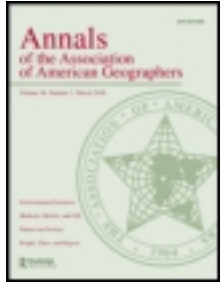


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Publisher: Routledge

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## Annals of the Association of American Geographers

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/raag20>

### Nazi Spatial Theory: The Dark Geographies of Carl Schmitt and Walter Christaller

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Available online: 23 Mar 2012

To cite this article: Trevor J. Barnes & Claudio Minca (2012): Nazi Spatial Theory: The Dark Geographies of Carl Schmitt and Walter Christaller, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, DOI:10.1080/00045608.2011.653732

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2011.653732>



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# Nazi Spatial Theory: The Dark Geographies of Carl Schmitt and Walter Christaller

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The concern with space and, more fundamentally, the formulation of a larger, guiding spatial theory, was central to achieving Nazi objectives during the Third Reich. We disclose critical elements of that theory, focusing on two contributions: the first by the jurist and international legal and political theorist Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) and the second by the geographer Walter Christaller (1893–1969). Applying the perverted biopolitical logic of National Socialism required the military accomplishment and bureaucratic management of two interrelated spatial processes: deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Deterritorialization involved moving non-Germanized Germans (mainly Jews and Slavs) off conquered Eastern lands to create an “empty space” that was then “reterritorialized” by the settlement of “legitimate” Germans (although often not German citizens). Although many German academics were involved in designing and implementing these spatial strategies, we single out two. Carl Schmitt provided a politico-judicial justification for reterritorialization involving the geographical expansion of the Third Reich: *Großraum* (greater space). Conceived four months before Germany’s *Blitzkrieg* invasion of Poland that triggered World War II, *Großraum* provided the (literal) grounds for Nazi reterritorialization. Walter Christaller brought his peculiar spatial imaginary of formal geometry and place-based rural romanticism in planning the “empty space” of the East after non-Germanized inhabitants were removed. His central place theory re-created the Nazis’ territorial conquests in the geographical likeness of the German homeland. *Key Words:* Carl Schmitt, Nazism, reactionary modernism, spatial theory, Walter Christaller.

对空间的关注，即更根本地制订一个更大的，指导性的空间理论，是第三帝国期间实现纳粹目标的核心。本文侧重于该理论两个贡献，揭露了其关键要素：首先是由法学家和国际法律和政治理论家卡尔·施密特（1888年至1985年）提出的和第二是由地理学家沃尔特·克里斯特勒（1893年至1969年）提出的理论。应用国家社会主义的变态生命政治逻辑需要军事成就和官僚管理这两个相互联系的空间过程：即再辖域化和解辖域化。解辖域化涉及把非德裔德国人（主要是犹太人和斯拉夫人）从所征服的东方土地迁走，以创建一个“空的空间”，然后该空间再被“合法”的德国人（虽然往往不是德国公民）再辖域化。虽然许多德国学者参与了制定和实施这些空间战略，我们只挑选出两个来说。卡尔·施密特为再辖域化提供了一个政治和司法的理由，该理由涉及第三帝国的地域扩张：*Großraum*（更大的空间）。*Großraum*是在德国以闪电战入侵波兰而引发第二次世界大战前四个月所设想，它为纳粹的再辖域化提供了（文字）理由。沃尔特·克里斯特勒则在规划这些非德裔居民被迁走的东方“空的地方”时，带来了他特有的正式的几何空间想象和以地方为基础的农村浪漫主义。他的核心地方理论类似于把纳粹的攻城策略实施于德国本土地理。关键词：卡尔·施密特，纳粹主义，反动的现代主义，空间理论，沃尔特·克里斯特勒。

La preocupación con el espacio y, más fundamentalmente, con la formulación de una teoría espacial orientadora, de mayor alcance, fue muy importante para alcanzar los objetivos nazis durante el Tercer Reich. Desglosamos los elementos críticos de aquella teoría, concentrándonos en dos contribuciones: primera, la del jurista y teórico político y legal internacional Carl Schmitt (1888–1985), y segunda, la del geógrafo Walter Christaller (1893–1969). Aplicar la perversa lógica biopolítica del Nacional Socialismo requirió el logro militar y manejo burocrático de dos procesos espaciales interrelacionados: deterritorialización y reterritorialización. La deterritorialización involucraba el desplazamiento de alemanes no germanizados (principalmente judíos y eslavos) de las tierras conquistadas en el este para crear un espacio vacío que sería luego reterritorializado con asentamientos de alemanes “legítimos” (que a menudo no eran ciudadanos alemanes). Aunque muchos académicos alemanes se vieron involucrados en diseñar e implementar estas estrategias espaciales, nos referiremos solamente a dos. Carl Schmitt se encargó de dotar a la reterritorialización de una justificación político-judicial que implicaba la expansión geográfica del Tercer Reich: el *Großraum* (el espacio mayor). Concebido cuatro meses antes de la invasión *Blitzkrieg* de Alemania a Polonia, con la que se dio comienzo a la Segunda Guerra Mundial, el *Großraum*

literalmente aportó el terreno para la reterritorialización nazi. Walter Christaller contribuyó su peculiar imaginario espacial de geometría formal y un romanticismo rural basado en la idea de lugar para la planificación del “espacio vacío” del este, después de que sus habitantes no germanizados fueron expelidos. Su teoría de las plazas centrales sirvió para re-crear las conquistas territoriales de los nazis en semejanza geográfica de la tierra natal alemana. *Palabras clave:* Carl Schmitt, nazismo, modernismo reaccionario, teoría espacial, Walter Christaller.

Anglo-American human geography has been mainly silent about the constitution of the geographies of Hitler’s empire. The relatively few although often excellent contributions to the topic have sparked only limited interest (Bassin 1987; Charlesworth 1992, 1994, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Cole and Graham 1995; Clarke, Doel, and McDonough 1996; Doel and Clark 1998; Cole 2003, 2009; Elden 2003, 2006; Keil 2005; Charlesworth et al. 2006; Gregory 2009).<sup>1</sup> In contrast, in history, philosophy, sociology, and political theory, critical examination and debate about the Nazi project and its theories have been energetic and widespread (see, among many others, Herf 1984; Burleigh 1988, 2000; Bauman 1989; Agamben, 1998, 2005; Browning 2004). Not in Anglo-American geography, however, where even the recent interest in genocide, and in the writings of Agamben and Schmitt (*Geografiska Annaler B* 88(4), 2006; and Legg 2012), has done little to provoke disciplinary discussion about the spaces of Nazism. This article is an attempt at remediation, concerned with outlining some of the elements that made up Nazi spatial theory, by exploring the works of two Nazi academics who influenced directly and indirectly postwar human geography: the legal theorist Carl Schmitt and the geographer Walter Christaller. Of the two, Schmitt (1888–1985) is better known and over the last decade or so has received considerable attention across the range of human sciences, including geography.<sup>2</sup>

As a youth, Schmitt was a brilliant law student, completing his second dissertation, the *Habilitation*, in 1916, just before enlisting in the German army to fight in World War I.<sup>3</sup> Postwar he taught at a variety of German universities, which culminated in his appointment as Professor of Law at the University of Berlin in 1933. On 1 May of that same year he joined the Nazi party. During the 1920s, Schmitt was a prolific writer, concerned with the constitutional legitimacy of the Weimar Republic (Kennedy 2004). Although even then, as Vinx (2010) said, “Schmitt’s declared aim [was] to defend the Weimar constitution . . . at times [it was] barely distinguishable from [his] call for constitutional revision towards a more authoritarian political framework.” With the end of Weimar, and the beginning of the Third Reich, Schmitt was appointed National

Socialism’s “Crown Jurist.” Increasingly he sought both legally and politically to justify Fascism, the Führer, and concomitant violent deeds, including political murder.<sup>4</sup> For our purposes, most germane was Schmitt’s geographical imaginary, which entered into the larger Nazi discourse and was represented most readily by *Großraum* (“greater space”).<sup>5</sup> *Großraum* provided a spatial justification for the National Socialist state expansion, for Germany to dominate a larger geographical region, and for the Nazis to take over the world.

