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States of power: Ronan Paddison, *Space and Polity*

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I record some thoughts on Ronan Paddison's accomplishments as an intellectual leader-scholar-citizen who made substantive and consequential contributions to the advancement of the systematic branch of Political Geography. I first consider that portion of Ronan's body of published research which tackles political geographical themes, commenting in particular upon his scholarship on state power, before exploring in greater detail the meaning and implications of his role as founder and Editor in Chief of the journal *Space and Polity*. Against the backdrop of the neoliberalising academy, Ronan Paddison's service to Political Geography serves as a lighthouse for those who survive him: it gestures to the kinds of academic subjectivities which enable privilege to be used wisely and reminds us of the indispensable work the protean scholar performs so that academic communities might prosper.

KEYWORDS

Ronan Paddison; political geography; *Space and Polity*; states

Introduction

In the context of his passing, my intention in this article is to remember, register, render and celebrate, *from my perspective*, Ronan Paddison's contributions to the advancement of the systematic branch of Political Geography. As such, it is my aspiration to compliment a recently published reflection upon his service to Urban Geography (Cumbers & Philo, 2019). The full story of Ronan Paddison as political geographer merits deeper excavation and more rigorous contextualizing and interrogation than is possible here. Without question, my brush strokes reflect the peculiar vista from which I paint. I knew Ronan first as my lecturer, then as my boss, then as a colleague and finally through time as my friend (Boyle et al., 1994, 1996; Findlay et al. 1994). At some point – perhaps from the start – he became a mentor. This then is a reading of 'Paddison political geographies' which is very much situated and partial but not, I hope, parochial.

In assembling my thoughts, I have had cause to ruminate over – and marvel at – the extent to which Ronan Paddison served as a role model for a particular kind of full spectrum human geographer, a cosmopolitan renaissance scholar-leader-citizen with abnormal bandwidth and capacity. His greatest strength was his ability to work both widely and deeply in equal measure. Breadth did not mean dilution. Depth did not mean niche. His work was always marked by scholarly intensity but he roamed widely in his

research and teaching and was a selfless ambassador for Geography in just about every service role conceivable. Alas, the neoliberalising academy, whose technes of governance privilege the subject of the academic entrepreneur, has blindly and foolishly diminished the figure of the general and generous intellectual citizen (Berg et al., 2016; Riding et al., 2019; Macfarlane, 2013; Mountz et al., 2015). As the dark clouds of neoliberalism redux scan the post-Covid-19 higher education sector in the hope of gaining further momentum and entrenchment, Ronan's oeuvre serves as a lighthouse, radiating the ongoing importance of catholicity within the professoriate and the critical work which the selfless protean scholar performs in the flourishing of academic communities.

I first provide a brief but panoramic overview of Ronan's scholarship on political geographical research before then exploring in greater detail the meaning and implications of his founding and tenure as Editor-in-Chief of the Taylor and Francis journal *Space and Polity*.

States of power: Ronan Paddison as political geographer

A luminary in the annals of institutional Geography, Richard Hartshorne (1899–1992) famously bemoaned the fact that he had invested too much energy in working to define and defend the mission of geographical enquiry as pre-eminently regional study (notably in Hartshorne, 1939, 1959) at the expense of losing himself in his primary passion, the systematic study of political geography. Although one of his lesser known works, Hartshorne's, 1970 book *The Academic Citizen: Selected Statements by Richard Hartshorne* gestures towards the ways in which he sought to make peace with his choices. Introduced and annotated by a colleague at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, mathematician Mark Hoyt Ingraham, the book gathers together Hartshorne's writings and less formal statements and ruminations on the subject matter of citizenship in the academy, penned in the period from the late 1940s to the late 1960s. Although one of the consultees engaged by Harvard University to review the Geography programme in 1948 (alongside Isaiah Bowman, Dudley Stamp, and Carl Sauer), historiographies of the subsequent and catastrophic closure of this programme have yet to document Hartshorne's reaction to the Harvard President's declaration 'Geography is not an appropriate university subject' (Smith, 1987, p. 160). Nevertheless, it cannot but have constituted a formative event. If there is a golden thread weaving through *The Academic Citizen*, it is that every discipline needs a healthy community of broadly trained and multi-talented intellectual leaders, expansively educated scholars and selfless academic citizens, if it is to propagate its intellectual agenda, secure its institutional status, and reproduce its scholarly communities across generations.

Although they would certainly have harboured different ambitions for Political Geography, Richard Hartshorne would have approved of Ronan Paddison's academic way of being and Ronan Paddison would have been intimately familiar with the trade-offs between personal and disciplinary advancement with which Hartshorne wrestled.

Ronan's core interest was Westphalian liberal state power; the sovereign power vested in different levels of the state to raise taxes and allocate public resources and to formulate public policy and enact the rule of law. With the shadow of Marxism always looming, he understood well the fact that the proclivity and competency of states to lay claims to territory emerged processually and contingently, but never innocently or somehow

‘naturally’, within the passing of human history. Nothing was to be reified; he was concerned with the structuration of state power and the structuration of the scalar division of labour within the state. He sought to understand the ways in which the unitary state was fragmenting and the significance of this ‘hollowing out’ for the capacity of the state to reign in the excesses of rampant capitalism. His inclination was to view a strong central state as an effective bulwark against neoliberalism but only if it worked to uphold the will of the people. He was to be disappointed with the unitary states he was encountering in daily life and recognized the important work done by supra-national, regional and local state bodies when the centralized state failed. He was fascinated with elections and geographies of voting and voting outcomes. He sought to understand how the public policies which various branches of government introduce have different consequences for different people in different places. He had particular interests in central government transfers to local authorities, local authority budgets, the social distribution of the burden of local tax regimes and the equity of allocations of local budgets.

