

## On the Road

For the past three weeks I have traveled the continent, taking in three regional meetings and visiting geography departments. What a wonderful opportunity to get to know the people and the regions of this wonderful discipline! The Association of Pacific Coast Geographers (APCG) met in San Francisco from September 28 to October 1. Aably organized by Nancy Wilkinson and a crew of colleagues and students at San Francisco State, the program featured fascinating papers, including one of the first on the ethnic geography of California based on the 2010 Census, great field trips, and dining worthy of the California tradition. As the conference drew to a close on Saturday, a "cloud" descended on the city in the form of nearly 50,000 participants in the annual Oracle Openworld conference. The landscape around Union Square transformed as badge-bearing attendees and their families descended, clearly intent on discovering all that the city offered. With three days to kill before moving to my next gig, I curiously listened to accents and conversations from around the globe, checking out the international geek chic style, and wondering at this manifestation of the impact of new technologies on the globalizing scene.

Next stop Denver, where a crowded itinerary allowed intense interaction with faculty and graduate students at UC Boulder, Denver University, and UC Denver, where the conference was graciously hosted by a team led by Deb Thomas. As in San Francisco, the abundant grad papers were fresh, full of great ideas. A field trip led by Bryan Page and Bryan Wee took place notwithstanding the pouring rain and 30-degree overnight temperature plunge. They peeled back the landscape to reveal the city's gold-rush roots, the magnificent architectural waves that make Denver both a showplace of the postmodern and a study in cycles of decay and reform, and the ambitious transportation

infrastructure in the process of making this one of the most connected urban systems in the country. We stopped in front of the state legislature, huddled shivering beneath umbrellas, and listened to a few dozen Occupy Denver pioneers begin their protest, then proceed noisily but peacefully around the adjacent streets. Passersby seemed only slightly bemused and more intent on staying dry than listening to their concerns.

A week later, I was in Montreal for the NESTVAL meetings. More than 100 regional members who crossed the border for their annual meeting included an impressive Salem State group who had chartered a full-size bus. David Greene and Alan Nash led the Concordia team in forming a thought-provoking program focused on the theme of the sustainable city. On Saturday, Kevin Gould and Ted Rutland led another group of weather-defiant field trippers on a tour of the radical historical geography of downtown Montreal, scene of some of Canada's most notorious student demonstrations. As we reached Ste Catherine Street, we met the leaders of the Occupy Montreal demonstration, and decided to check out the scene. French and English raised contrapuntal voices, culminating most loudly on the steps of the Bank of Montreal, symbolic foundation of Canada's financial empires. By the time we reached Victoria Park, scene of the Occupy camp presided over by a massive statue of Queen Victoria now sporting a Guy Fawkes mask, the crowd had swelled to an estimated 3,000. A fire truck flew by in the other direction, the fire fighters giving thumbs-up signals through the open windows. Police were there, managing the crowds carefully but quietly. As we headed away through the intense winds, harbingers of winter made more intense by the tun-

nels of skyscrapers, we encountered new crowds, making the transition from shopping to this night's hockey game—against Colorado—and numbering many thousands more than those hunkering down in Victoria Square for the night.

Meanwhile back in Denver, a week later the protest had grown to 2,000 people. There were arrests and sporadic violent encounters with the police. I checked out the blogs for a range of Occupy movements. The lack of leadership and clear political direction is celebrated. Participants are perplexed but hungry for change. The mainstream media too seem generally inclined to support political

change, but are unsure of the direction. The protestors who claim to represent the 99 percent who own only one percent of the wealth are still a tiny number of people, and yet these seem to be something more here than in the sporadic anti-globalization demonstrations that erupt at G20 conferences. They are re-spatializing our cities in ways that we have not seen for a long time, and doing so with the aid of twitters, blogs, GPS systems, and yes, public transportation that did not exist back in the 1960s and 1970s.

I do not have any more sense than do the protestors themselves of where the movement is going, but surely this is something that geographers should be placing on their immediate research agendas as we prepare to discuss social justice and the city—how appropriate—as one of the main themes of the 2012 AAG Annual Meeting in New York this February. I hope to see you there. ■

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Register for the 2012 AAG Annual Meeting in New York, February 24-28.  
For details visit [www.aag.org/annualmeeting](http://www.aag.org/annualmeeting).