The discomforting rise of 'public geographies' - a 'public' conversation (or is it a 'play'? (Paul B, 2006))

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And **(unless there's a special edition in the offing, in which case it's all my own work - we only 'talked', they're all my ideas*...)***

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(mine, mine, mine, mine….)

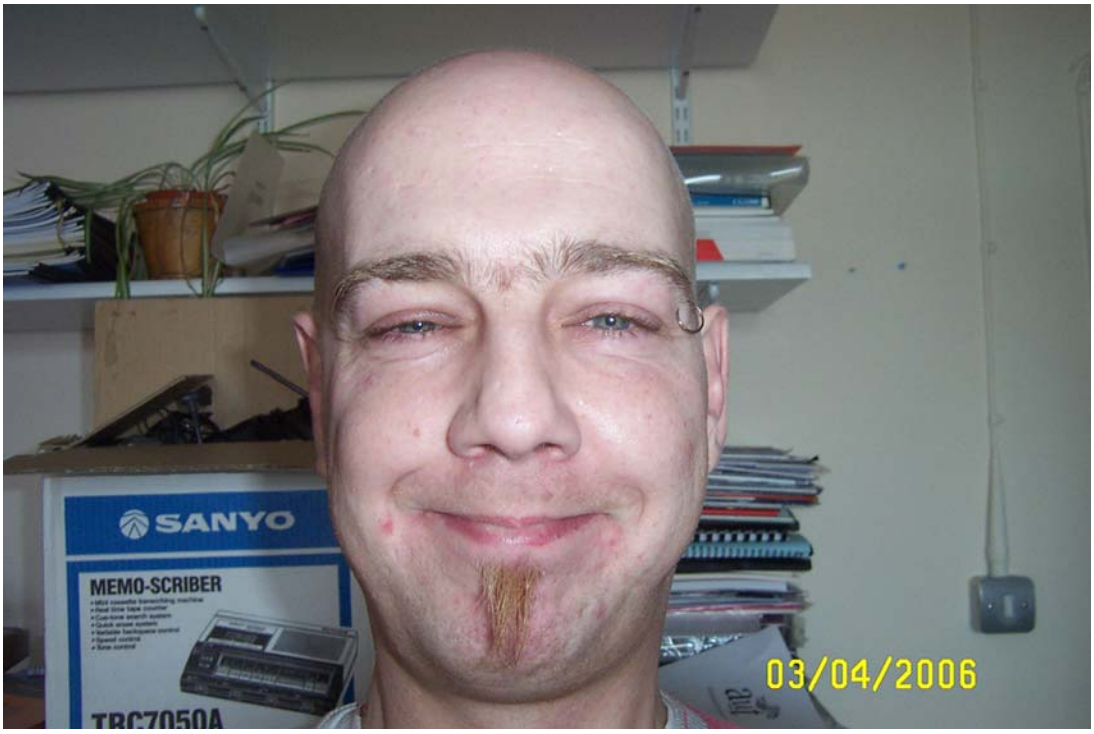
'Introduction'

I was invited to contribute to a two-day seminar on the theme of co-authorship and public geographies held on the 6th and 7th of April 2006. When advertised, the call for participation noted how, 'In the wake of - and alongside - Michael Burawoy's championing of a new public sociology, a variety of geographies are now emerging which call themselves 'public'. For example, Derek Gregory and Michael Dear have embarked on a Very public geographies project, whose aim is to inject geographers' views on important debates into public debate; Noel Castree (in press) has been admiring the recent 'public intellectual' writing of geographers David Harvey, Michael Watts and Neil Smith; and Kevin Ward (in press) has been asking what geographers can learn from debates about public sociology. A new field of 'public geography' is, we believe, beginning to take shape. So, for this symposium, we have given a diverse group of speakers a simple brief: to talk on the theme of 'my public geographies, our public geographies'. I was asked to speak alongside Don Mitchell (Geography, Syracuse University), Steve Hinchcliffe (Geography, Open University), Noel Castree (Geography, University of Manchester), David Lambert / Diane Swift (Geographical Association), John Bryson (Geography, University of Birmingham), and Kevin Ward (Geography, University of Manchester, who was unfortunately unable to come).