Ronan’s publishing career began in the early 1970s with two articles in *Irish Geography*; the first examining the reorganization of hospital services in Ireland (1970), the second exploring the revision of local electoral areas in the Republic of Ireland (1974; see Pattie, this Special Issue). His interests in political geography were clear from the outset; here we see his concerns with the geographical and scalar constitution of the state, the politics of the local state, and local government finance. His first book *The political geography of regionalism: The processes of regional definition and regional identity*, published in 1978 by the University of New England, introduced to this mix the structuration of the state at the regional scale (Paddison, 1978). Ronan’s second book, a collaborative endeavour with Richard Muir and published in 1981 by Methuen, presents as a detour of sorts. Bearing the title *Politics, geography and behaviour* familiar political geographical themes are certainly in evidence but the lens of behavioural geography, accenting the decision-making of political citizens, is to fore (Muir & Paddison, 1981). In 1983, Blackwell published perhaps Ronan’s crowning work *The fragmented state: The political geography of power* (Paddison, 1983; see McLeod, this Special Issue). Although its concerns were wider, this book cannot but have been influenced by the Thatcherite project of centralizing power and waging war on regional and local autonomy. Ronan attempted to understand, on the basis of published research, the drivers of what he called ‘integration and disintegration in the unitary state’ and the implications for different places of the (temporary) resolution of competing forces in given periods. There followed in 1988 two more books co-edited with Stephen Bailey and published by Routledge on local government finance, placing reform in the United Kingdom in international relief; *The reform of local government finance in Britain* (Bailey & Paddison, 1988) and *Local government finance: International perspectives* (Paddison & Bailey, 1988).

Based as he was in Glasgow, Ronan had a keen interest in the politics of local economic development in the post-industrial city. It is here that his urban and his political interests overlapped most. The story is a familiar one but one which alas thirty years later remains stewing. Cities whose economies had traditionally relied upon shipbuilding, heavy engineering, the production of locomotives, and chemical industries (such as Glasgow, Liverpool, Newcastle, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cleveland and Detroit) had found themselves unable to compete with rival industries based in low-wage regions. They had been failing since at least 1945 and their demise had been accelerated by the loss of



Plate 1. Ronan Paddison ‘in the field’, providing students with instruction on the regeneration of Glasgow (with thanks to Lesley Paddison for providing this photograph).

European colonies. They had been forced to contend with deindustrialization and its attendant problems of factory closure, unsightly and dangerous derelict and vacant land, high unemployment and poverty, and outmigration and depopulation. These cities had degenerated into ‘left behind places’, rustbelt communities rendered redundant by global capital, and abandoned it seemed to managed decline and terminal marginality (Plate 1).

The efficacy of ongoing approaches to urban regeneration concerned Ronan; notwithstanding their other laudable accomplishments, too many regeneration interventions, it appeared, were toiling (if not failing) to turn around economically deprived communities and pave the way for their sustainable and enduring recovery. What growth was secured was neither inclusive nor green. Too many people were being left behind and carbon footprints were growing. Indeed, at times, urban regeneration had manifest as a disciplinary force on local communities, making use of a convoluted apparatus of rewards and penalties to impose moral assumptions about which forms of community are ‘good’ and ‘bad’/ ‘right’ and ‘wrong’/ ‘just’ and ‘unjust’/ ‘worthy’ and ‘unworthy’

Why were urban regeneration and renewal programmes finding it so difficult to arrest the decline of poor neighbourhoods and to (re)build, in economically deprived places, sustainable and resilient communities? Ronan was heavily influenced by David Harvey’s 1989 paper in *Geografiska Annaler* which proposed that city leaders were then behaving more as urban entrepreneurs than as urban managers. He believed that the prevailing approaches were being limited by the politico-institutional field in which they had to work. Urban

regeneration projects would not be curative until they were properly political, doing more than compensating for the status quo. Ronan believed that neoliberalising cities were anatomically compromised in their capacities to deliver local economic recovery and social inclusion. They could not by design or definition, create sustainable urban recovery or rebuild life-affirming cities. Infact, cities were diverting ever more of their budgets away from the provision of welfare services to the poor and towards property led local economic development strategies including glossy, hyped-up city marketing campaigns, based upon building prestige, flagship and iconic landmarks, expanding cultural, heritage and museum amenities, and hosting leisure, cultural, sporting, and political events, heads of government meetings, comedy and jazz festivals, city of culture events, and so on. We would continue to make insufficient progress if we simply medicated ourselves with neoliberal prescriptions (Paddison 1993). Ronan was persuaded by the argument that urban entrepreneurs may well salvage some communities within some rustbelt cities but many more communities and many more cities would, if anything, be further impoverished. For the less fortunate, urban entrepreneurialism would not end well. And earlier than most he recognized the growing anger which was welling up in left behind places and its potential to transmogrify into populisms, some of which might be less than desirable.

In the late 1980s and across the 1990s and drawing upon the work of the Glasgow Quality of Life Group (see McKendrick, this Special Issue) Ronan published with Allan Findlay and Robert Rogerson on the question of quality of life rankings in the United Kingdom (Rogerson et al., 1989, 1996). This work lent itself to complicity with urban neoliberalism but it also championed the importance of human prosperity and wellbeing more broadly – more than simply GDP growth – in urban development, a theme which has recently become again of central importance. From 2000, he also undertook a body of work on local economic development and public art with Joanne Sharp and Vee Pollok (see Pollok, this Special Issue). Recognizing the appropriation by city marketing promotions of public art, importantly, this work sought to do more than reclaim art for art's sake. Public art was inescapably political; what was required was not a purging of society from art but a debate on how art might express alternative urban regeneration visions, themes and agendas, and deal with the cultural politics of place (Sharp et al., 2005; Pollock & Paddison 2010). With Steven Miles, Ronan also undertook a sustained critical engagement with the logic and virtues and vices of culture led urban regeneration. In 2007, Routledge published an edited book bearing the same title and edited by Steven and Ronan (Paddison & Miles 2007, see also Miles, this Special Issue).

As intimated in his contribution to this Special Issue, Chris Philo notes the ways in which Ronan cleaved towards a Marxist perspective, but always a heterodox, eclectic one allowing in many other (non-Marxist) intellectual influences. He was a Marxist, but in disposition only. He could live with – indeed happily dwell in – eclecticism and felt no need for clean lines. In his writing, he preferred the layering and complexifying of arguments to the imposition of overly muscular but schematic narrative threads. Whilst pace his Marxist point of entry, Ronan's focus was primarily on the power wielded by the capitalist state he was also a passionate student of political philosophies of power and came in time to appreciate more fully the wider literature on analytics of power and in particular the importance of distinguishing 'power over' from 'power to'.

