

Socialist & Critical Geography Specialty Group

Inside this issue

<i>Message from the Spokesperson</i>	1
<i>AAG 2010: Washington, D.C.</i>	1
<i>SCGSG Organization</i>	2
<i>Process of Formal Consensus</i>	2
<i>Student Art Contest for Political Art</i>	3
<i>Socialist & Critical Geography Resource:</i>	
<i>ACME</i>	4

NEWSLETTER

www.neiu.edu/~scgsg

Autumn 2009



–To promote critical analysis of geographic phenomena, cognizant of geographic research on the well-being of social classes; to investigate the issue of radical change toward a more collective and egalitarian society; and to discover the impact of economic growth upon environmental quality and upon social equity.

Message from the Spokesperson

by Jamey Essex

According to the AAG, the Socialist and Critical Geography Specialty Group (SCGSG) had 277 dues-paying members in April 2009. This number is heartening, because it suggests that within the AAG, a potentially large number of members could be called upon to advocate for positive and perhaps radical change within the association, the discipline, and beyond. It is also somewhat dispiriting, however, as the number of geographers who self-identify as critical, radical, or socialist is undoubtedly much higher than the SCGSG membership rolls indicates. As I begin my two-year term as group spokesperson (a position formerly known as the chair), I wonder what can be done to bring these two overlapping groups – our group members and our radical community of geographers – even more firmly together. Another way of posing this question is to ask what can and should the SCGSG be doing to facilitate greater participation among its membership, and to what ends?

Already this summer, the SCGSG has taken on an issue of critical importance to those who find the cost of the annual conference increasingly beyond their means by proposing to the AAG Executive and Council the adoption of a new, staggered registration fee structure. This would lower the cost of registration for unemployed, underemployed, and low income members, bringing the AAG in line with numerous other academic and professional associations, increasing accessibility to the conference, and reducing the sting of cuts to university budgets for travel support, especially for those on the part-time treadmill. This may seem like small potatoes, and is certainly not an overly radical proposal, but it has occurred through action formulated and taken within membership of the SCGSG. Progressive and radical

Continued on page 4

AAG 2010: Washington, D.C.

by Ryan Burns

As you prepare your abstracts and planned sessions for the AAG this year, the SCGSG would like to remind you of a few opportunities of which you may take advantage. These are sponsorship opportunities, the annual James Blaut award, and a small pool for travel funding.

Each year at the AAG meeting, the SCGSG sponsors sessions that support our mission. These sessions vary greatly in subject matter, covering topics such as human-nature interaction, disaster relief, economic geographies, geographies of education, and critical geographic theory. See our website for sessions that were sponsored in the past. To have your session sponsored, send its abstract to one of the officers for consideration.

The James Blaut Award and Memorial Lecture is the SCGSG's annual award given to a scholar who exemplifies the radical geographic approach taken by the late James Blaut. Jim worked indefatigably on issues of social justice and

Continued on page 3



SCGSG spokesperson:
Jamey Essex

Awards collective:
Lawrence Berg

Communications collective:
Ryan Burns

Conference collective & Treasurer:
Eliot Tretter

Institutional Campaign collective:
Jamey Essex

SCGSG Organization

by Ryan Burns

The SCGSG would like to briefly discuss our organization. In order to democratize the decision-making process, distribute responsibilities more evenly, and rid ourselves of unwieldy bureaucratic structures, we have organized ourselves in collectives. Each collective is a sort of focus group: it has a responsibility, and it is comprised of individuals who contribute to the cause of that collective. Some people are involved in multiple collectives. Thus, the organization as a whole depends on the collectives.

We have demarcated four collectives as of this writing: Awards, Communications, Conference, and Institutional Campaign (IC). The Awards collective is responsible for the James Blaut award, travel funding, and miscellaneous awards as our budget allows. The Communications collective directs the website, composes the (new) bi-annual newsletter and distributes meeting minutes. The Conference collective manages sponsorship of sessions, organizes catering for our annual business meeting, and organizes the informal SCGSG party. The IC is a collective oriented toward achieving specific goals in the AAG: for instance, in a past year the IC arranged for childcare at the AAG, and this year the IC is working to lower the AAG registration costs for low-income and underemployed attendees.

