

Introduction

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In the last few years, anarchism has been rediscovered as a transnational, cosmopolitan and multifaceted movement and its traditions, often hastily dismissed in the name of Marxism, Liberalism or post-structuralism, are increasingly revealing insights which inspire present-day scholarship in anthropology, sociology, philosophy, biology, social history and, last but not least, geography. This work is the first attempt to provide a historical geography of anarchism, addressing at the same time places and spatiality of historical anarchist movements and key thinkers, and the present scientific challenges of the geographical anarchist traditions in the fields of social movements, environmental struggles, post-statist geographies, indigenous thinking and situated cosmopolitanisms.

This book collects the proceedings of the multiple session “Historical Geographies of Anarchism: situating struggles, studying environments” organised by the Editors for the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference on the theme of ‘Geographies of Anthropocene’, which took place in Exeter in September 2015. While in recent years there has been a growing number of sessions on anarchism’s relationship with geography, this conference was the first one organised on these specific historical topics and the contributions drew on three main strands of international literature on Anarchist geographic research.

The first strand concerns the recent rediscovery of anarchist geographies, which has occurred increasingly since the special issues consecrated to anarchist geographies by the journals *ACME* and *Antipode* in 2012. These journal issues included works on anarchist geographies’ genealogiesⁱ and historical figures like Léon Metchnikoff/Lev Mečnikov (1838-1888), Élisée Reclus (1830-1905)ⁱⁱ and Pëtr Kropotkin (1842-1921)ⁱⁱⁱ now addressed by a great number of multilingual contributions.^{iv} Recent works have also promoted new debates in the fields of anarchist pedagogies^v and post-statist geographies^{vi}, among numerous other critical, substantive contributions to existing debates. The second is the literature analysing historical geographies of science and scientific revolutions^{vii} as a part of the wider context of the spatial turn in social sciences, addressing the localisations and mobilities of scientific knowledge as decisive elements in understanding it.^{viii} The third strand of the book is the historical literature considering anarchism as a transnational movement based on networks and cosmopolite circulations of ideas, publications and militants,^{ix} a line of research which has successfully challenged the shortcomings of more traditional histories of anarchism which were dependent on what Davide Turcato defines as a “cyclical pattern of advances and retreats”, leading to false “millenaristic” readings of anarchism that impede a clear understanding of how this movement really worked.^x

A common topic for a great part of our contributions is an analysis of the transnational and cosmopolitan networks and circulations affecting both social movements and the construction of knowledge by early anarchist geographers: the transnational nature of the anarchist movement can help to explain the anti-colonialist thinking of its early intellectuals, such as Reclus and Kropotkin. Thus, the idea of linking anarchism and its history to its places and circulations is a central one for this collective work, which addresses at the same time the history of anarchism and present-day anarchist movements and their spatiality. Consistent with the transnationalism,

cosmopolitanism and multilingualism of the anarchist tradition, we include works produced by an international collective of authors who worked (at the date of the conference) in Brazil, Mexico, Spain, Germany, Sweden, Ireland, Switzerland, UK and USA. Thus, one of our aims is to give accounts of works and debates outside the English-speaking world, which has become the *de facto* centre of academic knowledge production, and beyond mainstream academia altogether. Another characteristic of this book is its interdisciplinary nature, as one can find among the authors, historians, historical geographers, cultural and political geographers who have found in the spatiality of anarchism a common ground for research and discussion.

The first part of the book addresses spaces and places in the history of anarchism under a transnational standpoint. Carl Levy traces a wide historical outlook of the city as the place for anarchist experiments in self-government and as a generator of powerful revolutionary imaginaries. The historical experiences raised in this essay include the medieval city, the 1871 Paris commune, the 1936 revolutionary Barcelona and the capitals of 1968 risings, interrogating each case on its significance for the history and development of anarchist thinking. Andrew Hoyt presents a geographical approach to the distribution of the Italian-speaking anarchist journal *Cronaca Sovversiva* all over the United States, in order to analyse the spatial patterns of distribution of transnational anarchist propaganda by applying the concept of 'social field'. Davide Turcato likewise addresses the Italian anarchist press in the USA, in this case to investigate the relation between internationalism, cosmopolitan practices and ideas of national cultural belonging among transnational anarchist militants. Julian Brigstocke analyses a body of documents from late 19th century France to open up a discursive critique of the relationship between humour and violence in militant mentality and in wider biopolitical practices of that time.