For the most part, this widening in his scope was announced in his work on the politics of local economic development and through the prism of the purported shift from urban government to governance. He was to publish a number of papers with Ade Kearns, Iain Docherty and Ashok Kumar explicitly examining the ways in which states seek to manage urban citizens from a distance by convening remotely and then aligning in preferable ways, private, public, and third sector organizations and community groups (for example Kearns & Paddison, 2000; Kumar & Paddison, 2000; Docherty et al., 2001; Paddison et al. 2008 – see also Beel et al. this Special Issue). If urban regeneration was to be truly participatory and transformative, there needed to be a shift in perspective, from strengthening resilience to fortifying resourcefulness. When badly designed, community engagement policies ended up promoting conservative outcomes and wittingly and unwittingly worked to preserve the status quo. Building the resourcefulness of communities through genuine co-production in contrast, helped citizens exercise greater agency, in part to prosper better within the existing political order, but equally, where relevant to challenge this order and strengthen their structural position. Governance was at its best when it worked to strengthen the capacity of communities so that people were better able to address the root causes of their precarity.

Ronan's interest in wider theorisations of political power was consolidated with the arrival of new colleagues at the University of Glasgow. Inspired by the work of Chris Philo in particular, he became especially aware of growing interest within Human Geography in the works of Michel Foucault. Power was the centre of attention in Foucault's famous Collège de France Lectures delivered in Paris between 1970 and 1984. In these lectures Foucault claimed to discern a historical shift from the eighteenth century from sovereign power to biopower or governmentality (to cut through numerous complex knots of Foucauldian theorizing), at least in advanced liberal states. Power is now discharged primarily at a remove, by responsabilising citizens and building their ability to self-regulate and self-calibrate according to prescribed ideas of 'common sense'. This insight opened up new worlds for Ronan and he recognized that theories of urban governance, whilst certainly correct in spirit, were underdeveloped in articulation. Ronan was less cognisant of the works by Italian theorist of power Giorgio Agamben but in discussions about the future of *Space and Polity* he did speak about Agamben's *Homo Sacer* series of books (1995–2015) and was curious about the thesis that sovereign power was manifest most clearly through states of exception.

In September 1996, in collaboration with Chris Philo, Paul Routledge, and Joanne Sharp, Ronan convened a mini-conference titled Geographies of Domination/Resistance; an impressive list of delegates travelled to Glasgow. Geography at Glasgow was on the up and this mini-conference worked well to let the world know the exciting developments which were afoot. Power and its various theorisations, applications, and contestations occupied central attention. State power was discussed for sure, but so too were multiple formulations of biopower and governmentality. There followed in 2000 a co-edited collection published by Routledge titled *Entanglements of power: Geographies of domination and resistance* (Sharp et al., 2000). Using the themes of identity, embodiment, organization, colonialism and political transformation as lens, the book explored new directions in theories of power and its contestation, its ostensibly poststructural leanings actually sitting quite easily with the wise but rigorous eclecticism of Ronan's previous encounters with,

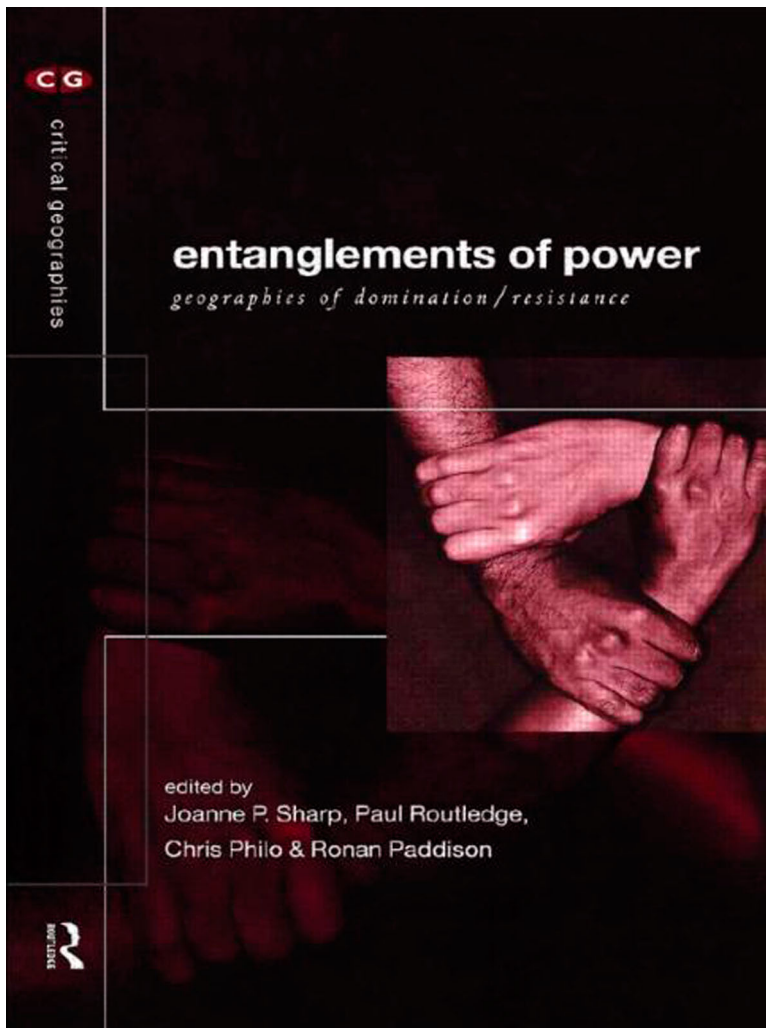


Plate 2. New colleagues, new thinking: the front cover *Entanglements of power* (2000).

and reworkings of, diverse traditions across the landscape of political theory, political science and beyond (Plate 2).

