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# What is Radical in School Geography Today?

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ABSTRACT This article addresses the question of what 'radical school geography' might look like in the present historical moment. It traces the history of a distinctive 'radical' tradition in school geography, most prominently associated with the work of John Huckle, who argued for the importance of understanding the content and pedagogy of school geography as linked to the requirements of capital. The article updates Huckle's analysis, suggesting that contemporary school geography is characterised by: (1) an unwillingness to focus on the question of what should be taught in schools; (2) teacher identities more concerned with the skills and competences of how to teach; and (3) a 'postmodern' mood of relativism. In the light of this, the article suggests the need for radical school geography teachers to focus explicitly on the types of knowledge that can help students understand the processes of economic production and social reproduction in contemporary capitalism. In conclusion, the article briefly discusses five substantive themes that can form the basis for geography education.

## Introduction

In this article I want to discuss the current and future possibilities for 'radical' school geography. My title is informed by the title of a recent collection of essays entitled *What is Radical Politics Today?* (Pugh, 2009) Pugh argues that the recent economic crisis has led to attempts to rethink how we run our lives:

> All of us are now thinking how our lives could be run differently. This recession seems to be giving more cause for reflection than most – not only about how the economy is managed, but also about the environment and society more generally. Neo-liberalism has governed our lives for nearly thirty years. Many feel that its Right-wing ethos of deregulation, privatisation and liberation of corporate power has not only failed the world's financial systems, but more

> fundamentally degraded the environment and the social fabric of life. (p.1)

Pugh argues that we look to radical politics to provide an alternative view of the world when that world is in trouble. However, despite the widespread anticipation of change, the 'revolution' is not coming anytime soon, which raises the question of what is the spirit and nature of radical politics in our time? In *Radical Education and the Common School* Fielding & Moss (2011) identify a series of imperatives at the heart of radical education's approach to the curriculum. These include a focus on the purposes of education and what is necessary for a 'sustainable, flourishing and democratic way of life', equipping students with the desire and capacity to 'critically interrogate what is given and co-construct a knowledge that assists us in leading good and joyful lives together', and knowledge that starts with 'the cultures, concerns and hopes of the communities that the school serves'. For the purposes of this article, I am concerned to explore the question of what is left-wing school geography. In what follows, I do not assume to speak for the majority of geography teachers, who would not regard themselves as left-wing. In order to develop the argument it is necessary to look again at some previous discussions of the relationship between school knowledge and society, in particular the work associated with the new sociology of education and how it was interpreted by geography educators. I then focus on the work of one geography educator – John Huckle – who has developed the most coherent argument for radical school geography. Finally, I outline the substantive themes that could for the basis for a radical school geography.

## The Politics of School Knowledge

The period after the Second World War saw an unprecedented consensus about the need to bring about the goals of social democracy. As the war went on, political debate focused on what type of society should be built (Sinfield, 1989). The Beveridge Report of 1942 set out a bold plan to tackle the 'five evils' that were thought to divide society. The 1944 Education Act was passed 'to secure an educational system which would provide equal opportunities for children from all kinds of social backgrounds' (Ryder & Silver, 1970, P. 248). This model of 'welfare capitalism' was intended to ensure that children from all social classes were provided with equal opportunities and the attendant rewards of 'social mobility'. In education, the crowning achievement of this era – in its imagined form at least – was the establishment of the comprehensive school. The challenges of educational integration are writ large in the policy texts, sociological studies, teacher accounts and popular literature of this period.

It is important to remember that this was also a period in which Britain's geography was being transformed. The slum clearances in large cities and the building of council estates on the edge of cities broke up previously tightly-knit communities, the continued suburbanization of the land around large cities, the

growth of car ownership and an increasingly mobile society, along with trends towards more individualistic and home-centred leisure and consumption, all led to a period of significant social and cultural change (Harrison 2009). Schools were the sites where the new 'subjects of modernity' were to be made (Conekin et al, 1999).