As it happened some time after accepting the invitation I discovered that the first day of the symposium coincided with a day of strike action at Northumbria to save the jobs and grades of colleagues in the English Language Centre (see http://journals.aol.co.uk/rikowskigr/Volumizer/entries/1009). Clearly this placed me in a rather difficult position – wanting to help defend my colleagues whilst wanting to participate in something… well… you'll see. So, after much thought and discussion with colleagues I (maybe wrongly??) decided to take part, but assuaged my guilt a little by deciding to do something that revolved around what was going on at Northumbria, that would highlight what was going on at Northumbria, that would be a little more fun, more odd, more potentially unacceptable (to my line managers, anyway) than academics are usually 'allowed' to do. On that day, I wasn't really working for them; I certainly wasn't representing them (other than 'badly' perhaps); I wasn't really there. But I'm very, very, very glad I was….

D My mum says I've always been a worrier.

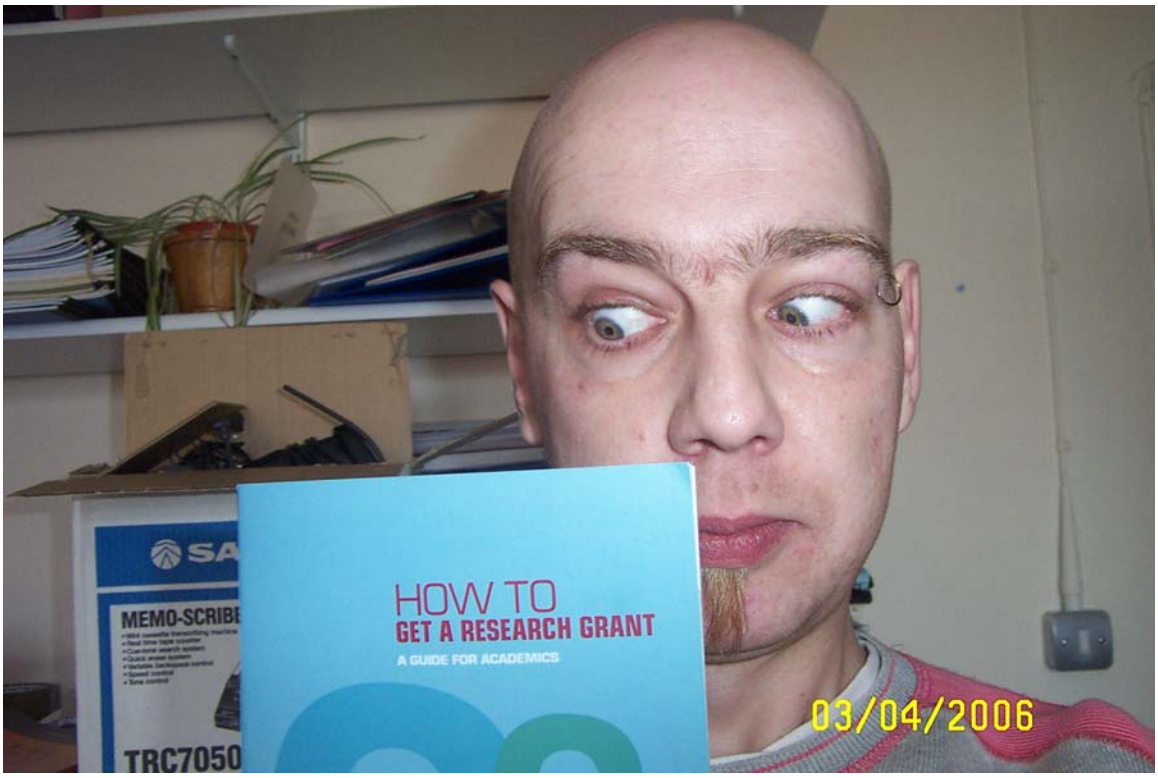
When I first heard about this event, being invited to contribute, I felt pleased.



Excited. Even honoured. Public geographies! (Now known affectionately as 'pug geogs' at our place due to a misspelt email I circulated seeking debate.... Very apt).

I read the email postings; ride the crit-geog-forum storm in silence (see http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A1=ind0602&L=crit-geog-forum); and check out the friendly symposium website (http://www.gees.bham.ac.uk/research/pgwg/symposium.htm). Yes, an opportunity to be 'in' on something interesting…,

something intellectually stimulating, something that seemingly offers up a more engaged and engaging alternative geographical, academic even, future, something that seemingly fuses my developing interests in activism, participatory geographies, and the multifarious geographies of the academy.