The second part of the book analyses topics related to the spaces of early anarchist geographers, focusing mainly on the figures of Reclus and Kropotkin. These authors were the inventors of a solidaristic interpretation of evolution, known as the theory of mutual aid, which challenged established theories of the time, such as Malthusianism and Social Darwinism. At the same time, they were committed to the study of the ongoing relations between humankind and environment, refuting the positioning of so-called "human" and "natural" environments as separable domains. Drawing less on ideas of wilderness and protection, these thinkers sought solutions to "harmonise" the coexistence of living beings on the earth's surface, anticipating some of the contemporary themes of more-than-human approaches. Secular and rational "science" was thus considered as a fundamental instrument for that. Problematising all these topics entails also reflexions and new debates on the present coming back of Creationism, Malthusianism and environmental Determinism. Francisco Toro analyses the Reclus's thinking with regard to the intellectual context of present-day degrowth theories, showing Reclus's commitment lead to very effective concerns in today's fields of geography of resources and environmental geographies. Federico Ferretti addresses three cases of analysis by early anarchist geographers Reclus, Kropotkin and Mikhail Dragomanov [or Drahomanov] (1841-1895) of colonised or recently-decolonised nations in order to understand the complex links between anarchism, nationalism and anti-colonialism in the Age of the Empire. Pascale Siegrist analyses Kropotkin's and Reclus's commitment to the scientific field of their time in order to problematise the definition of "anarchist geography", a relatively recent label, which did not exist during their period of activity.

The third part of the book addresses the spatiality of present challenges for anarchist geographers. David Crouch analyses the effectiveness of the social geography of Colin Ward (1924-2010), a thinker who is considered as one of the most important references for present-day anarchism, mainly in English-speaking countries. Crouch addresses at the same time his personal experience of collaboration with Ward, the latter's references in the history of geographical thought and his insights for contemporary cultural geographies and urban planning. Rita Velloso analyses the spatiality and "insurrectionary architecture" of the 2013 "Brazilian Spring" as it occurred in Belo Horizonte, its relations with urban spaces and the general social aims of the movement. Anthony Ince and Gerónimo Barrera address an innovative linkage between non-statist geographies and de-colonial geographies, matching in this sense the historical tradition of anarchist geographers Reclus and Kropotkin, committed to build a regional science which did not assume the state and the administrative boundaries as its framework of reference. For today's critical and radical geographies, the association with archaeology means a deeper historical reflexion in thinking and questioning recent assumptions and discourses on the dissolution of states, emphasising the necessity for critical scholarship to destabilise the state as an analytical category. Finally, Gerónimo Barrera de la Torre and Narciso Barrera-Bassols analyse the relations between anarchism and indigenous movements, mobilising an anarchist view of Anthropocene which draws on Reclus's idea of the consubstantiality of the terms traditionally considered as "humankind" and "nature". The authors propose an analysis of contemporary ecological emergencies through the lens of a set of perspectives distinct from the classical European and Eurocentric intellectual tools. In particular, they utilise indigenous thinking and seek to integrate it with a range of anarchist ideas on plurality and social solidarity. Thereby, they target an alternative view of modernity, drawn from what de-colonial thinkers in Latin America call "pluriversality".^{xi}

These contributions present a heterogeneous panorama in their historical and geographical span, but they also share important points in common. First, their common understanding of anarchism as a transnational, cosmopolitan and multilingual tradition which has to be studied in its places, networks and flows. Second, the importance of the historical tradition of the 'classical' anarchist geographers to provide insights for present day revival of anarchist scholarship in geography: this legacy, as several of our authors argue, should not be taken uncritically, but to be first historically and spatially contextualised to interact with recent debates while avoiding anachronism. Third, there is a common commitment to rethink the epistemological framework of geography questioning the long-lasting hegemony of readings based on the state, or on state-like territories, as the privileged framework of reference. Networks, material and immaterial flows, diverse localisations of intellectual and political movements addressed in this book show how much more complex the spatialities of these phenomena are; likewise, present-day global and reticular protest movements all over the world, and the left/libertarian revolutions which occurred in regions like Chiapas and more recently in Rojava,^{xii} show that state and state reason are increasingly intellectually unfit to explain reality and to inform scholarship committed to social transformation. Through the contributions of this book and its authors, we therefore seek to open up new analytical frameworks and frontiers of study for the future development of historical geographies in general, and anarchist historical geographies in particular.

ⁱ Springer, *The anarchist roots of geography*.

ⁱⁱ Ferretti, *Élisée Reclus*; Pelletier, *Anarchie et Géographie*.

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- iii Adams, *Kropotkin*; Kinna, *Kropotkin*; MacLaughlin, *Kropotkin*.
- iv For having an idea of the international and multilingual contributions consecrated to these figures, it is possible to consult the site <http://raforum.info/reclus/>
- v Springer, White and Souza, *The Radicalisation of Pedagogy*.
- vi Ince and Barrera, "For Post-Statist Geographies".
- vii Livingstone and Withers, *Geographies of Revolution*; Livingstone and Withers, *Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Science*.
- viii Naylor, "Historical Geography"; Secord, "Knowledge in Transit".
- ix Bantman, *The French Anarchists*; Di Paola, *The Knights Errant*; Hirsch and Van Der Walt, *Anarchism and Syndicalism*.
- x Turcato, "Italian anarchism as a Transnational Movement", 408.
- xi Carrillo, *Pluriverso. Un ensayo sobre el conocimiento indígena contemporáneo*.
- xii Knapp, Flach and Ayboga, *Revolution in Rojava*.