Ronan's immersion in political philosophy was to lead to an astonishing paper, published by the French journal *L'Espace Politique* in 2009. Titled 'Protest in the park: preliminary thoughts on the silencing of democratic protest in the neoliberal age', this paper narrated and then offered a tentative interpretation of Ronan's participation in March 2008 in a demonstration against a proposal to install a private recreational facility in Pollok Park in Glasgow. 'Go Ape', a commercial company, had applied to build an adventure park of sorts without sufficient attention to the ecological damage that would be caused by the loss of public space which would result, and the fact that many local people would be priced out of availing of the facility. Ronan lamented the ways in which developers and counsellors had combined to exclude the voice of the community whose opposition was construed as an irritant to be managed. In the end, in spite of

being given permission to build, Go Ape withdrew from investing on the grounds of commercial viability. The article is arresting because earlier than most, Ronan was attentive to debates on the so-called ‘post-political city’ and the works of Jacques Rancière, Slavoj Žižek, and Chantal Mouffe (also Karaliotas, this Special Issue). He knew well the direction of debates on democracy and the escalating political policing of the ‘public square’ so as to manufacture consent. In 2009, Ronan now predicted explicitly that the growing dislocation between representative democracy and popular sovereignty would lead to the rise of populism. Whilst some populist movements might advocate for progressive causes, others might not. Beware was his message: the history of populism was littered with cautionary tales.

Ronan’s concerns with the diminution of public discourse was to inform his thinking on Brexit. On 23 June 2016, the U.K. held a plebiscite on the status of its ongoing membership of the European Union (EU): with a turnout of 72.2%, 51.9% voted to ‘Leave the EU’. As with us all, this vote came as a shock to Ronan. His mind was quickly active in trying to get the measure of it. What just happened and why? He returned to his 2008 *L’Espace Politique* article for inspiration; the Brexit vote was a regrettable manifestation of the failure of representative democracy to register and remediate a geography of discontent which had been brewing in left behind cities and towns for 40 years.

In 2018, in collaboration with the present author and Peter Shirlow, Ronan published a Special Issue of *Space and Polity* titled ‘Brexit Geographies’ (Boyle et al., 2018). Beyond what it signalled about the dissonance between parliamentary democracy and popular sovereignty, Ronan was intrigued with Brexit mostly I suspect because it spoke directly to his enduring interest (as announced so clearly in *The Fragmented State*) in the contradictory impulses towards integration and disintegration afflicting the unitary state. Brexit brought Ronan back full circle to state power and its scalar constitution.

He recognized that the fate of Britain was being increasingly entangled in the work of supra-national bodies and in particular the EU. In the context of a neoliberal led and austerity minded unitary state, he appreciated the fact that a devolution of powers and resources from Westminster had commenced, albeit unevenly across the country: for example, in the form of the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Greater London Authority. He welcomed the degree to which English devolution has become much discussed today, although he was not especially impressed with the weak combined city-region authorities which had been created. But overall he was suspicious of the claim that the British state was undergoing a process of ‘hollowing out’. With the Westminster Parliament at its political epicentre, he considered the United Kingdom to remain one of the most centralized nation-states in Europe. Given prevailing circumstances, this was to be regretted. Playing into this dynamic, Ronan believed that Brexit both reflected and in turn reproduced two competing socio-spatial processes:

A fragmenting state: Westminster is feeling helpless and hapless, unable to shape events which are unfolding at larger scales and over which it has little control, and to strengthen its muscle is leveraging supra-national institutions. It is also being recognized that, insofar as they operate at finer geographical scales, more localized state tiers know better the challenges facing particular localities and therefore there are grounds to support devolution. A break-up of Britain is afoot in which Parliament

is ceding power to institutions operating at a wide range of overlapping scales and better suited to remediating different kinds of problems. Centrifugal forces are overwhelming centripetal forces.

A defragmenting state: British nationalism is on the ascendancy and Westminster is consolidating its standing as a crucible of power. Multi-scalar states have proven themselves unable to deal with problems created by globalization, neoliberalism and uneven geographical development. Supranational organizations are too big to tackle the problems nations are encountering and insensitive to nations' histories, whilst sub-national regional and local authorities are too small to do anything meaningful about local challenges even if they understand these challenges more intimately. Lamenting its fall as a world leading empire, Britain was suffering a nationalist spasm which was consolidating a unitary state which was populist but exclusionary. Centripetal forces are overwhelming centrifugal forces.

Ronan believed that the unitary nation-state might just be a more stubborn and enduring form of polity than presumed. The global financial crash and austerity had combined to effect a revolt of a very angry rustbelt. Multi-scalar governance appeared to be an inadequate response. The variety of nationalist populist movements that are currently springing up around the world (for example led by Trump (U.S.), Johnston (United Kingdom) Wilders (Netherlands), Hoffer/Kurz (Austria), Orbán (Hungary), Le Pen (France), Bolsonaro (Brazil), Syriza (Greece), and Podemos (Spain)) appear to be signalling a revival of patriotism and nationalism and in some cases a concerning reassertion of strong centralized governments. Ronan had no truck with the new political forms being thereby created and enforced: his vision of a unitary state, never to be cavalierly aligned with a singular, exclusionary nationalist agenda, was always to be one countering the worst excesses of capitalism – or indeed other alienating or authoritarian regimes – and ideally concerned with questions of equitably financing, managing and allowing decentralized political-agentic 'say' over the classic bundles of goods-and-services needed for the well-being of that state's (overall) citizenry.

In late 2019 Ronan developed the *Space and Polity* Special Issue on Brexit Geographies we had worked on into a book bearing the same title and containing an extended introduction (Boyle et al., 2020). But by a cruel twist of fate it was published by Routledge on 9 July 2019, the day after his passing. It was an honour to be part of his last hurrah (Plate 3).

Building a legacy: Ronan Paddison and *Space and Polity*

The years 1996 and 1997 witnessed political turmoil; no worse and no better than what has become normal, but turmoil nevertheless. Bill Clinton was elected for a second time as President of the United States, Tony Blair's New Labour swept to power, Scotland voted for a devolved parliament and Wales for a devolved assembly. Things were going to get better. Events elsewhere suggested otherwise. Global media mogul Rupert Murdoch was busy selling neo-conservatism and in a move which was to shape the political landscape for two decades had just appointed Roger E Ailes as CEO of Fox News in the U.S., Arab-Israeli relations were especially fraught as Yasser Arafat was re-elected as President of the Palestinian Authority and Benjamin Netanyahu from the Likud Party



BREXIT GEOGRAPHIES

Edited by

Mark Boyle, Ronan Paddison and Peter Shirlow



Plate 3. Cover of Ronan's final book titled *Brexit Geographies*, published on 9 July 2019.

as Prime Minister of Israel. dictator Major Johnny Paul Koroma swept to power in Sierra Leone, Pol Pot was committing his final atrocities in Cambodia, Algeria witnessed a horrific spate of massacres, Osama Bin Laden moved to Afghanistan and the Taliban captured the capital city of Kabul, and Saddam Hussein persisted in playing Russian roulette with the United States. Few could argue that there was a need for more copy space for political geographical research.