Walter Christaller (1893–1969), in comparison, was a petty bureaucrat and a technician. But he was no less a producer of dark Nazi geographies. With the opposite academic trajectory to Schmitt, intermittent, slow, and often unsuccessful,<sup>6</sup> he finally completed his doctoral dissertation at the Geography Department, University of Erlangen, *Die zentralen Orte in Süddeutschland* (*Central Places in Southern Germany*; Christaller 1966), the same year Schmitt became professor in Berlin. Initially fearful of the Brown Shirts, by 1940 Christaller, like Schmitt, had become a Party member. He worked for a key administrator in Himmler’s SS,<sup>7</sup> Konrad Meyer, Professor of Agronomy at Berlin University. Meyer headed several branches of Nazi bureaucracy, including the Planning and Soil Department (*Hauptabteilung Planung und Boden*) in which Christaller worked and that fell under the Himmler-led Reichs Commission for the Strengthening of Germanism (*Reichskommissariat für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums*, or RKFDV). Christaller’s task was to reconfigure the internal geography of Germany’s newly acquired territories. His particular charge was Poland, invaded by Germany in September 1939.<sup>8</sup> Like Schmitt, Christaller brought his own geographical imaginary to the task, a curious mixture of spatial geometrical formalism and place-based rural romanticism. But, as we argue, it was a geography that perfectly fitted the Nazi ideological agenda that we characterize following Herf (1984) as “reactionary modernism.”

Our discussion of Schmitt and Christaller does not exhaust the full list of contributors who produced Nazi spatiality. At least within the Anglo-American geographical literature, the person typically singled out as a key architect of that geography is Karl Haushofer (1869–1946), Professor of Geography at Munich University, promoter and practitioner of geopolitics (Heske

1987; Ò Tuathail, Dalby, and Routledge 1998, Section I; Herwig 1999; Kearns 2009, ch. 1). He is attributed with introducing to Hitler Friedrich Ratzel's work on *Lebensraum* ("living space"), which found its way into *Mein Kampf*. In 1923 Haushofer visited both Hitler and his secretary, Rudolf Hess (who served under Haushofer during World War I and was subsequently his student in Munich), when both men were imprisoned following the Beer Hall Putsch. According to Kearns (2009), "Haushofer visited on a score of Wednesdays, staying all day with them supervising their reading in classics in German political geography, notably, the second edition of Friedrich Ratzel's *Political Geography*" (17). The exact effects of those visits on Hitler, and the subsequent course of German geopolitics, continue to be debated (see, e.g., skeptical assessments by Heske 1986, 1987, and especially Bassin 1987). We do not intend to take sides, but we do not want to dismiss Haushofer's importance. Our larger argument is that many people contributed to the geographical vision of Nazism. *Lebensraum* was an important component, which we discuss, but there were other components, too. One of them was Schmitt's notion of *Großraum*, and another was Christaller's triangulation of space, society, and community in western Poland as part of Himmler's project to rewrite large swathes of an expanding greater Germanom as Aryan space. Haushofer's geopolitics played a role, but the Nazi plan for a German empire founded on a new biopolitics<sup>9</sup> required more than the mobilization of only Haushofer's work, as important as that was. Other geographical concepts were mobilized and provided by theorists like Schmitt and Christaller. Collectively, they allowed the Nazis to impose a new and violent relationship between people and space, and which is our intention to delineate.

The article is divided into four substantive sections. The first sets out a general framework for understanding Nazi spatiality based on Herf's (1984) notion of "reactionary modernism." Two central spatial processes of Nazi geography, deterritorialization and reterritorialization,<sup>10</sup> respectively an emptying out of space and its refilling in a different form, were shaped by the Nazis' own oxymoronic combination of modernism and anti-modernism. The second section discusses the work of Schmitt and, in particular, his idea of *Großraum* first set out in 1939. *Großraum* justified the dominance of Germany over a large regional sphere. Because of the breakdown of both the sovereign nation state and the existing global order based on *Ius Publicum Europaeum*, Schmitt (2003) argued that it was necessary to create a new world political order. In particular, it would be

predicated on the development of a set of wider spaces and spheres of influence, each associated with one of a select group of countries that included Germany. For Schmitt (2003) the worst fate that could befall the world would be the emergence of a political void, a "spaceless" global politics resulting from failing nation states. In those circumstances the void must be filled; otherwise, anarchy would be loosed on the world. The void would be filled by *Großraum*, producing a stable international spatial order. The third section is about what to do with the resulting spaces of the German *Großraum*. According to Christaller, the focus of the section, they were to be reterritorialized according to the hexagonal lines of central place theory. But the filling in of that space (reterritorialization) was only possible because of a prior emptying out of that same space (deterritorialization); harmony of the hexagons was achieved by the discordance of a past erasure. Finally, our extended conclusion reflects on how rational academics like Schmitt and Christaller were not only caught up in, but also perpetuated, even amplified, the irrationalities of the Nazi regime and its geography.

## Theories of Space and Nazi Ideology: A Reactionary Modernist Geography

The Nazi project was necessarily a geographical project (Schlögel 2003, 27–34). It was about creating a new world in the image of the perverted logic of National Socialism, a logic that Herf (1984) dubbed, "reactionary modernism." Herf (1984, 1) wrote, "reactionary modernism" attempted to affect a "reconciliation . . . between the antimodernist, romantic, and irrationalist ideas present in German nationalism and the most obvious manifestation of means–end rationality, that is, modern technology."<sup>11</sup> On the one hand, National Socialism embraced modernity and instrumental rationality; something found, for example, in the Nazi emphasis on engineering, eugenics, experimental physics, and applied mathematics. They were also exemplified in the Nazi technologies of governance around the economy, population, planning, and settlement (examples of the former are found in Renneberg and Walker [1994], and Szöllösi-Janze [2001a, 2001b]; and of the latter in Fehl [1992]; Rössler [1994]; Rollins [1995]; Kay [2006]). On the other hand, cheek-by-jowl was National Socialism's other embrace: a dark anti-modernity, the anti-Enlightenment. Triumphed were tradition, a mythic past, irrational sentiment and emotion, mysticism, and a cultural essentialism that turned

easily into dogma, prejudice, and much, much worse (Pringle 2006).

Reactionary modernism necessarily entered the geographical marrow of the Nazi regime. That geography was defined by two interrelated spatial processes: deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Clarke, Doel, and McDonough 1996; Doel and Clarke 1998; Gregory 2009; for a discussion of the larger concepts see Raffestin 1980; Raffestin, Lopreno, and Pasteur 1995). First, reactionary modernism expunged what previously was there (deterritorialization). Mostly the erasure was of the existing population, but it could also include the physical form of the landscape, literally bulldozed. Second, however, reactionary modernism determined the form of reconstruction that came after (reterritorialization). That could mean importing a new outside population or designing a new urban landscape (which is where Christaller came in). The point is that the two oxymoronic halves of reactionary modernism—that is, its rationality and irrationality—operated within both deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

Deterritorialization unambiguously exhibited a dark antimodernity, taking the form of a mordant racism. With Hitler's "turn Eastwards" enormous numbers of people were forced from their homes by the Nazis (Burleigh 1988). Certainly there was pervasive anti-Semitism, but many other ethnic groups suffered mortal Nazi prejudice, too. The racism was long standing (Bassin 1987), with the Nazis asserting an indissoluble link between race and space, captured famously by Darré's (1930) slogan, *Blut und Boden*, or "blood and soil." There were those who belonged to a particular space—Germanized Aryans in "Germandom"—and those who did not—non-Germanized, non-Aryans. Those who did not belong were removed, excluded, and separated, subject to *Entfernung* (Clarke, Doel, and McDonough 1996; Doel and Clarke 1998). *Entfernung* means expulsion, removal, or just distance. Set against Nazi racial politics, *Entfernung* implied geographical purification, a space made into the isotropic plain of ethnic homogeneity.

In a 1937 secret speech, Hitler demanded the creation of "empty space" (*Volk ohne Raum*—literally people without space) in the East for the settlement of Germans (see Grimm's [1926] book with the same title; Rössler 1989). Creating empty space was the ultimate intent of *Entfernung*. That process first began in the 1930s with pogroms, of which *Kristallnacht* was the best known. By 1940 it had become materialized as forced marches and ghettoization (Warsaw's is the best documented case, established by Governor General Hans

Frank in October 1940; Cole 2003). From June 1941 it became the Final Solution (the six death camps in what was Poland, which killed up to 22,000 people a day at each site; Koehl 1957; Kamenetsky 1961; Aly and Heim 2002). In the process, millions of people forcibly left their homes, creating Hitler's *Volksloser Raum* in the East.

