

NEW SCHOOL GEOGRAPHIES:

Engaging young people?

Submitted by Helen Gwyneth Griffiths, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Geography, September 2009.

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Abstract

In 2003 school geography was in a state of crisis: enrolment in GCSE¹ geography courses had fallen by a third over the previous eight years. In response, a radical new 'pilot' geography GCSE course was designed and implemented in England. The GCSE was an attempt to rejuvenate a school subject that had become out of date, with little change to its content since the inauguration of the National Curriculum in 1988. With student-centred learning at its heart the GCSE aimed to make the subject much more exciting and relevant to young people.

The following thesis examines alternative pedagogical approaches to teaching school geography that draw on young people's experiences as citizens and consumers to make geography more relevant and interesting to them. Written as an unfolding story this multi-sited ethnography began by exploring the networks behind the pilot. This involved not only several different actors/groups of actors (including geography educators, academic geographers, geography teachers and school pupils) but also several different spaces (including schools, classrooms, organisation headquarters, working group meetings and publications). It moves on to examine how the GCSE's approaches to teaching, learning and assessing were being played out in practice and to what extent its aims, claims and intentions were being realised in the classroom. Through exploring the pilot's approach to the pedagogy of school geography my research became action-oriented in approach, and I became involved in co-creating critical, connective curriculum materials for the GCSE. The development of these new materials and teaching and learning strategies are situated within debates in human geography about critical pedagogy, young people's geographies and public geographies and the thesis forges links between these different theoretical strands. I conclude by asking what lessons can be learnt from the pilot GCSE and its implications for the role of geography within a wider educational context. Written autoethnographically to reflect the collaborative and iterative nature of my research my intention has been to critically engage with multiple publics who are involved in this area.

¹ GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education- these are a set of qualifications that pupils in England, Wales and Northern Ireland study for from ages 14-16.

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List of Abbreviations

Symbol	Definition
CWG	Citizenship Working Group
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families (from 2007)
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (from 2001-2007)
GA	Geographical Association
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education (from 1986)
GMC	Geographies of Material Culture: 3 rd year undergraduate module at the University of Birmingham run by Ian Cook
GNC	Geography National Curriculum
GWG	Geography Working Group
IoE	Institute of Education
KS	Key Stage
NC	National Curriculum
PGWG	Public Geographies Working Group
OCR	Oxford, Cambridge & RSA Examinations
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (prior to April 2007 known as the Office for Standards in Education)
QCA	Qualification and Curriculum Authority
RGS-IBG	Royal Geographical Society (with Institute of British Geographers)
SLN	Staffordshire Learning Net
Tide~	Teachers in Development Education
YPG	Young People's Geographies Project

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 A Crisis in Geography?

A report from Ofsted warns that children are failing to learn about key global issues like drought, famine and conflict because of poor teaching. The number of teenagers choosing the subject for GCSE has fallen by a third in the last eight years, it says. Chief inspector David Bell says pupils should be shown how relevant it is. (Anon, 2004: np)

The chief inspector of schools, David Bell, today described his report as "stark". The key stage three curriculum - for 14-year-olds - had been left to "stagnate" and most schools needed to urgently review their whole approach to geography, he said. Lessons were failing because teachers were trying to drum facts into pupils, rather than help them build up an understanding of the subject and the skills that go with it. (Curtis, 2004: np)

If you were to pick up a newspaper near the end of 2004 you would be under the impression that geography was going through yet another of its crises with headlines such as '*Children failed in geography*' (Anon, 2004), '*Geography teachers urged to inspire pupils*' (Taylor, 2004: np) and '*Pupils failed by poor geography teaching*' (Curtis, 2004). Geography educators and school teachers had been aware for some time of the unstable future of the subject at school-level and of the widening gap between academic and school-level geography (see for example Stannard, 2003). It was not, however, until a press release from Ofsted² was published in November 2004 (Ofsted, 2004a), revealing that enrolment in GCSE geography courses had fallen by a third over the last eight years, that the whole subject community woke up to this predicament. Perhaps academic geographers had been too engrossed in debates over the future of the discipline to take much notice of their school counterparts up until this crisis point (Clifford, 2002; Johnston, 2002; Thrift, 2002). Yet, the reality of declining numbers

² Ofsted – the Office for Standards in Education (and since April 2007 the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills) – is the official body for inspecting schools in England.

filtering through to undergraduate level meant that this was an issue which struck a chord with both sides of the ever more visible school-university divide.

On the 24th November John Canning put a post on the Critical-Geography-Forum³ – an email forum for critical and radical geographers – entitled ‘Children failed in Geography’. His post directed readers to the BBC article of the same title, which highlighted the subject’s decline in popularity (see Anon, 2004). This seemed to cause a stir and over the course of the next couple of days one of the most hotly debated discussions on the forum ensued, with contributions made by academic geographers, educationalists, school teachers, ex-examiners and representatives of subject associations.⁴

In one of the forum responses John Morgan highlighted a paper Roger Lee had written in 1983 in which he argued for a change in the way geography is taught:

it is important that the curriculum be rewritten from the bottom up, rather than the top down; from the blackboard jungle, rather than from the ivory tower. The diverse lives of children in the classroom must provide the raw material. Rather than trying simply to impose explanations, their experiences and practice should be allowed to speak for themselves in our racially divided, sexist, and unequal societies. (Lee, 1983: 108)

Twenty-two years on it seemed that his arguments remained unaddressed and Lee himself contributed to the forum discussion, questioning academics’ ‘role (or lack of) in the dissemination of geographical knowledge’ and the part that academics have (not) played in engaging with teachers (Lee, 2004: np).

³ <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/crit-geog-forum.html> (viewed 20th September 2009).

⁴ See <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=ind0411&L=CRIT-GEOG-FORUM&T=0&F=&S=&P=38005> for the kick off of the debate and follow links for November and December 2004 to other contributions mentioned (viewed 20th September 2009).

This decline in geography appeared to be at odds with the Government's calls at the time for an increased focus on citizenship and sustainable development in schools (Citizenship became a compulsory subject in 2002). In newspaper articles, documentary programmes and, most importantly, new National Curriculum (NC) regulations these issues were highlighted as being essential components of education in the 21st Century (DfES and QCA, 2004). Yet geography – cited as being one of the most appropriate subjects in which to teach these issues – seemed to have been overlooked in these discussions.

According to a contribution from Ian Mack, it was within this wider educational climate that the idea for a pilot geography GCSE was born (Mack, 2004a). The pilot, which David Bell referred to in his Ofsted report, and for which Mack was principle examiner, aimed to make the subject much more exciting and relevant to pupils by incorporating innovative and lively ways of thinking, teaching and assessing. A pilot teacher that Bell spoke to commented: 'In one of the lessons I gave, at the end of it I got a spontaneous round of applause, so something's gone right' (in Ofsted, 2004a: np). Mack pointed out that 'one school in Birmingham had seen an increase of 30% in its GCSE numbers since switching to the pilot' (Mack, 2004a: np).

Further mention of this pilot GCSE and the positive effect it was having could be found via a link to an article in the Guardian (see Taylor, 2004). This included an extract from an interview with teacher Justin Woolliscroft, who taught the pilot, who remarked:

This new course has undoubtedly made a huge difference to the children I teach... The course encourages them to think for themselves and they are responding extremely well. It links geography to their own lives and is not

based exclusively on written exams and assessment, but allows pupils to express themselves in more creative ways. (in Taylor, 2004: np)

Something appeared to be happening in school geography, and this ‘pilot’ seemed to be at the centre of it.

Sitting at my desk in the human geography postgraduate room when the first of these emails popped up in my inbox, I was taken by surprise that school-level geography was being discussed. My heart started beating faster as more people entered the discussion, including some quite prominent academic geographers (Ron Johnston and Roger Lee to name but two). Unable to contain my excitement I emailed my two supervisors – Ian Cook and James Evans – to inform them that there was a hotly debated discussion about the state of school-level geography taking place on the forum. At last it seemed that the wider community (and especially academic geographers) was waking up to these issues. Ian and James suggested that I contribute to the debate. So I did. I began by saying:

As a postgrad student who has recently completed a Geography MSc thesis which examines critical pedagogy and innovative, student-centred ways of teaching school geography (including the pilot GCSE), and who has also just started a PhD entitled ‘A mad and interesting subject: engaging students as citizens and consumers in new school geographies’⁵, I have read with increasing excitement the recent debates which have panned out on the crit geog forum... (Griffiths, 2004a)

As it happened I had completed an MSc thesis two months earlier, which attempted to examine many of the issues discussed in the debate. Entitled, ‘*Funky Geography: Paulo Freire, critical pedagogy and school geography*’ this research had begun to explore issues surrounding critical pedagogy and innovative, student-centred ways of teaching school geography, including the pilot GCSE. A bid for an ESRC

⁵ This was my original working title, which would later change.

studentship to further explore these issues had recently been rejected (it would get funded the subsequent year). However, determined to carry on I had started my PhD part-time.

Where, you might ask, did this interest in school-level geography and critical pedagogy start? What prompted me to do a PhD in the first place? Furthermore, where did I first hear about this innovative ‘pilot’ that the Chief Inspector of Schools and teachers alike were raving about?

1.2 Children’s Geographies Matter

For too long children have been hidden from geography, as well as from other disciplines. Little effort has been made to investigate the role children play in society other than in terms of their adjustments to an adult-dominated and adult-oriented world. (James, 1990: 278)

My first foray researching young people’s geographies was during my undergraduate dissertation at the University of Birmingham back in 2001 (see Griffiths, 2002; 2003). At this time, the controversial rapper, Eminem, was one of the main artists accused of adversely influencing children’s behaviour. The perceived negative impact of his song lyrics was saturating the media, launching a widespread moral panic amongst adults. However, the journalists and adults criticising Eminem were not the chief consumers of his music and none of the newspaper articles I read even considered the views of young consumers themselves; instead they were portrayed as passive recipients of delinquent messages. This invisibility of these young consumers was also echoed in academic research where their personal experiences of music were generally overlooked; many studies relied on adultist assumptions and interpretations, with children’s own perspectives completely neglected. Through a focus on young people’s places and spaces of music consumption I wanted to give young people the opportunity

to voice their own opinions on these matters; hopefully opening-up adults' eyes to the fact that young people had different 'ways of seeing' to them. It was in this context that I discovered the emerging field of children's geographies within academic geography.

Although geographers, such as William Bunge, had called for the inclusion of children and their voices in geographic research since the late 1960s (Bunge, 1966), it wasn't until the 1990s that a wider community of geographers took this issue seriously. In 1990 Sarah James asked 'Is there a place for children in geography?' (James, 1990). This question came as a response to children and young people being seen in many sociological studies as 'little more than adults-in-waiting', with their opinions largely ignored and academic research being *done* to them (Matthews and Limb 1998: 67). This all struck a chord with the media hype and moral panic surrounding Eminem. So I was pleased to discover that such approaches were increasingly criticised for their reliance on adultist assumptions and interpretations (see for example James *et al.*, 1998; Matthews and Limb, 1999; Valentine, 1999). Building on the 'new sociology of childhood' studies, sociologists such as Allison James, Chris Jenks and Alan Prout (James and Prout, 1990; James *et al.*, 1998; Jenks, 1996) criticised previous sociological work which viewed children as having 'yet to reach biological or social maturity' and childhood as a time when 'children are to be developed, stretched and educated into their future adult roles' (Holloway and valentine, 2000: 2). Instead children were competent social actors and autonomous individuals who shaped as well as were shaped by their circumstances (James *et al.*, 1998).

The introduction of both the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child* and the *Children's Act* in 1989 brought children's rights and the ethical issues of

working with children into the spotlight (Matthews *et al*, 1998). With the rise of feminist methodologies and the ‘new’ cultural geography during the late 1980s and early 1990’s, geographers drew attention to the importance of difference and diversity and to recognising neglected social groups, including children (for example Aitken, 1994; Sibley, 1995; Skelton and Valentine, 1998). Limb and Dwyer highlighted that:

Feminist geographers have argued for methodological approaches that are collaborative and non-exploitative and that seek to challenge the unequal power relations between researcher and researched. (2001: 4)

In uncovering these unequal power relations, not only within society, but also between ‘us’ as researchers and ‘them’ as researched, researchers allowed a space for previously marginalized people to have a voice in academic work (McDowell, 1992; Cook 2000).

As a result, there was a movement away from doing research *on* or *to* children to doing research *with* and *for* children. As Gill Valentine argued at the time:

we cannot assume that adult ‘proxies’ are able to give valid accounts of children’s lives. Young people may have different values from adults or different perspectives on their experiences. (Valentine, 1999: 142)

This sentiment was reflected in my own research, which demonstrated that children were extremely knowledgeable, thoughtful, creative and reflexive when asked about their everyday and wider worlds, what influenced them and how they influenced others (see also Valentine 1999; Jones 2002, 2004). Clearly they did not experience things in the same way as adults as they carried with them (into school as well) their own, individual experiences. For example, Allison James vividly illustrated how spaces and places had different uses and meanings depending on who was using them:

Even when children share the same settings as adults, such as the home or public space, parks and shopping centres, what they expect and what they are expected to do there is likely to differ, and thus we see variations in ways in which children and adults experience the same environment. For example, in parks the children use the space for play; physical and emotional exploration and development of various kinds, whilst for the adults who accompany the children the space may perform a social function, a place to meet and talk to parents and child-minders. (James, 1990: 279)

Gradually, throughout the 1990s the views of young people began to matter and children's geographies became firmly on the research agenda. Geographers Gill Valentine and Tracy Skelton were forerunners of this movement, with publications such as *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Culture* (Skelton and Valentine, 1998) and *Children's Geographies: playing, living, learning* (Holloway and Valentine, 2000) providing essential grounding in this area for new and existing researchers alike. Publication of articles on the subject in high-profile geography journals such as *Progress in Human Geography* and *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* acted as confirmation that this was indeed an important area of geographic research (see Matthews, Limb and Taylor, 1998; Matthews and Limb, 1999). As this sub-field of the discipline grew and developed it became more widely accepted that young people had social agency and experienced places, spaces and things in different ways to adults. Importantly, research also highlighted 'the plurality of youth culture' and how, contrary to the picture often painted by the media, 'children' or 'young people' were not a homogeneous group and had their own identities (Matthews and Limb, 1999; Balderstone, 2006).

In 1999 Matthews and Limb published a progress report reviewing existing children's geographies research and outlining the direction of future research. They emphasised the need to go beyond merely reporting the outcomes of research with children: 'research on the lives of children should not just be reported for its own sake, but should lead to outcomes which encourage empowerment, participation and self-determination consistent with levels of competence' (Matthews and Limb, 1999: 61). Here they offered seven propositions which they hoped would 'define an agenda' for the teaching and research of children's geographies. These included 'children's "ways

of seeing” differ from those of adults’; ‘children’s place use differs from that of adults’ and ‘children’s relationship to environmental decision-making differs from that of adults’ (*ibid.* p.16).⁶ The propositions were built on many of the premises outlined in the paragraphs above, and centred on their observation that children’s presence in different environments was often masked or erased, marking them invisible. Research, they argued, needed to examine the experiences of children and their environmental needs since they were unable to influence planners and other decision-makers when it came to the design and management of their everyday environments.

In parallel with these developments came consideration of the ethical practices of doing research with young people. For example, Valentine (1999) listed five areas of concern: consent; access and structures of compliance; privacy and confidentiality; methodologies and issues of power; and dissemination and advocacy. Similarly, the Barnados publication, *Ethics, Social Research and Consulting with Children*, compiled by Alderson and Morrow (2004) outlined detailed guidelines to consider as well as highlighted the rights of young people to have their voices heard and experiences recognised (see also the United Nations *Convention of the Rights of the Child*, 1989).

By the time I began my Masters’ thesis in 2004 (see Griffiths, 2004b) there was a growing body of research that engaged with young people and it was becoming easier to show how my research was both important and worthwhile. Indeed, in 2003 there was another significant and timely development with the launch of a journal dedicated to quality research in this area – *Children’s Geographies*. This has since gone on to

⁶ The other propositions are: Children’s free-range differs from that of adults; children’s environmental fears and sense of danger differ from those of adults; children’s place feelings differ from those of adults; and, children’s democratic responsibility differs from that of adults (Matthews and Limb, 1999).

become a very successful journal addressing methodological, ethical and theoretical issues in the area, bringing together the often eclectic research in this area. There was also the development several groups which promote research in this area, notably, *The Geographies of Children, Youth and Families* Working Group of the RGS-IBG and *The Centre for Children and Youth* at the University of Northampton. Both have encouraged new research and have organised events such as the 'New Directions in Children's Geographies' International Conference at the University of Northampton in 2006.

Throughout the course of this PhD there seemed to be a growing interest with children and young people's everyday lives, issues and experiences; how they experience places and construct their own sense of place; and how they perform multiple identities at different times and in different spaces. This ever-expanding field spanned issues such as: rural childhoods (see, for example Matthews *et al.*, 2000; Riley, 2009); safety, risk, protection and fear (Nayak, 2003); mobilities (Brown *et al.*, 2008); play (Horton, 2009; Skår and Krogh, 2009) young people's school journeys (Ross, 2007; Walker *et al.*, 2009); and geographies of youth and childhood in economically developing areas of the world (Ansell, 2005; Bromley and Mackie, 2009). Whilst much of this research focused on micro-scale geographies, there have more recently been calls for geographers to move beyond just the day-to-day towards an engagement with 'broader political processes that impinge on children's lives' (Ansell, 2009: 191). Young people may carry out their day-to-day interactions in very localised spaces; however, these spaces are not bounded and all places are simultaneously local and global. Indeed they 'constantly engage with things that connect with different places', including, for example, school curricula, food and clothes produced in distant places (Ansell, 2009: 201). So, whilst children's lives are heavily impacted on by curriculum

guidelines they ‘cannot readily send communications in the other direction’ and have a say on the policies that play such a significant role in shaping their lives (Ansell, 2009: 202).

In seeking to gain an understanding of how young people experience their lived worlds there have been parallel developments surrounding research methodologies, with recent advances in participatory methodologies with young people (see Gallagher, 2008; Porter and Abane, 2008; Schaefer and Yarwood, 2008). All of this recent work has helped to contextualise the research I have carried out into young people’s experiences of school-level geography. It was thus an increasing concern with giving children their own voice, combined with my experiences at school and university, that led to my interest in researching young people’s experiences of school geography.

1.3 My School and University Geography

Haven’t our personal stories always been embedded in our research monographs? The question is whether we should express our vulnerability and subjectivity openly in the text or hide them behind ‘social analysis’. (Ellis and Bochner, 2000: 746-7)

Arriving at The University of Birmingham in 1999, I soon discovered that the geography I was to study bore little resemblance to the geography I studied at school. Writing from his experience as a geography lecturer, Kevin Ward revealed that this ‘shock’ was not uncommon:

UK undergraduates arriving to study geography at Manchester, for example, get quite a shock at the content of the curriculum, often struggling to see the overlaps between what they, and what we, understand and name as ‘geography’. (Ward, 2007a: 2)

Globalisation, Political Economy and New Cultural Geography replaced China’s one child policy, the Burgess model and the Lynmouth floods. At school, and at university

there was an endless stream of facts to learn and book pages to memorise with no acknowledgment of how any of it related to my life. Why did any of this matter? How did it connect to my life? Why wasn't there space for my own voice? What if I didn't agree with what I was being 'taught'?

It was reassuring to discover that others felt the same way. Read *et al.*'s (2001) research highlighted undergraduates' frustrations with the traditional essay/exam format. The authors revealed that many students refrain from presenting their own views, writing more what they think the lecturer wants to hear, than what they actually believe:

The lecturers always said 'don't write for anyone else but yourself' but that just wasn't the case...The people who get the firsts are those who 'parrot fashion' what they've been taught and I don't think that's progressive. (Sarah, cited in Read *et al.*, 2001: 397)

At school everything I learnt seemed reducible to a couple of pages in a textbook and 'teachings reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe was universal' (hooks, 1994: 35). This raised questions about how and what I was taught at school. Where was the space for creativity, for thought, for reflection? Why was I not allowed to situate myself in what I learnt? Who decided what I learnt at school? What sorts of knowledges were legitimated? As Henry Giroux asked in one of his papers, 'whose history, story and experience prevails in the school setting?... who speaks for whom, under what conditions, and for what purpose?' (Giroux, 1991: 507). John Wylie suggests that the UK's pre-university education system 'aims to inculcate in pupils a relatively unreflective acceptance of the cultural, social, economic and political *status quo*' (Wylie, forthcoming). He goes on to bemoan the lack of critical thinking skills that undergraduates arrive at university with and how they are:

unfurnished with the mental architecture, the lines of thinking and argumentation, that would enable them to make critical assessments of socio-cultural, taken-for-granted beliefs, and political and economic discourses. (*ibid.* p.7)

This certainly rang true with my experience of pre-university geography. An experience which was of learning the dominant culture, learning what it was that a combination of government committees, curriculum writers, and teachers had decided was important for me to learn in order to become a well-rounded adult. It seemed to exclude certain experiences and legitimate others, with the knowledge, interests, concerns and understandings that young people have of the world often getting marginalised. It was most definitely a white-middle class subject. In schools, a report from the DfES in 2005 revealed that ethnic minority pupils were less likely to be entered for GCSE's in Geography and History, and whilst in 2004, 17% of pupils in England were ethnic minorities, only 3% of geography teachers were (DfES, 2005), making it one of the lowest represented teaching groups. Similarly, in universities, geographers such as Audrey Kobayashi and Linda Peake had noted a culture of academic whiteness and a dismally low number of women of colour within the discipline (see for example Kobayashi and Peake, 1994). Indeed, during my undergraduate degree at the University of Birmingham I was studying geography in one of the most multicultural cities in the UK and yet out of 220 students doing a geography degree, only a very small proportion came from backgrounds that gave the city we were studying in its rich cultural identity. Whose voices, I wondered, could be heard and listened to in the classroom?

Then, during my final year at university I took a module which utilised a new way of teaching and learning where I was encouraged to situate myself and the

arguments I made in the literature. This module was called *Geographies of Material Culture (GMC)* and was run by Ian Cook (who had run it since 1999) who also happened to be my dissertation supervisor. The course encouraged students to trace the connections between our everyday lives and the invisible people around the world who were involved in making the things we bought. The chairs in the classroom were set out in a circle, so that everyone was looking inwards and could see and hear everyone else (see Cook *et al.*, 2001 and 2007b for a more detailed account of the way the course was run). This was a fundamental part of the course structure, because in this course we, the students, would be the ones talking. Using a critical or ‘border’ pedagogical approach the course was ‘taught’ in an innovative way, encouraging us to *situate* ourselves in the academic literature on commodity chains, circuits of culture and actor networks. Doing ‘detective work’ to find out more about the unseen others who helped us be who we were. Working in reading and discussion groups. Putting on performances to illustrate the commodity chains involved in the mobile phone network, or other goods that we ‘consumed’ in our daily lives. Making the connections both academic and personal by writing journals in the first person to document our journeys (for examples of journal writing see Cook *et al.*, 2007b and 2007c). Using our own experiences and voices we became ‘people who can participate in the production and acquisition of their own learning, and as people who in doing so can speak with a voice that is rooted in their sense of history and place’ (Giroux and Trend, 1992: 67). At times it was confusing, not being given any ‘correct’ answers or bullet point lists of ‘facts’ to learn. After fifteen years of getting used to this, it felt a bit scary at first; there were times that I got so frustrated that I felt my head was about to explode!

This critical pedagogical approach had a profound effect on my wider views of education and I was eager to return after graduation to explore these issues in more depth.

1.4 Paulo Freire and Critical Pedagogy

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. (Freire, 1996: 61)

The logical next step was to embark on an MSc, which I did in September 2003. I wanted to look at school-level geography and critical pedagogy but wasn't sure where to start. By this time Ian was my supervisor and he had pointed me in the direction of radical educationalist Paulo Freire and his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1996). Unable to put the book down, reading Freire confirmed my desire to investigate critical approaches to teaching school geography.

My first thoughts on reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was that it should be made compulsory reading for trainee teachers. Freire – a radical educationalist from South America – argued against exactly the type of traditional pedagogy I experienced throughout school. Arising during the 1970s, Freire's argument was that an education system, in which an authoritarian-like teacher transmitted information to passive students, helped maintain a 'culture of silence' of the poor (Freire, 1996). Students' self-awareness and creative power was suppressed through a 'banking concept' of education which 'functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it' (*ibid.* p.16). This act of 'depositing' information into student's heads, in which the 'teacher is

the depositor' and the students 'patiently receive, memorize, and repeat' not only deprofessionalised teachers but also diminished student's critical thinking skills since their classroom interaction 'extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing deposits' (Freire, 1996: 53). The main task of critical pedagogy was thus to unveil and critically analyse dominant educational discourse which functioned to serve the interest of the elite, re-producing the logic of capitalism and which 'ruthlessly deny their own complicity in reproducing forms of inequality, domination and oppression' (Giroux and Trend, 1992: 55). In its place, Freire believed education could be used as 'the practice of freedom', where the power relations between teacher and student were unravelled, where knowledge was not seen as information to be consumed but as a process of enquiry, and where marginalised groups became critical thinkers who were empowered to participate in the transformation of reality and to envisage a more democratic future (Freire, 1996).

Although originally used in the context of countries in the Global South for the education of illiterate adults (Freire began teaching in his native Brazil), Freire's work has been drawn upon by a number of educationalists who have used his banking model of education to illustrate and critique the politics underlying the North American education system (see Giroux, 1991; Giroux and Trend, 1992; Giroux and McLaren, 1994; hooks, 1994). Two of the more prominent of these, Henry Giroux and David Trend, observed that:

the right-wing educational and cultural agenda, with its emphasis on heritage rather than liberating memory, literacy rather than literacies, censorship rather than artistic expression, moral regulation rather than self- and social-empowerment, and testing rather than learning is mobilized by a vision of the arts, culture and schooling that presupposes and legitimizes particular forms of history, community and authority. (1992: 51-2)

Proponents of Freire's critical pedagogy developed the metaphor 'border pedagogy' to illustrate education that encouraged students to have an equal voice in the classroom and in which they became 'border-crosser in order to understand otherness in its own term' (Giroux, 1991: 510). Such an approach recognised both the increasingly diverse student body as well as how the banking concept of education served to alienate marginalised student groups even further. Thinking about how much of an eye-opener *GMC* had been for me I was reminded of bell hooks describing how the experience of moving from an all-black to a white school taught her 'the difference between education as the practice of freedom and education that merely strives to reinforce domination' (hooks, 1994: 4).

Freire argued for a dialogic approach where the teacher-student power relationship was overcome and where teachers and learners worked together as 'critical co-investigators':

Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students (Freire, 1996: 53).

The 'delivery system' of education treated teachers as the subjects of education with students as mere objects; the emphasis of Freire's approach was that education did not involve one person acting on another, but rather people working with each other (Freire, 1996). De-stabilising power relationships in both wider society and the classroom were key components of a critical pedagogy; thus the usual classroom hierarchies were redundant, with teachers acting as facilitators and all students being potential experts encouraged to see things from their own perspectives. It was only through such dialogue that education could move 'beyond interpretation to change' (Pinar *et al.*, 1994: 255).

To me, these arguments seemed to mirror recent debates in geography in which academics were arguing that we should no longer ignore questions of pedagogy (see Bonnett, 2003; Castree, 2003; Cook *et al.*, 2000; 2001; Heyman, 2000; 2001; McDowell, 1994). Students are potentially academics' largest audience and teaching could thus be used 'as a transformatory practice', yet, as Noel Castree has observed, 'geography is marked by a conspicuous non-debate over pedagogy' (Castree, 2003: 283 & 284). Since the mid-1990s Ian Cook and Rich Heyman had been two of the more prominent geographers influenced by the critical pedagogical literature. Stemming from the 'cultural turn' (see discussion below, p.38) Heyman drew on Freire, Giroux and McLaren's work to urge critical geographers to pay greater attention to their pedagogical practices and in so doing to see their classroom as 'vital spaces of a new public sphere'; spaces where not only the critical subject matter could challenge and transform the existing social order, but also the way in which this was taught (Heyman, 2001). This could only be achieved by rejecting the banking concept of education and moving away from 'seeing students as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge for the price of their tuition fee' towards engaging with them in a more participatory manner and developing their 'critical capacity' to develop a more democratic and socially just society (Heyman, 2000: 294).

From a personal perspective, I benefited greatly from this approach to teaching; not only in the grade that I received for my *GMC* first-person journals, but more personally in that I gained the confidence to use my own voice. A voice which had, for too long, been trained to be silent. Crucially, and as Heyman argued, it was not only the connective subject matter that empowered me, but the student-centred, pedagogical approach used to convey this information:

[w]e cannot merely add a lecture on the civil rights movement or on trade unionism and think we have created a 'critical pedagogy', all the while continuing to perpetuate Freire's 'banking model of education'. Doing so merely reproduces existing social relations and reinforces dominant modes of learning that train students to be efficient consumers of information rather than actively involved in producing knowledge in the classroom. (Heyman, 2001: 3-4)

Prior to developing the *GMC* module Ian had written about using bell hooks' (1994) work on border pedagogy to destabilise the power relations 'within and beyond the classroom' when teaching an undergraduate module on multicultural historical geography at the University of Wales, Lampeter (cf. Cook, 2000). This course and the thinking behind it obviously had an influence on the pedagogy underlying the *GMC* course. Such an approach was increasingly taken up by academic geographers over the course of my research, with Trevor Barnes and Michael Goodman just two authors who recently published their own attempts at teaching commodity geographies in this way (see Barnes, 2006; Goodman, 2008).

Surely other students might also benefit from pedagogical strategies which 'encourage a more diverse range of students to contribute to the teaching and learning process' (Cook, 2000: 15)? Having only experienced this type of learning in my final year of university, it would have been easy for me to miss out on it, had I opted for another module. Wasn't university a bit late for this in any case? I started to wonder what affect this type of subject matter and pedagogical approach might have at school-level geography.

Reading this literature on Freire and his wider context within critical pedagogy made it clear that this was an area of geographic research that was worthwhile. But how could these issues of critical pedagogy and school geography be explored in the

practical spaces of the classroom? Learning about an art installation called *Exchange Values* by the artist Shelley Sacks is where this story takes its first unexpected turn.

1.5 Research, Serendipity and the Pilot GCSE

I had met Shelley in February 2002 when a small group of us had visited her arts class at Oxford Brookes University to present some of the work we had been doing in *GMC*. It was then that I first heard about the installation. *Exchange Values* is made up of 20 'sheets' of banana skins, taken from 20 boxes of Windward Island bananas, dried, stitched together, and hung around the walls of a gallery space. Beneath each panel is a set of headphones via which visitors can listen to the people who grew these bananas talking about world trade, their increasing poverty, the declining educational opportunities for their children, how the bananas they grow have to be increasingly standard and blemish free, and how these issues relate directly to the consumer in the UK. In the middle of the gallery space, thousands of dried, shrivelled up banana skins are spread out on the floor with no voices attached to them (see Cook *et al.*, 2000 and Sacks, 2006). In early 2004 Ian was excited to tell me that he and Shelley had managed to get funding and support to get *Exchange Values* to Birmingham and that it would be hosted by the University of Central England's International Performance Space in Bourneville in May.⁷ Would I be interested in helping Ian and Shelley run workshops for secondary school pupils as part of my MSc dissertation?

An fortuitous meeting more than 5000 km away from Birmingham is where this story takes its second unexpected turn. In March 2004 Ian had gone to the Annual

⁷ Funding and support came from Birmingham University's Widening Participation Unit, Creative Partnerships and the University of Central England.

Conference of the Association of American Geographers which was held in Philadelphia. He was there to present a paper based on the running of *GMC* from the perspective of lecturer, postgraduate assistant and students (including me), a paper which engaged with academic debates on critical pedagogy (See Cook *et al.*, 2004; this would later be revised and published as Cook *et al.*, 2007b). However, he had also been asked to be on a panel on global education and was there to talk about *Exchange Values* coming to Birmingham.

In the session before Eleanor Rawling, then subject officer for geography at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)⁸, talked about a ‘pilot geography GCSE’ that had just been introduced in England. This GCSE was an attempt to rejuvenate a school subject that had become out of date, with little change to its content since the inauguration of the NC in 1988. With student-centred learning at its heart the GCSE aimed to make the subject much more exciting and relevant to pupils. In its advocacy of a critical and situated approach to teaching, learning and assessing it appeared to share many things in common with Ian’s *GMC* module and *Exchange Values*’ imminent arrival in Birmingham. Ian and Eleanor got talking and he mentioned my research interests. On his return, Ian excitedly told me about meeting Eleanor, the paper she had given on a pilot geography GCSE, and how it appeared to parallel the approach taken in *GMC*. My jaw dropped open. It continued to drop as I read Eleanor’s presentation handouts: I couldn’t believe this piece of good fortune and was eager to find out more. Eleanor was to become my ‘gatekeeper’ into the world of school-level geography.

⁸ QCA is the non-departmental public body responsible for developing the National Curriculum in England.

A quick search online was all it took to discover that Eleanor was one of the leading figures in thinking and writing about school-level geography. Since Eleanor, along with several other 'key figures', make recurring appearances throughout the thesis I have chosen to offer a brief biography as and when each character first enters the story. These, it is hoped, will provide the reader with an understanding of context for what follows.

Eleanor had been involved in geography education since the 1970s. As a geography teacher during the 1970s she was heavily involved in some of the early curriculum developments which sought to give teachers more freedom over what they taught (see below, pages 60-63). Towards the end of these projects (1989-1990) she was also a member of the government appointed Geography Working Group (GWG), before becoming a senior officer and President of the GA from 1991-1992. Moving away from teaching she was appointed principle officer of the QCA Geography curriculum team (alongside John Westaway) in 1994 and still held this position when my research began in 2004. It was in her role as geography officer that she became involved in the pilot GCSE from its inception. Since then she has been appointed an Honorary Research Fellow at the Department of Educational Studies, University of Oxford and, as will become apparent has been involved in and contributed to various Geographical Association projects, activities and publications. In recognition of her contribution to the subject she was awarded an MBE for services to geographical education in 1995. Eleanor has written extensively on developments within school-level geography. Indeed, my discovery of her book *Changing the Subject*, was a useful reference guide at the beginning my research giving me a developments that had taken place within the subject (see Rawling, 2001a; Westaway and Rawling, 2003).

Back at the AAG in Philadelphia Eleanor had told Ian about the GA – the subject association for geography teachers in England and Wales – which coincidentally had its annual conference two weeks later in Canterbury. She would be giving a similar paper there to the one she gave in Philadelphia. This sounded like the perfect opportunity for a first foray into the world of school-level geography and geography education and so I booked my train ticket hastily. The conference was really interesting, although I did feel a bit out of my depth: looking at everyone’s name tags I seemed to be the only academic geographer there! The place was buzzing and everyone seemed to know everyone else. I felt very much on the outside of things and began to wonder how on earth I was going to network my way into this ‘community’. Eleanor’s presentation was simply entitled *The GCSE Geography Pilot* (Rawling, 2004a). Finding a seat near the back of an already crammed lecture theatre I sat back eager to find out more about the context of the GCSE. The following extract gives a flavour of Eleanor’s presentation;

“As most of you will be aware school geography in the UK is in a state of crisis. Enrolment in GCSE geography courses has declined by about 20% since 1996 (see also Brown, 2001; Stannard, 2002). As Simon Catling’s article in *Geography* last year highlighted, the subject has continually weakened since the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1991, and particularly since the 1994 Dearing Review when geography lost its compulsory status (Catling, 2003; see also Rawling, 2000b; 2001). It is now facing a losing battle trying to compete against new ‘trendy’ subjects such as sociology and psychology, as well as the new ‘vocational subjects’ such as leisure and tourism (Lynch, 2002; Rawling, 2000b). As Brown and Smith report, the geography that is taught in schools has become ‘fossilised’, with little change to its content since the late 1980s (Brown and Smith, 2000. See also Balderstone, 2000; Wood, 2004). Meanwhile, academic geography has changed significantly and the gap between school and university geography is widening (Goudie, 1993; Rawling, 2001; Stannard, 2003). However it is not simply

the outdated content that needs to be addressed, but, perhaps, even more importantly the manner in which it is taught (see Balderstone, 2000; Mach, 2004). Balderstone warns us there has been an “emergence of the ‘textbook as curriculum’ in many schools’ with schemes of work being followed to the letter through transmission-style teaching (Balderstone, 2000: 116). I am sure that many of you sitting out there today can relate to this. We, at the QCA recognise that this is not teachers’ fault, but the fault of a rigid curriculum where regulation, accountability and ‘performativity’ dominate (See Lambert, 1994; Rawling, 2001b). We appreciate that most of you are under pressure to ‘deliver the results’ with little time to be innovative or develop active learning strategies (GeoVisions Working Group, 2002).

So, in response to the Government’s 2002 14-19 green paper (DfES, 2002), the QCA and the OCR have developed a new geography GCSE. Designed by the QCA in collaboration with the GA the GCSE which resulted is called the ‘pilot’ geography GCSE and aims to make the subject much more exciting and relevant to pupils. It hopes to reinvigorate geography’s status by incorporating innovative and lively ways of thinking, teaching and assessing. It is also an attempt to address, what Andrew Goudie described in 1993 as the great chasm between school-level and academic geography (Goudie, 1993). This GCSE is being implemented and examined by OCR and has been piloted by 18 centres from September 2003, with a further 30 joining them this September. The three core themes of the GCSE – *My Place: Living in the UK today*, *People as Consumers: the impact of our decisions*, and *Extreme Environments* – draw on cutting-edge research in academia. Rather than giving students information to memorize and then regurgitate ‘parrot fashion’ in exams, the new GCSE aims to give children materials to think with. An emphasis on students’ own experiences and their personal perspectives is advocated and children are encouraged to bring a critical and reflexive approach to their learning. We hope that this development will support you, as teachers, to take ownership of the curriculum and focus on active, rather than ‘closed’ teaching strategies”.⁹

⁹ This extract is an amalgamation of Eleanor’s 2004a and 2004b conference papers. References cited are both Eleanor’s and those I subsequently thought relevant.

Taking this all in, my head was full of ideas, questions and excitement. There was definitely a PhD in here somewhere! Eleanor's talk had made me think about the connections between whether there was any connection between the pedagogical theory underlying the pilot GCSE and those academic debates on critical and border pedagogy I'd been reading (Cook *et al.*, 2001; Giroux and McLaren 1994; Heyman, 2001; hooks, 1994). What was the context to these theories? How much of this was influenced by Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy? To me the 'innovative' and 'active' pedagogy Eleanor was alluding to seemed radical in comparison to my experiences of school geography *and* it seemed to have a lot in common with the approach taken in that *GMC* module I had taken two years ago. But were these two the same thing? How could this apparently radical pedagogical theory become central to school geography? What would the impact of this pedagogy have on teachers and young people disciplinary and personal geographies? Finally, what impact might this linking of school and university geographies have on teachers, students and academics? I wasn't going to be able to answer these questions right now however: they were beyond the scope of my MSc. But they could be addressed in a PhD.

A month later, in May, I was in the midst of running the workshops at *Exchange Values*. This allowed the worlds of school and academic geography to come together. Ideas started to develop. That same month, on 5th May 2004, there happened to be a *OCR Pilot Geography GCSE* for pilot teachers at Aston University in Birmingham. Eleanor had invited Ian to say something about *Exchange Values* as it could be a useful resource for the *People as Consumers* module. Ian invited me along. The meeting provided the opportunity for teachers in the second cohort of schools to hear about the experiences from those already teaching the pilot. Afterwards we got talking to Diane

Swift, who was organising the conference and who was not only a project leader at the GA, but had been one of the influential figures behind the pilot. I had heard Diane's name mentioned in various things I had read, but it was really good to meet her finally in person.

Diane started her career as a secondary geography teacher in the West Midlands during the 1980s, becoming head of geography at a large Walsall secondary school. She began work for Staffordshire LEA before moving on to be an adviser and inspector for geography and becoming involved in many curriculum development projects. As a consultant to the QCA and DfES, Diane has contributed widely to innovations at school-level geography. Perhaps one of her biggest contributions was as Chair of GeoVisions from its origins at Tide~ (Birmingham's Development Education Centre, known fully as Teachers in Development Education) and subsequently Chair of both the GA's GeoVisions Working Group from 1999 to 2003 and GeoVisions GCSE sub-group between 2002-3. Thus she was heavily involved in the pilot GCSE from the start, later being made chair of the pilot GCSE sounding board. Although involved in the pilot, Diane has also had her fingers in many other innovative GA pies. For example, from 2001 she took on the role of CPD coordinator for the GA as well as becoming project coordinator of the GA's *Valuing Places* project. Along with Roger Firth and Mary Biddulph, Diane helped set up the *Young People's Geographies* (YPG) project in 2006, before returning to teaching, this time as a primary teacher, in 2007.

After hearing Eleanor's presentation I thought it would be easy to find a PhD topic relating to the pilot. However, Diane wasn't so sure: they had already commissioned an independent evaluation of the pilot, so a straight forward evaluation

was out of the question. However one of the things that Diane did mention, along with various other teachers at the conference, was the making, sharing and creating of resources for a GCSE which had no set textbook. In light of this she asked whether *Exchange Values* could be added to the pilot pages of the GA website as a resource for its *People as Consumers* module. This conversation got me thinking about whether, as part of my PhD, I could become involved in co-producing curriculum materials for the pilot. At this stage I still had worries about how I was going to move from the outside of a network of geography educators, curriculum designers and teachers to the inside as well as being taken seriously. However, being invited along to events like the workshop was certainly a step in the right direction and it was with mixed feelings of excitement and nervousness that I began my PhD.

1.6 Formation of a Topic: doing ethnography

I don't feel it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think you would have the courage to write it? (Foucault cited in Martin *et al.*, 1988: 9)

Good ethnographers do not know what they are looking for until they have found it. (Fine, 1993: 274)

The ball had well and truly started rolling. My Masters had left me with a whole set of unanswered questions surrounding the developments taking place in school-level geography, and in particular around the pilot geography GCSE. Firstly, I wanted to examine the changing nature of school-level geography and the networks through which the pilot GCSE has been developed. Secondly, there were a series of fundamental questions that I wanted to address regarding the pedagogical principles and approaches built into the pilot GCSE. Thirdly, inspired from my conversation with Diane, I was interested in finding out what resources teachers were drawing on and how these

resources got made and used. Fourthly, I wanted to explore the opportunities the pilot provided for increasing engagement between academic and school-level geographers.

A plan was beginning to emerge. My research would examine alternative pedagogical approaches to teaching school geography that drew on young people's experiences as citizens and consumers to make geography more relevant and interesting to them. This was exciting stuff. But how would I go about achieving these aims? What did this mean in practice? and, What might a thesis that attempts to do this look like?

My original methodology – the one I had written on my funding application – stated that I would conduct a multi-sited, multi-method ethnography to try and help me answer some of these fundamental questions. Interviewing key actors, identifying three case study schools, carrying out participant observation and/or focus groups there and interviewing teachers. Not only did qualitative methodologies appeal to me on a personal level, but such an approach was also suited to the particular topic I was studying. This methodological approach recognised the 'messiness' and diversity of human experience such that I was trying to capture in my study of the pilot GCSE. During the 1990s an increasing number of geographers turned to qualitative methodologies as a way to engage with 'the complexities, contradictions, ambiguities and messiness of human behaviour and everyday life' (Valentine, 2001: 45). In attempting to unveil the false binaries between man/woman, nature/culture, able-bodied/disabled hetero/homosexual (Cook *et al.* 2000) they hoped to 'confront the fact that people's characteristics and experiences do not group into neat mappable parcels or tidy policy-relevant units' (Smith 2001: 25). This work stemmed from the 'cultural turn' in geography, a movement which was spearheaded by the *New Words, New Worlds*

initiative in 1988 and which aimed to provide solutions for a (re)approachment of social and cultural geography, encouraging geographers to look at the world through a ‘moral lense’ and bringing a much needed critical edge to the sub-discipline (Philo, 1991).

Ethnographic methods were widely adopted in geography since the cultural turn as Cloke *et al.* (2004) highlight:

Geography’s cultural turn was also its ethnographic turn because social and cultural geography were brought close together, in part under the influence of the new and feminist ethnography emerging from social anthropology. (p.181)

Ethnography in its most literal sense means ‘people-writing’. Stemming from anthropological studies in the early twentieth century by researchers such as Boas, Malinowski and Mead, these traditional ethnographic studies involved researchers spending a year in far and distant land carrying out participant observation on a foreign tribe, learning their language and immersing themselves into another ‘culture’ (Clifford, 1997). The ‘field’ was a discrete, bounded entity that researchers could leave once their research was completed. However, multi-sited ethnography (a term coined by Marcus, 1995) contradicted the notion of a pre-determined, marked out field, arguing instead for an ‘expanded field’ that was constantly (re)negotiated and contested (Clifford, 1997; Marcus, 1995; 1998). Herbert (2000) discussed how such an approach sought to explore the processes and meanings of interconnected macro-level social structures and micro-level activities that sustain everyday life. In this way the ‘sites’ of classrooms, schools, organization headquarters, conferences and official publications that I explored as part of my research were not seen as discrete ‘bounded’ fields, but part of the same ‘world system’ in which my research participants and myself were situated:

Although multi-sited ethnography is not an exercise in mapping terrain, its goal is not holistic representation, an ethnographic portrayal of the world system as a totality. Rather, it claims that any ethnography of a cultural formation in the

world system is also an ethnography of the system, and therefore cannot be understood only in terms of the conventional single-site mise-en-scene of ethnographic research, assuming indeed it is the cultural formation, produced in several different locales, rather than the conditions of a particular set of subjects that is the object of study. (Marcus, 1998: 83)

Despite much being written about how to *write-up* ethnographies (see Clifford and Marcus, 1986), there was limited advice on how to go about *doing* ethnographies (Cook & Crang, 2007). As Bhatti explained: ‘It is, after all, one thing to read about “how to do it” and a totally different experience to actually conduct one’s own research’ (2002: 11). From past experience I knew that my research would turn out to be a lot messier than the original proposal and I was prepared to take any ‘unexpected twists and turns as signs that things may be going well rather than off the rails’ (Crang and Cook, 2007: vii). Therefore this methodological approach was not set in stone and I would need to ‘prepare to be flexible, to think on [my] feet, to make the most of opportunities that came along’ (*ibid.* p.11). Indeed, there is both an art and a craft to a good ethnography: it requires high levels of interpersonal, networking and communication skills, as well as being flexible and open to new opportunities. For me, there was an inherent tensions to maintain a balance between addressing my research aims on the one hand and wanting to see where things led on the other.

When I searched for two of the key words connected to my research – education and ethnography – I stumbled upon an book edited by Geoffrey Walford entitled *Doing a Doctorate in Educational Ethnography* (Walford, 2002). This was a collection of tales from ‘the field’ by a group of young academics who had recently completed their doctoral research. Straight away I felt a connection to the experiences being described by authors like Pugsley:

[E]arly on, there is a sense of excitement and anticipation, coupled with feelings of anxiety and isolation. A confusing amount of advice seems to be coming from a number of different directions. There is a sense of dissonance which makes it difficult to make sense of much of what is seen and heard. There is a dawning realisation that you are alone in a microcosm. But having embarked on this journey, the potential to visit the unknown serves to add both to the thrill and the fear...Suddenly the crest of the first slope appears and you start to feel some concerns. Reaching the top of this first ridge, you try desperately to scan the horizon, in order to gauge what is coming next. You can merely glimpse the peaks and troughs and anticipate, in part, the hairpin bends the loops and whirls, the seemingly endless twists and turns that await you. (Pugsley, 2002: 83)

Reading Pugsley's tale of doing her thesis in educational ethnography reminded me of how I felt during my MSc dissertation. Back then I was not quite sure where I was going next and what exactly I wanted to find out. It was like walking a tight-rope which might snap at any point (see also Bhatti, 2002; Crang and Cook, 2007). However, the end result – the dissertation – was very successful and gave me the confidence that such a 'messy' methodological approach can and does work.

My PhD research has had a rather long gestation period, evolving over a couple of years: there have been false starts, unexpected opportunities and unforeseen outcomes. It has been exciting, confusing, and often messy. England argued that ethnographers need to embrace the 'openness and culturally constructed nature of the social world', before revealing that this can often result in 'research where the only inevitability is unpredictability' (1994: 81). I could relate to this 'unpredictability' as I could not have planned in advance the direction my research would take, and, as becomes apparent, there has been a healthy dose of serendipity along the way. These features, as Walford (1991) outlines, are characteristic of ethnographic research which 'in reality comprises, short-cuts, hunches and serendipitous occurrences' (cited in Troman, 2002: 100). Bryman, likewise, notes the importance of qualitative researchers remaining flexible:

Qualitative research is deemed to be much more fluid and flexible than quantitative research in that it emphasises discovering novel or unanticipated findings and the possibility of altering research plans in response to such serendipitous occurrences. (1984: 78)

I took heart in reading all of this since it legitimated the approach that I found to work for me, giving me an academic ‘green light’ to continue. Having worked through this and come out the other side I term this approach ‘rhizomatic ethnography’.

1.6.1 ‘Rhizomatic ethnography’

The multiple entranceways and infinite connections that emerged during my research, and therefore my writing, led me to Deleuze and Guattari’s work around rhizomes (1988). Rhizomes are underground root systems like those found on banana plants. Bananas have already made an appearance in my thesis (via the *Exchange Values* installation); here I use their growth as a metaphor to explain the research process. Banana plants are the largest herbaceous plant on earth, producing bunches of fruit that are used for cooking and eating around the world. However, underground things are a lot more complex. Their stems develop underground corms, or rhizomes, which grow upward, pushing their way up through a central stalk, known as *pseudostem*, each producing leaves and one large bunch of fruit. After flowering they die, before new stalks grow from the rhizome. Their growth is spontaneous and decentralised and stems can shoot up out of the rhizome in any direction. This rhizomatic growth paralleled the way my research grew, becoming a hub for different connections and shooting off into all kinds of directions. Others have similarly used this metaphor to describe the research experience:

To imagine an experience as rhizome is to accept that the experience itself can grow from its extremities or limits... For us, the rhizome is a way to chart this ‘unintended praxis’, which generates multiplicity and heterogeneity (Amorim and Ryan, 2005: 583)

Just as the direction the next stem from the rhizome takes is unexpected, so my research designed itself and I reacted to it. Taking this route means that the researcher does not know from the beginning who the key people will be or where your research might end up; the importance is rather in allowing the approach to be open to new encounters and. This has allowed me to move away from the traditional read-do-write approach and follow the people/thing/ argument/rhizome where it led rather than trying to map the entire entity that was the pilot GCSE. Sermijn *et al.* highlighted nicely how:

The most important characteristic of a rhizome is that it has multiple entryways. .. There is no main entryway or starting point that leads to “the truth”... There are always many possible truths and realities that can be viewed as social constructs (2008: 637).

This paralleled the structure of my research and writing where arguments are made and then developed in more detail at a later point, characters make appearances and change the direction of my research, themes that seemed important at the start fade into the background as new ones emerged. Since my research didn't happen linearly in neat stages it has been impossible to write it up as such and I drew inspiration from Deleuze and Guattari's *1000 plateaus* which they wrote as an open system that 'does not pretend to have the final word' and that could be read in any order (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: xiv). The reader may thus find 'multiple entranceways' in this thesis, finding themselves able to dip in and out at different points, reading parts through a few times and getting something more/different out of it every time. The hope has been that 'elements of it will stay with a number of its readers and will weave into the melody of their everyday life' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: xiv).

This thesis explores the networks, teachers and pupils involved in a pilot geography GCSE. Reading, doing and writing hasn't occurred in a sequential linear manner, and is thus not presented as such (see Bennett and Shurmer-Smith, 2002a;

Bhatti, 2000; Troman, 2002). Literature, theory and methodology are thus woven throughout the thesis and emerge when and where they are most relevant; you will not find traditional 'literature review' – 'methodology' – 'findings' – 'analysis' chapters in the subsequent pages. What you will find, however, is an attempt to theorize my empirical research in an iterative manner, 'reinforcing the notion of research as a personal, professional, methodological and theoretical "journey"' (Fisher and Phelps, 2006: 153). There are three main themes that have resulted from such an approach and which run through the thesis. As such my thesis engages with the theoretical concepts of critical pedagogy, public geographies and young people's everyday geographies, hinting at how these themes both link/work together through the 'rhizomatic ethnography' that unfolds.

1.6.2 Situating the Pilot in Context

My first aim was to find out more about the development of school geography in England and to situate it within the wider educational context. I could then examine the changes that had taken place to school-level geography since the development of the pilot GCSE in 2001 (and its implementation in September 2003), seeking to understand why these changes had taken place at this particular time. This involved getting to grips with not only the vast literatures in this area, but also hearing firsthand accounts from the people involved. At this stage I had several questions I wanted to answer: Why were these changes happening now? What were the networks driving the development of the pilot? and, What were the motivations behind the organisations and people involved in these networks?

This aim and these questions are dealt with in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. Chapter Two looks at the development of school geography prior to the pilot, concentrating on the historical context in which the pilot developed. Chapter Three then picks up the story from the pilot's inception, moving onto examine the specification and organising concepts of the GCSE as well as how teaching, learning and assessment differs to what had gone before. It ends by illustrating how the sorts of organisations and people involved in the process of curriculum making has changed.

I quickly discovered that my original intention of interviewing everyone ever involved in the pilot was going to be near on impossible and was not convinced that it would reveal a true insight into how these networks of people and organisations worked. Having already begun to 'cast a preliminary research net' (Crang and Cook, 2007: 17), I started with the connections already made (Eleanor Rawling, Diane Swift), saw where things led, remained flexible and followed unexpected leads. This 'rhizomatic' approach to ethnography, as George Marcus highlights, was essential in order to capture an emerging topic of study such as the pilot GCSE:

The object of study is ultimately mobile and multiply situated, so any ethnography of such an object will have a comparative dimension that is integral to it, in the form of juxtapositions of phenomena that conventionally have appeared to be (or conceptually have been kept) 'worlds apart'. (Marcus, 1998: 86)

But how could I use the contacts I'd already made to move from the outside to the inside of these networks in a more fluid, organic way? This was when I realised that importance role that serendipity could play. Fuller and Askins recently argued that:

Serendipity involves a 'being in the right place at the right time' but there is also the 'putting oneself in the right place at the right time'. Serendipity might mean 'fortune' or 'chance', but there is maybe more to 'making the connections' (Hawkins *et al.*, 2009) than that. (Fuller and Askins, 2010: 13)

When reading my thesis it may appear as though unplanned meetings and ‘lucky’ happenstances just occurred. Sometimes, of course, they did. But more often than not they were the result of careful planning. Whilst ethnography may be defined by its more chaotic style I have followed some guidelines to ensure that I was ‘in the right place at the right time’ (Fuller and Askins, 2010: 13). Firstly, if I was going to get behind these people and organisations then I would need to attend as many events and meetings in which I might bump into potential collaborators. So, I became a member of the GA (which included subscription to their journals), began attending the GA Annual Conference and got myself invited along to meetings and workshops for pilot teachers. Not only did all of this research activity allow me to gain a deeper understanding of school geography but, over the course of three years, I also got to know and be known by members of the geography community so that teachers knew of my work and would come up and chat to me. Through this, I was gradually able to start moving from the outside to the inside of my research community. Secondly, a willingness to become involved and be hands-on was also a useful strategy. This enthusiasm paid off and opened up a number of different doors and I was invited to present at some of these events, and would later be invited to become involved in a variety of exciting projects (see Chapter Six). Thirdly, it was important to get my work out there and make it accessible to as wide an audience as possible. I had already made my Masters’ dissertation available to download from my university webpage, leading to several people getting in contact with me over the years (including undergraduate/graduate students and geography educators). It was thus important to continue to make any research related stuff accessible (for example, I created WebPages from my first case study, see section 4.6.2.). These developments, as will become evident as my thesis unfolds, were of central importance to my research and the direction it took.

My participant observation notes from attending a variety of conferences, workshops and project meetings were key to realising my aims in practice. At these events and afterwards I also carried out a variety of formal and more informal semi-structured research conversations and interviews. Whilst some of these were pre-arranged, many took place because an opportunity presented itself: over lunch or coffee during a project meeting; in the corridor in-between sessions; or speaking to someone who had come up to ask a question after I had presented my work at conferences. All of these ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Eyles, 1998) helped in uncovering where the knowledge came from to produce the pilot. Having read a lot of literature on conducting interviews during both my undergraduate and Masters’ dissertations I knew this methodology would enable me to best hear the stories of key people involved in the GCSE (Valentine, 1997). Interviews, or research conversations (which I think is a better description), were conducted in various settings, all were done face-face and when appropriate, and with participants consent, were recorded. The full names of key people are used, with their consent; due to the low number of pilot schools/people involved it would be impossible to preserve anonymity (many have also written about their views publically). However, pseudonyms are used to preserve the anonymity of all young people and less identifiable teachers (such as support staff and those teachers I met at conferences). To illustrate how I went about ‘doing’ this side of my research I provide an example a semi-structured interview I carried out with the head of geography at my second case study school, Martin Crabbe (see Chapter Five). The purpose of the conversation was three-fold: it enabled Martin to meet me and ask any questions about my research; I was able to ask contextual questions about geography at the school and about Martin’s background; and we could sort of the logistics of me carrying out participant observation at the school. Before we met I had formally emailed Martin

outlining how I had got his details (which had been passed onto me by one of my 'gatekeepers' Diane Swift), providing details about my PhD, and asking whether this was something he would be interested in participating in. On the back of an email and text message exchange we set up a meeting at a time and location convenient for him; a cafe away from his school offered an informal environment away from 'prying ears' and meant that he was more likely to be open and relaxed. Originally I had intended to record our dialogue but the informal nature of our meeting combined with the noise in the cafe meant that it didn't seem appropriate once I was there; instead I used the two hour return train journey to make full notes on our conversation as well as my reflections on this. The conversation lasted approximately an hour and a half and whilst I used an interview guide to steer the conversation around the general themes I wanted to cover (for example, his background in teaching, how the school got involved in the pilot GCSE). Questions tended to be open end and there was no set order to them; rather our conversation was less 'interview' and more 'dialogue'.

