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**Editorial**

**Education spaces: embodied dimensions and dynamics**

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Education is of immense significance to political and economic life, particularly in advanced capitalist societies where specific levels of educational attainment are deemed essential in the reproduction of knowledge economies. However, education is not just about economics, as it is also firmly embedded in social and cultural processes. As such, it pays a major role in structuring the everyday lives of citizens, both young and old, through various different means. The social and cultural significance of education has long been recognised by sociologists, who have theorised the role that it plays in reproducing social inequalities (e.g. Althusser 1971; Bernstein 1990; Bowles and Gintis 1976; Reay 1998; Willis 1977), but often the role of space has been underplayed in these accounts. Over the last decade, geographers have shown increasing interest in the everyday spaces of schooling and education (e.g. Collins and Coleman 2008; Cook, Phillips and Holden 2006; Evans 2006; Fielding 2000; Hemming 2007; Holloway, Hubbard, Jöns and Pimlott-Wilson 2010; Holloway and Valentine 2003; Hyams 2000). This has involved a shift away from the traditional mapping of educational institutions, instead focusing more on their institutional geographies and the socio-spatial processes that take shape within them and ripple out from them (for a broader discussion of the geography of/in institutions see Philo and Parr 2000).1

Within this emerging literature, research has focused on a variety of themes, including the operation and resistance of social norms (Catling 2005; Holloway and Valentine 2003; Newman, Woodcock and Dunham 2006), the (re)production of identities and the regulation of bodies within these spaces (Fielding 2000; Hayes-Conroy and Vanderbeck 2005; Holloway and Valentine 2003; Holt 2007). Many of these studies demonstrate the enduring tension between structure and agency through the influence of authority and control and individuals’ ability to resist prevailing expectations (e.g. Catling 2005; Jewett 2005; Newman, Woodcock and Dunham 2006)2. This tension is particularly apparent in research on the use of different spaces within educational institutions, including playgrounds, libraries, dining rooms and classrooms in schools (e.g. Banks 2005; Gordon, Holland and Lahelma 2000; Newman, Woodcock and Dunham 2006; Pike 2008; Shilling and Cousins 1990; Thomson 2005; Tranter and Malone 2004). Such research has also revealed the ‘informal’ and ‘hidden’ geographies of these spaces, and the importance of ‘informal curricula’ (Coleman 2007; Van Ingen and Halas 2006). Some of this work has engaged theoretically with social theorists (e.g. Gallagher 2005), while at the same time seeking to inform and critique the education policy agenda (e.g. Hemming 2007; Holt 2007). Schools in particular have been noted as places of considerable political and social significance (Collins and Coleman 2008), acting as key sites for a variety of governmental interventions, many of which involve the exercise of biopower (e.g. the surveillance of childhood obesity, Rawlins 2008; smoking, alcohol use and use of UV protection, Lynagh, Schofield and Sanson-Fisher 1997).3

Such research has also demonstrated that education spaces cannot be considered in isolation from other social processes operating at a variety of spatial scales. Noting

the difference between inward- and outward looking geographies of education, Hanson Thiem (2009) argues that education spaces are both shaped by, and shape, wider social processes. For example, geographical research on education has considered the ways in which wider societal discourses impact upon education systems and institutions (Holt 2004; Vanderbeck 2005). In addition, it is widely recognised that spaces of schooling and education both reflect and contribute to the communities of which they are a part (see

Collins and Coleman 2008). Research has demonstrated how such places can provide focal points for social interaction and adult friendship networks both now (Butler and

Robson 2001) and in the future (Collins and Coleman 2008). School admission systems

have also been the focus of much research (e.g. Johnston, Wilson and Burgess 2007; Thrupp 2007; Nash and Harker 2005; Witten et al. 2003). Such studies have demonstrated the link between residential and educational privilege and, more recently, how neoliberal education frameworks have complicated the link between schools and their immediate neighbourhoods (Witten et al. 2003). Research has also focused on a variety of different education spaces and the interaction between these spaces, such as the family, cyberspace and the workplace. Ansell (2008), for example, explored the ways in which responsibility for social reproduction is being redistributed between the home and the school in Lesotho, South Africa, whilst Valentine and Holloway (2000) researched how children’s use of information and communication technologies influenced their use of domestic space. More broadly, the internationalisation and transnationalisation of education spaces at a variety of different stages, including primary, secondary and tertiary levels, is of considerable interest to geographers (e.g. Waters 2006).4

This special issue aims to contribute to the growing body of literature in the area of education spaces by drawing further on the theme of spatiality. Through our engagement with social theory and its conceptualisation of space, specifically bodies and embodiment (as a source of space and existing within space), the three interlinked dimensions of space (physical, social and mental/cultural) and the active dynamics of space, the special issue

will widen our understanding of the role of space in social processes relating to education.

We seek to employ these three spatial themes in the capacity of what Knott (2005) refers to

as theoretical and methodological tools, although in a different substantive context to

her particular contribution.

