

Andrew Herod, *Labor Geographies: Workers and the Landscape of Capitalism* (New York: Guilford Press, 2001)

AT THE CONCLUSION of his book, Andrew Herod states "that social praxis cannot be understood without an appreciation of the spatial context within which it takes place. Put more bluntly, the triumvirate of 'race, class, and gender' should really be a quadrumvirate of 'space, race, class, and gender.'" (269) Herod's study is a thoughtful scholarly effort to prod geographers to look closely at those four factors, and especially to consider workers seriously as conscious actors in the production of physical landscape within the system of global capital-

ism. His work is also an appeal to labour historians to see space as a source of power and an object of social struggle, not merely a flat stage for historical actors to play out the drama of class conflict.

Drawing on the seminal work of Marxist geographer David Harvey, Herod argues that workers and labour organizations need their "spatial fix" — "certain configurations of the landscape ... in order for them to reproduce themselves (socially and biologically) from day to day and from generation to generation." (Xiii) Establishing such fixed points in a physical place and at a historical moment in time will always be a process contested between labour and capital. Therefore, "molding the geography of capitalism is a key aspect of class struggle"; likewise, "the process(es) of class formation and class politics are fundamentally geographic at heart." (2) Moreover, social actors organize their "spatial activities at particular geographic resolutions;" that is, labour and capital are also in conflict over the physical size and context of landscape, the "scalar fixes" that will define the terms of negotiation. (xiii)

Herod structures his book around a particular "scalar logic." The early chapters look at local and regional dimensions, the later chapters encompass a more global canvas. But before turning to specific conflicts over space and scale, Herod begins his monograph with a theoretical framework that he hopes will move his discipline from a "geography of labour" to a "labour geography." This paradigm shift entails seeing workers not as inert factors to be calculated into an ideal resource mix at an optimal physical location, but as active geographic agents who shape the landscape differently than the demands of capital. When workers debate local economic development policy, or unions struggle for national contracts, Herod believes these are deliberate acts for creating a labour geography. Such a labour-centered geographical model can be potentially more radical and empowering for workers as they not only think globally

and act locally but also move decisively on the world stage.

The following chapters highlight a series of struggles where workers, in various organizational forms, shape regional and global forms of capitalist development. Herod begins by looking at the efforts of the garment workers' union (ILGWU) in New York City to preserve a mid-town Manhattan manufacturing district during the 1980s real estate boom. Using the authority of new zoning ordinances, the union succeeded in its local challenge to the power of global businesses to amass more territory in the post-industrial city. The next two chapters look at the challenges faced by longshoremen during the post-war shift to containerized cargo handling. Herod asserts that these workers engaged in forms of "spatial sabotage" as they negotiated work rules to control the dissemination of new technology across the nation's ports. Eventually, the unions went far beyond their accustomed local interests to create broader scales of collective bargaining agreements covering larger regions and the entire nation.

The second half of the book shifts its focus to "unions' international activities and their shaping of the global political economy of capitalism" Herod argues that workers are often not "impotent in the face of global capital." Rather, "they have frequently been actively involved in the very processes that are bringing about an (apparently) globalizing world economic system." (10) Thus, Herod looks closely at how organized labour has functioned as both a "global agent" and an "agent of globalization" throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. One chapter recounts the history of international labour federations and American unions' foreign policy. The following chapters are a rather eclectic mix of essays on US unions underwriting the construction of cooperative worker housing in Latin America and the Caribbean in an effort to encourage local development and undermine the appeal of communism in the region, the

steelworkers' international campaign to bring pressure on the financier Marc Rich during a bitter strike at an aluminum processing plant in Ravenswood, West Virginia, and the work of international trade unions to reshape the post-Communist eastern European economic landscape.

This is a book that often ranges between new theoretical models of geography, basic ideas about physical space and scale in economic development, and historical narratives of union contracts and strikes. Its empirical and analytical breadth is both a great strength and weakness — some chapters contain provocative insights, others seem more prosaic. In particular, Chapter Five becomes a detailed account of longshoremen negotiating master contracts with little to say about labour geography except some obvious references to the location of various ports and the distances between them. Chapter 6 is a historical overview of the links between US unions, foreign policy, international trade federations, and the global economy. But there are few precise connections drawn between organized labour and the physical geography of international capitalist development. And Chapter 8 is often a ripping good story of how a union local used innovative tactics and international connections to outflank a rich corporate raider. There is certainly a geographic dimension to this story, but much of the account has a more familiar David-versus-Goliath ring to it. Labour historians may actually be more at home in these chapters, rather than the more theoretical critiques of economic geography, but there is not all that much fresh material here for experts in either field.

Taken as a whole, Herod's book displays some intellectual coherence with each chapter providing empirical evidence for his larger arguments about the importance of space and scale in workers' efforts to actively shape the landscape of global capitalism. Yet, at the same time, the work lacks a clear narrative or chronological framework. Thus, the book often reads more like a collection of individual

essays based on a common theme, rather than a completely formed and completed text (at least in the way that most historians construct their accounts of the past). Despite such structural limitations, Herod's work does succeed in prodding geographers, historians, economists, sociologists, political scientists, and others to take this concept of labour geography seriously and apply it to a variety of worker and labour organizations across the globe. The idea of analyzing working-class people as active agents shaping the physical and economic structures of global capitalism is a potentially radical concept in both intellectual and political terms. Labour geography can be a methodology to liberate scholars from static ways of thinking about space and workers' role in the historical creation of the built environment, and embolden organizers to explore new ways for labour to reshape a world where spatial and temporal barriers are changing rapidly.

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