

Ecosocialist Pedagogies: Introduction

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The practice of education—labour that is both essential and vital for the successful (re)production of any society—can be one the most meaningful and transformative experiences in life. This is true for both students and teachers, as misleading as these dichotomous labels are. Moreover, teaching and learning, as false of a binary as this also is, is neither a one-way transaction between empty student-vessels and all-knowing authority figures, nor are they phenomena that can be divorced from the contexts (i.e. communities and ecosystems) they take place in. Rather, learning is a process that is defined by its relationality, connectedness, interdependency, and political consequences. All of which are applicable to, and affect both people and environments. Notably, for centuries now, education, along with the teaching strategies and techniques that comprise it, have been and continue to be co-opted and corrupted by liberal-colonial worldviews, androcentric norms, and capitalist logics. The repercussions of which are devastating, equally for societies and ecologies. Hence, education is in dire need of both transformation and defense, as well as is a necessary and crucial political terrain to struggle upon for social change and the preservation of the planet. It is precisely these realizations and realities that stoked our passions and led to this special edition of *Capitalism Nature Socialism*. One devoted to critical pedagogies attuned to history, power, and politics.

In turn, we wanted to explore pedagogies with ecosocialist potential that are characterized by multidisciplinary and intersectional approaches. Approaches that are rarely attended to, analysed, or taken seriously by political and social thinkers, not to mention natural scientists. This is despite the fact that nearly all of those who engage in research and academic work spend at least some of their time teaching or have done so at some point in their career. Our goal here, then, is to start to sketch out an ecosocialist vision that prefigures a collective coexistence of self-liberated people outside of any hierarchical gender-class-race differences (Kovel 2002). To keep this special edition manageable, we have had to omit detailed discussions of nonhuman and natural rights perspectives, but a key theme is *difference* as historically specified and as part of political processes and capitalist systems. Particularly, we have in mind the kind of difference that engages the collective knowledge of marginalized people, the recovery of histories opposed to domination and subordination, and possibilities for solidarity and alliance across difference.

Disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge is not based on any one epistemological enterprise, as they arise from our praxis, engagements with the world, academic upbringings, and political aims and ideologies. We suggest that disciplinary boundaries matter less than questions of power, history, and self-identity. Most, if not all, institutionalized knowledge that we routinely engage with or communicate from textbooks, policy documents, and maps is codified in colonial or settler principles, which are equally authoritarian and capitalocentric. Hence, our manifest intellectual plurality and radical inklings notwithstanding, we came together to discuss our pedagogical experiences and efforts to subvert institutionalized oppressions.

Neoliberal economic empires operate through control, domination, and accumulation at the expense of species at the bottom of the hierarchies they institute. One way to resist this is to consistently engage with radical projects and simultaneously refine

teaching techniques responding to increasing socio-ecological injustices. Efforts like these have been undertaken by our contributors.

First, through the contributions in this special edition we suggest that an ecosocialist approach to education is distinct from other radical and libertarian approaches, and this position can yield interesting insights into philosophies of education.

Second, against-the-grain pedagogical frameworks can promote nonhierarchical student cooperation on projects in class and in local communities. They can introduce theories that resonate with the everyday experiences of students from oppressed groups. They can sanction participatory and action-oriented learning, encourage problem-based learning and a dialogical method of problem-solving, as well as promote experiential learning by following “other” histories and context-specific struggles.

Third, in this journal’s title the two antagonistic forces of “capitalism” and “socialism” bracket “nature,” pointing to its focus on ecologically sound socialist (gender-) egalitarian alternatives, and making *Capitalism Nature Socialism* the natural outlet for the articles included here.

Pedagogies should not stand as a set of loose ideas or prejudices disconnected from history, power and politics (Engel-DiMauro 2009; Koyabashi 2006), passively spilling over information (Freire 1970) while studying “other” communities as detached subjectivities (Fanon [1952] 1967). Pedagogies should instead produce internationally sensitive students (Merrett 2004) who will be tolerant towards other cultures, engage with transnational projects, with reflexive pedagogy (Crang 1998), “border pedagogy” (Giroux 1991) and experiential methods (Suissa 2002).