In the left column of this page is the list of spokespersons for each collective. Our website also contains this information and contact information. One benefit of this structure is that it allows easy entry for others who wish to become involved in our organization; if you would like to provide your talents to any of these collectives, contact the corresponding spokesperson listed on our website: www.neiu.edu/~scgsg.

Newsletter

This is the first newsletter issued by the SCGSG. It will be issued on a bi-annual basis, with the goal of communicating important information about the specialty group and the annual AAG meeting. We would like to expand this to include information that YOU would like to see.

Accordingly, if there is a topic or information that you would like to see distributed, send an email to Ryan Burns, the spokesperson for the Communications collective, at [RLBurns\[at\]u.washington.edu](mailto:RLBurns[at]u.washington.edu).

Process of Formal Consensus

by Eliot Tretter

Adopted from On Conflict and Consensus: A Handbook on Formal Consensus Decision Making by C.T. Lawrence Butler and Amy Rothstein.

There are lots of ways to make decisions and the process of decision making the SCGSG of the AAG has recently chosen to adopt is called Formal Consensus. Like all other forms of decision making, Formal Consensus has a defined structure, but more than other forms of decision making, it requires a commitment to active cooperation, disciplined speaking and listening, and respect for the contributions of every member. Every person has the responsibility to actively participate as a creative individual within the structure. In Formal Consensus, conflict is encouraged and supported, and resolved cooperatively with respect, nonviolence, and creativity. Decisions are believed to be more robust because of group input and unity. Unlike majoritarianism systems, decisions are only adopted when all participants at a meeting consent to the result of discussion about a proposal. If people disagree with a proposal, they are responsible for expressing their concerns but no decision is adopted until there is resolution of every concern. All members of the group have the ability to unilaterally block any proposal, unless limitations are placed on the number of required blocks for a proposal, and a concern must be based upon the principles of the group to justify a block. As proposals are being discussed, the facilitator should ask those with concerns if they are willing to stand aside, if they will not and consensus is unachievable, the proposal remains blocked. Therefore, proposals can still be adopted if individuals have unresolved concerns; there does need to be complete agreement, but members must consent to the proposal or step aside to allow to it to be adopted.



Student Art Contest for Political Art

by Clayton Rosati

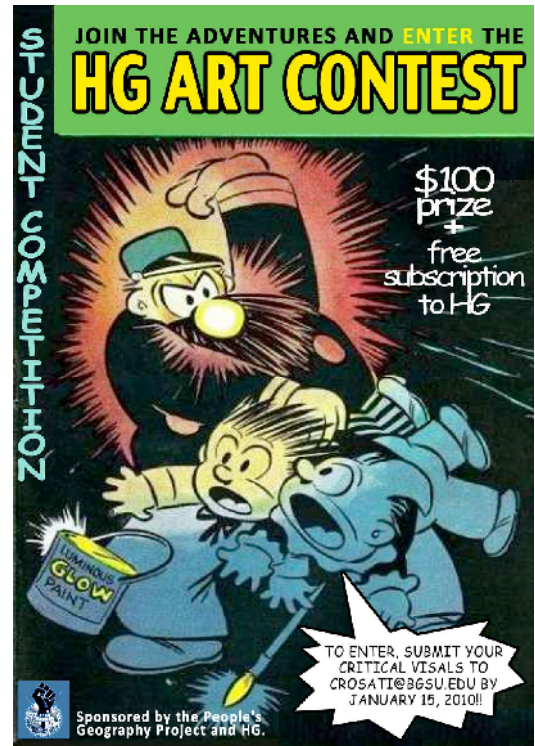
The People's Geography Project and the Journal Human Geography Sponsor a Student Art Contest for Political Art:

Art is not just something to ponder alone in museums and galleries. Art can also be an ordinary act, something political. Visual artists have the ability to inspire political outrage, to reveal social contradictions, to redirect our aspirations, to map a path to protest, to recast our view of the world around us. The journal, Human Geography (<http://www.hugeog.com/>) and the Peoples Geography Project (<http://peoplesgeographyproject.org/>) invite submissions of students' (from High School to Graduate School) political art and/or critical visuals for a unique artistic contest. We are looking for political art and critical visual projects in many different forms including, but not limited to, works of visual satyr, collage, comics, drawing, painting, and photography. We would like to see pieces that critically engage the social world through visuals. Pieces should include an artist statement explaining the piece. The winner will receive \$100 and a one year subscription to Human Geography.

