

Makers of modern human geography



Allan Pred (1936–2007)

Although I never knew Allan Pred (just one face-to-face meeting during the AAG conference in San Francisco in 1994 when I asked for advice about where to spend a few days vacation after the conference and so prompted a vigorous debate about alternative possibilities amongst Allan and his colleagues – in the event Allan's suggestions were, of course, very much the most perceptible), his contributions to human geography mean that, for me, he has always just been there.

And, of course, he still is.

One of his earliest publications – the 1967 *Behavior and location: foundations for a geographical and dynamic location theory* published, presciently enough, in the *Lund Studies in Geography* – went against the prevailing grain. It reminded geographers about human agency when all about were the prevailing mechanics of spatial analysis. All very confusing for someone just taught Geography around the principles of la Blachian regional geography! But – and this is the point of great writing – it was less against the grain than a reflection on the profundities of the geographical imagination. It is that which has always provoked Pred's scholarship.

And yet his geographical imagination was inspired not merely by human agency but by

his concern for humanity and his anger at the prevailing lack of humanity. His last book was entitled *Violent geographies: fear, terror and political violence*.

From first to last, then, a humane geographer and a maker of humane geographies or of what humane geographies should be.

So, it is not surprising that reading all the contributions to this *Makers of modern human geography* has been a most poignantly telling experience for me. Here, clearly, was a man who, like all really great people, was great in multiple ways and not only in those ways in which distant others – like me – can see and sense.

Those publicly apparent and visible things are often the least significant – and so it was with Allan Pred despite the fact, of course, that they were so very significant. Or, rather, it is that the visible great things are great precisely because of all the other greatneses.

How often we reduce people (and scholars especially, perhaps?) to one dimension. But in Allan Pred's case, this was impossible. All the contributions show him entirely committed to what he did but living – opening out in all directions.

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Allan Pred: scholar, teacher and rebel

Allan R. Pred, one of the world's leading geographers and social scientists, died of lung cancer on 5 January 2007, at the age of 70. He had just retired in May 2006 after 44 years

at the University of California, Berkeley. His last public address, to the Geography graduation in May 2006, was Allan at full bore: raging against a war machine – a secret

geography of terror and intimidation – that drew strength from weak citizenship. Always a tireless campaigner for Geography, Allan promoted the importance of space and place in everyday life. Space was, in his view, a sort of foundation stone for all of the human sciences. Seeing, measuring, perceiving and creating space was, Pred wrote, central to the birth of modernity.

To colleagues and students, Allan Pred was a brilliant thinker, a great humanist, and a generous teacher. Allan made the Berkeley Geography department the special place it is now, a source of enlightenment and a place of retreat that upholds the best ideals of the university. He was the central figure in the transformation of Berkeley Geography from the Sauer School to a critical, left approach. He left an indelible stamp, most especially by his devotion to wide-open inquiry, independent and critical thinking, public truth, and human liberation. Allen was a loyal and trusted friend, without whom neither of us would have long endured at Berkeley. A speaker at his retirement colloquium put it well: by his intellectual restlessness, his fearlessness in tackling the controversial, and his willingness to experiment, Allan had blazed a path for all of us.

The arc of Pred's academic life is remarkable. He entered Antioch College in 1953, age 16. He graduated in 1957, moved to Penn State University to study Geography, then decamped to Chicago. In the mid-twentieth century, the University of Chicago was the City on the Hill: birthplace of classic urban sociology, postwar home to the first group of American urban geographers, and, by 1960, a crucible for a new quantitative and analytical Geography. Completing his PhD in 1962, in little over four years, Pred arrived at Berkeley at the age of 25 (he always laughed at the methods of appointment then: Carl Sauer made a phone call and that was that). Within five years he had obtained tenure; by 1971, age 34, he had been appointed Full Professor.

For the better part of four decades, Allan was at the forefront of human geography.

When asked in an interview why he chose Geography, he replied that it offered an unmatched flexibility and cross-disciplinary landscape on which to operate. In keeping with that ideal, his scholarship radically reshaped our understanding of cities, landscape, modernity, place, and race. Pred's productivity is legendary. Fourteen books and monographs – translated into seven languages – and over 70 articles and book chapters. He was always among the most-cited scholars in the profession. At a May 2006 retirement party, one colleague calculated that Pred had penned, on average, about 350 words each day of his working life.

