

Revolting New York: How 400 Years of Riot, Rebellion, Uprising, and Revolution Shaped a City.

Maynooth University Department of Geography invites you to attend a seminar presented by:

Don Mitchell Uppsala University

Date: 7th March

Time: 4pm

Location: Rocque Lab, Rhetoric House



Riots, revolts, uprisings, and revolutions have been a near-constant and a decisive force in shaping New York City's landscape. From the revolt of the Munsee Indians in the 1640s to Black Lives Matters in the present, political and social tumult has – to a far larger degree than is usually appreciated – determined flows of investment, neighborhood restructurings, and everyday life of the metropolis. Drawing on research begun by Neil Smith and his students in a seminar on the Geography of Revolution and now nearing

publication, I will show *how* one of the determinants of the morphology and meaning of the urban landscape is revolt and riot, uprising and revolution – anarchists exploding bombs, gardeners claiming empty lots and holding them militantly, the inchoate rage of looters, the occupation of buildings, massive marches, violence by police and protesters. There is at play in the making of the landscape, I will contend, a constant dialectic of spatial form and social revolt, and it is important to understand this dialectic if we want to understand the making of cities as well as the possibilities for social justice in them. Or, as the Harlem Renaissance writer Allain Locke suggested, the 1935 Harlem riot – and by extension other moments of upheaval – was “a revealing flash of lightning.” *Revolting New York* – both the book and my remarks in this talk – tells the story of the city as it has been not only revealed by such lightning flashes, but also and especially how it has been *remade* by the lightning strikes of revolt. In doing so, I think, it makes palpable just how *power* is built into the landscape – and why. Through both descriptions of revolt large and small as well as historical-geographical analysis (and lots of images), this talk will not only *show* the remaking of New York's landscape, but also why it is vital to understand such remaking within the totality of long-term historical change.

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