This stage of research took place from my initial forays during my Masters in summer 2004 until 2007. Appendix One provides details, as fully as possible, of all the points, places and times at which 'data' which contributed to the empirical evidence of the thesis was collected. Throughout the thesis all this evidence is referenced appropriately; personal communications such as telephone conversations, emails, semi-structured interviews, VoxPops are referenced as such, as are extracts from my research diary and participant observation notes. If non-verbatim quotes have been used stylistically as part of my narrative style I say so in a footnote.

1.6.3 Examining the Pilot in Theory and Practice

This research examines the following objectives: How were the pilot's aims, claims and intentions working out in practice?; Who did the pilot seem to be working for and why?; What impact were these pedagogical approaches having on teachers, young people and their disciplinary and personal geographies?; and, How had an apparently radical educational theory become central to school geographies now? To help answer these questions I drew on the collaborative thinking and responses to the work that Ian Cook, James Evans and I had been doing around the notion of critical pedagogy (Angus *et al.*, 2001; Cook *et al.*, 2007b; Evans *et al.*, 2008; Gough, 2004). Ever since we had all been involved in that *GMC* module (me as a student, James as postgraduate demonstrator and Ian as module leader) the three of us had been writing collaboratively about the theory, practice and experience of critical pedagogy, engaging with the pedagogical theory of Paulo Freire. I explore how the themes of critical pedagogy and young people's geographies work together through my 'rhizomatic ethnography'.

In order to explore how the pedagogical principles and approaches built into the pilot GCSE were working out in practice I needed to gain access to case study schools. In reality this translated into in-depth ethnographic research at two schools as well as less intensive research at a further two schools. These schools weren't handpicked *a priori* and the story of how these case studies came about will be told later. However, since I wanted to examine the impact of the pedagogical approach on as wide a range of young people as possible I did attempt, with my first two schools at least, to work with schools with pupils from different educational, social and cultural backgrounds. This

later became difficult when two of the schools initially contacted me rather than vice-versa!

As it turned out, I managed to achieve a balance and work with pupils of varying academic ability, with teachers at various stages in their career (who also had different approaches to teaching), and with schools at various stages of the pilot. The similarities and differences that existed have enabled me to compare and contrast who the pilot and its approach seemed to be working for and why. My four case study schools thus included: a traditional school that was part of the second cohort of pilot schools and where pupils achieved just below the national average academically; a school for children with moderate learning difficulties who had been involved in the pilot from the start; a heavily over-subscribed ICT Testbed/ Humanities Specialist school who were part of the third cohort of schools and where pupils from a variety of backgrounds achieved above the national average; and a brand new 'School for the Future'¹⁰ which had also just started the pilot when I carried out research there.

Bennett and Shurmer Smith highlight, what was for me, one of the key benefits of looking at case studies:

the strength of all these case study methods is that they put the real lives of real people right at the centre of explanation. Their stories dictate the form of the narrative, their constructions of social relevance offer the context. (Bennett and Shurmer Smith, 2002b: 201)

Rather than trying to provide an overview or make any grand claims, case studies were used to contextualise my research and will hint at the juxtapositions, disparities and commonalities that exist in particular contexts.

¹⁰ Building Schools for the Future was a government scheme launched by the DFES in February 2004 to rebuild or remodel every secondary school in England (teachernet, 2008).

As with any ethnography I used a variety of qualitative methodologies to realise my aims in these case study schools. The central method used, and characteristic of any ethnography, was participant observation (Cloke *et al.*, 2004). This was combined at various times and in various schools with focus groups, walking interviews, teacher interviews, VoxPops and more participatory methods such as young people taking photos. The case study research took place at various times between February 2005 and March 2008. Whilst there were relatively distinct time periods when research physically took place in schools, the ‘expanded field’ of my research – those emails, conversations, publications that carried on afterwards – were not bounded by such rigidity (Clifford, 1997). My experiences from my first case study schools form Chapter Four. This research took place over an intense five week period between February and March 2006. Chapter Five outlines my research with my second case study school. Here I began research at the end of September 2006 and visited the school on various occasions over the course of the following 18 months. My third and fourth schools are detailed in Chapter Six, both of which I conducted research with during the early part of 2007.¹¹ Since the thesis is written as an honest reflection of the research process, later chapters are used to illustrate how strands shot out of my initial research and how it went off in all sorts of directions that were still ongoing when the chapter were written and the thesis was submitted.

1.6.4 Co-Creating Curriculum Materials

In examining what resources teachers were drawing on and how these resources got made and used I became involved in co-creating classroom resources and later sharing and distributing them. This research questioned what opportunities there were to

¹¹ Again, Appendix One provides details of the timeline for each period of research.

create curriculum materials that engaged with young people's everyday lives. This led me to explore the opportunities the pilot provided for increasing engagement between academic and school-level geographers through public geographic practice.

These aims are explored in depth in Chapter Four and then built upon in the subsequent two chapters. Chapter Four provides an example of what a small scale, public geographical research project that attempts to cross the school-university border might look like in practice. However, the crossing did not stop at the end of the five week project. Thus, by following the project where it led, a further case study was introduced – a project called the *Young People's Geographies* project (YPG) – which I was invited to take part in by the GA between November 2006 and November 2008. This was a collaborative project between geography educationalists, academic geographers, teachers and their students which aimed to design a geography curriculum based on young people's experiences. My involvement in this project led me to my final question: to examine whether young people themselves could be involved in co-creating curriculum materials that engaged with their own lives. In practice it was here where, by accident and design, I became involved more as an action research and became involved in co-creating resources for the GCSE. The story of how this happened is told later on, and the methodological approaches used to address these objectives were similar to those detailed in the previous aim.

Throughout all of these aims my participant observation notes and writing were central and, due to the participatory nature of my approach, I actively participated in lessons. Due to the power relations involved between me and the GCSE students at my case study schools it enabled me to build up trust first, with people less likely to tell me

only what they thought I wanted to hear. Indeed, one of the key benefits of participant observation was that it enabled me to study not only what people said they did, but also what they did in practice (Cloke *et al.*, 2004). Here, and elsewhere when participant observation was used, I wanted to step into the skin of my participants and understand their experiences of the pilot GCSE; only then would I be able to communicate this understanding to others (Bennet, 2002b).

Since ethnography in general, and participant observation in particular, was about observing, understanding and portraying the social and cultural worlds of others, my research needed to 'provide its readers with a vivid impression of being there' (Cloke *et al.*, 2004: 198). Howard Becker (1971), speaking about the difficulties about observing all aspects of classroom life, stated 'it takes a tremendous effort of will and imagination to stop seeing the things that are conventionally there to be seen' (cited in Delamont, 1992:41). Keeping a research diary was thus an essential part of my participant observation as it acted as a record not only of what I observed, but also how my feelings changed, allowing me to reflect on how I acted (Cook, 1997). My participation was thus as important as my observation and it was important to get the right balance between seeing things from an insider's perspective and stepping back and maintaining a critical stance:

to talk about participant observation should not be to separate its 'subjective' and 'objective' components, but to talk about it as a means of developing intersubjective understandings between researcher and researched' (Crang and Cook, 2007: 37).

It was through writing and later reading through these voluminous notes that a lot of sense-making was done (Bennett, 2002b). Since I was unable to write notes during actual lessons, it was important to write my notes up as soon as possible so as

not to lose any detail. I therefore took a notebook with me and wrote my notes up in-between lessons or directly after school had finished (for example, on the train home). These were then typed up in more detail the following day on my computer. In writing up these experiences it was important to be thorough, vivid and rigorous and I used Cloke *et al.*'s (2004) suggestion of including six layers of description; from describing other people's interaction in the setting to describing my own self-reflections. Sara Delamont described how easily researchers could overlook many crucial aspects of observation, noting about one student's efforts:

Nothing has been recorded about the time of day, the weather, the room, the teacher's dress or demeanour, what Mr Evans did for forty minutes, the number of pupils present, their seating arrangements, what they wrote on, whether the board was used, if dictionaries were available and so on. (Delamont, 1992: 41)

It was thus important to make field notes not only about what people were doing or saying, but also about the spaces, activities, atmospheres and emotions involved. Detail was key. Without all these layers of overlap, reflection and imagining audiences, the central aim of participant observation – that of putting readers in researcher's shoes – would be lost. In line with this, throughout the thesis there are some quite detailed descriptions of research encounters; rather than being unnecessary extras I argue that they contextualise my research encounters and give the reader the impression of being there.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, my concluding chapter, I return to both my aims and theoretical themes of critical pedagogy, young people's geographies and public geographies, showing how they link together and concluding what I have learnt from them along the way. I also reflect on the rhizomatic approach I have taken to both ethnography and writing, suggesting how this has allowed me to gain unique insights into an evolving topic of study.

1.7 Writing as Method: an autoethnographic sensibility to writing

Increasingly it is recognised that there is a politics both to the practices of research and in textual construction. Thus geographers are beginning to consider different ways in which we might write so as to allow not only the voices of those multiple others whom we study to be heard in our texts, but also to include our own voices. (McDowell, 1994: 241)

One of the many problems besetting the left (and indeed most of academia) is the miserable quality of our writing. With few exceptions we write for each other and we do it with dense, turgid and usually mind-numbingly boring prose. (Mitchell, 2006: 205)

This PhD is as much about the approach I have taken as it is about the subject matter (school geography and the pilot GCSE). It is therefore important that I be upfront, clear and persuasive about the rhizomatic approach to both ethnography *and* writing I have taken. By writing about the *process* of doing my PhD it is my intention that the resulting thesis will contribute to much wider debates.

Imagine that you are a school geography teacher in England.¹² You teach for 35 hours a week. You perhaps have two ‘free’ periods within this time. You arrive at school at 7am to prepare for the day’s lessons. You leave at 6pm having interrupted your marking of books to attend a staff meeting about the latest ICT initiative. You’re desperate to engage with what is going on elsewhere in school geography, or at university-level geography for that matter. You wish you had time to update the syllabus, but your life revolves around attending staff meetings, filling in risk assessment forms and making sure that you reach targets. You arrive home, put your coat up on the hook and place your bag under the stairs. The corner of a magazine protrudes from the top of your bag reminding you that your colleague lent you an academic journal saying that you might be interested in one of the articles on sustainable development. As your eyes move across the first page you stumble trying to

¹² And if you are a teacher reading this, then you might be able to relate to what follows!

come to terms with the dry, jargon-filled language used. Your eyes start to glaze over and you find it hard to keep focused. You don't make it past the abstract. Frustrated you put the journal back in your bag and go back to marking student essays on a subject that has no interest to you or your students.

One of the reasons why you did not make it past the abstract is that, as Kathryn Mitchell highlights, academic geographers have become increasingly poor at writing in accessible styles open to audiences outside of academia. However, it seemed to me that this was not just a problem isolated to the discipline of geography, but one of which academia at large was guilty (see Blumenthal, 1999; Hague, 2002). With the rise of 'public geographies' (see Fuller and Askins, 2007; Fuller, 2008) more geographers have argued that we need to 'write more, write better and write for audiences outside of academia' (Mitchell, 2006: 205; see also Murphy, 2006).¹³ However, there have been increasing arguments for and examples of more creative, experimental writing styles (see Behar and Gorden, 1995; Richardson, 2000; and the journal *Qualitative Inquiry*). Within geography Hayden Lormier (2003a; 2003b), Derek McCormack (2002; 2003), John Wylie (2005) and Catlin DeSilvery (2007) are amongst those who have answered these calls.

Since arguments about critical pedagogy, and especially the work of Paulo Freire, lay at the heart of what my thesis and the pilot were about, it would be going against the grain to write in an ivory tower, all-knowing third person (England 1994; Katz, 1992; McDowell, 1992; 1994). Haraway's seminal paper on situated knowledge called for researchers to de-centre themselves, to be continuously reflexive throughout

¹³ In-depth discussion on 'public geographies' take place in section 3.9 of the thesis (page 120 onwards)

the research process, and to write this into the research from the start (Haraway, 1988).

As Haraway argued:

The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another. (1988: 586)

Influenced by Haraway's work, an increasing number of geographers began to call for work that included the authors voice and position (for example Cook *et al.*, 2005; England, 1994; Katz, 1992; McDowell, 1992, 1994). This philosophical stand point that knowledge was situated and partial required researchers to recognise 'the extent to which they are immersed in, rather than attached from, the production of knowledge' (Smith 2001:25). Thus, the topic I research, the questions I do/do not ask, the voices I do/do not include are all affected by my position in the world; a position that isn't static but constantly changing (Blumenthal, 1999; Cook *et al.*, 2005). In McDowell's *Polyphony and pedagogic authority* (1994) she talked about how all knowledge was 'contextual, multiple and situated' and that therefore geographers should reflect upon and include their own positionality in their work (see also England, 1994; Katz, 1992).

My intention, with this thesis, has been to write a critically engaging narrative that could be read on a number of different levels and by a number of different audiences. If the thesis ends up being read solely by my supervisors and examiners then the past four years of research will be in vain. Laurel Richardson argues that qualitative research,

could be reaching wide and diverse audiences, not just devotees of individual topics or authors. It seems foolish at best, and narcissistic and wholly self-absorbed at worst, to spend months or years doing research that ends up not being read and not making a difference to anything but the author's career. (Richardson, 2001: 924)

Part of the point of doing this research in the first place – and of the pilot GCSE itself – was to collaborate with teachers and pupils and forge links between school-level and academic geography. This, coupled with the fact that the pilot was introduced because young people were disengaging with geography, was justification enough to write a thesis that tried to engage with the reader. I didn't want to write in a stuck up academic way as though I occupied a privileged position in the ivory tower, performing Haraway's 'god trick' (1991) and ignoring the partiality and positionality of any knowledge claims.

This thesis thus responds to the recent calls in geography for more accessible modes of writing, suitable for a varied audience. However, I recognised that this was an *academic* thesis over anything else and the main audience of *this piece of work* had to be the examiners, other academics and the University of Exeter who's library my thesis would be placed. I had a responsibility to them too. It therefore needed to retain critical academic rigour and reflexivity. This did not mean that it couldn't appeal to a wider (public) audience; indeed I hoped the informal and accessible writing style would engage with other important audiences including, PGCE tutors, MA students, geography educationalists and curriculum writers. Particular audiences could also more directly be addressed via publications that stemmed from the thesis; for example, Griffiths (2010) was written for a primarily geography teacher audience.

In attempting to produce an accessible, but still academically rigorous text, I drew inspiration from a variety of sources. As a student on *GMC* I'd been influenced by two authors who wrote in a connective and affective way: Bruno Latour's (1996) *Aramis, or the love of technology* and Leah Hager-Cohen's (1998) *Glass, Paper, Beans*.

The former traced why a rapid transit system in Paris failed and the later explored the journalist-cum-researcher's daily coffee shop routine, taking the reader on a journey to meet the people whose lives she (and us) rely on, 'People with name and toes and sore and wages and fancies and parents and memories' (Cohen, 1997: 14). Reading these texts had an emotional impact on me as I was invited to step into the shoes of both the author and the various people's lives they encountered; encounters that were portrayed full of energy and life and that were 'moving, affecting, heart-warming, poignant accounts' (Cook *et al.*, 2007b: 1122). They attempted to 'make situated, mundane but sparky connections, not only with the 'ethnographers' and the people whose lives they try to understand, but also with the audience(s) for their work' (*ibid.*). How might I write myself into my research and reflect on my own positionality, whilst weaving in the 'sparky geographies' of those people I spoke to? Drawing on autoethnography was one way I felt this could be achieved.

My first foray into autoethnography was during my Masters research. I'd enthusiastically read *Placing autobiography in Geography* by Pamela Moss in which the authors of ten chapters wrote themselves into the research, revealing how their everyday lived experiences informed their research (Moss, 2001). One chapter, in particular, had resonated with me; in it Rachel Saltmarsh spoke frankly about her frustrations as a working-class undergraduate in a predominantly middle-class university environment and how she used autobiography as a way to write herself out of this confusion by researching the mining community she was brought up in (Saltmarsh, 2001). As I read her narrative I found myself situating myself in her arguments and relating to the struggles she went through. I always knew that 'putting readers in shoes' was a central tenant of a good ethnography, but this seemed to take things one step

further. Since my research came out of my own experiences and frustrations of school and university geography I thought that placing myself in my research from the start may be a good idea. It was then that I discovered the work by sociologists Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner around autoethnography (Bochner and Ellis, 1996; Ellis, 1999; Ellis and Bochner, 2000).

Stemming from the ‘crisis of representation’ in anthropology during the 1980s (Clifford, 1986, 1988; Marcus and Fisher, 1986) which criticised standard forms of writing which inadequately represented the realities of fieldwork and which attempted to challenge the ‘realist tradition of “been there, seen that, know that” writing’ (Butz and Besio, 2009: 1662), autoethnography emerged as a style that invited readers to bring their own understandings to the story,

A good account can inspire a different way of reading. It isn’t meant to be consumed as ‘knowledge’ or received passively, you know, as an object of contemplation (Bochner and Ellis, 1996: 24)

By writing yourself into the arguments from the start, your narrative would hopefully spark recognition with the reader, who would take a more active role, reflecting critically on their own experiences and coming to their own conclusions about what it might mean for them and others (Ellis, 1999; Ellis and Bochner, 2000). The objective was not to produce a text which ‘simplifies, categorizes, slices, and dices’ (Ellis, 1999: 671), rendering research encounters as lifeless summaries (Blumenthal, 1999). Rather, it was an approach that evoked ‘particular aesthetic, emotional or intellectual responses’ and that got people in the hearts as well as the head, giving readers a real sense of being there (Butz and Besio, 2009: 1664; see also Cook *et al.* 2007a; Richardson, 2000). It would thus allow me to be open about the often emotional and at times overwhelming experience of research; something I felt was too often lost in ‘standard’ research.

Throughout my ‘following’ methodology I drew inspiration from Cook *et al.*’s call for geographers to narrate their own ‘detective work’ and to document,

the emotional geographies involved in searching for, meeting and learning about the lives of people (and other others) who might be helping us to live the lives we live (and vice versa), and the processes through which our politics might radically change by doing this (2006: 660).

These arguments also chimed with increasing attention being paid to affect, emotional and embodiment within geography (cf. Anderson and Harrison, 2010; Davidson *et al.*, 2005).

Reading the literature in more depth, it became clear that a) there were a myriad of terms that loosely fell under the label of autoethnography and b) the style had been criticised as being self-centred, irreverent and of fictionalising life. Several papers had been published which attempted to more thoroughly distinguish and critically analyse the different strands to autoethnography (cf. Butz, 2010; Butz and Besio, 2009; Delamont, 2009). Through detailed examples from her own ethnographic research into capoeira teaching and learning in the UK (a Brazilian martial art and dance form), Sara Delamont (2009) contrasted two types of autoethnography, distinguishing between what she termed ‘autoethnographic writing’ and ‘autobiographical reflexivity’. The first she argued could be used quite introspectively, foregrounding storytelling over critical analysis and taking the form of a ‘confessional tale’. This ‘self-indulgent writing published under the guise of social research and ethnography’ (Coffey, 1999: 155) allowed the audience to learn little about the wider socio or cultural phenomena under study and more about the researcher themselves. There thus needed to be a ‘demarcation between the ethnographer’s reflexive self when there is a research topic, and the academic who focuses on themselves rather than having any research topic’ (Delamont, 2009: 60).

It is the later of Delamont's two terms that this thesis draws parallels with. I use the term autoethnography to describe the autobiographical and reflexive thinking that is woven in with those of my participants, and that is focused on 'understanding and exemplifying social circumstance or relations beyond the individual self' (Butz, 2010: 150). Kim England makes the point that reflexivity in this way is 'self critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious *analytical* scrutiny of the self as research' rather than 'mere navel gazing' (1994: 83). Drawing on Reed-Danahay's oft-cited definition of autoethnography as 'a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context' (1997: 9) the aim has been to connect my own personal experiences of school geography to the wider socio-cultural phenomenon of school curricula and pedagogy. Such an approach has allowed me to make a more faithful sense of what I've learnt on the journey through the expanded field of my research, however much it stayed on or went off the rails.

1.8 Concluding Thoughts

Where does the thesis stand at this point? The thesis thus far has explored developments taking place at school-level geography alongside my own reflections on the process of doing and writing about research that is rhizomatic and unfolding in nature. This opening chapter has set the conceptual and methodological scene for what follows, contextualising and justifying both the content of my thesis (the pilot geography GCSE, school geography curricula and pedagogy) and how the thesis was done and written (rhizomatic ethnography, autoethnography).

From an Ofsted report that warned of the dire state of school-level geography and reports into falling GCSE geography student numbers to concerns over the

disconnection between school and university counterparts, I have highlighted the timeliness and originality of the thesis. Specifically, I have shown how the research fits into academic literature and debates in geography surrounding children's geographies and critical pedagogy (a third conceptual theme, 'public geographies', will also come to the fore in Chapter Three).

Having introduced the pilot GCSE and some of the key figures involved at this stage, I have gone on to develop my methodological approach. Here I outline my decision to use a multi-sited autoethnographic approach to explore how the pedagogical principles and approaches built into the pilot are working out in practice. Using the term rhizomatic ethnography I develop arguments for less linear, more organic approaches to doing research that allow for unexpected encounters and enable the researcher to react to the research as it develops. In response to recent moves in Geography, in particular public geographies, calling for more accessible writing styles, I have justified my choice to write the thesis as an honest reflection of the research process, able to speak to a varied audience.

How did I get here? In laying these foundation it is clear that both my experiences as an undergraduate student (in relation to both my dissertation and the *GMC* module) and my Masters' thesis have had a major influence on the thesis. Firstly, these influences have been outlined through my discussion of: the children's geographies literature; my own experiences of school and university geography (including the border pedagogical approach taken by Ian in *GMC*); being introduced to Paulo Freire's work during my Masters; learning about the pilot GCSE; making initial contacts; and writing my Masters' thesis autoethnographically. By nature, therefore, this

baggage I bring with me as a researcher has contributed to both the topic and approach under study.

Secondly, this is my third major piece of work taking a multi-sited ethnographic approach (after my BA and Masters' dissertations) and, as such, is the third stage in a methodological development. The rhizomatic, unfolding nature of my research which evolved rather than being planned and implemented was part of a well-rehearsed process of action-reflection-writing grounded in good solid research. Yet, despite this grounding in how to 'do' ethnography and a thorough knowledge of methodological literatures (for example on conducting interviews, participant observation and the like) I have continued to read and write about research methods and practice throughout the thesis.

Where next? Whilst there are clear links between my Masters research and this thesis, the former only scratched the surface of critically analysing the relationship between critical pedagogy and school geography. The next chapter therefore looks to dig deeper and take things further by providing a critical history of geography curricula and teaching. In doing so I hope to answer my first research aim; that of situating the pilot GCSE in context. By examining the changing nature of school-level geography and the networks through which the pilot GCSE has developed, I hope to gain a sense of why the pilot GCSE developed when it did.

Chapter Two: The Development of School Geography

2.1 Introduction

Yeah, there are definitely networks. I think particularly the people who are looking to change the nature of school geography, I think there are some, you know, circuits of people who get quite a lot of support from each other. (Ben Ballin, 2004, pers. comm., 23 May)

The letter arrived at the end of August 2005. The unmistakable ESRC logo stamped neatly in the top right-hand corner. I had just about given up hope of ever embarking on my PhD properly. This was a shame, as my Masters research had left me with lots of unanswered questions. I looked at the comments that Ian had written at the end of my thesis. ‘This has the makings of a PhD. And a great one at that’ he had scribbled in his trademark scruffy handwriting. ‘Yes, it has!’ I thought to myself. However, after two failed attempts to secure ESRC funding and with little hope of getting school-funding from the university, I wasn’t holding my breath.

Desperately hoping that the panel reviewing my application this time around would see the importance of research that crossed the school-university divide I nervously picked up the letter. After a couple of deep breaths I tore my finger through the top of the envelope breaking the seal, pulled out the neatly folded pieces of paper and glanced down at the front page. ‘Congratulations you were successful. You achieved 84 marks out of 100 and the cut off mark was 80’ I read. I couldn’t take it all in and had to re-read it several times to make sure I had not be mistaken. I had finally secured full-time funding for my PhD from the ESRC.

The past 12 months had not been in vain thank goodness. Between the end of my Masters in September 2004 and opening this letter I had been working on my PhD

part-time alongside a job. This time was used to reflect on what had come out of my Masters as well as doing lots of background reading. Throughout my Masters I had become increasingly interested in the networks of people involved in school geography, in particular those behind the development of the pilot GCSE. This interest came from having attended my first GA conference as well as comments I'd heard people, like Ben Ballin, make about the 'circuits of people' involved in recent developments.

I decided to draw a spider diagram to illustrate all the people, organisations and networks linked to the development and implementation of the pilot GCSE. Some of this I got from the reading I had done already, some from chatting informally to people involved and some from the research I did for my Masters. A very messy 'mind map' started to appear. At this stage I was still very much in uncharted territory. Looking at the map I had only spoken to a couple of the people I had named and the links I was making were tentative.

This was simply a starting point as it was based on my own interpretations of what I had read and experienced on the one hand, and on what had been written 'officially' on the other. When I showed this map to Ian and James in an early supervision meeting they were rather speechless at the mess of different coloured lines, circles and boxes covering the sheet of A3 paper in front of them. Yet, all this thinking had led me to the first of my thesis aims: to examine the changing nature of school level geography and the networks behind the development of the pilot GCSE. A series of questions were buzzing through my mind at this point: Why were these changes happening now? What were the networks driving the development of the pilot? What were the motivations behind the organisations and people involved in these networks?

Thinking back to the 2004 GA Annual Conference where I felt completely out of my depth I wondered how on earth I was going to move from the outside of this massive network to the inside? Where did I begin?

I felt I should start by talking to some of the people whose names seemed to crop up time and time again and seemed to me, at this stage, to be central to the development of the pilot GCSE. Fortunately for me, the research and contacts made from my Masters research meant that I was not starting from scratch. In line with Crang and Cook's advice (2007) I had already begun to 'cast a preliminary research net', having met Eleanor and Diane, via Ian, before I embarked on my doctoral research. However, alongside this, in order to understand why these changes had been taking place to school-level geography at this time, I needed to set the pilot in its historical context. An understanding of the development of school geography was required. This chapter combines what has been written in the literature about these developments alongside snippets of people's own experience during these different periods of school geography.

2.2 The Development of School Geography Years

From 'capes and bays' rote learning of facts about world regions in the pre-Second World War period, through the impact of the 'quantitative revolution' in the 1960s and the innovative Schools Council curriculum projects of the 1970s and early 1980s, we have experienced most recently the rapid changes and challenges of the 1980s and 1990s, in the shape of the GCSE, the National Curriculum and a vast catalogue of other educational innovations. (Binns, 1996: 40)

Reading Binns' summary of the development of school-level geography, I realised just how many changes school geography had come through over the past 100 years or so. Armed with a list of references a couple of pages long I headed to the University of Birmingham's Education Library to seek out the various book chapters,

books, journal articles and theses that might help me place the pilot GCSE in its historical context. As yet I was unfamiliar with many of the authors on the list and felt slightly out of place in a library that was swarming with PGCE students. However, authors such as John Morgan, David Lambert and David Balderstone, and journals such as *Geography*, *Teaching Geography* and *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education* would become trusty sources of information and guidance. Scanning the geography section there were no shortage of authors who had charted the history of school geography in one way or another. Two books published in the same year – Ashley Kent’s edited collection *Reflective Practice in Geography Teaching* and Rex Walford’s *Geography in British Schools 1850-2000* – both charted the development of school-geography from its inception in the late 19th century (See Kent, 2000; Walford, 2000). Then there were those books which focused on particular time-spans, such as Eleanor Rawling’s *Changing the Subject: the impact of national policy on school geography 1980-2000* (Rawling, 2001a), which mapped out in minute detail the impact of national policy on school geography between 1980 and 2000. Looking further along the library shelf I found Boardman and McPartland’s series of four articles, published to celebrate the GA’s centenary, which traced the main developments in school geography since the late 19th Century (1993 a, b, c, d). Another excellent find was a thesis written by Graham Butt about the development of the National Curriculum Geography Working Group (Butt, 1997). I hadn’t even heard about this Working Group so put a request in to borrow the thesis.

As interesting and useful as many of these broad accounts were, I found some of them offered little more than a description of events in school geography’s development. I then heard about a book hot off the press written by John Morgan and

David Lambert entitled *Geography: Teaching School Subjects 11-19* (Morgan and Lambert, 2005). Perhaps this could offer a new slant on things? Indeed it did. In the opening chapter, after a brief summary of ‘the development of school geography-type publications’ they concluded:

Too often, these tend to take the form of ‘uncritical narratives’ (Ploszajska, 2000) which chronicle the ‘progressive evolution’ of the discipline and the institutions that sponsor it... However, the biggest problem with the accounts is that they generally fail to unmask the relationship between geography as a subject and school geography. Also, very rarely do they seek to place developments in school geography in a broader cultural context. Our account is intended as an alternative commentary on this well-rehearsed history of school geography. (Morgan and Lambert, 2005: 26)

This book appeared to offer a much needed critical account of events and I had a feeling I would be drawing heavily on it in the coming months.

The easiest and most logical place to start was at the beginning. The beginning for school-level geography in Britain was in the late 19th Century. Opening up John Morgan’s 2002 chapter on *Constructing School Geographies* I read how the ideology of the state has always had an impact on what should be taught in schools. Geography appeared to be a prime example of this. Introduced during the late 19th century, geography developed as a school subject in direct response to the declining British Empire (Morgan, 2002. See also Hudson, 1977; O’Tuathail, 1996), inextricably tied to imperialism and commerce from its inception (Hudson, 1977; Johnston and Williams, 2003). Hudson, to whose work Morgan refers, explored connections between geography, militarism and commerce, illustrating the idea of education being a social process that reproduces dominant ideologies. Describing the emergence of university geography in 1870s Europe, Hudson argued that the subject was:

vigorously promoted at that time largely, if not mainly, to serve the interests of imperialism in its various aspects, including territorial acquisition, economic

exploration, militarism, and the practice of race and class domination.
(Hudson, 1977: 12)

Charting the development of 'national schools' of geography in Europe, Hudson showed how the new imperialism required trained geographers who could prepare a generation of students in the practical skills of charting and surveying different areas of the world (Hudson, 1977). Promoting colonialism lay at the heart of these developments and students were encouraged to travel abroad under the guise of the 'civilising mission' to exploit untapped commercial opportunities. It was for practical rather than academic reasons that geography thus developed as a school subject.

My next thoughts turned to identifying the key figures in geography at the time. I didn't have to look far to find the answer. Halford Mackinder was cited by several authors as being the forefather of geography (see Hudson, 1977; Livingstone, 1992), helping to set up the first geography department at Oxford University and subsequently being appointed reader there in 1887 (at that time the most senior position for a university geographer). It transpired that Mackinder similarly championed school-level geography when he helped found the GA in 1893 (Butt, 2007). As the founder of the Heartland thesis in which he stressed the importance of gaining power and control over Eastern Europe in order to 'command the World', geopolitical interests lay at the heart of Mackinder's passion for geography. Reflective of the broader historical circumstances of the time, 'Mackinder's was a politicized geography and a geopolitical politics' (Livingstone, 1992: 196).

Criticising geography for being a discipline in which one simply accumulated facts, in Mackinder's 1897 speech to the Royal Geographical Society, *On the scope and method of geography*, he urged his fellow geographers to move away from this

approach, describing the process as being similar to ‘throwing another pebble onto a heap of gravel’ (Mackinder, 1887: 144 cited in Butt, 1997: 3). Unfortunately, geography has never really managed to dispel the image, with many people still viewing it as a ‘colouring in’ subject or one where you have to remember pub quiz facts such as the longest river and highest mountain. According to Mackinder, the main task of geography was to study the integration of nature and culture; only then could it become an academic discipline in the true sense of the word (Livingston, 1992). This evolutionary geography was threaded through with the notion of environmental determinism; that is the natural or physical environment determined individual’s behaviour and consequently their culture (*ibid.*). The cultural process of imperialism has too often been overlooked in favour of political and economic domination, however, Teresa Ploszajska’s work places developments within the broader cultural context (Ploszajska, 1999; 2000). In particular she discusses the practice of teaching geography and textbooks and how they impacted on students’ cultural attitudes and ideas about the rest of the world (Ploszajska, 1999). I discovered that one of Mackinder’s successors, Andrew Herbertson, authored many school geography textbooks in the early twentieth century.

Herbertson was appointed director of Oxford University’s School of Geography in 1905, the same year in which his influential paper ‘The Major Natural Regions: An Essay in Systematic Geography’ was published in *The Geographical Journal* (Herbertson, A., 1905a). This paper was the beginning of a regional approach which infiltrated into school textbooks and became the major focus of school geography for the first half of the 20th Century (Butt, 1997). Along with his wife Fanny, the Herbertson’s had a huge impact on school geography, with their textbooks selling more

than a million and a half copies (see for example Herbertson, A., 1905b; 1906; Herbertson, F., 1909; 1912; Herbertson, A. and Herbertson, F., 1907). It was in such textbooks that academic discourses of environmental determinism were translated 'into popular, but implicitly accurate and authoritative, narratives' and used as both intellectual and scientific justification for the imperialism and racism rife in the subject (Ploszajska, 2000: 131). After Mackinder championed the use of visual imagery as a means of furthering geographical knowledge and understanding, school textbooks became littered with pictorial representations. Images of non-white 'native' Australian represented as half-naked savages were contrasted against those of 'civilised' white families neatly dressed, perhaps posing in the family's library (Ploszajska, 2000). Such racist and imperialist imagery 'provide the foundation for collective geographical imaginations and continue to shape popular attitudes and senses of identity' (Polszajska, 2000: 131). Issues of power and representation, centred on Western binary ways of thinking (us/them, White/rest) and developing out of imperialism, were thus key to how school geography developed at this time.

The 'Regional Approach' was an attempt to move away from the 'capes and bays' geography of the previous century towards a more *analytical* geography (see Biddle, 1985). In 1919 the GA developed a manifesto for geography, outlining the aims and objectives of the subject, and forming the basis for geography education (Butt, 1997). Seven years later in 1926 the Hadow Report was published which believed that, 'learning in geography now required an attitude of mind and a mode of thought rather than an ability to engage solely in rote factual learning' (Butt, 1997: 7). By the 1930s the regional approach was embedded in the school curriculum, being adopted by most textbooks of the time. Unfortunately, these were passed down from generation to

generation and the regional approach ‘tended to be handed down to pupils as though it were a kind of geographical gospel, to be absorbed but not questioned’ (Graves, 1975: 31). Most textbooks had a similar layout and covered the relief, vegetation, climate, industry and agriculture of particular areas. Reading this got me thinking that no matter how innovative the syllabus, if there was an accompanying textbook, then there was always the danger that teachers and pupils would see this as information to be absorbed and learnt off by heart for an exam. This, along with the problem of the longevity of textbooks (the Herbertsons’ textbooks were still being used in the 1960s) was not restricted to the pre-war period: authors such as David Waugh had a similar monopoly on the school geography market at the end of the 20th Century and into the 21st. Since I knew that the pilot did not have an official textbook this would alleviate the problem of any particular author having control over what was being taught. It would therefore be interesting to discover what types of resources teachers were drawing on in place of textbooks.

Tim Unwin’s chapter in *Geography into the Twenty-First Century* (Unwin, 1996) highlighted that by the early 1960s the quantitative revolution sweeping university geography was filtering through to school geography. The regional approach was replaced by a new geography that was designed to be more scientific in method and application and the discipline saw a ‘transition from a “pre-scientific” to a “scientific” geography’ (Billinge *et al.*, 1984: 7); where regional studies only provided *information* (such as the relief, climate and vegetation within a region), this new quantitative approach would provide *explanation*.

Here I found another two of geography's academic linchpins. Peter Haggett and Richard Chorley championed this move towards a quantitative approach and produced a series of lectures aimed at sixth form students emphasising an approach based on theories and models (Unwin, 1996). The accompanying book *Frontiers in Geographical Teaching* (Chorley and Haggett, 1965) was to have a similar widespread impact on a generation of geography teachers and their pupils. Up to this point there was a clear, if somewhat paternalistic, relationship between school and university geography with academic thinking and research filtering through to the classroom via textbooks, lectures at local GA branches, and A-level examinations, where academics were often Chief Examiners (Daugherty and Rawling, 1996; Winter, 2009). Whilst academic involvement in curriculum design was to be welcomed, there was the danger of academics parachuting into schools telling them where the cutting edge of the subject was, rather than engaging in dialogic encounters and building mutually supportive networks.

However, this shift to a more quantitative, scientific approach was also influenced by a group of much wider factors affecting the school curriculum. These, I discovered, included, but were not limited to: pressure from the Government for more and better scientists; a similar demand for increased student participation; and the foreseeable raising of the school leaving age to sixteen (Morgan, 2002). Coupled with this, between 1945 and 1960 educational spending continually rose as consecutive governments shared the philosophy that 'in order to compete on a world scale' the British economy;

needed a greater degree of state intervention in economic planning and a thorough overhaul of the social infrastructure of the country... Teachers were entrusted both with sustaining a capitalist economy and society, and with

providing an egalitarian and universally acceptable public service. (Morgan, 2002: 47)

This idea of education being a social process, inextricably tied up with politics and ‘reproducing dominant ideologies and social inequalities’ (Warf, 1999: 589) drew parallels to those debates I had been reading surrounding critical pedagogy and the politics of education. Indeed, elsewhere I found that John Morgan suggested that ‘the literature of critical pedagogy provides a resource with which to interrogate existing educational practices’ (2000: 275). This critical geography sought to ‘unravel the manner in which schools reproduce the logic of capital through the ideological and material forms of domination that structure the lives of students from various class, ethnic and gendered groups’ (McLaren and Giroux, 1997: 38).

2.3 Innovation, Innovation, Innovation

A hive of curriculum development took place during the 1970s and early 1980s and these decades were often described as forming the most dramatic period of innovation and diversification in school geography (Binns, 1996). Part of a wider critique of the school curriculum, there was a realisation amongst many that dominant approaches to school geography were irrelevant to the needs and interests of the majority of students, and working class students in particular (Morgan and Lambert, 2005).

I first heard about three main curriculum developments that took place during this time when I met Eleanor Rawling for the first time and was eager to find out more. The developments attempted to reflect a ‘new geography’ that was radical in content *and* approach and were called: Geography for the Young School Leaver (GYSL); Geography 14-18 (Bristol) Project; and Geography 16-19 (See Binns, 1996; Rawling,

1996). These projects were sponsored by an organisation called the Schools Council. In 1964 the Council was established as an independent body responsible for promoting and funding curriculum reform and development in schools. This was the first time that a non-governmental organisation had been given this responsibility (Rawling, 2001a). They were developed and implemented by large groups of enthusiastic and creative teachers, frustrated with the overly-descriptive and quantitative direction the subject had been heading towards. Eleanor was herself involved as a teacher in the Bristol Project (Geography 14-18) and she explained how the project ‘was a complete shift from anything that had come before in terms of teachers having much more freedom over what they teach’ (2004, pers. comm., 8 July). Hearing all this I started drawing parallels to the pilot GCSE’s philosophy of giving teachers back some ownership of the curriculum and increasing their confidence to experiment more as a result. Why hadn’t these projects been successful in the long run? What had happened between then and the school geography of the early 1990s?

I read how the projects were seen by many as radical syllabi, replacing factual, rote-learning with decision-making, enquiry and the development of transferable skills (Naish *et al.*, 1987). The emphasis was on preparing students for everyday life and employment (Binns, 1996) and consequently ‘the focus of attention in schools was more on educational matters, on aims, pedagogy and on the potential of geography as an educational medium’ (Daugherty and Rawling, 1996: 362). A move towards a more critical pedagogy made this period stand out markedly in relation to anything that had come before. Advocating a shift away from didactic ‘delivery’ methods of teaching towards more open and experimental learning allowed teachers to incorporate more

varied teaching strategies including group work, role plays and simulations (Binns, 1996). Speaking about the GYSL project David Balderstone summarised how:

the project particularly encourages the move towards a discovery/investigative approach in situations well structured by the teacher. The teacher is encouraged to be a guide and stimulus, and to abandon the traditional expository approach in favour of more 'open learning'. (Balderstone, 2000: 116)

This breaking down of power relationships between teachers and students and the shift from 'traditional' to 'child-centred' pedagogies (Morgan and Lambert, 2005) seemed to many to be a response to the wider social changes taking place at this time, especially in urban areas. Cultural theorist, Paul Willis' seminal publication *Learning to labour: How working class kids get working class jobs* (1977) revealed the inherent injustice underlying a society in which working class students saw their future reproducing the current social and cultural order. The recognition of the multicultural nature of society as well as issues around social justice began to find their ways into geography classrooms. Geography educators began drawing upon Dawn Gill's work around the racist undertones prevalent in the geography curriculum (cf. Gill, 1983; Gill and Levidow, 1987) and began to develop curricula that were explicitly anti-racist and anti-imperialist in approach (Morgan and Lambert, 2005).

Not only did these projects incorporate relevant, up-to-date issues, they also changed the way students were assessed; abandoning conventional exams and overtly descriptive essay-style assessments requiring the regurgitation of learnt facts, in favour of more stimulating thought-provoking coursework and individual study (Rawling, 2001a). With their emphasis on enquiry and issue-based approaches the project syllabi were seen as flexible and adaptable to the teacher's individual situation, rather than as official documents to be followed religiously. This flexibility to experiment was brought

up during a meeting with John Morgan, a former geography teacher, turned teacher educator who was on secondment to an not-for-profit organisation called FutureLab when we chatted in November 2006. John described how, as a teacher during this period, flexibility to experiment was key:

I mean the curriculum projects of the 70s and 80s really, I see as part of a very specific moment in curriculum debate in this country. One where there really was a move towards school-based curriculum innovation. So, the projects were quite good 'hubs' for teachers to... they provided frameworks or shells which teachers could then interpret in a variety of ways. (2006, pers. comm., 8 November)

Speaking about his experience of teaching the Geography 16-19 syllabus, he explained that 'the route to enquiry outlined in the syllabus didn't work for my students, so I had to adapt it' (*ibid.*). However, as there was space for teachers to adapt the syllabus to their own situations, this was not a problem: Indeed John said that he didn't think there was very much *pure* 16-19 geography going on.

The story of how I ended up speaking to John is illustrative of the rhizomatic ethnographic approach to my research. Sometime near the beginning of my PhD I Googled two of the key terms central to my research interests – critical pedagogy and geography education – to see if there was anyone else out there with similar research interests. John's profile at the School of Education, Bristol University came up and I was excited to discover that he had written several papers that sounded like essential reading for my research (see for example Morgan, 2000; 2001; 2002). I duly added his name to the list of people I should maybe speak to in my second year. John's name kept cropping up when I was reading about geography education and I noticed that he had co-written several books, chapters and articles with David Lambert (see Morgan & Lambert, 2003; 2005) – who I had already identified as being a key figure – so I knew there was a connection there worth finding out more about. Then, during a meeting I

had set up with Diane Swift and David Lambert in February 2006 I was told that John had been a member of the original working group for the pilot GCSE and had also been responsible for writing one of the optional modules, called *Cultural Geography*.

Alongside what was happening in the classroom, there were large-scale activities to support these project which included new textbooks, resources and in-service activities. The newly established Development Education Centres formed one arena in which these developments took place. The first DEC's were set up in the early 1970s as public awareness and interest in international development grew. With some financial support from aid agencies and the Government, committed individuals looked to sustain this interest and to increase understanding of the issues at a local level (Ben Ballin, 2004, pers. comm., 23 May).

Birmingham's Development Education Centre, Tide¹⁴, was particularly active with curriculum innovation during this period (and it remains so today), providing a physical space where teachers could come together, meet, discuss ideas and be creative. During a visit to the centre to find out more about their role in curriculum innovation I spoke to one of their project workers, Ben Ballin, who highlighted how the curriculum developed during this time:

I think in the 70s and even the early 80s, teachers working together with other teachers was quite well established in some places. Things like the Teaching Councils, I think they were called, actually used to do a lot of curriculum development and resource creation projects with groups of teachers. At that time, the curriculum was organised locally and often an LEA would have a suggested curriculum, but really schools would go significantly their own way around things[...] It gave schools space to do creative things and be response to the needs of particular groups of kids, or whatever. (2004, pers. comm., 23 May)

¹⁴ See Tide's website for more details, <http://www.tidec.org/>

This issue of *space* and *time* for teachers to think/be creative appeared to be an important one, raising questions to explore further.

There was wide dissemination of these projects, particularly GYSL which had a 3-tier local, regional and national structure, allowing it to reach – directly or indirectly - 98% of schools at one point (Rawling, 2001a). As a result of the success of the ‘16-19’ project, other ‘A’-level syllabuses, such as OCR’s Avery Hill, became more enquiry-oriented in approach. However, as Rawling highlights, this optimism and creativity of the 70s was not as far reaching as originally intended because:

Despite their high profile and major dissemination programmes, in the short term it was really only the relatively small number of pilot schools that received a full immersion and involvement in curriculum thinking and many schools continued with traditional examination syllabuses wedded to a regional approach. (Rawling, 2001a: 25)

Although the curriculum projects did not ultimately change the content and pedagogy of school geography, many of those involved in or affected by these projects were to lay the foundations for what was to happen thirty years later. This period of innovation and the people involved or affected by school geography at this time was obviously an important influence on the development of the pilot GCSE. Would the pilot face a similar fate, with only pilot schools receiving ‘full immersion and involvement’, or would it be offered as a mainstream option opened out to more schools

2.4 Regulation, Regulation, Regulation

all school subjects are socially constructed – that is they reflect the values and interests (the ideologies) of those individuals and groups influential in constructing them at different times. (Rawling, 2001a: 30-1).

After finding out about the changes that had taken place during the 1970s I was eager to discover what had halted these developments and why they hadn’t been sustainable in the long-term. As it turned out, their demise wasn’t something of

geography's own making, but rather due to the increasingly politicised nature of education and curriculum making more widely (see Binns, 1996; Warf, 1999; Rawling, 2001a). All the effort that curriculum development teams had put into changing the foundations of the subject was put to a stop with the arrival of neoliberal approaches to education. In 1976 Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan in his famous Ruskin College speech spoke of the need 'increased teacher efficiency in spending, accountability and closer links between schools and the national economy' (Winter, 2009: 668). However, it wasn't the election of Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Government in the 1979 general election that neoliberal educational reform would take place in earnest. School geography, and education policy more widely, were to witness changes that would reverberate into the next century.

The relatively strong input from teacher educators and academic geographers that had been so important was gradually undermined during the 1980s, with the eventual abolishment of the School Councils in 1984. As Rawling highlights, their replacements were much more tightly controlled by the Government:

The curriculum successors to the School Council – the School Curriculum Development Committee (SCDS) (1984-88) and later the National Curriculum Council (NCC) (1988-93) – ostensibly took on some of the curriculum support and monitoring roles. In fact, both bodies were essentially created to allow the Government to exercise firmer central control over the curriculum and assessment. (Rawling, 2001a: 24)

Not surprisingly, therefore, during the 1980s those teachers who had previously been involved with curriculum development projects were fighting a constant battle against the system. Funding for initiatives had become much harder to obtain and the support systems that had existed began to dissolve (Rawling, 2001a). The Thatcherite era, I learnt, was characterised by increasing regulation and control in education.

Qualifications became the new ‘currency’ in which people could ‘buy’ jobs (Rawling, 2004b). At the same time, the Government increased regulation and accountability in its quest to increase the size of its qualified labour-market, ready to contribute to its cause of Capitalism (Morgan, 2002). Curriculum discourse was forced to retreat, making it extremely difficult for teachers (and critical teachers in particular) to influence the direction of curriculum change. In its place, qualifications and assessment discourse advanced at an ever quickening pace:

whereas before about 1980 assessment and examinations were the servants of the curriculum, after this time they assumed a key role in government policy as *masters* of the curriculum. (Rawling, 2001a: 108, my emphasis)

This came as a huge blow for those critical geography educators who had thrived on the experimental learning and development that had taken place during the 1970s and, as Morgan underlined, they now faced an awkward dilemma:

teachers are under pressure to produce a stream of trained disciplined and qualified students on the one hand, and to strive to treat students as equally valuable and valued members of society. Teachers are thus in a double bind: they are contributing to the reproduction of capitalism at the same time as being committed to values that come into conflict with capitalism. (Morgan, 2002: 47-8)

However, despite the difficulties in incorporating new developments in academic geography, the progress that had been made during the previous decade ensured that geography remained a popular school subject (Rawling, 2001a).

Teachers had lost the time and space to be more creative. In 1988 the introduction of the Education Reform Act (ERA) was a second, if not bigger, turning point for the school curriculum, influencing the way education would be organised well into the 21st century (Butt, 1997; Powell and Edwards, 2005; Rawling, 2001a). By the late 1980s the partnerships within education – between teacher educators, academics and LEAs – that had characterised earlier education were made redundant and ‘LEAs

were viewed merely as organisations for the administration of centrally devised policy' (Butt, 1997: 57). Decision-making power was concentrated increasingly in the hands of the Government and 'the pattern seemed to change from one of competing influences to one of a single powerful influence – that of the state' (Rawling, 2001a: 9). The then Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Baker, became increasingly authoritative, with 175 new powers, allowing him to 'single handily redirect the future of education' (Butt, 1997:57). No consensus was ever gained from practicing teachers and, according to Butt (whose thesis painted an invaluable picture of this era), it was clear that the act had been established to meet short-term political and not educational aims (*ibid.*).

Following on from the ERA, the NC for England and Wales was established in 1989 ensuring that geography was compulsory for all 5 to 16 year olds (Rawling, 1999). This was perhaps the most significant shift in educational reform since school subjects were formed, and indicated a move towards a more centralised approach to school teaching (Rocksborough-Smith, 2001). The brainchild of the New Right, who wanted a fully market-oriented system of state education, its focus was to be on traditional subject knowledge and skills (Butt, 1997).

Many commentators asserted that the NC came as a response to the 'legitimation crisis' that many Western nations were contending with during the mid-1980s (Harland, 1988 in Butt, 1997). During periods of economic and social crisis, they argued, the economic system becomes out of step with the mode of social regulation (see Foucault, 1991). During these periods all functions of government have to go into overdrive to establish new social norms and institutions:

There are, in other words, periods in which particular sites of control, for example, educational provision is subject to novel mechanisms and technologies in order to facilitate the transition from one state of affairs to another (Powell and Edwards, 2005: 99).

Indeed Butt described how, during the recession and miners' strikes of the 1980s, people had lost confidence in the 'welfare state's ability to deliver their minimum demands and expectations' (Butt, 1997: 68). Thus, the creation of the NC was seen as a 'knee jerk' reaction to this crisis, in which the government needed to be seen as 'delivering' more, preparing young people for the 'world of work' (Harland, 1988; Morgan and Lambert, 2005). Through syllabuses, textbooks, regulation and standardized exams the 'controlling elite' could maintain its political dominance, imposing its culture and values as the norm (Shor, 1993). The emphasis was thus on Freire's 'banking system' of education with young people once again seen as 'empty vessels to be filled by facts' (Shor, 1993: 26) with knowledge seen as information rather than always partial and socially constructed. The aim was for students to leave school qualified and indoctrinated to work in a society that was becoming increasingly neo-liberal in nature. The very antithesis to a critical geography education that would encourage critical thinking and enable students to see how they were implicated in these very systems of domination (Giroux, 1991). By providing students with 'knowledge, capacities and opportunities to be noisy, irreverent and vibrant' a critical geography would enable students to challenge the existing social order and realise that they could participate in the transformation towards a more just, equitable and socially responsible society (Giroux, 1991: 508).

The Geography Working Group (GWG) was charged with developing the first Geography National Curriculum (GNC). Established on 5th May 1989, whilst it gave the impression of being a democratic group open to consultation, in reality '[t]here was

never any doubt that this was a political exercise steered from central government' (Rawling, 2001a: 50). Significantly there was only one full-time teacher on the group and Kenneth Baker, as Secretary of State, appointed Sir Leslie Fielding as the Chair; a non-geographer who believed, according to Eleanor Rawling, 'there's got to be more mental discipline, facts, arguments and evidence rather than philosophy and opinion' (2001a: 52). It was becoming clear that the notion of it being a democratic group was a façade behind which hid a small, elite group with all the power:

A small agenda committee of the Chairman, Vice-chairman, Secretary, DES Assessor and HMI Assessor often met before the main meetings, ostensibly to determine the order of business; some of us came to wonder if the ultimate decision making might not rest in such a conclave. It was a group notably light on the professional element of the Working Group and, perhaps, it was designed to be so (Walford, 1992, cited in Rawling, 2001a: 65)

Disturbingly, the fate of the GNC was placed in the hands of a small group of people whose main goal was political rather than developing the subject of geography. Graham Butt's doctoral research, which provided an in-depth study of the group, described how 'trouble makers' were marginalised and contentious issues brushed over (Butt, 1997). Whilst the focus of the geography community at this time was primarily to ensure geography's place into the NC, Rawling argues it won its place at the expense of being over-prescriptive:

The energies of the geography education community were channelled at national level away from pedagogical issues and into political campaign to ensure geography a place in the new national curriculum. (Rawling, 2001a: 30).

Representing a very traditional view of geography, recent developments in academic geography (postmodernism, new cultural geography, gender issues) were not incorporated. Rawling documents that teachers were dismissed as irrelevant in its creation and were given less autonomy over its implementation: rather they were viewed as technicians there to simply 'deliver' the curriculum (*ibid.*). One teacher I spoke to highlighted this saying how he felt that 'opportunities and encouragement to be

creative are perhaps less because of the fact that the curriculum is imposed from above' (Richard Carter¹⁵, 2004, pers. comm., 12 July). The creativity that Eleanor had described teachers having pre-NC seemed to have been eroded away. Schemes of work were picked up and used repeatedly for year after year with little change to content or delivery and an almost 'check-list' format (Rocksborough-Smith, 2001). This resulted in 'the fragmentation of geographical learning' where individual topics were taught in isolation from each other, 'without enforcing linkages between them or with other aspects of the curriculum' (*ibid.* p.54).

2.5 The National Curriculum, Governance and School Geography

Teachers used to harbour the illusion that as Ofsted came but infrequently, they could shut the door and carry on, as before. Faint hopes. We now have the most prescribed and proscribing curriculum in the western world; it's the how, when and where of teaching. Schools have been stripped of their autonomy, teachers de-professionalised - mere functionaries. (Anon, 2002: np)

In an excellent article that was published a couple of years into my thesis, Castree *et al.* (2007) described how the 1988 ERA gave birth to a statutory 'school geography' which was heavily monitored and administered by QCA and Ofsted. The establishment of the regulatory body Ofsted and its school inspections in 1993 only added to the regulation and administration of schools and teachers. A content-rich geography materialised, heavily influenced by the government of the day. However, it was the introduction of a series of textbooks which perhaps had the biggest impact on the direction school geography would take for the next 20 years,

[I]nvestment in textbooks tends to set the tone for many years. In practice, a single author's interpretation of the newly codified school geography was able to withstand successive QCA reforms (largely designed to loosen the rigidity of the original curriculum) in a large proportion of secondary schools in England. (Castree *et al.*, 2007: 130)

¹⁵ A pseudonym has been used to protect the teachers anonymity.

Reminiscent of the monopoly that the Herbertson textbooks had on school geography during the first half of the 20th Century, David Waugh and Tony Bushell's textbook series for 11-14 year olds (both collaboratively and individually; Waugh and Bushall, 1991, 2006; Waugh, 2000, 2003) had a similar impact from the introduction of the 1991 GMC with nearly two-thirds of market share; an impact that is still felt in the present day (Lambert, 2004). As Balderstone revealed, 'we have also seen the emergence of the "textbook as curriculum" in many schools' (2000: 116) with pupils learning all there is to know about volcanoes/migration/Africa from a double-page spread of a textbook. Piled up in classrooms throughout the country Waugh and Bushall's *Key Geography* (which was first published in 1991), saw its fourth edition published in 2006. It was scary to think that a book series (and its authors' world views) that had been introduced in classroom before I had even reached secondary school was still going strong almost 20 years on. Christine Winter describes the series as a 'scissors-and-paste' version of the 1991 GNC which 'promoted a narrow, uncritical, racially stereotypes view of people and places' and offered 'unchallenging, pedestrian activities, and reduced geographical knowledge to fragmented, depoliticized facts' (Winter, 2009: 670).