The optimism of this post-war period was undermined during the 1960s when the economic growth that had underpinned expansion faltered. In this context, there emerged criticisms of the nature of schooling in capitalist society. For instance, in their introduction to the Open University course reader *Schooling and Capitalism,* Dale, Esland & MacDonald (1976) neatly summarised the critique of the liberal ideology of education which: (1) assumed that schooling contributed to progressive social change, providing personnel to 'push back the frontiers of technical knowledge and to consolidate these advances and bring them into our everyday lives'; (2) assumed that education is capable of redressing social inequalities – as providing a ladder and an avenue for social mobility; and (3) suggests that culture and schooling are politically neutral forces for social change. These criticisms challenged the idea, which underpinned curriculum theory and practice, that knowledge is neutral:

> Seen as objective, apolitical and internally governed, the selection, modification and transmission of a cultural heritage, through the curriculum and pedagogical practice of education, is assigned more often than not a total autonomy from the society of which it is a part. (p.5)

In the light of these critiques, from the early 1970s critics argued that the nature of school knowledge served to marginalize and disenfranchise working class children and marginal groups in schools. These critiques were developed around the field of the 'new sociology of education', which insisted that it was important to look 'inside the black box' of schools and classrooms, and argued that it was the processes that took place in schools and classrooms that served to perpetuate social division and hierarchy. It was this that animated the work of the so-called 'new sociologists of education' which:

> focuses upon the ways in which teachers and pupils make sense of their everyday classroom experiences, and on how educational 'reality' is continuously reconstructed in the interaction of individuals, rather than imposed upon them by mysterious external forces. Linked to this change of emphasis has been a refusal to regard definitions of what counts as 'education' as somehow neutral and irrelevant to the way in which inequality is reproduced in school and society. From such a perspective, what secretly keeps society going is crucially the practices of individual teachers and pupils, and the assumptions about knowledge, ability, teaching and learning, which are embedded in them…They show how it is both the values embodied in current conceptions of curricular knowledge and the

> styles of pedagogy and assessment adopted by teachers, which help to sustain existing social hierarchies. (Whitty & Young, 1977, p. 5)

It is important to register that, at the time, school geography educators did not fully engage with these critiques of school knowledge. Thus, although the 1970s saw the publication of the founding texts of 'modern' geographical education (Graves, 1979; Hall, 1976; Marsden 1976), these assumed that geographical knowledge was produced independently of social forces such as social class, the corporate state, and the politics of science. However, through the 1980s, as geography educators were influenced by debates about school knowledge there were a series of 'ideology critiques 'which highlighted the social biases in school geography curricula (e.g. Gill, 1982; Gilbert 1984; Henley 1989). These focused at first on stereotyping along lines of race and gender, on the representation of poverty and development, and more latterly focused on the ecological crisis and the politics of peace and war, about questions of human survival in its broadest sense. This work drew upon wider developments within the field of 'radical geography' which highlighted the ways in which geography as a discipline tended to produce knowledge and theories that supported the status quo (e.g. Peet, 1977; Harvey, 1973). The most articulate and persistent critique of school geography in capitalist society was provided by John Huckle, whose work is discussed in the following section.

## John Huckle's Radical Critique of School Geography

In the space available I want to focus on Huckle's 1985 paper 'Geography and Schooling' published in a collection of articles on *The Future of Geography*. Here, Huckle challenged the assumptions on which 'rational curriculum planning' in school geography were based. Following writers in the new sociology of education, he insisted that the curriculum is not something that is within geography teachers' control, but is the product of larger social and economic forces:

> Contrary to the beliefs of many geography teachers, changes in the nature of schooling, curriculum content, and methodology are not then simply a response to the growth of knowledge or the changing preoccupations of geographers and educationalists. (p. 294)