Something that offers new opportunities for, and lines of, academic production..., promotion..., participation..., prestige!

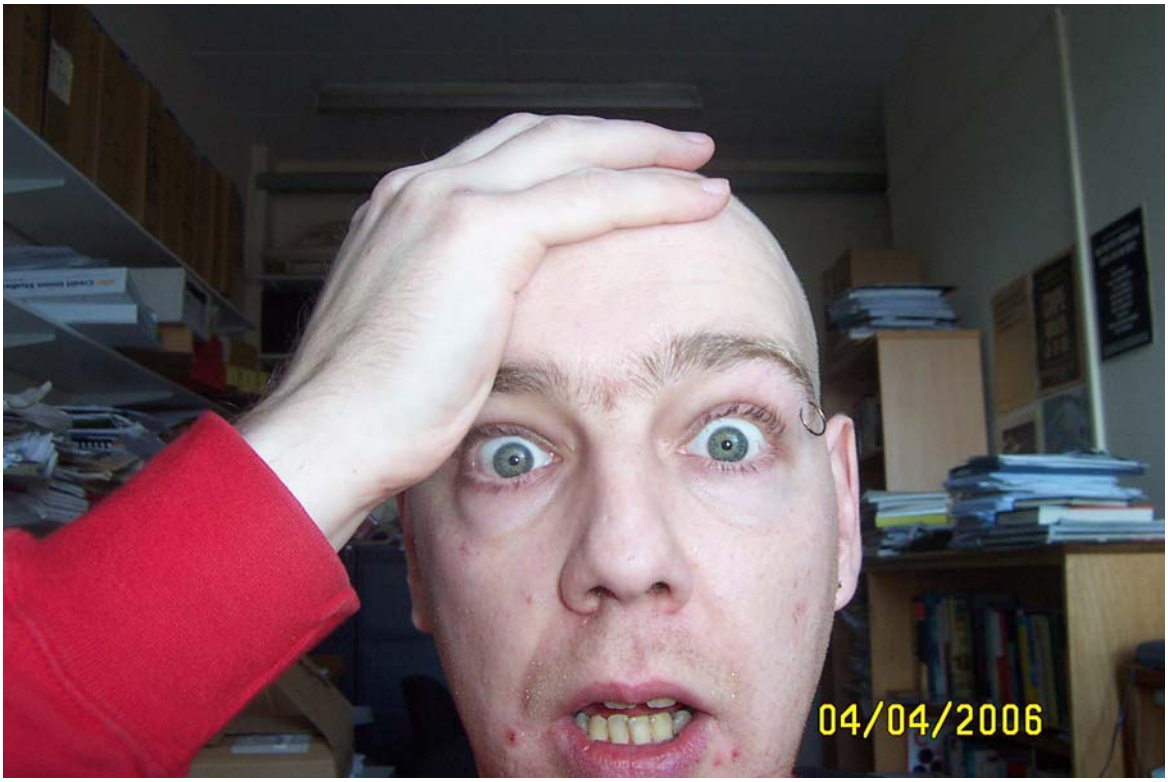
[I began to worry. Something not quite right]

Perhaps I ought to *read* some Burawoy? (see 2004a; 2004b; 2005a; 2005b).

[Why am I worried?]
They've already got 'public geographies working group' in Birmingham!

[Worried]
Best get those Castree (2006) and Ward (2005) pieces too. I wonder what they're saying? Where are they saying it?

So quick!! I'm so behind....
[Hmm, worried thoughts]
Bloody Gregory and Dear - are they taking the piss?!
There hasn't even been a 'public turn' yet (has there?) and someone's already beyond public geographies. I'm SO behind!
[Why am I worried?]



Oh god, the AAG are getting involved (see Murphy, 2006)
[Why am I worried? Think!]

I perhaps ought to see what *other* sociologists have been saying too - where are they going with this, why, and are they happy with the implications??

[Why AM I worried? NEED TO THINK!!]

But, I *need* to read, *need* to write, *need* to read, *need* to write, *need* to read *too* much, *need* to write *too* much, *too quick….* Students to see. Lots of students to see. Things to do…

Lots of things to do.... You know the score - everything to do, make, see, be, little time to [think]...

.

..

...

[Worry!!]

Something is not quite right with this...

Why do I feel this way? Ignorance? Possibly. Selfishness and self-interest? Possibly. Disorganisation?? Probably!

