

Schelhaas, B., Ferretti, F., Novaes, A.R. and Schmidt di Friedberg, M. (eds.): **Decolonising and Internationalising Geography: Essays in the History of Contested Science**. Cham, Springer, 2020. 140 p.

Geography as a scientific discipline, as well as the production and consumption of geographical knowledge, have their spatialities or 'geography.' Scholars are working at specific locations where a specific scientific milieu surrounds them; they have to consider specific norms, they need to cooperate with specific actors, and they are exposed to specific social, economic, and political conditions and interests. Even the very meaning of scientific knowledge "takes shape in response to spatial forces at every scale of analysis – from the macro-political geography of national regions to the microsocial geography of local cultures" (LIVINGSTONE, D.N. 2003, p. 4). These considerations led to the emergence of a new domain of scientific research, which is hallmarked by the notions of 'historical geography of science' (LIVINGSTONE, D.N. 1995), 'geographies of science/scientific knowledge' (LIVINGSTONE, D.N. 2003; MEUSBURGER, P. *et al.* 2010; MAYHEW, R.J. and WITHERS, C.W.J. 2020), 'landscapes of knowledge' (LIVINGSTONE, D.N. 2010), and 'mobilities of knowledge' (JÖNS, H. *et al.* 2017), to name but a few.

This kind of scholarship has stimulated a critical investigation of uneven power relations in global

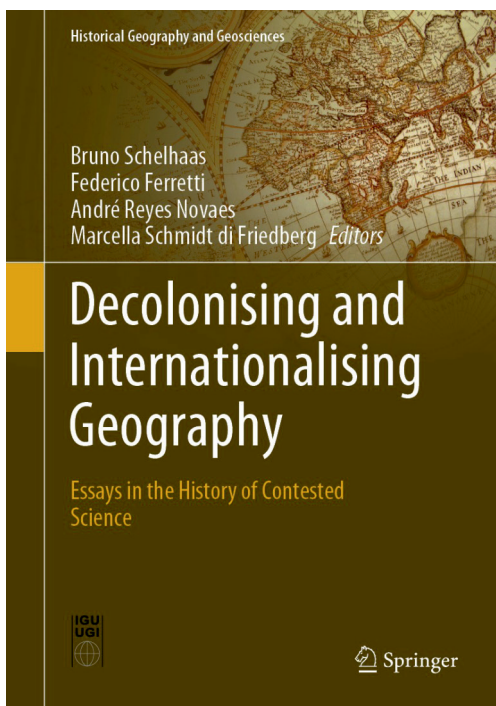
science, including international geography. For example, the hegemony of the English language, as well as the dominance of Anglo-American and British authors, institutions, publication platforms, and even scientific theories have been discussed in many studies (e.g., TIMÁR, J. 2004; PAASI, A. 2015; MÜLLER, M. 2021). Hence, more and more scholars started to argue for internationalizing, 'worlding' (MÜLLER, M. 2021), and decolonizing geography (JAZEEL, T. 2017; LEGG, S. 2017; RADCLIFFE, S.A. 2022), which include involving previously "subalternised and silenced knowledge" (p. vii) and a reconsideration of authors and sources from outside the global core regions of scientific knowledge production.

In recent years, attempts to internationalize and decolonize geography and even the history of geography have resulted in several projects that aim to explore from an internationally comparative perspective the history of a specific geographical approach, e.g., radical geography (BARNES, T.J. and SHEPPARD, E. 2019), critical geography (BERG, L.D. *et al.* 2022), and geography's mid-20th-century 'quantitative revolution' (GYURIS, F. *et al.* 2022). Furthermore, decolonizing and internationalizing the history of geography have been central notions in the latest progress reports in *Progress in Human Geography* (FERRETTI, F. 2020, 2021, 2022).

The current volume can be seen as an essential step in the same process, for it presents 11 papers from the international symposium of the IGU Commission History of Geography, which took place in July 2017 in Rio de Janeiro. As the four international editors make clear in the *Introduction*, their edited book is a programmatic one: "the problem is not merely to analyse internationality or decoloniality in geography; what we want is to internationalise and decolonise our discipline, with all the possible challenges and contradictions annexed" (p. v.). I appreciate the editors' brave devotion, and in line with it, I will not simply review the book's chapters but also refer to their relevance for potential research projects in Hungary.