1) Images must be 7-inches wide, 300 dpi, RGB, jpeg. If your image is horizontal please submit your image as 10-inches wide, 300 dpi, RGB, jpeg.

2) Please identify your files with your last name and, in the case of multiple entries, followed by the number one (1) for your first image, number two (2) for your second, until all single entries are identified. Example: *Mingus_1.jpg, Mingus_2.jpg, Mingus_3.jpg*. When entering a series, please identify your files with your last name followed by the letter S. If you are entering more than one series, name them as S1 for your first, S2 for your second until all the series have been identified. Example: *Mingus_S1a.jpg, Mingus_S1b.jpg, Mingus_S2a.jpg...* 3) Please attach a digital copy of your artist's statement as well, identifying contact information, school/institution/student status, and an explanation of the piece(s).

3) To enter, submit your critical visuals to [CRosati\[at\]bgsu.edu](mailto:CRosati[at]bgsu.edu) by January 15, 2010.



AAG 2010: Washington, D.C. continued from page 1

inequality; enhanced our understanding of racism, imperialism, and Eurocentrism; and contributed directly to the advancement of socialist and anti-colonial struggles. The SCGSG awards a scholarship of \$500, and the awardee delivers the James Blaut Memorial Lecture. Please see our website for more information and for instructions on how to nominate a scholar who strives for these ideals.

Lastly, the SCGSG has a small pool available to support travel to the annual AAG meeting. In the past this support has gone to young, non-tenured scholars. To apply, send a request to the Treasurer, Eliot Tretter, at [etretter\[at\]mail.utexas.edu](mailto:etretter[at]mail.utexas.edu).

Please visit our website for more information on these opportunities: www.neiu.edu/~scgsg.



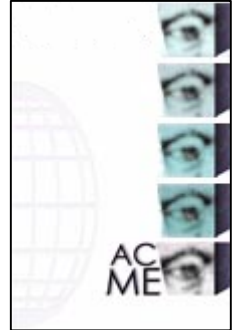
Socialist & Critical Geography Resource: ACME

by Ryan Burns

For seven years, high-quality peer-reviewed articles have been published by *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*. The collection's breadth and scholastic eminence are astonishing; add to that the fact that all articles are free, and this resource becomes an indispensable asset for critical geographers.

A strength of *ACME* comes by way of its accessibility to younger scholars not yet entirely familiar with critical geographic literature. This is not to undermine the importance of work published here: in fact, *ACME* is heavily cited and holds much esteem in critical geography. While the articles featured here can serve as launching pads into the literature, many articles in *ACME* have themselves become seminal publications in their subfields. It is in this interesting balance that the journal links cutting-edge publications with accessibility.

The journal can be accessed for free by visiting <http://www.acme-journal.org>.



Message from the Spokesperson continued from page 1

change in and through the AAG and the discipline of geography are possible through the efforts of groups like ours, but only to the extent that members use the group's structure, capabilities, and networks.

The SCGSG's recent adoption of a consensus-based decision making procedure and an executive structure that emphasizes collective action and wider collaboration are designed to encourage broader and more democratically socialist forms of participation among members. As the piece below details, the group already sponsors several AAG sessions and the James Blaut Award and Memorial Lecture each year, and provides some conference travel funding to young faculty and graduate students. Whether the group can and should do more is up to its members, and I encourage you all to take a more active role in the activities and life of the SCGSG by participating in the efforts of one of the group collectives discussed below. These collectives allow easy entry for those new to the group, and can encourage increased participation by current members. With more active and consistent input from the group's members, and engagement with the larger community of radical, critical, and socialist geographers, the SCGSG can build on its past and current efforts to forge radically inspired change in and through the AAG. Thanks, and I look forward to working on behalf of the group as spokesperson.

In solidarity,
Jamey Essex