One of the virtues of working at the University of Strathclyde in central Glasgow at that time was that I got to meet Ronan regularly for lunches at various hostelrys; when

roughage was required, the Horseshoe Bar in central Glasgow sufficed; more decadent afternoons were spent in the comfort of the Grosvenor Hotel in the West End of Glasgow. Ronan used these lunches, which increasingly extended out into the late afternoon, to test out his idea for a new journal with a political geographical focus. Whilst the journal *Political Geography* (originally *Political Geography Quarterly*) was the flagship journal of the systematic branch of Political Geography, Ronan felt that there was a need for a journal which was more interdisciplinary and focussed more intensely upon the structuration of polities and the restless scalar geographies of the state. On one occasion, I recall having an epic feast at the Grosvenor Hotel with Ronan and David Green from the publishers Carfax. Excitement was growing. Details were being thrashed out. Plans were being made. By late evening we left the lobby with a sense of resolve. Ronan was determined to make an intervention in the political geography publishing landscape. With the support of David, in 1996 Ronan launched *Space and Polity* and called upon me to serve as the journal's first Book Review Editor. Issue 1, Volume 1 was published in May 1997. Ronan would have been 52 years of age (Plate 4).

Immediately thereafter, Carfax was acquired and from 1998 *Space and Polity* has carried the Taylor & Francis imprimatur. Initially two issues were published per annum; from 2001 this increased to three issues per annum. Ronan served as Editor-in-Chief from the first issue until his death in 2019. Through the years, Ronan appointed two Associate Editors to help him manage the ever increasing flow of copy: first Robin Boyle, then Mark Purcell. The journal was also supported by Book Review Editors: initially the present author, then Rhys Jones, Nick Gill, and Kirsi Pauliina Kallio. From July 2019, the present author has had the honour of serving as Editor-in-Chief, and has been supported by Alistair Fraser as Associate Editor and Social Media Editor, Kirsi Pauliina Kallio and Derek Ruez as Associate Editors, and Debangana Bose as Book Review Editor.

Ronan launched *Space and Polity* because he saw a definite niche for the journal to occupy, pivoting around a fresh focus upon political geographies of states and state power, an emphasis upon inter-disciplinarity, and an openness to publishing political geographical research from and about regions of the world often neglected by the Anglo-American canon.

His editorial which front-ended Issue 1, Volume 1, was revealing, opening with what might initially strike as a curious vignette: 'In a recent move in Massachusetts the state government has sought to boycott firms which have business connections with [what was then] Burma, in protest at the poor human rights record of that country's military regime' (Paddison, 1997, p. 5). Here, then, was a lower-tier political unit, the state of Massachusetts, effectively intervening in not only the realm of global capitalist transactions but also what would normally be regarded as the 'foreign policy' domain of national states. Here was Ronan setting the stall of the new journal against any simplistic – he called it 'realist' – conception of a world comprising a neat hierarchy of more-or-less sealed-off state-like forms – larger and smaller; from the nation-state to the local state – with clear 'insides' and 'outsides' in terms of what shapes them and what they in turn can shape. He spoke of 'the changing configurations between space, place and political processes within a globalizing world, and of the resulting disjunctions and contradictions' (Paddison, 1997, p. 5). Such messiness and contrariness has already been signalled in



Plate 4. Where *Space and Polity* was born: The Grosvenor Hotel in the West End of Glasgow.

my remarks about Ronan's complex response to Brexit, but it was beautifully crafted here and also immediately connected to his abiding concern with how 'the territorial basis within which political processes are transacted undergoes continuous change', yielding an ever-cycling 'de- and re-territorialisation of politics' (Paddison, 1997, p. 6). Put another way, and encapsulating the new journal's mission, '*Space and Polity* aims to inform the theory and practice of the changing spatialities of politics, power, government and governance' (Paddison, 1997, p. 7).

It is unsurprising that this vision – and it very much *was* a vision for a different kind of political geography, a different focus for a journal – played out in the journal's initial call for papers, found in preliminary materials included in the first issue

- State-society relationships and emergent patterns of regional and local governance
- Representations and meaning of power and the reterritorialization of space
- State-local/central-local relations
- Decentralization

- Regionalism
- Nationalism
- Secession
- The politics of urban and rural restructuring
- Federalism and federalization
- Local fiscal restructuring
- Globalization and local political change
- Grassroots mobilization and local politics
- New cultural identities and local political processes
- Citizenship and globalization
- Redefining territoriality and sovereignty in the global era
- Boundary regions in emerging supra-states

The aims and scope of the journal were further explained in the front jacket, presumably in text initially drafted by Ronan:

Space and Polity is a fully refereed scholarly international journal devoted to the theoretical and empirical understanding of the changing relationships between the state, and regional and local forms of governance. The journal provides a forum aimed particularly at bringing together social scientists currently working in a variety of disciplines, including geography, political science, sociology, economics, anthropology and development studies and who have a common interest in the relationships between space, place and politics in less developed as well as the advanced economies.

In his opening editorial, Ronan also elaborated on why such an interdisciplinary focus was timely. Some of the best political geographical writing was to be found in related subjects such as (with capitalized first letters to underline their institutional[ized] status) Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, International Relations, Economics, Regional Studies, Archaeology, Cultural Studies, Environmental Science, and so on. Political geographers draw from and contribute to cognate subjects across the social sciences, humanities, and even the sciences. Any journal interested in publishing serious articles in political geography – in lower case – would fail if it refused to cast its net wider than literature that is narrowly defined as Political Geography (with those capitalized first letters). Indeed, to limit coverage thus would be to fail to report on some of the most exciting directions being taken by what can be construed as a more wide-ranging, even promiscuous, terrain of political geographical research. Ronan was also conscious of the spatial turn then well-established and taking root across the social sciences. The journal would both constitute and be constituted by that turn, as he made clear when writing as follows:

Much as geographers have been anxious to show that space is not some neutral vessel in which political conflict and cooperation take place, so political scientists and other social scientists have become increasingly aware of the roles of space and place, and how they mould the interplay of the stuff of politics, conflicts and co-operation, and outcomes. (Paddison, 1997, p. 6)

Or, with a different inflection again: ‘politics takes place *in* space, but also – through the mechanisms of control, regulation, allocation, distribution and redistribution – has itself been contributory to spatial difference’ (Paddison, 1997, p. 7). Spaces makes polity and polity makes space: and thus the couplet for the very title of the journal *Space and*

Polity. It would be no underestimate to state that contribution after contribution to the journal over the years have sought to peer into, to grasp, to picture, to theorize, and to survey the implications of that couplet, necessitating in the process the tools made available by not one or even two but a variety of disciplinary framings.