K calm down, dear! You're right – we need to [think] and I can't [think] while I'm panicking - or you're panicking.

D hey, a spoonful of panic makes the RAE seem sound.... Sorry. Carry on.

K why do you feel this way? Perhaps it's the 'System' - aka 'The Man' (sorry, can't resist a little gender jibe!). Little 'TIME TO THINK'. Unless of course you've 'made it' to a position where you have miniscule contact with students/get paid sabbaticals don't have to juggle the research-teaching batons.

D another way in which the RAE divides and conquers all us left-minded critical social commentators and revolutionaries you mean...

K well, you say you're 'SO BEHIND'. But is it a race? Is what we do really so competitive now?

D it feels that way doesn't it? It's devised to make us feel that way, isn't it...?

K 'NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR, AND LINES OF, ACADEMIC PRODUCTION, PROMOTION, PARTICIPATION, PRESTIGE'... Participation I can get with; prestige I don't care about; promotion needs some unpacking; production … I presume you're talking about a broad notion of production that goes beyond 'whining at each other' (Mitchell, 2006, cited in Ward, 2006) in academic press. You do know that I've been avoiding writing this paper for the past four years, don't you? The irony of writing these very words, right now, is stomach clenching!!
But OK. Let's [think]....

D yes, lets [think] – let's make time…. Let's *take* time from elsewhere. Somewhere….

[We read Michael Burawoy's 2004 Presidential address to the American Sociological Association (Burawoy, 2005b - published in the British Journal of Sociology and available, (alongside much, much more!) from http://sociology.berkeley.edu/faculty/burawoy/burawoy_pdf/2004PresidentialAddressASR.pdf):

2004 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

For Public Sociology

Michael Burawoy
University of California–Berkeley

Responding to the growing gap between the sociological ethos and the world we study, the challenge of public sociology is to engage multiple publics in multiple ways. These public sociologies should not be left out in the cold, but brought into the framework of our discipline. In this way we make public sociology a visible and legitimate enterprise, and, thereby, invigorate the discipline as a whole. Accordingly, if we map out the division of sociological labor, we discover antagonistic interdependence among four types of knowledge: professional, critical, policy, and public. In the best of all worlds the flourishing of each type of sociology is a condition for the flourishing of all, but they can just as easily assume pathological forms or become victims of exclusion and subordination. This field of power beckons us to explore the relations among the four types of sociology as they vary historically and nationally, and as they provide the template for divergent individual careers. Finally, comparing disciplines points to the umbilical chord that connects sociology to the world of publics, underlining sociology's particular investment in the defense of civil society, itself beleaguered by the encroachment of markets and states.

[I have similar reactions to those that the initial call for participation at the Public Geographies Symposium - optimism, excitement, a new vision that again melds with an increasing zest for alternative perceptions, visions, and realisations of academia and academics, and academic 'work' (as, ironically not academic)…]

D I read Burawoy; feel good, and yet, again, that feeling of discomfort, of unease, remains.... What's that about?

K I share those feelings…

I was upset by its disconnectedness from the ways in which I understand my role as an academic; at times angry at what I read as patronizing comments (we'll get to some specifics in a minute); and, while sympathetic to his general project calling for more engaged academic endeavour…

D absolutely…

K … I found myself FRUSTRATED by unhelpful divisions throughout the discussion, and an 'expert' tone!

D hmmm! Burawoy's address certainly stimulates. Throughout most of it I am struck by the potential for replacing 'sociology' with 'geography' and re-publishing in Transactions. And the two disciplines appear to have not too dissimilar histories certainly (once you get beyond the rather pompous mobilisation of Benjamin's (1940) angel of progress stuff of course….

In fact, the address certainly rang bells as to the state of our discipline throughout…

K mmmm, geography has done/does its fair share of pompous, and it's not dissimilar, either, in the gendered language – I noticed that the 'angel of progress' is aroused from 'his' slumbers.

D 'naturally'...!