Many teachers, like Richard Carter, still saw these books as 'safety nets' during an era of increasing regulation and accountability, enabling their department to 'play safe in order to satisfy outside requirements' (2004, pers. comm., 12 July). Indeed Richard went on to highlight a recent trend whereby publishers produced accompanying textbooks for particular specifications (see Winter, 2009). So for both GCSE and A-level his school had *the* book, which 'makes it so tempting to say "there's you case studies", you know, what is *the* point in deviating from that?' (*ibid.*). Buying into a particular textbook series meant that school's like Richards were often locked into a

particular way of teaching geography for years, if not decades (Winter, 2009). By sticking to tried and tested examples, he revealed how at least this meant that ‘you’re not going to be criticised for your curriculum, your content, when Ofsted come along’ (Richard Carter, 2004, pers. comm., 12 July). This was particularly pertinent in a department like Richard’s where only two out of six geography teachers were subject specialists with textbooks offering them a lifeline; a situation that was repeated in schools around the country (Hopkin, 2006; Ofsted, 2004b). He spoke frankly about the situation, revealing that:

At the end of the day you’re looking to hit levels, not necessarily um, to give students opportunities to be creative... you know your priority is to make it safe. I mean I get frightened when I look at schemes of work that are ten years old and you know every year I think, I must do something about that, but it’s pressure of time. (*ibid.*)

Hearing all this brought back memories of my own school geography where there was little time to have any meaningful dialogue about particular issues that grabbed mine my classmates’ attention. We would be told that unfortunately there wasn’t time to talk about that in any depth as it wasn’t in the exam board’s Programme of Study, and unless we moved onto the next topic we wouldn’t cover the syllabus in time for the exam. It appeared as though little had change since my time at school; no wonder then that pupil numbers were declining. As Mack quite rightly pointed out,

In schools where geography lessons comprise the next double-page of the textbook, or where teachers are non-specialists or are expected to follow units of work to the letter, the opportunity to fire student’s imaginations may be lost. (Mack, 2004b: 65)

It was becoming clear that external pressures were having a real impact on what was being taught in geography classrooms and how it was being taught; by becoming transmitters of information teachers were losing their creative and professional confidence, and pupils were being conditioned to conform to the ‘banking model’ of

education with ‘little effort made to draw students’ attention to the ways in which geographical knowledge is partial and socially constructed’ (Morgan, 2000: 277). One reason change had been slow to happen was because schools were wary to move away from tried and tested formulas;

Awarding bodies have told the QCA that schools don’t want change because they get such good results, and they want to go on getting good results. Schools say ‘don’t rock this cause we’re getting really good results, we’ve got it down to a fine art. We give out these notes, the kids learn then, they put it in the exam, they get the results’. You know, unfortunately that’s the situation we’ve got at the moment. (Eleanor Rawling, 2004, pers. comm., 8 July)

During my conversation with Eleanor she talked candidly about the tight regulatory system that geography, and other subjects, had been stuck in since the introduction of the NC. Referring to it as ‘the closed system of 14-19’ she described how,

QCA sets the criteria, the awarding bodies create the syllabuses, the schools take them and teach the stuff, the makers mark it, the kids get the grades, and because of accountability and because of the need for schools to show they’re getting more and more A*s to C, and all the rest of it, it’s become tighter and tighter and tighter and tighter, and what’s gone out is any real consideration of the curriculum. And by that I mean the content and the teaching and learning. (*ibid.*)

Since the introduction of the NC it appeared that the regularity side of QCA had driven out the curriculum side of it; in essence the body had changed ‘from qCa with a big C; to QcA with a little c’ with the curriculum aspect gradually becoming less important (*ibid.*). This ‘closed system’ was illustrated in more detail in Eleanor’s *Changing the Subject* (Rawling, 2001a), reproduced in figure 1.

What was crucially missing from this system was any meaningful input from academic geographers, the education research community, parents/governors, and young people themselves. Prior to the NC these groups helped shape the development of

the subject and their disappearance marked a significant loss. Of particular interest to me was the lack of say that young people had about what they learnt in geography and I was looking forward to seeing how the pilot would approach this.

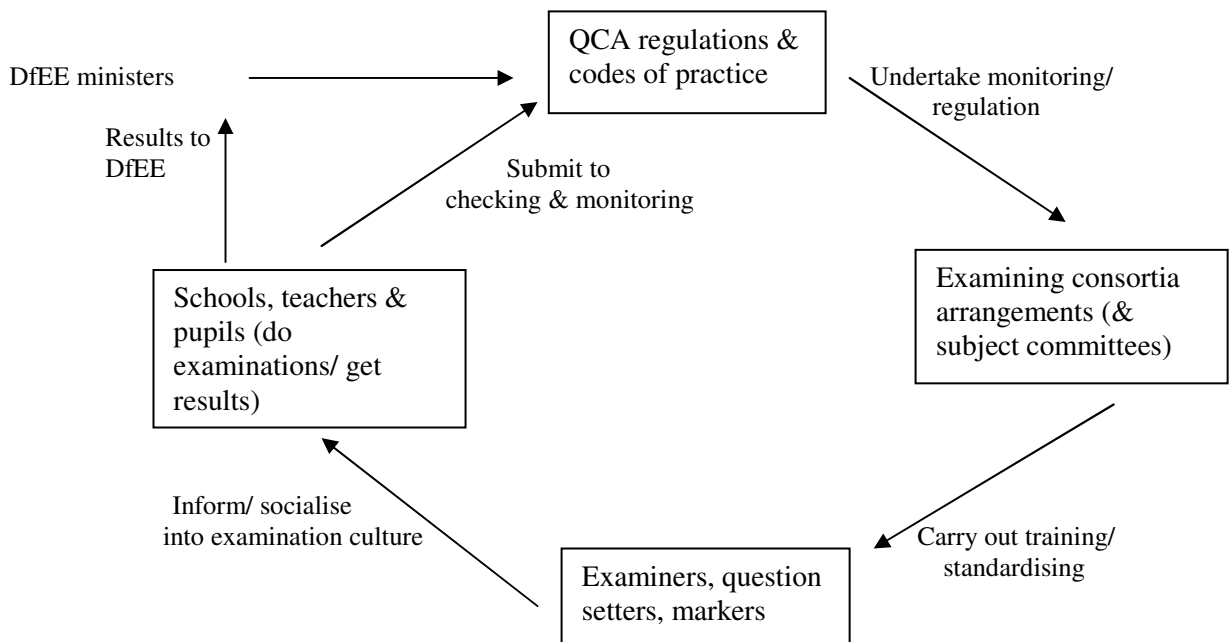


Figure 1 The 'closed system' (from Rawling, 2001a)

Unfortunately, although the election of the Labour Government in 1997 changed the political control of the NC, it continued to marginalize curriculum development in favour of hitting external targets. Ever since 'policy making has been characterised by target setting, performance indicators and curriculum strategies' (Chapman, 2003:53). With 'testing, targets and (league) tables becoming the terrible three Ts' (Parkinson, 2003: np), teachers' unions argued that the curriculum was 'stymieing enjoyment and diversity' (*ibid.*). Indeed when I spoke with David Lambert, the Chief Executive of the GA, he revealed the stark contrast between pre- and post- NC teaching experience;

I remember when I was a new teacher in the 1970s, where you just *knew* that you could excite kids with geography. That was why you wanted to be a teacher. I think it might be slightly different now. There are so many sort of

controls and structures, and geography's been marginalised. A quarter of its candidates lost in 5 years etc. (2006, pers. comm., 14 February)

Rather than being 'tested' on their curriculum content (subject knowledge) or teaching and learning strategies, teachers were now under pressure to hit a series of 'performance indicators' with their success being judged via a plethora of hard data acquired from exam results, teacher performance targets, pupil performance targets and social indicators. This, according to David had led to 'the issue of professional confidence' where newly qualified teachers who were very good geographers (with 1st class and 2:1 degrees for example) quickly saw that 'they're not being judged as geographers, they're being judged on performance in the classroom against criteria they're unfamiliar with' (2006, pers. comm., 14 February). As a current PGCE geography tutor, John Morgan shared this view, pointing out that there was no role for curriculum development within the PGCE standards and getting time to focus on this was 'always a bit of a luxury' (2006, pers. comm., 8 November). The realities of the classroom meant that PGCSE students quickly forgot the reasons why they had gone into teaching in the first place,

it's quite a hard battle, because all the messages students get is that, in a way, it's about 'here's the curriculum, don't worry too much about it, just get on with it' really. I'm sure students experience real dilemmas around that. And I have had students who have been very upset about the fact that – as someone said - they're teaching 1960s geography to kids born in the 1990s or later. (*ibid.*)

Thus, their enthusiasm and commitment to the development of the subject that is geography could quickly wane as it 'takes a hugely confident person to say "I know what I'm doing and I'm going to do it my way"' (David Lambert, 2006, pers. comm., 14 February). Depressingly, it seemed, subjects were now seen as purely content to be

delivered and it was very difficult to pursue any meaningful professional development in the actual subject of geography.

2.6 Time for Change

It transpired that Ofsted had been concerned about the quality of geography teaching long before it had hit the headlines in November 2004 and subsequently the Critical-Geography-Forum. In its 2000/01 *Secondary Subject Reports on Geography*, Ofsted noted that 'there continues to be more unsatisfactory teaching in geography than in most other subjects' (Ofsted, 2002). Weaknesses were identified as a narrow range of teaching approaches and an over-reliance on a single text book or inappropriate photocopied worksheets (*ibid.*). Two years later and the situation hadn't improved, with the inspection agency reporting that 'In a significant number of schools the focus on coverage of content limits opportunities to develop more in-depth enquiry and independent learning skills' (Ofsted, 2004b: 1). Unfortunately, it appeared that all this 'playing safe' to hit targets had begun to backfire. Years of little or no professional development had wiped out teacher's 'teaching skills' as they had become indoctrinated into a system which saw them as transmitters rather than facilitators.

Despite these worries, pupils' achievement at Key Stage (KS) 3 and 4 was improving; at least teachers had become well-trained at the qualifications side of things! For example in 1996/7 only 40% of pupil's achievement was either excellent/very good or good, compared to 56% of pupils by 2002/2003. Likewise the percentage of pupils who were obtaining unsatisfactory/poor achievement had halved in the same period from 8% to 4% (Ofsted, 2004b). In keeping with these positive trends, the quality of teaching in secondary schools at KS3 and 4 similarly improved with the percentage of

excellent/very good teaching raising from 5 to 15% (*ibid.*). Reading these reports it thus became clear that whilst there was a lot of very good teaching going on, a *significant* minority of teaching was just not up to scratch. For example, one of the key issues identified was ‘Maintaining high expectations’:

In a minority of schools, teachers focus on the acquisition of knowledge but not on the broader development and application of skills and understanding. Where this occurs, lessons are sometimes over-directed by teachers, reducing opportunities for pupils to develop their independence. (Ofsted, 2004b: 9)

The situation looked even starker in primary schools, with the equivalent report of the same year concluding that ‘Pupils’ learning is not as good in geography as in other subjects’ and that ‘[t]here is more unsatisfactory teaching in geography than in other subjects’ (Ofsted, 2004c). Unfortunately my research did not allow me sufficient time to address the issue of primary level geography, however, Fran Martin has written widely on the topic (see Martin, 2006; 2008).

In parallel to the Critical-Geography-Forum debate I discovered a parallel one taking place amongst school teachers on a forum called the Staffordshire Learning Network (SLN). Here, Diane Swift and David Lambert talked about how the ‘patchiness of geography’ was one of the big challenges facing geography: in some schools the entire year group took geography at GCSE and at others the subject wasn’t even offered (SLN forum, November 2004). It therefore seemed crucial to engage with those teachers who were perhaps not active in the geography community. The SLN was a very lively and incredibly useful forum where geography teachers asked for help, shared ideas and resources and generally provided support to each other.¹⁶ It had also shown me that *there* were spaces for enthusiastic teachers to be more creative within the confines of the NC. Yet, teachers were fighting a constant battle against the system and, as a

¹⁶ See <http://learningnet.co.uk/geoforum/>. The forum has been relaunched and updated since April 2009.

particularly poignant post pointed out, were often seen as scapegoats for the subject's downfall:

Create league tables for Primaries based on English/Maths/Science/SATs, undermine imagination creativity choice by govt dictat, conspire in every way to marginalise geography in favour of CORE subjects, remove nearly all LEA geog advisors, continually divert funds into literacy/numeracy/citizenship and other 'on task' roles (please see TES ad for last 10 years!), create an uninspiring KS1 & 2 centralised curriculum, give it to mostly non-geographers, reduce or remove training at teacher education level, create a situation where publishers/resource creators move out of geography, promote whole class didactic lessons at the expense of topic work, have Ofsted inspectors that don't know anything about the subject, encourage parents to think that all that matters is SATs results, have virtually no govt profile for geography for a decade or so, pile on restrictions on any out of class activity, and guess what as ever before – IT'S ALL THE TEACHERS FAULT! Ian. (idmurray, 25/11 2004)

This, more than any Ofsted report, brought home the predicament that school-level geography teachers were facing and how passionate many felt about the situation. I wondered how many academic geographers were aware of this reality. As long as schools continued to produce geography candidates for their degree courses, there seemed little motivation for them in the current system (unless of course they had children themselves) to engage with what was going on in schools.

Reflecting on all of this it was hardly surprising that the number of pupils opting to study geography were falling. In her address to the GA Annual Conference in April 2004 Eleanor had put up a slide which revealed how GCSE and A-level numbers have fallen between 1996 and 2003. From a high of 302,298 GCSE candidates in 1996, numbers had fallen by over 20% to 232,830 in 2003 (see figure 2). This trend continued in the subsequent years with only 213,469 GCSE candidates in 2006 (Castree *et al.*, 2007. See also Weedon, 2007 and Winter, 2009 for discussion of declining students numbers).

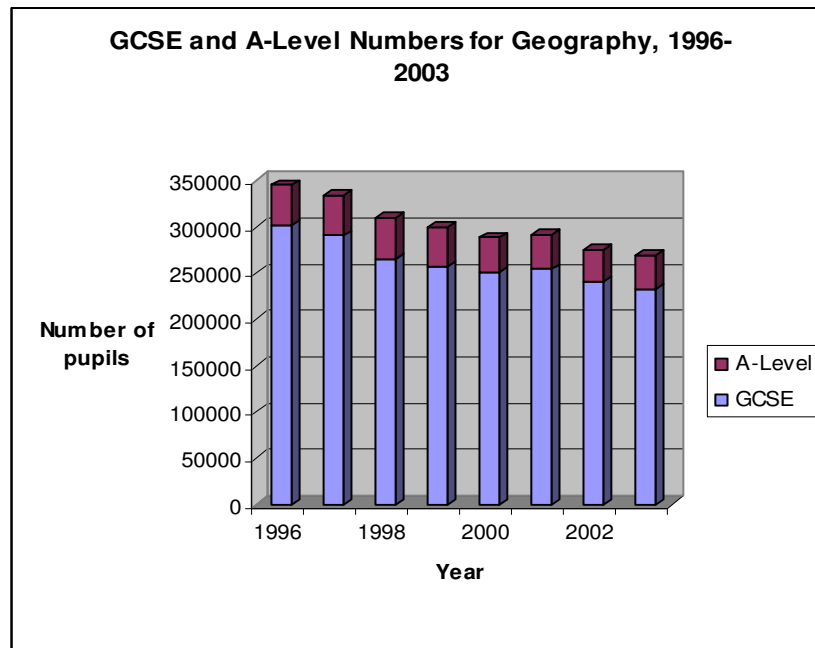


Figure 2 GCSE and A-Level numbers for geography, 1996-2003 (source: Rawling, 2004a)

According to several authors, geography as a school subject had come under pressure from several corners, with this pressure intensifying since the mid 1990s (see Stannard, 2002, 2003; Rawling, 2004b). First, there was geography's inability to compete against new 'trendy' subjects such as sociology and psychology. Second, was the Government's increasing stress on 'vocational subjects' such as *Health and Social Care*. Third there were new government initiatives such as the introduction of compulsory citizenship education in 2002. This, more than anything, was seen by David Lambert as a major threat to the future of school geography (2006, pers. comm., 14 February). David laughed at the absurdity of a statement made by the outgoing chief inspector of schools in which he suggested that citizenship could be imported into geography to make it more interesting. This, according to David was '*absolutely* the wrong way to look at it' and rather we should look at how to teach citizenship *through*

geography (*ibid.*). The advent of a citizenship GCSE would be a major blow to GCSE geography because,

If I'm a head and I'm worried about my league table position and I just want to up the number of kids who can get 5 A-C's GCSE, I'd be tempted to introduce a citizenship GCSE. It would be much easier to get a grade C in citizenship than in geography [laughing]. (*ibid.*)

In future months, I would become directly involved in finding solutions to teaching citizenship through geography. But that part of the story will come later.

Fourth, as highlighted by Ofsted, there were often non-specialists teaching the subject at KS3 whose lack of subject knowledge and quality of teaching could have a knock on effect on pupils' experience of the subject (as Richard Carter earlier revealed, see above p.71). The situation was even more stark at primary school where teachers rarely had good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Research carried out by Fran Martin, for example found that only 13 out of 79 trainee teachers doing primary PGCE had A-level qualification and more than half felt negatively about their own experiences of geography lessons as pupils (Martin, 2005). Children's experiences (or lack of) at this level can impact their views on the importance of the subject at secondary school, and consequently their decision to study the subject post-14 (see Martin, 2008).

Fifth, and perhaps most importantly was its outdated content and its failure to incorporate some newer subject matter and approaches (hardly surprising given academics lack of involvement). As Kevin Lynch suggested, students see geography as boring and irrelevant to their lives because:

relatively new disciplines have emerged in education at all levels which have sparked the imagination of learners, attracting them away from the apparently

less relevant subject of geography which seems dull by comparison. (2002: 155)

Too often topics were repeated, with the possibility of pupils learning about rivers in KS3, KS4 and at A-level (see Biddulph and Adey, 2003). John Hopkin highlighted this and raised the question of teaching relevant, up-to-date content that is relevant to students' lives in the twenty-first century:

Students who do opt for geography may find their courses too similar to what they studied at Key Stage 3; at worst their experience of GCSE geography can seem more like a version of recent history, rather than an opportunity to discover a rapidly changing world, relevant to their future. (2006: 1-2)

Finally, there was the problem of geography's image. Often portrayed as a 'colouring in subject' where rote learning of facts was a core component, it was stigmatised as being an outdated, easy option with no real focus, and a lack of career possibilities (unless of course you wanted to be a geography teacher). Much of what figured in the public's perception of the subject – including those images of tweed jackets and leather elbow patches – was based on adults' own school experiences of geography from perhaps 20-30 years ago. Geography, as this quote from the Channel 4 TV series *Teachers* suggested, has never gotten away from its past;

You teach f***ing geography, probably the most tedious subject in the history of subjects, historically taught by the most tedious f***ing teachers. You're supposed to be boring. Live with it. (*Teachers*, 2003, television program, Channel 4, United Kingdom, 20th August. Kurt speaking to Brain – the geography/PE teacher)

As an academically bright student who had achieved all A's or A*'s at GCSE and was expected to achieve similar top grades at A-level (including an 'A' at Maths), I frequently came across people who were shocked to discover that I had applied to read geography at university, sharing the opinion that it was 'a subject only for those outside the "top-flight" of candidates' (Stannard, 2000:74-75). Indeed, academically it was often seen to be about 'nebulous attitudes and values which float free of basic "scientific

understanding” (ibid. p.74). Changing people’s outdated views of the subject therefore seemed essential since,

Those who see *Geographers* only as encyclopaedic custodians of millions of facts and figures about the world do a serious injustice to all the good work that goes on in schools today in an attempt to create the responsible citizens of tomorrow (pasionforgeography, cited in Ward, 2007b: 159)

There were thus a wide range of factors which had contributed to geography’s declining status as a school subject, and consequently there would appear to be no ‘quick-fix’ solution when it came to reversing the problem. However, by 2002, there was a growing consensus that geography needed something to ‘kick start it’, particularly within the 14-19 age group. How would the geography community address these problems head on?

2.7 Signs of Change: Green Paper and GeoVisions

Geography just needs something to kick start it...It’s such a mad, interesting subject, about the environment and culture, and now with citizenship coming into it, but over the past 10 years its gone downhill. (Pilot Teacher, initial evaluation report, cited in QCA, 2004: np)

In my search to discover how the pilot GCSE had come about I came across an article written by John Westaway and Eleanor Rawling. Published in April 2003 – five months before the pilot was implemented in its first cohort of 18 schools – the authors detailed the background to the development of this innovative GCSE (see Westaway and Rawling, 2003). Reading through the paper, it became apparent that two parallel developments eventually led to the design and implementation of the pilot GCSE. The first of these was the QCA Geography Curriculum Project (GCP) of 2001. Part of QCA’s wider series of curriculum projects which began in 2000, a project on geography and history was introduced the subsequent year. The project’s rationale was to ‘ensure

that national curriculum geography and history were responsive to the changing world of the early Twenty-First Century' (Westaway and Rawling, 2003: 60). Steered by a GCP group that included primary and secondary teachers, higher education, representatives from the GA, the RGS-IBG, the DfES, Ofsted and Becta, assistance and guidance was given in abundance to the geography curriculum team at the QCA (*ibid.*). This couldn't have stood in sharper contrast to the elitist group that was responsible for developing the geography NC 13 years earlier.

After considering a series of reports they had commissioned, the group concluded that there were three ideas to develop further; one of which was 'The development of a pilot GCSE geography specification aimed at promoting a more up-to-date, lively and innovative approach to the subject for 14-16 year olds' (Westaway and Rawling, 2003: 60). It looked like I was finally uncovering the initial stages of the pilot. A group called the GeoVisions Working Group was set the task of doing some thinking on what such a GCSE might look like and was asked to produce a discussion paper highlighting the features of a 'lively and innovative' GCSE. I wondered why the changes had been chosen to take place at GCSE level and later found out that 'a change at GCSE means that potential benefits can move up or down the curriculum' (Eleanor Rawling, 2004, pers. comm., 8 July). In short, it had the potential to have an impact on both KS3 and A-level.

Ben Ballin had told me how GeoVisions had been formed by Tide~ back in 1997 as a kind of think-tank on the future of geography made up of geography educators and teachers (2004, pers. comm., 23 May). Diane Swift was the group's chair and in an article she wrote for Tide~'s in-house journal she stated that the

project provided a forum to debate, raise issues and make proposals about the future of school geography. The project was unconstrained by short-term objectives or immediate political concerns. (Swift, 2005)

When I later found a GeoVisions publication that listed all project members I discovered that Eleanor Rawling and John Morgan had also been project members and therefore had been involved from the outset (see GeoVisions, 1999). The pedagogical and education theory underlying the pilot was thus shaped by these people's ideological and pedagogical views; many of whom had both been inspired by and had direct experience of the more radical/critical approaches to school geography during the late 1970s and early 1980s. This undercurrent of critical geography educators continued through the 1980s, despite the problematics of having their voices heard in formal curriculum arenas. John Morgan, for example, spoke about hunting out geography educators who wrote from 'radical perspectives' during his PGCE in the mid 1980s, such as John Huckle and David Hicks (2006, pers. comm., 8 November). Both of these educators took critical and creative approaches to geography focusing on issues surrounding global and environmental education, futures oriented work and racism in school geography (see Fisher and Hicks, 1985; Hicks, 1988; Huckle, 1988a and b). All of these insights went some way to contextualised the pedagogical foundations underlying firstly GeoVisions and subsequently the pilot GCSE.

Then, in November 1999 the GA became involved and GeoVisions became an official GA Working Party, chaired again by Diane Swift. This Working Party included: geography educationalists; senior teachers at a range of Primary and Secondary Schools (including Head Teachers and Heads of Geography/Humanities); Chairs and members of other, relevant GA Working Group; and various people involved in geography education. Crucially it included people involved in teaching geography at primary,

secondary and post-16 level as well as those involved in training geography teachers. However disappointingly, there didn't appear to be any academic geographers in the group and I noted that I would need to follow up whether and how any had been involved.

A set of six dispositions were created by the group (see figure 3). These recognised the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the subject, the partial, situated nature of geographical knowledge and the need for critical reflection (GeoVisions, 1999). These underpinned the groups thinking when, at the start of 2002, a GeoVisions GCSE Sub-Group (again chaired by Diane Swift) was established and the QCA commissioned the Group to produce a report on what the proposed pilot geography GCSE might look like.

- Places are complex and diverse
- We need to make transparent the way in which individuals develop their partial view of the world
- We must recognise the plurality of knowledge
- We need to engage in critical reflection
- We must use alternative texts, and think about how we inform and misinform young people
- We must be confident that geography is plural, dynamic and contested

Figure 3 GeoVisions Dispositions (source: GeoVisions, 1999)

A planning weekend was held in the February of that year, the result of which was a report to the QCA entitled '*Creating Challenge Within a Geography GCSE: A framework to guide the development of a more lively and innovative course for 14-16 year olds*' (GeoVisions, 2002). That weekend the group came up with the notion of 'Fugis'. This stood for the five key concepts - Futures, Uneven development, Globalisation, Interdependence and Sustainability – which were to become the building

blocks of the pilot GCSE (see figure 4). A concept-led specification was an ‘innovative departure’ allowing:

greater freedom to explore ideas and content appropriate to both the students’ and the schools’ local circumstances and strengths, rather than imposing pre-determined content on a learning community. The use of concepts creates the opportunity for more open discussion and dialogue, increasing the opportunities for deep learning. (Swift, 2005: np)

The emphasis on deep learning, that is learning which has a long lasting effect on practice and is thus more likely to lead to transformative change, was illustrative of the critical approach underlying the development of the pilot GCSE.

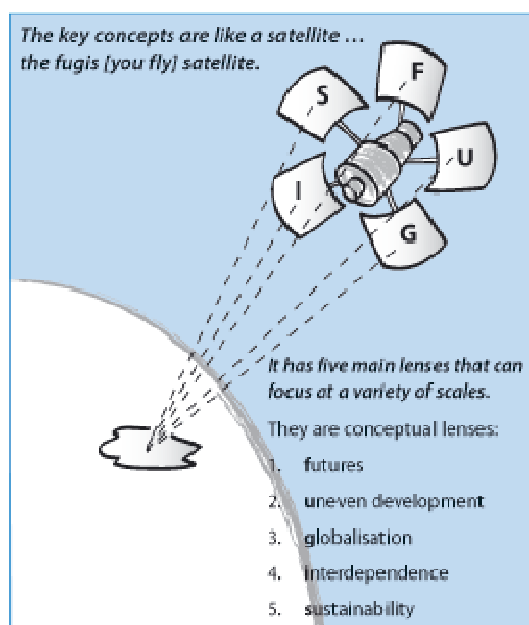


Figure 4 'Fugis' (source: <http://www.tidec.org/Tide~talk/network%20arts/learn-converse.html>)

This report was sent to the GCP group for consideration. At almost exactly the same time the second development took place: The Government published its 2002 Green Paper for the 14-19 phase entitled ‘14-19 Green Paper: extending opportunities, raising standards’ (DfES, 2002). Here a ‘hybrid’ GCSE (combining academic and vocational elements) was promoted, and geography was cited as an exemplar subject. The timing was perfect and an unexpected piece of luck had occurred. The GCP group

took the opportunity to not only develop a hybrid syllabus, but to also allow a new approach to a subject that had seen little change to its content since the inauguration of the NC in 1986 (Westaway and Rawling, 2003). The pilot geography GCSE was born.

2.8 Concluding Thoughts

Where does the thesis stand at this point? Through a combination of in-depth literature review and empirical insights, this chapter has charted the development of school level geography, situating developments within a wider education context and historicising and contextualising the development of the pilot GCSE. From school geography's inception in the late Nineteenth Century with its close ties with imperialism, through to the increasingly regulated geography of the 1980s with the introduction of the NC and New Labour's performance and accountability mandate, I have offered a critical history of geography curricula and teaching. Building on the underlying themes raised in Chapter One I have developed more detailed discussion of critical pedagogy, placing the work of Freire within a broader context and, in so doing, contributing to wider understandings of the practice of critical pedagogy in geography. The notion of educational governance has also been introduced to show how the various organisations and people involved in geography curriculum development fit together and where the power resides in such a 'system'.

Ending at the start of the Twentieth-First Century and Ofsted's warnings about the declining quality of geography teaching combined with declining candidate numbers at GCSE, I have examined the multi-faceted reasons why geography needed something to 'kick start' it. Central to this was rejuvenating a school subject that had become stagnant and out of date by introducing material and approaches that would be relevant

to young people's lives, and in so doing remodelling geography's image both at school-level and with the wider public. As a response, therefore, to disciplinary changes and challenges, the pilot GCSE developed firstly out of an opportunity provided by QCA's GCP and secondly from a timely Government Green Paper which promoted a 'hybrid' GCSE. In exploring the networks behind the development of the pilot GCSE I have highlighted how many of the people involved drew on their experiences of pre-NC Geography. Inspired by a critical geography that would recognise the partial and situated nature of geographical knowledge and move away from the transmission model of education, towards one in which young people were involved in their own learning, the pilot GCSE was intended to radically change the status quo.

How did I get here? Firstly, in keeping with my rhizomatic ethnographic approach, I drew on the contacts already made during my Masters which led me to attend various workshops and conferences. The research conversations with people at these events enabled me not only to gain first-hand insights about people's prior experiences of school geography, but also to piece together the complex jigsaw behind the development of the pilot GCSE and to give a sense of the motivations behind the people and organisations involved.

Secondly, as discussed in Chapter One, I have responded to recent calls in geography for studies that go beyond the micro-scale of children's geographies and research those 'who are actively involved in constructing the policies and discourses that affect children' (Ansell, 2009: 205). Since schooling is one of the biggest arenas that affects young people's lives, rather than simply examining the impact the pilot is having on young people's personal and disciplinary geographies, I have begun by

exploring the people and organisations involved in the development of the geography curriculum.

Where next? In providing the historical context in which the pilot developed and identifying some of the people involved, I have laid the foundations for Chapter Three to examine the pilot GCSE itself since its inception in September 2003. In order to uncover the intentions of the pilot I need to critically analyse both the GCSE's substantive elements alongside its approach to teaching, learning and assessment. At this stage I want to follow some of my existing leads through, continue to attend those workshops and conferences, speak to some of the teachers already involved in the pilot to get their views on how it was working out, and find out whether there were any happenings going on between school and academic geography. In continuing to shed light on the thinking, people and organisations behind its development I hope to begin to move from the outside to the inside of the school geography community.

Chapter Three: The Pilot Geography GCSE

3.1 A 'lively and innovative' GCSE

In one of the lessons I gave, at the end of it I got a spontaneous round of applause, so something's gone right! (pilot teacher, initial evaluation report, cited in QCA, 2004)

In April 2004 on the long train journey back from my first GA Annual Conference in Canterbury (where I had heard Eleanor talk about the pilot for the first time), I began to write up my notes from the day. I had collected a wealth of handouts to read, made a note of websites and forthcoming events to look into, and a list of people and email addresses to follow up. Over the next four years I would attend a range of conferences, events and workshops in an attempt to immerse myself into the world of school geography and the pilot GCSE. Although I had no idea at the time, by adopting a rhizomatic approach and following things were they led I would subsequently become much more involved in this world than I could ever have predicted: presenting my own research at the GA Conference and at a conference for pilot and non-pilot teachers; being emailed out of the blue by pilot teachers and by the Principle Examiner for the pilot asking if they could use resources I had produced; and becoming co-chair of a GA Working Group and an academic consultant on a GA project.

Eleanor's presentation (Rawling, 2004a, see also Rawling, 2004b; 2004c) described how a pilot GCSE geography group was set up by the QCA to design and develop the specification for this qualification. However, this was a collaborative venture with input from both the GA and RGS-IBG along the way. From the groundwork that had already been done by the GeoVisions Working Group and the GCP group a number of core principles had already been developed. The pilot GCSE's purpose was to:

1. provide a lively and innovative geography course for 14 to 16 year olds that reflect the needs of students and current thinking in the subject;
2. build effectively on students' geographical learning in KS 3, and provide a constructive basis for study at advanced level and beyond;
3. test a hybrid model for the geography-related area of qualifications which allow students to follow academic (general) and/or vocational/applied pathways within the qualifications.

(Westaway and Rawling, 2003)

In December 2002 the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA examining board (OCR) were accredited to run the pilot for QCA. Following on from this, in February 2003 information about the GCSE was sent out to all secondary schools in England to find those interested in being one of twenty schools to start teaching the specification less than seven months from then (QCA, 2004). Nearly 250 schools attended the OCR information meeting the following month, and of these over 100 liked what they heard and applied to be involved. The sheer number of interested schools made it clear that teachers urgently wanted a 'sea change' to the geography curriculum. Twenty schools were then selected to become 'partner centres' which would start the pilot in September 2003; a further thirty were chosen to form the second cohort of schools which would start the subsequent September. An estimated 2000 pupils would therefore be involved in the pilot, which would run for three years, from September 2003 until July 2006 (when it was expected that all GCSEs would finish due to a review of the curriculum). An evaluation would then be published by OCR in the autumn of 2006 (Westaway and Rawling, 2003). Alongside the geography pilot there would be further piloting of the 'hybrid' GCSE model, in history and science for example. The Government would then

make its decision (in the Tomlinson report) about the future of GCSEs in 2006 (Hopkin, 2004).

What then attracted so many schools to a GCSE, which in reality might only last for three years? What was being offered? Perhaps teachers were drawn by the premise that the pilot aimed to restore geography's status by incorporating innovative and lively ways of thinking, teaching and assessing. At that early stage OCR didn't even have a specification to show the schools, but as Eleanor later told me 'teachers were looking for something different and were willing to take a risk and run with us on it' (2004, pers. comm., 8 July).

In the days following the GA conference I downloaded articles in order to get as full an understanding as possible of the thinking behind the pilot, its intentions and any feedback from teachers thus far. The GA website seemed a good place to start. Here the OCR specification was available to download (OCR, 2004) as was a Planning Guide aimed to assist pilot schools in their planning and teaching of the new course (GeoVisions, 2003). The specification (which was subject to change) outlined what the pilot GCSE would look like in practice. Central to the course were three core modules (which also constituted a GCSE short course):

- *My Place*: living in the UK Today;
- *An Extreme Environment*: exploring landscape and process; and
- *People as Consumers*: the impact of our decisions.

A further two optional modules comprised the full GCSE. There was no specific order in which to teach the modules, although most, if not all, schools opted to teach the three core units in year one followed by the optional units in year two. Originally seven

optional units were offered, with a further two being subsequently added. The options were: Coastal Management; Investigating Culture; Investigating Geography through Fieldwork; Planning Where we Live; Travel and Tourism Destinations; GIS; Geography in the News; Living with Floods; and Urban Transport: finding sustainable solutions. These covered a full spectrum from being more academic (such as 'Coastal Management'), through to applied (such as 'Geography in the News) and vocational (such as 'Planning Where we Live').

Looking at these topics it was clear that the pilot was attempting to engage with academic geography as well as choosing topics that were relevant to young people's lives both now and in the future. Indeed Eleanor told me how the core themes were chosen to link in with some of the new developments in geography as well as to 'link into things that kids would find interesting and motivating' (2004, pers. comm., 8 July). I couldn't stop thinking about how similar that *People as Consumers* module sounded to the *GMC* module I had taken as an undergraduate. A well-established, but continuously growing body of work existed in geography around commodity geographies, material culture, and the politics of consumption with the likes of Peter Jackson (1999), Nicky Gregson and Louise Crewe (2003), Paul Cloke (2002) and Ian Cook *et al.*(2004) just a few of the more prominent academics in this area.¹⁷ This work in geography was situated within and was influenced by/influenced work from other disciplines, including Daniel Miller's work in Anthropology on material culture and consumption (see Miller, 1998; 2003; 2005) and Arjun Appadurai oft-cited *The social life of things* (Appadurai, 1988). Historically this work drew upon Marx's concept of 'commodity fetishism' (Marx, 1887) as well as from the decades of social action in the latter half of the

¹⁷ See Cook *et al.* (2006) for a review of 'following the thing' research in relation to food.

twentieth century, which resulted in David Harvey's famous call for radical geographers to 'get behind the veil, the fetishism of the market (1990: 422)'. This was when my thoughts first turned to taking a more active, engaged approach to research rather than simply looking at how the pilot was working out in practice. Could my own experiences be used in the classroom to help cross the two worlds of school and academic geography?

Back to the specification and I read how the whole course was organised around those five organising geographical concepts, or 'big ideas', which had stemmed from GeoVisions: interdependence, globalisation, uneven development, sustainability and futures. These, according to the Planning Guide, were chosen 'because they summarise the broad sweep of geographical interest implied and highlight the stress on citizenship for the 21st century' (GeoVisions, 2003: 3). The concepts were key to the pilot's approach and underlined David Lambert's notion of the need to have both a 'grammar' and 'vocabulary' to geography (2006, pers. comm., 14 February). The 'vocabulary' was what made up the geography of the NC era; (mostly) predetermined factual content, such as place names, which pupils were meant to learn and then regurgitate in an exam. Whilst there was still a need for young people to know the vocabulary, David argued that geography's grammar – key concepts such as place, space and those underpinning the pilot – would enable intellectual thinking and a real engagement with the *subject* of geography (see Morgan and Lambert, 2005). Only by using vocabulary and grammar together, it was argued, would teachers and young people be able to 'think geographically' (see Jackson, 2006).

The Planning Guide for the pilot GCSE further revealed the networks of people involved in its development. This guide, commissioned by the QCA and collated by the GA's GeoVisions GCSE Working Party, was sent to all 'partner centres' in July 2003. The guide provided an insight into the geographical thinking behind the GCSE, explored the core themes in more depth and provided lesson planning ideas, links to academic sources and other resources (see GeoVisions, 2003). This was key in light of the fact that there were no textbooks to accompany the course. Although the guide had been written by the Working Party, with Diane Swift as lead author, it was evident from the first page that this had been a collaborative effort with input and support from a number of different groups which had developed and sometimes merged over time. The network of people who had, in some way, influenced the pilot continued to grow and it was becoming clear that I wouldn't be able to pin down everyone involved and record their views. Rather, a more rhizomatic approach was needed and I decided to follow the leads I had already established and watch where they took me.

Another source of valuable material in the Planning Guide was provided by a group of teachers called the Rivendell Working Group. This, I discovered, consisted of a number of pilot centres from the first cohort working collaboratively to provide 'real life' planning and thinking around the pilot. The plan had always been to heavily involve the 'partner centres' in the development of the specification, so this group had developed in response to this (see Westaway and Rawling, 2003). The group formed out an informal gathering organised by Graham Senior, one of the 'partner centre' teachers, and was named after the centre in Yorkshire where it met. Two weekend long meetings provided the opportunity for schools involved in the Pilot to engage in collaborative curriculum development alongside each other, and 'experts' in this area. The pilot

teachers were joined by Eleanor Rawling, Diane Swift and Judy Mansell (Education Officer at the RGS-IBG) who provided support and curriculum development expertise to the group as they developed outline plans for the core themes and considered creative ways of planning for the optional modules. From the outset then it would appear that the pilot *was* giving teachers the time and space to be creative and engage in curriculum development. This, I knew from my Masters research, was essential and could provide the mechanism needed for continuous curriculum change. Whilst small teacher networks like the Rivendell Group were undoubtedly valuable I did think that these types of comings together could move one step further and provide a forum for dialogue to take place between academics and teachers. It would therefore be essential for me to attend as many of these events as possible.

3.2 The Modules

Leafing through the OCR pilot GCSE specification I read how the *My Place* module ‘examines the idea of ‘place’, by starting from candidates’ own local place and community’ (OCR, 2004: 22). I remembered that Diane had said that the module was about ‘opening the window onto the world through your place’ (Interview, Diane Swift). In essence, it called for an understanding of how place was made. The module focused on four of the five organising principles: uneven development, interdependence, globalisation and futures. The scale and range of study was ‘personal and local but moving outwards to regional, national, international and global links’ (OCR, 2004: 22). So the idea was that pupils would study their local place or community in depth and use this as a starting point for exploring,

the processes affecting the changing geography of their own lives; the links/connections which the local community has with its region, the nation and the wider world; some important issues about the UK’s changing identity and character. (*ibid.* p.23)

The topic would also provide opportunities for pupils to explore their personal geographies, to undertake fieldwork in the local area, and to develop their understanding of citizenship. Teachers were encouraged to use local community links and experiences and there was the opportunity to arrange visits from and to local people and organisations. Suggested questions to address included: ‘how is this place influenced by its links with other places?’ and ‘how do different people experience this place differently?’ (*ibid.* p.24).

Eleanor, who helped write the specification for the module emphasised that the unit was *not* a locality study, but that ‘it is about using the local area as a springboard to get into the bigger picture and global issues’ (2004, pers. comm., 8 July). Later on teachers would tell me they had found this the most challenging module and had initially spent too long on it as it covered so much ground. Eleanor agreed with this saying that ‘not surprisingly teachers have found it difficult, because they do need some professional development with this’; which it was hoped the pilot workshops and meetings would provide. However, although the topics approached would necessarily be different in every area with every group of students, ‘because it’s a core theme, there has to be enough similarity for things to appear on an exam paper’ (*ibid.*). Thus, the module was intended to investigate some of the big issues in the UK at the moment via a very local starting point.

Making school geography more exciting and relevant would involve the development of new teaching materials and strategies which allowed students to see themselves in the issues they studied, and to appreciate their connections with others around the world through the things they bought and the activities in which they

engaged. The *People as Consumers* module focused on ‘the impact that the process of consumption has made and is making on our lives’ exploring international and global scales but linking back to the personal and local (OCR, 2004: 29). Students were asked to ‘follow the production, distribution and marketing of one familiar product [...] and one service’, exploring their own consumption practices and using the Internet to find information (*ibid.*). Whilst the unit would touch on all five underlying concepts, there were clear opportunities to explore and engage with uneven development, interdependence and globalisation. Some questions for students to consider were: What are my rights/responsibilities as a consumer? What are some of the spatial consequences of these decisions? What alternative consumer scenarios are there? It therefore looked like opportunities existed for teachers to think through the links between the syllabus and issues of citizenship, responsibility and connectivity using ‘hands-on’, non-didactic teaching practices and materials. *Exchange Values* being added as a potential resource was just the starting point for what was to come.

The *Extreme Environments* unit, looked as if it was the only overtly physical geography element of the GCSE. This module started regionally and moved up and down scales for explanation through an examination of a desert, polar or mountain area; OCR provided a list including such as Svalbard, the Peruvian Andes and the Kalahari desert. However, the more I read about the module, the more I realised that it went further than the traditional physical topics I learnt at school; rivers, glaciers and coasts and describing their physical characteristics. Rather, it drew on both physical and human aspects of the subject. Thus it explored issues to do with image and representation and how this affected people’s ways of seeing particular landscapes and environments. This could be done through ‘exploring literature, music, film, poetry and

painting as sources of landscape representation’ (OCR, 2004:26). However the focus would then move to ‘understanding the physical process which account for the feature of the chosen environment, the challenges presented to humans and the range of human adaptations and responses’ (*ibid.*). It was hoped that by focusing on one location such as the Sahara desert rather than all hot deserts a deeper more critical learning could take place as teachers wouldn’t desperately try and cover every fact and feature relevant to deserts. There was an emphasis on exploring different future scenarios for the chosen environment and the impact that different courses of action might have, thus drawing on the concepts of sustainability and futures.

I soon discovered that this module had the most established set of recognised resources. Every teacher I spoke to would mention the *High Arctic* teacher and student resources (Martin *et al.*, 2004) and I would also hear them spoken about at the various pilot meetings and conferences I attended. These resources had been developed by the Geographical Association alongside Cape Farewell – a charitable organisation which brought together artists, scientists and communicators to develop a cultural response to climate change.¹⁸ Coming out of an inter-disciplinary expedition to Svalbard, the resources aimed to provide (according to the accompanying WebPages¹⁹) an alternative approach to teaching which was ‘more narrative based, more about WHY people have developed the theories they have, looking at the interpretations, deeper meaning’ (Cape Farewell, *High Arctic*, Website accessed 19th September 2009, <http://www.capefarewell.com/youth/education-resources/the-high-arctic.html>). This was again crucial to the concept-led nature of the pilot, ‘not predetermining what that

¹⁸ See <http://www.capefarewell.com/about.html> for further details about the organisation.

¹⁹ The High Arctic WebPages are <http://www.capefarewell.com/youth/education-resources/the-high-arctic.html>

interpretation is, but giving kids a substance in which they can create their own interpretations' (Diane Swift, 2006, pers. comm., 14 February). This resource provided 'the architecture' for how to think about these issues according to David Lambert (2006, pers. comm., 14 February); so whilst there was a sequence of 12 lessons, and accompanying DVD and images there was no reason to follow this structure or use them in a rigid manner. This approach to resources was key; providing a basic architecture for teachers to then go off and adapt things for their students and local context. This issue of how teachers interpreted resources was an interesting one and I wondered how this would work in practice. Were teachers so used to picking up stock case studies and teaching them 'out of the book'? Or would they relish the opportunities to draw on their own and students' knowledges, experiences and creativity to produce their own versions?

3.3 Support for Pilot Teachers

Providing professional support and development for teachers was crucial to the pilot's success. Without this it would be almost impossible for teachers to keep 'reinventing, developing and translating the curriculum' at *local level* (Eleanor Rawling, 2004, pers. comm., 8 July). Eleanor explained how the pilot GCSE had shown that you could wait a long time for change to happen at a national level and therefore a focus on giving support at the local level was key. Thus alongside the Planning Guide, professional development, guidance and support for pilot schools would be provided in a variety of forms (Westaway and Rawling, 2003). OCR, as part of the funding for the pilot from QCA, was expected to run professional development activities. New collaborations between OCR/QCA and the GA and RGS/IBG were anticipated, which would consist of: conferences for pilot schools; guidance and resource advice; web-

based support; the establishment of a pilot co-ordinator; and pilot teachers' own efforts.²⁰

These sorts of support structures were central as teachers were taking a leap of faith during a period of intense regulation and monitoring. Taking time out for teacher to attend continuing professional development (CPD) was particularly hard to come by in the current climate of hitting targets. However, the GA was now in a privileged position to provide this much needed time and space for teachers 'to remember why they were motivated to teach geography, to be engaged with the subject and to renew and construct their own knowledge and understandings' (Diane Swift, 2006, pers. comm., 14 February). Having the name of professional bodies such as the GA attached to particular events helped teachers justify their involvement or attendance with senior management and head teachers:

Teachers feel the legitimacy of a GA project or a GA piece of work, and they can go to their senior teachers and say "the GA has asked me to do", or "there's this work that I can do, and it's the Subject Association"... So, it's quite a privileged position to be able to be in really. And it's been hugely beneficial... I mean the feedback from the teachers has been phenomenal really. (*ibid.*)

One of my first forays into examining how the pilot was working out in practice was by attending two such meetings. These were an excellent opportunity to see what this support involved and meant in practice. The first was that *OCR Pilot Geography GCSE* planning meeting at Aston University on 5th May 2004 that Ian had been invited to speak at. Here, schools from the first cohort shared their experiences of their first year with schools in the second cohort about to start the pilot. I was intrigued to hear

²⁰ For example, the aforementioned Rivendell Group.

how schools had found things so far. One teacher, Pete²¹, told how he had been teaching for 12 years but was about to pack it all in two years ago. He was frustrated. His pupils were frustrated. There was no time to stand still and discuss things with his pupils or to let any of their voices be heard. Geography was something that was ‘done’ to them. All that had changed with the pilot and he was now as enthusiastic as ever and actually felt that his skills as a teacher were important. Pete’s school started trailing the GCSE with a class of 25 kids; by year two they had the entire year group of 120 doing it because they’d seen the difference that it made, not only to the kids, but the teachers as well (participant observation notes, 5th May 2004). It was stories like these which reaffirmed my enthusiasm to research a GCSE that sounded so amazing!

The second meeting was a workshop a couple of months later, on 8th May, called *Getting Started with the Optional Units* at the RGS-IBG which provided space for teachers to gain professional development. At this meeting Dave²², another pilot teacher, echoed many when he revealed that he had found it difficult ‘knowing whether I am on the right track’ because he didn’t have the ‘reassurance of a accompanying textbook to structure a lesson, or to set kids stuff for homework’ (participant observation notes, 8th July 2004). Feelings of being out on a limb, fear of losing pupils, and questioning their own teaching ability were shared by many teachers. This is why these planning days and meetings were essential since they let teachers ‘share what’s worked and what hasn’t and at least you don’t feel alone out there, trying to change the curriculum for yourself’ (*ibid.*). Giving teachers the time and space to have a dialogue and discuss their classroom experiences was essential.

²¹ Pseudonym

²² Pseudonym

One of the major issues that cropped up time and time again when speaking to teachers at these and other meetings was the issue of resources. One of the most obvious differences between the conventional and pilot GCSE was that there was no core textbook; the significance of which could not be underestimated in a culture of 'textbook as curriculum' (cf. Balderstone, 2000). While more flexible, the GCSE therefore required innovative curriculum materials to succeed. Thus, as well as support in the form of CPD and curriculum development, producing, sharing and distributing resources would be critical.

3.4 Innovative Assessment

A key difference between the 'traditional' and the pilot GCSE, it seemed to me, was the innovative assessment advocated. The full GCSE comprised a combination of external (33%) and internal (67%) assessment. This was quite a leap of faith at a time when assessment was becoming ever more regulated. To have a syllabus where two-thirds of a qualification was assessed by teachers appeared to be invaluable; it was teachers rather than external assessors, surely, who were experts on the local topics of study and who knew how much effort pupils had put into a group piece of work. Yet, this raised questions about how time consuming this would be for teachers, especially factoring in the need to create resources for the GCSE too.

The 'core course' (or GCSE short course) was made up of external and internal assessment. External assessment (33% of full GCSE) comprised a 1 ½ hour examination paper which focused on a decision-making exercise, which was based on pre-release material and cut across all three core modules (but with a heavy focus on one) (QCA, 2004; Wood, 2004). Internal assessment (worth 17% of full GCSE) was through a

portfolio of three short items, one from each core theme, which formed part of normal class-work and/or homework. Rather than simply producing an essay or report, I read with excitement that pupils could be assessed through writing a poem, producing a website, making a film, compiling a report, and so on; thus enabling students to work to their strengths (QCA, 2004). Phil Wood, a pilot teacher in one of the 'partner centres', explained that these pieces should not be seen as 'bolt-on' pieces of coursework but form normal classroom work (Wood, 2004: 99). Many pupils had been put off choosing geography in the past by the perceived lengthy nature of coursework; putting low word limits on pieces – each portfolio piece should be the equivalent of 500 words – was therefore an attempt to combat this. The portfolio also had to incorporate ICT and one piece needed to show primary data collection. One of the strengths of producing a portfolio that would be internally assessed was highlighted by Wood:

The use of a portfolio of work has acted as an excellent medium for demonstrating progression and attainment within geography. Many geographical experiences are not well examined through the use of formal examination, including skills relating to fieldwork and GIS. (Wood, 2006: 136-7)

However, it was with the two optional modules (which comprised 50% of the full GCSE) where the really innovative assessment lay (Wood, 2004). Since only two modules were covered over the course of a year the emphasis was on researching topics in depth rather than trying to cover a wide breadth of material. Pupils could choose how they want to present their work and did not necessarily have to produce two separate pieces. For example incorporating GIS into a report on planning issues in the surrounding area provided an excellent example of linking the *Planning Where we Live* and *GIS* modules (*ibid.*). All the modules were also internally assessed and two of these – *Investigating geography through fieldwork* and *GIS* – were actually teacher assessed

which, according to Rachel Atherton respects teachers' professional judgement rather than seeing them as incapable of having the knowledge to carry this out. As one teacher later pointed out, 'the whole specification values the responsibility of geography teachers to design challenging and fresh geographical experiences for their candidates' (Atherton, 2007: 20). I wondered what impact this leap of faith in teachers' professional ability would have after years of teachers being deprofessionalised through the NC? Would it, as David Lambert had hoped, improve teacher's 'professional confidence' and consequently their willingness to take risks in the classroom?

One place where this school-university crossing would be key was examinations. However, John Morgan told me that the link between exam boards and universities had been eroded. So whereas before,

university tutors and lecturers used to be part of the process of making the curriculum... increasingly it has become, what I would call exam experts – bureaucrats – who really make decisions about exams. (John Morgan, 2006, pers. comm., 18 November)

Speaking to John made me recall a post from that Critical-Geography-Forum debate a couple of years earlier. Jacky Tivers, who had been an A-level geography examiner for 23 years with two exam boards (ULEAC and Edexcel), including being Assistant Chief Examiner for five years, had written about her frustrations of trying to effect change within a system where Chief Examiners were so rooted in 1960s/1970s geography that they just couldn't 'think outside the blinkers' (Tivers, 2004). She eventually resigned from her position because she found the experience 'like banging my head against a brick wall...Every year I was invited to write exam questions, which were then "archived" - not one was ever used in an actual paper' (*ibid.*).

At this stage I therefore had a few concerns regarding OCR's ability to implement the pilot. If, what I'd read about the changing role of examining boards was correct, and their role had changed from curriculum innovators to qualification deliverers then I was becoming concerned that OCR might find it difficult to a) implement such an innovative GCSE and b) provide the training and support for the GCSE.

How had the pilot managed to develop within this exam board culture, I wondered? Eleanor shed light on the role OCR had played during the development of the GCSE, revealing that members of the various GA and QCA Working Groups had in essence taken over the reins:

[The pilot] was only done because of large amounts of hard work and negotiations with the exam board, actually taking things out of their hands, because they didn't know how to do it. In a way, they didn't want it. Don't get me wrong, they wanted to be involved in change, but they didn't have the kind of people and the kind of structures that could do this kind of thing. We had to actually virtually take it out of their hands and say 'no, we really want it to be different' and make it different. (2004, pers. comm., 8 July)

Indeed, it would seem that OCR's role was simply to administer the GCSE on behalf of the QCA, and it had rather been down to the hard work of a small number of individuals such as Eleanor and Diane to ensure the pilot GCSE *was* innovative in approach and to ensure that support and innovation were there for teachers. The very nature of the GCSE being a pilot meant that it was very low risk for OCR and their involvement was seen as simply to accredit it and 'there was always the sense that if it goes wrong then you can dump it in a way can't you?' (John Morgan, 2006, pers. comm., 18 November).

It was becoming clear that the roles of the different organisations involved in curriculum development had changed, with it no longer being the aim of either the exam

boards or QCA. In fact, in line with the wider personalisation agendas of the curriculum, QCA was moving away from a subject-centred towards a future-led and person-centred curriculum (David Lambert, 2006, pers. comm., 14 February). Rather than being asked to contribute subject knowledge wise, subjects were now being asked how they contributed to the overall aims of the whole curriculum (going back to Eleanor's notion of qCa to QcA, see above p.72). It had therefore fallen, in recent years, to the GA to take on this responsibility and push the subject forward. As John Morgan put it:

It seems to me the big player is, at the moment, is the GA. But that's interesting because I don't think the GA had a major role in curriculum development 20 years ago with the older projects. So, something's happened and it's playing a role that perhaps someone else played earlier. (2006, pers. comm., 18 November)

In thinking all of this through I now had a better understanding of the 'mechanics' of the GCSE. However, before I could go on to look into how the pilot was working out in practice I needed to also understand what the intentions behind the GCSE were.

3.5 Engaging Young People

In short, in order for students to find geography an increasingly attractive option, both fresh academic content and student-centred approaches must be integrated to produce a cutting edge classroom experience. (Mack, 2004b: 67)

Bringing geography up to date and making it relevant to students' own lives underlined the pilot from the start. The Planning Guide, for example, stated that 'It is about making transparent the "what has this got to do with me?" question' (GeoVisions, 2003: 3). The stickiness of personal geographies was, according to Diane Swift, very powerful and it was important that the pilot didn't come across as 'geography being done to them'. Rather, the intention was to start with issues relevant to young people's everyday experiences and use them as a 'jumping off point' to investigate wider issues

(Diane Swift, 2006, pers. comm., 14 February). In this regard the pilot WebPages on the GA site stated that,

In essence, it is a specification that reveals global connections. The Pilot GCSE does this in a way that is both relevant to the learner and extends their thinking, hence the emphasis on the personal perspective. It demonstrates that thinking geographically enables us to appreciate that people and places at great distance from ours are, nevertheless, intimately connected with us. (www.geography.org.uk).

Importantly, the pilot provided space for teachers to adapt the issues they studied to ones that related to pupils' own lives (whether this was the impact that the closure of a local factory had had or the connections students had with different countries around the world). This was one way in which the pilot could remain up-to-date since the issues that effected young peoples' lives in a particular area were constantly changing. Making school geography more exciting and relevant would involve not only student-centred approaches to teaching, but also the development of new teaching materials and strategies which would allow students to see themselves in the issues they study.

Built into the pilot was the principle that students should not simply be on the receiving end of education. As the chair of the GA's Education Standing Committee argued, in order for teachers and educators to know what was relevant to student's lives, the student's themselves needed consulting (Grimwade, 2002). This tied in to more recent initiatives within education surrounding the personalised curriculum and the role of 'student voice' within schools (see QCA, 2008). However, the literature within young people's geographies pointed out how easy it was to pay lip service to young people's participation, with young people simply given a quick questionnaire to complete, becoming, as Hugh Matthews (2003: 270) has suggested, 'bit-part players'. For example, in a school, or local community context, are young people fully engaged

in policy or planning processes from the outset? Is it made clear why their involvement is important? Are they told the ways in which they will be involved? How much of their involvement is taken seriously? Young people may, quite rightly, become sceptical of adults canvassing their views, questioning the motivations behind 'consultation', if previous involvement has resulted in little change (Matthews, 2003).

It became clear that research needed to be undertaken on how children actually used and worked through these issues, the effect that 'revelations' of connections might have on them, and the ways in which geography curriculum, teaching materials and strategies were developed which did and did not connect with their lives.

3.6 A Less Exclusive Geography

So far it appeared that both the student-centred approach and the innovative assessment advocated by the pilot would make it accessible to a wider range of pupil abilities and backgrounds, compared to other geography GCSEs on offer. Had making the pilot more accessible to a range of pupils been one of the original intentions when developing the GCSE? Indeed, the promotion of the GCSE as being a hybrid – combining academic and vocational aspects – was seen as an opportunity to mask something slightly more radical. David Lambert later referred to the pilot as being 'deceptively radical' at the Public Geographies Symposium in April 2006 (pers. comm., 7th April). So whilst there was talk at the outset of vocational and academic modules this ended up getting lost a bit (Diane Swift, 2006, pers. comm., 14 February). Diane described how the pilot had evolved in her mind as 'rather than being academic and vocation, it was becoming a more inclusive geography, or perhaps, a less *exclusive* geography would be more appropriate' (*ibid.*). One way this was achieved was through

the assessment options integrated into the GCSE. Diane explained that by widening the number of ways that pupils could demonstrate their geographical understanding it enabled the GCSE to be more inclusive thus allowing a greater range of young people to succeed in geography. The whole approach to the pilot – to teaching, learning and assessment, as well as the subject matter – was therefore intended to produce a much ‘less exclusive’ geography in the classroom.

During a conversation amongst a group of teachers at the *Getting Started with the Optional Modules* meeting at the RGS-IBG, one of the teachers – Sandra²³ – revealed that she had found even the more ‘vocal’ kids focused and motivated. Going on to describe the impact of the flexible assessment options she told the story of how one very artistic pupil had created an amazing travel guide to their local area. Prior to the pilot Sandra vividly recalled how this same pupil always sat at the back on the class chatting away. She’d always put it down to laziness, but maybe it was because the pupil’s ways of working didn’t suit the traditional essay format (participant observation, *Getting Started with the Optional Modules* meeting, 8th July 2004). I was interested to discover that the young people who didn’t perform so well under other specifications could access geography via the approaches advocated by the pilot. It was fantastic that kids were at last being given a choice of learning and presenting their geographical knowledge in a range of ways. Recalling some of the oral feedback they’d had from the first couple of years of the pilot Diane Swift would later tell me how,

you’ve got advocates who teach in special needs schools, who are saying that the kids are really motivated by this. And we’ve got advocates in King Edwards VI Five Ways Grammar School intake, who are saying the kids are really motivated and challenged by this. (2006, pers. comm., 14 February)

²³ Pseudonym

However, this wasn't to say that the pilot was an 'easy option', conversely teachers had told her that the pilot was challenging both the least able and most able because 'the kids have to dig deeper, are more personally engaged and have to think more critically' (*ibid.*).