Ronan's inaugural editorial roamed widely across the globe, both explicitly – taking us from Massachusetts to what is now more often known as Myanmar, but with nods to the European Union – and more implicitly by dint of the kinds of theoretical issues and substantive topics, including globalization, alluded to in the process (and as echoed in the call for papers list given above). A glimpse of a critical note was also sounded when Ronan mentioned how 'Southern economies have been influenced by Western ideals as to what constitutes good governance' (Paddison, 1997, p. 5), although one might have expected a more explicit statement or two about looking beyond the West (cf. Laurie and Philo, this Special Issue). Nonetheless, in recognition of looking both to extend the influence of the journal globally and to invite in perspectives from many diverse global regions, an eclectic International Editorial Advisory Board was appointed, as can be seen from Table 1.

Space and Polity has been publishing influential political geographical articles for nearly a quarter of a century ever since Ronan's first glimmerings of an idea resulted in the first issue of the journal in 1997. A cursory survey of past issues confirms that almost 'everyone who is anyone' in the field has published in the journal; the stellar list of published authors is truly astonishing. Moreover, *Space and Polity* has an established track-record of publishing both early career researchers and international authors with English as a second language. The archives contain legions of 'thank you' letters written to Ronan by grateful first time authors who appreciated the level of support and encouragement he had offered through often multiple rounds of revision. *Space and Polity* has also become known as a home for high impact Special Issues; to date, twenty-five have been published, clustering around themes of ethnic conflict and political violence, borders and citizenship, rescaling of the state and cities, the politics of belonging and cultural identity, children's and

Table 1. Membership of the *Space and Polity* International Editorial Advisory Board at launch in 1997.

Jonathan Bradbury – Department of Politics, University of Swansea, U.K.
Michael Burgess – Department of Politics, University of Hull, U.K.
John Coakley – Department of Politics, University College Dublin, Ireland
Kevin Cox – Department of Geography, Ohio State University, Columbus, U.S.A.
Ghazi Falah – Department of Geography, University of Toronto, Canada
Herve Guillourel – Department of Politics, CNRS/Université de Paris X (Paris-Nanterre), France
Vincent Hoffman-Martinot – Department of Politics, Université de Bordeaux, France
Peter John – Department of Politics, University of London, U.K.
Dominique Joye – SIDOS, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland
Michael Keating – Department of Politics, European University, Florence, Italy
David King, – Department of Economics, University of Stirling, U.K.;
Jan Erik Lane – Department of Politics, University of Geneva, Switzerland
Jean Laponce – Department of Politics, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada
Zdravko Mlinar – Department of Sociology, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
Ken Newton – Department of Politics, University of Southampton, U.K.
Joe Painter – Department of Geography, University of Durham, U.K.
Charles Pattie – Department of Geography, University of Sheffield, U.K.
Chris Rogerson – School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Johannesburg, South Africa
Jo Sharp – Department of Geography, University of Glasgow, U.K.
Jim Walmsley – Department of Geography, University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia
Oren Yiftachel – Department of Geography, Beer-Sheva University, Israel.

youth politics, and social movements and activism (see [Table 2](#)). Many individual articles have also attracted significant audiences and proved seminal in key debates ([Table 3](#)) ([Plate 5](#)).

Somewhat out of the blue, Ronan called me in 2017. I was in my office, frantic with deadlines but I registered a very unusual tone in his voice and realized this was a moment to be sedentary. Ronan sounded wearied and was unusually downbeat; only later did I realize he was unwell. He was concerned that he did not have the energy to continue to develop *Space and Policy*. He asked to meet me in Glasgow

Table 2. Full list of *Space and Polity* special issues: title and guest editor(s), 1997–2020.

1999	Grounding Globalization – Cross-National Perspectives M. Martin Bosman
2002	Europe and the Spectre of Comparisons James D. Sidaway
2003	Political Geographies of Children and Young People Christopher Philo & Fiona M. Smith
2004	The Urbanization of Justice Movements? Walter J. Nicholls & Justin R. Beaumont
2005	Geographies of Citizenship Hilda Kurtz & Katherine Hankins
2005	The Politics of Local and Regional Development in Comparative Perspective Kevin R Cox
2006	Belfast: The 'Post-Conflict' City Peter Shirlow
2007	Urbanism and Regionalism Down Under Paul J. Maginn & Matthew W. Rofe
2007	Geographies of Citizenship Hilda Kurtz & Katherine Hankins
2008	Citizens and Borderwork in Europe Chris Rumford
2009	Geographies of Genocide Shannon O'Lear & Stephen L. Egbert
2010	Spaces of Multiculturalism Caroline Nagel & Peter Hopkins
2012	Between Absence and Presence: Geographies of Hiding, Invisibility and Silence Rhys Dafydd Jones, James Robinson & Jennifer Turner
2012	Asian Cities in an Era of Decentralization Michelle Ann Miller & Tim Bunnell
2013	Religion, Violence and Cities Liam O'Dowd & Martina McKnight
2013	Children and Young People's Politics in Everyday Life Kirsi Pauliina Kallio & Jouni Häkli
2014	For a Politics We Have yet to Imagine Mark Purcell
2015	In, Against and Beyond Neo-liberalism: The 'Crisis' and Alternative Political Futures David Featherstone, Kendra Strauss & Danny MacKinnon
2016	Drugs, Law, People, Place and the State: Ongoing Regulation, Resistance and Change Stewart Williams and Barney Warf
2017	Digesting the Public Sphere Sarah Marusek
2017	Governance, Peace and Citizenship Lynn A. Staeheli
2018	Introducing 'Brexit Geographies': Five Provocations Mark Boyle, Ronan Paddison & Peter Shirlow
2019	Challenging the Representation of Ethnically Divided Cities: Perspectives from Mostar Giulia Carabelli, Aleksandra Djurasovic & Renata Summa
2020	Youth Politics in Urban Asia Sonia Lam and Cheng Yi'En
2020	Paddison Geographies Christopher Philo and Mark Boyle

Table 3. *Space and Polity* league table: most downloaded articles 1997–2020.