Huckle's analysis stressed how the school geography curriculum is a reflection of economic structures. Thus, for Huckle, the majority of geography lessons 'cultivate a voluntary submission to existing social, spatial and environmental relations' (p. 293). He sought to show how the success of geography in establishing itself as a popular curriculum subject was achieved through it adopting forms more or less acceptable to the needs of capital and the state. Huckle was particularly critical of the development of geography in the post-war period, and the curriculum projects which focused on scientific methods and models, arguing that these were an 'elitist exercise' and an attempt to render

the schooling of a minority of pupils more 'technocratic and vocationally relevant'. This agenda was supported by the cooption of examinations boards, the Geographical Association, HMI and textbook publishers. Teachers were brought in line with the promise of a 'new professionalism'. The new geography was advocated by educationists in university education departments who combined rational curriculum theory with positivist geography. These were then the basis for dissemination and professional development. From this perspective, the curriculum projects, rather than being progressive educational developments, were concerned largely with the management of change as the state sought to restructure in the face of new challenges, and with the sectional interests of a community of educators.

However, at the same time, the 'mounting crises of capitalism' were requiring new educational thinking, and Huckle described how some geographers were using 'humanistic and structuralist philosophies' to design lessons on such topics as environmental degradation, global inequalities and urban redevelopment. These were a direct response to the 'crisis in education' precipitated by economic recession and capital's attempts to restore profitability. This went along with the break-up of social democracy and the decline of political consensus. The immediate concern was to find ways to promote the attitudes, behaviours and ideologies to produce willing and disciplined workers at a time when there was high youth unemployment. The solution was the development of courses teaching 'social and life skills' which required submission to alienated work and the authority of the state. These were experienced as a threat by many teachers, especially as the 'new vocationalism' (represented at the time by the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE) and the Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative (TVEI) seemed to downgrade the role of traditional school subjects such as geography. In his 1985 essay, Huckle detected move to reassert the primacy of the traditional academic curriculum. He predicted that this would lead to a 'tighter control over the curriculum', a stronger role for HMI, and changes to teacher education. These were designed to seek a stronger correspondence between schooling and the economy and erode the relative autonomy that teachers had enjoyed. Huckle argued that in response to these developments a minority of geography teachers became more aware of the developments taking place in universities, and in educational theory that offered humanistic and radical alternatives. The flavour of these alternatives can be seen in the issues of the journal *Contemporary Issues in Geography and Education* published by the Association for Curriculum Development between 1984 and 1987. The journal's concerns mirrored those of the geographical left: racism, sexism, wealth and poverty, environmental degradation, war and conflict. In participating in these debates geography teachers were engaging in wider debates about the nature of schooling and how it differed from broader notions of education. The aims of the journal were:

> The journal seeks to promote an emancipatory geography; it seeks, in other words, to promote the idea that the future is ours to create – or to destroy – and to demonstrate that education bears some

> responsibility for building a world responsive to human needs, diversity and capabilities.
> (*Contemporary Issues in Geography and Education*, 1983, p. 1)

Huckle concluded his paper with the following prediction:

> At a time when the state finds it increasingly necessary to link learning with productive work and raise economic and social awareness, there are significant opportunities for socialist teachers to exploit. The rhetoric of relevance, critical thinking, vocationalism and citizenship, which is being used to legitimate the restructuring of education, allows us to argue for genuinely polytechnic education. At the same time the mounting contradictions of schooling, particularly the credibility gap between its promises and outcomes, create a climate in which liberal and radical alternatives are more acceptable…The struggle to construct and implement a socialist school geography will face many setbacks as it has in the past, but it remains part of the overall struggle for a counter-hegemony and an alternative future. (p. 303)