Allan Pred was born in the Bronx in 1936. His father was a high school French language teacher, his mother a housewife and musician. Both grandparents had been Jewish immigrants from Poland. But he rarely looked back to New York or his heritage after his departure. His new horizons were out in the Midwest and later across the Atlantic to Europe – and a life-long love affair with Sweden. He first visited the country while a graduate student at Chicago, drawn by the theoretical innovations of Torsten Hägerstrand (who became a close friend). When he met his future wife, Hjördis, in San Francisco in 1962 the die was cast. They lived between Berkeley and Sweden on a yearly basis, raising two bi-lingual children. In the 1980s, they bought a summer home in Sörmland, which was Allan's sanctuary and passion; he loved the physical work of building and gardening as much as he cherished burrowing into the archives.

Pred started his career as a theorist of the American city. His international reputation was made by a trio of brilliant books on nineteenth-century urbanism, marked by a magnificent control of historical sources. Each proved to be enormously influential across disciplines, as well as theoretically groundbreaking. In *The spatial dynamics of US urban industrial growth 1800–1914*, he challenged the new economic historians to take seriously the role of urban agglomeration

in industrial growth. In *Urban growth and the circulation of information, 1970–1840*, Pred linked national growth, mercantile expansion and industrial innovation to the advance of communications and urbanization. And, finally, in *Urban growth theory and city systems in the US, 1840–1860*, he charted the way capitalist dynamics ramify across entire city system, more than between cities and rural hinterlands.

Beginning in the 1980s, Pred turned to the Swedish city, and in the process his gaze shifted to modernity as a way of life. Pred's eye for historical sources yielded unexpected fruits in his new Swedish project. He discovered an archival goldmine, a treasure trove of neglected church and state papers on nineteenth and twentieth century life. What followed was an exhilarating series of projects designed to unearth the making of place, everyday life, and popular identities in the transit to what he called, 'Swedish modern'. He began with rural enclosures and peasant life in the nineteenth century, in *Place, practice and structure* and moved quickly to the world of Stockholm's working class at the *fin de siècle* in *Lost words and lost world*. In *Recognizing European modernities*, Pred's vision grew bolder, taking on that apotheosis of modernity, the World's Fair, as it took shape in Stockholm. Finally, he turned to contemporary Swedish life and the deafening silence surrounding the question of race. In two powerful and controversial books – stunning excoriations of cultural racism memorably entitled, *Even in Sweden* and *The past is not dead* – Pred courageously exposed a deep vein of pain and shame.

In addressing modernity, Pred shifted radically in conception and style. Influenced by the work of Walter Benjamin and his theory of montage, Pred experimented with a distinctive prose style – at once poetic and stark – and a remarkable integration of image and text, ethnography and commentary. For some, this resembled a postmodern turn, but Pred never neglected the hard-edges of

material life and capitalist economy as he delved into cultural and visual studies. In the end, his achievement was truly original and distinctive. Not surprisingly some took umbrage at his language, but nobody doubted the erudition of his scholarship or his willingness to take a chance on escaping the confines of conventional thought and banal didactics.

As his stature grew, the honors followed. He was awarded the Anders Retzius medal by the Swedish Society for Geography and Anthropology (Geography's Nobel Prize) in 1991. He was honored by the Polish Academy of Sciences and twice by the Association of American Geographers. He was elected a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy, and, for his contributions to Swedish social science, was awarded the Willy Brandt Professorship and an honorary doctorate from Uppsala. He held visiting appointments at the École des Hautes Études de Sciences Sociales and the University of Lund. In recognition of his achievements and contributions to campus life at Berkeley, he was made Professor of the Graduate School upon his retirement. As he once said, not bad for a kid from the Bronx.

Pred was in every sense a fixture on the Berkeley campus. Arriving in the early days of the Free Speech Movement, he was thrown headlong into the ferment that consumed the decade. He never shied away from support for students, free thought, or the Rights of Man – and Woman. A great supporter of women students and colleagues, and a committed advocate of racial equality and affirmative action, he never forgot his humble roots. An optimist in matters of human possibility, he nonetheless had few illusions about the workings of power and its corruptions. Still, his favorite *New Yorker* cartoon, pinned on the wall of his office for years, pictured a baseball boxscore with the Realists scoring a run in every inning and the Utopians shut out until the end. The final score: Utopians 1, Realists 0.

Pred contributed to the Berkeley campus on many fronts. He never shirked the thankless committee duties, and his knowledge of university affairs was voluminous. He served as Chair (Head) of Department between 1979 and 1988, during a critical period of transformation and growth. All departmental Chairs develop their own personal styles. His was chairing by stealth: a remarkable combination of administrative genius, healthy distrust of those in power, a ferocious determination, and a memory like an elephant. He was a mongoose when it came to university in-fighting: he knew what he wanted, never gave up, and almost always won. His wise counsel was sought around campus. As a colleague his hallmarks were loyalty and honesty, a profound political acumen, and a great generosity of spirit. He was a consummate academic citizen.