The first of these spatial themes—the human body—has been famously described as ‘the geography closest in’ (Rich 1986: 212) and can be viewed as both an entity within space and a social space in itself. The body can be understood as a boundary between the self and others; a place where emotions are experienced; a location for the constitution of personal and social identities; or as a site of struggle and resistance (Valentine 2001). However, bodies are also in space, providing the basis for our experience of the multiple dimensions, aspects, dynamics and properties of space. Bodies both allow us to understand space relationally and spatially orientate ourselves both physically and mentally (Knott 2005). We also relate to other people somatically, through ‘inter-corporeality’: shared sensual experiences and the way in which we perceive the meanings attributed to other bodies (Simonsen 2007). Moves away from the Cartesian dualism of mind and body and the emphasis on rational thinking above corporeal experience have led to a reengagement with material bodies and theories of embodiment in the social sciences over the last few decades (e.g. Longhurst 1997; Shilling 1993; Turner 1996). Embodied experiences of the social and the spatial, along with their emotional and affective aspects, are now viewed as legitimate ways to further understanding of these domains.

The recent focus on emotions and affect is characteristic of the discipline’s ‘emotional

turn’ (Bondi, Davidson and Smith 2005). Anderson and Smith (2001: 8) have called for the emotional nature of “knowing, being and doing” to be recognised, along with the way in which social relations are lived through embodied emotions. Further to this, the significance of relational and transpersonal space is highlighted through the concept of ’affect’. Conradson and McKay (2007: 170) follow Thrift in describing affect as an embodied state or an energetic outcome that results from encounters with other people or the environment, and as a type of nonreflective somatic thinking. Simonsen (2007) understands emotional spatialities as affective— as passive spaces for experiencing the emotional affects of the world. Bodies can therefore express, articulate and become possessed by emotion, as well as actively performing them. Following Davidson and Milligan’s (2004) assertion that emotions are relevant to geographical study at a variety of spatial scales, a consideration of the emotional and affectual body within education space is therefore timely.

The second of the spatial themes we are drawing on to make sense of education space concerns the physical, social and cultural dimensions of space. Lefebvre (1991 [1974]: 11–12) referred to these three dimensions as ‘fields’ and suggested that we should be ’concerned with logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias’. While physical space refers to the solid realities of the cosmos, mental and cultural space exists through concepts, representations, symbols and ideas, but “may provide a means of imagining and giving expression to human possibility, cultural difference, the imagination itself, as well as social relations” (Knott 2005: 159). By considering the ways in which social space may be dominated or appropriated, and hence become implicated in reproducing social relations, Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) draws to our attention the significance of power for making sense of this dimension of space. The key point that Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) makes is that all three of these dimensions need to be considered together rather than separately, in terms of the ways in which they inter-relate

and work in unity. These connections are illuminated in the context of the education spaces explored in this special issue, where social and cultural processes interact with physical environments.

Finally, the third spatial theme we are considering—the active dynamics of space—is explored in more depth by Massey (1999). She describes space as socially constituted, as a product of interrelations and multiple narratives and as a forum for disruption. Massey (1999) argues that space is more than simply a surface on which temporal processes take place, but is in fact a product of social relations and practices. It is always in the process of being made and therefore always unfinished. Space is characterised by chaos, juxtapositions and disrupted trajectories, just as much as, if not more than, order and neatness. The construction of subjects and objects therefore occurs through these spatial connections and interrelations and cannot be considered in isolation. Massey (1993) argues through her concept of ‘power geometries’ that social relations should be viewed more broadly than as if they existed in a single locality. Places cannot be bounded but are inexplicably linked to wider scales, with particular interactions and articulations of social relations, through a mixing of local and larger-scale processes. In other words, ‘place is constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular focus’ (Massey 1993: 64). Education spaces and places are no exception: they are active and dynamic forums that cannot be understood apart from their wider social, cultural, political and economic contexts.

These three different ways of thinking about space do not exist in isolation from each other. Instead, they overlap and interrelate in real-life contexts. For example, Gordon, Holland and Lahelma (2000) have written about the centrality of the body in school life, whether that be through the way that pupils challenge the requirement for them to be motionless through embodied actions, maintain gendered boundaries with various corporeal interactions, or recount experiences of school through a range of negative emotions. These processes also interacted with the ‘official school’ (mental/cultural space), where the institution attempted to produce ‘professional pupils’ with neoliberal skills and values, and gendered citizens. The impact of social identities such as gender, age and ethnicity were also significant for the ‘informal school’ (social space), and the place of different bodies within complex power dynamics. Finally the buildings and the ‘physical school’ (physical space) represented particular ideologies about learning and reflected hierarchies of power and embodied social differences. Gordon, Holland and Lahelma (2000) therefore highlight the crosscutting elements of embodied, social, physical and mental/cultural space within one particular educational context.

Similarly, Holt (2004) explores the interconnections between bodies and the active dynamics of space in the primary school. She argues that wider societal discourses of disability strongly influence the way in which children are disabled in the classroom. The study of micro-spaces within schools and other education spaces can therefore be useful for understanding intersecting social, political, economic and cultural processes that operate at a variety of different scales, revealing wider understandings of society (see Holt 2007). Embodied education space cannot be considered in isolation from other spaces, such as national, community, public, private and home space. The papers in this special issue take these kinds of analyses a step further, by considering the dimensions of, and the active dynamics of, space and the way in which they intertwine with the role of the body, both within spaces of education and as constituents of it.