## The Neoliberal Turn

Huckle correctly noted the restructuring of education in line with the needs of capital. However, at the time, the particular form which this restructuring was taking was unclear. In retrospect, the 'mounting contradictions of schooling' were not simply the latest in a long history of changing relations between industry and the education system, but were taking place in the context of a transformation in the nature of capital accumulation and of the social relations necessary to sustain and reproduce this. From the perspective of the Regulation School of political economists, this entailed a shift from Fordism to post-Fordism (e.g. Aglietta, 1979), or from Organized to Disorganized capitalism (Lash & Urry, 1987). At the time of Huckle's writing, education was being called upon to serve this new regime of accumulation. A few years later, Kevin Robins and Frank Webster (1989) identified three phases through which the subordination of education to the new regime of accumulation would pass through:

> 1. A 'social democratic' phase in which there was a common call to identify the problem and find a solution
> 2. A macho second phase which was aimed at 'nothing short of dismantling a whole epoch'. This phase involved some initial 'softening up' moves such as appealing to parent and governor power, and focused on raising standards and market solutions. But these were followed by moves to break local authority monopoly over public education, break teacher militancy, redistribute power

> within schools to head teachers and management teams, and change long-established patterns of teacher culture through the introduction of a core national curriculum, along with new regimes of assessment and inspection.
> 3. A third phase aimed at the construction of a new consensus – this involved focusing on the image of the new model pupil/student/worker committed to the goals of team work, flexibility and the desire to learn.

Robins & Webster were careful to argue that these trends were not inevitable, and that it 'is not a consensus that will cover everybody, but a consensus among the responsible moral majority'. However, what is striking is how far the new consensus which saw a stronger articulation between education and the new regime of accumulation has been achieved. Whilst the 1980s were concerned with conservative modernization, the 1990s saw the rise of neo-liberal globalisation in which it became commonsense to assume that the major purpose of education is to prepare students to provide the 'human capital' to assure success in the global knowledge economy. Peck & Tickell (2002) argue that neoliberal globalization promotes and normalizes a growth-first approach to policy, relegating social welfare concerns as secondary. It assumes as natural the dominance of market logics, justified on the grounds of efficiency and even fairness, and emphasises notions of choice and privileges, lean government, privatization, deregulation and competitive regimes of resource allocation. Neoliberalism stresses global regimes of free trade even to services such as health care and education.

It is vital to remember that neoliberalism is a political project. In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism,* David Harvey (2005) insists that neoliberalism represents a restoration of class power. In the face of a crisis of accumulation from the early 1970s, capitalists sought to reduce the 'social wage' and increase the rate of exploitation of labour. These were strategies devised to reduce the power of labour and increase the share of the profits going to the transnational capitalist class, who increasingly, from the late 1970s, sought to operate on a global scale. In order to ensure the consent of workers, neoliberalism requires what Rivzi & Lingard (2009) usefully describe as a social imaginary. This is the set of narratives, stories, images and motifs that help us to make sense of the world. They stress that these are not simply ideological impositions that are imprinted on people's minds but instead form the cultural backdrop in which people's world-views are shaped. They point to the role of governments in promoting 'the highly ideological claim that there is no longer any choice but to pursue neoliberal policies', an idea captured in the acronym TINA (There Is No Alternative). In addition, most government reports now begin with the customary framing discourse of the 'global imperatives' of how best to meet the challenges of globalization.

The radical geography of the 1980s was marked by a willingness to draw upon disciplinary perspectives in order to pose critical questions about the

nature of the economy, models of development, the relationship between society and nature, and the social divisions that exist based on class, race and gender. However, what is striking about current forms of geography teaching is the relative silence of issues of curriculum content. It seems as if geography teachers, teacher educators have accepted the idea that there is no alternative. There are three aspects to this:

*The Emptying of Subject Content.* In school geography, the contest over what content should comprise the curriculum has largely disappeared and the focus is on the types of competences or skills required for young people to play a productive role in the economic future of the nation-state. This neglect of the question of the content of school geography is underpinned by the emergence of a new consensus that advanced Western economies have undergone a fundamental shift and that this requires a radical restructuring of schooling. The argument is that we are now living in a global 'knowledge economy' and that the nature of knowledge and learning need to be re-thought (e.g. Bentley, 1998; Leadbeater, 2008; Brown & Lauder, 2000; Yelland, 2006; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). These 'new' ideas about knowledge and learning have significant implications for how schools are organised, the most important of which is that education should be less concerned with *what* and more concerned with *how*. This is reflected in calls for the development of 'higher order' cognitive skills such as problem-solving and thinking skills, and with ideas of meta-cognition or 'learning how to learn'. In addition, the collaborative nature of knowledge construction requires that students acquire a series of 'soft skills' such as team-work, empathy and co-operation.

*New Teacher Identities.* With the question of curriculum content no longer seen as a central concern of geography teachers, more attention is now focused on the processes of teaching, and in particular in making sure that all pupils are achieving to their 'limits'. There are moves to ensure that common approaches to 'good practice' are shared across the teaching profession. These National Strategies have sought to communicate 'what works' in classrooms. The influential *Key Stage 3 Strategy* provided advice on techniques such as 'thinking skills', 'objectives-led teaching' and 'assessment for learning'. Though many teachers may have felt the satisfaction and rewards that accompanied improvements in measured pupil performance, it is important to note that these developments have had the effective of marginalising the types of subject-specific pedagogy that had been developed over time. Crucially, teaching is increasingly characterised as a technical, rather than an intellectual or creative activity and practitioners (as they are often called) are expected to comply with national guidelines for 'lesson delivery' and be seen to adopt strategies supposed to maximise 'learning outputs'. These teaching methods are inculcated during post-graduate training courses which are based on a competence model with Professional Standards for QTS set by external bodies such as the TDA. Ainley & Allen (2010) summarise the effects of these policies:

> The reality for teachers has been an iron-cage of micro-management with teachers doing what they are told when, following lesson plans and delivering centrally-determined learning objectives while having to justify how they spend their time in schools. (p. 66)[1]

Though recent years have seen moves to recognise the autonomy and creativity of teachers, a focus on developing teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject has been notably missing.

*Post-modern Geographies.* The third area I want to consider here in the transformation of geography teachers' work is the rise of postmodernism as a mode of thought and practice. As Hamnett (2001) argues, as a discipline human geography in the 1990s was increasingly affected by the 'crisis of representation' and the assumption that the world is a 'text' that can be read and interpreted in a variety of ways. Since texts are capable of a variety of readings and interpretations the idea that there is no final 'Truth', only multiple 'truths' became common. Although Hamnett's concern was with what he saw as the self-indulgent writing of some cultural geographers, similar trends can be found in school geography where it is common to recognise that there are many geographies, that there are different representations and that there is a need to value different perspectives and viewpoints. This is underpinned by the apparent fragmentation of the subject at university level, where it can no longer be assumed that there is a 'core' experience. Although radical school geography would recognise that knowledge is socially-constructed, it would also understand the significance of 'ideology' and the struggles of the powerful to ensure that their version of 'reality' is accepted as the 'truth'.

## What is to Be Done?

In order to realise Fielding & Moss's vision (briefly mentioned at the start of this article) of a radical curriculum, geography teachers need to focus on introducing young people to ideas and perspectives within their subject which allow for the critical co-construction of knowledge that relates to their own lives and communities. Although this is a challenging task, the work can begin today. As a starting point I would identify five substantive themes where school geography educators can focus their attention.

### *Challenging Zombie Economic Geographies*

There is an urgent need to examine the representations of economic space that are offered to students in school geography. A grasp of ideas and concepts in economic geography is essential for understanding the contemporary world. Indeed Benko & Strohmeyer (2004) state that:

> The central concerns of economic geography revolve around the ways in which space – in its various manifestations as distance,

> separation, proximity, location, place etc.- dictates the shape and form of economic outcomes. In more concrete terms, we can say that the task of modern economic geography is to provide a reasoned description of the spatial organization of the economy and, in particular, **to** *elucidate the ways in which geography influences the economic performance of capitalism.* (p. 47)

This statement makes it clear that economic geography cannot be understood without an understanding of capitalism as an economic system. However, this is rarely and poorly taught in schools, where there is a reliance on simplistic ideas about how economic space is reproduced based on ideas from neo-classical economics, or what Ben Fine (2010) has vividly termed 'zombie economics'..