The chapters of the volume reflect the diversity of papers at the 2017 conference in Rio de Janeiro and make up a colourful collection of mosaics instead of following a linear logic. In order to avoid thematic jumps, I will review the chapters not according to their actual order in the book but in three thematic groups. I will start with chapters telling the stories of specific *scholars*. Then, I will focus on chapters reporting about the history of *institutions* aimed at producing and disseminating geographical knowledge. Finally, I will scrutinize the chapters on the history of *geographical imagination*.

In Chapter 1, André Reyes NOVAES from the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) investigates the



works of the leftist Portuguese scholar Jaime CORTESÃO (1884–1960), who was exiled from Portugal in 1926 and left Europe to Brazil in 1940. CORTESÃO intensively scrutinized the history of Brazilian mapmaking and the essential role indigenous knowledge gained from indigenous people played in the exploration and mapping of vast territories of Brazil, especially from the 16th to 18th centuries, by explorers representing the Portuguese and the Brazilian colonial elites. NOVAES illuminates that “exploration maps as co-produced and hybrid artefacts” (p. 1), and even the writings of CORTESÃO and similarly minded authors in and before the mid-20th century may be exciting research subjects for contemporary scholars of the history of geography. From a Hungarian perspective, the approach of NOVAES’s chapter could be applied to analyze the role of indigenous knowledge in late 19th and early 20th-century Hungarian expeditions to Africa, Asia, and especially the Balkans, which progressively became a target of Austro-Hungarian imperial realms. Besides, the increasing literature on foreign (predominantly ‘Western’) travellers’ and researchers’ journeys to Hungary in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as on large-scale mapping projects of the Habsburg elites about their empire, including Hungary, could be enriched by investigating the role of local knowledge stemming from people living in then Hungary.

Larissa ALVES DE LIRA from the Federal University of Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte writes about the French geographer Pierre MONBEIG (1908–1987) in Chapter 9. MONBEIG was a professor of geography in São Paulo from 1935 to 1946 when he returned to France. Strongly influenced by Paul VIDAL DE LA BLACHE’s geographical and Fernand BRAUDEL’s historical approach, MONBEIG developed a ‘geohistory’ approach and focused in his research on the long-term social transformation and territorial development of Brazil, embedding the process in the global development of capitalism, and stressing its cyclical nature (e.g., due to the depletion of tropical soils). As ALVES DE LIRA presents, not only did MONBEIG’s “French geographical epistemology” (p. 97) impact how he framed his studies and findings on Brazil. Instead, his experience with Brazil, especially with the country’s territoriality, tropicality, and peripheral position in global capitalism, also actively shaped his ‘geohistory’ approach and his understanding of late capitalism in more developed countries. From a Hungarian point of view, it would be tempting to analyse in similar ways how foreign scholars, who paid at least more extended research visits to Hungary and investigated its social and spatial realities, integrated Hungary-related findings into their general scholarly way of seeing. Likewise, Hungarian scholars’ changing understanding of their country’s social and spatial dynamics in light of longer stays abroad would be a promising research topic in the history of Hungarian geography.

In Chapter 2, María Verónica IBARRA GARCÍA (National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM, Mexico City) and Edgar TALLEDOS Sánchez (College of San Luis, San Luis Potosí) report about early leftist geographical traditions in Brazil and Cuba. They focus on Josué DE CASTRO (1908–1973), a professor of geography in São Paulo, and the Cuban geographer Nuñez JIMÉNEZ (1923–1998). The chapter provides an interesting comparison of two individual careers through their seminal books, *The Geography of Hunger* (1946) and *Geopolitics of Hunger* (1951) by DE CASTRO and *Geography of Cuba* (1954) by JIMÉNEZ. Both authors criticized plantation agriculture, monocultures, the concentration of land in the hands of a few, and the poverty of a large part of society. In addition, they rejected environmental determinist approaches in geography, which interpreted these problems as unavoidable consequences of natural conditions, and instead stressed the impact of capitalistic property relations, European colonization, and US imperialism. DE CASTRO’s 1946 book was translated into 24 languages, whereas JIMÉNEZ became a leading geographer of Cuba after the communist revolution led by Fidel Castro. As a remarkable contribution, the chapter highlights that genuine critical works had been present in Latin American geographies even before the influence of the Anglophone ‘critical turn.’ However, it seems to imply that all previous geographical approaches, except for anarchistic ones, were environmentally deterministic. That is a popular claim in many Marxist works, but it cannot be justified in this form for some ‘classical’ traditions (e.g., the Vidalian one) also rejected determinism – which does not decrease the merits of pioneering critical geographers. It should also be discussed what the term ‘critical’ means in the case of scholars who started as the critics of capitalism, colonization, and nationalist autocracies or dictatorships but ended up uncritically supporting communist dictatorships. That is a conceptual and ethical question with clear relevance for those interested in the history of geography in (former) communist countries.