Whereas the end of empty space was thoroughly reactionary, the means by which the Nazis realized it were rationally modern. They relied on the latest technologies, such as data card readers, teletext, the most efficient trains and rolling stock, and the most up-to-date scientific forms of bureaucratic management and decision making, including statistical analysis, organizational and flowcharts, and ledgers of neatly recorded numbers (Burleigh 1988; Bauman 1989; Black 2001). The rankest antimodernism and the highest forms of modernism were joined to make faceless office-based bureaucrats as deadly as any Gestapo officer or SS storm trooper. At the limit, the bureaucrats became "desk killers" (*Schreibtischtäter*, literally a desk criminal or thug; Milchman and Rosenberg 1992). Perhaps the most famous was the SS officer Adolph Eichmann, in charge of the transportation of death camp victims (Cesarani 2006). He was eventually tried and executed in 1962 by a special Israeli court following his abduction from Buenos Aires to Jerusalem by the Israeli secret service, the Mossad (Arendt 1977). In his defense, Eichmann gave a paper-pusher response: "I sat at my desk and did my work" (Papadatos 1964, 29). That was no defense, however, given what he actually did at that desk. As Gideon Hausner, Israel's Attorney General and chief prosecutor of Eichmann, said in his opening remarks in court:

In this trial we shall . . . encounter a new kind of killer, the kind that exercises his bloody craft behind a desk. . . . It was [Eichmann's] word that put the gas chambers into action; he lifted the telephone, and railway cars left for the extermination centres; his signature it was that sealed the doom of thousands and tens of thousands.<sup>12</sup>

In this interpretation, the Final Solution was an extreme form of deterritorialization. It was directed to the creation of a *judenfrei*, a purified greater German space. The removal of the German Jews from the territories of the Reich to the General Government, the successive integration of Governor Hans Frank's General Government into the Reich (Burleigh 2000; also Aly and Heim 2002; Housden 2004), and the projected extra-European final "destination" imagined for the expelled European Jews (Madagascar, but also the Dominican

Republic, the Philippines, Australia, and even Alaska; see Jennings 2007), formed part of a broader concept of space, which we argue was taken up by Christaller and Schmitt, although in different ways and at different scales. Auschwitz and the archipelago of concentration and death camps that stretched across those same territories were fully embedded within this broader Nazi imperial spatiality. It was simultaneously “a Faustian project to create a German paradise amid Polish perdition,” as Van Pelt (1994, 94) put it, a newly conceived German and Aryan greater space associated with the destruction of European Jewry and the translation of Himmler’s geopolitical ambitions into practical policies of resettlement (Van Pelt 1994, 104–05).

Deterritorialization by *Entfernung* was only the first step, however. It was followed by reterritorialization and shaped according to the same reactionary modernist principles that produced the “emptying” of the East. The new East would be reterritorialized by and for Germanized people, Aryans. The justification was partly through *Lebensraum* and partly through *Großraum*. We discuss *Großraum* in a separate section later, confining our attention here to *Lebensraum*.

Ratzel first made use of the term *Lebensraum* in the 1890s. It meant the surface area required to support a given population and mode of existence (Smith 1980, 53). Ratzel’s unit of analysis was the *Volk*, which for him continually needed to colonize new (rural) living space to thrive and prosper (Smith 1980, 54–55). The Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén took up the idea, turning it into the political project of geopolitics (Holdar 1992). Haushofer, already familiar with Ratzel’s work, then further developed Kjellén’s new field of study. That was the reason that Haushofer brought to Munich’s Landsberg prison a copy of Ratzel’s *Politische Geographie* to instruct Hitler and Hess. As Bassin (1987, 124) wrote: “in the early years of World War II [Haushofer] proudly recounted how he had left a ‘well-read’ copy of Ratzel’s *Politische Geographie* behind him after a visit in 1924 . . . where from his cell Hitler was busy dictating the first draft of *Mein Kampf* to his assistant, Hess.” After the War was over, it was rather a different story. In the interim, Haushofer had been incarcerated in Dachau and his son executed by the Gestapo (Low 1996). Haushofer told Father Edmund Walsh (1949, 8), who interviewed him in 1945 for possible prosecution at Nuremberg, that Hitler had misunderstood his teachings, seizing on only catchwords, producing half-baked ideas. But one of those catchwords was *Lebensraum*. As it appeared in *Mein Kampf* published in 1925:

Germany must find the courage to gather our people and their strength for an advance along the road that will lead this people from its present restricted living space [*Lebensraum*] to new land and soil. . . . [I]t is not in colonial acquisitions that we must see the solution of this problem, but exclusively in the acquisition of a territory for settlement.<sup>13</sup>

Haushofer said he had no influence over the writing of *Mein Kampf* (Walsh 1949, 15). Father Walsh disagreed, however, suggesting that especially Chapter XIV on German policy in Eastern Europe, from which the preceding quote was taken, showed precisely the effects of the materials that Haushofer brought Hitler and Hess (Walsh 1949, 41).

Whereas Haushofer’s exact influence on Hitler remains unclear, the National Socialist ambition of territorial expansion is very clear. The natural living space for Germans, as well as an estimated 30 million *Volksdeutsche*, people of German ancestry not living in Germany (Berger 1994), required the enlargement of Germany’s borders; that is, it necessitated Germany’s reterritorialization. That process began in 1935 with Germany reintegrating the Saar Basin (occupied and governed for fifteen years by Britain and France as a result of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles), marching into Austria in 1938 (the *Anschluss*), moving the same year into Sudetenland, and in early 1939 occupying the rest of Czechoslovakia. In September 1939, Poland was invaded and reterritorialized, in the process provoking World War II. Finally, in June 1941 *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war) was waged against the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> The high water mark was German troops reaching the outskirts of Moscow. But after that, it was an ebbing tide, with reterritorialization going into reverse.

Clarke, Doel, and McDonough (1996) argued that *Lebensraum* was not simply about acquiring physical space but socializing it as German space and marking it Aryan space. This point speaks to the reactionary part of reactionary modernism. Again following the discussion of *Entfernung*, this reactionary end was achieved by the most modernist means and sensibility. There was the cutting-edge military strategy and technology of warfare permitting speed and rapid victory in the acquisition of territory. Poland surrendered less than four weeks after the German invasion began. Just as important, though, was the managing bureaucracy and the means–end rationality deployed. Reterritorialization involved much bureaucratic work and enormous planning. Germans, or more likely *Volksdeutsche*, were brought to the new “empty spaces” of the East. To

do so, though, criteria were needed to establish who counted as German. Four levels of German authenticity were recognized: from the top tier, “pure and politically clear,” to the lowest tier, “renegades” (Berger 1994, 572). Once identified, *Volksdeutsche* were transported from where they were located—in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, the Baltic states, The Netherlands—to the “empty spaces” sometimes a thousand kilometers away. This operation was followed by a process of resettlement and reeducation (many *Volksdeutsche* had long lost their ability to speak German, in some cases 200 years previously; Burleigh 1988). This is the larger point: Reterritorialization was an enormous bureaucratic project that, although motivated by reactionary beliefs, could be completed only by modernist organizational forms (Hertz 1997).

A second aspect to reterritorialization turns on how “empty space” was reconstructed and relandscaped, both in the country and in the city, to meet the economic, political, cultural, and aesthetic requirements of Nazism (Lower 2005). This issue speaks to the role played by Christaller’s boss, the SS academic Konrad Meyer. In spring 1941, Meyer was charged by Himmler with redesigning the conquered territories of the East. Employing in his Berlin office at Dahlem planners, architects, and geographers, Meyer drew up rational and systematic plans to convert the “empty lands” of the East into the image of reactionary modernism. The reactionary part was represented by the Germanic romantic myth of a people and land bonded. Its anchor was the farm, tied to the local community and materialized as the *Hauptdorf* (main village). The modernist part was to use urban and rural planning to create an ordered landscape in which *Hauptdorfs*, and surrounding farms, were hierarchically and rationally connected to the highest achievements of metropolitan modernity (Fehl 1992). Rural areas and associated *Volksgemeinschaften* (people’s communities) would be rationally integrated with the urban pinnacles of modernity: Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Essen, and the ultimate, Berlin.

The larger point is that Nazi processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization were tethered to particular conceptions of space (Mullin 1981; Rössler 2001). According to Van Pelt, it was Konrad Meyer who convinced Himmler “that a speedy Germanization of the area around Auschwitz was of the highest priority” to make Auschwitz “a paradigm of the settlement in the East” (Van Pelt 1994, 106). Or again, Gottfried Feder, a key player in Nazi urban planning, while occupying the Chair of Urban Design at the *Technische Universität Berlin* (Technical Univer-

sity of Berlin), promoted a theory of urban design that matched Himmler’s vision of urban rearticulation of the newly conquered territories (Schenk and Bromley 2003). Feder’s was one of the most radical interpretations of the Nazis’ calculative rationality translated into real space. His research concerned the “ideal” size of a Nazi city (20,000 inhabitants) and its concomitant economic and productive structures based on a hierarchy of nested scales. Despite its rational impetus, Feder’s spatial imagination was also inspired by mythic images of a bucolic pre-modern Germany (Brüggemeier, Cioc, and Zeller 2005). Exactly that same tension was present in Christaller. As Dwork and van Pelt (1996, 240) wrote:

It was Christaller . . . who informed Himmler of the proper relation between a town and the surrounding countryside. Like so many others in Hitler’s Reich, Christaller was inspired by the medieval settlement pattern in which urban and rural life had been balanced in healthy symbiosis. The industrial revolution had destroyed that harmony, the countryside was no longer valued by the town, and the latter lost its identity as a result.