Year	Title and author(s) – based on number of downloads (at June 2020)
1	2008 Borderwork Beyond Inside/Outside? Frontex, the Citizen–Detective and the War on Terror Nick Vaughan-Williams
2	2018 Explaining ‘Brexit Capital’: Uneven Development and the Austerity State Gordon MacLeod & Martin Jones
3	2001 A Feminist Geopolitics? Lorraine Dowler & Joanne Sharp
4	2002 Exploring the Nexus: Bringing Together Sustainability, Environmental Justice and Equity Julian Agyeman, Robert D. Bullard & Bob Evans
5	2018 Women, Equality and the U.K.’s EU Referendum: Locating the Gender Politics of Brexit in Relation to the Neoliberalising State Julie MacLeavy
6	2018 Introducing ‘Brexit Geographies’: Five Provocations Mark Boyle, Ronan Paddison & Peter Shirlow
7	2008 Rebordering the City for New Security Challenges: From Counter-terrorism to Community Resilience Jon Coaffee & Peter Rogers
8	2010 Attitudes to Multicultural Values in Diverse Spaces in Australia’s Immigrant Cities, Sydney and Melbourne James Forrest & Kevin Dunn
9	2013 Children and Young People’s Politics in Everyday Life Kirsi Pauliina Kallio & Jouni Häkli
10	2006 Medieval Modernity: On Citizenship and Urbanism in a Global Era Nezar Alsayyad & Ananya Roy
11	2014 Where is the Political? Insurgent Mobilisations and the Incipient ‘Return of the Political’ Eric Swyngedouw
12	2002 The Communicative Turn in Urban Planning: Unravelling Paradigmatic, Imperialistic and Moralistic Dimensions Philip Allmendinger & Mark Tewdwr-Jones
13	2018 Metropolitanising Small European Stateless City-Regionalised Nations Igor Calzada
14	2004 Multiple Disconnections: Environmental Justice and Urban Water in Canada and South Africa Anne-Marie Debbané & Roger Keil
15	2008 Introduction: Citizens and Borderwork in Europe Chris Rumford
16	2016 Spaces of Exception: Governing Fuel Poverty in England’s Multiple Occupancy Housing Sector Stefan Bouzarovski & Jenni Cauvain
17	2013 Young People, Children, Politics and Space: A Decade of Youthful Political Geography Scholarship 2003–13 Tracey Skelton
18	2000 Ethnic and Civic Nationalism: Towards a New Dimension André Lecours
19	2020 Civil Liberties or Public Health, or Civil Liberties and Public Health? Using Surveillance Technologies to Tackle the Spread of COVID-19 Rob Kitchin
20	2016 Relational Geographies of Cyberterrorism and Cyberwar Barney Warf & Emily Fekete

in July 2017, on this occasion in a coffee shop at Royal Exchange Square. Our meeting was convivial but it was clear that Ronan was not his usual self. He looked strained and his sparkle had dimmed. I met him again during the Christmas break of 2017/8 and then at the Easter break in 2018, all in the same coffee shop. He was anxious about the future of *Space and Polity*, of which he was very proud and over which he fretted. What began as an idea locked in Ronan’s head and gradually teased out at the Grosvenor Hotel was now an established and well respected home for political geographical research from across the world. The ongoing flourishing of the journal mattered greatly to him and again he was frustrated that his depleting energy was mitigating against his capacity to be entrepreneurial. He asked me to join the journal as Associate Editor. As a first action, we agreed to convene a high impact Special Issue on Brexit Geographies. This was published in December 2018 (Volume