A dedicated teacher and mentor, Allan's influence reached across the campus. His graduate seminars – always boisterous events – drew ethnographers, historians, planners, and students of rhetoric and literature. He revelled in graduate advising, and his door was always open. He elicited a kind of affection from students that one can only envy. And he managed to captivate despite questionable taste in clothes, bad socks, hair askew, and a quaint hitch in his speaking voice. Indeed, those things were part of his slightly eccentric persona and immense charm, and his deep humanity at close quarters. We hope his students and friends will pick up his fallen banner and carry it on for another 70 years.

Allan Pred as producer

It's very hard for me to speak or write about Allan – to find in my words the place that Allan inhabited in my life; to articulate the place of someone who was a mentor, an inspiration, and a provider. But also an interlocutor, a team-mate, and a partner in crime. We shared a sense of joy, curiosity,

Books by Allan Pred

- Pred, A.** 1966: *The spatial dynamics of urban growth in the United States, 1800–1914*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- 1967: *Behavior and location: foundations for a geographic and dynamic location theory*. Lund, Sweden: Glerup.
- 1973: *Urban growth and the circulation of information, 1790–1840*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 1977: *City-systems in advanced economies*. London: Hutchinson.
- 1980: *Urban growth and city systems in the United States, 1840–60*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- 1985: *Place, practice and structure: social and spatial transformation in southern Sweden, 1975–1850*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- 1990: *Lost words and lost worlds: modernity and the language of everyday life in late-nineteenth century Stockholm*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- 1990: *Making histories and constructing human geographies: the local transformation of practice, power relations and consciousness*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Pred, A.** and **Watts, M.** 1992: *Reworking modernity: capitalisms and symbolic discontent*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Pred, A.** 1995: *Recognizing European modernities: a montage of the present*. New York: Routledge.
- 2000: *Even in Sweden: racisms, racialized spaces, and the popular geographical imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 2004: *The past is not dead: facts, fictions and enduring racial stereotypes*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gregory, D.** and **Pred, A.**, editors 2006: *Violent geographies: fear, terror and political violence*. New York: Routledge.

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irreverence, and trespass in our intellectual and creative pursuits. At some point, we began signing our emails to one another with a phrase that spoke to our relationship: in cahoots. Allan was a very, very dear friend. But he was also more than that, and remains more than that.

Axiomatic to critical geography is the concept of the 'production of space' – an analytic tool we use to see the ways in which people sculpt the environments around them, and about the ways that we, in turn, become the products of what we've created. The idea encapsulates the recursive relationships between ourselves and everything and everyone around us that we, for better or worse, find ourselves inescapably enmeshed within. For many of us, this axiom of critical geography is a framework we use to generate analyses, a technique we use to describe the world, a guide to constructing elaborate arguments and clever texts. Things too often designed to languish on the cobwebbed pages of obscure journals or to choke in the bad air of so many hotel conference rooms. Too often, geographers conveniently ignore the ways in which we too produce space: in our everyday lives, we hold onto our comfortable distinctions between mind and body, between ideas and their implications, between ourselves and those around us, between what we say and what we do, between form and content, between art and life.

I've always thought that Allan's work was less about the topics and subjects that he took up, and more about the space he created through his own production. Not only through his thoughts about how a better world might be possible, but through the things he did to make it so. Did he change the way we think about cities? Yes. Did he change the way

we think about race? Undoubtedly. Did he change the way we see our own condition on this planet, showing us things that had gone unnoticed, unsaid, unthought. Very much so. But he did far more than that.

For many of us, Allan created, then gave to us, a place to exist. Speaking personally, the space he created at the university and within the field of geography put a roof over my head. Allan's work put food in my stomach just as it put ideas and inspirations in my mind. I was and am not alone: the space Allan created is filled with some of the most wonderful people you can hope to meet. Allan's space overflows with people of curiosity, passion, commitment, and generosity. Like me, they are here because of him.

I miss him very much.

But in a certain way, the past is not dead, and neither is Allan. I see the space he created when I walk the halls of our department. I see him in the faces of the friends and colleagues he brought together. I hear his voice when I write. And from the corner of my eye, I see his reflection in the glass cases and waxed floors of the university. I miss Allan very much, but I also see him every day. And I thank him.

In cahoots,
Always.

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