The premodern image of the Reich, then, was to be realized by a high modernist rationality. This same contradictory logic that lay behind Christaller’s spatial planning was also found in Schmitt’s conceptualization of *Großraum* to which we now turn.

## Schmitt’s Grand Geographies

### Carl Schmitt, the Making of a Nazi

Trained in law during the waning years of the Wilhelmine Empire, Carl Schmitt became a leading legal and constitutional scholar and a political theorist in the Weimar Republic (1919–1933). Initially a professor of constitutional law at Bonn, during the 1920s he published in rapid succession a series of volumes on Weimar’s constitutional and political status (Schmitt 2004, 2005, 2008). That preoccupation ended abruptly in January 1933, with the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor. In March 1933, on a trip to Rome, Schmitt got the call. Johannes Popitz, freshly appointed Reich Commissar for the Prussian Ministry of Finance, asked Schmitt to serve as Prussian Councillor of State. Schmitt immediately accepted. At that same time, Schmitt was in communication with Martin Heidegger, who urged him to “join the revolution” (Müller 2003, 37). Quickly, then, Schmitt found himself at the center of Nazi power, in his case also enjoying the

patronage of Hermann Göring, deputy to Hitler from 1941 after Hess flew to Scotland. In May 1933 Schmitt joined the Nazi Party and in November was appointed President of the National Socialist Jurists Association. He remained a member of the Party as well as Professor of Law at the University of Berlin until the end of the war in May 1945. At that point he was detained by the Allies but was never charged at Nuremberg with war crimes (Strong 2005, vii–viii). He refused “denazification,” though, and consequently was denied any future appointment at a German university (Schmitt 2000).

Schmitt operated across many different fields, from law to politics to philosophy and the history of ideas. Müller (2003) argued that because of his expertise in political and legal theory and his institutional position within National Socialism (including who he knew and who offered him protection), Schmitt was more complicit within Nazism than other German intellectuals who were also drawn into National Socialism (such as Heidegger). This is what makes Schmitt’s “Nazi episode” so crucial but also so controversial (Dyzenhaus 1998; Ojakangas 2006; Shapiro 2008; Hooker 2009; Slomp 2009; Vinx 2010).

Schmitt’s Nazified political theory most immediately stemmed, according to Balakrishnan (2002, 179), from “the wave of enthusiasm that swept over large parts of the [German] population” following Hitler’s rise to power. It “was beginning to look to [Schmitt] like that formless, mass acclamation of a sovereign nation . . . could turn any usurpation into an authentic revolution.” “The People” became core in his new formulation, a “People” conceived as a multitude living in the shadow and under the protection of the Führer’s political order (Balakrishnan 2002, 185). The “political” was conceived as pure intensity, a substance, a total way of life, a national and racial project (Kennedy 2004, 22). It was precisely the lack of distinction between the State and “the People” that made this new regime revolutionary—and fully German: “in Hitler, all the lessons of German history are alive, and all justice originated in him. He decides what is right and lawful, and he is also the last judge in every case. Hitler is also sovereign; he decides what is an emergency and, in accordance with his positions as the source and judge of law, what shall be done” (Schmitt 1934 in Kennedy 2004, 24).

Accused on many occasions of being an opportunistic late-comer to the Party, Schmitt did whatever he could to dismiss such allegations, publishing, for example, an infamous article in support of Hitler (“The Leader Protects the Law”) after the Night of the Long

Knives. He delivered an anti-Semitic speech at a 1936 conference in Berlin that concluded following Hitler with the words: “By fending off the Jew, I struggle for the work of the Lord” (in Müller 2003, 39). According to Schmitt, racial homogeneity (*Artgleichheit*) “made judicial decision determinate,” as both judges and the people were part of an overall “concrete order” preserved by the Führer. There was complete identification of the people with the leader because they were of the same substance. “Species sameness” was “a substitute for the categories of identity and representation” (Müller 2003, 39).

Despite these public manifestations of allegiance, in 1936 Schmitt was virulently attacked by the SS for his relative distance from *volkish* ideology, his skepticism of a biological interpretation of the political, his Catholicism, and his alleged past association with Jewish scholars (Galli 2008, 41). Schmitt fended off these attacks, buttressed with support from Hermann Göring, but from then on he prudently decided to abandon commenting on domestic political issues and instead focused his work on international relations and international law. It is in this context that his theorization of space and, in particular, *Großraum* as applied to German expansionism in the East, was formulated.

### Schmitt, Space, and Nazi Academia

In March and April 1939, Schmitt attended two conferences at the Christian Albrecht University of Kiel. Here he presented his new political agenda and spatialized understanding of global geopolitical ordering. Those Kiel conferences, Balakrishnan (2002, 234) argued, provided a new model of participation for German academics sympathetic to the Nazis. They enabled German scholars to generate and circulate ideas, concepts, and justifications for the benefit of the Nazi regime; that is, to integrate the academic and the political. While Hitler’s military marched across Europe to Germanize the continent, German scholars would provide the intellectual rationale for the Nazis’ “will to power.” This was certainly Schmitt’s aim in putting forward his spatial theory of *Großraum*.

Admittedly, Schmitt had an ambiguous relationship to geography. Although he acknowledged the work of MacKinder and Ratzel, often he was dismissive of a geographical understanding of space and spatial theory (Schmitt 2003). But although he might not have realized it, Schmitt’s work rested fundamentally on a geographical sensibility. Key here was Schmitt’s ideas of “land signification and appropriation” (Schmitt 2003,



48). Both were foundational acts of every community, the sources of all forms of order and ordering, the origins of all categories adopted to inhabit the world. This *Nomos of the Earth* was conceived by Schmitt as the *original spatialization*, a crucial element of the German people's right to existence and their "will to power." He believed that global politics were inevitably moving toward spatial formations of spaces exceeding the territory of the State. In this situation, which political and juridical order could secure peace? To use his term, Schmitt was terrified by the opening up of a "spaceless" global politics (Schmitt 2003, 78) due to the decline of the formerly hegemonic *Ius Publicum Europeum* (see Dean 2007; Odysseos and Petito 2007; Chandler 2008). It was a spacelessness, he thought, that originated from a dangerous "ontological" void created by the dismissal of the Eurocentric *Nomos of the Earth* (Schmitt 2003). All of Schmitt's speculations around the spatial concepts of *Großraum*, *Reich*, and *Nomos* were ultimately linked to his ontological preoccupation of filling up space with politics. The "German nation" was conceived as a spatial organism aimed at realizing a historical destiny: the joining of a people and a unified, endlessly perfectible German space. The essential relationship between "friend and foe," as famously described by Schmitt ([1932] 1996) in his *The Concept of the Political*, therefore must be understood as a spatio-ontological one, based on a spatialization that was defined and produced by the true body politic of the German people. It is precisely in the formulation of this essential relationship that we find an implicit justification for the invasion of Poland and for Germany's search for an appropriate European *Großraum*.

### Schmitt and Nazi *Großraum*

Schmitt's ideas about *Großraum* were first expressed in his 1939 book *Völkerrechtliche Großraumordnung mit Interventionsverbot für raumfremde Mächte: Ein Beitrag zum Reichsbegriff im Völkerrecht*. The book was published just before the declaration of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, the nonaggression treaty between Germany and the Soviet Union signed in August 1939 that recognized geographically distinct German and Soviet spheres of influence (Balakrishnan 2002, 237). Schmitt announced in his book the deep crisis of the European state, a crisis due to many factors, including the new technologies of warfare and communication that were undermining conventional understandings of national territories and their borders.

Elden (2012) suggests that we should understand Schmitt's conception of *Großraum* not only as literally "greater space" but also in the sense of a "sphere of influence" and "geopolitical space." Interpreted as such, Schmitt was describing an area or region that went beyond a single state (i.e., a specific territory) to comprehend much larger scale spatial orderings, complexes, and arrangements. Hannah (2012, 28) argued that *Großraum* has been translated in a range of ways:

all of which have in common, first, the idea of a territorial expanse exceeding the geographical boundaries of a single state, and second, the idea that a single hegemonic power actually or at least potentially dominates this region politically despite the nominal independence of states within its sphere. Thus "territorial sphere of control," "sphere of influence," "global region" are all possible translations.