In the mainstream academy, conventional educational models based on apolitical, technocratic, and state-legitimized ideological knowledge are usually recommended as superior forms of knowledge. By contrast, ecosocialist perspectives, rich in insights on relational ways of understanding human and nonhuman processes and collaborations and their environmental implications, are devalued. Nonhuman species, ignored for so long by even radical pedagogical writers such as Paolo Freire, ought not to go unnoticed. We are not suggesting that teaching alone can disrupt institutionalized boundaries or wholly unsettle reductionist and colonial views of people and environment. But teaching is one way among many to challenge capitalist exploitation within the colonial academic system and beyond.

Knowledge is socially-constructed, situated, and power-laden. All knowledge, particularly that which is produced in the academy, is pedagogical, and all pedagogy is political (Castree 2008). Everyday classroom relations are therefore crucial for the struggle for egalitarianism and for uncovering the realities of social oppression (McLaren and Houston 2005). In this edition, Sutapa Chattopadhyay justifies her use of a self-reflexive pedagogy, following her personal teaching trajectory, ethnographic experiences, and theoretical approaches to feminism, anarchism and anti-/de-colonial struggles. According to her, humans and ecosystems are linked with one another in knots by our everyday actions and by the histories of domination and repression in ways that cannot be overlooked. “Any institutionalized, essentialist, corporate-driven teaching content cannot be challenged without a mutual synthesis of teacher-student knowledge, critical formulations of social and political realities through praxis, action and place-based environmental pedagogy,” the author holds. For Chattopadhyay, this has been the most important reason for the development of an anti-authoritarian (Indigenous) people-environment-centric pedagogy. She draws together radical geography, anarcha-ecofeminist and de-colonial philosophical trends.

Teaching-as-we-know-it alone cannot sensitize students to the challenges of those who are most affected by the historical trajectories of dispossession, exploitation, and extraction. In their contribution, Levi Gahman and Gabrielle Legault thus open a discussion on how place-based education informed by theories of decolonization can be employed in a context of ongoing settler colonialism. Decolonial and Indigenous methodologies involve intergenerational knowledge, defy conventional teaching practice, acknowledge situated perspectives, and can animate pathways for solidaristic collaboration. With this in mind for an undergraduate Women's and Gender Studies course, they drafted a syllabus that centered Indigenous (feminist, anti-racist, and queer) perspectives and devised a slate of assessments and praxis-oriented assignments that were collaboratively developed with members of local Indigenous organizations and activist collectives. In doing so, they demonstrate how community members and struggles can inform pedagogy, as well as how land, ecosystems, and the environment can be foregrounded in teaching and learning. Additionally, they highlight how "modernity," scientific "progress," and the purported superior needs of colonizers and the capitalist market continue to repress the epistemologies, territories, and ontologies of "others." Ultimately, their contribution reveals how the practice of theory, care, and listening, coupled with decolonial action and place-based teaching can be "leveraged against settler colonial institutions, discourses, and logics to unsettle their claims to legitimacy, land, and authority over learning."

Laurence Cox opens up the possibility of envisioning a pedagogy based on Irish working-class community organizing experiences, rural environmental justice alliances and women's and LGTBQ activism to reimagine education as an outlet that can maximize the potential for everyone's self-determination. To move to a wider and nuanced activist understanding, Cox starts concretely from exploring participants' existing praxes, honing in on mutual experiences of struggle and exploiting "frozen" movement theory.

Anne Harley reflects on counter-hegemonic thinking and theory from below, following the issues of food sovereignty to her teaching at the University of KwaZulu Natal. She employs the knowledge gathered from the Food Festival there to subvert the innately oppressive industrialization of food and the interlocking hegemonic discourses of food security. Her readings of Freire and her understanding of the global peasants' movement *La Via Campesina* help her formulate counter-hegemonic interventions towards an alternative pedagogy.

Judith Watson suggests that the challenge of radical pedagogy is to involve the development of critical knowledge while critiquing scientific knowledge that is mobilized by corporate capital. Academics can also carve out a space for historically silenced people to construct knowledge. These knowledge bases that emerge from transgressing monolithic Eurocentric knowledge make possible a conceptualization of knowledge as self-transformatory and as a praxis through the modification of its structure and the power it embodies. As Watson writes, "alternative educational spaces and networks, such as free universities, can be precursors of a genuine learning society ... There is sufficient data, information, knowledge and skill to support the transition from the fossil fuel economy. What is lacking is the wisdom to do so."

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