K ...and there is a clear parallel between the ways in which Burawoy dissects sociology and the same kind of compartmentalization that goes on in geography…

D yes

K …but, these are artificial boundaries, analytically useful, yes, but uncritically so – as part of our critical public geographies, we should re-imagine the categories in ways that deconstruct these boundaries – for a start I have different understandings of 'professional' and 'policy' geographies (with a small g) than you, I think … I am/think of myself as a geographer who attempts to adhere to the discipline's holy grail regarding rigour, reliability, etc. with respect to all my activities and my peers and to seriously theorize all aspects of my work (professional), while at the same time keen to develop policy suggestions/inputs from research that I undertake (whether asked to by policy bodies or not), while at the same time trying to hold a critical gaze, while at the same time engaging in a variety of publics (as I understand the concept)……

D ok, yes, I take that point – I too am a geographical juggler, as are many (if not all) – we *have* to be. That said, however, you'd agree that we probably have most affinity to critical (public) geographies...?! And I must admit to an unthinking, automatic disregard of, and disdain for, (certainly) professional and (possibly) policy Geographies – as I understand them. For me, [I think] a furthering of the academic-activist line of critical public geographies... remains... essential…

[.]

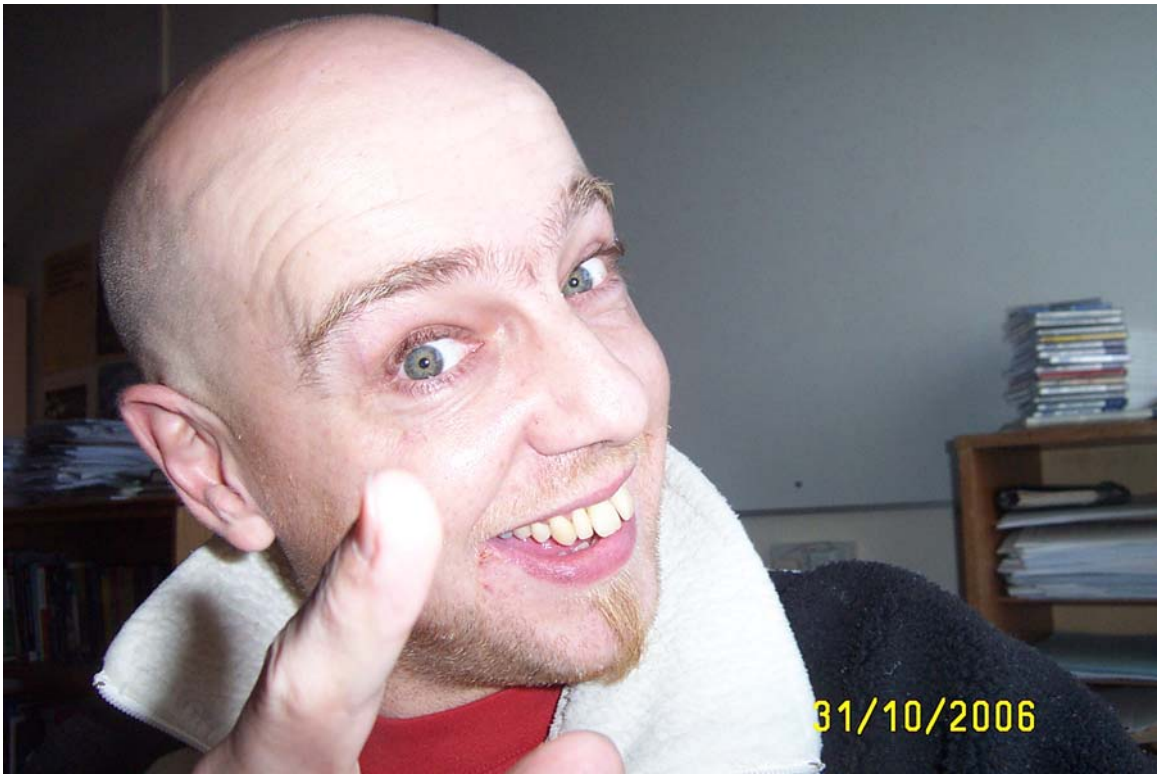
[..]

[… Hmmm…]

…and, as a key part of that [thinking], and the development of such an academic-activist line of critical public geographies [and far from being bloody navel-gazing] is there not a continued if not heightening need for committed, active, relentless, critical public *geographies of the academy* to be fully and systematically explored?

K Absolutely! We should consider not only how the ('public') academy is lived and performed in different ways by individuals, but crucially how these performances impact upon and *are impacted by* structures of the discipline … (I've read ahead in this conversation so I know we'll get to issues around 'dancing' later!!)

D clever
sausage!



