new publics. I'm a keen reader of Stuart's blog, but I'm also interested in the

possibilities of collective blogging and in moving our work outside the pay-walls of commercial journals. If a public pays to support our research, it surely has the right to read the results without having to pay twice for it. And if we expect public support we must in turn engage with those publics.

Acknowledgments

A Spanish version of this interview was published earlier in 2011: “Espacios del pasado, historias del presente: en torno a los rastros de la historia especial.” *Urban*, new series, 1, pp. 91-114, 2011.

References

- Badiou, Alain (2009) *L'hypothèse communiste*, Éditions Lignes, Paris.
- Badiou, Alain (1985) *Peut-on penser la politique?*, Seuil, Paris.
- Bacevich, Andrew (2010) *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War*, Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt & Co., New York.
- Baker, Alan R.H. & Gregory, Derek (1984) *Explorations in Historical Geography: Interpretative Essays*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (MA).
- Benhabib, Seyla (1986) *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Bentham, Jeremy (1977) *Le Panoptique, précédé de L'OEil du pouvoir, entretien avec Michel Foucault*, Belfond, Paris.
- Billinge, Mark, Gregory, Derek & Martin, Ron (1984) *Recollections of a revolution: geography as spatial science*, MacMillan, London.
- Brenner, Neil & Elden, Stuart (eds.) (2009) *Henri Lefebvre, State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Castree, Noel & Gregory, Derek (eds.) (2006) *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Certeau, Michel de (1988) *The Writing of History*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Crampton, Jeremy W. & Elden, Stuart (eds.) (2007) *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, Ashgate, Aldershot.
- Dikeç, Mustafa (2005) “Space, politics, and the political”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 23(2), 171-188.
- Duncan, James S. & Gregory, Derek (eds.) (1999) *Writes of Passage: Reading Travel Writing*, Routledge, London.

- Elden, Stuart (2011) "Response to Antonsich: The role of history", *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 35, 426-29.
- Elden, Stuart (2010a) "Thinking Territory Historically", *Geopolitics*, vol. 15, 757-761.
- Elden, Stuart (2010b) "Land, Terrain, Territory", *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 34, 799-817.
- Elden, Stuart (2009a) *Terror and Territory: The Spatial Extent of Sovereignty*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Elden, Stuart (2009b) "Place, Symbolism and Land Politics in Beowulf", *Cultural Geographies*, vol. 16, 447-463.
- Elden, Stuart (2006) *Speaking Against Number: Heidegger, Language and the Politics of Calculation*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
- Elden, Stuart (2004) *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible*, Continuum, London.
- Elden, Stuart (2003a) "Reading Genealogy as Historical Ontology", in A. Rosenberg & A. Milchman (eds.), *Foucault/Heidegger: Critical Encounters*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, pp. 187-205.
- Elden, Stuart (2003b) "The importance of history: A reply to Malpas", *Philosophy and Geography*. vol. 6, 219-224.
- Elden, Stuart (2001) *Mapping the Present: Heidegger, Foucault and the project of a spatial history*, Continuum, London.
- Elden, Stuart, Lebas, Elizabeth & Kofman, Eleonore (eds.) (2003) *Henri Lefebvre: Key Writings*, Continuum, London.
- Elden, Stuart & Mendieta, Eduardo (2011) *Reading Kant's Geography*, State University of New York Press, Albany, (NY).
- Elden, Stuart, Moore, Gerald (trans.) & Lefebvre, Henri (2004) *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, Continuum, London.
- Englehardt, Tom (2010) *The American Way of War. How Bush's Wars Became Obama's*, Haymarket Books, Chicago.
- Febvre, Lucien (1983) *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century. The Religion of Rabelais*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA).
- Filkins, Dexter (2008) *The Forever War*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.
- Foucault, Michel (1980) *Power/Knowledge*, edited by Colin Gordon, Harvester, London.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg (2008) *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles.

- Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1979) "The Problem of Historical Consciousness", in P. Rabinow & W.M. Sullivan (eds.), *Interpretive Social Science. A Second Look*, University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles.
- Graham, Stephen (2010) *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism*, Verso, New York.
- Gramsci, Antonio (1992) *Prison Notebooks, vol. 1*, Columbia University Press, New York..
- Gregory, Derek (2009) "American military imaginaries and Iraqi cities: the visual economies of globalizing war", in C. Lindner (ed.), *Globalization, violence and the visual culture of cities*, Routledge, New York.
- Gregory, Derek (2008a) "The rush to the intimate: counterinsurgency and the cultural turn in late modern war", *Radical Philosophy*, n. 150 (July/August), 8-23.
- Gregory, Derek (2008b) "The Biopolitics of Baghdad: Counterinsurgency and the counter city", *Human Geography*, vol. 1, 6-27.
- Gregory, Derek (2007) "Vanishing points: Law, violence and exception in the global war prison", in D. Gregory & A. Pred (eds.), *Violent Geographies: fear, terror and political violence*, pp. 205-236, Routledge, New York.
- Gregory, Derek (2006a) "'In another time-zone, the bombs fall unsafely...': Targets, Civilians and Late Modern War", *The Arab World Geographer*, vol. 9, 88-111.
- Gregory, Derek (2006b) "The Black Flag: Guantánamo Bay and the space of exception", *Geografiska Annaler B*, vol. 89, 405-427.
- Gregory, Derek (2004) *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Gregory, Derek (1994) *Geographical Imaginations*, Blackwell, Cambridge (MA.).
- Gregory, Derek (1991) "Interventions in the historical geography of modernity: Social theory, spatiality and the politics of representation", *Geografiska Annaler*, vol. 73, 17-44.
- Gregory, Derek (1984) "Space, time and politics in social theory: an interview with Anthony Giddens", *Environment & Planning D: Society & Space*, vol. 2, 123-132.
- Gregory, Derek (1982) *Regional Transformation and Industrial Revolution: A Geography of the Yorkshire Woollen Industry 1780-1840*, University of Minneapolis Press, Minneapolis.
- Gregory, Derek (1978a) *Ideology, Science and Human Geography*, Hutchinson, London.

- Gregory, Derek (1978b) "The discourse of the past: Phenomenology, structuralism and historical geography", *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 4, 161-173.
- Gregory, Derek (1976) "Rethinking Historical Geography", *Area*, vol 8, 295-299.
- Gregory, Derek, Johnston, Ron, Pratt, Geraldine, Watts, Michael & Whatmore, Sarah (eds.) (2009) *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 5th ed., Blackwell, Oxford.
- Gregory, Derek, Martin, Ron & Smith, Graham (eds.) (1994) *Human Geography: Society, Space and Social Science*, MacMillan, London.
- Gregory, Derek & Pred, Allan (eds.) (2007) *Violent Geographies: Fear, Terror and Political Violence*, Routledge, New York.
- Gregory, Derek & Urry, John (eds.) (1985) *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, St. Martin's, New York.
- Gregory, Derek & Walford, Rex (ed.) (1989) *Horizons in Human Geography*, MacMillan, London.
- Haraway, Donna (1988) "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective", *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, 575-599.
- Harvey, David (1982) *The Limits to Capital*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Heidegger, Martin & Jaspers, Karl (2003) *The Heidegger-Jaspers Correspondence, 1920-1963*. W. Biemel & H. Saner (eds.), Gary E. Aylesworth (trans.), Amherst (NY), Humanity Books.
- Jenkins, Keith (2009) *At the Limits of History: Essays on Theory and Practice*, Routledge, Abingdon.
- Jenkins, Keith (1991) *Re-thinking History*, Routledge, London.
- Kern, Stephen (1983) *The culture of time and space, 1880-1918*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA)
- Laclau, Ernesto (1997) *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, Verso, London.
- Laslett, Peter (1988) "Introduction" in J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Lefebvre, Henri (1974) *La production de l'espace*, Anthropos, Paris.
- Livingstone, David N. (2003) *Putting science in its place: geographies of scientific knowledge*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Massey, Doreen (2005) *For Space*, Sage, London.
- Mumford, Lewis (1961) *The City in History: its origins, its transformations, and its prospects*, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York.

- Mumford, Lewis (1997) *The Culture of Cities*, Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London (original ed. (1938) *The Culture of Cities*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York).
- Münkler, Herfried (2005) *The New Wars*, Polity, Cambridge.
- Said, Edward (1993) *Culture and Imperialism*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.
- Sassen, Saskia (2010) "When the City Itself Becomes a Technology of War", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 27, 33-50.
- Smith, Adam T. (2003) *The Political Landscape: Constellations of Authority in Early Complex Polities*, University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles.
- Thompson, Edward P. (1978) *The poverty of theory and other essays*, Merlin Press, London.
- Toscano, Alberto (2008) "Emblems and Cuts: Philosophy in and against History", *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy / Revue canadienne de philosophie continentale*, vol. 12, 18-35.
- White, Hayden (1978) *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- White, Hayden (1973) *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.