Several chapters of the book focus on the history of *institutions* producing and disseminating geographical knowledge. One of them is Chapter 7, where Maximilian GEORG and Ute WARDENGA from Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography in Leipzig present a large-scale research project that is taking place under their coordination. The project aims to compose a ‘transnational’ history of geographical societies between 1821 and 1914, which were the leading organizational units of academic geography in those decades. Based on an in-depth analysis of 34 societies from all continents and in 14 languages, standardized methods, and meticulous analysis of their journals’ content, this truly pioneering enterprise promises to go beyond methodological nationalism and the predominantly capital city-centric approach of many previous studies. The authors’ goal is to illustrate the potential and challenges of their ongoing project.

However, they provide many conceptual and methodological ideas that can be efficiently employed in any study focusing on geographical societies, even concerning more contemporary times.

Whereas Chapter 7 deals with geographical societies, Chapter 10 by Mariana LAMEGO at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) concentrates on geographical congresses. LAMEGO historicizes contemporary debates on the dominance of the English language in international geography in genuinely fascinating ways and investigates the 1956 International Geographical Congress in Rio de Janeiro – ever since the first and last such congress in South America and the last truly multilingual one, with papers in 6 languages. LAMEGO contextualizes the congress as “a geopolitical event” (p. 115) and scrutinizes the complex network of post-WWII geopolitical interests due to which Rio de Janeiro got the chance to host the event. She painstakingly analyses which countries were represented and which presenter used which language. She concludes that the congress’s multilingual, even “babel tower nature” (p. 124) challenged efficient communication in several cases. Nevertheless, the negative consequences of the congress’s multilingualism have mainly been emphasized – and the positive outcomes de-emphasized – later by “those who already occupy privileged positions” (p. 124) in contemporary English-language-centric academia. Moreover, these negative consequences, such as “the almost exclusively sub-group intercommunication” (p. 123), resulted from a complex set of sociological factors, not just multilingualism and the limited language proficiency of the participants. Hence, they have been “not a rare phenomenon at international congresses of geography until nowadays” (p. 123), despite the emergence of English as a hegemonic language. In addition to its remarkable argumentation, LAMEGO’s chapter can serve as a great starting point for the analysis of conferences in future projects on the history of geography.

The archives of the International Geographical Union are the focus of Chapter 11 by Bruno SCHELHAAS and Stephan M. PIETSCH from Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography in Leipzig. This study traces the organizational development and geographical location of the IGU Archive (eventually some parts of it) from the foundation of the International Geographical Union in 1922 through places like Winchester, London, Florence, Paris, Louvain, Berlin, New York, London again and Rome to the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography in Leipzig, which has hosted the materials since 2013. SCHELHAAS and PIETSCH also give an overview of the diversity of documents handled by the archive. In addition to being a tempting ‘appetizer’ for everyone considering doing research in the IGU Archive in Leipzig, the chapter gives precious ideas for future projects about the history of geographical archives.

The third group of studies comprises book chapters on *imaginative geographies* and their transformations

throughout the last two centuries. Toshiyuki SHIMAZU from Wakayama University takes a landscape-as-text approach and scrutinizes two locations in late 19th century Paris: *Les Quatre Parties du Monde* from 1874, which comprises four female bronze statues representing Europe, America, Africa, and Asia, and *Les Six Continents* from 1878, a group of six female statues representing the continents. SHIMAZU reveals how the allegorical presentation of female bodies in a patriarchal society promoted “hegemonic internationalism” (p. 93), the notion of “a linear progress from the primitive to the civilized” (p. 89), and a Eurocentric and even imperial Paris-centric imaginative geography.