In light of the preceding, we maintain the original term, broadly treating it as "greater space."

For Schmitt, the new international legal order based on *Großraum* was to replace the principle of the equality of sovereign states with a hierarchy of *Reichs*, or empires, based on culture, space, and ideology (Müller 2003, 43). For Schmitt, the *Reich* rested on a specific concept of *Großraum*. Defined by global politics, the *Reich* was constituted by a set of hierarchies between hegemonic and subjugated states in different macroregions of the earth. Although this scenario was formally exempt from the bio-centric understanding of *Lebensraum* so popular among many core Nazi ideologues of the day, Schmitt's formulation of international politics could nonetheless be comfortably adjusted to a set of implicit or explicit racial categories. Müller (2003, 44), in his seminal *Carl Schmitt: A Dangerous Mind*, suggested that whereas for other National Socialist theorists the *Volk* was the exclusive organizing principle and the basis for *Großraum*, for Schmitt, *Volk* was "too imprecise, too disorderly and undisciplined a concept. . . . The concept of *Volk* on its own did not provide a sufficiently new principle to overcome the nineteenth century idea of nation state and create a new order" (Schmitt 1934, cited in Müller 2003, 44). Schmitt argued that the holistic notion of *Volk* was insufficient as a concept that could frame a new international legal order because it relied on a supposedly "natural" racial and national characteristics for the new ordering of the earth, Müller (2003, 44) insisted.

For Elden (2012), while Schmitt's *Reich* would in practice include German-speaking peoples, and therefore linked to the substantial presence of a *Volk*, it was

not necessarily dependent on the *Blut und Boden* elements of mainstream racialized discourses. It was rather the basis of a legalistic argument, suggested Elden, that came close “to arguments made about a ‘land without people’ that should be filled with people without—or without sufficient—land.” Despite this important difference, there is widespread support in the related literature for the idea that Schmitt’s theories were in line with, and at times supportive of, Hitler’s grand geopolitical plans for the East. According to Müller (2003, 43), for example, Schmitt’s conceptualizations were clearly aimed at legitimizing Hitler’s policies of conquest:

It is not by chance then that just two weeks after Hitler had invaded what remained of Czechoslovakia and just four months before the invasion of Poland, Schmitt unveiled a new theory of *Großraum* to supersede the system of nation states. At a time when the Third Reich had taken actions which could not possibly be justified in terms of a necessary revision to the Versailles treaty or the protection of ethnic Germans in eastern Europe, Schmitt, the foremost proponent of *Geopolisprudenz*, provided concepts and categories to legitimise Hitler’s decision.

Here is how Schmitt ([1939] 2012) expressed this very same argument in two key passages:

The arguments of the Führer’s address of 28th April 1939 have with one blow put an end to this entire confusion. They have cleared the path to the restoration of the true and original Monroe Doctrine. Mr. Roosevelt will in this case . . . surely appeal to the Monroe Doctrine and reject such a challenge as interference in the internal affairs of the Americas. We Germans advocate exactly the same doctrine for Europe, but in any case for the region and the affairs of the Great German Reich.

The thought of a neat and peaceful distinction between *Großräume* is expressed in simplest sobriety and the confusion removed with which an economic imperialism had enveloped the Monroe Doctrine in fog, in that it bent [the latter’s] reasonable logic of spatial separation into an ideological claim to world interference. It would be terminological hair-splitting if one now wanted to ask whether this amounted to the declaration of a “German Monroe Doctrine,” or if—as has already happened once—a further discussion were inaugurated about whether and to what extent it is permissible to speak at all of a German, a Japanese or any other sort of Monroe Doctrine.

Whether Schmitt’s argument effectively gave the Third Reich free reign in the East is open to discussion. What is clear, however, is that Schmitt offered a broad theoretical (and spatial) justification to explain why Western powers had no right to intervene in the *Großraum* that the Nazis were establishing. Schmitt’s theory made

the invasion of the East appear as if it were a contribution to a better and more stable world order (Müller 2003, 43). What is more, as Müller and many others noted, the empires at the core of each “greater space” envisaged by the legal theorist were based on a particular civilized, superior people, and distinguished by a substantial degree of internal homogeneity: For Schmitt, Eastern Europe, excluding the Jews, constituted part of such a homogeneous *Großraum* (Müller 2003, 45).

Returning to the main argument, for Elden (2012) the line cut through Poland established by the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact was a division between different *Großräume*, with Central and Eastern Europe assigned to Germany’s natural sphere of influence. Schmitt would later declare that the new world war needed to be understood as a *Raumordnungskrieg*, a war for spatial ordering (Schmitt 1995, 433). In Schmitt’s analysis, insisted Elden (2012), “the *Großraum* cannot be reduced to the *Reich*, but it is the *Reich* that will dominate it. . . . If this means his position has some distance from a policy of explicit annexation, this is of little comfort. While some of the lands seized by Hitler were annexed to the greater *Reich*, and some were occupied, other countries were simply subjugated while retaining nominal independence.” The occupation of Poland was the obvious consequence of such a vision of global politics, part of a formal plan for a newly constituted German *Großraum*, the result of a Schmittian Monroe doctrine, a spatial theory that Hitler was prompt to adopt to declare the invasion a genuine European political–territorial context. It is important to recall, as did Galli (2008, 144), that Schmitt’s vision was contested by high-ranking officials in the Nazi Party as too respectful of other “peoples” outside of Europe and openly skeptical of a biological interpretation of geopolitics, but it is equally important to remember how Schmitt’s speculations on space, and especially on the right to *Großraum* on the part of the German nation, flirted implicitly, and at times explicitly, with the political elite that prepared the invasion of Poland and the conquest of the “Farther East.” Nazi geopolitics was a discursive formation in which theories of space played a crucial role, and Schmitt’s grand vision was a contribution to its success.

## Christaller’s Spatial Dream

### Spatial Theory

If anyone in human geography is associated with spatial theory it is Christaller. He might have been the very first spatial theorist in human geography, at least for the

modern period in which the discipline was institutionalized. Christaller was part of a long tradition of formal, rationalist German location theorists that dated back to von Thünen's ([1826] 1966) *Isolated State*, and that included Weber ([1909] 1929), Lösch ([1940] 1954), and Predöhl (1928). But none of them was a geographer except for Christaller (1966), who completed his doctoral dissertation, *Central Places in Southern Germany*, at the Department of Geography, University of Erlangen, in 1932 (for a discussion of German location theory, see Blaug 1979; Ponsard 1983; Barnes 2003).

Right from the start of his dissertation, Christaller framed his work as modernist, scientific, and rational. He began "not with descriptive statements" but "with a general and purely deductive theory" (Christaller 1966, 4). His aim was to "find a general explanation for the sizes, number, and distribution of towns" (Christaller 1966, 2) and which was to be formulated as "*special economic geographical laws*" (3). Special economic geographical laws were "not so inexorable as natural laws" (3), but they were almost as good. Similar enough, at least, that Christaller (1966, 4) concluded, "it does not seem senseless to search for such laws." He did, and he thought he found them.

Later, others in human geography thought the same. Christaller's quest for laws, his shunning of initial "descriptive statements," and his full embrace of "deductive theory," from the mid-1950s onward increasingly led to his celebration by especially a group of North American geographers who were keen to put human geography on precisely a modernist, rational, and scientific footing (Barnes 2001, 2003). Key to that movement was central place theory, and Christaller's work in particular. As Robic (2003, 387) wrote, "owing to [central place theory's] spatial oriented view, its theoretical aim, and its focus on urban issues, it became during the 1960s the central point of reference for the 'new geography.'" Christaller was duly fêted, receiving awards and medals from the Association of American Geographers, the Royal Geographical Society, and even the King of Sweden (Hottes, Hottes, and Schöller 1977). Never mentioned in the citations, however, was Christaller's membership in the Nazi Party or that his spatial dreams that began as a child were a nightmare for millions in Eastern Europe by the time he was as an adult.

### Walter Christaller: A Nazi in Spite of Himself

In a reminiscence, Christaller tells about receiving an atlas as a Christmas present. It was given to him by his "well-to-do aunt" when he was an eight-year

old schoolboy growing up in the Bavarian Black Forest (Christaller 1972, 601). As Christaller (1972, 601) recalled, "When I saw the atlas on the gift table, and its many-coloured maps, I was quite bewitched. I didn't play ball or walk on stilts, but rather was only engrossed in the study of my atlas." He went on to say, eerily anticipating his later spatial activities as an adult, "I drew in [on the atlas] new railroad lines, put a new city somewhere or other, or changed the borders of the nations, straightening them out or delineating them along mountain ranges. . . . I designed new administrative divisions and calculated their populations" (602). He became upset only when his father refused to buy him a statistical handbook to add veracity to his map doodling. His spatial dreaming continued later when he served in the trenches during World War I. After he was wounded at the front and taken to Stralsund military hospital, he told his mother that the only thing he wanted as he recuperated was the "Perth pocket atlas" (Christaller 1972, 602). He took it back with him to the front when he rejoined his regiment.