3.7 A Critical, Deeper Approach to Learning

Ultimately it [the pilot GCSE] aims to help young people think geographically about their own place in the world and this means appreciating that a place cannot be summarised or represented in one exclusive way. The same is true of a person. Using this approach may help to challenge the notion, perpetuated by some textbooks that people and their place can be reduced to a double page spread. (GeoVisions, 2003: 2-3)

The GeoVisions planning guide emphasised that the GCSE 'is about a geography that encourages young people to be reflective and critical' and that 'it is also a geography for deep learning, aimed at developing conceptual understanding and transferable skills' (GeoVisions, 2003: 2). This approach to learning lay in stark contrast to the 'banking system' of education characteristic of the geography NC since pupils would be given the time and space to think outside the box.

Interested to find out whether this approach had been influenced by the critical pedagogical approach of the likes of Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux, I asked Eleanor this question. She replied that the pilot was obviously a 'move away from kids as being passive vessels that you fill up with knowledge, to much more active learning', a student-focused approach where learning takes place by actively engaging in the learning process, using real life situations; in essence, learning through doing (cf. Gibbs, 1988). This was similar to the approach taken by curriculum projects during the 1970s had attempted, so 'in a way we've been here before' (Eleanor Rawling, 2004, pers.

comm., 8 July). Whilst the QCA geography team along with the GA had been trying for some time to ‘make little in-roads’ into the predominately passive style of learning advocated by the NC, they realised that the only way to really change things was to ‘kick into the pot something very new and very different’ (*ibid.*). Whilst maybe not having directly read the works of Freire first hand, it was becoming clear that the team behind the pilot shared a similar philosophy and that their thinking had been informed by these sorts of ideas.

Rather than learning a stock of case studies (which had most likely been taught in the same way for 20 years) to regurgitate in an exam I read with interest how the GCSE focused on a limited range of studies which were studied in much more depth. Although there would be less ‘content’ (in terms of geography’s vocabulary), there would be more depth in what was studied (more of geography’s grammar). The five underlying principles that tied the GCSE together meant that pupils would not see individual topics modules in isolation, but would be able to identify the interconnections inherent within much of geography. By studying topics in depth, gaining knowledge from a variety of sources (not just the double-page spread of a textbook), and being asked to discuss and question the information, pupils could develop ‘a reflective and critical approach to their learning and to knowledge’ (OCR, 2004: 12). This differed somewhat to the geography I remembered at GCSE where there were any number of case studies with each case study fitting nicely onto an index card for exam revision. A bullet point list telling me all the facts I needed to know to get that elusive ‘A*’ grade. Getting academic pupils to move out of their comfort zone and realise that there were

no right answers was something that Laura²⁴, who was on my table at the RGS-IBG pilot meeting, had come up against,

Our pupils are very academic and sometimes the kids have wanted a list of what they need to ‘know’ about a particular topic. It reassures them to have a textbook in front of them. It’s taken them a long time to have confidence in their own voice. (2004, pers. comm., *Getting Started with the Optional Modules* meeting, 8 July)

Digging deeper, being more engaged and thinking more critically were all key intentions of the pilot (Diane Swift, 2006, pers. comm., 14 February). It was these skills that were central to a geographers toolkit, but unfortunately, many students lacked these on arrival at university. This subsequently meant that lecturers could often spend the first and sometimes second year of degree courses getting students to think for themselves, become ‘politicised’ and have informed opinions; what Wylie (forthcoming) says might once have been called ‘consciousness-raising’.

3.8 Re-establishing Links between Academic and School Geographies

A stronger and more mutually supportive relationship between university and school geography is likely to benefit the future survival of the subject at both levels. (Winter, 2009: 673)

Remaining up to date with current thinking in the subject was an underlying principle of the pilot and was one of the intentions that Eleanor thought might be most difficult to achieve since ‘we have yet to put the mechanisms in place so that developments in academic geography are made easily accessible to educational communities’ (2004, pers. comm., 8 July. See also Rawling, 2004c). Whilst the development of the pilot GCSE was proof that the curriculum could change, whether this change could be self-sustaining remained a crucial, yet still unanswered, question.

²⁴ Pseudonym

Maintaining a dialogue across the school-university divide was absolutely imperative if long-lasting changes were to be made to the subject at school:

How can we build in a system whereby curriculum change *happens*? We don't want to be doing this [designing a new GCSE] every few years cause we shouldn't have to. We should be able to have a system whereby teachers and higher education people talk about the subject at regular intervals, and that the results of this are fed into a continuous process of reviewing and reinventing and changing the curriculum. And if you don't, in ten years time all this will be happening again. (Eleanor Rawling, 2004, pers. comm., 8 July)

But how could teachers access these academic debates if they were only published in academic journals that teachers had no access to? It was therefore essential for teachers to have a dialogue with their academic counterparts. In order for these conversations to take place there had to be enough geographers in universities who were keen to see this crossing as part of their work;

You know being involved with teachers, making sure their stuff is readable and accessible to teachers... [B]ecause it is a big problem with the emphasis on research and the RAE. It's driving a lot of academic geographer's to be less involved, not more involved with schools. (*ibid.*)

This was and is a big problem. Unfortunately, the university system, with its emphasis on research and the pressure of the RAE drove academics to be not more but less involved with school geography (see Sidaway, 1997). Whilst there were academic geographers willing to cross the divide these remained a minority and I would rarely see articles written by academic geographers in geography education journals (in the early days of the pilot GCSE these included Andrew Goudie (2000) Peter Jackson (2006) and Stewart Barr (2006)). Making time and space for school and academic geographers to come together and talk was imperative and something I hoped would change by the end of my research. It was only a matter of time I felt before more academic geographers realised what a difference to both 'worlds' this crossing made.

There of course is an inherent contradiction between the advocacy of university involvement in and the desire for a bottom up curricula which starts in the 'blackboard jungle' and the lives of young people. Perhaps I naively thought that any involvement of academic geography would be a good thing, however the relationship needs to be transparent, reciprocal and mutually beneficial. It should not, as Christine Winter and others have argued, 'be assumed that university geography can be unproblematically transferred into school classrooms' that somehow academics have the right to parachute into schools and tell them where the cutting edge is (Winter, 2009; see also Morgan and Lambert, 2005). Nor should it be seen by university departments as a quick-fix solution of safeguarding application numbers; particularly relevant given that university offer acceptances in human geography fell by 14% between 2002 and 2006 (Winter, 2009). Quite rightly, as Kye Askins points out 'we in academia have as much to learn as to offer' and the emphasis should rather be on developing networks in which critical approaches to geography can be communicated and shared (including with wider publics).

In an attempt to re-establish links between the academic community and schools the Planning Guide stated that several high-profile academic geographers had been involved in its development, with their work linking into one of the core themes. It went on to highlight a leading geographer whose research area was drawn upon in each of the core modules. In each section there was a brief overview of the core theme and then a description of each academic geographers research and how it tied in with the theme. There were then some references and a list of websites that teachers might find useful when producing their own resources. For *My Place* Doreen Massey's work at the Open University was highlighted; *An Extreme Environment* pointed to Andrew Goudie's

research from Oxford University; and Louise Crewe (Nottingham University) and Peter Jackson (Sheffield University) were the geographers linked to the *People as Consumers* unit.

The linking of such high-profile geographers was a bold statement about the approach the pilot hoped to take. Here I began to wonder how involved they had *actually* been in the development of these modules, or was it rather that they were happy to have their name and their research associated with the pilot? During a visit to the GA headquarters in Sheffield I took the opportunity to arrange a meeting with Peter Jackson, Professor of Human Geography at Sheffield University, to ask him about his involvement with the pilot GCSE.

Peter had written widely on commodity and cultural geographies, so it made sense that his work had influence the *People as Consumers* module. As highlighted earlier he was also one of the few academic geographers to have had a longstanding involvement with school-level geography: writing publications for the GA's three journals and geography education books (see Jackson, 1996; 2006; Jackson and Russell, 2004), giving presentations at their annual conference and being a steering group member (along with Doreen Massey) on a previous project called *Valuing Places*. When I asked Peter to tell me about his involvement with the GA and the pilot, he said he wasn't really sure that he'd had all that much involvement. I thought he was being incredibly modest when he said that the GA did all the hard work for him and that it was more of a case 'being asked to be involved in this innovative project and feeling honoured to be asked' (2006, pers. comm., 14 February). Unable to understand why more academic geographers couldn't find the time to write for different audiences like

schools, he thought this was something all academic geographers should be doing anyway. He didn't buy the excuse of the RAE since academics were only required to submit four publications every seven years, and therefore it wasn't the incredibly hard slog that some people made out. Academics should see the GA as a '*user community* in which they can reach an audience of 3000 instead of the three people that might read one of their academic articles' (*ibid.*). He thought it was a shame that Masters and PhD students were now so concerned with the RAE that they weren't even aware of what was going on at school-level geography and how to get involved. This was so true! At my 6-monthly PhD progress review meetings the only question that seemed important was 'are you going to finish on time?' and the whole process of checking our progress seemed like a form-filling, tick box exercise. Participating in any activities that might distract from this were frowned upon.

Likewise, when I spoke with John Morgan about his involvement with the GA and the pilot (i.e. writing the cultural geographies optional module and being a member of GeoVisions) he, like Peter, questioned his connection, jokingly saying 'well I don't even know if I am involved in GA activities!' (2006, pers. comm., 18 November). Whilst, he had always tried to attend GA conferences and subscribe to what the association did, it was only when he'd gone to the Institute of Education (IoE) in the late 1980s (to pursue a Masters, and then PhD, in geography education) with its 'community of geographers' such as David Lambert and Ashley Kent that he'd started to do more. Then when he moved to Bristol and was the sole person responsible for the geography PGCE his 'sense of isolation' meant that he tried to keep the network going by doing some work with David with the GA's Multicultural Working Party. Their mutual interests in race and culture meant that David and John wrote several

publications (Morgan and Lambert, 2001; 2003) and later, when David became Chief Executive of the GA, John made an effort to keep his links with the organisation. However, he felt that he had ‘never really found a role to play’ within the organisation:

Because I don’t know... I just don’t feel I have the confidence to do what Di [Swift], for instance does, which is a very specialised role around curriculum development. I’ve sort of never really feel able to do that. So, I suppose I get involved in things which I’m interested in and I feel I know I can contribute something to really. (2006, pers. comm., 18 November)

So when OCR contacted him asking if he would write an optional unit for the pilot GCSE on Cultural Geography he was happy to contribute, especially because he shared David’s desire for putting an understanding of concepts and theory back into school geography. In a culture where teachers were pushed to do things very quickly he described how QCA schemes of work ‘never seemed to offer teachers a rationale of why they’re doing it. We’re in a bit of a culture where there’s a need for off-the-shelf-texts still. So, the curriculum thinking has been done for the teachers’ (*ibid.*). He saw the Cultural Geographies module as an opportunity to draw on ideas based around texts, ideas and representations, heavily influenced by Peter Jackson’s *Maps of Meaning* (Jackson, 1989). After he had written it he didn’t hear anything more about it, until it ‘just sort of appeared’. Whilst his schemes of work had been kept, the thinking behind the module (ideas about ideology, notions of cultural materialism) and the rationale for it had been lost. When John spoke to a man from OCR to suggest running some curriculum development workshops with teachers he was told bluntly how that would not be happening, which he found incredulous. Thus, he was yet to be fully convinced that the pilot would radically change the curriculum development process since ‘teachers will always try to re-produce their existing practices in new ways... so everything changes, but nothing really changes’ (*ibid.*). This conversation with John

brought me out of my ‘worshipping the pilot’ bubble and reminded me of the need to keep a critical stance. In my case study schools it would be important to examine the extent to which the pilot was enabling teacher and students to ‘think geographically’.

Whilst Peter maybe hadn’t sat down and actually written the *People as Consumers* module his ideas and previous work had provided much of the grammar for it. It was perhaps by helping unpick these big ideas and theories, like both John and Peter had aimed to do, that academics could usefully contribute to school-level geography. For example, at the 2006 GA Annual Conference, shortly after I met with Peter, I listened to his presentation based on the increasingly popular trend in the UK of gift-giving²⁵ addressing current debates in academia surrounding ‘caring at a distance’ and consumer ethics (see Cloke, 2004). Here he not only provided an excellent example to use in the classroom (including the pilot’s *People as Consumers* module), but more importantly, showed how this drew upon geography’s grammar of: space and place; scale and connection; proximity and distance; and relational thinking. Later by writing this up into a short, snappy article for the GA’s journal *Geography*, he provided teachers with an exciting topic to teach in the classroom, engagement with a current area of research in academic geography, and an illustration of the importance of ‘thinking geographically’ (see Jackson, 2006). So whilst Peter may not think that he has contributed much, as many teachers I later spoke to told me, these small offerings were invaluable to school teachers.

²⁵ Alternative giving in this way was first brought to popular attention through Oxfam’s *Oxfam Unwrapped* scheme. Here, customers choose and purchase a virtual ‘ethical gift’ (such as purchasing a goat, school supplies, or training for a health care worker) from the charity for a friend or relative; the friend/relative then received a card from the charity telling them what they’ve been bought; and the ‘ethical gift’ is sent to an individual or a community that the charity works with. See <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/shop/oxfam-unwrapped> (Website accessed 20th September 2009) for further details. A whole host of charities subsequently offered similar approaches.

In an era dominated by the RAE, funding pressures and burgeoning administration and teaching duties, perhaps it was unrealistic to hope that academic geographers would once again sit on exam boards, write syllabuses and publish textbooks for school geography. However, it would seem that simple steps were all that were needed to maintain conversations taking place between school and university geography. Presenting their research at the GA conference, becoming a member of the GA (and its subscription of magazines where academics can engage with developments taking place at school geography), getting involved in curriculum projects/GA working groups, or writing a couple of thousand words for a teacher audience, didn't seem too much of a stretch (see also Castree *et al.*, 2007). Would the pilot present opportunities for this to happen? I certainly hoped so.

3.9 New Public Geographies?

The recognition of public sociology must extend to the organic kind which often remains invisible, private, and is often considered to be apart from our professional lives. The project of such public sociologies is to make visible the invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life. (Burawoy, 2005: 264)

When I started my PhD at Birmingham I was assigned, like all other students were, to a research unit. I was placed in the *Alternative Capitalisms* group. This was a bit strange as my research had nothing to do with this sub-field of the discipline. Yet, when I investigated, I didn't feel that I belonged in any of the other existing groups. The same was true of two of my fellow PhD students – Emily Quinton and Becky Morris – both of whom also had Ian as their principle supervisor. We were the odd balls in our office. However, despite the differences in our research topics [school geographies (me); plant hunting (Emily); and blood (Becky)] our work shared two commonalities. Firstly, we were actively engaging with different types of publics (me with school

teachers, pupils and the GA; Emily with botanic gardens and plant collectors in the UK; and Becky with donors and recipients of blood in the UK's National Blood Service). Secondly, we wanted to write our research up in an accessible way that would engage directly with public audiences.

Ian shared our feeling of being 'out on a limb' and in September 2005 suggested setting up a new group for members of the department who were engaging in 'public geography' work in one way or another. This led to the eventual setting up of the Birmingham Public Geographies Working Group (PGWG) – a group of academics, postgraduates and non-academics – whose ethos was to 'create and communicate popular geographies that empower people to pursue the wider goal of social, economic and environmental justice'.²⁶ At the start we weren't too sure whether having the label 'public geographies' would matter, but it seemed that this label might be one way to legitimize work that might otherwise be seen as being 'hobby' work (see Chilvers *et al.*, 2006; 2008). First things first, we wanted to start by seeing what else was out there and whether anyone else was thinking along the same lines.

Ian had discovered a body of literature surrounding Public Sociology and the calls by Michael Burawoy for sociology to 'engage[e] publics beyond the academy in dialogues about matters of political and moral concern' (Burawoy, 2004: 1607).²⁷ Later, as I was reading his address as 2004 president of the American Sociological Association he argued that public sociology had two distinct variants: traditional and organic (see Burawoy, 2004; 2005a; 2005b). In the former, sociologists instigated wider debates by

²⁶ See Chilvers *et al.* (2006, 2008) for the full story of the group formation. And see <http://www.gees.bham.ac.uk/research/clusters/cpp/pgwg/> for further details about the group.

²⁷ In fact we later discovered that similar calls had been made much earlier (see C. Wright Mills, 1959)

disseminating research or writing articles or columns in popular magazines or newspapers. This seemed to me a bit too much like ‘academic as expert’. However, ‘organic public sociology’ referred to a more involved intellectualising, pursued *with* area-based or single interest groups, in which the process itself might be the outcome. This entering into a dialogue with research participants, or what Burawoy (2005c) terms ‘a process of mutual education’, chimed with my ‘rhizomatic ethnography’ approach to research. It also offered a way of making visible and validating that vitally important ‘hobby work’. A whole host of issues and debates had been stirred up by this address with a variety of papers in response (for example, Kalleberg, 2005; Nielson, 2004; Scott, 2005). There were also calls in other disciplines such as Anthropology for the subject to be more publicly oriented through collaboration with subject communities and producing publications for wider audiences (Lamphere, 2004; Lasiter, 2004; Sanjek, 2004).

Yet, when the PGWG came to look at geography we initially struggled to uncover anything that explicitly labelled itself ‘public geography’. However, a variety of quite recent and forthcoming developments were stumbled across including: Kevin Ward’s and Noel Castree’s writings on Public Intellectuals (which were later published as Ward, 2006, 2007b; Castree, 2006); and a *Very Public Geographies* book to be edited by Derek Gregory and Michael Dear which would be written accessibly and published via a mainstream publisher (this was later shelved due to the pressure at the time of the imminent RAE; see Fuller, 2008a). We also found a group called the People’s Geographies Project, set up by US geographers including Don Mitchell, with the aim of

‘popularizing radical geography and radicalizing popular geography’.²⁸

It did appear that there were murmurings of things going on within geography as well across other disciplines. After several meetings and much discussion, we decided that the group should have some terms of reference which would identify us as a group. One member, Jason Chilvers suggested three main ways of ‘doing’ these geographies, which he and, another member, Phil Jones later developed into a three-stage typology. First, *Academic geographical knowledges* which were about producing popular, accessible work relevant to academics and non-academics. More reminiscent of Burawoy’s ‘traditional’ public sociology, these often equated with geographer’s role as public intellectuals or policy-relevant researchers; So for example, Kevin Ward and Noel Castree’s work on Public Intellectuals (Castree, 2006; Ward, 2007b) and well known geographers, such as Katherine Mitchell, Loretta Lees and Don Mitchell writing op-eds. Perhaps best described as Public geography with a capital ‘P’ with the public academic’s role being that of writing in the public domain (Askins, 2008).

Second, *Working with non-academics*, which often stemmed from more participatory research, where collaborations between academics and non-academics could lead to the co-construction of knowledge. For example, Fuller and Askins have argued for a different approach and/or identity for academic researchers, where:

the academic not as expert but as primarily as enabler or facilitator, and the role of the participants is one of co-researcher or co-activist, allowing the research to become more reflexive, reciprocal and representative. (2007: 598)

Third, *Legitimizing non-academic geographical knowledges*, which involved exploring and legitimating public geographical knowledges; making people’s own sense of

²⁸ See www.peoplesgeographyproject.org (Website accessed 20th September 2009). Linked to the PGP is the Syracuse Hunger Project which Don Mitchell has written about elsewhere (see Mitchell, 2008)

geography visible and producing spaces where people could communicate and use these knowledges. For example Jane Wills' work on the Living Wage campaign at Queen Mary, University of London (Wills, 2009; Wills *et al.*, 2009) or Steve Hinchliffe and other's ethnographic research on urban natures (Hinchliffe *et al.*, 2005; 2007).²⁹ These later two ways of 'doing' falling very much within the public geography with a small 'p' camp, where the emphasis was more on the public academic 'doing' outside the academy (see Askins, 2008). What was becoming clear was that there was no singular 'public geography', but rather multiple, contested, and often conflicting 'public geographies';

rather than there being an either/or binary of style and form, what and how people 'do' public geographies is less clear cut, more liminal, and positioned somewhere more on a continuum of engagement, with any engagement with public(s) shifting about between the stereotype ivory-tower knowledge producer, distanced from the 'real world' and those who inhabit it, and the 'academic as public, intellectual, activist, wearer of many hats, teetering on the brink of going native and becoming a civilian (Fuller & Askins, 2010: 2)

The group decided that it would be a worthwhile activity to gather together some of those people whose work, at that time in late 2005, might be considered 'public geography'. In light of this a Public Geographies Symposium was organised for April 2006.³⁰ As a result of obtaining Roberts' research money (which UK universities had available for projects that developed postgraduates' academic, professional and transferrable skills) I along with three other PhD students were responsible for organising and leading the event. This meant that we also had a say in which speakers to invite and I was very interested in getting the debate on school-academic geographies rolling. I therefore approached Diane Swift and David Lambert who were very

²⁹ See also <http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/livingwage/> Website accessed 20th June 2009 and www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/habitable-cities/introduction.php Website accessed 20th September 2009.

³⁰ See <http://www.gees.bham.ac.uk/research/clusters/cpp/pgwg/symposium.shtml>, Website accessed 5th October 2007.

interested in becoming involved. The other speakers/discussants included Jane Wills, Steve Hinchliffe, Duncan Fuller, Noel Castree, Don Mitchell, Fiona Smith and Jonathon Breckon (from the RGS-IBG). Later, we would also organise two sessions at the 2006 RGS-IBG Annual Conference and a group of us would attempt to write through the story of the group (see Chilvers *et al.* 2006, 2008).

Looking back, the formation of this group and the subsequent readings, symposium, conference sessions and other events I got involved in have been part of the 'expanded field' of my research. Firstly, involvement has opened up avenues and presented me with opportunities that might not otherwise have existed, enabling me to move from the outside to the inside of the geography education community. For example, shortly after the symposium I was asked by David Lambert to become a member of the newly established GA Citizenship Working Group and was later invited to be an academic collaborator in a new GA project called Young People's Geographies (more about that much later). Such opportunities presenting themselves have been invaluable to my rhizomatic ethnographic approach and the contacts and experiences gained from them have shaped my thesis. I later read how the collaborations with groups and organisations outside academia can often be unplanned, despite not often being detailed in reports and publications (Fuller and Askins, 2010). Indeed the value of such methodological approaches – ones that 'follow the leads we may stumble upon' and which involve 'serendipitous encounters that evolve organically into research/learning/teaching endeavours' – have been advocated by geographers Duncan Fuller and Kye Askins (Fuller and Askins, 2010: 1).

Secondly, the development of the PGWG has had direct relevance to my research topic (specifically the synergies between public geography and critical pedagogy) and has had an impact on school-university geography crossings. For instance, new groups of co-authors/researchers/activists emerged from the symposium: Noel, Duncan and David later co-authored an article (see Castree *et al.*, 2007); Noel and Duncan both became more involved with the GA (Noel became chair of a new Pilot GCSE Sounding Board and both Duncan and Noel subsequently presented their research at GA conferences and events).

Thirdly, the principles of collaboration, co-authorship, flat hierarchies and the co-construction of knowledges (which are central to the public geographies agenda) have helped shaped the way that I have approached my research. Fourthly, the group's existence and the subsequent publications around this area have certainly legitimised the way that I have gone about my research as well as the subject matter I have been examining. Since the group's formation there have been several publications about Public Geographies (see Davies and Dwyer, 2008; Fuller and Askins, 2008; Fuller, 2008a).

3.10 Public Geographies and School Geographies

University and pre-university geography in this country are like distant relations: there is a family connection but it is fairly weak. (Castree, Fuller and Lambert, 2007: 130)

At the Public Geographies Symposium Diane Swift talked about new developments in school geography in England arguing that 'public geographies' were about communicating what we already did to a wider audience and raising the discipline's profile. It was vital that we all needed to work together to address public

(mis)understandings of geography in schools and in government (Swift, 2006). The following day, during the round table discussion (where David Lambert had replaced Diane) there was much talk about the relationship between school and post-16 geography and academic geographers' (non)involvement in school geographies. The bridging of the longstanding gap in the UK between university and school geographies (see Goudie, 1993; Jeffrey, 2003; Stannard, 2003) was touched upon with David discussing the pilot GCSE and how more lively relationships between geography's 'publics' (lecturers, students, teachers, pupils, etc.) was essential to the survival of the discipline. This apparent 'crisis' in British Geography was later well documented (Castree *et al.*, 2007; Fuller, 2008a). Borders needed to be crossed and collaboration between different spheres of geography education needed to take place with David, Noel and Duncan later writing,

Most university geographers in Britain know virtually nothing about pre-18 geography and yet many readily and regularly bemoan its apparent lack of contemporary focus and irrelevance. (Castree *et al.*, 2007: 130)

Crucial to such a system was ensuring that there were enough geographers in universities who were keen to see this, despite the constraints of the RAE, as part of their work. As Castree *et al.* (2007) highlighted there was a need to change attitudes within academic geography, moving away from the stigma of being associated and involved with pre-university geography. Eleanor described how this could simply be the case of academics 'making sure their stuff is readable and accessible to teachers' (2004, pers. comm., 8 July). Making writing accessible, was a central part of the public geographies debates we'd been having, and it would be interesting to see what developments took shape here.

The crossing of school and university geographies was already happening, but needed to develop further. For example, David discussed two projects – *Valuing Places* and *Where Will I Live?* – that the GA had developed, which aimed to connect school geography with university geographers and external organisations such as the Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment.³¹ During the previous meeting I'd had with David, he discussed how the GA as an organisation had been working more closely with the RGS-IBG since 2004. This was 'good news from the Government's point of view and the general public' as it would increase, improve and help to change the public profile of school geography (David Lambert, 2006, pers. comm., 14 February). However, this closer working relationship would also help from the 'curriculum development angle' by keeping the school subject continually updated, which was key to 'the role of geography in schools and the subject specialism' (*ibid.*). Again, the development of the pilot was seen to play a key role with Diane suspecting that,

there's more conversations like this going on than there have been in the last 10 years... because the syllabus is demanding the scholarship and re-engagement with geographical content. (2006, pers. comm., 14 February)

Pilot centres linking up with Higher Education Institutions 'both in terms of academic geography and in terms of geographical education' would be hugely beneficial and was thoroughly encouraged (David Lambert, 2006, pers. comm., 14 February). The pilot, then, clearly provided the opportunity to increase engagement between academic and school-level geography.

3.11 Concluding Thoughts

Where does the thesis stand at this point? This chapter has provided a detailed overview of the pilot GCSE itself, the nuts and bolts if you like; its core modules and

³¹ See <http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/valuingplaces/> and <http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/wherewilllive/>, Websites accessed 20th April 2009.

organising concepts, the innovative assessment options, the different cohorts of schools and how many are involved and so on. Weaving together critical analysis of official sources (such as the exam board's specification and the Planning Guide produced by the GeoVisions GCSE Working Party) with empirical findings from semi-structured interviews, research conversations and participant observation, I have also teased out the intentions of the pilot GCSE. These are: engaging with young people more, offering a less exclusive approach to teaching and learning, providing innovative assessment options, an emphasis on thinking critically and geographically, and re-establishing links between academic and school-level geographies.

In doing so I draw on the children's geographies literature, specifically surrounding young people's participation, raising questions about the impact the pilot would have on young people's personal and disciplinary geographies. I also develop my third underlying theme, that of public geographies, which stemmed from my involvement in the PGWG. I argue for *organic* public geographies (with a little 'p') that are more participatory in nature and which aim to flatten hierarchies and make a difference within and beyond the academy. My specific interest centres on the area of school-university crossing, leading onto questions about whether the pilot GCSE will provide opportunities for increasing engagement between academic and school-level geographers.

How did I get here? In keeping with the principles of remaining flexible and putting myself out there I began to attend various workshops and conferences. Such opportunities allowed me to speak to teachers doing the pilot, giving me a grounding on how things were working out so far before embarking on more in-depth empirical

research. As a result I have become interested in finding out what types of resources teachers are drawing on and how these resources get made and used. Drawing on the public geographies literature I have illustrated how my methodology has adapted and become much more organic; in following opportunities where they lead, new pathways have already opened up which may take me in new directions (for example the Young People's Geographies project). This methodological development is something that I hope to continue over the course of the next three empirical chapters.

Where next? The conversations I'd been having so far with teachers and people involved in the pilot have given me a brief insight into how the pilot is working out in practice. However, if I want to build on these understandings and really examine how the pilot's claims and intentions are working out in practice I need to begin ethnographic research in schools. Firstly, this will allow me to help answer some of the questions in my head about: who the pilot seems to be working for and why; the impact the pedagogical approaches are having on teachers and young people; and to explore opportunities for increasing engagement between school and university geographers. Secondly, such empirical research will enable me to further investigate the parallels I have started to identify between the *People as Consumers* unit of the pilot GCSE and the *GMC* module at The University of Birmingham.

Finally, responding to calls for more publically engaged work to make a difference within and beyond the academy I hope my first case study school will bring the worlds of school and university geography more closely together in a collaborative, mutually beneficial way. As such, I am to build on the theme of public geographies and

unpack what exactly this might mean for my research as well as the wider impact of making time and space for publically engaged research encounters to happen.

Chapter Four: St Edmund Campion School Case Study

Geography's a lot better now, yeah. I chose it because I didn't like history, but I think now it's a lot more enjoyable... I didn't realise that geography was such a variety of stuff. (Oli, 2006, VoxPop, 24 March)

I found this type of work really fun and exciting, the change to the way we worked really got me interested in the learning of geography. I also thought that the practical work enhanced my knowledge of the particular subject. I found it much easier to understand the work we were doing and it made me feel like taking part in my geography lessons as much as I could. Compared to my normal geography lessons, this project has been amazing and memorable! I would prefer to work in these surroundings much more often. (Kiera, 2006, Coursework, March)

4.1 Introduction

So far my narrative has been concerned with why the pilot GCSE developed at this particular point in time and the networks driving its development. Although I have touched upon some initial experiences from the classroom floor, it is to these experiences that I now turn in earnest. This chapter tells the story of the PGWG's first project, called *Making the Connection*, which formed my first case study. The collaborative project, which I led, developed in response to growing concerns that school and university geography were becoming 'distant relatives' and the call for critical, creative, curriculum materials that engaged with young people (Castree *et al.*, 2007).

This case study brought together the parallel worlds of the *People as Consumers* module of the pilot GCSE, and the *GMC* undergraduate module, through five weeks of collaborative work between staff, postgraduates and undergraduates at the University of Birmingham and staff and students at St Edmund Campion School, Erdington, Birmingham³². Based on the critical pedagogical approach used in both modules, this

³² The full names of my case study schools and the geography teachers I worked with have been used. The nature of the pilot, with only 18 schools in the first cohort and 30 in the second meant that schools would be easily identifiable even if confidentiality had been used. Schools and teachers were fully aware

project encouraged students in both institutions: to develop geographies of material culture rooted in their own experiences, knowledges, enthusiasms and concerns; to critically express these geographies through group work, creative/academic writing and performance; and, thereby, to help develop new school and university geographies that were more engaged, challenging and socially inclusive.

Over the course of the next three chapters I find myself: involved in co-creating curriculum materials that engage with young people's everyday experiences; crossing the worlds of academic and school geographies/geographers; and exploring the effects that the pilot's approach has on teachers and students and their disciplinary and personal geographies.

The case study provides an example of what a small-scale, public geographical research project might look like in practice and ends by highlighting how this 'crossing' (between school and university geographies) continued beyond the five week project. Indeed this project turned out, in one way or another, to be a defining moment of my research serving as a catalyst for much of what follows in the remaining chapters.

4.1.1 Sowing the Seeds for the Case Study

For some time Ian, James and I had been having discussions about a school project as part of our ongoing work on material culture and critical pedagogy. This work had already seen us trying to work through and teach this stuff in academic settings (see

of my role as a university researcher and were happy to be named; being involved in a school-university crossing project was seen as a "big positive" and it would enable them to "showcase the good work they were doing" (Martin Crabbe, Glebe School). However, pseudonymous forenames have been used for all pupils, support staff and other teachers who would be less identifiable (see section 4. 2.3)

Cook *et al.*, 2007b) but I was eager to take these ideas and approaches into a school classroom.

By September 2005 when I started thinking about a first case study, I had read about and spoken to people about the need to increase and maintain links between school and university geographies. Alongside this there were the discussions the PGWG had been having and reading surrounding seeing students as an important public and calls for academics to engage with wider publics (see Castree, 2003; Ward, 2007b; Chilvers *et al.*, 2006, 2008). Finally, there was my suspicion that parallel worlds might already exist between the *People as Consumers* module of the pilot GCSE and GMC at the University of Birmingham (spurred on when Diane asked about putting *Exchange Values* on the pilot WebPages as a resource for the module). So, it seemed a timely and logical step to develop a collaborative project which would see the crossing of university and school geographies as the first PGWG project.

I had already discovered that there was an issue around classroom teaching resources: it seemed like teachers were crying out for relevant, exciting resources that were relevant to their students' lives, but few had the time to produce them themselves:

Teachers have not been able to use a textbook, they've had to go out and create their own resources and their own materials...But of course teachers' lives are limited and with the best will in the world, the most creative of teacher is going to kill themselves if they're constantly creating from new this sort of resource. (Diane Swift, 2006, pers. Comm., 14 February)

This got me thinking about how as well as examining how the pilot was working out in practice, I could also help to co-create much-needed curriculum materials.

Bananas and mobile phones were the starting point. Firstly, the activities we had done a couple of years ago, during the *Exchange Values* workshops, really seemed to ‘click’ with students. But how could I do something along the same lines in a classroom without the art installation? Secondly, ever since a presentation my group had done for *GMC* on the networks behind mobile phones six years earlier, Ian, James and I had discussed the possibility of taking the idea and adapting it to a classroom situation. How could these ideas be used to make geography attractive and relevant to a diverse group of students, at school and at University? I was keen to involve young people themselves in producing curriculum materials that were based on their own lives and interests. The project was given the title *Making the Connection* which seemed apt; not only would the project be connecting the world of school and university geography, but young people, at the heart of the project would be encouraged to make connections between their everyday lives and those of various people, places and environments around the world.

The seeds were sown for a public geography project that would link pedagogy and research to the world outside the academy. The project would be my research, but would be collaborative in nature in keeping with the ethos of public geography. It would combine my research interests and expertise, Ian’s experience of teaching about these sorts of things at university and his ‘following the thing’ research interests (see, Cook *et al.*, 2004, 2006; Cook and Harrison, 2007) James’ role as Schools’ liaison officer for School of Geography at the University of Birmingham, and all our interests in pedagogical theory. Our admin duties, teaching responsibilities, and research concerns brought us all together. Brought *it* all together. The three separate parts of our academic jobs became one. There was no hierarchy between them. Our research was admin. Our admin was teaching. Our teaching was research.

4.1.2 *Mixing up Reading and Doing*

The chapter introduces the format used throughout my empirical chapters; that of mixing up reading and doing. Academic literature and theoretical issues are combined with empirical findings as and when they were raised ‘in the field’. In this chapter, for example, empirical sections are followed by more heavy engagement with academic arguments and debates surrounding critical pedagogy, young people’s geographies and public geographies. It is hoped that such an approach will not only hint at how these themes and literatures work together but also that it will be more accessible to the various audiences I hope to engage with.

4.2 **St Edmund Campion Case Study**³³

4.2.1 *Finding the Case Study*

At this stage, my intention was to examine three case study schools for my PhD. This project would therefore form the first of my case studies. There were already several details that could be sketched out about the project: how it would link the School of Geography at the University of Birmingham with a local school doing the pilot GCSE via the parallel worlds of *GMC* and *People as Consumers*; how we would use our prior experience from running workshops at *Exchange Values* and our thinking around mobile phones; and how an integral part of the project would be co-creating curriculum materials for the pilot GCSE. A plan was definitely starting to come together when *BOOM*, a gem of an idea suddenly materialised. Near the end of *GMC* there was a ‘performance day’ where students put on group performances to highlight an issue that they had got their teeth into (that mobile phone presentation I had done). How about

³³ This chapter draws on my participant observation notes carried out during the project. Any direct quotes (from VoxPops, course evaluations, interviews) are attributed as such; everything else comes from my own research diary.

getting pupils onto campus to participate? This would be magic and would physically illustrate the crossing taking place between the two 'classroom' spaces.

An idea was all well and good, but some thinking needed to be done regarding appropriate methodologies. For my own research interests I would use participant observation in the classroom and semi-structured interviews with the teacher. However, in order to get input/feedback from the pupils about their views on the project as well as geography as a subject, I wanted to move away from the usual questionnaire/interview formula and incorporate something much more participatory. Using VoxPops as a sort of 'big brother diary room' was one idea. Originally, there had been several more grander ideas around the use of young people making their own films to document the process and their experiences of the project, collating them into some sort of mega narrative which would illustrate how the project and characters progressed and developed. This really would have been ace, but unfortunately time and logistical restraints, not to mention the team's technological capabilities (!), got in the way. Instead pupils expressed their geographies through a range of VoxPops, performance and creative writing. The 'data' for this case study therefore included: my participant observations from visits to the school and my research diary; conversations/interviews with Jacky the teacher and her pupils; conversations with the other academic and undergraduate co-researchers; audio transcripts from VoxPops and film recording of 'performance day'; photos; student coursework; notes and letters sent to the school by myself (and replies); school newsletters and newspaper articles. Finally, there was the important matter of disseminating the project. Could a project website be developed, where other teachers could access the resources? All of this wouldn't cost much money, but it would require some funding.

Thus, armed with this vague idea, we went about looking to fund the project. When *Exchange Values* had come to Birmingham, the University's Widening Participation Unit (WPU) had part-funded the school workshops that Ian and I had run. Since James had just been appointed the department's Schools' liaison officer it seemed logical to approach the WPU in the first instance. An appointment was made with the head of the WPU, Gail Rothnie, and funding was surprisingly easy to secure. She was interested in working with us but, if we wanted some financial support, we would have to forge new relationships with target schools, and bring pupils from backgrounds that were under-represented in HE onto campus. The Department of Geography had done little to engage with local schools before and she was happy to give us the go ahead.

The next stage was to identify a school that was a) doing the pilot GCSE, and b) met the criteria set out by the WPU. This criteria dictated that the school had to be a low achieving school located within Birmingham, with pupils that were under-represented in Higher Education. Back in 2005 there were only two schools in Birmingham doing the pilot GCSE, one of which was King Edward VI Five Ways – one of the highest achieving schools in England. So that left St Edmund Campion Catholic School (SEC) in Erdington, North Birmingham. I had a quick look at their 2005 Ofsted report and thought they fitted the Widening Participation remit.³⁴ Gail gave us the go ahead and all that was left to do was to contact the Head of Geography at the school, Jacky Wilson, ask if she would like to be involved in a project and hope that she would say yes. Simple.

³⁴ See [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxedu_reports/download/\(id\)/57573/\(as\)/103537_275329.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxedu_reports/download/(id)/57573/(as)/103537_275329.pdf) for report.

Now, in a traditional PhD researchers spend much of their first year reading literature and writing a literature review. In most of the 'how to' books I looked at there was not a section on beginning the fieldwork in the second term of your PhD. However, such an opportunity could not have been planned, and neither could it be passed up. It was important to strike while the iron was hot and I had, after all, done considerable reading throughout my Masters and part-time year. I was not rushing in without having an understanding of the pilot and school-level geography.

4.2.2 Establishing Contact: Making a Connection

In early December 2005 I wrote a letter to Jacky outlining the *Making the Connection* project and asking whether this might be something she would be interested in getting involved in. The project, I wrote, would be centred on the *People as consumers: the impact of our decisions* module of the pilot GCSE and would involve pupils exploring the global interconnections that linked them as mobile phone consumers to various people, places and environments throughout the world. The timing of the course, I continued, would coincide with a parallel course, *GMC*, a final year undergraduate course that Ian Cook – a lecturer at the university – ran. Part of the project would involve her pupils preparing presentations that would be performed during a visit to the university to participate in a *GMC* lesson alongside undergraduate students. This work would be used as a springboard for their assessed coursework which would be completed as part of the project. The curriculum materials produced would then be disseminated to other schools regionally and nationally. However, since we wanted the project to be as collaborative as possible, none of this was set in stone. Would she be up for something like this?

I waited nervously wondering whether my letter would be ignored or whether she would ring me back saying that sorry, but they had already covered *People as Consumers*, or that next term's work was already planned and changing things at the last minute would be too stressful. Anyway I needn't have worried as the very next morning I got an excited phone call from Jacky saying that she would jump at the chance of getting involved; this, she said, was exactly the sort of thing she was looking for, and what's more the timing would be perfect as they started the *People as Consumers* module after February half-term. She told me her Year 10 second set GCSE class would love it and we arranged to meet up after Christmas to discuss things further. It seemed that our two worlds were destined to come together! Since the pilot was very much at its early stage, I thought I should get in contact with someone at the GA to check that our getting involved had their consent. I thought of Diane and so emailed her and subsequently arranged a meeting with her and David. This was exactly the sort of collaboration which they would encourage they told me. Then came the jaw dropping moment (of which there are a few). What followed went something like this. *Diane*: Which school were we thinking of collaborating with? *Me*: St Edmund Catholic School in Erdington. *Diane*: Really? *Me*: Why, have you heard of it? *Diane*: That's where I did my first years of teaching. *Me*: No way. *Diane*: Yes, Jacky Wilson the Head of Geography was my mentor (2006, pers. comm., 14 February). Just like that another rhizomatic link had been made.

Located opposite a pair of post-war high rise flats typical of inner city Birmingham SEC was tucked behind some houses on the edge of a main road. As things turned out, the school could not have been more conveniently located. From the University train station it was a 20 minute journey to Erdington and from there a five

minute walk to the school. At £1.80 return it wasn't going to break the budget either. On later visits we would often wonder why we hadn't done something like this sooner. A mixed 11-18 Voluntary Aided Comprehensive School and 6th Form College, its modest exterior disguised the fact that it was quite a large school, with 982 pupils on roll. According to their latest Ofsted inspection 'a significant minority of pupils are socially and economically disadvantaged' (2005: 3). In 2004 49% of pupils achieved 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE, just below the National Average that year of 54%.

On arriving at the school, Jacky led us to one of the geography classrooms. Sitting down she reiterated how excited she had been when I first contacted her and that the most important thing for her was to give her pupils 'something exciting and different to get them through their GCSE' (2006, pers. comm., 23 January). She wanted them to achieve good results; not through cramming for an exam, but because they were interested and passionate about what they were learning. She explained that she had taught at the school since the 1960s and that her connection with Diane probably helped their application to get onto the pilot. Close to retirement now she had been enlivened when she heard about the pilot and they started teaching the course across the whole of the GCSE group in September 2004. With significant teaching experience pre NC she said the pilot was 'like a breath of fresh air' (*ibid.*). The pilot allowed her to revert to a style of pedagogy she had enjoyed earlier in her career and to have her creativity legitimised once more. Later, when I spoke to Diane about her time at the school she explained that it wasn't your 'typical Catholic school' and that there was 'a long history of doing quite innovative, creative teaching' (Diane Swift, 2006, pers. comm., 14 February). She told the story of how during the Apartheid era the school collapsed the timetable so that a local theatre group could work with the pupils, and how one of the

school priests had told the pupils that he ‘used to go down to the supermarket and load up his trolley with all the products made in South Africa and leave the trolley by the exit and walk out’ (*ibid.*)

Jacky was happy to give us *carte blanche* to work with her pupils and her laid back approach was certainly beneficial to the project’s success as both the pupils and ourselves didn’t feel under pressure to ‘perform’ to certain criteria. I remember asking her to make sure we were differentiating the work correctly and covering the required numeracy and literacy. She laughed it off and explained that she ‘didn’t worry about all that, they’re just tick box exercises the Government introduced’ (2006, pers. comm., 23 January) and that it was more important to adjust things once you knew how they panned out practically in the classroom. It was such a breath of fresh air hearing this after all the depressing reading I had done about testing and targets suppressing subject learning and enjoyment.

When we moved on to talk about *Making the Connection* in more detail Jacky explained that we would be with her middle ability Year 10 class, which covered a broad spectrum of abilities from a Grade A to a Grade E at GCSE. There were 24 in the class and this was one of three Year 10 classes doing geography. They had two one hour geography lessons a week and she was happy for us to lead from the very first lesson. As we talked through how things would work logistically, it was agreed that I would sketch out a rough five week overview so Jacky had an idea of where we were heading. Then, at the start of each week I would fax the lesson plans for that week to Jacky (she didn’t have email and so a degree of forward planning was necessary), but subsequently adapt each individual lesson the night before, to take into consideration what had gone

on the previous lesson. This was where flexibility was essential as ideas raised one week could be incorporated into the lesson plans in future weeks.

It was at this point I also mentioned the people who would be involved in the project and what their roles would be. I was the first port of contact and would liaise with Jacky, produce lesson plans and resources and help facilitate lessons. Ian, in his role as lecturer on *GMC*, would bring insights from his experience of teaching parallel issues to undergraduates and would help to facilitate lessons. James, as the department's school liaison officer, would be in charge of arranging the visit to university, organising a campus tour for the pupils so that they could get an insight into what life was like at university and liaising with the university's WPU. I also mentioned that an undergraduate called Alice Williams would be involved. Alice, who was an undergraduate on the *GMC* course, had been recently drawn into the project. She was the only student to have chosen a third year extended essay module, which Ian had bolted onto *GMC*, and could use the opportunity to produce an first-hand account of her experiences. She was keen to be involved and had experience of working with young people; her dissertation had looked at Tweenage fashion. Jacky agreed and was very happy for the four of us to be involved. Alice would be integral to our attempts at this material culture/pilot crossover as she, more than anyone else, was doing this crossing and living these parallel worlds herself. The essay she later produced and the research diary she kept during the third week (when Ian, James and myself would be at the AAG Annual Conference in Chicago) proved invaluable resources for this case study (see Williams, 2006a and b).

In the weeks that followed, various other people became collaborators, taking on important roles. Two of Alice's *GMC* classmates – Spencer Allsop and Helen Clare – helped facilitate the lessons during the third week. Not only would they bring insights from their 'parallel world', but both had recently done dissertation research in relevant areas: Helen used geographical detective work to follow a T-Shirt she had bought in fashion store H&M in Birmingham to the Cambodian factory workers who might have made it, and Spencer had looked at mobile phone photography. Bringing these sorts of experiences and geography expertise into the classroom and allowing pupils to enter into a dialogue with them – 'talking between worlds' – only added to the richness of the project. Then there was the important role that all the *GMC* students played during performance day, sharing their geography detective stories, but also sharing their experience of university life with young people, some of whom had little idea of what this entailed. There were, of course, other collaborators. Which was only to be expected, in hindsight, with a 'rhizomatic ethnography' like this. But that would be giving too much of the story away.

After sorting out the nuts and bolts of the project with Jacky I said I was keen to find out about her experience of doing the pilot so far. She definitely thought that choosing the pilot was the right decision, but revealed that there was a difference of opinion amongst her colleagues,

It's going well in some ways. The older staff, like myself, like it. The younger staff prefer the traditional syllabuses oddly enough. You'd think it'd be the other way round, but it's not. (Jacky Wilson, 2006, pers. comm., 23 January)

In fact, Jacky had been keen for her colleague, Matt, to get involved in the project since he taught one of the other Year 10 classes at the same time as her. At the early stage of his career he hadn't been enjoying teaching the pilot and was going to stick with what

they had done the previous year. Like Jacky, I had been surprised by this since I had assumed that younger teachers would have lapped up the pilot since it would enable them to draw on the geography they had done in their recent degrees. When I'd talked with Diane about this she identified, although generalising somewhat, three cohorts of teachers,

I mean the Jacky's of this world, who have significant teaching experience pre National Curriculum, it's almost like a breath of fresh air because in the early part of their career their creativity was legitimised. Many of the new teachers, again anecdotal evidence, is that they're lapping it up because it engages them with their undergraduate geography. And then there's a cohort in the middle, whose teaching has always been National Curriculum driven, maybe they were teaching 4, or 5 years before the pilot came in, they were used to teaching out of the folder, and they've been unsettled by it. (Diane Swift, 2006, pers. comm. 14 February)

It was this cohort in the middle, who had become comfortable with 'playing it safe' that the pilot GCSE and any spinoffs from it really needed to reach. How might the pilot re-engage those 30-something, often male, teachers, who entered the profession career driven, aiming for management positions? How could their passion for teaching and 'thinking geographically' be reignited? I thought back to the teacher who had spoken at the Aston meeting and wondered whether this was a one-off or whether the pilot could really spark a change.

One of Jacky's main criticisms so far was with OCR whom she felt hadn't given as much support as she and the other teachers might have liked considering this was a 'pilot' GCSE. This was especially the case in Year 11, with it being entirely coursework based,

They have got a website, but there's not a great deal on it at all. They did keep promising that they would put up sample coursework. We've got no idea about coursework in Year 11, we're fumbling in the dark really. We don't even know how long the pieces are supposed to be. (Jacky Wilson, 2006, pers. comm., 23 January)

This was a common gripe amongst pilot schools and Jacky said that when she had been to pilot school meetings there had been a general feeling that there could have been more help provided from OCR (a point that I had also heard raised at meetings). Whilst she welcomed the fact that, unlike other GCSEs, there wasn't an accompanying textbook 'bible', she felt that having the odd book to refer to would be useful. As one of the first cohort of pilot schools she felt like they were 'making up our own resources as we go along really' (*ibid.*). This was fine up to a point, but any development of relevant resources was more than welcome. This was confirmation enough that resources were needed and I left the school hoping that *Making the Connection* might make a small contribution to this.

That evening I sat down to finalise the first week's lesson plans. Previous discussions meant that we had a rough plan for what we wanted to cover each week and how it would in turn link to both the pilot specification and *GMC*. The lesson plans were based on the layout of those used in the Pilot Planning Guide and outlined: key questions, lesson activities, purpose of activity and how it linked to key geographical ideas, resources needed, related homework and the approximate time dedicated to each activity (although in reality the timing went out of the window a lot of the time as it seemed silly to cut short an interesting discussion because the allocated time for that activity had run out).³⁵ As well as sharing the lesson plans with Jacky they were emailed to the rest of the 'team' in advance. Emails and the train journey to the school were then used to finalise plans, deciding who was going to lead each part of the lesson and going through the resources needed. Time permitting, we would try to have a brief feedback

³⁵ See Appendix 2 (page 289) for lesson plans covering the five week project. These were later made available on the project WebPages for other teachers to download and adapt.

session with Jacky after each lesson. This was important, given that this was new territory for us: we needed to check that we were pitching things at the right level and weren't travelling at too slow or quick a pace for the majority of pupils. Each evening I would then type up my participation observation notes and reflections in my research diary.

As well as drawing up lesson plans, there were a number of ethical and administrative considerations to address both before, during and after the project. These weren't particularly time consuming, but they did need some thinking about and planning. For example, I needed to get CRB clearance to work in an environment with children. Then there were various forms to draft out: a consent form from children opting into the project; consent forms for parents to consent to our presence; university consent forms covering students' visit to the university; allowing photos and video footage to be used at subsequent conferences and in publications.

4.2.3 Research and Ethics

Much of the Social Sciences made it seem as though 'Research Ethics' was a canon body of knowledge ready to be learnt and implemented. Read the appropriate guidelines (BERA, ESRC Research Ethics Framework) and make sure your research adhered to them before entering the field. Ask for consent, get the appropriate forms signed, and, in the case of working with young people, get CRB clearance. Pretty straight forward really. By ticking all the boxes the researcher has nothing to fear on entering 'the field' as long as they stick to the guidelines. If only it were that easy!

Research ethics was a very (and increasingly) important part of research design and review board procedures. But that was the problem; it wasn't just a part of research *design*, something that could be planned for in advance. I knew from previous experience that research ethics was a much more complicated beast than filling out the relevant forms. In reality, things could be more tricky and messier than that. For example, how did you know whether you would make the right ethical decision in that split second when a teacher walks out of the room during an emergency elsewhere in the school, leaving you 'in charge' of a class of pupils. Should you let the teacher go or should you stop them and tell them that the guidelines say that you shouldn't really be left in charge of a group of children by yourself?

Fortunately, within the sub discipline of Children's Geographies there was not only a wealth of advice, but a growing number of 'tales from the field' where researchers described the sticky ethical issues they faced during their research. For example, I could relate to many of the experiences that John Horton mentioned in one of his papers (see Horton, 2008). Here he described how ethical issues were still playing on his mind some years after completing research in a school and how he struggled to deal with the 'sense of failure' he felt when reflecting on 'small, banal moments of angst, awkwardness, embarrassment, uncertainty, hopelessness, and so on – like my awkward silence in the face of children's racist, sexist, uneasy questions' (2008: 363). The keeping of a reflexive research diary was recommended and this was a technique that I had found invaluable in previous research; enabling me to question whether I could have handled situations better and being able to reflect back on and think through my actions in the classroom.

Ethical issues therefore involved research ethics as *process* and research ethics as *practice*. So, they not only meant following formal rules about ‘not doing harm’ to research participants (for example, following those guidelines and frameworks) but also everyday moral concerns about ‘doing the right thing’ that couldn’t be anticipated for in advance (Allsop *et al.*, forthcoming). This is where lessons learnt from previous research were invaluable.

When I began my undergraduate dissertation in the summer of 2001 there was relatively little literature addressing the ethical complexities of doing research with young people and I relied heavily on a couple of sources; namely Valentine (1999) and Matthews and Tucker (2000). However, when I began my research at SEC in February 2006 there was a considerable body of literature in this area, which continued to grow over the next four years (see Alderson and Morrow, 2004; Christensen and James, 2008; Horton, 2008; *Children’s Geographies* 6 (2); *Ethics, Place and Environment* 4 (2)). As well as guidelines, more formal structures and procedures also existed, such as getting CRB clearance and the ESRC’s Research Ethics Framework. All of this, along with my previous experiences, helped me work through ethical issues both before and during my research.

Working with young people, as authors such as Tracey Skelton (2008), Hugh Matthews (Matthews *et al.*, 1998; Matthews and Tucker, 2000), and Gill Valentine (1999) have pointed out, demands a great deal of care. No teenagers should ever be forced to participate in research and if they do get involved they have the right to withdraw at any time (Skelton, 2008). It was important to recognise that the people who knew most about young people were young people themselves – so it was about

working *with* them rather than *on* or *about* them. Gill Valentine's (1999) 'five areas of ethical concern' when working with children provided a useful set of guidelines to adhere to. These were: consent; access and structures of compliance; privacy and confidentiality, methodologies and issues of power; and dissemination and advocacy (*ibid.*). Thinking through these issues brought up a range of questions such as: Who was the research for? Who would benefit; young people, or just me as researcher? Did the benefits of the research clearly outweigh these possible risks?; Were children given proper information about the research?, and, most importantly, Were they offered the opportunity to refuse to participate or answer particular questions? (see Alderson and Morrow, 2004).

Before any research began at SEC and at future schools, I explained in detail the reason for my research to both teachers and students as well as who was likely to read the completed thesis or any related publications. Children were given the opportunity to 'opt' into being participants in my research through signing a consent form (Green and Hart, 1999; see also *Ethics, Place and Environment*, 4 (2)). Each school also had their own guidelines regarding recording pupils' voices/taking photos, so it was important to check with each teacher what these guidelines were and ensure I complied with these.

It was also important to ask everyone's permission before recording anything and let them know that they were free to turn off the voice/video recorder whenever they wanted to. VoxPop recordings at SEC, for example, were optional. A classroom had been set up opposite Jacky's with the cameraman and one of the research team present; after being told exactly what it would involve and where the audio/video would be used and shown volunteers were asked to go and do recordings. It was also

particularly important to continuously stress that I was interested in what they had to say and that there were no right answers (Morgan, 1988; Pykett, 2006). Following on from this was the important issue of language used to communicate with young people; language (whether this be face-face or in written or other form) needed to be engaging, snappy and jargon-free. If I had started chatting to young people using terms such as pseudonyms, confidentiality and power relations then they might not have fully understood things. Also, when summarising anything the students had said we would repeat things back to the students to check that we had understood them correctly.

When adult researchers work with young people the issue of power relations abounds (Christenson and James, 2008; Skelton, 2008). At SEC, for example, our presence undoubtedly had an impact on the power relations in the classroom; not only because of our university status (which was alien to the majority of pupils), but also because we increased the number of adults present from one to four; and, on some occasions to five or six. One of the main strategies to reduce power relations was the layout of the classroom. Groups of tables were spread around the room with 4-5 students working together in small groups and in order to minimise the role of 'teacher as expert' we rarely stood at the front of the classroom. When working with particular groups I would try to sit at their level and during group discussion we would position ourselves on the outside of the room and move around so that the students would address each other during discussions and not us. A second technique was via the use of paired interviews. Here, pupils chose another classmate to record their VoxPops with, interviewing each other about their coursework, taking it in turns to be interviewer and interviewee which helped to destabilise power relationship (see Mayall, 2000 for description of a similar technique).

As with conducting research with any age group, using a range of methods was essential to ensure that as many young people as possible felt comfortable to express their views, rather than only those who were most confident or articulate (Alderson and Morrow, 2004; Henning, 2008). This wasn't something unique to doing research with young people, and a sensitivity to the specific characteristics of each case study school was necessary when conducting research,

the study of children does not require 'special' techniques but rather simply a rigorous application of the general methodological requirement, true of studying adults or children, that the techniques used should reflect the concrete particularities of the persons being studied. (Prout, 2008: xv)

From my Undergraduate and Masters thesis I knew that some young people (and adults) could dry up in group discussion, or in front of a camera, whilst others might have a particular interest in technology and felt comfortable using mobile phones or palmtops whilst talking to a researcher. The collaborative nature of my research meant that more participatory methods were often used and opportunities were provided for students to creatively expressing themselves both orally, visually and through written form (see section 5.2.3 for further discussion of this).