Akio ONJO from Kyushu University in Fukuoka presents in Chapter 3 the controversial impact of the 1894–1895 Sino-Japanese War and the 1904–1905 Russo-Japanese war on Japanese national identity. As he underscores, the wars “boosted the imperial consciousness and geographical imagination of the [Japanese] people as a ‘first-rank nation state’” (p. 31). However, this imagination was intertwined with “a normalized body form” (p. 29), which the impaired bodies of the roughly 150,000 wounded soldiers did not fit. Furthermore, the Hospital for Disabled Veterans, which the national government established in 1906, separated veterans from other people and confined them to a closed space. Hence, they were not visible to the rest of society and were soon forgotten. Alternative local initiatives aimed at providing a meaningful and socially valuable job for the veterans, who could thus sustain everyday communication with non-impaired people, proved much more efficient in enhancing the social recognition of veterans. In my view, similar studies would have much relevance in many countries. For example, in Hungary, research on the geographies of disability has just started recently (FABULA, Sz. and TIMÁR, J. 2018). These studies could be historicized in valuable ways, such as in the case of impaired veterans and civilians after the two world wars.

In Chapter 5, Pascal CLERC from CY Cergy Paris University scrutinizes and deconstructs the concept of the ‘North/South’ divide and the ways it is being used in contemporary discourses. He presents how an intellectual construction, initially introduced to avoid the stigmatization intrinsic to the previously used terms of ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’ countries, gradually has become a discriminating concept, reinforcing neo-colonial imaginations. Moreover, as CLERC highlights, “the question of development can be thought [of] as a possibility of change,” but “the location in the world does not change.” Hence, the ‘North/South’ divide as a concept “establishes a spatial hierarchy” that is “impossible to change” (p. 53) and creates “a vision of the world as immutable even against the facts” (p. 47). CLERC emphasizes that his analysis has been made from a French point of view. In-depth critical deconstructions of the ‘North/South’

divide have also been provided in the last decade by scholars in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, even in English (e.g., SOLARZ, M.W. 2014, 2018). Integrating their findings into scholarly discourses in Western Europe could further enhance the internationalization of geography.

Marcella SCHMIDT DI FRIEDBERG and Stefano MALATESTA from the University of Milano-Bicocca focus on the geopolitical aspects of geographical imagination in Chapter 4. They scrutinize how the Chagos Islands and the Maldives as “unsinkable aircraft carriers” (p. 37) gradually transformed from geopolitically significant archipelagos of the British Empire to a critical element of US military control over the region, especially in the light of the current rivalry between India, China, and the United States. They also present how a renewed competition between these three powers, or “triangular condominium” (p. 39), for the Indian Ocean Region made “ocean space ... the central object in the construction of the geographical region” (p. 41).

Last but not least, Verónica C. HOLLMANN from the University of Buenos Aires turns in Chapter 6 towards drone photography and the complex ways it is “reshaping the geographical imaginations of nature” (p. 57). She underscores that the most widely circulated award-winning drone images tend to “depict highly transformed or produced natures” instead of “pristine nature” (p. 62). Their visual composition is usually dominated by eye-catching colours and extraordinary shapes, which are further accentuated through digital image processing technologies to maximize their ‘beauty,’ at least in terms of what ‘landscape beauty’ means in consumption-centric contemporary Western societies. Hence, these images popularize false imaginations of nature and its relations to society. After reading this thought-provoking chapter, an embarrassing yet critical question is whether digitized drone photography’s obsession with ‘produced natures’ may even contribute to the (further) devaluation of ‘pristine nature’ in many people’s eyes. If it does, it can increase the general social acceptance of projects with a devastating impact on nature. That is a dilemma geographers all around the world should take seriously.

In sum, the volume is a precious piece of reading for everyone interested in the history of geography. Moreover, given that it was written by an international group of scholars from non-Anglophone countries and includes lots of references to academic works published in languages other than English, it provides a unique insight into several national geographical traditions from South America to East Asia, including French, German, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish-language ones. Hence, the book is an essential step toward decolonizing and internationalizing geography and its histories, which gives precious ideas and exciting directions for future research.

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¹ ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, Department of Social and Economic Geography, Budapest, Hungary. E-mail: ferenc.gyuris@tk.elte.hu

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