The first paper in this special issue, by Olga den Besten and colleagues, focuses on the UK’s

‘Building Schools for the Future’ programme, pursued by the last Labour government. They show how plans for the rebuilding or refurbishment of all 3,500 of England’s state secondary schools often drew on ideological notions of ‘childhood’, ‘education’ and ‘schooling’. Mental/cultural and physical space therefore intersected in the design of new spaces such as corridors, constructed in ways to better manage pupil’s bodies and aid in the development of orderly citizens. Moreover, the programme itself was presented as an event, characterised by promise and hope, and hence able to evoke particular emotional and affective responses. The design of school space is therefore revealed in this paper as closely connected to the engineering and management of human emotions.

The next article, by Cath Lambert, discusses the material and conceptual spaces of classroom design and how this impacts upon the sensory and aesthetic experiences of the bodies within them. In (re)conceptualising teaching and learning as ‘aesthetic encounters’, Lambert demonstrates how spatialised educational practices can be understood as participatory, experiential and embodied. Through a focus on the Reinvention Centre at Westwood at the University of Warwick, she explores how the concept of ‘ruin’ as applied to physical learning space can disrupt established power relations within the social space of the university classroom.

The paper by Michael Gallagher considers the role of sound in the primary school as another way in which disciplinary power is exercised over bodies, through processes of sonic surveillance, rather than sight or vision. He explores not only teachers’ and children’s use of sound surveillance for ensuring ‘appropriate’ noise levels but also the role of sound in disrupting institutional power. Gallagher’s analysis is a good example of the active and embodied nature of primary school spaces, and the way in which sonic geographies are integral to understanding social space and power dynamics. It therefore recognises that a focus on sound, rather than vision, can bring a new dimension to the study of education spaces.

Next, Peter Hemming takes a look at the issue of religion and community cohesion in English primary schools. He explores a number of processes in a state-funded Community primary school and Catholic primary school, aimed at ensuring that children used their bodies effectively within social space, in order to promote community cohesion through positive encounters. Key to this analysis is the concept of ‘emotion work’ and the way that children were expected to manage their emotions appropriately to meet the desired outcomes of the institution. Through this focus, Hemming draws attention to the links between education space at the micro-level of the school institution and wider debates and issues in spaces of the community and nation.

Finally, the article by Bettina Fritzsche and colleagues examines how changes in the German education system from half-day to all-day schooling have facilitated changes in the spaces that children learn in as part of their primary education. Developments in mental/cultural and physical space have therefore impacted upon social space in these schools and the bodies and power dynamics within it. Drawing on photographic data, the authors point to how such learning spaces are performed domestically as private home spaces, rather than public institutional ones, and the way in which this blurs traditional boundaries between the two spheres. Education space is therefore revealed as fluid, interconnected and constructed through power relations.

Research on education spaces continues to evolve as it is informed by recent developments

in Geography. Holloway, Hubbard, Jöns and Pimlott-Wilson (forthcoming), for example, argue that engaging with research on children, youth and families will foreground young people’s experiences of education, both now and in the future. This special issue further contributes to the geographical literature on education spaces by working with some previously under-explored theoretical frameworks. As outlined above, each of the

articles takes a very different focus, but in its entirety, the special issue begins to respond to a number of key questions. In what ways do social and cultural processes interact with physical educational environments? How is the emotional and affective body connected with education space? In what ways is education space constructed from social relations and how does it interlink with wider spatial contexts? In conclusion, we argue that a consideration of the dimensions and active dynamics of education space and its interaction with the body can further our understanding of the role of space in social processes, as well as open up some new avenues for future research in this important area.

**Notes**

1. Whilst beyond the scope of this editorial, it would be remiss to overlook research undertaken on the historical geographies of education (e.g. Driver and Maddrell 1996; Gagen 2000; Ploszajska 1998).
2. It is not only students who are able to subvert and challenge institutional spaces of power. For example, Askins (2008) demonstrates how academics can create spaces in which students are able to express their agency. Askins’s work engages with debates about ‘border geographies’, which have important implications for geographers engaging in collaborative partnerships both within, and beyond, academia (e.g. Castree 2002). Philo’s (1998) and Lorimer’s (2003) work offers similar reflections on the geographies of geographical education, whilst also underscoring the necessary blurring of spaces and places of education. However, reflections on the embodied role of educator are notably lacking within this literature, particularly the creative practices of negotiating institutional requirements.
3. Research has also been conducted at different stages of a student’s life-course. For example, O’Connor and Goodwin’s (2005) research explores the school-to-work transitions of Leicester school girls during the 1960s.
4. Whilst beyond the scope of this paper, research has also examined how the circulation and performance of particular knowledges continually transforms education spaces as sites of production, reception and reproduction (e.g. Livingstone 2003).

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