4.3 Making the Connection: Geographies of Consumption

The grapes that sit upon the supermarket shelves are mute; we cannot see the fingerprints of exploitation upon them or tell immediately what part of the world they are from. (Harvey, 1990: 422)

The work I have done this half term has opened my eyes. I would never have thought that so many people across the world were involved in bringing things as simple as bananas to the shop shelves. (Duncan, 2006, project evaluation, March)

4.3.1 In the classroom: an awakening

A month later, on a very windy February afternoon Ian, Alice and I returned for the first lesson. The previous evening I had found it very difficult to sleep; I had visions of drying up in front of the class, seeing looks of confusion and disinterest on pupils'

faces with the class eventually erupting into chaos. Standing up in front of a class of 14 and 15 year olds suddenly seemed a lot more daunting than presenting at an esteemed academic conference. By lunchtime, it was a relief to meet up with Ian and Alice and discover that they shared my feelings of anxiety! The twenty minute train journey was spent reassuring each other, going through who would do what and wondering whether the class would be up for it. The space of the train journey was interesting since it physically linked the two worlds of university and school geography.³⁶ Over the course of the five weeks the outward journey would be filled with our nervous thoughts, with time spent going through the ‘running order’ of who was taking on what role during various parts of the lesson and checking resources. Whereas on the return journey we’d be excited, chatting about how great the kids had been, exchanging the amazing things we’d heard them say, joking about how we’d all end up as teachers and wondering why we hadn’t done anything like this before.

One of the pupils met us at reception and showed us to the classroom where Jacky had already got everyone to sit around desks in groups of four or five. Arranging the class into small groups was key as group work was a core component of the project, mirroring the approach in *GMC*. This was a change from the usual set-up in Jacky’s class of rows of two-seater tables facing the whiteboard and I hoped this wouldn’t cause any tensions. The classroom (see figure 7) actually reminded me of my geography classroom at school: The polished wooden floors; Jacky’s desk in the corner piled high with an assortment of exercise books and worksheets waiting to be marked; the shiny pale yellow gloss painted walls reminiscent of schools and hospitals; display boards

³⁶ The University of Birmingham has its own train station and six stops north on the cross city line you arrive at Erdington station, a five minute walk from SEC.

where pupils' work had been backed, laminated and pinned up; dog-eared textbooks and atlases crammed onto a few bookcases; a row of filing cabinets bulging at the seams; and a couple of old PCs on computer trolleys. Everything that I had been expecting from a geography classroom. Everything that my old geography classroom was like.



Figure 5 The Geography Classroom at SEC (Credit: James Evans, 24th February 2006)

The classroom was lively as we entered with pupils chatting amongst themselves or listening to their latest MP3 downloads, although most turned their heads to look at us as we entered. Later Jacky told us that the pupils had been really excited that 'people from the university' were coming to work with them and had been pestering her all week checking that we were still coming and what we had planned. No pressure then! Jacky welcomed us and I smiled nervously, said hello and found a spare chair to sit on along the edge of the classroom alongside Ian and Alice. Later that evening, when reading about power relations, I thought back to how nervous I'd felt and realised that I'd probably felt as intimidated entering a boisterous classroom of 24 pupils as many of the pupils might have felt having us participate in their lessons. This was unfamiliar territory for us and I thought how different the power relations might have been had we carried out the entire project on campus at university.

The aim of the first week was to get the students in the mind set of thinking about the invisible people behind the products that they consumed. I began by asking pupils to think about a mundane, everyday item – a banana – and all the people and places involved in getting it to their school canteen/supermarket shelf.

The *Banana Game*, initially published by Christian Aid, and later adapted by various NGO and Charities, uses role play to investigate ‘who gets what’ when we buy bananas.³⁷ I first heard about the game from Alistair Smith, the Education Officer for an NGO called Bananalink who had been involved in *Exchange Values* and had attended a forum day at its Birmingham show in 2004. For the game, the class worked in their groups with each group representing a link in the banana chain (workers, plantation owners, shippers, ripeners/importers, retailers). The idea behind the game was simple. Each group was provided with some information about what their job entailed. They discussed how much of the 30p retail price of a banana they thought they should get and put their argument forward to the rest of the class. The real banana ‘split’ was revealed. The students returned to their group to discuss their reactions to this and whether they were willing to compromise on their original price.

I spent some time with the packers group, which was made up of Emma, Sarah, Julia and Chris. After their initial shyness around me had worn off, a lively discussion developed, and Emma and Julia in particular were confident and had plenty of ideas. For example, Julia said she thought their job was quite demanding as they had to stand on their feet all day long, ‘concentrating hard to make sure we don’t bruise any bananas and chucking out any mouldy ones’. Referring to the information sheet, Chris added

³⁷ The game can be downloaded from www.bananalink.co.uk. Similar games are available from Cafod and Traidcraft.

‘yeah, and we’ve got quite a dangerous job as there are pesticides on the bananas which can make us ill there and spiders lurking in the packing boxes so we might get bitten’. However, when it came to deciding how much of the 30p their group should get Emma argued that ‘I think everyone should get the same amount because without one of the group the whole chain would break down’. Their level of empathy and understanding really surprised me and the group feedback that followed progressed along similar lines.

When the real ‘split’ was revealed (1p for workers; 5p for plantation owners; 4p for shippers; 7p for importers/ripeners; 13p for retailers) there were gasps. Josh, one of the livelier students, shouted out that he thought his group – the retailers – would get the most, but he didn’t realise it was quite that much. Returning back to their groups to discuss what they felt about the real split, Emma and Julia were chatting about the bananas sold in their school canteen ‘we always get left with the bruised ones don’t we, while the cooks get the nicest ones’ Julia was saying. Did they know where the school sourced their bananas from? They didn’t. Then Sarah, who had been pretty quiet up until this point, said that they could ask to pay an extra 3p per banana and to collect the money to send back to the banana farmers. The rest of the group hummed in agreement and Emma mentioned that as she was on the school committee this was something she would bring up. This was pretty cool stuff; I couldn’t believe that after a one hour lesson pupils were making such personal connections and envisioning alternative consumer scenarios such as the one Sarah had suggested.

Looking up to check what was going on in the rest of the classroom I overheard Josh saying to the rest of the retailers, ‘yeah, but even if we give the workers 3p they’d get a better wage, and we’d still get 10p’. The class had started to understand that there

were multi-dimensional links between people and places, the different scales at which the causes and effects of these links operate, and the impacts of these upon different people and places. Everyone was on task. Sure it sounded lively, but that was only because the pupils were getting into their roles so much and Jacky didn't seem at all concerned about this. Indeed, a few weeks later Jacky told us that her colleague Matt, who was initially reluctant to get involved, had asked if he could use the scheme of work. He'd heard the debates going on and wondered what his class was missing out on. A couple of lessons in and he and his pupils had really gotten into this stuff. I was glad that this project was proving not only how easy it was for academics and school teachers to engage, but also how the effects of this engagement could trickle down and be felt by a much wider public than initially anticipated. I knew that there were so many other academic geographers who had really exciting research that could be translated into school classrooms and hoped that small projects like this could serve as a catalyst for action.

Back in the classroom it was a shame to bring the discussions to an end. However, I explained that about two years ago, near the Cadbury's chocolate factory in Bournville there had been an art installation about bananas, called *Exchange Values*. Putting up a photo of the gallery on the whiteboard I asked the class to imagine that they were visiting the art exhibition. They were shown photographs of the exhibition (see figure 6) and we described what they might hear, smell and see in the gallery space.

I had been nervous about how well *Exchange Values* could be brought into the classroom without pupils ever having had visited it. However, they were fascinated by the photos and as I played a few of the recordings of the farmer's that could be heard via



Figure 6 Shelley Sacks' 'Exchange Values: Images of invisible lives', University of Central England (now BCU) International Performance Space, April 2004. (Source: authors own photographs)

the headphones in the gallery, the class came over in a hushed silent, everyone concentrating hard to decipher the farmers' unfamiliar accents.

After discussing the exhibition and looking at some photos each student was given a CD which had the farmers voices recorded on it. We asked them if, for their homework, they would listen to this CD while they were out shopping. This was an activity that Ian had tried himself and found successful; and he was going to ask some of his *GMC* students to do the same activity. Ian later described how he had come up with the idea whilst sitting in the *Exchange Values* Gallery in Bournville,

Suppose you went to a supermarket before opening time. Switched on the food. And could hear whispering like this. Suppose you could pick things off the shelf, put them to your ear and listen to the people who had helped to get them there talking to you. What would they say and ask? Could you have a chat? (Cook, 2006: 655-656)

Using sound was one way to connect students to these issues in a more creative, less exclusive way. To accompany the CD I had photocopied a short article about the background to *Exchange Values* written by Shelley called 'A Banana is not an easy thing' (Sacks, 2006). This was two sides of A4 writing. However, when I began handing it out to the class I overheard Josh say that he wasn't going to read it as 'it was far too much writing'. Originally I had thought this was an accessible piece, but afterwards I reflected that maybe I was comparing it to the kinds of things I had read for my degree. Year 10 pupils were probably more accustomed to reading short sections out of a school textbook. Maybe a black and white sheet of text wasn't the most inspiring thing I could have thought of!

Two days later we returned for the next lesson. Ian, Alice and I were joined by James and a PhD student from Glasgow University called Jo Norcup.³⁸ Jo had found out about my research online, emailed me about our mutual research interests (she was a former teacher and had just started a PhD looking at critical geography education) and asked whether we could meet up. This was not the only contact that was established after people had found out about my research online and such encounters reinforced the importance of making work easily accessible to the public. Jo had arranged a trip down to Birmingham for the end of February which happened to coincide with the second lesson, so after consulting Jacky, I invited Jo along. This worked out really well as it meant that each group could be facilitated by one 'academic' (and Jo also took some great photos). During the train journey I was really worried that we had expected too

³⁸ Jo's research page is <http://www.ges.gla.ac.uk:443/postgraduates/jnorcup>, Website accessed 8th March 2008.

much from the pupils in two days. Maybe none of them had listened to the CD. Maybe it wasn't cool to go to the supermarket. I was half expecting the discussions to dry up.

Sticking to the tried and tested formulae of small group discussions followed by whole class feedback, the class discussed what they had heard and read so far and what their initial thoughts were. Throughout the project we aimed to have as little 'lecturing' as possible, with most of the lesson involving group discussions. This worked well as it provided the time and space for us to go round individual groups to prompt and encourage where necessary. Pupils were able to discuss some quite complex issues amongst themselves and it allowed some of the more reserved pupils, such as Sarah to participate more fully in lessons. By not giving students facts to memorise, but rather ideas and materials to think with, this helped to reduce the power relationship between teacher as 'expert' and student as 'receiver of information' (Freire, 1996).

Initially, I went back to the group I had worked with the previous lesson, since they were comfortable with my presence and were more likely to be open with their discussion. Thinking that they might have only listened to a couple of tracks on their way to school that morning, I was surprised to find that all four pupils had listened to most, if not all the tracks (sometimes several times). Julia asked who had listened to track 4, saying 'I couldn't believe how much they actually loved bananas, they really care about their produce'. Chris, who said he had been transfixed by the voices and had listened to over an hour, said he had been surprised and shocked to learn that the farmers had to work until they were 90 because they couldn't get a pension. 'You just have no idea about that sort of thing when you see a banana in a supermarket' Emma pointed out.

Likewise, when pupils presented their thoughts to the rest of the class, Ashley, who had listened to the CD whilst wandering the supermarket aisles said that he could pick up a loaf of bread without thinking about it and then go down the next aisle and get a bag of sweets too. Yet the farmers had to work so hard just to buy some bread, let alone to send their kids to school or purchase health care. Charlotte told how she had put the CD on in the car when her mum had picked her up from school; they had both been mesmerized by the farmers' voices and, once the CD had ended her mum started asking lots of questions once it had ended about what else they had learnt. This had the makings of Pester Power (see Evans *et al.*, 1996). The voices of these unseen others had stuck and they had begun to realise the effects of their own everyday consumption practices and what they, as consumers, knew, or didn't know about these effects. By starting to 'think geographically' they had begun to appreciate how the consumer decisions they made could lead to uneven development, one of the underlying principles of the GCSE. As the OCR specification stated:

Candidates should be encouraged to examine their own values as they analyse the values of others and to become aware of the power relations implicit in any situation and the conflicts and inequalities which may arise. (OCR, 2004: 20)

Coincidentally, a few months earlier Ian and I had been invited to the Eden Project in Cornwall to discuss incorporating this use of farmer's voices into their new tropical biome display. On the train on the way down I read an article by John Blewitt who had carried out research into the strategies Eden used to realise its public educational aims (Blewitt, 2004). Their Education Manager revealed that by listening directly to the people who produce the goods we consume a personal connection could be sparked,

the most powerful moments have been when we've brought over a coffee grower from Ghana, or a banana grower or a cocoa grower and they look the audience in the eye and they talk to them about their lives and what an impact Fair Trade or sustainable farming or whatever has on them. And it is those

moments that the audience finally connect and it's an emotional reaction. 'Oh, there's the women that grows our chocolate' and though intellectually people realize there are people growing the food that they eat and the clothes they wear, when they actually get to look at them face to face and hear their story and personally identify with them, that's when they go 'wow, so when I go and buy Fair Trade chocolate, it actually make a difference to you, someone else'. (Sue Hill, Education Manager in Blewitt, 2004: 180)

Indeed, in a discussion with pupils in my third case study school (where bananas also figured strongly!) students explained the stickiness of being able to hear a farmer's voice rather than reading about their lives in a textbook:

Ruth: You'd feel a lot closer... cos you could hear his expressions as well and how they feel...

Richard: You can relate to it better I think if you can hear it. Words don't mean nothing to me sometimes but if you were to hear something then it means more.

Hannah: I think also when you actually hear someone saying their own opinions rather than just reading it- you can hear it *how* they'd say it, like...

David: How much it means.

Hannah: Like how much they really do feel, how strongly they feel about it. And it helps you to understand them a bit more...

David: The severity...

Hannah: Instead of reading...

Ruth: Like in writing you could have it in bold letter couldn't you, but that's about it...

Hannah: Like if they're being ironic, you can't tell that like if they're being ironic when it's written down.

(Barking Abbey Students, 2007, focus group, 19 January)

It was becoming clear that critical educational resources that connected to young people's own lives (as consumers etc.) could provide an entry point into engaging with some of geography (and the pilot's) big ideas around, for example, interdependence, uneven development and globalisation.

Back in the classroom, what also seemed to work for all four pupils was the fact that, as Julia pointed out, the farmers were just talking about their lives; they weren't trying to make you feel guilty, but simply saying 'this is how it is for us'. One of *Exchange Values'* strengths as a critical, connective teaching resource was that it didn't give any right answers. It didn't tell you to go out and buy fair-trade bananas or tell you

how to stop world poverty. Nor did it put the message across that the world was too much of a mess, it was all the consumers' fault and it was too late to do anything. Rather, by enabling pupils to make personal connections, it *awakened* an interest and raised lots of questions that they wanted to ask and find out more about. A similar approach to educational learning was taken at the Eden Project,

It's down to the role that Eden can usefully play in broader educational and communication sphere which is about exciting, engaging, hooking people, awakening interest rather than delivering the whole story. (Blewitt, 2004: 182)

Arriving home later that afternoon I was exhausted but excited. The first week had been excellent. The pupils were up for it and Jacky was laid back and was happy for us to carry on as we were. I had been bowled over by the pupils' reactions to both the banana game and *Exchange Values*. By putting themselves into other people's shoes and working in groups they had begun to think about themselves as groups of consumers and as groups of people who were related to distant others like banana farmers. An 'awakening' of pupils' critical consciousness had begun to take place (Freire, 1996). This was just the tip of the iceberg.

4.3.2 *Commodity Geographies*

Commodities are... a unity of what is revealed and what is concealed in the processes of production and consumption...it is an astute shopper indeed who had much idea about what most things are composed of and what kinds of people made them (Leiss cited in Lury, 1996:41).

The burgeoning literature on commodity geographies over the past 20 years was just one potential connection between the two parallel worlds of school and university geography. Four years previously, as a student on *GMC*, I had read a range of literatures relating to 'geographies of consumption' (Bell and Valentine, 1997; Cook *et al.*, 1998), 'commodity geographies' (Jackson, 1999; Leslie and Reimer, 1999), 'the ethics of

consumption' and 'caring at a distance' (Smith, 1997, 1998; Cloke, 2002; Barnett *et al.*, 2005), 'commodity fetishism' (Lury, 1996; Hartwick, 1998, 2000; Castree, 2001) and 'global citizenship' (Desforges, 2004a) and could see visible overlaps with both the vocabulary and grammar of the *People as Consumers* module.

As David Harvey (1990) famously pointed out most of us realise that products don't just appear on a supermarket shelf, but would rather forget about how they got there so we don't have to feel guilty about buying them. Marx (1887) referred to this masking of commodities' origin as 'the fetishism of commodities', where, according to Lury,

the appearance of goods hides the story of those who made them and how they made them...commodities not only hide, but come to *stand for* or *replace* relationships between people. (1996: 41)

So, just as those bananas in the centre of the *Exchange Values* gallery had no names attached, most students hadn't ever thought about the people behind the everyday products they consume. Three years earlier, Stuart Corbridge put forward the following argument about the subject of geography,

Why not learn from geography, and from the dynamics of globalisation, and make the argument that our lives are not that distant from the lives of distant strangers? Why not say that because we are in part responsible for the lives of others elsewhere we must bear a responsibility for the needs of distant strangers in times of distress? (Corbridge, 1993:462)

As the first week had shown, using connective classroom resources in geography lessons to get behind the commodity fetishish encouraged young people to be more aware of their connections with these 'distant strangers', as well as raising a whole host of wider geographical issues surrounding notions of interdependence, responsibility and global citizenship.

Since Harvey's call for geographers to defetishise commodities by tracing their biographies and geographies, and make visible the connections between the people involved in their trade in order to provoke moral and ethical questions for their consumers, a burgeoning body of academic research, documentary films, and art projects emerged which attempted to do this (see, for example, BBC, 1999; Cook *et al.*, 1998, 2004; Cook and Crang 1996). In geography, the sheer number of academic geographers researching commodity geographies and changing geographies consumer culture led Nicky Gregson to coin the phrase 'And now it's all consumption' (1995: 135).

Whilst some of this work was highly creative and imaginative, the majority of academic contributions by geographers, as Euan Hague pointed out, had been written in a 'dry and uninspiring standardized academic style... unlikely to stimulate student debate' (Hague, 2002:660). Which was a shame since geographers might be best placed to do this work (Miller, 2003). How then to transfer these ideas from academic journals to hands-on, connective classroom resources that related to young people's consumption of everyday items? Geographers might not have the creative writing skills of a novelist writing about the life stories of glass, paper and coffee beans (see Cohen, 1997) nor be skilled film makers following pineapples from field to tin (see Cook and Crang, 1996), but how could they 'write-up' findings 'in ways that are more engaging and less didactic than most of the things we're expected to write?' (Cook *et al.*, 2007b: 1120)

When I was a *GMC* student in 2001, Daniel Miller gave a talk at The University of Birmingham about a fascinating project entitled 'Could the Internet defetishise the commodity?' (later published as Miller, 2003). Here he proposed a project whereby, as

part of the NC, school children would follow a variety of commodities from their sites of production to consumption. This would be carried out over the Internet, giving children the opportunity to speak to the people working 15 hours a day to make the commodities that young people consume. Thinking back to this, the type of thing that Miller had outlined sounded like just the sort of critical, connective teaching materials that school geography needed. But what else might be possible with more limited time, money and resources? The pilot GCSE desperately needed this. It's a good job that this is where the project was headed in week two then!

4.4 Parallel Worlds: Critical pedagogy in the classroom

I want to send an email to the whole world so that everyone can know what we know about the invisible people who make our mobile phones. How can I do this? (Mike, 2006, research diary, 2 March)

4.4.1 Made in...?: Making the Connections Personal

It's like you're one of them, so you're involved. So it's like you could be any of them... They're similar to us. Cos, they're... we're all human beings, they just have different lives to us. (Duncan, 2006, VoxPop, 24 March)

Waiting in the school foyer at the start of the second week I noticed the school newsletter pinned up on a notice board and was excited to see that there was a piece about *Making the Connection* on the first page. Whilst this was not exactly the front cover of the *Times Educational Supplement* it was, nevertheless, good to be disseminating an innovative *geography* project (and GCSE) which couldn't do any harm to the subject's public image with other teachers, pupils and parents.

At the end of the first week we had introduced the notion of 'geographical detective work' (Hartwick, 2000). I said that if we really wanted to we could trace back

other items, in a similar way to what Shelley had done with bananas, to find their makers. We got students to look for the ‘made in’ labels on their clothes and other items they had on them- their bags, their iPods, their watches and so on (see figure 7). This notion of using ‘made in’ labels on everyday items to make connections between pupils’ everyday lives and those of unseen others, who helped them be who they were, really seemed to click. Soon they were delving into their bags, checking their coat and shirt labels, and looking on the back of their iPods. I looked around the classroom: there was Ian, with his shoe off showing Josh – the joker of the group – the insole of his shoe; and Jon – who had been pretty quiet so far – checking where his shirt was made.



Figure 7 Pupils searching for ‘made in’ labels (Credit: James Evans, 24th February 2006)

Using an activity which had again been trailed at the *Exchange Values* workshops, students were asked to trace these connections onto a copy of a world map; which not only linked the idea of consumption with geography but helped pupils understand the spatial dimension to their purchases. They drew a line on the map connecting them in the UK to others elsewhere via, for example, Ashley’s bottle of Sprite made in Germany; Oli’s blazer made in the Ukraine; Emma’s iPod designed in

California and assembled in China; their chairs made in the UK; and Holly's coat made in Cambodia. Why were things made so far away? Who made these things? This simple idea had got pupils thinking about the global interconnections that linked them as consumers to various people, places and environments around the world involved in making things they consumed everyday.

This had been a good ice-breaker for what we had planned in the second week. Here we moved on from bananas to look at another everyday item, one which was inextricable linked to young people's identities: mobile phones. The lesson began with a variety of questions posed to the group:

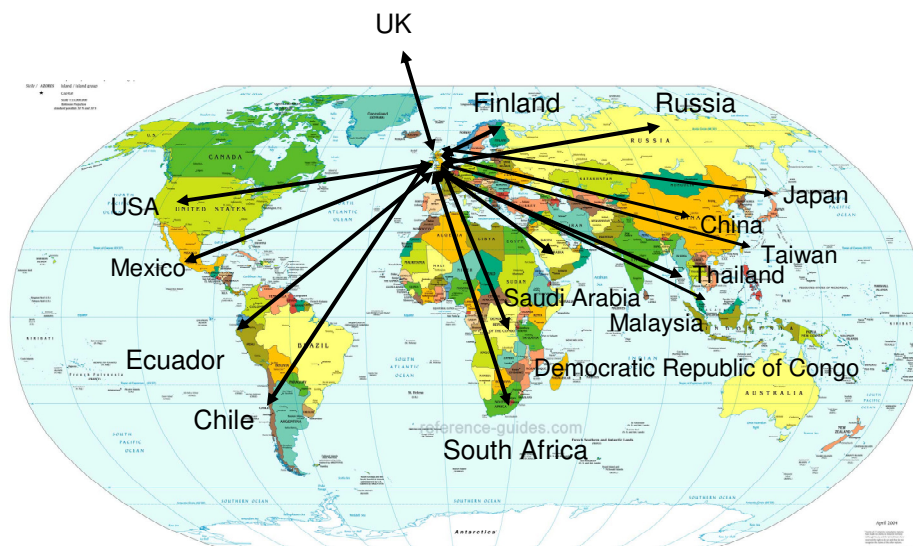
- What sort of phone do you have and where did you get it?
- What do you use your phone for?
- What does your phone mean to you?
- What would you do without your phone?

Students discussed how their phones gave them greater freedom; by having one they were allowed to go places and stay out later because their parents could keep in touch with them. Emma admitted that her parents had bought her one for safety and that she wouldn't feel safe without one. Someone else said it would be like losing a limb if they lost it. Overall then, they relied on their phones to do a lot of everyday things (listen to music, text friends, keep in touch with parents) in essence to be who they were. The idea was to start off with very local connections to spark interest with pupils before gradually 'zooming in and out' to a variety of scales (to coin Margaret Roberts' phrase; see Roberts, 2003).

If we opened up our phones there wouldn't be many 'made in' labels. I showed how my phone, for example, had a 'made in Korea' sticker on its battery. But what

about the parts that there were no ‘made in’ stickers for - the fascia, the speaker, and all those tiny little components and raw materials – where did they come from? To find out, we’d have to do some geographical detective work to find out where they came from. Whereas a banana may have been a more simple thing to trace, mobile phones were a whole different kettle of fish, with different components from around the world.

I prepared a PowerPoint presentation to introduce the notion of exploring where all the components of their phone came from. Starting with the plastic fascia, I explained how plastic was made from oil, and that some oil producing countries were Saudi Arabia and Russia. Soon, students were taking the fascias off their phone and discovering that the battery had come from Japan, or that their phone had been assembled in China. They plotted these connections on a photocopy of a world map just like they had done with items the previous week (like in figure 8).



Source: <http://www.cia.gov/>

Figure 8 PowerPoint slide from SEC lesson, 24th February 2006

I went on to say that if we looked a little closer we would see the speaker and microphone which were tiny and some detective work had uncovered that they come from Thailand and China. If we took all the plastic, the screen, keypad etc off we would be left with the circuit board- the hub of the phone, made up of an analogue to digital chop, antenna, transistors, microchip, processors etc. Each of these came from a different country and were each made up of different raw materials.³⁹ Gold. Copper. Coltan. I stopped here. The next slide showed a picture of a gorilla (see figure 9). ‘What have Guerrillas got to do with mobile phones?’ it asked. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gorillas were being killed because of mobile phones. Now the class was really interested.

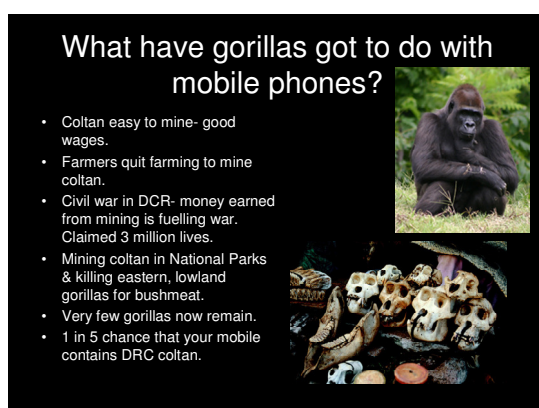


Figure 9 PowerPoint slideshow from SEC lesson, 24th February 2006

I explained how miniaturised technologies like mobile phones and laptops could get very hot and therefore needed capacitors that could conduct an electrical charge at high temperatures. Tantalum a mineral extract from the ore Colmubite tantalum, or Coltan for short, was used in the production of these capacitors. As phones had got smaller and smaller the demand for Coltan had risen. Countries like Australia and Brazil were the main producers of this mineral. However, the DRC also had sources of this

³⁹ In 2006 Save the Children (<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/>) had a webpage called “right online” which examined where all the components of a mobile phone came from (accessed 15th February 2006). This has since been removed.

metal. Mining it paid well and many farmers had left their land to make a better living. However, civil war had dominated the country for many years (and had claimed over three million lives) and much of the money earned from mining helped fuel this war (see Vesperini, 2001). In the search for further sources of Coltan, mining began in the country's National Parks, home to the rare eastern lowland gorillas. Mining drove gorillas away from their natural habitat and locals killed the animals for bushmeat as food was so short due to the decline of agriculture (Kirby, 2002; Readman, 2004). Very few gorillas now remained. The kids were visibly shocked.

In their groups they discussed their reaction to having heard about the people and places who make the components of their mobile phones: Coltan miners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; assembly factory workers in Dongguan, China (Wright, 2003; Yeung, 2001); mobile phone consumers like them in the UK; and recycling schemes which sent their old phones to help refugees find their family members in war-torn countries.⁴⁰

I overheard Emma making the connection between her feeling safe because she had her mobile phone and a 22 year old factory worker in Guangdong, China who spends months away from her young family working long hours to make phones like Emma's Nokia 6230. She wondered why workers are only paid a few pence when the phone they are making is sold in the UK for £100. Across the other side of the room, Mike was asking Ian how he could send an email to the whole world so that everyone could know what he knew about the invisible people who make our mobile phones.

⁴⁰ <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/kidsweb/bringbring/index.htm> Website accessed February 15th 2006

Ian's reply was that he didn't know, but that he could try emailing the WTO, and explained that this was the organisation responsible for setting trade regulations and rules. In the corner, at the back, Alice told me how she had discussed what happens to the pupils' mobile phones when they have finished with them. The pupils excitedly talked about setting up a mobile phone recycling scheme as part of their annual Lenten appeal.

When I went over to listen to the conversation taking place in another group I found that everyone was listening carefully to Simon. Quiet up to this point, Jacky later told us how he had recently arrived at the school from Nigeria and had been having problems adjusting and fitting in. Speaking passionately Simon told how he had seen Coltan mining first hand. There had already been several jaw-dropping moments in my research so far, but I could never have seen this coming. Trying to contain my excitement I heard him saying that, 'the miners have to work really hard and it is dirty work because they have to sift for it in a river'. We relied on people doing this digging to make our phones pocket-sized. The rest of his group were gripped. By being able to situate his knowledge he suddenly became an expert in the classroom and the students began to realize that they had just as much to learn from each other than from an out of date textbook. More importantly the power relations within the classroom had changed. Jacky and our university team were no longer seen as the experts. Students were beginning to be seen as 'critical co-investigators' who worked alongside and in dialogue with their teacher (Freire, 1996).

School pupils, their teacher, an undergraduate student, a PhD student and 2 university lecturers were in the classroom. We were learning from the kids as much as

they were learning from us. Their stories were as important as the ones we were telling. This was critical pedagogy in action. It brought these sorts of stories and ideas out of kids who wouldn't normally be *that* interested in geography, because they could see these connections, they could *feel* these connections.

At the end of the lesson Ian dropped the bombshell. We'd spent a lot of time finding out about where and how they learned their geography. So, it was their turn to find out where and how we learned our geography. In two weeks time all the undergraduates in Ian's *GMC* class would be putting on group performances about things they consumed and were interested in. How would the class feel about performing alongside his students about their mobile phone geographies? Alice was doing the course and would also be doing a presentation, so they were not alone. There were audible gasps around the classroom. As we left the pupils looked shocked! But there was also an atmosphere of excitement that they would be coming to the university.

When asked, the following lesson, what their reactions to finding out they would be presenting in front of a group of 20-21 year olds was, they said they were pretty scared. It was then important to explain a bit more about what Ian had meant by a presentation and suggested that 'performance' might describe it better. What had really got to them last lesson about mobile phones? What did they understand so far and how did they feel about this? What did they still need to find out? How could they best get all of this across to other people: A role play?; A quiz show? They would work in their small groups and together had to produce a 15-20 minute 'performance' between them. We didn't want them doing a boring presentation; though in reality, there was little chance of that happening.

Whilst ‘made in’ labels didn’t tell us much about these connections and relationship, they were a starting point for ‘geographical detective’ work (see Cook *et al.*, 2007b). They would use this to investigate the various people, place and environments behind the mobile phone network. Each group would tell the story of one stage of the mobile phone commodity chain: raw materials; assembly; mobile phone consumers; and recycling phones. They would therefore need to work as a team and discuss as a large group what each sub-group was going to look at. It was up to them to decide what they wanted to focus on and what angle they wanted to take. I handed out a sheet to everyone with a picture of the lecture theatre and the equipment it had (DVD, laptop, projector etc.) and described how big the ‘stage’ was. We told them that they would have the next week to work on their presentations. Myself, Ian and James would be away at the AAG conference in Chicago, so Alice would be joined by two other students from the *GMC* class; Spencer and Helen, as mentioned earlier. We reassured them they would be left in good hands.

The group started to brainstorm. Things were buzzing. There was an energy and enthusiasm to the room. Charlotte was glad she had her phone, yet felt guilty for having it now she had started to hear about these unseen others. These connections were getting personal. The groups were debating over who would get Coltan. Everyone seemed to be in the zone and Jacky later said she was amazed how they all stayed ‘on task’. A decision had been made: Sarah’s group would look at Coltan, Kiera’s group would investigate the production of mobile phones, David and Josh’s group would look at consumers and Charlotte’s group at recycling. They chatted excitedly about the format of the presentation and who would do what to prepare for it e.g. writers, researchers, presenters etc. Each group was given an article/website to read as a starting point. But

what else did they want to find out? Doing detective work was like piecing together pieces of a big jigsaw; they didn't want to give too much away at the beginning, but leave the audience guessing a bit, gradually weaving everything together. This notion of geography detective work sat well with the approach to teaching advocated by the pilot:

The specification content and the nature of the assessment assume that an investigative enquiry approach to teaching and learning will be undertaken and that candidates will be encouraged to be critical and reflective about what they study. Where appropriate... candidates should be encouraged to draw upon their own experiences. (OCR, 2004: 20)

Being able to find things out for themselves rather than copying things out of textbooks really struck a chord with the students and they relished the opportunity the module had provided them. Speaking later about what she thought academic geographers could do to make school geography more interesting Lucy said,

No more textbooks, because they're just boring and we don't learn anything from the textbooks, we just write it down and forget about it the next day... When we sit in the classroom we look at the teacher and she's telling us these things it just doesn't connect, but when we're actually doing it ourselves we understand about it... (2006, VoxPop, 24 March)

Similarly Duncan and Oli had a conversation about how useful they thought textbooks were in their learning:

Duncan: Our lessons at the moment are basically read a page, whatever, answer the questions and then that's it basically.

Oli: And the thing is that the questions are so stupidly easy it's just like...

Duncan: You get bored of them.

Oli: ...all you have to do is look at the page – now, which picture represents blah blah blah. And then you just look at it and it's there. So you don't actually learn anything.

Duncan: We find ourselves not like, sort of, it's not like a challenge...

Oli: It's too easy, you don't want to do it.

Duncan: ...so you're not actually going to do it. Cos people tend to skim read. Cos, like, I don't actually read the text. I just like read the question, then go over to the text and find the answer. I don't actually read it.

(2006, VoxPop, 24 March)

These comments raised the issue of the kinds of classroom materials needed for young people to critically and reflexively engage with the subject of geography; materials that

connect the personal with the political allowing young people to see themselves as global (and local) citizens with certain rights and responsibilities. They present an argument against 'factual' textbooks which present nice neat case studies, show cultures as artefacts, fetishise 'exotic' people and places, and promote rote learning of facts.

4.4.2 *Teaching Geographies of Material Culture: Cyborg Pedagogy*

Without a fundamental transformation of the classroom, and a reconceptualization of our roles as teachers, we run the risk of shoring up rather than breaking down dominant social relations and forms of oppression. Treating our students as consumers of information instead of as active participants in knowledge creation inhibits the radical possibility of the classroom to be a site of liberation in which students view themselves as agents actively involved in the social production and reproduction of a contested world. By treating students as active participants in the creation of knowledge in the classroom, radical geographers can promote democratic practices and transform their classrooms into 'vital public spaces'. (Heyman 2001: 5)

So what sort of pedagogy would be required to teach these touchy-feely, connective geographies in school geography classrooms? Well, this is where the parallel worlds of *GMC* and *People as Consumers* came into their own. My collaborative work with Ian, James and others had seen us trying to work through and talk about our experience of teaching and learning about this stuff in academic settings. We had even written journal articles about it (see Angus *et al.*, 2001; Cook *et al.*, 2007b). The next stage was to think about how we could work through all of this in a classroom situation: Would our approach translate well to a school setting?; What would be the impact of this pedagogy on teachers, students and their disciplinary and personal geographies?; and, How might we be able to use what we learnt to push our pedagogical thinking further?

The principle that students will engage more enthusiastically in education that allows them to see themselves in what they study was a cornerstone of academic

debates about critical pedagogy (see Giroux and McLaren, 1994; Cook, 2000) which argued against seeing students ‘as empty vessels for teachers to fill with knowledge, thus disempowering them and devaluing their own experiences and powers of critical thought’ (Heyman, 2000:300). *GMC* combined this approach with Donna Haraway’s (1988, 1991) cyborg ontology and situated knowledge to create the notion of a cyborg pedagogy (see Angus *et al.*, 2001; Gough, 2004; Cook *et al.*, 2007b; Evans *et al.*, 2008). In the classroom this meant destabilizing power relationships between teachers and students (McDowell, 1994) and getting students to take connections personally,

Allowing them to bring what they know, what matters to them, what they care about, and how they judge right from wrong, good from bad into the classroom. To have that valued, but also to have it challenged. By bringing the lives of connected by ‘usually unseen others’ – near and far - more closely into their own. In a bodily, cyborg sense. (Cook *et al.*, 2007b: 1118)

This was achieved via detective work, working in reading and discussion groups, group performances and writing journal entries in the first person. This ‘situated knowledge’ approach encouraged students to be ‘active participants in knowledge creation’ (Heyman, 2001) by developing teaching materials and strategies that provided less information to remember and more materials to think with and discuss, whose intentions were,

to mobilise rather than dictate meaning, to give audiences/participants materials to think with, to provoke questions about what this work is about, what the ‘moral of the story’ might be, how they ‘ought’ to respond. Maybe. These are ‘spaces for imagination’ to be inhabited and enlivened by those who enter them. (Cook *et al.*, 2007b: 1118)

Working through these pedagogical issues answered recent calls by geographers for a (re)emphasis on pedagogy in academic debates (McDowell, 1994; Bonnett, 2003; Castree, 2003). Rich Heyman, for example, argued that geographers seemed to pay

much more attention to relationships between theory, politics and practice in their research, than in their teaching (2000, 2001). Indeed, since making our work available online in draft form (our paper that was eventually published in 2007 – Cook *et al.*, 2007 – was originally written in 2004!) other geographers had picked it up and had written about taking similar approaches to teaching about consumption and commodity geographies in university settings (see Barnes, 2006; Goodman, 2008). There were, therefore, other examples of university students ‘plac[ing] themselves in the actual material networks of consumption they are intimately engaged in day-to-day’ (Goodman, 2008: 367) and encouraging students to see that they were ‘not mere passive observers but... part of the story’ (Barnes, 2006: 407).

However, what was missing in all of this were practical examples of how to translate this into a school setting. Alice had told the class at the end of the second week that she couldn’t believe that she had had to wait until she was 21, and studying in her final year at university, to learn about these sorts of things and had wished she could have learnt it when she was 14 or 15. This echoed my own thoughts as a GMC student four years earlier. Fortunately, it would seem that both this connective subject matter and critical pedagogical approach mirrored the approaches advocated in the pilot with the specification stating that ‘candidates are asked to see themselves as consumers and to trace the implications of this for place and environments’ (OCR, 2004: 29). So, why not introduce the notion of cyborg pedagogy and geographical detective work into this parallel world?

This is where St Edmund Campion and mobile phones came in. Using geographical detective work to trace the biographies behind everyday items, such as

mobile phones, could be a useful, interesting and accessible way to get students to situate their *own* lives within these complex geographical issues (Cook *et al.*, 2007c). Making personal connections. There was also reason to believe that this would be a success. Back in 2004 after Ian had spoken at the pilot conference in Aston he received an email from a teacher called Louise Ellis; she wanted to know if she had understood him correctly and all her students were cyborgs. It seemed like these concepts of cyborg pedagogy (or connective pedagogy might be an easier term for school students to grasp) and commodity fetishism could be translated into a school setting. I went to visit Louise later that year and was blown away by what she was doing in the classroom. Inspired by Alex Hughes' (2000, 2001) research on the Kenyan cut flower industry she had written a scheme of work entitled 'A Thorny Issue' where students had produced some amazing work linked to their buying of Roses for Valentine's Day (which was later the inspiration for part of an innovative GA book series – see Ellis, 2009). This made it clear that teachers could take these issues into the classroom and create something exiting. But not all teachers had access to academic journals where much of this stuff was written about, nor the time or space to create resources, so there was a need for accessible examples of what this geographical detective work meant in practice.

We had taken mobile phones as a starting point with the SEC students. But, virtually any mundane item could be used in the same way. Ian happened to have dozens of fantastic examples of *GMC* student journals researching the biographies of everyday items. Socks, Keys, Chicken Nuggets, Ballet Shoes, iPods, Chewing Gum. Why not make use of these? The GA were keen and so, after *Making the Connection*, some of these were worked up into an article for their *Teaching Geography* journal in

which there was also a quick tutorial about how to start carrying out geographical detective work via the Internet (Cook *et al.*, 2007c. See also Cook *et al.*, 2006).

When we later presented this paper at various teacher conferences it went down very well with teachers coming up to us afterwards, and later emailing us saying how easy this would be to implement into their own classroom. Getting these journals out there was a starting point. But wouldn't it be amazing if other academics who had researched the hidden lives of commodities wrote their research up into a short, snappy article for a school audience. Made them accessible and vivid. After this project finished this notion of doing geographical detective work to trace the invisible lives of commodities became much more widespread in the public realm. Examples included pop singer Jamelia tracing the origins of her hair extensions in BBC3's *Whose Hair is it Anyway* (2008), BBC3's *Blood, Sweat and T-Shirts* (2008) where clothes shoppers swapped high street in the UK for working in India's cotton fields and clothes factories and BBC News' project, *The Box*, which follows a shipping container around the world.⁴¹ All of these could provide starting off points and inspiration for young peoples' own detective work.

4.5 Collaboration, Co-learning and Co-constructing knowledges: Group pedagogy

I think it's easier to talk about in a group because you can discuss everything, the points of right or wrong and then you can like think about it more in depth, instead of just sitting there having no choice that you read a book. (Julia, 2006, project feedback, March)

Group pedagogy becomes creative, collaborative research. The subject group allows us to shift the question from the potentially disempowering 'what can *I* do in the face of this world? To 'what can *we* do?' (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 342)

⁴¹ For further details see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00cr3hj>, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/thread/blood-sweat-tshirts/> and http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/business/2008/the_box/default.stm. All Websites accessed 20th July 2009.

4.5.1 Group Creativity and Performances: Towards an Embodied Understanding

A week later in a swanky hotel room in Chicago, Ian, James and I were putting the finishing touches to a presentation we were giving at that year's AAG meeting about the *Making the Connection* project. It felt strange to be talking about the project, whilst it was still going on in the classroom back in England and I was apprehensive about having left the pupils to prepare the performances themselves. The next time I would see them would be at University train station the morning of the performances. However, I remembered that we had left them in the capable hands of Alice, Helen and Spencer and impatient to find out how things had gone I texted Alice. Almost immediately my phone beeped and I got the following reply:

It went amazingly! Wish you were all here for me to tell you all about it! I'll email all the details. Really the performances are going to rock! (Alice Williams, 2006, pers. comm., 8 March)

So, what had we missed out on? What had been going on in the classroom? Alice kept a research diary during the week I was in Chicago and very kindly emailed it to me on my return so that I could use it in my thesis (Williams, 2006b). When I read it, it seemed that things could not have gone more smoothly. Her first entry in which she started 'I'm buzzing, completely buzzing, and shattered!!' summarised the liveliness she had felt in the classroom. The critical, connective pedagogical approach seemed to be enabling pupils to gain in confidence in their own and each others' voices. She described how,

Simon drew diagrams of 'how you mine Coltan'; he got emotional, vocal, passionate about his views and feelings. His group listened, understood, respected...this wasn't just connecting them to the other side of the world, this was connecting them to/with each other. (Williams, 2006b: np)

This diffusion of power from teacher to student was again cropping up and it seemed that group work had a role to play in enabling co-learning and the co-construction of knowledge. Alice described how the class had started to really gel both in their small

groups and as a large group, writing how ‘as each group finished explaining their ideas they were clapped and cheered by the others in the class... they were working as a real team’ (*ibid.*). This notion of working as a team, drawing on each member’s strengths and gaining confidence in their voice was picked up by Cathy:

We worked well as a team and used everyone’s ideas. We didn’t need a leader as we all had the manners to listen to one another. I would usually be quite shy about sharing my ideas if I was working with just one person, but this time, working as a team, made me feel much more confident. (Cathy, 2006, project feedback, March)

Jacky would later tell me how much they had enjoyed working as part of a team and how they ‘felt they were treated as adults whose ideas and opinions mattered’ (2007, pers. comm., 25 May). It seemed that it was not only the SEC students who had been inspired by their experiences in the classroom. I later found out from Alice that Spencer had been considering doing a PGCE but was concerned about not being able to use his enthusiasms and undergraduate experience. However, after spending two days in the classroom and learning about the pilot GCSE it had reignited his enthusiasm and he had decided to apply. This was quite powerful stuff and it provided yet more anecdotal evidence that the GCSE’s intentions were being realised.

As well as destabilizing power relationships in the classroom, could group work also be key to developing a more creative form of pedagogy? (see Evans *et al.*, 2008). Well, Helen’s summary of her time helping in class would seem to hint at the creative potential of group work:

Wow! What a lesson. An amazing group of people with some brilliant thoughts, ideas and comments: So similar to what I’m/we’re doing, yet I’m 5 years older. Absolutely great! Wish I’d had lessons like that at GCSE, that actually studies in depth about unseen others. Brilliant ideas for presentation/performance using finger puppets for people all over the world that produce mobile phone parts. Sock puppets for the consumer. Size shows power! Totally their idea. (Helen Claire, 2006, pers. comm., 8 March)

It certainly seemed that working in groups had enabled students to think creatively about geographical issues, moving away from answering questions out of textbooks. They were also starting to develop more empathetic, embodied understandings of those 'distant others':

All of the things that we had to research and find out really made a difference to the way I act, think and feel. I am more aware now that what I buy could make a difference to people on the other side of the world. I also feel more sympathetic towards those people who are stuck in trade labour. (Charlotte, 2006, project feedback, March)

In parallel to the first-person journal writing of *GMC*, group work was another method which pupils developed a more engaged empathy to those 'invisible others'. Although school geography lessons and textbook might address poor working conditions in factories and pupils might feel sorry the workers, Firth and Biddulph have highlighted how it is 'difficult to foster anything other than initial sympathy' (2009b: 52). However, by getting young people involved in their own learning and taking ownership of the course this critical-connective-cyborg-group pedagogy had the potential to lead to more embodied learning. I couldn't wait to see what their performances would bring.

Arriving at the University of Birmingham to take part in the *GMC* 'performance day', there was a mixed feeling of excitement and nervousness amongst both sets of pupils (the undergraduate students were particularly nervous about their performances not being up to scratch!). Walking down from the train station to the lecture theatre Jacky told me how her class 'had also amused commuters on the cross-city line with their impromptu rehearsals and their props!' (Jacky Wilson, 2006, pers. comm., 14 March). What also stuck out were the students' reactions to being on University campus. None of them had ever visited a university before and they couldn't believe that it was only a 20 minute train ride from their school.

Entering a lecture theatre full of students five years their senior could have been a daunting experience for them, and unsurprisingly many felt nervous. In between *GMC* students doing presentations on Clothes shopping, McDonalds, The Seven Deadly Sins and Bodily geographies, Group F came onto stage and told the story of the mobile phone commodity chain. Standing up in front of a room of 21 year olds was something many pupils never thought they would be able to do. But they did and they rocked! A mixture of role play, quiz show, ICT presentations and audience interaction were all used to convey the stories behind those unseen people, places and environments that they relied on for an item they used daily without thinking about it. For example Sarah's group acted out a scene set in DRC complete with gorillas in costume; Kiera very confidently explained where the components came from; and Charlotte asked members of the audience about what they did with their mobile phones when they got an upgrade (see figure 10).



Figure 10 SEC group performances, performance day at University of Birmingham (Source: stills from video recording, 14th March 2006)

Using drama, art and other creative forms of expression enabled students, both on performance day and beyond, to become really engaged with some quite complicated geographical issues. The powerfulness of performances and co-learning was reflected in Holly's diary (which she later used to produce a journal for her coursework). This

charted the development of her feelings over the course of the project, revealing the impact that collaboration and co-constructing knowledges had had on her disciplinary and personal geographies:

Week 3: I'm still really nervous about doing this presentation, but hopefully people watching will really take notice, and for all we know we could really be making a difference! I have finally found a subject that I am really interested in. I wish all of geography was this interesting!

Week 4: It's amazing how differently you take something in when it's presented to you in a more interesting way. It was funny watching other members of my class doing silly things, but it was also great learning from them! That way I think I am more likely to remember it. I have noticed that now, if I see anything about mobile phones on the television I automatically get interested, and I never really used to be bothered. (Holly, 2006, GCSE coursework, March)

The day was also attended by Eleanor Rawling who had been so impressed with the performances that she later admitted that she had mistaken the SEC students for *GMC* students. It was great to be showing such an influential person the impact that her work/our work could have on young people's personal and disciplinary geographies.

Later, she wrote about the project:

Pilot GCSE pupils have been provided with a genuine involvement in exploring an issue affecting their own lives, their teachers have been given access to the excitement of working at a research frontier. (Rawling in Hawkins *et al.*, forthcoming).

At the end of the project Jacky told us that the highlight of the course had definitely been the trip to the university. She revealed that whilst the pupils might have been nervous, they needn't have been 'since their presentations equalled and in some cases surpassed those of the undergraduates' (Eleanor Rawling, 2006, pers. comm., 14 March). After the performances, Noel, one of the undergraduate students described how similar the worlds of school and university geography were:

It just shows that it's not academic- you don't have to be an academic to argue the points and express your opinions because it's material culture and it affects

absolutely everyone: we're all consumers, producers and participants, so everyone should have an opinion on it. (2006, VoxPop, 14 March)



Figure 11 The parallel worlds of SEC and GMC students, performance day University of Birmingham (Source: stills from VoxPops, 14th March 2006)

This physical crossing of school and university geography highlighted how creative forms of expression enabled young people to ‘think geographically’ and also hinted at the potential benefits of collaborations and conversations across the academic-school divide.

Back in the school the day after the performances the students were still on a high and were relieved at how well their performance had gone down. Jacky reiterated what a good job they had done. It was now time for them to produce a piece of coursework for their GCSE based on what they had learnt, seen, heard and felt. So what effect had the project had on the students? How did they respond to the ways of teaching, learning and assessing used in this project? Not surprisingly, when they were asked who was going to write an essay for their coursework, no-one put their hand up. Instead, they wanted to hand in comic strips, diary entries, email exchanges between a pupil doing *People as Consumers* and an undergraduate doing *GMC*, a children’s story, and poems.

The role of connective group pedagogy also led toward social action rather than just individual understanding (Evans *et al.*, 2008). The first couple of weeks had hinted at this with students petitioning their school canteen to use more Fair Trade products and harassing their parents to shop more ethically. I had read Freire talking about how critical pedagogical approaches could enable students to:

Come to an awareness of selfhood and begin to look critically at the social situation in which they find themselves, often taking the initiative in acting to transform the society that has denied them this opportunity to participate. (Freire, 1996: 11)

The classroom had, it seemed, become a ‘vital public space’ with knowledge accumulated in the classroom becoming fluid, moving into the varying spaces of pupils’ lives, whether it be in the aisles of a supermarket or pestering their friends and family members (Heyman, 2001). In the weeks that followed the students put on their performances as part of school assemblies, wrote articles for the school newsletter and sent copies of their work to the Eden Project for use in the revamp of their Tropical Biome. Summing up their views on the course Holly revealed how the project had affected her on a more personal level and how she would take what she has learnt in the classroom away with her:

When I first started this course I really didn’t know anything about it [working conditions in the 3rd world], and if it was on the TV I’d just change the channel or whatever, but now I think I really like care about everything, now that I know what’s going on and I want to do something about it. (Holly, 2006, project feedback, March)

One example, however, completely took me by surprise. Sherry, one of the shiest students, revealed that she had taken Ian’s earlier advice to Mike and had emailed the WTO about trade laws, asking why Banana farmers were so poorly paid. They hadn’t replied at first, but that lesson she received a reply (see figure 12).

From: [REDACTED]@aol.com [mailto:[REDACTED]@aol.com]
Sent: 15 March 2006 19:38
To: Enquiries, WTO
Subject: Windward island farmers

Dear sir/ madam,

I am e-mailing you because i am appauled about the amount of money banana farmers on Windward Islands earn. Supermarkets get 13 times more than them but they do the least work. Everyday they struggle for food and work non-stop for hardiy any money

I think you should have done something about this already however i see that that has not happened. I think you should do something about this.

If you cannot help me will you please tell me someone who can and give me there contact details. I would also appreciate it if you you replied to my e-mail by letting me know what is being done about the situation. Please contact me at [REDACTED]@aol.com

i look forward to hearing from you.

Yours
sincerely
[REDACTED]

Subj: RE: Windward island farmers
 Date: 17/03/2006 14:52:14 GMT Standard Time
 From: Enquiries@wto.org
 To: [REDACTED]@aol.com

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your e-mail about banana producers in the Windward Islands of the Caribbean. In the WTO in Geneva, the representatives of these countries have been very clear about the problems facing their banana producers. Along with other countries they have made proposals about what they think needs to be done in terms of international trade law. However, other representatives of other countries, including poorer countries, do not like the proposals and do not like the system that helps support banana producers in those countries. Right now banana exporters in the Caribbean rely on getting better access to the market of the European Union compared to producers in other countries, but discrimination in their favour means discrimination against others and some of the others do not like that. You can find some of the debate on this issue on the WTO website's section on the agriculture negotiations (http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/agric_e/negoti_e.htm).

You mentioned the difference between what a banana producer is paid and the price of bananas in the shops. As far as I am aware there are many others that share your concern, for that reason some enterprises offer "fair" or "equitable" trade products. Of course, I cannot recommend any particular company and to be sure that these products meet your definition of what is "fair" or "equitable" you should do some research.

You also say that the WTO Secretariat should do something about the problems facing banana producers in some countries. However, the WTO Secretariat can only do what the governments of the Member countries agree to and there is no consensus among Members that the Secretariat should have a direct role in this or similar development issues. There are other organizations that do have a mandate to assist in agriculture development and trade, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (<http://www.fao.org/>) or the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (<http://www.unctad.org/Templates/StartPage.asp?intItemID=2068>) as well as many national aid agencies like the United States' Agency for International Development (<http://www.usaid.gov/>) or the UK Department for International Development (<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/>).

I hope this information is useful to you and if you have other questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

John Finn
 Agriculture and Commodities Division
 WTO

Figure 12 Sherry's email to, and reply from, the WTO, March, 2006 (Source: photocopy of original with Sherry's permission)

Since nowhere on the email had she mentioned that she was a 14 year old school student, the WTO had sent her a full reply and given her links where she could take her

‘geographical detective’ work further. Thus, by engaging directly with young people’s everyday consumption the class had begun to see themselves as ‘groups of consumers and more importantly as groups who could act, and who could be counted alongside and with socially distant others’ (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 340).

This notion of engaging directly with students and giving them the sense that they could take action linked directly to the pilot specification which stated that pupils should have the opportunity to:

Make connections between their own lives and aspirations and the geographical learning they have undertaken, so that they are able to make decisions and take actions both at a personal level and as citizens. (OCR, 2004: 12)

These were amazingly complicated issues which, if presented in a certain way, could lead to a sense of hopelessness with young people (and adults!) not knowing how to work their way out of the messiness. But also, they could be taught in a superficial way, glossing over really complicated issues and leading individuals to feel like they’ve done their bit by buying fair-trade bananas or donating their mobile phone to charity without critically engaging with the bigger picture. However, embodied learning and the inclusion of ‘the self’ in knowledge production could empower young people to mobilize action, leading to long-lasting change (see Giroux, 1991; Gough and Scott, 2003)

Returning to Sherry’s email, she had subsequently made a big list of other people and organisations she wanted to email. One of them was the local MP Sion Simon. Now, you couldn’t have written a better script, but unbeknown to me he was visiting the school that afternoon. I couldn’t believe it when he walked into the geography lesson with the head teacher keen to talk to the students about their

experience of the project and university. The students bombarded him with questions and he looked visibly uncomfortable about the extent of their questioning. When he tried to fob them off with a simplistic interpretation of why banana farmers didn't get paid very much, Mike replied saying that his answers didn't match to the research they had been doing. This visit was perhaps most surprising for Sherry, who had been sitting at the computer at the back of the classroom trying to send Sion Simon an email about her WTO correspondence. As her MP, she wanted to know, how could he help campaign for trade justice? He promised to send a more considered response to her via the Head Teacher.

4.6 Organic Public Geographies: Making the Connection

Many perceive a great and unwelcome divide between university and school geography. Others, including myself, see a range of dynamic and energetic conversations about geography to join in with. Many of these are happening because more school and academic geographers are going public about their work, their areas of interest, their passion for the worthwhile-ness of geography. Making these concerns public and accessible has enabled more teachers to reinvigorate their teaching and more academics able to relate to and understand the priorities of teaching the subject within schools. (Diane Swift in Hawkins *et al.*, forthcoming)

It has altered my perception of university because I was not sure whether I really wanted to go to university but now that has all changed and I can't wait to go... I really can't wait for my time at university! (Julia, 2006, project feedback, March)

4.6.1 School<-> University Geographies

In the final lesson we said that we had one last task for them. In week one we'd told them the story of how the artist Shelley Sacks had travelled to St Lucia to meet banana farmers asking them what they would say to the people who ate their fruits; she had encouraged them to imagine the gallery space, describing the panels of skins and people listening to them via headphones. What if the SEC students were given the

chance to speak to a captive audience about their school geography? We asked them to imagine a plasma TV at the front of lecture theatre at a geography conference and a room full of academic geographers like Ian and James who were sat listening. Here they would be able to tell these people about the geography they were learning and how they could help to make school geography more relevant and interesting for them at school. What would they like to say?

We set up a video camera in a nearby classroom and stuck a picture to the camera of what a conference room full of people looked like so they could imagine the space and asked them to record short VoxPops (see figure 13). Their responses were filmed and edited down to make a short 10 minute film we later showed at the 2006 RGS-IBG Annual Conference in a public geographies session (Class 2b geography *et al.*, 2006).