Wartime service severely disrupted Christaller's university education. He had first become a student in 1913, but it took him seventeen years with stints at the Universities of Heidelberg, Munich, Berlin, and Erlangen before finally he was awarded a Diploma in Economics at Erlangen (equivalent to a master's degree). His plan was to continue with a PhD in economics, but because no economist would take on either him or his spatial dream (Hottes, Hottes, and Schöller 1977, 11), he went to the University of Erlangen's Geography Department to work with Robert Gradmann, a regional cum biogeographer. His doctoral thesis was a return to his earlier "games with maps," drawing "straight lines," and in his case seeing "six-sided figures (hexagons)" emerge on the southern German topographic landscape that he studied (Christaller 1972, 607). His thesis was completed in nine months (Christaller 1972; Hottes, Hottes, and Schöller 1977, 11–12), and formally published in 1933 in Jena as *Die zentralen Orte in Süddeutschland* (translated in English in 1966 as *Central Places in Southern Germany*; Christaller 1966).

Of course, 1933 was also the year that Hitler and the Nazis took over power in Germany. As a former socialist, and a Social Democratic Party (SPD) member, Christaller had reasons to fear the rise of Hitler and the Nazis. The National Socialist government banned the SPD the same year they took power. The next year Christaller was so nervous that he mounted his bike and rode to France, staying there as a "political refugee" (Christaller 1972; Binder Johnson 1978, 97), but he

was not there for long. Luring him back to Germany was geographical work, and for the Nazis.

On 1 July 1940, shedding his earlier trepidation, Christaller officially joined the Nazi Party. He worked for Konrad Meyer at the Planning and Soil Department. With other academics such as planner Joseph Umlauf, rural sociologist Herbert Morgen, and geographer Angelika Sievers, Christaller was concerned with planning Germany's newly acquired Eastern territories, including Czechoslovakia and Poland, and by the second half of 1941 an increasingly large portion of the Soviet Union. All were to be incorporated into the Third Reich either through annexation, justified by *Lebensraum*, or by coming under Germany's sphere of influence as *Großraum*. In either case, they were to be managed and planned according to *Generalplan Ost*.

### The Geography of *Generalplan Ost*

*Generalplan Ost* was top secret, produced and overseen within the SS (Burleigh 1988; Rössler 1989; Aly and Heim 2002). Much of the plan's documentation was burnt just before the end of the war for fear of its prejudicial character. In spring 1941, Himmler charged Meyer with planning Polish territories annexed by Germany (Madajczyk 1962, 3–4). The invasion of Poland by Germany, on 1 September 1939, resulted in the country being divided into three regions: western Poland was incorporated into the Third Reich, becoming the provinces of Wartheland (later known as Warthegau) and Danzig West Prussia; central Poland became a German military occupied territory known as General Government (*Generalgouvernement*); and eastern Poland (Galicia) was ceded to the Soviet Union as part of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact signed a week before the occupation of Poland. Himmler was pleased by Meyer's Polish planning efforts; so, taking an opportunity to impress again, Meyer submitted to Himmler three weeks after the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 an even more expansive plan that applied not only to Poland but to all subsequent German Eastern conquests (Madajczyk 1962, 4).<sup>15</sup> Himmler approved, ordering Meyer in January 1942 to set out the full legal, political, and geographical foundations necessary for the reconstruction of the East, which he did on 28 May 1942 (Burleigh 2000, 547).

*Generalplan Ost* involved the two spatial pivots of the Nazi regime: deterritorialization (*Entfernung*) and reterritorialization (*Lebensraum* and *Großraum*). As Meyer said in a speech on 28 January 1942, “The *Osttaufgabe* (task in the East) is the unique opportunity to realise the National Socialist will, and unconditionally to let it be-

come action” (quoted in Renneberg and Walker 1994, 17). Action was to be effected by applying modernist planning principles along with the associated bureaucracy of experts and practitioners. Once land and resources were acquired, permitting Germany to fulfill the imperatives of *Lebensraum* and *Großraum*, those spaces would be Germanized by bringing in people of Aryan heritage. The *Plan* estimated resettlement would require more than 4.5 million *Volksdeutsche* over a thirty-year period (later revised upward to 10 million). In contrast, *Entfernung* was the fate of most of the original Eastern European inhabitants, Slavs and Jews, who did not fit the Nazi Germanic ideal racial type. That could mean being left bereft on a train station somewhere in *Generalgouvernement*, expulsion to the Warsaw ghetto, incarceration in a slave labor or concentration camp, forced inclusion on a “death march,” or execution by firing squad, mobile *gaswagen*, or at one of the six Nazi death camps, all of which were located in the East, either in annexed Poland (two) or *Generalgouvernement* (four; Gregory 2009). The numbers of planned expulsions varied from a low of 30 million to a high of 65 million (Burleigh 2000, 547).

### Christaller and the “Empty Spaces” of the East

Christaller's doctoral thesis, and his later 1938 Freiburg *Habilitation* dissertation on rural administrative planning (“Rural Settlement Patterns in the German Reich and Their Relationship to the Organization of Local Government”),<sup>16</sup> were ideal for the Nazi project, explaining why he was recruited by Meyer's office. Both Rössler (1989, 1994, 2001) and Preston (1992, 2009) have searched the German Federal Archives (*Bundesarchiv*) for Christaller's wartime contributions and found memos, and especially plans and drawings, that have his initials. He also contributed to journals including the house publication of the Planning and Soil Department, *Spatial Research and Spatial Planning* (*Raumforschung und Raumordnung*; Rössler 1989, 425). On the basis of these contributions, Preston (2009, 6) concluded that:

Christaller's [main] war research was... to develop a theoretical foundation and plan for a hierarchical system of urban centred administrative and planning regions that facilitated the centralized control of political and socioeconomic planning programs sought by the Nazis. ... This research contributed directly to plans facilitating German *Lebensraum* (search for living space) policy, on the one hand, and Himmler's RFKDV [strengthening of Germandom], on the other.

Christaller's work brought three contributions to National Socialism. First, it was a modern spatial theory and thus spoke to a key dimension of the Nazi project. Specifically, the theory rested on a formal geometry of equilateral triangles, joined to create a hexagonal grid on which different-sized settlements (central places) were organized. The resulting set of hexagonal nets integrated into a single national urban system all settlements from the smallest "country town" surrounded by individual farms to the largest, most modern "metropolis" jam-packed with shops and factories (Christaller 1966, 59). Urban settlement in *Lebensraum* and *Großraum* Germany, which even on a 1944 map drawn by Christaller still spread into the heart of Russia (Preston 2009), would operate as a single spatial system, reflecting the fundamental laws of geographical ordering (Christaller 1966, ch. 1).

Second, although Christaller's theory had trappings of modernist thought—it was rational, scientific, orderly, law-seeking, the future—it came with an undertow of tradition, community solidarity, nostalgia, and the past. That is, like the larger Nazi regime, central place theory was colored by reactionary modernism. The reactionary part derived from the theory's emphasis on the initial building block of the urban system, the country town (*hauptdorf*) and what produced it, the surrounding farms and associated rural community (*Volk*) rooted in the soil. The German urban system might have modern urban industrial behemoths like Dortmund, Düsseldorf, and Essen, but functionally and geographically they remained connected to a rural bedrock, to blood and soil, to *Volkgemeinschaft*.

Finally, central place theory was a planning tool, a technology for practicing instrumental rationality. Christaller recognized three planning principles in his doctoral thesis:  $K = 3$  (marketing principle),  $K = 4$  (transportation principle), and  $K = 7$  (administrative principle). Later they were further refined in his *Habilitation* and refined yet again in the work he undertook at Meyer's office. As Bauman (1989) persuasively argued, the Nazis were able to achieve all they did in part because they applied modernist principles (albeit to achieve reactionary ends). Primary among those principles was rational planning and an associated bureaucracy that at the top was composed of academic managers and administrators. Meyer, of course, was an example but so, too, was Christaller. Consequently, figures, maps, and blueprints were quickly produced, allowing the bulldozers to be brought in and the conquered territories of the East to be converted into "Central places in Southern Germany." As Rössler (1994, 134)

wrote, the Nazi "aim was the transformation of the East into German land and as a German landscape." That was exactly what Christaller's hexagonal diagrams aimed to achieve.