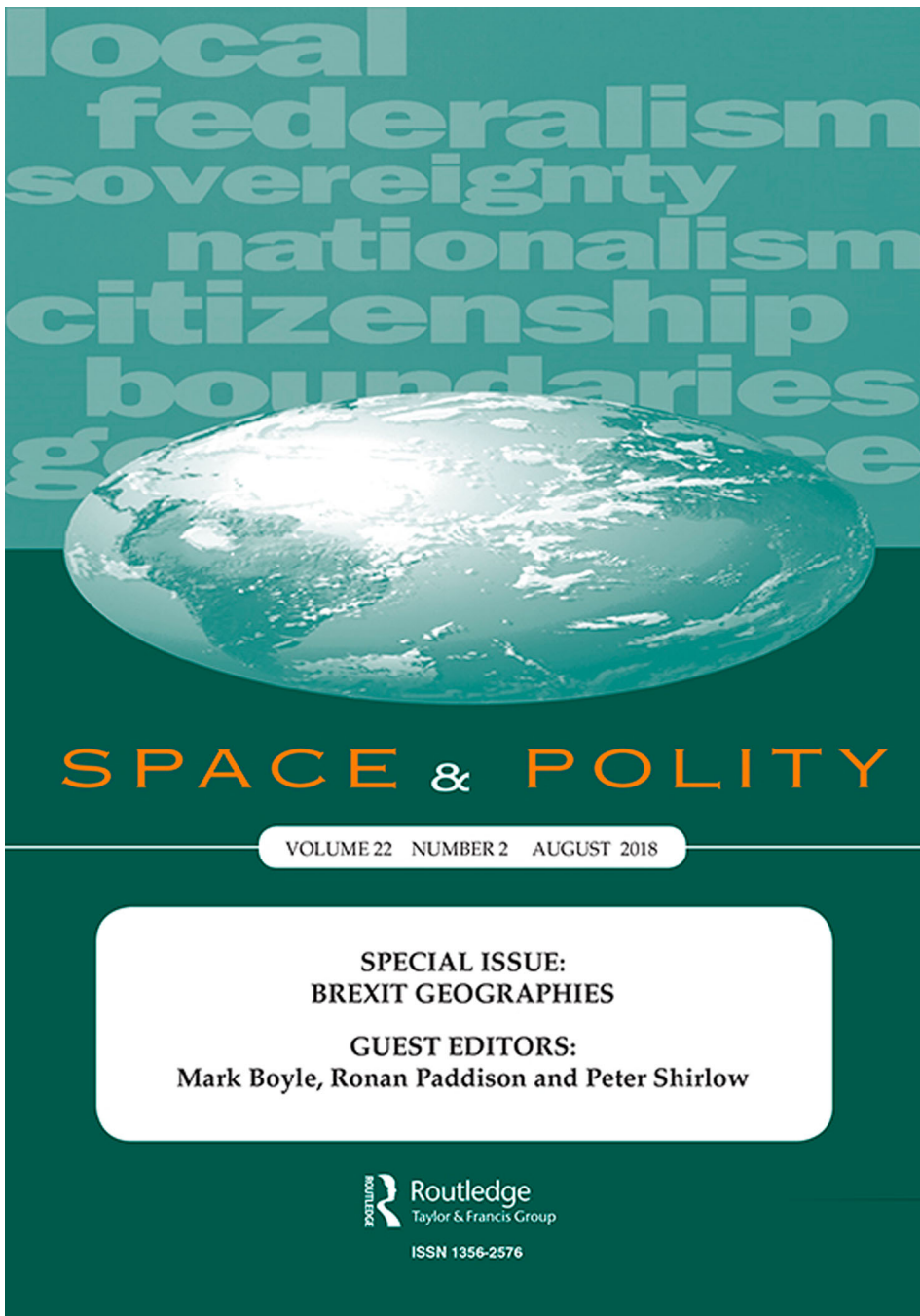


Plate 5. Front Cover of Ronan's Special Issue of *Space and Polity* on Brexit Geographies.

22, Issue 2) and notwithstanding its young life has subsequently generated more downloads than any other single issue. Ronan's nose for a timely intervention was as keen as ever.

In July 2018, Ronan proposed that he gently wind down as Editor-in-Chief and asked if I would step up into the role. I was very happy to do so. As the journal was healthy and well-established, the job of work itself was attractive. But I also knew Ronan's health was deteriorating and wanted to be of service. In the fall and winter of 2018 and indeed up until April of 2019, we continued to discuss his idea for a refresh of the journal. He continued to serve as Editor-in-Chief, seeing through two Special Issues he had sanctioned. As his illness became more acute and other priorities faded without it seemed any existential regret, there is no doubt that the future success of *Space and Polity* weighed on his mind, right up until the end. Only days before his death, I received a call from his hospital bed. He wanted to be reassured that a fascinating Special Issue he was working on, titled simply Mostar and eventually published in 2019 as Volume 23, Issue 2, was progressing to production. He knew well the rhythms to which I work and my distaste for military timing. On this occasion everything was in hand, but it took effort with the help of Lesley his wife to convince him so. I heard of his death on July 8th from Lesley. It felt like the end of an era. On 9 July 2019, I took over as Editor-in-Chief of *Space and Polity* and began receiving papers from Manuscript Central still bearing his signature: opening each email was painful.

As intimated, before his passing Ronan was planning a significant refresh, restructure and repositioning of *Space and Polity*, believing that it had the potential to be developed to 'the next level'. He was conscious that alongside *Political Geography* (which had grown even stronger since 1997) and *Space and Polity*, there now existed journals like *Geopolitics* and *Territory, Politics, Governance*. He was also aware of the impressive work his prodigy Eugene McCann was doing in Vancouver to refresh and reinvigorate the journal *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*. Ronan wanted to relaunch a *Space and Polity 2.0*. He had strong ideas about the new direction of travel he wished the journal to take. Although lacking in energy to execute his vision he had the satisfaction at least of briefing the current editorial board in detail about his preferred destination. Much of what is now planned has already been introduced in greater detail in the Editorial Introduction to this Special Issue. Suffice to note that 'Paddison Political Geographies' will continue to inform the journal as it strives to do justice to both the original and the new vision and mission Ronan pioneered and championed.

In this article, it is enough to note that the journal will continue to accept submissions from across the political geographical spectrum and will actively procure, publish and promote articles which:

- Strengthen ties between political philosophy, political philosophers, and political geographical thought and make foundational theoretical and conceptual contributions
- Conduct politically aware historiographical investigations of political geographical thinkers, theories, concepts, ideas and debates and interrogate and reimagine the trajectory of political geography as an politico-intellectual project itself
- Provincialize political geographical scholarship as it has been practiced, decolonize political geographical thought and increase substantive engagement with political geographical theory and debate from the Majority World/Global South
- Advance significant new insights, through new approaches, methodologies, data sets, and empirical analyses into the most pressing public political problems which present in the 2020s across a wide range of scales and contexts

- Inspire political geographical centred scholar activism and enhanced civic and cultural engagement and think anew about the contribution of political geographical scholarship, research, pedagogy and praxis to the public square and to the public good.

Conclusion

Astute, intellectually curious, cosmopolitan, entrepreneurial, generous, kind, blunt, stubborn, convivial, a rock, wise, a mentor – these are words that come to mind when I think of Ronan Paddison. In a neoliberalising academy which valorizes academic subjectivities which are proving corrosive for scholars, academic communities, disciplines, institutions, and most of all students, Ronan's oeuvre merits ongoing recollection. He stands as a beacon of the cosmopolitan intellectual leader-scholar-citizen which the neoliberalisation of the professoriate has done so well to disarm, of course with disregard for the ennoblement that learning brings and at great cost to liberal education. But there is comfort and hope. Ronan's legacy, and those of his ilk, is secure because it is etched indelibly in the stratigraphic record of human geographical research, the biographies of the peers, colleagues, students, and practitioners he touched (see also Beel et al. this Special Issue), and the many projects he launched which survive him and continue to flourish.

Geographers yet to come will be impacted by Ronan in ways they will never understand. In 2050, as they study Issue 53 of *Space and Polity*, few will pause to reflect upon the origins of the bank of intellectual resources which have been solicited, vetted, gathered, and published so that they might better understand the political geography of the world in which they live. They will not appreciate the sweat, blood and tears that went into founding and developing *Space and Polity*. They will not fully grasp how the field of Political Geography might have turned out differently if *Space and Polity* and never existed. But they will know more, more broadly and more deeply, because fifty years prior, Ronan Paddison had the energy, knowledge, vision, leadership, contacts, guile, and skill to create something special and enduring.

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