Figure 13 Students recording their VoxPops for academic geographers, SEC school. (Source: stills from VoxPop recording, 24th March)

When we showed this video at the RGS-IBG and later at other conferences many academics were shocked at how little they knew about pre-university geography. In the film Sarah started off by saying ‘We know that geography is about the world, but our geography lessons make this seem boring’ with Kiera chipping in ‘The world is an

amazing place, but our ways of learning does (sic) not make us think like that' (2006, Voxpop, 24 March). It was therefore amazing to hear how much being involved in the project had changed some of their views on the subject and the effects that this pedagogy seemed to have had:

Before this project we would have definitely discarded Geography for our A-Level subjects. But since doing the more practical project we will definitely consider doing A Level Geography. (Kiera and Sarah, 2006, VoxPop, 24 March)

We noticed that before doing this piece of coursework many uncooperative students were unwilling to do any work and coursework was always handed in late. But in this practical piece of coursework they all got involved and they did not disrupt other pupils learning. (Kiera, 2006, VoxPop, 24 March)

It was clear that both the pedagogical approach and connective subject matter were key to students' engagement with the subject.

When it came to their advice for academic geographers, time and again comments were made about creating curriculum materials which engaged with young people's lives and which would enable them to express themselves in more creative ways. Using art, drama and film to connect young people to quite complex issues was mentioned by Holly, who when asked how geographers could present their work, replied,

Um, well films, because they're more personal so we'll feel like more connected to people, and also like through making the geography more interesting by presenting it differently, say like through drama or artwork. (Holly, 2006, VoxPop, 24 March)

Similarly, Julia spoke about more creative forms of expression when talking about why she got so much from the performance day at the university,

Yeah, I think we learnt different way of presenting our information. Normally you're just told to write an essay, cos none of us would like use the video, none of us would have thought of anything like that, but we'd just sit there and write the project – which is what we've always done. (Julia, 2006, VoxPop, 24 March)

Pupils were positive about the experience they had had over the five weeks, in particular getting the chance to meet university geographers and students studying the subject at university,

I think that the university was an amazing experience and the students were a great help for helping us understand things. I didn't really like the idea of going to university but now I am positive about attending it. (Lucy, 2006, project feedback, March)

Indeed it was their visit to the university which perhaps had one of the biggest impact on students. They all wanted to know when they could come back to the university and really enjoyed the interaction they had with the university students. On his visit MP Sion Simon had asked how many of them who hadn't been thinking of going to university were now thinking of going and approximately a third of the class put their hands up. The project thus provided an excellent example of how to develop school and university geographies that are more engaged, challenging and socially inclusive. I hoped the film would highlight the importance of getting balls rolling and creating the time and space for dialogues to take place between school and university geography.

4.6.2 Organic Public Geographies

The whirlwind that was my first case study had come to its completion in the space of the classroom. But things didn't stop there. Since the project was an illustration of what an organic public geography project looked like in practice it was important to create space to disseminate the project as widely as possible. All those notions of collaboration, entering into dialogue, making visible the invisible, co-authorship and co-learning were central to both the project's and my thesis' approach. I therefore wanted to get stuff out there and see where it led; of course, it would be great if other teachers could find, pick up and use the resources produced in their own classrooms.

We also spoke about the project at a variety of conferences, workshops and events aimed at both school and academic geographers over the course of the next 18 months.⁴² Finally, much later, we tried to capture the dynamics of the project which had connected the lives of teachers, school and university students and geography educationalists through writing a multi-authored collaborative text (see Hawkins *et al.*, forthcoming).

By this stage the PGWG had their own space on the School of Geography WebPages. Whilst not the most innovative of templates and leaving little space for creativity, they would at least provide a quick and easy way of disseminating details about the project to the public. So, I took a couple of MS FrontPage courses via the university, transcribed and edited the audio and video materials, collated the resources and lesson plans and spent a day uploading everything onto the Web.⁴³ As well as showing what we'd done and sharing the resources that we had made and used, there was also a section detailing how other schools and universities might attempt a similar 'crossing project', with links to relevant websites and organisations that could be of interest and use.

These sorts of dissemination activities raised questions concerning what research was, and what constituted 'legitimate' research. How about submitting a website, video or art exhibition for the RAE? Unfortunately, the pressure of writing peer-reviewed journal articles meant that those academics that *did* engage in exciting 'organic public

⁴² These included: at the Young People's Geography project, November 2006; an invited seminar at the Department of Geography, University of Liverpool, February 2007; at the GA Annual Conference, April 2007; an invited plenary at Geography 21 Conference, June 2007.

⁴³ The original website moved to a Wordpress blog. *Making the Connection*, Website accessed 20th September 2009 <<http://makingtheconnection.wordpress.com/>>

geography' work had 'little time to actually document them' and thus remained hidden from view (Fuller *et al.*, 2008c: 4). It was this pressure that I had found to be one of the reasons for the disconnection between school and university geography. How then could these sorts of publically engaged work be communicated, made more visible and more public? Furthermore, how could they be legitimised and be seen as and making a difference both within and outside the academy?

A few weeks later we posted details about the WebPages on academic and school geography forums. As I was about to post it on the SLN forum I noticed that someone had already posted about it for me (see figure 14). This was a sign of what was to come and things didn't end here. The project took on a life of its own, spread through the Internet and by word of mouth. In May I received an email from Lesley Moule, who told me she was a principle examiner for the pilot GCSE. Eleanor had told her about the excellent work I had been doing with SEC and she was interested in using the example of mobile phones in future exams. Would I be able to send her a copy of the lesson plans and resources used? Making stuff public seemed to be key.

In the coming months, the nature of the collaboration changed from being The University of Birmingham and SEC school, to me collaborating with other schools involved in the pilot and to other schools. All of this has ended up shaping my own PhD research. I didn't know it at the time but my research turned into something that I tried to keep up with as much as planned. I could never had guessed or written a research proposal about what would happen in the months to come.

Staffordshire Learning Net
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Pilot GCSE resources

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Author Topic: Pilot GCSE resources

Noel Jenkins Member
posted 24 January 2007 05:28 PM

The Public Geographies Working Group based at Birmingham Uni. have completed a project to "develop new school and university geographies that were more engaged, challenging and socially inclusive."
An outcome of the Making the Connection project are some resources designed with the OCR pilot in mind. Probably Pilot centres are already aware of these, however lesson plans and other resources can be found here:
<http://www.qees.bham.ac.uk/research/pqwq/Projects/Makingconnection/introduction.htm>

The project is a terrific example of the potential for links with Higher Education. I suspect it will be given a proper outing at the GA conference.

IP: Logged

Alan Parkinson Member
posted 24 January 2007 05:39 PM

Hi Noel
The project is already having an input into the Pilot GCSE resources.
I've been involved, along with a few other schools in a project called YOUNG PEOPLE'S GEOGRAPHIES which is getting students to question the geographies they receive, and develop the ones they want to learn about. We had an eventful meeting in Leicester last Thursday (the day of the storm!) and you can read about the progress so far at: <http://www.geographypages.co.uk/ypq.htm>
It's a very exciting project, and Helen Griffiths from GEES is involved, along with Tracey Skelton, Mary Biddulph etc. - all regular names in Geographical journals.
Some of the Material Cultures resources are also referenced in various places on my site.
For example, try this site: <http://www.exchange-values.org> which looks at bananas and includes excellent sound files of the farmers speaking about their work.

Figure 14 Making the Connection post on SLN. (Source: Noel Jenkins, (24/01/2007) Pilot GCSE resources, SLN Geography Forum, Website accessed 25th January 2007, <<http://active.sln.org.uk/ubb/Forum5/HTML/008649.html>>.)

4.7 Concluding Thoughts

Where does the thesis stand at this point? Whereas the previous two chapters examined the pilot at a more conceptual level, this chapter – my first ‘proper’ empirical one – has moved on to critically examine how the GCSE is working out in practice. In telling the story of how I became more involved in co-creating resources via the *Making the Connection* project I have framed my research within the academic literature on commodity geographies and geographies of material culture. With a specific focus on the parallels between the *People as Consumers* and *GMC*, I have developed better understandings of the impact of a critical, connective pedagogy on young people’s personal and disciplinary boundaries. Firstly, introducing the notions of cyborg pedagogy and geographical detective work into the GCSE classroom facilitated a more embodied learning; one in which pupils were able to critically and reflexively engage

with the subject of geography, make personal connections and gain confidence in their own voice. Notably, such an approach was less exclusive and broke down classroom power relations; everyone was seen as a potential expert and pupils became critical co-investigators developing geographies that mattered to them. Critical, connective teaching resources that provide opportunities for group learning and creative forms of expression are central to the pilot meeting its aims as outlined in the previous chapter.

Secondly, I have developed mine and others' work on the practice and experience of critical pedagogy. Whereas previous attempts to work through cyborg pedagogy in the space of the *GMC* classroom had concentrated on individual understandings of critical pedagogy (drawing on Donna Haraway's notion of situated knowledge) this case study has illustrated the importance of 'group creativity as a form of pedagogy'; a theme that is developed further in a paper I co-authored as a result of this research (see Evans *et al.*, 2008).

How did I get here? My methodological approach means that I'm not attempting to provide an evaluation of the pilot GCSE; rather I want to give a sense of the energy and buzz that I experienced during my research. As such, I am aware that this thesis only tells a partial story and that any conclusions I make are tentative. Drawing on the children's geographies literature I have developed deeper understandings of doing research with young people in educational settings, arguing for flexible methodological approaches that are both sensitive to the power relationships and to the particular context of research.

Underpinning this research have been the notions of collaboration, co-authorship, the co-construction of knowledges and breaking down hierarchies; notions that draw heavily on the emerging public geographies literature. I have argued that time and space needs to be created for dialogues to take place between school and university geographers. In bringing together these parallel worlds I have illustrated both how I began to become more involved in the world of school-level geography and how I began to go more 'public' with my work; writing articles for non-academic audiences, speaking at conferences and so on.

On reflection, this chapter may seem longer and more detailed than the empirical chapters that follows. Due to my read-do-write methodology I was writing up as I went along and therefore this first empirical chapter sets the conceptual and methodological context for what follows. There was a lot to be learnt a lot from this first case study and I wanted to document the experience of everything coming together there and then and devote words to show how this happened.

Where next? In disseminating the Making the Connection project I am leaving the door open for anyone to pick up, use and adapt the ideas for their own purposes. Whilst there is no guarantee this will happen, I have already hinted how the project ended up being a catalyst for the rest of my PhD. Alongside this, however, I wanted to continue my multi-sited ethnography with a second case study school; one which would compliment St Edmund Campion and enable me to continue to examine the impact of the pilot on young people and their teacher's disciplinary and personal geographies. Indeed, as Chapter Five will reveal, the cogs for this case study have already been set in motion.

Chapter Five: Glebe School Case Study

5.1 Introduction

This chapter tells the story of my second case study school and, like the previous chapter, seeks to examine my second and third aims; those of examining how the pilot was working out in practice as well as the resources teachers were drawing on. I do so through an examination of various outdoor learning projects the geography department at the school was involved in. By building on and working through the questions and issues raised by my research at SEC this case study further develops the synergies between the themes of critical pedagogy and young people's everyday geographies. The chapter ends by highlighting the evolving nature of my 'rhizomatic ethnography' and how the research started to design itself.

5.1.1 Sowing the Seeds for the Case Study

The second main phase of research stemmed from that meeting Ian and I had with Diane Swift and David Lambert at the GA back in February 2006. Talking about schools' experiences of the pilot so far and who it seemed to be working for and why, Diane mentioned that I should get in touch with Martin Crabbe, Head of Geography at Glebe School in Bromley, Kent. Glebe, she explained had been in the first cohort of pilot schools and did some fantastic geography-related work. It was a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and she said it would be great to see 'the way that his kids have engaged with the GCSE, where previously they perhaps would have been excluded from undertaking GCSE study, because of their specific learning needs' (Diane Swift, 2006, pers. comm., 14 February). Since one of the things I was interested in was who the pilot was working for and why, an examination of a cross-section of schools was essential. Glebe sounded like it would provide a good contrast to St

Edmund Campion; a school where pupils didn't usually attain GCSE standard vs. a school which was broadly in line with the national average for pupil attainment.

5.1.2 Research Methodology as Networking

At this stage my PhD had involved networking, communicating and building up relationships within and between schools, teachers, universities, educational decision-makers and organisations. This initial networking appeared to have paid off; a second pathway had been opened up via the contacts I had already made and I was keen to see where this would lead. Gill Valentine (1997) highlighted the importance of gatekeepers in negotiating access to research settings (see also Crang and Cook, 2007). Having a 'gatekeeper' as well-known and respected in the school geography world as Diane proved beneficial and definitely gave me the confidence to get in touch with Martin.

5.2 Glebe School Case Study⁴⁴

5.2.1 Establishing Contact

Once the *Making the Connection* project was complete I emailed Martin Crabbe outlining my research so far and asking whether he would be interested in getting involved from September onwards. It was important to make early contact as setting up contacts and gaining access to potential collaborators could take considerable time (Valentine, 1999). I explained how Diane Swift had recommended I get in touch with him and how Glebe would make a fantastic case study for my research. I outlined that two of my research objectives were: addressing how the pedagogical principles and approaches built into the pilot GCSE were working out in practice; and examining the

⁴⁴ This chapter draws on my participant observation notes carried out during the project. Since no data was formally recorded, 'data' is based on my research diary notes and not on direct quotations.

types of resources teachers were drawing on. However, it was important to highlight the approach taken to the research, and added that:

My research is taking a collaborative approach i.e. I don't want to go into schools, be a distant observer, collect my 'data', say 'thank you very much' and then leave! Rather, I want to work in collaboration with teachers and pupils helping to create something worthwhile to all parties. (Helen Griffiths, 2006, pers. comm. to Martin Crabbe, 25 May)

On reflection, this probably helped gain access as Martin's teaching was similar in approach and was something he felt passionately about.

I got an enthusiastic response back and Martin said that he'd like to hear more. However, as often happens with the summer term at school, exams, coursework and other deadlines got in the way, and I didn't hear back from him (Pugsley, 2002). This was fine, as I had plenty to be getting on with, not least putting the *Making the Connection* project online. Not wanting to be pushy I decided to wait until September, and the new school year, to make contact for a second time. Around this time I had been asked by David Lambert to become a member of a new Citizenship Working Group (CWG) the GA were setting up; Ian, John Morgan and Jessica Pykett were also members. This was an amazing opportunity to get involved and another example of creating time and space for academic and school geographers to have a dialogue.

In early September I received an email inviting members of the CWG to the inaugural meeting which would take place on 16th September at Tide~ in Birmingham. I chuckled to myself when I realised that Tide~ would yet again make an appearance in my research (these guys seemed to be involved in every exciting project!). Then, as my

eyes scrolled down the list of other members I saw Martin's email on the list. This definitely was a small world and it seemed fate that we would meet one way or another. I seized the opportunity and emailed Martin asking if he was coming to the meeting in September and, if so, would he mind meeting up for a coffee afterwards? Ten minutes later the phone rang. It was Martin. He said that he wouldn't be able to make the meeting but would love to meet up to chat about how he might be able to help me and we arranged a date for a couple of weeks time.

*5.2.2 Establishing Contact: Making a Connection*⁴⁵

On 20th September 2007 I was outside Café Nero by the entrance to Clapham Junction station waiting for Martin. I was a bit nervous that we would miss each other so sent him a text to tell him where I was waiting. I fiddled with my top and took my cardigan off. It was a lovely sunny afternoon. It wasn't so lovely in Birmingham when I caught the train 2 hours earlier; it was pretty damn cold in fact. But seeing people walking past me in flip flops and sandals I regretted my decision to wear my fur lined boots. This didn't help me stay calm either and I took some deep breaths. He sounded nice enough on the phone, but I wondered what he would be like in person. I didn't want to come across too enthusiastic. I kept looking around to see if anyone was approaching. Finally as I was delving into my bag trying to find my notebook a friendly looking man came up to me and asked if I was Helen. Relieved, I said yes and we smiled and said hello to each other.

⁴⁵ The following sections are based on my research diary (Helen Griffiths, 2006, research diary, 20th September).

We exchanged informal chit-chat about the weather and my journey and popped into the café to get a drink. As it was just after 5pm the place was buzzing with the post-work crowd grabbing a quick coffee on their way home, or catching up with friends. There were none of the formalities of meeting at Martin's school. It was far too noisy to get my minidisk out and record our conversation. I was quite glad. I always worry about asking people if I can record our conversation; there's that awkward moment when you rustle around in your bag trying to find your damned recorder and then, pulling it out, you feel like you are about to interrogate them. There would be plenty of time later, I hoped, to record some diamond quotes and I had a two hour train journey home in which to write up my notes whilst they were still fresh in my mind (Crang and Cook, 2007). Taking our place at a table I thanked Martin again for agreeing to meet me and for being enthusiastic about my PhD research.

Having glanced at my 'interview guide' whilst waiting, we began by chatting about Martin's background as a geography teacher. A nice easy opener to put Martin at ease, or a 'grand-tour' question, as Crang and Cook (2007) would put it. 'Well, I did my geography degree at Leeds University and graduated in 1988' he replied. Continuing he said, 'I really enjoyed my degree but managed to get a job down in London working with young homeless people once I'd graduated' (Martin Crabbe, 2006, pers. comm., 20 September)⁴⁶. Here I nodded my head and make generally encouraging noises for him to continue, while he paused to let someone past. Remembering Katy Bennett's advice that 'knowing how to work with silences is as important as knowing how to manage talking' (2002a: 153) I refrained from butting in to fill the silence. As someone who talks quite a

⁴⁶ The rest of the speech in this section is based on the conversation that took place between me and Martin on 20th September 2006.

lot as well as being nervous when first meeting people I stopped myself by nodding and smiling so that the story could unfold in Martin's own time. He continued by telling me how he had gone on to work with young disabled people but that, 'during this time I always kept in touch with what was going on in geography and it was easy for me to do voluntary work for the RGS as I was living in London'. It was after about six years that he gradually realised that he really did want to have a job that had something more to do with geography and since he loved working with people he decided to be a teacher. 'So, I went and did a PGCE at Sheffield University with Margaret Roberts'. Afterward he saw a job advertised at Glebe School which sounded perfect as, 'I could use the experience I had of working with people with learning and physical difficulties combined with my passion for geography. Fortunately I got the job and once at Glebe I enjoyed it so much that I didn't see the point in moving elsewhere. I've been here 10 years now'.

Margaret Roberts' name rang a bell and it was later I realised that she had been a member of the GeoVisions GCSE Working Party which had developed the pilot specification. In a similar vein to the link I discovered between Jacky and Diane Swift, there was a link between Martin and another geography educator whose name I had come across before. The link between teachers involved in the pilot and their PGCE mentors seemed to be important. Margaret was a retired, former senior lecturer in geography education at the School of Education, Sheffield University. A longstanding and very active member of the GA she was editor of their *Teaching Geography* journal at this time. She would be the one who later asked us to work up those *GMC* student journal entries into a publication for school audiences (see Cook *et al.*, 2007c).

Pausing to sip on our cappuccinos, Martin then offered to tell me a bit about Glebe. ‘That would be great’ I replied, knowing that this would have been the next question I wanted to ask. Apart from reading the Ofsted report⁴⁷ online and hearing a bit through Diane, I told him I didn’t have much of an idea of what the school was like. Martin outlined how the Glebe was an 11-16 school for children with moderate learning difficulties in the Bromley area.⁴⁸ With 180 pupils on roll, it was a large school for its type. All the pupils were statemented and each year had a large range of learning difficulties ranging from moderate learning difficulties to autism. There were also a group of kids who had behavioural problems, although this was no more than what was normal for this type of school. ‘When you meet many of the kids for the first time’ Martin explained, ‘you’ll think ‘there’s nothing wrong with them, they’re no different from “normal” kids. However, it’s only when you get talking to them or ask them to write their name that you realise that they actually do have severe learning difficulties’.

Having a mum who gave after school tuition to kids with dyslexia I knew that pupils’ particular difficulties and their experience of the ‘banking system’ in mainstream schools affected their self-esteem. Martin agreed and highlighted that improving kids’ confidence could do wonders for their achievement: ‘Some of the kids have been to normal primary schools and arrive with no confidence as they couldn’t keep up with the rest of their class and had fallen behind what they could have

⁴⁷http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=198917&providerCategoryID=65536&fileName=%5C%5Cschool%5C%5C101%5C%5Cs10_101700_20020913.pdf viewed 5th September 2006.

⁴⁸ Teachernet’s definition of pupils with moderate learning difficulties is that they “will have attainments well below expected levels in all or most areas of the curriculum, despite appropriate interventions. Their needs will not be able to be met by normal differentiation and the flexibilities of the National Curriculum. Pupils with MLD have much greater difficulty than their peers in acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills and in understanding concepts. They may also have associated speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration and under-developed social skills” (<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/senglossary/> Website accessed 7th July 2007).

achieved. A lot of Year 7⁴⁹ is therefore spent on projects aimed at giving pupils confidence in their abilities. I'm sure that the majority of pupils would not achieve half as much in a normal school as they do at Glebe. Many leave Glebe with a couple of GCSEs and/or entry certificates that they would not have otherwise achieved'.

Building confidence was an important element of Special Needs Education and as such was part of the Government's national strategy (DfES, 2004a). Fortunately, in recent years schools had become increasingly aware of pupils' different educational needs: in the past pupils with dyslexia could very often be labelled as being lazy. Television series such as Channel 4's *The Unteachables* (2005) similarly brought these issues to mainstream attention. Here award-winning teacher Phil Beadle used 'unconventional' methods to help those previously excluded from formal education learn in a way that suited their particular needs – from reading Shakespeare to grazing cows to acting out punctuation marks with kung fu moves (see Ellen, 2005 for a review). I couldn't wait to find out how Martin's students' were responding to the pilot's 'less exclusive' approaches to teaching, learning and assessing, and what types of resources and approaches Martin used to engage his students.

To get an idea of the academic ability of the pupils I asked Martin if he could tell me a bit more about this. 'Of course' he replied, 'Um, the average ability is probably at the lowest end of a GCSE, say a grade "G" or "U", or at the upper end of an entry certificate. The highest grade a pupil has achieved was a "C" in Art this summer. Most of our students have very limited literacy ability, but can excel in other skills, for example art. Previous geography syllabi placed too much emphasis on

⁴⁹ Year 7 is the first year of secondary education in England and pupils are aged 11-12 years old.

literacy ability and prescribed content. This is one of the biggest advantages of the pilot for us as pupils aren't restricted to written coursework. We try to do cross-disciplinary projects wherever possible so that, for example, pupils can produce a piece of artwork for their geography coursework. My aim for this year is to get a "C" in Geography as the previous highest was a "D" grade'.

The way that students at SEC had been able to communicate a much deeper, more embodied 'geographical thinking' via drama, art, poetry and reflexive journal writing had really stood out in my first case study. Indeed I remember Diane Swift telling me,

I would think that their dialogue will be far more detailed and far more revealing than any written work you'd get out of them. And again, work that we've done previously, kids will say that they're asked to write too soon. They're asked to write before they've engaged in thinking. Cos quite often teachers think they'll be judged by what's in kids' books, so they're hung up about getting them to produce something, and their oral understanding isn't acknowledged as being as substantive as what's written. (2006, pers. comm., 14 February)

The pilot's flexible approach to assessment was quickly emerging as being fundamental to its success at engaging a range of educational abilities; both in its emphasis on coursework rather than written exams and in its openness to creative forms of presenting young people's geographical understandings. The importance of this couldn't be underestimated since it was enabling young people to achieve a qualification that they wouldn't otherwise be entered for. That was a pretty big achievement. I hoped that my second case study would enable me to build on this, and take things further.

Steering the conversation onto talking more about geography, I asked Martin how he got involved in the pilot GCSE. He had been involved in GA projects in the

past, he replied, for example as a teacher-researcher for their *Valuing Places* project (the one where Peter Jackson and Doreen Massey were also involved). During the initial stages of the pilot in 2002 Diane had approached him asking whether he would like to be involved in the first cohort of schools. This was not unusual he said, as ‘we often get asked to be involved in projects as they are required to have a cross-section of schools, so more often than not we’re the token “special needs school”’. ‘Anyway’, he continued, ‘before Diane had even gone into detail about the pilot I jumped at the chance. It sounded fantastic and had a very similar philosophy to the one I follow at Glebe in the way it advocated a student-centred approach to teaching, learning and assessing. It would allow me to carry on with the way that I enjoyed teaching and the way that our kids enjoy learning, but the bonus would be that the kids would get recognised for the work they did’.

Keen to find out more about Martin’s approach to teaching, and specifically whether he had read any of that pedagogical theory I had been reading, I asked if he could say a bit more about his style of teaching. ‘Well, around the same time as we started the pilot I was also doing a MSc in Education for Sustainability at South Bank University in my spare time. My tutor – Paul Maitney – introduced me to a methodological approach called the Collaborative Learning Cycle (CLC). This is a form of participatory action research where students became participant-researchers and co-researchers along with myself’. This was turning into one of those meetings where one juicy nugget of information was revealed after another. Co-researchers. Participant-researchers. This was what *Making the Connection* had all been about. It sounded like these issues could be taken forward and explored in more depth at Glebe. I was certainly glad that I had taken Diane’s advice to contact Martin.

Martin went on to talk about how he had adopted the CLC in his teaching, 'Once Paul had told me about the CLC I used this to structure my geography lessons. Adopting this approach moved the focus of geography lessons, and wider projects, away from transmissive learning to transformative learning. It enabled lessons to be created by the students in collaboration with each other and myself. A few students worked together with me to produce an adapted, simpler version of the CLC which we could all understand and use to structure our geography lessons'. Rather than going into all the details at this meeting, Martin offered to email me his MSc dissertation so I could read about this in more depth. This would be magic as it would allow me to uncover the pedagogical theory behind his approach and how it mirrored and tied into the approach advocated by the pilot. It was here that I wondered again who had been reading what, or talking to whom about what reading, if and how they were making connections, direct or indirect, with the pedagogical theory I had been reading by the likes of Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux and bell hooks.

Fascinated by what Martin was saying I asked whether he thought the pilot had facilitated this move to a more transformative learning approach. "Oh, absolutely" he responded, 'What you could term "transmissive" learning just does not fit with the way our kids work. That is why, like I said earlier, I bit Diane's hand off when she told me about the pilot. When I looked at the specification I saw straight away that it offered students and teachers the opportunity for a more reflective, critical approach which should lead to a "deeper" learning experience. It suggested that time was allowed for this deeper learning to take place by the reduction of prescribed content as compared to other GCSEs'. He described how this contrasted with the reductionist approach that previous specifications took where the aim was to induce learning through the teaching

of ideas and knowledge. ‘In my MSc I wrote about how this approach maintains power at the “centre”. And while it can lead to knowledge transfer it is unlikely to be deep or produce lasting results’ (see Crabbe, 2005). Blimey. All those issues about embodied learning, mobilizing change and connective pedagogy that SEC had brought to light were being reaffirmed by Martin’s own experience. Whilst *Making the Connection* had been mine, Ian, James and Alice’s first attempt at some sort of action-oriented research in a school setting, it sounded as though Martin was an expert and this approach had been ingrained in his geography lessons for a while.

‘One of the main highlights of the pilot for me’, Martin continued, ‘is the fact that it only covers a limited number of “topics”, which allows us to cover topics in real depth and have time to make relationships between modules. It is fantastic that modules do not need to be studied in isolation – to me it seems ridiculous to separate topics and study them separately. Over the last few years the geography department has been involved in a number of projects that are aiming to support sustainable education in the school and that have an emphasis on developing student participation. A major focus has been the increased use of outdoor learning, both in the school grounds and through various other activities and projects, to support geographical learning. The aim has been to provide a more inclusive curriculum to students with learning difficulties, emotional or behavioural difficulties. I can tell you more about these when you come and visit’. ‘Do you think this would have been possible outside of the pilot GCSE?’ I enquired. Martin looked at me, smiled and simply said ‘No’.

Looking at my watch I realised that we had been talking for the past 2 hours and I only had 10 minutes to catch my train. On a rather hurried and hot walk to the

station (damn those boots!) we discussed what role I might play in the classroom and I stressed that it was important for my involvement to be mutually beneficial. Martin, like Jacky, was extremely laid back and suggested that I came down to the school after October half-term so he could show me some projects and I could meet the students. He finished by saying, 'It would be great for you to be as practically involved in the GCSE as possible, if that is alright with you'. That sounded perfect. On the train on the way back I was still so excited and couldn't believe how well it had gone and how enthusiastic Martin had been. I couldn't wait to write up my research diary!

5.2.3 Mixed Methods

"The study of children does not require 'special' techniques but rather simply a rigorous application of the general methodological requirement, true of studying adults or children, that the techniques used should reflect the concrete particularities of the persons being studied." (Prout, 2008)

I carried out my research at Glebe School over the course of 17 months (November 2006 – March 2008) visiting the school on eight separate occasions. After a couple of visits it became clear that it would make more sense, logistically and financially, to visit the school in 2-day stints whenever possible. A typical visit would involve arriving at the school for 10am when the second lesson was about to start (the first hour was spent in forms doing literacy related activities and registration in form groups) and leaving once lessons had finished at 3.10pm (although I might stay later to chat to Martin if we hadn't had much time during the day). Martin would specifically time my visits for days when he taught his pilot GCSE classes or there was some specific geography-related event happening. Very little time was spent actually in the classroom and Martin also timed my visits to coincide with several projects pupils were working on for their GCSE coursework.

As I very quickly found out, there was no such thing as a typical day at Glebe with Martin. Due to the small size of the school, I soon became a familiar face and other teachers would ask how my research was going when I met them. Lunch was eaten in the school canteen which allowed me to chat to pupils and teachers on a more informal basis. Break times would be spent in 'ICT1', an ICT classroom which also housed tea and coffee making facilities and acted as an informal 'staff-pupil room'. Martin, along with several other teachers I got to know would come here rather than the formal staff room to check their emails and catch up with each other, about both school and non-school related activities. Near the end of my research, Martin came to see me as more of an 'insider' than an 'outsider' and, for example, asked me to look after a visitor from Reading University whilst he was on break duty!

I worked mainly with his Year 10 and 11 geography classes and there were usually between 8 and 12 pupils in each class. However, I also participated in Year 8 geography lessons and Year 10/11 Environmental Science lessons. Due to the nature of the pupil's needs, combined with Martin's CLC approach lessons were rarely taught to the whole group. Most of the time students worked individually or in pairs on aspects of much larger geography or whole-school projects they were interested. This therefore provided me with the opportunity to build up a rapport with certain pupils.

I was quickly made aware that it would take a few visits to build up pupils' trust; some of them, particularly those with communication problems (e.g. those on the autistic spectrum) found it hard to make eye contact with me or even speak to me. When I first met with Martin I had asked whether the students would be OK with my presence since I didn't want to disrupt their behaviour or make them unnecessarily

uncomfortable. Whilst some might take time to warm to me, he said they were used to different ‘outsiders’, such as photographers and journalists (the school’s work was often featured in local newspapers or education publications). He suggested that by visiting the school frequently and allowing students to get to know me they would be more likely to tell me what they really thought.

Thinking back to what I had written in my previous ‘progress review paper’⁵⁰ I realised that the methodology I had chosen to carry out in my case study schools was not going ‘work’ in practice. A ‘one size fits all’ methodology just wouldn’t work. I had written that I would be conducting in-depth research with pupils through VoxPops and focus groups. However, it had become apparent that these sorts of methods weren’t appropriate for Glebe.

Many researchers choose mixed methods when working with young people in order to minimise power relations and ensure that as many children as possible feel comfortable to voice their opinions (see Hemming, 2008). However not only did I mix methods *within* schools (for example combining participant observation with VoxPops), but I also adapted the combination of methods I used *between* schools (so participant observation combined with VoxPops at St Edmund Campion; research conversations and visual methods at Glebe; and focus groups at later case study schools). Whilst some researchers may argue that research has to be consistent throughout to be thoroughly rigorous, ‘investigators need to be sensitive to the disparate ways in which children express themselves’ (Matthews *et al.*, 1998: 319). So just as the pilot GCSE allows

⁵⁰ At The University of Birmingham PhD candidates would have two ‘Progress Review’ meetings each academic year to check on their progress; before the second meeting candidates had to submit a written paper outlining research design, methodology etc.

pupils to work to their individual strengths, my research, by allowing children to express themselves through various media, has attempted to do likewise. Using a combination of methods also allowed the power balance to shift from adult researcher to child participant. As Hemming argued,

my role as a researcher, and the way in which the children related to me, continually fluctuated as different research methods and their associated power relations intersected with each other. Each method allowed for the co-production and active construction of data in slightly different ways, with varying forms of participation for children in each case. (2008: 160)

So, for example, when one of the students, Oli, showed me around his school grounds and told me about the various things that went on there, he was the expert and I was very much in his territory. Had we sat down in a classroom (a space where pupils were used to being taught by a figure of authority) he might not have been so confident with his opinions or be so willing to share them with me.

Many pupils lacked self-confidence and did not like speaking in big groups and would definitely dry up in front of a video camera. Important stories could have been missed if I had focused on a single approach and it was essential to 'always at least consider the voices which may be silenced in the particular group research settings' (Michell 1999:36). So, I decided to have a rolling methodology and speak to pupils about geography in situations where they felt comfortable. Furthermore, I would need to spend significant time in the classroom in order to gain pupils' trust and to 'reduce the impact of my presence on the children's usual behaviour' (Hemming, 2008: 156. See also Pyer, 2008). So, in the classroom, I took on the role of classroom assistant helping them with their work, answering any questions and generally observing lessons. I found that once the initial 'excitement' of me visiting had worn off it was 'business as usual' for the rest of the lesson. Teaching assistants played an important role in Glebe; not only

did they provide assistance during lessons, but the three who worked closely with Martin – Sarah, Angela and Louise – were also fully involved in many of the geography related school projects. It was important for me not to be seen as treading on their toes or taking over their territory, but fortunately all three shared Martin’s laid back attitude and were very easy to get on with.

Looking back, a year or so later, these decisions were good ones. Rather than conducting formal ‘data collection’ I instead chatted to pupils in environments where they felt most comfortable, whether this was on the minibus on our way to the outdoor education centre, whilst digging out in the Quad, whilst serving customers at a farmers market, or whilst taking photos round the school grounds. These conversations are scattered throughout the remainder of this chapter.

5.3 ‘Real World Learning’: Outdoor Learning

Education should never be restricted to the classroom, and I’m very keen for pupils to get outdoors because there are so many excellent learning opportunities for children of all ages, particularly in science and geography. (Stephen Twigg, Schools Minister, speaking at Real World Learning Conference, December, 2003)

5.3.1 The Bromley Garden Project⁵¹

On 13th November I caught a train from London Bridge heading towards West Wickham in Bromley, Kent. I spent the journey with those same nerves I had felt almost nine months previously on the cross-city line in Birmingham to SEC; worrying about how the kids would react to me invading their classroom. As there was no company this time to share my feelings of anxiousness with I spent the journey reading over the notes I had made in my research diary outlining areas I might want to chat to the kids about.

⁵¹ All photos used in this chapter from are either taken by pupils or by Martin.

However, as this visit was more of an introductory meeting, for both me and the students, I wasn't entirely sure what I would be doing; but it was worth being prepared for any opportunities that may have arisen.

Getting off the train I followed the route I had printed out and found the school tucked away in amongst some houses on a very pleasant residential street. An attractive building it had well kept grounds to the front (see figure 15) and a driveway to the left-hand side which led to a primary school and staff parking. By now it was 8.55am and since most of the pupils had already arrived at the school it was relatively quiet with only the odd parent walking away. I walked down the path leading to the entrance and pressed the buzzer by the entrance. A lady answered and I gave my name and said that I was here to see Martin Crabbe. The door opened and I walked into a small reception area; Martin was standing by the stairs chatting to one of the pupils. After signing in and getting my visitors badge I walked over to greet him. Martin introduced me to Richard,



Figure 15 Glebe School (Source: Glebe School)

the student, who said hello and then quickly asked if I was a Liverpool supporter. I had to reply that I was in fact a Boro supporter, he said 'tough luck', smiled and walked off to his class. I was glad football could be used icebreaker! As other teachers and pupils

rushed past they all greeted each other and it was clear the school's ethos was all about flattening hierarchies and collaboration; no doubt integral to improving students' self-confidence.

As we walked up the stairs Martin explained that there was a lot of construction work going on at the moment so things were quite hectic. He was in a temporary classroom whilst his was being re-decorated. When we reached the 2nd floor we turned right and walked along the corridor. From the windows I could look out over the rest of the school. The school building was set around a central area of land, which Martin told me was called the Quad. Martin introduced me to his students and explained that I was a researcher from The University of Birmingham who would be working with them over the next year or so. He said that I was an expert in geography who would be helping them with their geography coursework and so if they wanted to ask me any questions then they could. I said that I wasn't sure about the expert bit of this, but yes I was very happy to help them with their geography and that I was interested in what they thought about geography.

Back in September Martin had mentioned a geography project which linked to a lot of the work the students did for the pilot GCSE; this was called the Bromley Garden Project (BGP). It was not until the first visit when Martin showed me round the Quad that I got a real understanding of what the project was about and how it linked in to the pilot. As we walked out from his classroom, down the stairs and through the door, Martin explained that the Quad was the square area of land in front of us, that formed a sort of courtyard in the middle of the school buildings (see figure 16).



Figure 16 The nature area in the Quad (Source: Glebe School)

I looked around me; the damp, rainy weather, combined with the scaffolding up against the north facing wall probably didn't do the area justice. A few years ago, Martin told me, the area was a complete mess and could not be used by pupils. However, in the summer of 2003 the school finished stage one of a project to develop one half of the Quad. This involved the creation of a wildlife pond, outdoor classroom and footpath.

Then in the autumn of 2003 the school started stage two of the project. Initially called 'The Garden Project', the aim was to develop and sustain an organic school garden. Later that autumn, the project was given extra impetus when the DfES awarded it lead school status to run a two year Enterprise Pathfinder Project and funding of approximately £20,000 per year was given to support its development. The project, given the new name of the BGP, linked four special needs schools in the Bromley area through horticulture.⁵² It seemed that the school's ability to draw on financial as well as pedagogical resources was crucial.

Linked primarily to the geography curriculum the project centred on developing vegetable, fruit and flower plots in the Quad and at a local allotment. These would then be harvested and sold at a stall at the local farmer's market once a term. Centred around

⁵² These three schools consist of two secondary schools and one college for students who are over school age. These schools have a wide range of pupils with different mental and physical difficulties.

‘real world’ learning Martin explained how he hoped pupils’ involvement in the project would motivate them to be collaborative learners. When I asked him what he meant by ‘collaborative learners’ he replied that the project would be centred around the CLC so that all pupils would be involved in decision-making. This approach, he hoped, would increase pupils self-confidence and help them realise that, despite their particular learning difficulties, they could contribute positively to the local community. Fully collaborative from the off, the school held a student competition to design the Quad area and then the student-led school council decided on a final design. Teachers were only there to advise, Martin told me, for example to suggest the vegetable plots were located in the area which got the sun for most of the day. It became clear that giving pupils a say in decision-making and making them feel like their views mattered was a philosophy that underlined a lot of the work at Glebe School.

The final design was what I saw before me that day: in the western, more shady half of the Quad there was a fenced-in nature area with a pond. Behind that was an outdoor classroom- a square of grass complete with a group of wooden benches. This was used particularly during the summer months, Martin said, either for leading full lessons, or letting students come down and write there- which many of them found easier than writing in a classroom. Unfortunately, this area would be lost during the building works as it would be transformed into a new drama classroom. Martin wasn’t very happy about this, but there was plenty of grass near the plant beds where students could work if they wanted to. We walked around the edge of the classroom towards the raised bed area which took up the eastern half of the quad (see figure 17). As it was November there was not much growing, but the beds were being dug over ready to plant things in the spring.



Figure 17 The raised beds in the Quad (Source: Glebe School)

There was also a near-complete structure for a polytunnel – in fact everything but the actual polythene covering. It was a good size – approximately 10 metres long by 3 metres wide.

Although they had managed to successfully grow lots of

tomato plants outside that year (which they had made into tomato chutney and sold at the farmers market), Martin outlined how the polytunnel would allow them to grow from seedlings over the winter as well as growing a wider range of flowers, vegetables and herbs. It would also serve as a potting shed, allowing students to pot produce up ready to sell at the farmers market. I asked Martin how the work the pupils did out here linked in with the pilot GCSE. He said that as Glebe pupils often found it difficult to write, doing practical work out in the Quad was a good way to link in to learning about issues such as organic production, food miles and people's habits as consumers. It was particularly useful for the *My Place* and *People as Consumers* curriculum units; it supported learning about a particular 'place' called the Quad and its relations to other people, places and the natural world. Through the practical work, Martin continued, they learnt how to tap into sources of gardening and business knowledge, and build up relationships with garden centre staff, allotment holders and people at the farmers' market.

The pupils involved in the school grounds projects used their involvement to produce work which formed the main body of coursework for the GCSE. This coursework used a whole range of approaches such as video, photo journals, GIS, questionnaires, project reports and so on to illustrate this learning. Finally, learning in the school grounds helped students to learn the skills needed to take part in collaborative processes of change. Wow! It was fascinating to see that without the flexibility of the pilot GCSE pupils would not be able to use their involvement in one particular project to produce coursework for their entire GCSE. Although this visit provided a great insight into what the area was used for I wanted to find out what the pupils themselves thought about the BGP and how it helps them with their geography learning.

Neil, one of the Year 10 pupils when I began visiting in November 2006, used his work on the school grounds and the BGP to produce a project linked to the wider issues of food and sustainability, futures 'Building and Grounds' It had taken Neil a few months to warm to me, but the last couple of times I had chatted to him I felt we had gained each other's trust. By my fifth visit in March 2007 he was putting the finishing touches to a piece of work on the school grounds. During the afternoon's geography lesson he mentioned that he wanted to take some photos round the ground to use for his coursework. Visual methods were used frequently by Glebe pupils as a way of collecting 'data' about the project they were involved in. They could then use this as a stimulus for written work back in the classroom. I asked Neil whether it would be OK to accompany him and have a chat whilst we walked round. He agreed so we pulled on some welly boots, I grabbed my umbrella (it had just started to rain but that hadn't put him off) and Neil went to ask Martin for the digital camera. Martin had a digital camera and a mobile phone camera that students regularly used. In keeping with the

collaborative ethos images were often shared between students for use on different projects.

We headed straight for the cover of the polytunnel which had been transformed over the winter. Not only was the polythene cover on, but the floor had been laid and two work benches erected, each running the length of the tunnel. The benches were full of different varieties of flowers, herbs and vegetables- most of which looked ready to be planted outside. A couple of pupils were busy watering them while Neil and I chatted. He told me that lots of pupils had been involved in helping to build and design the polytunnel (see figure 18).



Figure 18 Students helping to build the polytunnel (Source: Glebe School)

He said that when the school had got a new project, like the polytunnel, the pupils decide as a group which part of a project they wanted to take part in. I asked him if this is what Mr. Crabbe calls the CLC and he replied that yes that's what it's called, he's just not very good at remembering long words! Could he tell me a bit more about this? Well, he said, Mr. Crabbe asked them to think about how they could grow a wider variety of produce in the school grounds. After thinking about this problem themselves, they fed back to the rest of the class and had a group discussion with Mr. Crabbe writing the main ideas up on the board [group learning, collaboration]. Having decided that they

wanted to build a polytunnel they then had to make a plan: Where did they want the polytunnel located? What did they want to grow in it? Did they want electricity? What were they going to build it out of? As a group they then decided who wants to be involved in which part. So, some pupils helped dig and lay the polytunnel floor, others chose to take photos to document the project, or visited the local garden centre to buy new equipment for the allotment area, or weeded the beds. Doing practical stuff first helped a lot as Neil told me he found it difficult to write. However, now that he had been actively involved in shaping the school grounds and had photos to prove it he could use them to help him tell the story.

He liked using PowerPoint so he thought he would do a presentation about the school grounds; what worked, what could be improved and how it has helped him learn about where his food comes from, organic gardening, food miles, fair trade and sustainability. These were important geographical issues to be engaging in and it was obvious that his practical involvement had enabled him to make personal, then local, then global connections; this touchy-feeling-doing-stuff approach seemed to lead to a more embodied, engaged learning. He said that they sold some of the things they grew at the farmers market, but also sold it at the school tuck shop and cook with it in their food lessons.

Venturing out into the rain to take some photos of the gardening beds, we saw a couple of boys weeding: Adam and Jack. Neil said they had helped lay the slabs for the floor of the polytunnel so I went over to them and asked if they enjoyed working on the polytunnel. They replied that it was good fun laying the slabs because they like working outdoors rather than in a classroom. Their next project was to run an underground cable

from the school's mini wind turbine to the polytunnel to generate a small heater in the winter and to power a laptop in the summer. 'Why did they want a laptop in the polytunnel?' I asked. Adam replied that they could link it up to a thermometer and humidity reader to take recordings and ensure they watered the plants enough. He went on to explain that by using wind energy it was helping the school be more sustainable which was important to try and reduce climate change. This was amazing stuff that they were learning about right here in their school grounds!

Indeed, throughout my research at Glebe the students I spoke to were responding well to the ways of teaching and learning advocated by the pilot. Many pupils had writing difficulties but through active involvement in projects such as the BGP they could use their experiences to shape their coursework and learn about key concepts such as sustainability and interdependence, which were embedded in the pilot. I went back to find Neil who was taking a picture of the herb bed they had just planted. He said that they will be selling these at the farmers market in the summer. He said it might be good for me to speak to Lucy if I want to hear more about the farmers market.

5.3.2 Nature/Outdoor Learning: Active Citizenship

Outdoor learning was a central part of Glebe's approach to geography teaching and learning. School geography had long been one of the main proponents of outdoor learning, with geography fieldtrips still figuring highly in many people's experience of the subject at school. However, in recent years, with the rise of health and safety issues; concerns about cost; lack of time in an already crowded curriculum; increasing focus on controlled assessment; and senior managements' often negative view of it as a 'disruptive activity', the future for outdoor learning looked bleak (Rickinson *et al.*,

2004). After strong lobbying from the Real World Learning (RWL) Campaign⁵³, in 2003 the Government agreed that outdoor learning was an important part of the school curriculum, with the then Schools Minister Stephen Twigg arguing that ‘education should never be restricted to the classroom’, and highlighting geography as a subject suited to such an approach (speaking at the Field Studies Annual conference, December 2003).

A report into Education Outside the Classroom was commissioned which highlighted the benefits of such an approach (see Education and Skills Committee, 2005). In responses to these findings the DfES published its *Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto* in November 2006 (DfES, 2006). This Manifesto made it clear that every young person should be able to experience learning beyond the classroom setting,

Learning outside the classroom is about raising achievement through an organised, powerful approach to learning in which direct experience is of prime importance. This is not only about what we learn but importantly how and where we learn. (DfES, 2006: 2)

Flicking through the Manifesto I noticed some photos of Glebe school and students; it was then I remembered that Martin had said that someone had visited to take pictures of the exemplar work the school was doing in this area. The manifesto also stated that learning outside the classroom could help meet the expectations of the Government’s *Sustainable Schools*⁵⁴ strategy, which Glebe happened to be heavily

⁵³ The Real World Learning Campaign was launched in December 2003 at the Field Studies Council conference. It was founded by the Field Studies Council, RSPB, Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, National Trust, PGL and others. <http://www.field-studies-council.org/campaigns/rwl/index.aspx> (accessed 17th November 2007).

⁵⁴ The government would like every school in England to be sustainable by 2020. As part of this a National Framework for Sustainable Schools has been set up. For more details see <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainable-schools/> (last accessed 20th September 2009).

involved in. Being involved in high-profile projects like these and building partnerships with various organisations certainly helped legitimate the work that Martin and his students did in geography.

Since the manifesto was published a corresponding Website was launched providing teacher guidance, news and events, resources and case studies (see <http://www.lotc.org.uk/> accessed 20th November 2007). Importantly the site also included downloadable CPD modules (including sections for Governors, Head Teachers and Senior Management Teams) outlining the importance of integrating learning outside the classroom approaches into the whole school:

All young people should experience learning outside the classroom and its benefits, not as a bolt-on to learning but as a central aspect of the learning experience, the curriculum and the courses they are engaged with. (Learning Outside the Classroom Website, <http://www.lotc.org.uk/> Website accessed 20th November 2007)

According to research commissioned by the RWL Campaign there were three main types of outdoor learning: fieldwork and outdoor visits; outdoor adventure education; and school grounds/ community projects (Rickinson *et al.*, 2004). Glebe were heavily involved in all three areas, but it was the school grounds and community projects (such as BGP and the associated gardening in the Quad and at the allotment along with the farmer's market) that my research focused on.

Gardening was one way that pupils learnt outside the classroom. Whilst organised school gardening was not a new phenomenon, it was certainly an increasing trend, when I began my research at the end of 2006, for schools to have their own organic garden. Since then the number of schools that had started to grow their own fruit and vegetables has been increasing, spurred on by a wider trend for all things local, from farm to plate,

organic and sustainable. These have resulted, in part, from a number of new government initiatives. For example, in England, a programme called Growing Schools was launched with a particular focus on food, farming and the countryside⁵⁵, and in 2008 the RHS also launched its 'Campaign for School Gardening'.⁵⁶ Indeed everyone, from celebrity chefs to Barack Obama and the 'White House Kitchen Garden' (see Burros, 2009) seemed to be jumping on the 'grow your own' and sustainability bandwagon. It became difficult to turn the television on without coming across a programme where the presenters were going back to their roots, creating their own cottage garden in search of the good life. From Jamie Oliver's *Jamie at Home* (2007) Channel 4 series based on home-grown, in season and local produce, to Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's campaigns and involvement in community farm projects and landshare schemes; from the rise in Guerrilla gardening projects, to Nigel Slater's new BBC series *Simple Suppers* (2009) filmed at his own vegetable patch and friends' allotments.⁵⁷ Not to mention the resurgence in popularity of shows like *Gardener's World* and the BBC's national campaigns such as Dig In which gave away free vegetable seeds telling everyone they could grow their own potatoes in an old tyre or wellington boot.⁵⁸

Schools were often at the heart of this and it was important that the creation of school gardens did not become a tick box exercise with the school successfully 'doing' sustainability because they had a pretty vegetable patch, when in reality there was little actual involvement or engagement with students. However, gardening and outdoor learning was not a new thing at Glebe, nor had decisions to create a garden been taken at senior management in order to meet outside criteria. Rather it had been a much more

⁵⁵ See www.teachernet.gov.uk/growingschools, Website accessed 7th June 2009

⁵⁶ See <http://www.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/default.aspx>, Website accessed 7th June 2009

⁵⁷ See <http://www.rivercottage.net/>; <http://www.guerrillagardening.org/> Websites accessed 7th June 2009

⁵⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/digin/> Website accessed 7th June 2009

‘organic’ process in both senses of the word. School pupils themselves had been at the centre of decision-making from the start and it was very much seen as a whole-school project.

The synergies between young people’s own geographies, passions and interest were combined with an action learning, critical pedagogical approach. It was in this way that students’ involvement in the BGP could be drawn upon as a teaching and learning resource in which to address many of the concepts underlying the pilot GCSE. As I found out during my guided tour with Neil, by allowing students to take the lead and get involved in areas that interest them, he was able to engage in geographical thinking about issues such as place, interconnectedness, futures, sustainability and active citizenship. Using such plant- and garden-based resources in, and out of, the classroom could thus provide another source of the much needed critical, connective, touchy-feely resources that pilot schools needed.

However, Martin (2008) revealed how the aim of empowering children so that they can make a difference and listening to their voices ‘usually falls short of giving children more control over the curriculum and their learning’ (p.438). Could school grounds, gardening and community projects be used as a resource for action learning and action research? Might a collaborative, action learning approach such as the CLC be an appropriate pedagogy to ensure fuller participation of young people in what they learnt?

5.4 Learning for Change: Action Learning

5.4.1 The Farmer's Market

An important part of the BGP was the termly visit to the local farmer's market and the associated weeding, planting, sowing and harvesting of produce at both the school's local allotment and the raised beds in the Quad. Students' participation in these activities formed an integral part of their work for the pilot GCSE, helping pupils to address and come to an understanding of its underlying principles of sustainability, futures, interdependence and globalisation. Of particular importance was the collaborative nature of the project which involved the four partner schools working together to run a stall where they sold produce that they had grown or made in their schools. To begin with this had mostly been plants, herbs and flowers, but they were hoping to sell more home-grown vegetables and fruit once the allotment and their patches at their own schools had established. As Oli had previously told me, any produce they didn't sell was then taken back to the school and either sold on the student-run tuck shop, used in their food technology lessons, or sold to staff and parents.

One of my roles at the school was to help pupils in both their preparation for and running of their stall and I participated in the termly farmer's market five times over the course of my research. My observations that follow show how the project has been a valuable curriculum resource for the pilot GCSE and has given students not only the opportunity to engage with young people's everyday geographies, but also to involve the young people themselves in the creation of the resource. This built upon the collaborative approach at SEC and took the principles of collaboration etc. to a different level.

As founders of the BGP Glebe were the main initiators and organisers of the stall with one of their GCSE students elected as lead organiser. However, due to the collaborative ethos of the project the four schools would hold regular meetings where they could discuss any issues and decide how they wanted to 'invest' the money (all profits were ploughed back into the project to buy seeds, tools or produce marketing materials). They would also, at times, visit and work at the allotment together or have a trip to one of the other schools to get advice and see what was working for them. The stall at the farmer's market, however, was the most physical and regular coming together of the four schools since students would manage the stall in conjunction with two schools at a time on a rota system.

In 2006, when I first visited the school, Lucy had taken on the role of organiser for the past couple of years. Lucy was a Year 11 pupil. Martin had mentioned her on our first meeting as one of the school's success stories and said that she ran the school – for both pupils and adults! She arrived at Glebe in year 8 with no confidence after having attended a mainstream secondary school. She soon got her confidence back and was hoping to achieve 6 GCSEs before going on to study hair and beauty at College. She had been involved in the BGP since the beginning. When I visited the school in May 2007 she was busy doing a project on 'How to run the perfect farmer's market stall' for her GCSE coursework. She had just finished a presentation that she was presenting to HMI Leszek Iwaskow, the Ofsted subject specialist adviser for geography; he was visiting the school the following day to inspect the school's progress on Education for Sustainable Development.

I told her I was sure the presentation would be great and told her to start whenever she wanted to. She took a deep breath, smiled and said: ‘In order to run the perfect farmers market first of all you have to get all the people involved together so that you can come up with a plan’ (Lucy, 2007, pers. comm., 1 May)⁵⁹. Collaboration was at the heart and she went on to talk about how the stall was run by pupils from four schools. ‘We all got together in 2004 to decide what we wanted to be called, what we wanted to sell and how we were going to organise things. Our original name was *Quad Perfect* but we are now called *The Bromley Garden Project*’. She went on to describe how the four schools had termly meetings to plan together the next market. These were also used to decide, as a group how they wanted to spend the money they had made at



Figure 19 Sending a letter to the local council
(Source: Glebe School)

the previous stall ‘We use the money we make to buy more seeds and pots and equipment. It is not important to make a big profit as we are helping to contribute to the place where we live as well as making our own schools a more attractive place to work’.

Clicking onto the next slide she spoke about how the next step was actually securing a stall at the market. ‘We wrote to Bromley council to ask if we could have a stall and said who we were and what we wanted to sell (see figure 19). The project has

⁵⁹ The rest of the speech in this section is based on the conversation that took place between me and Lucy on 1st May 2007.

meant that we have had to communicate to a lot of different people along the way such as the council, other stall holders, farmers and growers and customers'. Indeed, during my time at Glebe I saw how the project built up various important partnerships in the local community, including: the local council (who own the allotment and run the farmer's market), garden centres, allotment holders, and the local Waitrose.

These collaborations and getting geography out into the public were key since they enabled pupils to engage in the local community, becoming active citizens who took a participatory role in shaping the world (Hicks, 2001)⁶⁰. Lucy went on to describe how these sorts of collaboration and communication had improved her confidence and social skills as well as 'making me aware of the various groups of people we are affecting with our project. This means that we make sure we are friendly to all these people'. Lucy and her peers were therefore able to engage with geographical issues such as interdependence through their involvement in this project.

'As a group we decided that we were going to grow organic vegetables, herbs and flowers. So the next stage was to actually grow them! It is important that we sell things on our stall that are produced locally because this is more sustainable and cuts out on pollution associated with transport'. Such embodied learning through, for example, planting potatoes, tending to them, watching them grow and harvesting them enabled students to situate their knowledge. This in turn led to a deeper understanding of concepts surrounding interdependence and sustainability, which led to them often wanting to take further action, such as installing water butts at the school and asking the

⁶⁰ Politically, within the UK there are drives for greater community cohesion and a greater understanding of global differences. In light of this the Education and Inspections Act of 2006 introduced a requirement for all schools in England to promote community cohesion from 1st September 2007 (see <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/communitycohesion/>, Website viewed 20th September 2009)

school caterers to source local produce where possible. The BGP was thus not conceived as a project with an end point, but as continually evolving.

Of particular importance was the notion of the BGP as a sustainable project in every sense of the word. This is where the school council came in. Whilst most of the pupils who physically went to the market were GCSE age, younger pupils were



Figure 20 Showing younger students how to plant potatoes (Source: Glebe School)

involved in other aspects of the project, with everyone having the opportunity to have their voices count. As such Lucy talked about her next photo (see figure 20), ‘Here I am showing one of the younger student at Glebe how to plant potatoes at our allotment. It is important to work together as a team so that the BGP is sustainable. By showing younger students the skills we have learnt they will be able to keep the project going’. Students who were involved in the project had a real passion and had taken this with them when they left school. Several ex-students returned to the school to participate in various projects. For example, a past pupil, Dan, owned another of the allotments and

they would often go to him for advice, and Richard, the Liverpool fan, often returned to advise and get involved in the school's recycling projects.

Lucy went on, 'then have to harvest our produce in time for the next market. We split the tasks up between us, as some people are better at different jobs. This means that we have learnt about interdependence because we have to rely on other people for the whole project to come together. If the group who go and collect the seeds forgot then we wouldn't have any plants to grow, for example'. Engaging young people in parts of the project they were interested in was crucial to the sustainability of the project.