That task began in annexed Poland, specifically Warthegau. Warthegau would be the "workshop" for the Reich as Joseph Umlauf, a colleague of Christaller's in Meyer's Planning and Soil office, put it (quoted in Fehl 1992, 96). This was Christaller's view, too. Writing in 1940, he said:

Because of the destruction of the Polish state and the integration of its western parts into the German Empire, everything is again fluid. . . . Our task will be to create in a short time all the spatial units, large and small, that normally develop slowly by themselves. . . . so that they will be functioning as vital parts of the German Empire as soon as possible. (Christaller 1940, translated and quoted in Preston 2009, 23)

A year later Christaller was more strident and more specific:

The aim of regional planning . . . is to introduce order into impractical, outdated and arbitrary urban forms or transport networks, and this order can only be achieved on the basis of an ideal plan—which means in spatial terms a geometrical schema. . . . [C]entral places will be spaced an equal distance apart, so that they form equilateral triangles. These triangles will in turn form regular hexagons, with the central place in the middle of these hexagons assuming a greater importance. (Christaller 1941, quoted in Aly and Heim 2002, 97)

Consequently, parts of Warthegau were redesigned, "completely changing the face of the countryside" as Himmler had demanded in 1940 (quoted in Aly and Heim 2002, 74). For example, the district of Kutno, in northeast Warthegau, was made over, on paper at least, according to Christaller's "geometrical schema."

Clearly, though, there was work to do in making the world conform to the "ideal plan." Christaller wrote in the same 1941 planning document just quoted, where "it seemed absolutely essential . . . that a new town of at least 25,000 inhabitants" be built, then a new town would be "created from scratch" (Christaller 1941, quoted in Aly and Heim 2002, 97). If Upper Silesia needed "a Dusseldorf or Cologne" of 450,000 people "to provide a cultural centre" then so be it (quoted in Aly and Heim 2002, 97). If "Posen . . . has the power and potential to develop into a town of 450,000 [from 350,000]," it should (quoted in Aly and Heim 2002, 97). More specifically, Christaller planned for Warthegau thirty-six new *Hauptdorfs*. Each one came, as Rössler

(1994, 134) wrote, with a “National Socialist celebration hall, buildings for the Hitler Youth or a central parade square, in other words the visible buildings of the model for National Socialist society.”

Before this vision could happen, though, many of the non-Aryan existing residents had to go—560,000 Jews and 3.4 million Slavs. Only 1.1 million of the existing population were thought Germanized enough to stay. Given the large expulsion, 3.4 million Germanized German settlers needed to be brought in. This was a second task of Christaller’s to assist in the migration of *Volksdeutsche* from various places in Europe so as to strengthen Germanism (which now included Poland). As Christaller put it, this was another reason to construct a new central place system: “to give settlers roots so they can really feel at home” (Christaller 1942, quoted and translated by Preston 2009, 23).

## Conclusion: Lessons for and from Geography

Nazi spatial theory simultaneously combined rational (modernist) and mystical (antimodernist) elements. On the one hand, rational principles were pivotal to the Nazi agenda that connected space and population, drawn often from mainstream economic and demographic theories (Aly and Heim 2002). On the other hand, an antimodernist racism intertwined and overlapped with these theories and spaces, creating an extraordinary and untenable tension (Pringle 2006). Key was space itself. Schlögel (2003) argued that National Socialism was literally obsessed with space and spatial categories. For the Nazis, space had its own fetishistic logic and power, and entered into the very integuments of reactionary modernism. Questions of living space, of empty or overpopulated space, of measured space and its “content,” of the philosophy and operation of space, and of the imagination of space (especially of Oriental space) kept busy an army of Nazi academics, experts, technicians, opinion makers, politicians, and military personnel. Both Himmler and Hitler believed that an as yet unrealized space (a theoretical space) would historically recoup the Nazi reactionary modernist project (and, as discussed earlier, embodied in Schmitt’s notion of *Großraum*). It would reach back, guiding the mission of the Third Reich, becoming the geographical site of inhabitation. Within this macabre dance of theories and human beings, Carl Schmitt and Walter Christaller imagined, drew, and designed those spaces. Both men, along with Himmler and Hitler, believed

that the ultimate purposes of the German nation would be realized by adopting specific forms of spatial thinking.

Schmitt’s greater spaces were a Wilsonian vision of multipolarism and spheres of influence projected over Europe as a whole; at the same time, they were an attempt to imagine a possible and ideal territorial unity for the German people. This same end of a greater Nazi and German space was also Hitler’s and Himmler’s, even though the unity they had in mind was to be achieved by biological purification and not through Schmitt’s cultural and ethnic selection. When interrogated in Nuremberg, accused of influencing Hitler’s geopolitics, Schmitt forcefully rejected the charge (Schmitt 2000); however, although Schmitt’s influence on Hitler might not have been decisive, Schmitt was behind the discursive production that rendered the idea of a greater Germany not only conceivable but acceptable as a political and judicial entity. Schmitt’s 1933 speech on the “ethnic” definition of a properly German juridical body of magistrates, his infamous attempt to provide National-Socialism with a constitutional basis (Schmitt 1933), and his writings on *Großraum* were explicit contributions to making a German “greater space” that culminated in the extermination of millions of people.

Christaller, although less influential than Schmitt, was an active member of Meyer’s team of experts. Christaller provided an explicit geographical contribution to the realization of the Nazi dream of a Greater Germanism. When Konrad Meyer went on trial at Nuremberg,<sup>17</sup> several members of his staff, including Christaller, were required to provide character references. Those witnesses justified the plans for Poland as merely a scientific exercise, an innocent laboratory experiment. One of them, the planner Erhard Mäding, even claimed that the plan was good for the Poles, “directed towards improving the living standards of the inhabitants including the resources that the Polish people could draw on” (quoted in Heinemann et al. 2006, 34). Of course, what those character witnesses failed to mention, including Christaller, was that the spatial reorganization of Poland took place often at the fatal expense of the Jewish and Slavic populations who lived in Warthegau and Danzig West Prussia before the rule of experts from Konrad Meyer’s Planning and Soil Department was applied. Overlooked was that the real and imagined geometries of central place theory represented a key element in the final integration of a *judenfrei* Warthegau and Danzig West Prussia in the Reich, an integration in which only a limited number of the Poles were included after being “Germanized.”

Schmitt and Christaller probably never met; most likely, Schmitt might have never heard of Christaller; however, their deployment of spatial theories, albeit at different scales, shared three important features. First, their spatial theories became one of the bases for the Nazis in creating a new German nation led by a master race. Second, the “flirting” of their theories with Nazi geopolitics and biopolitics represented for both men a disturbing compromise between their personal ambition and an intellectual and academic commitment to their ideas. In both cases, Aly and Heim’s (2002, 6) more general assessment resonates: “career-minded [German] technocrats and academics . . . regarded Europe . . . as a drawing board on which to work out their grand designs. For them Eastern Europe was one vast wasteland crying out for ‘readjustment’ and ‘reconstruction.’” Finally, Schmitt and Christaller both emphasized a spatially determined and unified concept of community. For Christaller, this was a community created by a hierarchy of central places that connected everyone, from individual farmers in deepest rural Bavaria to the *haut bourgeoisie* in the swankiest parts of Berlin. For Schmitt it was an indivisible national political community. Both Schmitt and Christaller took for granted the possibility, even the necessity, of a united and internally consistent human consortium. All social, cultural, political, and economic spaces were conceived as the result of, or as a potential means toward, this hypothetical unity.

For Christaller, the end of a unified community of beings is not much discussed in his work but is simply accepted as a fact of economic and social life. It is the natural unfurling of a central place hierarchy, which he literally drew out at an early age on his Christmas-present atlas. Most of Schmitt’s work, even parts apparently unrelated to spatial thinking, is based on the search for a fundamental united or unified community, a community that implicitly represented the starting point for all his categorizations of “the political,” as well as his arguments about constitutional legitimacy and his theory of the exception (Schmitt [1932] 1996; see also Agamben 1998). Like many other conservatives of his time in Germany, Schmitt was obsessed with the idea of cultural and political unity. For Schmitt, unity signified order and identity, the two pillars ensuring a political entity’s future. For this reason, unity was to be obtained and maintained at all costs. Not incidentally, according to Strong (2005, xiv), Schmitt blamed the destruction of the idea of a unified political realm on the Jewish and “Eastern” Europeans. For Schmitt, the Jew was the enemy, lacking spatial and territorial sub-

stance and definition. As a spaceless people, the Jews represented an incumbent and immediate danger. In contrast, the German people were not simply a people but a people having common histories, language, and (fixed) space (Balakrishnan 2000, 206–208). This explains why his somewhat ambiguous use of the concept of *Großraum*, especially considering the political circumstances in which it was elaborated, was—in our view—implicitly related to the emergence of a concept of *Lebensraum* supported by ideas of supremacy of a master race.