Questions about the nature of the economic systems that govern and shape our everyday lives should be central to any curriculum that allows students to understand their worlds. There is currently an important struggle for economic explanation which is reflected in popular best-sellers such as *The Armchair Economist*, *Freakonomics* and *Superfreakonomics* which take the form of an 'economics imperialism' that suggests that virtually all aspects of social life can be explained by neo-classical economics, and more critical theories of economic space, derived from political economy, such as those found in David Harvey's (2010)*The Enigma of Capital (and the Crises of Capitalism).* Recent work by geographers has stressed the importance of avoiding the idea that neoliberalism is a uniform and static achievement and urged the need to pay attention to geographical specificity of the processes of neoliberalism (see Birch & Mykhnenko 2010).

### *Welfare Geography*

The financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent economic recession let the 'genie out of the bag': the social costs of the market are finally acknowledged and recognised. There has been the outpouring of articles and books which claim to map the contours of an acquisitive and divided society and which call for greater justice and equality. After years of edging around the topic, 'capitalism' is being 'named and shamed'. At the time of writing, both the left, centre and right of the political spectrum make overtures about the need for equality and fairness, though of course there is dispute about what these terms mean and how they might be realised (Jordan, 2010a,b). The Conservatives have responded with the idea of the Broken Society and the corresponding idea of the 'Big Society'. Those on the political left are more likely to talk of the advent of a 'social recession'. This is likely to become a major cleavage in political debates over the coming decade, as the costs of economic crisis are re-distributed. Geographers are producing important and interesting work in this area, with collections such as Glynn's (2009) *Where the Other Half Live* and Chris Allen's (2008) *Housing and Social Renewal*, debates on gentrification and the restructuring of cities and social housing. Popular commentators such as the

psychologist Oliver James (2008) have published books that explain the new affliction of *Affluenza* and a companion volume which collates the evidence on 'selfish capitalism'. Wilkinson & Pickett's (2008) *The Spirit Level* provides a great deal of evidence to show that more equal societies invariably have higher levels of social cohesion, and Daniel Dorling's (2010) *Injustice: why social inequality persists* is a major statement from a geographer documenting in great detail the five new tenets of injustice. These are elitism, exclusion, prejudice, greed and despair. Dorling's arguments are provocative and draw attention to the multiple hurts piled on the poorest sections of society. He adopts an historical approach which relates growing inequalities to moves in the 1970s to reverse programmes designed equalise society.

### *Consuming Geography to Excess*

It is over two decades ago since John Huckle's (1988) *What We Consume* project sought to develop a critical pedagogy which sought to help students explore the social and environmental costs of everyday acts of consumption. Since, then, consumption has become a major focus of geographical study. In the 1980s, in line with developments in cultural studies, geographers tended to stress the ways in which consumption was a positive force in the lives of many young people and how they used consumption in order to make meanings of spaces and places. Subsequently, geographers became interested in mapping the commodity chains that linked production and consumption, paying attention to the voices and experiences of people as agents in commodity chains. Much of this was based on the idea that making the geographies of the 'thing' more visible and explicit might lead to better (i.e. more ethical) consumption choices. However, more recent work has marked a return to more evaluative work on consumption. Humphery (2008) summarises:

> While there is much about material culture and our relationship with things that can be understood as constructive we cannot escape the need also to reflect on and question market systems, consumption decisions, and the ultimate value of particular kinds of objects. It is the preparedness to tackle this latter imperative that has indelibly shaped contemporary anti-consumerist critique.