Figure 21 At the farmer's market (Source: Glebe School)

Once at the market she stressed the importance of work together to make the stall a success. For example by helping those students who didn't have much confidence, making sure the produce was laid out well and remembering to smile. This was essential she said. 'We also have to find out what the customers want' she went on, 'so I designed a survey asking customers about their shopping habits so we knew what to grow for the next market. We can also use this for our geography coursework, for example for the *People as Consumers* Unit'.

‘Being involved in this project has helped me with my geography GCSE a lot. I have learnt how to make sure that BGP stays fair to all the people involved as well as the environment. I have also learnt about how the Quad and the allotment are connected to other people and places through horticulture. This has been useful for the *My Place* and *People as Consumers* modules. It has also made me think differently about the “Glebe School” and Bromley and has made me realise that my actions can have an impact on the local community. This has been the most interesting as I have realised that I can actually contribute positively to my local community’. This dialogue highlighted the effect that the pilot’s approach could have on young people’s personal and disciplinary geographies. By enthusing and engaging directly with young people, students were given the sense that they could take action and become active local and global citizens who could envision different future scenarios.

She told me that she had finished. I clapped and told her that it was brilliant and that it gave me a real insight into the project. I said that I thought she has got just the right balance of humour and seriousness. Adopting the critical and action-learning pedagogy underlying the CLC (and subconsciously of Freire’s pedagogy) moved the focus of geography lessons away from transmissive to transformative learning for both Martin and his students. The pilot provided the opportunity for a more reflective, collaborative, co-learning approach which led to a ‘deeper’ more embodied learning experience. Mirroring SEC, group work and the co-construction of knowledges mobilised social action rather and led to more inclusive notions of citizenship (see Evans *et al.*, 2008).

5.4.2 *The Collaborative Learning Cycle*

Notions of collaboration, flat hierarchies, action and embodied learning, and situated knowledges were central to how the pilot was taught at Glebe. The notion of group pedagogy leading to mobilizing action and social change (which was worked through in the SEC chapter) has been built on with this case study. At SEC what came across strongly was how much the students had gained from collaborating and co-learning alongside the *GMC* students. At Glebe these types of collaboration were more established; relationships were forged with groups of learners outside the classroom on a regular basis via student involvement in the BGP. Building up and co-constructing knowledge with pupils from different educational abilities, other stall holders, allotment owners and local councillors was at the heart of the project. These collaborations had been successful in learning for change: enthusing and engaging directly with pupils, giving them the sense that they could take action, providing them with the option of a positive future and empowering them to change the future.

At a later visit to the school I was introduced to Chris Gayford from Reading University who was doing some consultancy work for the WWF examining schools' sustainable education provision. He said that the main problem was that sustainable development issues were too often conveyed to students as 'the right thing to do' and that the importance of *why* doing these things were important was overlooked. Similarly they were often taught within the narrow boundaries of particular subjects, such as geography and science, when crucially, schools needed to develop an ethos *towards* these issues (Chris Gayford, 2008, pers. comm., 31 January).

This paralleled arguments I later heard at a forum organised by Tide~ at the GA Annual Conference in March 2008. There I listened to a panel where Ann Finlayson, a Commissioner on the UK's Sustainable Development Commission with a lead role on education, stressed the need for sustainable development to be seen as a learning *process* rather than something that could be 'done' and achieved by schools; could, for example, a school ever really *be* a Sustainable School?⁶¹ And it was via action – and mutual-learning along with reflective critical thinking that change could be mobilised and values be changed. Fran Martin (who had contacted me about my MSc dissertation all those months ago), then spoke as Editor of the GA's *Primary Geography* journal about learning *as* sustainable development rather than learning *for* sustainable development; a notion that Paul Vare and Bill Scott had written about (see Vare and Scott, 2007). Vare and Scott (2007) argued that special events such as 'Fairtrade fortnight' or raising money for Southern partner schools could be dangerous as they advocated false empowerment i.e. I've done my bit for sustainable development so it's alright if I get a lift to school rather than walking in the morning. A much broader approach, one which engaged with the local community and strengthened and built links with places elsewhere in the world, was what was needed. The embodied, connective geography resources and projects that Glebe drew on along with the action learning approach underpinning learning would seem to be an excellent example of this.

The CLC underpinned Martin's approach to teaching and learning in geography. Martin had outlined the underlying principles of this approach – a continuous process of action and reflection between teacher and students in a full collaborative manner -

⁶¹ (2008) *Tide~ Forum: Geography and Sustainable Development*, panel session at GA Annual Conference, University of Guildford, Surrey, 29th March. The panel members were: Ann Finlayson, Jo Flynn and Fran Martin. The forum was introduced and chaired by Scott Sinclair, Director of Tide~.

during our first meeting. However, reading his dissertation later, which used the BGP to show how the CLC worked in practice, I gained a deeper understanding of what the approach meant in theory and practice. Figure 22 illustrates the approach in more detail.

Collaboration and flat hierarchies were at the heart of the process,

The aim of the methodology was for the geography students who participated in the BGP to act as co-researchers. They not only decided on their learning content and approach but also reflected on this learning as part of an ongoing research programme. (Crabbe, 2005: 2-3)

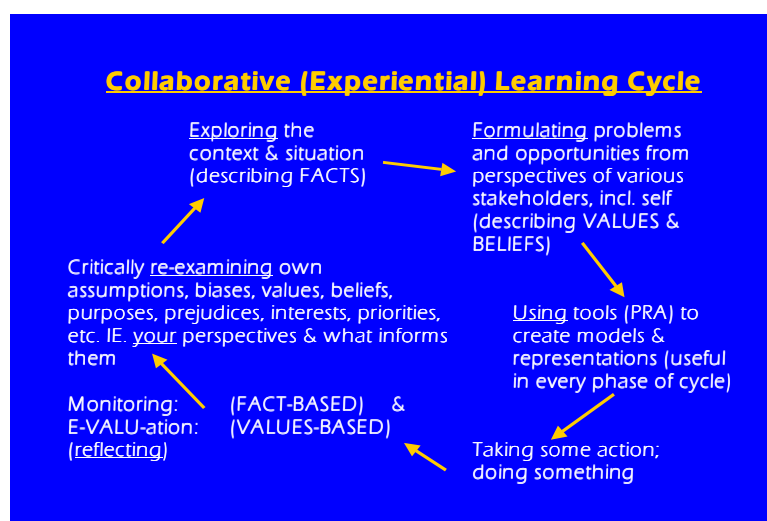


Figure 22 The Collaborative Learning Cycle designed by Paul Maiteny (Source: Crabbe, 2005: 47)

So for example, as Neil had told me students decided on their learning content and approach, then reflected on this learning as ‘part of an ongoing research programme’ (Crabbe, 2005: 3). Students produced their own version of how the CLC worked for them in the classroom (see figure 23). This had led to the co-construction of curriculum materials that engaged with young people’s lives, but had also crucially begun to hint at the possibilities of including young people themselves in the actual curriculum design. This would take those ideas of co-authorship and co-construction of

knowledge one step further. Little did I know at this point that I would find myself involved in a project that attempted to do this sooner rather than later.

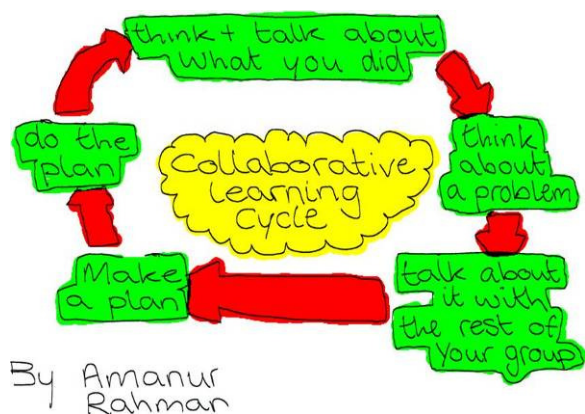


Figure 23 Students' own version of the Collaborative Learning Cycle (source: Crabbe, 2005: 49)

Having spoken to Martin and read his thesis, I notice some amazing parallels with the literature I had been reading on critical pedagogy. There was no doubt that this philosophy had influenced Martin's approach to teaching and learning greatly. Whilst this influence may not be through direct reading of academic literature, the radical pedagogy espoused by the likes of Paulo Freire had filtered through into the geographical classroom. Perhaps these links had come indirectly via the sorts of pedagogical approaches advocated by both the pilot and the CLC. Or had this powerful educational theory entered the classroom in some other way? Could you be influenced by a theory that you had never read before? As I was reading a book about a visit Freire had made to the IoE (where, coincidentally David Lambert and John Morgan had, and would both study/work) there was a quote from Freire which illustrated this point rather amazingly. Speaking about the influence that Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci had had on his work he stated,

I only read Gramsci when I was in exile. I read Gramsci and I discovered that I had been greatly influenced by Gramsci long before I had read him. It is fantastic when we discover that we had been influenced by someone's thought without ever being introduced to their intellectual production. (Freire, 1995)

It seemed that Paulo Freire could keep popping up (albeit in book rather than person form) throughout my research, his influence both directly and indirectly. Both Eleanor and Martin had mentioned moving away from transmissive learning and seeing students as empty vessels, without ever having directly engaged with this work.

It was after spending a year carrying out research at Glebe, that Freire's name cropped up; this time rather more vividly and directly. Whilst sitting in the classroom waiting for the next class to arrive, I noticed a familiar looking red and yellow book face down in amongst a great big pile of assorted art work and magazines in the centre of the main classroom table. Turning it over I discovered that it was indeed the book I thought it was; a rather new looking copy of Paulo Freire's (1996) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Just sitting there in the middle of a school geography classroom. Waiting for anybody to pick it up. Of course my jaw dropped yet again. When Martin finally entered the classroom I could contain my excitement no longer and spurted out that I had just found *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and asked if he had read it. Martin told me the first time he picked it up and read it he couldn't believe it, 'It was the closest thing I'd found which paralleled the way I teach. I couldn't quite believe that he had written about all this stuff in the 1970s; he just seemed so ahead of his time' (2007, pers. comm., 12 November). I told him that I had discovered Freire's work during my Masters and held felt a similarly strong connection being able to identify with his notion of the banking concept of education and students being seen as blank slates. Martin was inspired to continue developing his interest in pedagogical theory and had embarked on an Education Doctorate in the summer of 2008 when I completed my research at Glebe.

5.5 Research as Social Sculpture

What is important about social sculpture is that what's in the gallery space isn't an end product. It's just part of an ongoing, provocative, transformative social sculptural process that continues, 'following installation', and not just as an afterthought. (Cook *et al.*, 2007a: np)

5.5.1 Bananas

The concept of sustainability as a learning *process* lay at the heart of both the pilot GCSE at Glebe and the school's wider ethos. Earlier that year, in January 2007, Martin had invited me down to help a small group of GCSE pupils take part in a pupil conference called 'Doorways to Sustainable Schools: What's on the other side?'. The conference was part of the Government's 'Sustainable Schools Framework strategy' that Glebe were heavily involved in.⁶² Launched in 2006 by the DCSF, working alongside a range of core partners, this government strategy aimed to embed sustainability in all areas of school life with the aim of every school in England being sustainable by 2020. To help schools achieve this, a National Framework was been developed based around '8 doorways to Sustainable Schools'. Highly interconnected, these doorways were: Food and Drink; Energy and Water; Travel and Traffic; Purchasing and Waste; School Grounds; Inclusion and Participation; Local Wellbeing; and Global Dimension. These doorways focused on:

Ways in which sustainable development can be embedded into whole-school management practices and provides practical guidance to help schools operate in a more sustainable way. (<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools/>, Website accessed 10th November 2008).

Martin had been involved in the programme from the start and Glebe was one of the beacon schools for the 'Doorways to Sustainable Schools'; as such, much of the geography work pupils did at Glebe was connected to these doorways.

⁶² (2007) *Doorways to Sustainable Schools: What's on the other side?* Pupil conference, South Camden City Learning Centre, 31st January. Organised by Global Learning Communities, WWF-UK, City Learning Centres and DfES.

The conference comprised of two parts: a preparatory meeting in January and an on-line conference in June. Eight beacon schools met that January to share initial ideas and materials. Pupil ambassadors from these schools had been working on presentations linked to the doorways, which would eventually be hosted on the GLC conference website.⁶³ During a two-week live, on-line conference in June pupils from these schools, as well as any other schools who registered around the world, would be able to view each others' presentations and ask questions, and discuss issues with others online.

My role was to help pupils with the presentations they had prepared to share in the January meeting; these would subsequently be worked up to form part of their GCSE coursework. There was Shaun talking about cycling schemes; Jon and his recycling; Heather and Leanne and their food miles; and Aaron and Neil and the farmer's market (Aaron would take on Lucy's role the following year). Suffice to say that the day was a success; students gained much from sharing their work with an audience and learnt a lot from other schools' presentations which they could take back with them. Finally there was Sarah and her presentation which, tying in with the Global Dimension and Food and Drink Doorways, discussed the school partnerships Glebe were in the process of setting up in St. Vincent and Bangladesh. She was talking about how her school was thinking of sending onions they had grown on their allotment to a partner school in the Caribbean who would send bananas from their school back in return. Sound familiar? Well, it just so happened that bananas made an important appearance as a curriculum resource for the pilot at Glebe as well as at SEC. To find out how we need to go back a few months to when I first met Martin.

⁶³ The conference website was www.glc.me.uk/conference, Website accessed 10th May 2008.

This reoccurring rhizomatic filament of my research was brought back into centre stage; this time not in the form of a person connection (like Freire), but a ‘thing’ strand. In our initial conversation, as I was telling Martin more about my PhD, he interrupted and asked whether I had ever done work on bananas. Stopping in my tracks I told him about *Exchange Values*, the school workshops I had run as part of my MSc and how we’d used the installation as a starting point during *Making the Connection*. Aha. You see, someone had mentioned my name to him before and he had only just put two and two together. Getting work out there, through the Website, my MSc, at conferences and workshops really seemed to having an impact on my PhD research; people were finding, talking or hearing about this stuff by word of mouth or by stumbling across it online and I was seeing it come back at me and getting dragged back into it.

The reason Martin asked about the bananas, he explained, was that he had visited the Windward Islands the previous summer as part of a study trip. Along with three other geography teachers, the trip, which was funded by FACE⁶⁴ and supported by the GA and Windward’s Bananas (WIBDECO), involved critically looking at the banana trade and the Windward Islands involvement in it. On their return the group produced a free on-line resource for teachers called ‘Look Windwards’.⁶⁵ Since his return he had run the FACE stall at the GA conference promoting the resource and giving away free bananas, in a surreal *Exchange Values* but not *Exchange Values* type of way. At this point I couldn’t really believe this connection; during my Masters I had

⁶⁴ FACE (Farming and Countryside Education) is an educational charity, with over 60 member organisations, committed to teaching young people about sustainable food and farming practices. See www.face-online.org for more details. Website accessed 5th August 2008.

⁶⁵ For further details about the trip and to view the resources see: <http://www.face-online.org.uk/windwards/studyvisit.html> and <http://www.face-online.org.uk/windwards/>, Websites accessed 5th August 2008.

attended a meeting at Tide~ where they were launching a new publication with FACE and representatives from WIBDECO had been there. These strange threads kept cropping up at different time periods. In your face. Making connections.

A couple of months into my research at Glebe, Martin said that he wanted to push this work from the study visit in a new direction and was fascinated to find out more about *Exchange Values*. He had been setting up a school link with a school in St. Vincent and had maintained contact with WIBDECO who had been helping him identify a suitable school. His long-term aim was to set up some sort of food exchange: the St Vincent school would send bananas over and Glebe would send them onions grown in their allotment in exchange. It was crucial to ensure that the partnership was sustainable over the long-term as well as mutually beneficial; using agriculture to connect the two schools was Martin's attempts to do this. This was yet another jaw-dropping moment and I told him that I would post him my *Exchange Values* exhibition book and CD of its recordings of farmers' voices, and watch where he took things from there. He had been having meetings with a lady, Hella, he knew from WIBDECO who was keen to help with organising the link and she had links with an agricultural school over there. This would be excellent for Martin's idea of swapping produce that both schools produced.

So this was how Sarah ended up talking through the initial school link ideas at that sustainability conference. Despite being at the early stage, this linking of schools had deepened students' understanding of geographical issues such as global citizenship and interdependence. In the months to come, however, these ideas would morph into some very exciting developments. Later that year, in November 2007, bananas made

another appearance when my visit to the school coincided with a visit from the local Waitrose (an upmarket supermarket chain known for its social conscious). Martin had been having conversations with the supermarket about the BGP and also about Glebe's link with the school in St Vincent. Inspired by how Shelley Sacks had given away bananas in exchange for their skins and then dried them to form art, he wanted to replicate this as a starting off point for their School Partnership work⁶⁶. Waitrose were very keen to get involved and had offered to donate a box of bananas for Glebe pupils to give away, in exchange for their skins, with customers' purchases at the farmers market and were also keen to learn more about the work that Glebe pupils did.

I found myself back in the Quad with Aaron and a Year 10 pupil, Billy, who had been given the responsibility of showing the visitors from Waitrose around; Nick, the Waitrose fruit and vegetable buyer and Lesley the deputy store manager (see figure 24).



Figure 24 Students showing Waitrose visitors round the Quad and Allotment (Source: authors own photographs)

⁶⁶ An increasing number of schools in England are developing links with countries in the global south, supported through the Department for International Development's *Global School Partnerships* program (see <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/globalschools>, Website accessed 20th September 2009). Indeed in 2004 the DfES set a target for all schools to establish a 'sustainable partnership with at least one equivalent institution in another country' by 2010 (DfES, 2004b: 15). The nature of these partnerships is somewhat of a controversial issue; they can too easily become token gestures that can reinforce negative stereotypes and be detrimental to pupils' learning, especially when associated with fundraising for the southern partner (see Disney, 2004; Martin, 2007).

Aaron, who was a painfully shy Year 9 student when I first visited the school 12 months earlier was busy explaining what they grew in the Quad, and how they used the produce in their food technology lessons. I remember the turning point being the sustainability conference where he got up and, despite his nerves bringing out his stammer, spoke about what he had learnt. He was buzzing when he sat down and Martin had been incredibly proud of him. His confidence had continued to grow and he was now head of the school council. He and Billy went onto describe how the new drama classroom, that had been built where their outdoor classroom had once been, had a green roof and explained the system by which water was collected and pumped back up to water the roof. Nick and Lesley seemed impressed. Next was a whirlwind trip to the allotment where they had just planted 800 onion plants. Martin mentioned his plan to send onions to St. Vincent in exchange for bananas and Lesley joked that they were always on the lookout for local growers!

Arriving back at school, Aaron had been busy and had managed to get all the school council members for the meeting, so there was a full classroom (see figure 25).



Figure 25 School council meeting with Waitrose
(Source: authors own photograph)

Nick introduced himself and Lesley and said that they had had a really interesting afternoon and had enjoyed being shown around by everyone. He said that they had heard a lot about this farmers market and could anyone tell him more about it. Aaron put his hand

up and described what they did. Nick then said that, with their permission, they would like to give some bananas to the school for free for the farmers market. Everyone was happy about this and the group decided to make a plan for the upcoming event and how they would link this work into learning more about bananas and their interconnections with St. Vincent.

After the farmer's market, Martin sent me a text out of the blue asking how Shelley Sacks had dried her bananas. Thinking that this was just him being curious I replied that she had used a kiln because they had to be dried very quickly to prevent mould forming. Well, it just so happened that art was a big thing at Glebe, with many students able to engage with and present their work creatively. They had their own kiln. Martin and his class dried the bananas they had handed out at the market, just like Shelley had done. I then got an email after the Christmas holidays which said,

How would you like to make some banana art? I've dried some bananas and Paul and Laura have made some recycled paper too. They're going to do a project using them for their GCSE (Martin Crabbe, 2008, pers. comm., 29th January)

This, of course, blew my mind and I was on the next train down to Glebe. Here Paul and Laura, two Year 10 students, showed me the curled up blackened banana skins, the smell immediately taking me back to the gallery space in Bournville. They had been thinking about recycled fashion as part of a joint geography-art project (which would form part of their *People as Consumers* and *Cultural Geography* modules) and had begun collecting unwanted clothes at the school. They were both 'dead into fashion' and were excited about getting stuck into their project. This was yet another benefit of the pilot shining through; because students work to their strengths and concentrate on issues that really got to them they were more likely to dig deeper and engage

enthusiastically with the subject. Martin had taken Laura to a conference about fair-trade the previous week which, according to her was ‘quite boring, but they gave us lots of information and handouts which will be useful’ (2008, pers comm., 30th January). The idea that they had come up with was to address the issues of where clothes and unwanted clothes come from/end up via an eco-clothes show. Here, they would create new items of clothing and sew the bananas on to embellish the pieces. Laura even picked up a pair of skins that she said would work as banana earrings. Underlying this they would be engaging in some quite complex geographical issues about producers and consumers, uneven development, globalisation and interconnections.

Banana fashion was where I left Glebe. There was no nice neat ending. I could have carried on visiting the school for the months to come, but I had to get on with the important task of writing my PhD. In any case, they seemed to be doing an excellent job of making their own links, taking stuff in different directions and carrying these connections on in new and exciting ways

5.5.2 Research as Social Sculpture

As I moved through the first two case studies it was becoming clear that my research had started to design itself and I was facilitating/sculpting/reacting to it. There had already been several unexpected connections and the threads of the rhizome kept spreading further and further with each new case study: bananas and *Exchange Values* and their connections/relevance to the pilot’s *People as Consumers* module; the recurring appearance (direct and indirect) of critical pedagogy and the work of Freire (and others) as well as my attempts (with Ian, James and others) to work through these

tricky pedagogical issues; and interconnections between different people and organisations involved in the pilot (Diane Swift, Tide~ for example).

Disseminating my research, seeing other people pick it up and use it in unanticipated ways, being contacted by people who have discovered me through indirect channels (when people have heard about me via other people), and getting sucked back in had already played a major role in the direction of my research. Reading the public anthropology literature I discovered that researchers were increasingly ‘going public’ with their research through, for example, project websites, museum exhibits and print and broadcast media (Lamphere, 2004; Sanjek, 2004). Roger Sanjek (2004) told the story of how a book he published – *The Future of All of Us* (1998) – about his ethnographic research into the New York community where he lived accidentally went ‘public’, to be read by a much wider audience than he originally intended. The post-fieldwork, post-writing stage of the ethnographic research became much busier and much more ‘publically engaged’ than he ever had anticipated (Sanjek, 2004). Through what he called ‘fieldwork reciprocity and applied activities’ he sent copies of his book (which he had written in an accessible style) to key people involved in his research and the local media. People read the book, responded positively to it and subsequently Sanjek was invited to speak at various events and was interviewed by local media. From here it snowballed; his work was feature in the *New York Times*, he was invited to speak in museums libraries and bookstores across Manhattan and he became policy advisor and campaign worker for a local mayoral candidate (*ibid.*). None of this could have been anticipated when he first set out on his research, yet, from having gone through this process he learnt that ‘your material itself is “active”’ (Sanjek, 2004: 452).

An example from my own research (on a much smaller scale!) is when Fran Martin contacted me back in 2004 when she was a Senior Lecturer in Primary Education at University College Worcester. She was in the process of completing her PhD examining trainee teachers conceptions of geography, pedagogy and epistemology and their development as primary school teachers. Ben Ballin from Tide~ had sent a copy of my dissertation and she got in contact asking if she could reference it since there were synergies between our work,

I am particularly interested in 'critical geography' and transformatory pedagogy and have read Freire's work in the original state for the first time this year! (Better late than never)... Like you, I have come to the conclusion that one of the most effective ways for teachers to reclaim ownership of the curriculum and its development is through teacher networks like Tide~. (Fran Martin, 2005, pers. comm., 10th November)

These kinds of opportunities for having other people cite my work, enabling it to reach a wider inter-disciplinary audience (in this case education) were invaluable and have led to future collaborations; when Fran was appointed editor of the GA's *Primary Geographer* magazine a couple of years later she contacted Ian to contribute an article showcasing *GMC* student's journal articles. Having also put the *Making the Connection* materials and resources online I wondered whether anyone would pick these up. Would I get sucked back into it in new and exciting ways? I hoped, but never dreamt, that this would happen.

Ian once emailed me to say that he had ended up talking to one of his other students about my PhD as a kind of social sculpture. Initially I thought that he had finally lost the plot. But gradually I realised that there were similarities in approach. Just as, for Shelley, the gallery space itself wasn't the end point, the intention with *Making the Connection* was for the project to carry on after the five weeks that occurred in the physical space of the classroom. It was part of a bigger, ongoing aim to 'bring ideas,

accounts and materials together to encourage audiences and other participants to feel, picture, discuss, reflect upon, and re-imagine connections, responsibilities and potentials to shape more just and sustainable futures' (Cook *et al.*, 2007a). Anyone was free to stumble across this work, adapt the resources for use in their own classrooms and take things in new and exciting directions,

Our main aim through these publications and this website is not only to document what we have done, but also to encourage others to have a go at what has, for us, been exciting, rewarding and valuable work. (<http://makingtheconnection.wordpress.com/> viewed 20th May 2009)

When I had helped set up *Exchanges Values* in Bournville back in April 2004 Shelley explained how the installation formed part of a wider 'social sculpture' project inspired by the work and thoughts of conceptual artist Joseph Beuys (2004, pers. comm., April 21). Shelley had worked with Beuys in Germany during the 1970s when he first coined the phrase 'social sculpture' to describe his 'expanded conception of art' in which 'every human being is an artist, a freedom being, called to participate in transforming and reshaping the conditions, thinking and structures that shape and inform our lives' (Beuys, cited on www.social-sculpture.org, website accessed 20th September 2009). Himself greatly influenced by the social thinker and philosopher Rudolf Steiner, Beuys believed in the power of human creativity and saw art as being able to bring about transformative social change for a more just society and a more ecologically sustainable future [see Holland, 2007, and in particular the chapter by Shelley (Sacks, 2007)]. When speaking about Exchange Values Shelley used Beuys' influential phrase 'scratching the imagination' to demonstrate the 'connective aesthetic' element of the work; that if people could imagine the farmers' situation, then they could also imagine how it might be different. Intentionally non-didactic, there was an element of mystery, of not knowing, of asking yourself questions, but never for certain knowing

the ‘answers’. The installation wasn’t the final product, but aimed to make connections, raise questions and engage people in imaginative discussion; it was ‘less about facts, figures and delivery and more about narratives, lives and dialogues’ (Cook *et al.*, 2007: 4).

When I thought about it I could draw parallels with my research; it had been an ongoing process, with the aim of provoking conversation, and creating spaces of imagination for people to enter into and think about things differently. My research wouldn’t come to an end with the completion of the thesis, it was continuously evolving to involve all kinds of people; it was about making connections and having conversations – in person, via texts, emails, in corridors, cafes, at workshops. This dialogic approach to research also included seeing ‘writing as a form of architecture, creating spaces for imagination’ (Cook and Crang, 2007), engaging with readers, sparking connections and getting the audience to reflect on their own practice (in relation to geography, pedagogy amongst other things). What do you think about the way this is written? How do you feel after reading it? What has it got you thinking about?

5.6 Concluding Thoughts

Where does the thesis stand at this point? This chapter has further explored pedagogical approaches to teaching school geography that draw on young people’s own experiences to make geography more relevant and interesting to them. It has not been my intention to homogenise pupils’ experiences and it is clear that each individual has a unique and personal experience. However, from examining the experience of a small number of pupils it has been possible to gain some insight into the nature and impact of

the pilot GCSE on their personal and disciplinary geographies. In emphasising observations and conversation I have put young people's voices central in the research, giving a richer and fuller insight into their experiences of school geography.

I have highlighted how the pilot GCSE has offered students and teachers the opportunity for a more reflective, critical approach to geography which has led to a deeper learning experience. An emphasis on real-world, outdoor learning has been key to the transformational learning process and as a result to the success of the pilot in this particular school. In this particular example, a key benefit of the pilot's less exclusive approach to teaching, learning and assessment is that pupils have been able to achieve a GCSE where previously they would have only been entered for an entry level qualification. For example, many pupils have writing difficulties, but through active involvement in projects such as the BGP they have been able to use their experiences to shape their coursework and learn about key geographical concepts such as sustainability and interdependence. This again illustrates the benefits of the concept-led approach which lays at the heart of the pilot GCSE.

Specifically, I have shown how the pilot provides the time and space for teachers to engage with the subject and to renew and construct their own knowledge and understanding of the subject. Firstly, resource-wise, the absence of a core textbook for the pilot does not appear to be an issue; instead Martin has been able to draw creatively on resources from a variety of contexts, including using those within the school grounds. Secondly, pedagogically, by drawing on the CLC to structure his approach to geography, Martin has moved the focus of geography lessons away from transmissive

learning to more transformative learning in which students work in collaboration with each other and their teacher.

How did I get here? By this point the reader may realise that there isn't a big 'theory' section in this thesis. Yet, I don't see theory as being an abstraction. Instead my theoretical story to tell is about the theory of praxis and throughout the thesis I have demonstrated the integration of process with the outcomes of my research. Through my rhizomatic ethnographic approach there has been an emphasis on practice, on doing, on the unfolding nature of research, which travels here, there and everywhere. This notion of praxis links my method and theory, drawing on both the public geographies literature that argues for more process-oriented research (Fuller, 2008a) and Freire's arguments for informed action that synthesises theory and practice, with each informing the other (1996). Through a combination of observing classroom practice alongside in-depth conversations I have shown how the relationship between theory and practice seems to be in people's praxis. As such critical pedagogy can be out there but not in the sense that everyone's read Freire and then they're applying it; instead it's much more subtle and becomes evident only in their praxis.

In a similar vein, part of the process of me doing this research has been to name the relationship between theory and practice. I didn't set out to take a rhizomatic approach to ethnography, it was only when I was introduced to the work of Deleuze and Guattari on rhizomes that I realised that this was what my research was like. Once I started to think about it in this language it altered the way I thought about my practice and it altered my practice a little bit as well. Drawing on the notion of social sculpture and the work of Joseph Beuys I have developed my methodological understanding and

have illustrated how my approach is changing and evolving over the course of my research.

Where next? My involvement in the Making the Connection project has already gotten me more involved in the crossing of school and university geography with my role on the CWG. During the course of my research at Glebe I started to become part of these teaching geography networks, both virtually and in person; speaking at conferences, receiving/ sending emails, publishing in GA journals and so on. In Chapter Six I will continue to develop my methodological approach, following these leads and opportunities as they present themselves, remaining flexible to unanticipated collaborations, which will (hopefully) take my research in new and exciting directions.

Chapter Six: The Coming Together and Moving Apart of Different Strands

6.1 Research Methodology as Rhizome

We are writing this book as a rhizome. It is composed of plateaus... (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 22)

Two days after my first visit to Glebe on 15th November 2006, I was on a train to Leicester for the first meeting of an exciting new development called the Young People's Geographies project (YPG).⁶⁷ Diane Swift, Eleanor Rawling and John Morgan would all also be there (and Ian, Duncan Fuller and David Lambert would also attend later meetings), along with some other geography educationalists, geography academics and a group of eight geography teachers. How had this happened?

Well, for the past couple of years I had gradually become more involved in the networks surrounding the pilot GCSE: speaking to people involved in its design, presenting my work at conferences and being invited onto working groups. This involvement resulted in some exciting, if unanticipated, outcomes. This chapter charts three such pathways; the first of these was the YPG project and the second and third were schools involved in the pilot GCSE. What marks these examples as different was that rather than me initiating the contact (as I had done with SEC and Glebe), this time people were getting in touch with me and inviting me to be involved in stuff they were already doing. This turned things on their head. It seemed like my research really was growing rhizomatically. At the centre of all of this was the *Making the Connection* project. What had started out as an interesting small-scale project and case study for my PhD was turning into a much larger beast that I was attempting to tame! The project was

⁶⁷ The YPG project, led by the GA, is about involving young people in curriculum making, with a focus on their own lived geographies (see <http://www.youngpeoplesgeographies.co.uk/>, Website accessed 20th September 2009). It is discussed in more detail on page 247.

much more than a case study. Had *Making the Connection* opened a can of worms, and was I now reacting to this? Was I designing this research, or was the research (though my involvement in it) designing itself? It had certainly moved on from the original networking approach used at the beginning. The process appeared to be taking over. Indeed, as Sanjek and others' work had shown, I was beginning to realise that research (and post-research/writing) that involved collaborations with subjects and audiences could result in projects gaining a life of their own that researchers had to react to as much as plan (Lamphere, 2004; Rose, 2005; Sanjek, 2004).

This chapter therefore illustrates the way things took off, fragmented and grew out of the research begun at the start of my PhD; as such it is not presented as a series of three in-depth case studies (as in Chapters Four and Five), but rather as partial snapshots of an unfolding rhizomatic process. By telling the story about the life of the *Making Connection* project beyond the classroom at SEC, I build upon the issues raised in the previous two chapters.

Firstly, through participating in the innovative YPG project I further explore the opportunities for increased engagement between school and academic geography and how conversations across the divide have the potential for mutual learning and benefits. Developing from my research into co-creating curriculum materials that engaged with young people's lives, I look at how young people themselves might more fully participate in the actual curriculum development process. What impact does this participation have? How could the notion of conversations be used to further debates surrounding critical pedagogy, young people's geographies and public geographies?

Secondly, the example of a pilot teacher picking up the *Making the Connection* resources and using the architecture provided to adapt them and use them in different ways in their own classroom builds on my research into the making, sharing and distribution of curriculum materials for the pilot. From this a set of questions develop around the role of more informal, organic teacher networks which appeared to be developing from the pilot. How were these creating the space and time for teachers to be more creative and share ideas? What was the role of new developments in ICT in these networks? How might this all tie in with debates surrounding public geographies and making work more accessible for a range of public audiences?

6.2 Young People as Curriculum Makers?

... who are these young people, and what are their interests, aspirations and needs? (Balderstone, 2006: 18)

A culture of non-participation by young people is endemic within the United Kingdom. For the most part, young people are provided with few opportunities to engage in discussions about their economic, social and environmental futures and seldom given chances to express their preferences outside of adult-dominated institutions. It would seem that participation is still conceived to be an adult activity. (Matthews *et al.*, 1999: 135)

I first heard about the YPG project in August 2006 when Diane sent me an email inviting me to participate in this new Action Plan for Geography (APG) related project. The project, Diane said, would bring together geography educators, geography academics, school teachers, school students and the GA. Over the course of four one-day meetings these different groups would meet and talk about how the geography curriculum could be organised and planned in an innovative, exciting and worthwhile way. The outcome would be a set of curriculum units delivered in the students' schools. This would take mine and others (e.g. Castree *et al.*, 2007) attempts at engaging school and academic geography through public geographic practice and push them in a new

and exciting way. It also sounded like the perfect opportunity to bring together the overlapping themes of critical pedagogy, young people's geographies and public geography that had been running through my research. I told Diane that this sounded fantastic and that I would love to be involved.

The project brought together the various networks I had a) been investigating and b) got involved in along the way. The YPG project was all about new networks developing; moving outwards from the pilot as well as taking the concept of creating curriculum materials that engaged with young people's lives one step further by actually involving them in co-creating the curriculum. This was not only new territory for the students and teachers involved, but was also the first time the GA had involved students in the curriculum design process from the off. Immediately my mind was taken back to Roger Lee's assertion about the curriculum being written 'from the backboard jungle, rather than the ivory tower' (1983: 108) and was excited at the prospect of what this would mean in practice.

In 2006 the DfES awarded school geography £2 million, the response of which was a 2 year joint initiative between the GA and RGS-IBG called the Action Plan for Geography (APG): the YPG project developed as a strand of this. The aim of the APG was,

To provide everyone – opinion formers, policy makers, schools, parents and pupils – with a clear vision of geography as a relevant and powerful 21st century subject; and to equip teachers with the professional skills and support they need so that pupils enjoy and succeed in geography.
(<http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/actionplanforgeography/>, Website accessed 14th March 2009)

Through three strands – communication, support and development – the plan aimed to connect with all primary and secondary geography teachers in England. A variety of projects were launched with the funding including: the Geography Teaching Today (GTT) website which would collate and signpost existing and new teaching resources in a sort of one-stop shop⁶⁸; the RGS-IBG led Geography Ambassadors scheme (undergraduate and graduate geographers going in to schools to show the relevance of the subject in the wider world); the establishment of Primary and Secondary geography ‘quality marks’ and ‘charted geographer status’ (to recognise professional achievements by schools and teachers); and a range of CPD projects and opportunities for teachers from primary to secondary schools (see GTT website for more details). The coming together of the RGS-IBG with the GA was at the heart of the APG; a bold and manifest statement about the need for academic and school geography to work together. As Rita Gardner (Director of the RGS-IBG) and David Lambert (Chief Executive of GA) argued it was crucial to make a joint case,

not to impose any intellectual and possibly spurious unity on the subject, but as an essentially political task to communicate the extraordinary relevance of the subject for students at all ages and stages, now and into the future (Gardner and Lambert, 2006: 159)

These developments coincided with the activities of the PGWG and seemed to share a similar philosophy: both developed in response to the ‘state’ of the discipline (at school and university); a need to change the subject’s public image and identity; and a disconnection between school and university geographies (see Castree *et al.*, 2007; Chilvers *et al.*, 2006, 2008; Fuller, 2008).

Significantly, for my research, this APG money also secured the (short-term) future of the pilot, which was originally due to end in July 2006; thus a third cohort of

⁶⁸ <http://www.geographyteachingtoday.org.uk/> accessed 20th September 2009

approximately 30 schools started teaching the pilot from September 2006. Since the overhaul of the KS4 curriculum would not be implemented nationwide until September 2009, the pilot would run for an additional three years. This was great news for those already involved and would also enable more schools to get at least a taster of an alternative version of school geography before choosing a new specification in three years time. Something must be going right then for the pilot to continue being rolled out. I had been concerned that I hadn't been critical enough of the pilot and that my knowledge would be limited due to the number of teachers and students I had spoken to, and I hoped that this was a sign that it might have a wider impact and become a mainstream syllabus

In Diane's original email she had some further information about the YPG project; who would be involved and details of the project's aims and intentions. The project leaders were Mary Biddulph and Roger Firth, both lecturers in geography education at Nottingham University. Diane Swift and David Balderstone (a lecturer in geography education at the IoE) were also project co-ordinators (although David would take on more of a teacher role as he took study leave and returned to teaching). Eleanor Rawling also attended the first meeting as project evaluator before other important commitments (including making a case for the importance of coursework in geography to the government!) took over and she was replaced by Nick Hopwood, a postdoc at University of Oxford. The other academics involved along with myself were John Morgan, Tracey Skelton, Ian Cook and Duncan Fuller. Then there were the teachers from the eight secondary schools involved.

The aims of the project were three-fold: firstly, ‘to explore ways in which geography teachers could use the lived experiences of young people to inform the process of “curriculum making” in school geography’; secondly, ‘to develop pedagogies through which young people can use their lived experiences to develop their geographical understanding’; and thirdly, ‘to establish conversations between young people, academic geographers, geography teachers and geography teacher educators that will inform a dynamic process of 'curriculum making' in schools’ (Biddulph and Firth, 2009).

In many mainstream curricula the knowledge, interests, concerns and understating that children had of the world often got marginalised due to the constraints that the curriculum put on both teachers and schools. Giving young people the opportunity to ‘have a more authentic say in the how and what of learning’ had been rare, if non-existent, within school geography; doing so right from the curriculum development stage and through all stages of development and delivery was therefore uncharted territory (Firth and Biddulph 2009: 50). The YPG project would thus provide a unique opportunity for a more equal dialogue and would allow young people, their teachers and the academic discipline to work ‘together in a more equal way to construct a more meaningful and inclusive school geography curriculum’ (*ibid.*).

These aims chimed with previous arguments I’d made for school geography to connect with the lived geographies of young people (Cook *et al.*, 2007b, c). Young people should be seen as part of the process and have a say in what they were taught, with teachers having as much to learn as their pupils (See also Catling, 2005 and Martin, 2008 for a primary school perspective). Indeed, one of the main points Keith

Grimwade, the president of the GA, made in his presidential address at the 2007 GA Annual Conference was that the view of children and young people mattered. Speaking about the importance of the YPG project he said,

This project must be developed so that there is a clear model for geography teachers to incorporate the views of students into all aspects of learning and teaching. (Grimwade, 2007: 177)

Research at both SEC and Glebe had show that by building on the dialogic approach advocated by Paulo Freire (1996), collaborative approaches to learning could destabilise hegemonic power relations between teacher and student through and lead to what Michael Burawoy termed ‘a process of mutual education’ (Burawoy, 2005c; see also Evans *et al.*, 2008; Le Heron *et al.*, 2006).

So, in November 2006 I arrived at the New Walk Museum in Leicester not really knowing what to expect from the first meeting. I had been asked to prepare two short presentations; one about what young people’s geographies meant to me and the second about my own reflection of researching young people’s geographies in school contexts. I was keen to share my experiences from *Making the Connection* since YPG would be able to build on our attempts to engage with young people’s everyday geographies by involving them right from the curriculum development stage. John Morgan then spoke about his involvement in a FutureLab project called *Enquiring Minds* which shared a similar philosophy to YPG and attempted to bring the interests and concerns and experiences of young people into the classroom⁶⁹. He would later tell me,

if you get children interested in their everyday worlds – and I think there’s an assumption here that you start with the local rather than the global- I don’t know whether that has to be. What you can then do is use that spark to begin to spiral into a whole set of other questions about that phenomenon. (John Morgan, 2006, pers. comm., 18 November)

⁶⁹ See <http://www.futurelab.org.uk/projects/enquiring-minds>

The day was spent thrashing out ideas about what we meant by YPGs; how teachers currently used their students' geographical experience to inform their planning, teaching and learning; and thinking about ways they could use these experiences to inform this in the future. Discussions took place in small groups with a mixture of academics, project co-ordinators and teachers in each group. How could teachers use their students' geographical experiences to inform their planning and teaching and their students' learning? How did you go about finding out what children want to learn and how they learn? and, What might a curriculum based around children's everyday experiences look like? This first day provided teachers with the time and space to engage with these issues at a much deeper, more theoretical level. This was crucial. What came out of the day was the concept of *creating possibilities* for young people's geographies; making space for things to happen and negotiating in a way that the current NC didn't.

One of the teachers involved was Alan Parkinson, Head of Geography at King Edward IV in King's Lynn at the time of YPG. Alan will play a role in the next part of my story so a quick introduction is needed here. His was another of these names in the 'geography circuit' that had kept cropping up; I had heard him speak at various GA conferences and he had a well-established Website, GeographyPages, which was a melting pot for everything geography teaching related. At the first meeting I discovered that King Edward IV been selected as one of the schools for the pilot's third cohort. Alan had heard about *Making the Connection* via another pilot teacher, Noel Jenkins, and had already mentioned it on his blog (see figure 26). However, he later emailed me

to ask if he could put up a link to our website on his own GeographyPages Website⁷⁰ and I emailed him back with a similar request to add a link to his site from ours. Being mentioned on a website that was visited by hundreds of geography teachers daily could only be a good thing and it wouldn't take long before our work had been picked up by another teacher.

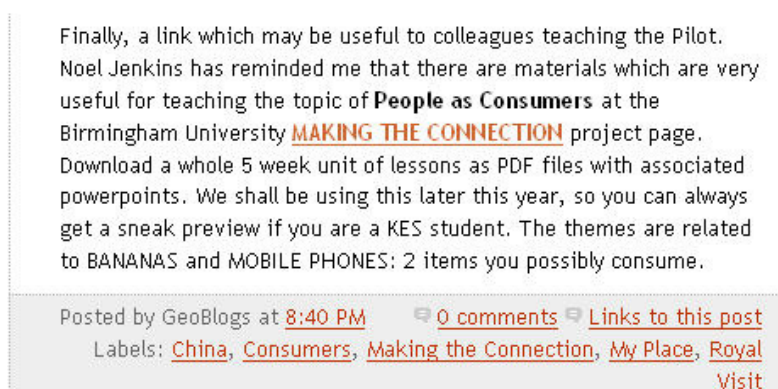


Figure 26 Alan's blog entry mentioned *Making the Connection* (Source: Alan Parkinson, 24/01/2007)

6.3 Barking Abbey

It was a typical Friday afternoon in the human geography PhD office at Birmingham University. Becky and I were chatting about our impending Progress Review Boards that would be taking place in a month's time at the beginning of January. It was the beginning of December 2006; I had already completed ethnographic research at SEC and had recently begun my research at Glebe School. Things were ticking along nicely and I was looking forward to visiting Glebe's stall at the farmer's market the following week. My original plans for carrying out research at a high achieving school in Birmingham were not really taking shape after a couple of emails on my part, but to be honest I had been too busy to pursue this any further. I had already

⁷⁰ See www.geographypages.co.uk/pilotconsume.htm, Website accessed 1st December 2007.

been to the first YPG meeting and was thinking about using this as an example in my thesis anyway.

The phone rang. Becky got up to answer it and I went back to putting the final touches to my progress report. Becky then called across and said that there was someone called Pete on the phone who wanted to talk to me. Walking over to take the call I racked my brains, but couldn't think of anyone I knew called Pete. After saying hello, a very friendly guy replied saying that his name was Pete Flaxman and he was from Barking Abbey School in London, which had just started the pilot GCSE. He had heard about the work I had done on the *People as Consumers* module of the GCSE and wanted to ask me a few questions.

Bloody hell. I wasn't expecting this. I tried to stay calm while he explained that Alan Parkinson had given him my name and contact details. At this point I did a double take. I told Pete that I knew Alan from a GA project we were both involved in and it was nice of him to pass my details on. Pete described how he was producing his own schemes of work for each module, collating and producing relevant resources and making them available electronically online. They had just done the *My Place* module and were thinking of starting the *People as Consumers* at the beginning of March next year. He had already come up with some ideas for the module, but when Alan mentioned *Making the Connection* he thought it sounded interesting and was keen to find out more about the stuff we had done with bananas. Pete had been having difficulties trying to look at the project WebPages and wondered if I could point him in the right direction. It was really great that teachers were actually going to use and adapt the resources and put them to their own use in their classrooms. My mind wandered

back to how *Making the Connection* was turning into the first stage of ‘an ongoing, expanding, transformative social sculpture practice’ (Cook *et al.*, 2007a: 7. See also Cook *et al.*, 2000).

Back to the phone conversation, I outlined what we had done and suggested that it would be best if I emailed Pete the relevant links and information. Making the most out of the opportunity I then explained that one of the things I was really interested in was the sorts of resources that teachers were drawing on and producing for the pilot and I couldn’t wait to see how he was going to use *Making the Connection* in his own classroom. ‘Well if I am going to be using your resources, what can I offer you in return?’ Pete asked. ‘Could I come down and have a chat about how the pilot was working out in practice?’ I replied. Pete said this would be great and that he’d organise for me to speak to some students to get their views too. By the time I put the phone down I was buzzing. A third pilot school had been found.

So on a bright, sunny morning in January 2007 I arrived at the school to meet Pete. It’s location in a pleasant residential suburb next to a primary school reminded me of Glebe. A very large, mixed 11-18 comprehensive school in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Barking Abbey was heavily-oversubscribed.⁷¹ In a low-achieving LEA where in 2006 only 37.6% of students, on average, attained 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE (including maths and English), Barking Abbey had achieved an average of 61%; the highest result in the LEA. In fact, arriving at the school’s reception I noticed a whole host of certificates displaying its achievements, including the

⁷¹ See <http://www.babbey.bardaglea.org.uk/aboutschool.htm>, Website accessed 19th December 2006.

‘Schools’ Curriculum Award’ in 2000, Technology Colleges Trust ‘Most Improved Schools’ award in 2001 and ‘Most Value Added School’ award in 2001. The school was obviously doing something right to get such high grades.

Pete arrived and gave me a friendly hello and said it was lovely to meet me. He took me through the old part of the school across a tarmac area full of temporary portacabin classrooms to a brand spanking new building which had been built with funding the school had received from various awards. His new classroom was a big step up from teaching in the portacabins! Arriving in a very spacious light and airy classroom I asked if Pete would mind telling me a bit about his background as a geography teacher. This was where I had uncovered some interesting connections in my conversations with Jacky and Martin and I wondered whether further connections would be made with Pete. It transpired that Pete had done his geography degree in the late 1980s at The University of Birmingham; after a few years away from geography after graduating he saw an advert for a PGCE at the IoE and applied for it on a whim. He got accepted and was given David Lambert as a tutor. This, for him, was where it all started. His first teaching job was at Barking Abbey and he had been teaching at the school for 13 years.

I interrupted at this point to say that it was funny that his tutor had been David Lambert and explained how I’d been hearing the same circles of names cropping up time and time again. Pete wasn’t surprised and said ‘Yeah, we’re a small little family really, there are all these links between each other’(Pete Flaxman, 2007, pers. comm.,

19 January⁷²). A small family indeed! I kept finding all these links back to the IoE; first David Lambert, then John Morgan and now Pete. Then there were the links that I had discovered between where and with whom people did their PGCEs: Jacky being Diane's mentor; John doing his PGCE at the IoE whilst David was a lecturer there; David being Peter's PGCE tutor; and Martin having Margaret Robert's as his PGCE mentor. There wasn't time to investigate this further, but it did raise questions about the role that PGCE tutors/mentors had on developing professional confidence, deepening subject knowledge and creating curriculum development opportunities for teachers.

Returning to our conversation I asked about the ability of the students. Pete replied that they had a really mixed intake with students from a variety of backgrounds,

I mean this road here adjacent to the school is quite sort of affluent, middle class; parents commute into work in the city. And then there's pupils who come from estates which you wouldn't believe; they're really, really bad. There's one being demolished; it's been attacked by arson, it's about 90% empty and we've got about five families at this school still staying in it, it's really bad. (2007, pers. comm., 19 January)

Although students' abilities were vast from 'absolute A*s to those that probably won't get through at all' the school's results had been going up year-on-year. Pete put this down to the money that had been invested in various aspects of the school in recent years. Being selected as one of only five secondary schools in England as an ICT Testbed school in 2003 had had a huge impact and was also was on the reasons they had been picked for the pilot Pete explained. Whilst the geography department knew about the pilot from the very start they hadn't been successful to begin with. 'In fact' said Pete, 'we were approached by David Lambert who told us about it and said why don't you apply for it? And we applied for it and didn't get on and we tried again for the second cohort and didn't get on then either' he said smiling. Finally, when they 'And

⁷² Since this conversation was recorded all quotes that follow are verbatim

then finally I think we were actually invited to be part of the third cohort, but we were limited with which optional modules they wanted us to do. And one of them is the GIS unit and we're kind of leading the way probably pretty much in the country with GIS and ICT stuff, which I can tell you about later on. So, I think our Testbed status combined with our GIS capabilities helped to get us on it'.

The government's idea behind ICT Testbed Schools was to discover how great an impact an influx of ICT would have on learning and achievement. Pete explained that they picked schools in poor areas that had shown signs of coping with innovative change and 'pumped loads of money in to buy ICT equipment'; Barking Abbey received £2 million. This had radically transformed the classroom set-ups; where once there had been blackboards and a few old PCs, there were now interactive whiteboards, laptops for every student, and a host of techy gadgets such as Visualisers (OHPs with knobs on) and Active Slates (palm-held which could be passed around the room). It was hoped that this would engage students more.

Pete had recently completed an MA looking at the impact of ICT on students. What he had found was that many teachers had limited ICT skills and thus much of the first year was spent learning how to integrate all this ICT into their teaching. They then thought they were being all high-tech and innovative using PowerPoints in every lesson, yet neglected to consult the students themselves. Students therefore ended up going from classroom to classroom watching PowerPoints getting increasingly bored. Learning wasn't moving forward and students weren't being given the chance to use the equipment themselves. They thus moved to a much more collaborative approach, consulting students, finding out what they already knew and how they felt ICT could be

used to best help them learn. The flattening of these hierarchies and the realisation that teachers could learn from students had led to a much more collaborative, co-learning approach; reinforcing the arguments that had come out my/our research at SEC (Cook *et al.*, 2007b, Evans *et al.*, 2008).

When I spoke to students at Barking Abbey they understood they were in a privileged position and discussed the differences between now and lower school when they had used mainly “boring maps and textbooks” (Annie, focus group). They talked about how they had used computers to listen to animal noises for the project they did on Antarctica and that this had really stuck:

Like when you’ve heard such a powerful animal like a polar bear and then you find out that they are being killed due to climate change it really makes you think. (Chris, 2007, focus group, 19 January)

The use of more creative forms of engagement mirrored what many of the SEC students had said. For example, when discussing how academics could present their work for school students, Holly’s response was:

Um, well films, because they’re more personal so we’ll feel like more connected to people, and also like through making the geography more interesting by presenting it differently, say like through drama or artwork. (2006, VoxPop, 24 March)

Balderstone (2006) had argued that the integration of ICT into the curriculum could encourage a method of teaching which lead to more responsive, creative and engaging modes of learning. The anecdotes from students so far would seem to support this, yet this was an area where disparities existed,

while the communication revolution is undoubtedly of huge potential value to the goals of radical pedagogy, it remains a partial revolution. Not all people are equally connected or, to put it another way, there is a geography of ICT privilege (Evans *et al.*, 2008: 341).

This potential of ICT as a teaching resource was another question that had developed from my research.

ICT also had a big impact on the way Pete made, shared and distributed resources and he was pushing his ideas further since he started the pilot. When we spoke on the phone he had mentioned that he designed all the lesson plans, collated all the resources and made them available online for the rest of the department to use, so I was keen to find out where he got his ideas from. Pete pointed out that there were quite a few teachers in the third cohort of schools that were very active and well-known in the geography community; teachers like Tony Cassidy who had a well-visited site called radical geography⁷³, and Alan Parkinson, whose GeographyPages site I had already come across. Pete said, 'I wonder if with this third cohort they've gone for schools they think will be able to lead things forward a bit'. Then there were a group of teachers who were setting up blogs to not only share ideas between each other, but to also allow their students to give regular feedback⁷⁴. Pete mentioned that he had been inspired by the likes of Tony and Alan to try this out and had recently set up his own⁷⁵.

It had been through these contacts that he had heard about our project. A few months after first contacting me I was back at the school to observe Pete's first *People as Consumers* lesson. He had chosen to incorporate elements and ideas from *Making the Connection* with his own; precisely what we had hoped teachers would do. Having the professional confidence to take existing architecture and combine it with teachers' own ideas, rather than using 'off the shelf' resources, was exactly what David Lambert had hoped would happen (2006, pers. comm., 14 February). Using the school's media facilities this introductory lesson, which incorporate a version of the Banana Game, was filmed. Music and would later be added and this would be used as a DVD resource for

⁷³ <http://www.radicalgeography.co.uk/>, Website accessed 20th September 2009

⁷⁴ See blogs such as <http://kespilotgeography.blogspot.com> and <http://pilotgcseradicalgeography.co.uk>, Websites accessed 20th September 2009

⁷⁵ See <http://geoghoops.blogspot.com/>, Website accessed 17th March 2007.

use by other teachers and for when he led ICT training sessions for trainee teachers from Middlesex University.

From what I had discovered so far it appeared that the formal networks (GA pilot GCSE pages, OCR) set up for disseminating ideas hadn't been all that successful. Did Pete know about or use these sites? Or, were there informal support networks, like those Pete had eluded to, in place? Pete agreed that the pilot pages on the GA website 'hadn't really taken off' and he also mentioned a virtual forum for pilot schools that had taken place a few months earlier on the GA site, but again the department 'didn't really get into it that much'. He said that if he needed to ask for help he was sure it would be available, but he was quite happy getting and sharing ideas and swapping schemes of work informally with other pilot schools. The development of these 'social networks' of geographers from relationships fostered through attending events or contacts that had been made online (via teacher's websites or blogs) seemed to play an interesting role. I would later read an article by Jessica Pykett and Maggie Smith in which they reflected on a *Rediscovering School Geographies* workshop which brought together academic geographers, geography educators and school geography teachers (see Pykett and Smith, 2009). They highlighted how:

Teachers have also urged us to consider their more 'organic' associations, including the ways in which they work across subject disciplines within their own schools and departments, and also their own social networks as teachers across Local Authorities, with their PGCE cohort across the country, and through their participation in global networks and forums on the internet. (*ibid.* p.36)

It seemed that networking and these more organic, informal support networks were invaluable when it came to resourcing the GCSE. But what about schools and teachers who weren't part of the loop? Were these getting bypassed by the more innovative,

‘underground’ stuff that was going on? The next strand of my research would build upon these questions further.

6.4 Hadley Learning Centre

When you are doing a PhD you have to expect the unexpected. Finding myself working alongside Alice, who had helped in the classroom at SEC, was one such incident. How this happened was as follows. It was the 1st February 2007; almost a year on from the first *Making the Connection* lesson. After graduating Alice landed a job working as a broadcast assistant at BBC Radio Shropshire. Apart from the odd email filling her in on *Making the Connection* related activities (the website, journal articles, conference presentations) our paths hadn’t really crossed. Then Ian forwarded me an email entitled ‘Pilot GCSE and the BBC!!!- how exciting!’ which Alice had asked him to forward to me and which she began with ‘well, well, well, suddenly I find myself back in the mist of the Geography Pilot!’ (Alice Williams, 2007, pers. comm., 1st February). This time the collaboration had changed from me making the connections, to one of the collaborators making the connection and then drawing me back in.

To cut a long story short, Alice was working on a project with a school in Telford called Hadley Learning Centre (HLC) where she was making short broadcast pieces about young people’s lives. One day she bumped into one of the geography teachers – Dan Roycroft – in the coffee lounge; they got talking, he mentioned that he had started this pilot geography GCSE last September, she got very excited and told him about *Making the Connection*. So now, as part of her project for the BBC she was collaborating with Dan’s geography class on their *My Place* course work, where they would make TV and radio pieces about their place in the community, environment and

culture. She had told Dan about me and he was very excited about me getting involved somehow. Would this be of interest? I didn't have to think about that for too long! There was little chance that I could have predicted these types of connections being made when I wrote my ESRC application three years previously.