In this context both Christaller and Schmitt elaborated their views based on the assumption that society—for the former—and politics—for the latter—should be conceived in spatial terms and that the objective of spatial theory was to allow for production and the establishment of a form of territorial order that corresponded to a stable and “proper” social, cultural, economic, and political arrangement. Whereas Schmitt was largely preoccupied with questions of greater space, and Christaller was busy with the details of geographical prescription, both became part of the more general discursive formation that fed into geopolitical and biopolitical Nazi ideology. Necessarily, both ended up entangled within the latent reactionary modernist tensions inherent within the Nazi spatial project. They were both caught (and so were their careers) in between a Nazi *Geopolitik* with its unmanageable spaces and a Nazi biopolitics of racial irrationalities.

It is their association with Nazism that makes it so important to return to these two authors. We believe it is important to investigate their silences about, and their coimplication with, the Nazi regime. But we also believe it is important to reflect on the geographical nature of the Nazi project to which they contributed. The Nazis attempted to realize a pure, perfect, rational, community in place and space but in conjunction with a millenarian, mystical, and nonrational history and temporal horizon. Christaller and Schmitt were victims of their own decision to participate in this project intended to change the world. But in the process, with its cocktail of extreme rationalism and apocalyptic and gross irrationalism, that project displaced and murdered millions of human beings.

Schmitt’s ideas—in spite of his attempts to adjust them to the ever-changing *zeitgeist* of the regime—were progressively dismissed by the Party’s elite. Christaller’s geometrical modeling was likewise never systematically applied because *Ostplan* was increasingly nullified by the German military retreat. In both cases, however,

their geographical imaginations were indelibly stained by the biopolitical violence perpetrated by the Nazis in those territories about which both men theorized. The spatialities of genocide must thus be read in light of contributions made by rational and enlightened academics, among whom we must include Schmitt and Christaller. With their spatial speculations, they both tried to find privileged spaces within the dark geographies of Hitler's empire. The history of the coimplication of geographical thought and of spatial theory in the extermination perpetrated by the Nazis continues to be written.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Derek Gregory for reading the article and Matt Hannah for his help with the German and many other things, too. The editor and the referees provided an excellent set of comments for which we are very grateful and that significantly improved the article and its use of terms. Trevor Barnes would like to thank the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, University of British Columbia, where he was Distinguished Scholar in Residence when he wrote his portion of the article. Claudio Minca would like to thank the Dipartimento Interateneo Territorio of the Università di Torino and the Politecnico di Torino where he was Visiting Full Professor when he wrote his part of the article.

## Notes

1. In addition to these works by Anglo-American geographers, German scholars have recognized the systematic involvement of German wartime geographers in theorizing and planning the Nazi geographical world. Much of that literature is in German, but some of it is written in English, including works by Heske (1986, 1987); Rössler (1989; 1994, 2001); Sandner (1988); Fahlbusche, Rössler, and Siegrist (1989); Rössler and Siegrist (1989); and Sandner and Rössler (1994).
2. The recent interest in Schmitt's work is linked to three major factors (Minca 2012). The first and foremost is Agamben's reliance on Schmitt's theory of sovereign exception and his concept of the *nomos* (Agamben 1998, 2005) and a crucial starting point in Agamben's critical analysis of contemporary biopolitics. The second is the engagement with Schmitt's understanding of "the political" in so-called postfoundational political theory and in political philosophy (Mouffe 1999, 2005; Ojakangas 2006; Marchart 2007). Finally, Schmitt's grand claims about friend and enemy, as well as his antiliberal stance, have appealed to many popular (and sometimes populist) interpretations of the unstable global geographies following 11 September 2001.
3. Biographical details about Schmitt's life up until 1945 are found in Bendersky (1983), Balakrishnan (2002), and the entry on Carl Schmitt by Vinx (2010).
4. Schmitt famously said that the executions committed by the SS and Gestapo during the Night of the Long Knives between 30 June and 1 July 1934 represented the "highest form of administrative justice" ("*höchste Form administrativer Justiz*"; quoted in Adams and Dyson 2003, 180).
5. Although it is intuitive to translate *Großraum* as "large space" or "great space," for reasons we discuss later we think a better translation is "greater space." We thank one of the referees and Matt Hannah for persuading us of the significance of this subtle but important difference.
6. Christaller began his studies in 1913, attending five different universities before he completed his Geography PhD in Erlangen in 1933. His intention after he completed his Diploma in Economics was to carry on for his doctoral degree in the same field, but the Economics Department refused him, and he ended up in Geography instead (Hottes, Hottes, and Schöller 1977).
7. The *Schutzstaffel* (SS) was first named in 1925 and initially formed as a Praetorian guard to protect Adolph Hitler. Once Himmler was appointed head in 1929, the SS grew enormously and by the war's end consisted of almost 1 million members, operating as a quasi-autonomous unit of government.
8. Christaller's involvement with the Nazis has been documented by a number of scholars. The details of his involvement, as well as biographical information, are found in the following English-language sources: Aly and Heim (2002); Fehl (1992); Hottes, Hottes, and Schöller (1977); Preston (2009); and Rössler (1989, 1994, 2001).
9. Our use of the term *biopolitics* comes from Foucault, who meant by it how the state and other institutions govern, regulate, and discipline the population at large as well as individual bodies. The National Socialist state both in Germany and in its conquered territories implemented a horrifying biopolitical regime. On Nazi biopolitics see, among others, Agamben (1998) and Esposito (2008); also, in relation to geopolitics, see Giaccaria and Minca (2011a, 2011b).
10. The concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization are most associated with the writings of Deleuze and Guattari ([1972] 2004, [1980] 2004) in their analysis of "Capitalism and Schizophrenia." A densely complex work in which terms vary in meaning over the course of the texts, deterritorialization is generally defined as a loosening up, a decontextualization, an unravelling. It is applied by them to economic states and psychic ones but rarely to geographical regions. Reterritorialization is the necessary twin to relative deterritorialization, involving reassembling, recontextualizing, and re-creating. Whereas Deleuze and Guattari's work is in the background of our use of the terms deterritorialization and reterritorialization, our most immediate understanding of territorialization derives from the work of Swiss geographer Claude Raffestin (1980, 1984; also Fall 2007).
11. Herf's notion of reactionary modernism clearly resonates with Adorno and Horkheimer's ([1947] 2002) *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which argued that the West's rationality had become irrational, that the progress of reason



had regressed (Lambert 2011). The historical context of their claim was precisely the rise and consequences of Nazism, leading both men to leave Germany to become political refugees in the United States. Horkheimer even joined the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency), getting into a fight with the geographer Richard Hartshorne, chair of the Research and Analysis Branch's Project Committee, who made the final decisions about Branch publication (Barnes 2006). We would like to thank one of the referees for pointing out the importance of the connection between Herf's work and Adorno and Horkheimer's work.

12. The court transcripts for the entire Eichmann trial are available online at <http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/transcripts/>. The quotation is from Attorney General Hausner's opening remarks, session number 6, 17 April, 1961; <http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/transcripts/Sessions/Session-006-007-008-01.html>. The case of Eichmann is discussed by Arendt (1977) in her famous book, *Eichman in Jerusalem*, with its equally famous subtitle, *The Banality of Evil*. Evil is banal precisely because it has been bureaucratized, carried out in Lewis's (1982) depiction "by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voices" (p. x).
13. From Hitler's (1926) *Mein Kampf*, chapter 14, "Eastern Orientations or Eastern Policy." An English translation of the two volumes is available online at <http://www.crusader.net/texts/mk/index.html>, from which this quote is taken.
14. For a review of the academic support to this operation see Kay (2006).
15. Various versions of *Generalplan Ost* existed from 1940 onward but after some wayward arithmetic in earlier incarnations "the more practiced Meyer" got the job (Burleigh 2000, 547).
16. *Die ländliche Siedlungsweise im Deutschen Reich und ihre Beziehungen zur Gemeindorganisation*, Stuttgart-Berlin, 1937.
17. After the War was over, Konrad Meyer was tried for war crimes at Nuremberg, Case 8 (the RuSHA trial). He was convicted only of belonging to a criminal organization and was released for time served. He later became Professor of Land Planning at Hannover University. Selected transcripts of the Nuremberg trials are accessible online at the Mazal library (<http://www.mazal.org/NMT-HOME.htm>). They are available in full at the National Archives and Record Administration, in Washington, DC (<http://www.archives.gov/research/captured-german-records/war-crimes-trials.html>).

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