There are signs that there is a more general acceptance of the costs of consumerism. This is reflected Neal Lawson's (2009) *All Consuming* which provides an accessible and thought-provoking account of the costs of consumerism on individuals and society. In *Radical Consumption,* Jo Littler (2008) discusses the potential for radical consumption in bringing about progressive change. Her book is one of the most astute and complex analyses of the politics of consumption. She starts off by providing evidence of how the call to consume in progressive ways has become almost central to consumer capitalism. A glance around supermarkets and adverts in magazines urges forms of green and ethical consumption, and large corporations such as Marks & Spencer and

MacDonald's present themselves and their products as caring and environmentally friendly. She traces the rise of ethical consumption as a moralistic response to the contradictions of a consumer society, examines forms of cosmopolitan caring through which consumers are encouraged to be 'activists' making links with people and environments in distant places; the emergence of 'Corporate Social Responsibility'; different forms of anti-consumerism which reflect, to varying degrees, on our position in an unequal world, and the ecologies of 'green consumption' (Sandlin & McLaren, 2010).

### *Society and Nature*

It is becoming increasingly clear that there are limits to the continued exploitation of resources and the physical environment. Geography has, since its inception, been a subject that has been concerned to document and explore people's relationships with the natural world. However, from the early 1970s, the broadly celebratory account of how man has utilised nature to bring about improvements has been challenged. Instead, economic systems are known to have distinctive approaches to the environment. The environmental crisis is understood to be a social crisis – we cannot understand environmental problems without understanding society. Geographers routinely talk of the social construction of nature, social nature or 'technonatures' to highlight this. However, many geography lessons fail to offer a complex account of these processes, with the result that environmental problems are described and explained without reference to the social processes that create them or exacerbate them. A major element in any radical school geography must be to provide a theoretical account of the relations between society and nature (see Morgan, 2011, for an elaboration of this argument).

### *Crack Capitalist Geography*

Finally, an important aspect of radical school geography will be to simply allow students to understand that there are alternatives to the fast capitalist neo-liberal world. Geographers have been at the front of these developments. In economic geography, the work of Kathy Gibson and Julie Graham (2006) has been important in arguing that we should not think of global capitalism as a coherent and all-powerful entity. In reality much of the real work of economic production and social reproduction is done in ways that do not rely on monetary exchange. Once we begin to think in these terms, it becomes possible to imagine all manner of ways of making the economy. Colin Williams (2005) makes a similar point, backing this up with careful empirical evidence to show that economic life is becoming less, rather than more dependent on formal employment and cash trading. In their book *Alternative Economic Spaces* Leyshon, Lee & Williams (2003) discuss a variety of alternative economies. Similarly, there is interesting contributions from so-call labour 'autonomists' who stress that all economic value is, ultimately, derived from work and that the first step

to building human and sustainable societies is for people to undertake activities for fun, companionship and self-need (Carlson, 2008; Holloway, 2010). The political importance of this task is clear. We live in a time when the rich and powerful routinely announce the hegemony and dominance of capitalism. The task of radical geography is to make clear that there are always alternatives to the mainstream of global neo-liberalism.

### *Note*

[1] In writing this account I have had to think very carefully about the 'evidence' for this. I have worked as a teacher educator for the last ten years, which has entailed roughly 500 visits to student teachers in schools where I have observed lessons and discussed with mentors. I have examined PGCE courses and held numerous conversations with other teacher educators. I have worked on a PGCE course where there has been a gradual increase in demands to provide evidence that students (or trainees as we are urged to call them) are meeting the Standards. Increasingly, in talking to teachers I get myself into trouble by even gently raising questions about what are seen as 'good' practice across departments and schools. I read assignments from student teachers that are full of the jargon of gifted and talented, strategies and the obligatory reference to assessment for learning. The one thing I find that nobody wants to talk much about is the nature of the geography that is being taught to pupils in schools.

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