The next day I emailed Dan. He replied almost straight away saying how fantastic it would be for me to visit and see what they were doing at HLC and watch the students' progress but that he wasn't 'one hundred percent sure how it will evolve yet... but that is the whole point of the pilot course... it is really up to the students how they want to make it evolve (I hope!)' (Dan Roycroft, 2007, pers. comm., 2 February). It sounded as if Dan's approach would suit the pilot very much!

Conducting collaborative research that designed itself to which I then reacted, turned traditional arguments about access, politics and ethics on their head. First, access was often negotiated for me; at both Barking Abbey and HLC it was the teachers themselves who approached me rather than the other way round. Research was very much a two-way collaborative endeavour, where I hoped that teachers and students benefited as much from my presence as the other way round. The teachers all mentioned that it was good to have a 'geography expert' (as Martin referred to me) in the classroom who brought up-to-date subject knowledge with them. The links that teachers had forged with academic geography and the connections they could subsequently develop also helped with their professional development. For example, Martin asked me to be a consultant for their school's Eco Schools Green Flag application⁷⁶ and Pete later

⁷⁶ See <http://www.eco-schools.org.uk/>, viewed September 2009.

contacted me for letter of evidence detailing the work we did together for his application as a 'Centre of Excellence' under the APG.

By the end of February I was therefore involved in three overlapping case studies, all of which had come about from my approach to research. Driving up to HLC I remembered that Alice had told me it was a brand new school, built on a brand new site, with funding from the government's *Building Schools for the Future* strategy.⁷⁷ Although students from several schools now attended the school, the main feeder school had been called Orelton Park whose students had relocated to HLC in September 2006; their school was being knocked down due its state of disrepair and the land sold to part-fund the new build. The school still had that brand-new smell about it. The walls were white gloss with the odd shot of bright colour here and there, the floors were similarly shiny and polished and everything looked very sterile. I had arranged to meet Alice in the car park; it was great to meet up and it was obvious that she was really excited about being back in the world of the pilot GCSE again.

We met Dan at reception and as he took us to his classroom he filled me in on some basic information about how he had gotten involved with the pilot. Having begun his teaching career at Orelton Park four years earlier, he had applied to start the pilot with the move to HLC. Since he knew that lots of schools must have applied, he said they were lucky to have been chosen. However, the head teacher was very supportive and wrote a very persuasive letter outlining the reasons the school should take part. Dan admitted that the truth was he had convinced the head when he mentioned the Extreme Environments module; the head was as an extreme sports, outdoor enthusiast!

⁷⁷ See <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page5801> for more information, Website accessed 2nd April 2007.

Underlying this though was a more serious, overarching point about the need to convince senior management about the importance and relevance of geography. Initiatives like the pilot and the APG were therefore crucial in having long lasting impacts on public perceptions of the subject.

In contrast to Barking Abbey Dan would be the only geography teacher teaching the pilot at the school; the others would continue teaching the old 'Bristol syllabus'. Whilst Dan had started off in September teaching both his GCSE classes the pilot he had quickly switched the lower ability class back because he had gone 'a bit cold turkey about pupils not achieving what the school expected from them' (Dan Roycroft, 2007, pers. comm., 27 February). This, I discovered, was down to the issue of professional confidence and lack of wider support. He explained that he felt like he was 'flying by the seats of his pants' and like he was taking a bit of a risk both with students' grades and his own career; he was pretty sure that if the pilot didn't work out in the first year, grades-wise, then it would be scrapped by the department. It was a shame that Dan had felt that he couldn't take a risk with lower ability students for a GCSE that specifically aimed to be less exclusive. This returned to bigger questions surrounding the importance of teacher support networks, whether formal or informal, and being able to (and know where to) access this support from the beginning. Teachers who were just starting out, who were near the beginning of their career, like Dan, or who were in a large department where others didn't share their enthusiasm were often bypassed by developments in the subject as well as curriculum development opportunities.

This issue of engaging schools currently 'out of the loop' had been recognised by the subject associations and was central component of the APG.⁷⁸ The plan was to enable schools to network and share good practice through a variety of ways: Firstly, all school that had Humanities Subject Specialism were encouraged to set up a local GA Branch. This would enable them to connect to schools in the local area where geography was struggling and share best practice, offer help and advice and run curriculum development activities (see Pykett and Smith, 2009). Indeed, Barking Abbey were in the process of establishing a branch, due to their specialist status.

Secondly, the funding would provide CPD opportunities to help teachers make greater use of existing materials and to,

facilitate innovative teacher groups to identify and develop new approaches to teaching aspects of the curriculum linked mainly to the pilot GCSE (<http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/actionplanforgeography/>, Website accessed 18th October 2008)

As part of this Ian and I were asked to present a paper on *Making the Connection* at a *Geography 21* conference in Birmingham later that year in July 2007. The aim of this conference was to share experiences from the pilot with existing pilot teaching wanting support as well as to non-pilot schools who were interested in drawing on aspects to integrate into their existing curriculum.

Thirdly, the subject associations had woken up to their role as facilitators between teachers and the exciting and varied resources available; the GTT website would provide much needed inspiration by the end of 2006 as would a new-look GA website in September 2009. Fourthly, the GA journal *Geography* was rebranded and

⁷⁸ See <http://www.geography.org.uk/projects/actionplanforgeography/> for more details, Website accessed 18th October 2008.

relaunched in 2007 as a more 'coffee table' magazine with an eclectic editorial board and advisory panel (including Peter Jackson, Eleanor Rawling, John Morgan, Ian Cook and Noel Castree). All of these activities aimed to communicate the subject to a wider audience, show how the subject combined both David's 'vocabulary and grammar' and improve its public image (including with senior management).

Back at HLC, Dan showed me some of the work his students had been producing. Judging from the examples he showed me he had relished the opportunity to incorporate a range of media into both his teaching and students' presentation of their work. Kicking off with the *Extreme Environments* module he had used the film 'Touching the Void' (2003), in which two climbers near-fatal climb of a mountain in the Peruvian Andes, as inspiration for mountain environments. The class had then studied Mt. Everest as a case study and had drawn on a variety of sources, including pictorial representations and first-hand accounts from mountaineers, to produce short films with music soundtracks about the mountain alongside an accompanying visitors guide. Some students had then gone on to produce 3D models of the mountain as joint art-geography projects. Drawing on media for curriculum resources seemed to be a recurring theme. The approach to learning advocated in these lessons gave all students (no matter their academic credentials) a chance to express themselves in the way they could best. Rather than being limited to writing an essay, pupils used art, media and creative writing to convey their views. This varied approach to learning allowed pupils to develop imaginative ways of thinking and learning; it seemed vital that the new GCSE specifications would continue in this vein.

This use of media and technology was set to continue with Alice and the BBC's involvement in the *My Place* module. Here, linked to the concepts of sustainability and futures, Dan had set the class the task of redeveloping the site of their old school as an eco-community. This engaged with an issue that many students felt strongly about since they missed the sense of community that Orelton Park had and were resentful of the fact that it was being knocked down. Rather than learning about what developers thought should be done with the area, they began by discussing their own views of 'their place' and the issues that affected where they lived.

In her role Alice interviewed the students and VoxPop clips were later broadcast on BBC Radio Shropshire as well as on their Website;⁷⁹ Dan was very excited about giving his students an audience. Recording short pieces to be aired on its local radio gave students the opportunity to enhance their creativity, communication and social skills. The creative learning advocated by the pilot resulted in pupils speaking quite passionately about the destruction of their old school and how it affected their identity and sense of place. Georgina's description of the school was particularly pertinent:

It had love, it gave you warmth, it gave you a good feeling about yourself. At Orelton park we knew we were appreciated it, we knew we were wanted there. It had a sense that you were just one big family. At HLC there's not a family, I don't get that sense of a bond. It's missing like the love, it's missing love... Orelton park meant loads to me, absolutely loads to me and HLC is just a school. When people used to say 'what school do you go to?' you used to be proud to say 'I go to Orelton Park'. It has memories... in like the bricks the memories are there. Like if them walls could talk, my god, none of us would have gone to HLC. Someone took something away from us and we didn't really appreciate it, but now it's gone we appreciate it. I feel like they're just getting rid of memories, that's something we liked and loved. (2007, VoxPop for BBC Radio Shropshire, February)

More importantly, it gave young people a voice, providing them with an arena where other people could hear what they have to say and made them feel like their views

⁷⁹ http://www.bbc.co.uk/shropshire/content/articles/2007/01/25/bbc_at_hlc_introduction_feature.shtml, Website accessed 12th April 2007.

counted. Pupils actually began to feel like they could have a say in local decision-making. It was not about imposing ideas on pupils, but about providing the tools and the space for pupils to creatively voice their ideas and opinions. Reading David Balderstone's influential *Secondary Geography Handbook* (2006c), he introduced the notion of a 'purposeful creative enquiry', a term coined by Chris Durban in 2003. This was an approach in which,

young people are given responsibility for their learning, a motivating stimulus, the need to produce a creative response that demonstrates their understanding and skills, with an authentic (other public) audience (Balderstone 2006b: 20)

This point about giving students an audience was key and built upon the findings at SEC where students had benefitted so much from the opportunity of presenting their work to undergraduate and academic audiences. Similarly, at Glebe, by participating in a variety of projects that connected them to the local community and other schools, students began to appreciate that they could make a positive contribution as a local and global citizen. I would therefore argue that giving students an audience gave them the sense that their voices could count on various different issues and they could make a difference within society. All of this, of course, was also central to the YPG project, to which I now return.

6.5 Young People's Geographies: Conversations Across the Divide

It's important to get young people's views across, cos, at the end of the day, they're the next generation. Either they shape it now or they shape it later. (Dave, 2007, VoxPop for BBC Radio Shropshire, February)

Our teacher often makes us teach each other. I've found that teaching and learning from each other works very well. By having to present what you have learnt to other pupils means that you really have to understand what you're talking about, so stuff really sticks. (Ben, 2007, pers. comm., YPG meeting, 18 January)

Arriving back in Leicester on an extremely windy day on 18th January for the 2nd YPG meeting I was very excited; with the students present the project would start in earnest. Four pupils from each school would attend and there was a wide range of ages with three Year 9 groups (KS3), two Year 10 groups (GCSE) and one Year 12 group (A-Level). The first meeting got students thinking about their own personal geographies and how they could work in collaboration with their teachers to co-design a curriculum to cover at least three weeks of geography teaching in their school. A lot of the discussion was based around whether students really wanted to learn about their everyday experiences in geography, and how we might go about researching our personal geographies. Pupils and their teachers finished the day by thinking about what they would like to do back in their school. Over this and the subsequent three meetings young people, their teachers, academic geographers and geography educators worked together on various participatory activities including learning walks, creative group work and small and large group discussions.

Arguments for the inclusion of the ‘student voice’ were becoming increasingly in vogue; laying at the heart of the new KS3 curriculum (QCA, 2008) as well as forming part of inspection process (Ofsted, 2005). However, this had all too often led to cursory efforts that failed to engage young people fully in participation. For example, during YPG we discussed a paper written by Matthews *et al.* which argued that young people had few opportunities to ‘engage in discussions about their economic, social and environmental futures’ which had resulted in a ‘culture of non-participation’ by young people in the UK (1999: 135). The YPG project, however worked with the notion of ‘student agency’ which emphasised the need for young people to become *active* and take responsibility.

At the heart of the YPG project was the idea of conversations (see Firth and Biddulph, 2009a and b). These changes couldn't happen unless teachers, students and academic geographers talked to each other in order to better understand each others' perspectives. A big part of the project was establishing these conversations – between pupils and teachers, pupils and academics, academics and teachers. Building on the dialogic approach advocated by Freire (1996) conversations enabled the sharing of perspectives between these groups, de-stabilising hegemonic power relationships between teacher and student in a similar way to *Making the Connection*. Half-way through the project Diane asked the students whether they needed teachers if they could work through things themselves. They immediately shouted out that they did still need teachers; they acted as their guide through complex geographical issues such as sustainable development, enabling them to see the bigger picture and to gain deeper understandings. There was thus a role for the teacher, just one as facilitator of 'learning engagements' rather than as teacher as transmitter of information to be absorbed uncritically (Fuller, 2008a).

These conversations led onto group work with groups of students from different schools working together at various points and subsequently working with their teacher and/or academics. Like at SEC and Glebe, working in groups led to group empowerment with pupils realising their voices did matter and that they could contribute and participate in the development of the geography curriculum. Diane Swift later shared her initial experiences of being involved in the project:

Making public each other's personal geographies has empowered us to make the curriculum simultaneously more challenging and more inclusive. Understanding each others' priorities and perceptions and involving young people in curriculum design is leading to some exciting ways of using the subject discipline in schools. (Diane Swift in Hawkins *et al.*, forthcoming)

How then might young people's voices be more fully incorporated into academic research? One activity that really worked during YPG was when students interviewed their teachers and asked them why they had wanted to get involved in the project. This gave Ian and I the idea of getting young people to interview academics and/or teachers with the dialogue/transcript forming the basis for publication. This would take those ideas of collaboration to yet another level.

6.6 Concluding Thoughts

Where does the thesis stand at this point? Through the illustration of three short case studies – YPG project, HLC and Barking Abbey School – this chapter has given a sense of how my research ended up spreading out into all sorts of different directions. Whilst it is much shorter than the previous two empirical chapters and may read as if I am trying to cover too much ground, I want to hint at the potential opportunities that can open up from getting involved in an organic public geographies project such as *Making the Connection*. As such I have explored how a combination of fortunate connections, collaborative research, involvement with the GA and making my work publically accessible have all led to my research being picked up by a range of people/organisations, taking it in new and exciting directions to which I have reacted to as much as planned. I have highlighted how these opportunities evolved from existing contacts coming together in new and different ways: Diane Swift, Eleanor Rawling, Ian Cook, John Morgan, Duncan Fuller and myself during the YPG project; Alice Williams and myself for the HLC case study; and Alan Parkinson networking on my behalf to lead to my involvement with Barking Abbey School.

The YPG project brought together the underlying themes of young people's geographies, public geographies and critical pedagogy. In creating structures that allow schools and teachers to actually engage with young people and allow their voices to be heard, the project has provided an example of how the geography curriculum can be re-designed in a more meaningful and inclusive way. I have drawn on the work of radical educationalists such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux and bell hooks who argue that students must be empowered to take responsibility for their own learning. My involvement has again responded to those calls made by Nicola Ansell for geographers to 'research with those who are actively constructing the policies and discourse that affect children' (2009: 205); indeed the YPG takes this one step further with young people being given the opportunity to have an authentic say on some of the educational processes that affect their lives.

I have shown how the development of the APG allowed the pilot to continue beyond its original trial period, with schools such as Barking Abbey and HLC entering its third cohort. These encounters enabled me to further consider how teachers are making and sharing resources. In doing so, I have identified the increasing importance of web-based activities in 'enabling conversations' and their role in developing more organic, informal networking opportunities amongst geographers (cf. Fuller and Askins, 2010). Indeed websites, blogs, podcasts and social networking sites (most notably facebook and twitter) will no doubt become increasingly significant in how networks and relationships are formed. This is an area that is moving at lightening pace and much of what I write here will be out of date even before my thesis has been bound. However, it is clear that such developments present yet further opportunities for academics to engage with wider publics (in this case school geography).

In exploring both the educational context and history of the pilot GCSE alongside how it is working out in practice I have been left with some questions to consider: In an educational climate that is moving towards more accountability, can a GCSE that is reliant on student-centred learning, coursework, teacher assessment and outdoor learning/fieldwork have a future? Will it forever remain a pilot, or will it be rolled out to the mainstream as a GCSE? What are the possible contradictions between the advocacy of both a bottom-up curricula and university involvement in curriculum development?

How did I get here? Had I been sticking to a rigid methodology these opportunities may have been overlooked for fear of veering too far off the linear pathway. Yet, having the time and space to let these unstructured encounters unfold was a central characteristic of my methodological approach. I have thus shown that rather than following the pilot GCSE (as originally intended) I ended up following the ‘buzz’ surrounding it; all those offshoots, enthusiasms, informal networks and connections. This notion of following/ being part of/ creating the buzz is something I will develop further in the concluding chapter.

Where next? Now that I have come to the end of the empirical chapters, it is time to pull together some of the empirical and theoretical threads woven throughout this thesis by critically reflecting on the original aims of the thesis as well as the underlying themes of critical pedagogy, young people’s geographies and public geographies. Finally, the concluding chapter will also give me the opportunity to reflect critically upon the style of research adopted in the thesis in relation to its effectiveness as research and its ability to speak to different audiences.

Chapter Seven: Reflections and Moving Forward

7.1 Introduction

Modern methodology has moved away from the idea of research as a series of hermetic stages, with set operations and set techniques performed in sequence. Research is conceived now as a process[...] The complexity of the research process and the lack of sequence does not threaten good practice in the conduct of the research. Ethnographic research, which is perhaps the most chaotic style of research, is thus not impugned by its flexibility, but has an advantage in enabling the researcher to make adjustments. However, careful design is still necessary so that the complexities are expected and planned for, and last-minute alternatives are anticipated and known. Modern ethnographers should not be taken unawares. (Brewer, 2000: 102-3)

Originally when asked ‘so what’s your PhD about?’, I would reply that it examined how an innovative student-centred geography GCSE was working out in practice. Easy. A nice quick way of summing up my research. This short spiel was learnt off by heart and used on many occasions (at conferences, when emailing potential collaborators, in reply to inquisitive friends and family, and, more recently, on job applications). However, I gradually became more and more uncomfortable relying on this and found it increasingly hard to describe exactly what my research had turned into. Yes, examining the pilot in theory and practice was still an important part of my research, but, on reflection, it has been as much about the approach to research as it has been about the content. Mixing up reading, writing and doing; synthesising the theoretical concepts of critical pedagogy, young people’s geographies and public geography; following my own work and seeing where this led; and exploring writing as a method all became entwined into the beast that became my research. This has been incredibly difficult to (re)present and squeeze onto 300 odd pages. So, why did I choose to take this route rather than sticking to the original plan and writing a straight-forward thesis that ‘did exactly what it said on the tin’?

7.2 Why I couldn't write my conclusions until after my viva

When I first submitted this thesis there was a conclusions chapter, but it wasn't the one you are about to read. This final chapter had been the one I had been dreading writing; I kept coming back to it and staring at a blank page. In the end I wrote a few pages which I was relatively happy with; reflecting on how why had gone about my research in the way I had, why I had written it the way I had and reflecting back on my original research aims regarding the pilot GCSE. Yet something was still missing and I didn't know what. It was only when I was having my moc-viva that I realised why I'd found it so tricky to write this last chapter; my thesis has been a product of co-learning and collaboration throughout and then suddenly there I was trying to pull together all these experiences, themes and literatures by myself. Engaging in conversations has been a central feature of this journey and the intention of the thesis was to provoke a reaction with the reader leading to yet more conversations; conversations about what's going on at school/ university geography, the state of geography, the public image of geography and so on. Kim England talks of research as being 'a process not just a product' and part of an 'ongoing, intersubjective (or more broadly a dialogic) activity' (1994: 82). I couldn't agree with her more. So until I'd had these sorts of conversations with my examiners – since they would be one of the thesis' most important audiences – I couldn't actually write the conclusions. The viva was thus an integral part of completing the thesis and I viewed the conversation with my examiners, Roger Lee and Nicola Thomas, as a means of reflecting critically on the thesis. With these reflections in mind I have structured this final chapter as my response to some of the questions and conversations that arose out of the viva. Finally, whilst these reflections are my own, I am grateful to Nicola and Roger for their role in this process.

7.3 Can you explain your methodology and why you chose it over another?

The social sciences need to re-imagine themselves, their methods, and their 'worlds' if they are to work productively in the twenty-first century where social relations appear increasingly complex, elusive, ephemeral, and unpredictable. There are various possibilities: perhaps, for instance, there is need for 'messy' methods. (Law and Urry, 2004: 390)

Multi-sited ethnographies makes anthropological enquiry more geographic in nature, not just locating in different cartographic spaces, but in the rhizomatic constitution of its subjects and sites. (Marcus, 2000: 17).

Throughout my continuing literature search I came across countless overviews and reports of developments within school geography or the stark nature of the situation (see Rawling, 2001 and more recently Winter, 2009). These of course had warrant in and of themselves, but what was missing was a sense of the energy and excitement of being caught up in these developments; of what it was like being part of the action/buzz from all the various groups of people involved (teachers, academics, young people and geographer educators).

At the centre of my PhD has been my approach to research, which I have termed 'rhizomatic ethnography'. This has allowed me to move away from the traditional read-do-write approach and follow the people/thing/argument/rhizome where it led rather than trying to map the entire entity that was the pilot GCSE. A 'following' methodology has been sensitive to the notion of research as social sculpture and I have argued that the thesis is not the end point, just part of an ongoing project that has been taken in different directions by various collaborators. A more organic, 'messy' approach to research has been essential to capture an unfolding research topic and has led, in keeping with the underlying theme of critical pedagogy, to research that is more participatory and mutually beneficial to all collaborators. As such this research became more than the

thesis could ever contain; things have escaped, threads and strands have not been followed through to the end and questions have been left unanswered.

By writing about and reflecting on the *process* of doing my PhD I have been able to contribute to much wider methodological debates. In so doing I hope that the thesis can act as inspiration for other students who want to steer away from the traditional read-do-write structure. I often struggled to visualise what this thesis would look like. However, I hope that having worked through this and come out the other side, this might provide others with the inspiration and legitimisation they need to convince less willing supervisors to support such an approach. Through a dual focus on theory and empirics I have also contributed to the field of geography more widely, answering calls for work that is both theoretically *and* empirically important;

On the whole cultural geographers' use of theory therefore remains resolutely eucomistic and representational; and therefore in danger of simply retracing steps already made by others. But cultural geography is not empirical enough either. Its range of methods is remarkably small and, underneath all the rhetoric, really quite conservative. (Thrift, 2000: 5)

The further down my journey I travelled the more I realised that the pilot GCSE was maybe not a tangible thing like in traditional 'following' research. At the beginning I thought my PhD was about following the pilot GCSE (and the people/ organisations involved in it), tracing networks, seeing how they worked and who was involved. However, I ended up following the energy/ buzz surrounding the GCSE instead and gradually became involved in creating and communicating the buzz myself. Part of this buzz is the belief that school geography needed something to rejuvenate it and the enthusiasms surrounding this: stories of teachers who had lost their ideals talking about spontaneous applause they'd received in the classroom, or things that had happened to

people 20 years previously still sticking with them, or teachers being influenced by their PGCE mentors. In essence the emotional side of things became really important. I therefore needed a methodology that could access and engage with people's emotions and enthusiasms (as well as my own), that could be sensitive to how people felt and that could examine how all of this translated through their praxis. In line with this I also wanted to write the thesis in such a way that it would have the buzz rather than just be about it. As such it is open about the often emotional, and at times overwhelming, experience of doing research; something that is too often lost in 'standard' research. Fuller and Askins have recently written that 'the emotionality of motivation' in research encounters is characteristic of organic public geographies research (2010: 13). Through an 'autoethnographic sensibility' I have been able to chart my own and others' motivations, passions and emotional connections to the subjects and issues involved in this research.

7.4 Do you see your thesis as a form of 'public geography'?

WE enact public geographies to a range of degrees, taking the university out into rest-of-life experiences: conversations with neighbours, children's teachers, people down the shops etc- accidental and banal engagements through which our academic-ness (training, "knowledge" etc) may play out (Fuller and Askins, 2007: 598-99).

Intrinsic to my approach have been the notions of flexibility, and making time and space for encounters with potential collaborators to 'happen'. Using Roger Sanjek's example of how his ethnographic research went public, I have illustrated the importance of networking and of making research publically accessible. However, it is not enough to assume that people will discover your work on their own, you need to do more to create a buzz around your work; get involved with relevant organisations, attend events, speak to people who are interested about your work, write a blog, or even send out free

copies of publications (which is what worked for Sanjek). Maybe it was fate that I struggled to write those conclusions first time round. In the original, I tried to make an argument about how serendipity had played a part in my research. However, it kept reading as though I had just gone out and spoken to a few people and saw where it led. No methodological rigour. And yet, this is (kind of) what had happened. In re-writing I am pleased to discover that others have written about precisely this. In one of the top peer-review journals no less. In their second progress report for *Progress in human geography* entitled 'Public Geographies II: Being organic' Duncan Fuller and Kye Askins argue that organic public geographies can/should:

foreground the necessarily unforeseeable processes involved as a *positive element* of this work, and argue for the value of such methodology/activity. Currently, it is difficult to find funding, time or space for 'unstructured' research of this nature: we need to build our case and argue that it has its own logic/structure, full of potential. (Fuller & Askins, 2010: 12, my emphasis)

Indeed, other geographers have outlined how academics' 'capacity for creativity, for experimentation, for time to think and write is being steadily eroded by externally-imposed demands' (Burgess, 2005: 279). Good quality *research* that engages with a variety of publics, which is fully collaborative and which has the potential to make a real impact beyond the walls of the ivory tower is being pushed out by 'government policies that do not fundamental value research and education for anything other than utilitarian goals' because they do not always produce traceable, measurable outcomes (Burgess, 2005: 279. See also Cope, 2008). Why should 'good' research always be seen as that which is outcome-oriented rather than process-oriented?

Alongside this need for increased time and space I have also highlighted that following unexpected leads can generate a lot of 'data'; what if your research proliferates in many different directions? How do you know which pathways to follow?

When do you decide on a cut off point for the actual written thesis? These are all questions that I have had to deal with. Unfortunately a PhD has to have a beginning, middle and end. The ending is by far the most difficult part. Although, a thesis must have an end point this does not mean that the research it is bounded by its extremities; publications and other collaborations can continue this work beyond the life of the thesis.⁸⁰

7.5 If you do research in this way, what does it mean when it comes to writing up?

In standard social scientific discourse, methods for acquiring data are distinct from the writing of the research report, the latter presumed to be an unproblematic activity, a transparent report about the world studied. (Richardson, 2000: 293)

A presentation of a rhizome on paper is impossible as such. How could one grasp a rhizome... on paper when one takes into account the principles of infinite entrances, multiplicity, infinite connections, resistance against ruptures, and cartography? A rhizome is never tangible as it is infinite and always changing. (Sermijn *et al.*, 2008: 645)

How best then to write up research that looks like this? I have suggested that reading about writing is just as important as reading about doing. I have built on Laurel Richardson's notion of 'writing as a method of inquiry' in which writing is seen as 'a method of discovery and analysis' through which the researcher can work through the twists and turns of their research (Richardson, 2000). In other words rather than simply (re)presenting what the researcher has found out, writing can be a way of 'knowing'; like Foucault (see above, p.33), if we knew at the beginning where our research was going to lead we may never have had the courage to write about it (Foucault cited in Martin *et al.*, 1988: 9.)

⁸⁰ For example, Evans *et al.*, 2008; Griffiths, 2010; Hawkins *et al.*, forthcoming.

Drawing on both George Marcus' (1994) notion of 'messy texts' and Sermijn *et al.*'s (2008) 'rhizomatic writing' I have sought an approach to writing that allows for the unfolding nature of the research, continuous reflections and the 'unpredictability in social relationships' (Frankham and Howes, 2006: 628). Whilst I wanted to set the reader up for what was to come I didn't want to give away everything at the beginning, but to 'make readers work', allowing them to read between the lines, take from it what they want and not impose meaning on them (Denzin, 1997: 224). Qualitative research can't be skim read, nor can individual chapters be made sense of in isolation but rather 'its meaning is in the reading' (Richardson, 2000: 924). Indeed I have attempted to answer calls to:

Publish work that other people want to reread, work that does not disclose itself fully on first reading but, through its craft and sensibility, entices the reader back for a second, deeper meditation on it (Agger, 2002: 457)

Building on this and drawing on arguments within public geography I have explored how best to translate the 'juiciness' of research encounters onto a page. This does not mean shying away from theoretical debates in favour of writing a publically accessible narrative, but rather experimenting with different methods of dissemination and alternative forms of engagement. The auto-ethnographic narrative style I have used in this thesis tries to capture the dynamics of public geographic research that was organic, fluid and connected the lives of a variety of young people, teachers, geography educators and academic geographers in a mutually beneficial way. However, many collaborative projects don't produce write-up-able outcomes; in such cases findings may be better communicated using different mediums such as films, WebPages/Blogs, art installations and so on, where stakeholders can contribute their views more fully (see Evans and Jones, 2008; <http://rescuegeography.wordpress.com/>).

7.6 Reflections on research aims

I have charted the changing nature of school-level geography and examined how education is a social process inextricably tied to the politics and government of the day. I highlighted how since the introduction of the NC in the late 1980s the curriculum became increasingly centralised and prescriptive. The geography that resulted quickly became stagnant, irrelevant and out of touch with its academic counterpart. A worrying combination of factors (including declining student numbers, the deprofessionalisation of teachers, an increasingly outdated public image and a move towards a skills rather than subject based curriculum) led to thinking about what a new more ‘lively and innovative’ geography might look like. I explored how the pilot GCSE developed out of a window of opportunity presented by a government white paper which coincided with these ‘underground’ developments. This was seized upon to design a ‘deceptively radical’ syllabus, which aimed to provide a ‘lively an innovative’ syllabus that would be much more exciting and relevant to students’ lives and allow for a deeper connection with geography’s vocabulary and grammar. Central to this was providing opportunities for teachers to re-engage with the subject and play a greater role in curriculum development and decision making.

This thesis has explored alternative approaches to teaching school geography that draw on young people’s everyday geographies to make the subject more exciting and relevant for them. Therefore, an emphasis on how the pilot has been working out in practice has dominated this thesis as I have tried to understand the impact the approach has had on teachers and students and their disciplinary and personal geographies.

I have highlighted how engaging with young people's everyday lives can have a profound effect. Drawing upon critical pedagogical theory I have illustrated how group pedagogy and learning conversations can de-stabilise power relationship in the classroom and lead to the co-construction of knowledges and a process of 'mutual education'. I also outlined the importance of allowing students to critically express their geographical knowledges in more creative forms and the important role that ICT and media can play in making the subject less exclusive. This has raised questions about the kinds of classroom materials needed for young people to critically and reflexively engage with the subject of geography; materials that connect the personal with the political allowing young people to see themselves as global (and local) citizens with certain rights and responsibilities.

Building on this are questions about how academics could best contribute to school geography in relevant and timely ways. I have illustrated the opportunities that the pilot presented for increased engagement between school and university geographies through small-scale public geographic practice. The evidence from *Making the Connection* and the YPG project both highlight the potential benefits of collaborations and conversations across the academic-school divide. In being involved in such projects I have drawn on the literature and arguments around public geographies and have argued for the importance of publically engaged work that can make a difference within and beyond the academy. Influenced by Michael Burawoy's notion of public sociology I argue that a key task of public geography is to 'make visible the invisible, to make the private public [and] to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life' (2005: 264). Communicating these geographies through more accessible writing and/or making them publically available to a wider audience is key.

The development of the pilot alongside debates in academic geography about public geography has resulted in much more interaction between the worlds of school and academic geography. Whilst, we haven't yet reached the stage where teachers and higher education people talk about the subject at regular intervals, with the results being fed into a continuous process of reviewing and reinventing the curriculum, there were definitely some interesting 'happenings' going on. In recent years there have been a whole host of attempts to cross these borders and engage in dialogue: new writing collaborations have formed (Castree, Fuller and Lambert, 2007); the subject associations have worked much closer together with the arrival of the APG; academics have spoken at the GA conferences, become members of working groups and editorial boards for geography education journals. Whereas at the pilot's inception very few academics wrote for geography education audiences (both teachers and geography educators), there was now a plethora of articles appearing. For example, in just one edition of the GA's lead journal *Geography* in Autumn 2008, there were articles by Tim Creswell, Claire Dwyer, Tim Hall and Hayden Lorimer. Finally, crossing these borders is also one of the central theme in the ESRC *Engaging Geographies* seminar series which involves a whole host of geography practitioners.⁸¹

I wish to argue that one of the successes of the pilot has been the CPD support and opportunities available to teachers, especially those who were involved in the first cohort of schools. Involving teachers in the curriculum development process has enabled teachers to 'think geographically' and (re)engage with the subject that is geography. Many have used their experiences to further their professional career. For example, Phil Wood, the teacher who had spoken so passionately at the Aston pilot

⁸¹ <http://engaginggeography.wordpress.com/>, Website accessed 20th September 2009.

meeting, moved from being a subject leader in geography at a school in Lincolnshire to a Lecturer in geography education at Leicester University; in September 2008 Alan Parkinson, who I met at the YPG project, began a post as Secondary Development Leader at the GA; and another teacher from the first cohort, Justin Woolliscroft, moved from being Head of Geography at a school in Staffordshire to become Chief Examiner for a new OCR syllabus and from 2007 co-ordinated the Secondary Geography Quality Mark for the GA. Rather than seeing this as losing innovative teachers, I would argue that by moving into more powerful positions there is more potential for geography's voice to be heard within the wider education system and more potential for bigger inroads to take place in the future.

One of the tensions this research has outlined is between top down and bottom up pedagogy, however, I'd like suggest that this contradiction can be understood positively. On the one hand change and improvement to the pedagogy and approach in the geography curriculum are best generated at school and classroom level; teacher and pupil creativity must be allowed to flourish. On the other hand, preventing the persistence of out-dated and delivery forms of geography is of vital importance and the GNC together with exam boards must play some role in this. Yet, the NC and, perhaps to a lesser extent, its supporting structures, are the antithesis of school and classroom generated change. What I believe my research has shown is that educational structures such as the NC need to be more flexible, being enabling as well as controlling. It is vital that dialogue takes place at regular intervals between academics, teachers, geography educationalists and young people and that these conversations are taken seriously, feeding into a cycle of continuous curriculum change.

Another important issue I have explored is how teachers are making, using and sharing resources in new and interesting ways; hinting at the role of ICT in creating more informal, organic teacher networks. Teachers are now using a whole host of social media (including blogs, websites, twitter, ning) to form relationships, share ideas and take the subject in new and interesting directions. These informal, more organic associations play a vital role in creating the time and space for teachers to engage in creative dialogue. They also offer the potential to facilitate conversations across the divide. However, I argue that the subject associations also need to play a crucial role in enabling access to (some of) these networks, so that teachers and schools currently bypassed by these developments can become part of local, national and global communities of geographers. With many recent developments on this front, including the launch of the GTT website and an overhaul of the GA website, there is much to suggest that these concerns have been recognised and are being worked on. Further research into the role of social media within geography teaching would be a worthwhile area of research.

My story ends with a brief fast forward to September 2009. Even as I write these reflections teachers up and down the country have begun teaching new GCSE specifications; the OCR pilot GCSE ceased to be in existence after GCSEs were awarded in July 2009. This was the last change in a much wider overhaul of the whole 11-19 curriculum. I had heard snippets of information and rumours about what these new GCSEs might look like. These had not filled me with too much hope as the changes effected in the KS4 review meant stricter guidelines regarding coursework and fieldwork, despite much lobbying from the GA and people like Eleanor Rawling. At the *Geography 21 Conference* in July 2007, at which I was invited to speak about *Making*

the Connection (see Griffiths and Cook, 2007) there was much discussion of the abolishment of coursework and its replacement by controlled assessment. This would have a significant impact on the pilot specification since coursework lay at its very core. I came away feeling quite depressed and how the pilot might suffer the same fate as the curriculum development projects of the 1970s.

However, at the 2008 GA Annual Conference I thought I should find out more about what was happening and went over to the OCR stand. There I spoke to their subject officer for geography – Tim Kendrick – who explained that the new GCSE specifications would be made online the following week. Voicing my concerns Tim reassured me that it was ‘not all doom and gloom’ and that, in fact, one of the best things to come out of the pilot was its wider influence; in the overhaul other examining boards had been influenced by certain aspects of the pilot. This was great news! Furthermore one of the two new specifications that OCR themselves would be offering – OCR A – had been developed directly from the pilot GCSE and shared its underlying principles and ethos (although the move from coursework to controlled assessment had obviously meant that they were unable to continue to roll out the pilot as it stood). Since they still had the principle examiner and several other people originally involved in the pilot, Tim felt that theirs would still be the most ‘lively and innovative’ in approach (2008, pers. comm., 28 April).

Doing a bit of digging a few months ago I discovered a couple of articles written about the new GCSE specifications, and specifically about the OCR A syllabus referred to as ‘arguably the most radical’ (Bustin, 2009: 57). The links to the pilot were obvious: The *Extreme Environments* module sounded nothing but identical to its doppelganger

from the pilot; *You as a Global Citizen* included a task to ‘Investigate how consumer decisions may have a positive or negative impact on people’ reminiscent of our work at SEC; and the *Similarities and Differences* module consisted of a study of a location in the UK, ‘your place’ (see Johns and Wood, 2008; Bustin, 2009). Bustin highlighted how one of the major differences between this and the other new specs was in the assessment. OCR A was the only syllabus which advocated a variety of ‘creative pupil presentation methods’ including reflective journals, poetry and video recordings for the *Global Citizen* module (OCR, 2009). The fourth module, called *Shaping our changing world*, which was futures based also incorporated the use of ICT via a computer based test. However, every other syllabi was much more traditional in its assessment with written exams and written work at the core. Since one of my key findings had been the potential of more creative forms of engagement with the subject, this raised lots of questions; would students like those at Glebe, for example, no longer be able to be entered for GCSE geography? This seemed a real shame and was very disappointing. It was crucial that it was not only the subject content that continued to be updated, but the pedagogical insights aswell. Finally, there was clearly still a lot of work to be done on the subject’s public image; the arrival of the more ‘radical’ OCR A syllabus had led to headlines such as ‘What a joke: how pupils can pass GCSE geography by drawing a cartoon’ in the Daily Mail (Harris, 2008). Nevertheless, it was both encouraging and inspiring to think that changes had been made in a major curriculum reform.

Appendices

Appendix One: Timetable of Empirical ‘Evidence’

The following table provides details of all the points, places and times at which ‘data’ that contributed to the empirical evidence of the thesis was collected. Listed in chronological order, it represents the ‘expanded field’ of my research.

Date	Methodologies	Place/ Person	‘Evidence’ collected
5 th April 2004	Participant Observation	GA Annual Conference, Canterbury	Research diary
April – May 2004	Co-led student workshops, participant observation.	Exchange Values art installation, University of Central England’s International Performance Space, Bournville, Birmingham	Research diary, photographs
5 th May 2004	Participant Observation, informal conversations with teachers	<i>OCR Pilot Geography GCSE</i> planning meeting, Aston University, Birmingham	Research diary
23 rd May 2004	Semi-structured interview (recorded)	Ben Ballin, projects team, Tide~ Global Learning, Birmingham. Interview held at Tide~	Interview transcript
8 th July 2004	Participant observation, informal conversation	<i>Getting Started with the Optional Units</i> meeting, RGS-IBG, London	Research diary
8 th July 2004	Semi-structured interview (recorded)	Eleanor Rawling, then Subject Officer for Geography at QCA. Interview held at RGS-IBG, London	Interview transcript
12 th July 2004	Semi-structured interview (recorded)	Richer Carter, Head of Geography, Westfield Boys	Interview transcript

		School*, Birmingham (*not real school name)	
31 st April- 1 st May 2005	Participant Observation	GA Annual Conference, Derby	Research diary
23 rd January 2006	Set-up interview: semi-structured (recorded)	Jacky Wilson, Head of Geography, St Edmund Campion School, Birmingham. Interview held at school	Interview transcript
14 th February 2006	Semi-structured interview (recorded)	David Lambert (Chief Executive, GA) and Diane Swift (at that time part-time project leader, GA and lecturer, University of Wolverhampton). Interview held at GA headquarters, Sheffield	Interview transcript
14 th February 2006	Semi-structured interview (not recorded)	Peter Jackson, Professor of Human Geography, University of Sheffield. Interview held at university	Notes from interview/ research diary
24 th February – 25 th March 2006	Case study one: participant observation, informal/semi-structured learning conversations, VoxPops, visual methods.	Students from Class 2b GCSE geography class and Jacky Wilson, Head of Geography, St Edmund Campion School, Birmingham	Research diary, lesson plans, photos, written communication, VoxPop transcripts, video material from performances, students' coursework, written feedback (specific details expanded below)
14 th March 2006	Visual methods; VoxPops of student reflections	Students from Class 2b GCSE geography class and students from 2006 GMC class, performing at The University of Birmingham	Research diary, video recordings, VoxPop transcripts
17 th March, & 24 th March	VoxPops	Students from Class 2b GCSE geography class ,St	VoxPop transcripts

2006		Edmund Campion School, Birmingham	
6 th & 7 th Aril 2006	Participant observation, group discussions	Public Geographies Symposium, University of Birmingham. Co-organised conference; presented introductory paper; led discussion; participated in small group discussion (including Noel Castree, Ian Cook, Duncan Fuller, Steve Hinchliffe, David Lambert, Don Mitchell; Diane Swift)	Research diary; minutes from discussions; Ppt presentations; evaluation of event.
20 th September 2006	Semi-structured interview (not recorded)	Martin Crabbe, Head of Geography, Glebe School, West Wickham. Interview held away from school in Clapham	Research diary; interview notes
8 th November 2006	Semi-structured interview (recorded)	John Morgan (then project leader at FutureLab & lecturer at University of Bristol). Interview held at FuterLab.	Interview transcript
13 th November , 27 th November & 1 st December 2006; 29-31 st January, 22-23 rd March 2007, 30 th April-1 st May, 12 th November 2007; 30-31 st January 2008	Case study 2: participant observation (at school and at various events e.g. farmers market, Sustainable Schools conference); informal/ semi-structured learning conversations; visual methods	Students from Glebe School and Martin Crabbe, Head of Geography at Glebe School, West Wickham.	Research diary; notes from learning conversations; photos; emails/ text communication.
15 th November 2006; 18 th January, 15 th March & 6 th July 2007; 24 th April & 5 th November 2008	Participant observation; learning conversations	Young People's Geography meetings (New Walk Museum, Leicester; Nottingham University; GA headquarters, Sheffield)	Research diary; copies of Ppt. Presentations, emails; YPG Website (including VoxPops from students, examples of

			work; feedback from teachers); Year 1 project evaluation.
19 th January 2007	Semi-structured interview (recorded)	Pete Flaxman, geography teacher, Barking Abbey School, London.	Interview transcript
19 th January & 27 th March 2007	Case study 3: Focus groups; participant observation	Year 10 GCSE geography students and Pete Flaxman, Barking Abbey School, London.	Focus group transcript; research diary; DVD material; emails, telephone conversations etc.
27 th February 2007	Semi-structured interview (not recorded)	Daniel Roycroft, geography teacher, Hadley Learning Centre, Telford	Research diary; notes from meeting.
28 th February & 28 th March 2007	Case study 4: Participant observation	GCSE geography students and Daniel Roycroft, Hadley Learning Centre, Telford	Research diary; email communications.
10 th April 2007	Participant observation	GA Annual conference, Derby. Conversation with Tim Kendrick, subject officer for geography, OCR.	Research diary; informal conversations/ feedback on paper

Appendix Two: St Edmund Campion Lesson Plans

All lesson plans authors own work, except week three lesson plans where credit goes to Alice Williams.

‘Making the Connection’ by Helen Griffiths for St Edmund Campion Catholic School, Birmingham

Unit of Work: People as Consumers (Yr 10)

Week 1, lesson 1

Lesson length: 60 minutes

Key Questions	Lesson Activity	Purpose and /or link to key idea	Resources	Homework	Time
<p>What are consumers?</p> <p>What do people consume?</p> <p>Which places are involved in consumption?</p>	<p>Class Brainstorm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What did they eat for dinner last night? - Where did it come from? - What do they know about the person that could have produced their food? 	<p>Stimulate thinking and find out what children already know. To enable children to familiarise themselves with consumption. Appreciate that consume objects and services.</p>			10 mins
<p>Where does your money go?</p> <p>Who/where are the producers?</p> <p>Who/where are the consumers?</p>	<p>The Banana Game:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Divide group into 6 that represent the links in the chain - Ask groups to imagine what their role involves - How much of 30p retail price should they get? - Present arguments - Reveal situation and discuss. 	<p>To enable children to understand that there are multi-dimensional links between people and places, the different scales at which the causes and effects of these links operate and the impacts of these upon different people and places e.g. upon different people within the consumer chain.</p>	<p>Copy of The Banana Game (available to download from: http://www.bananalink.org.uk/ then click on 'Resources', 'Banana Link Resources' and scroll down).</p>		30 mins
<p>What are the effects of our consumption practices? What can (can't) we know about these effects?</p> <p>What connections are there between us and people elsewhere in the world?</p>	<p>Exchange Values PowerPoint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explain the story behind the exhibition - Talk about the gallery space and show photos. - Explain homework task 	<p>Understand that different groups of people have different views of consumption and that these have different environmental and social consequences.</p>	<p>Laptop and projector</p> <p>Photocopies of 'A banana is not an easy thing' (available from http://www.exchange-values.org/ then click on 'story of the project')</p>	<p>Keep journal throughout:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -what I wanted to find out/learn/ know - what I have learned so far -what I need to find out/learn/know next. 	10 mins
	<p>NB Children to start reading if there is sufficient time at the end of the lesson.</p>	<p>Understand how consumer decisions can lead to uneven development i.e. who gains and who loses as a result of consumer decisions.</p>	<p>Copies of farmers voices on CD (available from http://www.exchange-values.org/ by clicking on growers numbers)</p>	<p>Read 'A banana is not an easy thing'. Go shopping and listen to farmers voices.</p>	+ 5 mins to explain homework

'Making the Connection' by Helen Griffiths for St Edmund Campion Catholic School, Birmingham

Unit of Work: People as Consumers (Yr 10)

Week 1, lesson 2

Lesson length: 60 minutes

Key Questions	Lesson Activity	Purpose and /or link to key idea	Resources	Homework	Time
<p>Who gains and where are they located?</p> <p>Who loses and where are they located?</p> <p>What alternative consumer scenarios are there?</p>	<p>Small group discussion discussing what they heard/read and their reaction to this experience.</p> <p>Present group findings to class.</p>	<p>Understand that different groups of people have different views of consumption and that these have different environmental and social consequences.</p> <p>Understand how consumer decisions can lead to uneven development i.e. who gains and who loses as a result of consumer decisions.</p>			<p>15 mins (small groups)</p> <p>10 mins (group findings)</p>
<p>Where are the producers?</p> <p>Where are the consumers?</p>	<p>World map activity: - Pupils trace the connections between the things they have on them (clothes, watches, mobile phones, bags etc.) and where they were made.</p>	<p>To link consumption with geography by using maps; to help understanding of the spatial dimension to purchases.</p>	<p>Photocopies of world maps.</p> <p>Atlases to locate countries.</p>		15 mins
<p>How am I connected to different people around the world?</p> <p>What do I know/ want to know about the lives of producers?</p> <p>What are my rights/responsibilities as a consumer? How might they promote a sustainable future?</p>	<p>Ask pupils to imagine that one of these items is to be part of an exhibition being held in the factory where the item was made. What would they want to say to the person who had made their coat/ phone? What questions would they want to ask of the person who had made it? (e.g. write a letter/ poem etc.)</p>	<p>Communicate different interpretations of the rights & responsibilities of consumers: Explain and justify their own consumer choices</p> <p>Understand how globalisation influences their own lives and the lives of other people in the consumer chain and the different opinions and debates which exist about these relationships.</p> <p>Understand that there are concrete connections between who we are and what millions of other people elsewhere can be (& vice versa) and what each of</p>		<p>Finish exercise at home.</p>	15 mins

		us thinks we can, should and might (not) want to do if/once we understand them better.			
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‘Making the Connection’ by Helen Griffiths for St Edmund Campion Catholic School, Birmingham

Unit of Work: People as Consumers (Yr 10)

Week 2, lesson 1

Lesson length: 60 minutes

Key Questions	Lesson Activity	Purpose and /or link to key idea	Resources	Homework	Time
	Volunteers to read out their letters to the rest of the class.				15 mins Jackie
What does your mobile phone mean to you? What do you use your mobile phone for?	Introduce case study of mobile phone. - Ask group how many of them have mobile phones. What do they use them for? What does their phone mean to them? Banana very simple commodity to trace, but mobile phone much more complex i.e. made up of different components.				5 mins Ian

<p>What is a mobile phone made up of?</p> <p>Where do the components come from?</p>	<p>In groups get phones out, take the back off and look for the 'made in' stickers for the different parts of your phone (e.g. battery, handset etc.) Map these onto copy of world map.</p> <p>What about the parts that there are no 'made in' stickers for? Quick presentation illustrating all the different components that make up their mobile phones (e.g. battery, handset, plastics, metals, microphone, circuit boards, liquid crystal display) and where they come from. Class to add these links on their maps.</p>		<p>Laptop & Projector</p> <p>Photocopies of world maps</p> <p>Atlases</p>		<p>25 mins</p> <p>Helen</p> <p>Ian</p>
	<p>Introduce 'Geographies of Material Culture' course – university equivalent of People as Consumers. Tell class about student presentations and say they have been invited to give a presentation on mobile phones as part of this. This will involved a day at the university. Alice is doing the course and will also be doing a presentation.</p>				<p>10 mins</p> <p>Ian</p>
	<p>Tell pupils that they will need to research, write and rehearse a 15 minute presentation/ performance. This will take place over the next three lessons where they will have to do detective work.</p>		<p>Copies of handout with key questions to consider for their presentation.</p>		<p>5 mins</p> <p>Ian</p>

‘Making the Connection’ by Helen Griffiths for St Edmund Campion Catholic School, Birmingham

Unit of Work: People as Consumers (Yr 10)

Week 2, lesson 2

Lesson length: 60 minutes

Key Questions	Lesson Activity	Purpose and /or link to key idea	Resources	Homework	Time
	Class to sit in four groups of 6. Go over presentation handout. Discuss what issues have had an impact on them so far- how might they convey these to other people?				15 mins Ian
	Each group to look at a different stage in the mobile phone network. E.g. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raw materials (e.g. Coltan, plastics) 2. Assembly (Mexico, China) 3. Uses of mobile phones (UK, Developing world) 4. What can we do with old phones? (recycling) Each group given an article/ website to read as a starting point. What else do they want to find out? Each group to carry out detective work looking at the various people, places and environments behind that stage of the mobile phone network.		Copies/ printouts of newspaper articles, website, resources to start from etc. Internet	Further detective work.	35 mins All
	Decide format of the presentation and decide on roles e.g. writers, researchers, presenters etc.				10 mins All

‘Making the Connection’ by Alice Williams for St Edmund Campion Catholic School, Birmingham

Unit of Work: People as Consumers (Yr 10)

Week 3, lesson 1

Lesson length: 60 minutes

Key Questions	Lesson Activity	Purpose and /or link to key idea	Resources	Homework	Time
<p>Introduce Helen and Spencer to the class</p> <p>RECAP: What is each group’s role?</p> <p>What is each individual’s role?</p> <p>What did you find when doing the homework?</p>	<p>Recap of the outcomes of the last lesson. Reminding each other of aims</p> <p>Short group discussion. Decide what they want/ must find out next.</p> <p>Discuss ideas</p>	<p>Focus aims/ objectives of the lesson.</p> <p>Stimulate excitement/ enjoyment/ interest of last lesson.</p> <p>Consolidate the need to work as a team. Allow each member to have a purpose/ say in what to do next.</p>			5/10 mins
<p>RESEARCH: What are the main themes of your section?</p> <p>What information do you need to prove/ understand these themes?</p>	<p>Allow individuals to ‘get on’ with their role/ task.</p> <p>Drawing/ Internet searching Script writing Discussion of presenting/ performing methods</p>	<p>Focus importance of the presentation. Build confidence in own research.</p> <p>Improve study skills/ team work</p> <p>Find out all information needed for presentation/ performance</p>	<p>Internet</p> <p>Paper, pens, colouring pencils</p> <p>Teacher/ uni student input/ discussion/ aiding of groups</p>	Continue at home	30 mins
<p>REPORTING: What has each group found out?</p> <p>What is most important?</p> <p>How should all these sections link together?</p>	<p>Reporting back to the other three groups</p> <p>Hands up ideas of what worked well/ responses to key questions?</p>	<p>Allow all the class to be involved in what each group is learning about.</p> <p>Discuss and feel empowered by each others choices/ ideas</p>	White board for key ideas		10 mins

ROUND UP: How do we feel?	Any class questions?	Reassure them of their progress Maintain confidence and excitement stays high		Continue research/ writing/ acting/ ideas at home	5 mins
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‘Making the Connection’ by Alice Williams for St Edmund Campion Catholic School, Birmingham

Unit of Work: People as Consumers (Yr 10)

Week 3, lesson 2

Lesson length: 60 minutes

Key Questions	Lesson Activity	Purpose and /or link to key idea	Resources	Homework	Time
RECAP: (Explain idea of conclusion phone calls) In your groups decide your final plan What is each individual’s role? Have you all completed the handout for homework?	Recap of the outcomes of the last lesson Short group discussion. Decide what they are going to do.	Focus aims of each performance			5/10 mins
SCRIPT WRITING: What are you all going to say? What are you going to do?	Allows the group to make decisions and work on the themes Drawing/ writing Script writing Discussion of presenting/ performance methods	Improve study skills/ teamwork	Paper, pens, colouring pencils Teacher/ uni student input/ discussion/ aiding of groups		20 mins
PRACTICING: Act out what you have planned	Practice in 4 corners of the room	Allows each group to test/	Space!		20 mins

Is this going to work?		solidify script and gain confidence			
What else do you need?					
ROUND UP: Are you ready?	Any class questions?	Reassure them of their progress Maintain confidence and excitement stays high		Practice once more before Tuesday	5 mins

‘Making the Connection’ by Helen Griffiths for St Edmund Campion Catholic School, Birmingham

Unit of Work: People as Consumers (Yr 10)

Week 4, lesson 1

Lesson length: 60 minutes

Key Questions	Lesson Activity	Purpose and /or link to key idea	Resources	Homework	Time
EVALUATION: How did you think your presentations went? What did you learn from your day at university and from this project? How have you worked together as a team?	Small group discussions about what they have learnt: 1. About geography 2. About themselves 3. About university 4. About mobile phones/ bananas One group member to collect thoughts together on paper ready to feed back to rest of class.	Draw together what they have learnt so far and reflect on experience. Maintain confidence	Paper		10 mins
FEEDBACK: What are your collective thoughts as a group?	Class feedback of group reflections.	Discuss and feel empowered by each others reflections/ideas.			5 mins
COURSEWORK: BRAINSTORM: What do you want to do your coursework on? E.g. bananas, mobile phones, something else?	Individual Brainstorm: What are the interesting things that have hit you so far? What are you thinking about? How could you convey this to others?	Focus aims/ objectives of their coursework. Summarise what they have learnt so far.	Paper		20 mins

PLAN: How are you going to do your coursework?	What do you enjoy doing? (e.g. writing, drawing, IT) Is there a way of incorporating this into your course? What more do you want/need to find out in order to do your coursework to a high standard?		Teacher/ Uni members input/ discussion/ aiding pupils.		15 mins
ROUND UP: Is everyone happy/ know what they are doing for their coursework?	Any class questions?			Continue to work on coursework (e.g. planning, research, writing, filming, drawing)	5 mins

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Unit of Work: People as Consumers (Yr 10)

Week 4, lesson 2

Lesson length: 60 minutes

Key Questions	Lesson Activity	Purpose and /or link to key idea	Resources	Homework	Time
RECAP: Go over coursework deadline and ensure that everyone knows what is required of them.	Recap of what they need to produce.	Focus aims/ objectives of their coursework.			5 mins
PLAN: What points do you want to get across? How are you going to put these in a logical order?	Continue planning the structure of their coursework	Reassure them of their progress	Teacher/ Uni members input/ discussion/ aiding pupils.		20 mins
RESEARCH: What else do you need to find out?	Continue with extra research (where necessary) on Internet. Do further reading e.g. of newspaper articles.		Copies of information sheets from week 2.	Continue with coursework	20 mins

REPORT: What's your coursework on? How are you doing it? (e.g. poem, poster, film, diary) Why are you doing it this way?	In pairs take it in turns to ask each other questions about coursework (to be filmed).	Build confidence			5-10 mins Throughout lesson
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'Making the Connection' by Helen Griffiths for St Edmund Campion Catholic School, Birmingham

Unit of Work: People as Consumers (Yr 10)

Week 5, lesson 2

Lesson length: 60 minutes

Key Questions	Lesson Activity	Purpose and /or link to key idea	Resources	Homework	Time
RECAP: Recap what we told them last lesson about plasma screen at the RGS conference in September.	Quickly go over plasma screen activity: They have the opportunity to speak to academic geographers and tell them what they could do to make school geography more interesting. What would they like to say to them?	Give pupils the opportunity to voice their own opinions about school geography and the ways in which they learn best.	Plasma screen handouts.		5 mins
DISCUSS: What can academic geographers do to make school geography more interesting? What topics would you like them to do research on? Why? What topics would you not like them to do research on? Why? How would you like them to present their research so that you can get the most out of it?	Individually/ in small groups use the prompt questions (if necessary) to voice their opinions to academic geographers (to be filmed in a separate classroom).				5-10 mins

<p>EVALUATION: Class summary of the People as Consumers module.</p>	<p>Mindmap/ concept map activity.</p> <p>Use the whiteboard to construct a group mindmap: pupils asked what they have learnt from this unit of work. Each to go up and add a strand to the mindmap.</p> <p>Pupils to make their own copies of the mindmap, adding anything extra to them. This can be used as a summary of what they have learnt from the module.</p>	<p>Able to describe the spatial impact of mobile phones/bananas e.g. sources of raw materials, location of manufacturing, consumers etc.</p> <p>Understand that there are multi-dimensional links between people and places.</p> <p>Understand how consumer decisions can lead to uneven development i.e. who gains and who loses as a result of consumer decisions.</p> <p>What alternative scenarios are there? e.g. fair-trade/ recycling What difference can this make?</p>	<p>Whiteboard.</p> <p>Copies of concept map for pupils.</p>	<p>Finish coursework</p>	<p>30 mins</p>
<p>ROUND UP: Any class questions?</p>	<p>Thank pupils for their hard work and ask pupils to fill out consent forms.</p>				<p>5 mins</p>

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