Yes, for there is certainly a danger that the academy – its geographies, structures, rules, regulations and so on - are, at best, a little undersold by Burawoy amongst others, such as when he argues that *"…despite the normalizing pressures of careers, the originating moral impetus is rarely vanquished, the sociological spirit cannot be extinguished so easily" (p. 260-261).*

Can it not? My 'sociological spirit' takes a hammering pretty regularly! At worst, the realities of our day to day existence are somewhat buried beneath more than a sliver of rather annoying pseudo-poetic-heroism!:

"*Constrictions notwithstanding [constrictions…?!!], discipline – in both the individual and collective senses of the word – has born its fruits. We have spent a century building professional knowledge, translating common sense into science, so that now, we are more than ready to embark on a systematic back-translation, taking knowledge back to those from whom it came, making public issues out of private troubles, and thus regenerating sociology's moral fiber" (p. 261).*

Ready after 100 years! We should be so grateful!! I didn't even know! When is Geography 100?

K well, this is one of those patronizing statements that I find problematic. I mean, who the fuck do we think we are? Such a construction of (more artificial) boundaries between the academy and non-academic world really troubles me, with its undertone of 'experts' (empowered) so graciously feeding back the knowledge we have built to those from whom we extracted it in the first place (disempowered): so 'us' and 'them'. I agree when he recognizes that publics are multiple and in flux, but 'they' are not only 'other', according to Burawoy – 'we' create them:

"The category woman became the basis of a public … because intellectuals, sociologists among them, defined women as marginalized, left out, oppressed and silenced, that is, defined them in ways they recognized" (p. 265).

Has postcolonialism not reached sociology yet?! My point is that, if we are having debates about situated knowledges in terms of making policy-related research matter (e.g. the Burgess, Castree, Eden & Owens *Transactions* comments, 2005), and discussions surrounding what constitutes relevance in the discipline/academia more widely (umpteen references!), then surely we should be connecting these and thinking about public geographies that emphasise us personally – if temporarily/ partially – *as embedded in the different publics we inhabit*. For me, that means bringing my public Self/Selves into academia and vice versa – holding on to my

(non-fixed) politics while I view the place in which I work, and inherently utilising my geographical learning in my everyday life….

And it's this critical gaze, I think, that is at the core of my suspicious reaction to any supposed rise in public geographies that is limited to 'us' trying to better engage 'them' by being active in public media, or suggestions that this is the Next Big Turn.

D but its bound to be isn't it?? If only because the 'Affect Turn'© sounds so crap. Anyway, yes, maybe my worries were partly (at least) about getting caught (yet again!!!) in the academic moment – y'know, those moments when you find yourself getting carried along, carried away, as the latest invisible (self-) exploitative academic trend, fashion and potential source of production sidles past; somewhere inside you're aware of the ironies, the dangers to self, but doing *just* this, *just* that, getting a *little* bit involved, writing just that *one* more thing, just seems like such a good idea – it's the right thing to do; the taken for granted thing to do; the academic thing to do…. And that's one reason, I think, why I worry. As I read Burawoy's

address my thoughts had turned to 2004, and the paper I gave at the IGU, co-written with Rob Kitchin (Fuller and Kitchin, 2004a). In that paper we set out to explore what we had (perhaps, I should say given your comments before, rather facetiously termed) the new 'participatory turn' within the discipline. In so doing we wanted to examine the roots of this apparent turn, its main features and collective visions, and assess its potential for effecting meaningful and sustained social change. We said we would be 'considering just how long it will be before geography is considered to have become, well, just too damned participatory'. Yes, 2004 was a necessarily rude year:

"What do the participants of participatory research gain from our theorising, journal writing, conference attendance and time spent in books? How ironic it would be if all of the discussions revolve around the problems with such work, rather than solutions to these problems? Are participatory geographies the latest academic fodder or toolkit for some to denounce as 'crap', whilst others jump on board, critique, get promotion, make policy makers and funders nervous, make practitioners isolated and resentful, and then withdraw as French social theory makes a comeback? Just who will benefit from a 'participatory turn' in geography?" (p. 10)

Upon reading Burawoy's address my mind had actually turned to whether we could also replace 'participatory' with 'public' in this quote and hear the same dangers calling? There is *such* a need to focus on critiquing, researching and reforming the academy in order to do public geography in any meaningful, non-academic, emancipatory way...

K emancipatory is such a great word! I understand that as meaning emancipatory for everyone in the groups, communities, publics that we engage with (and are not divorced from) but also ***emancipatory for us as academics***.

D ok, yes, go on...

K well, central to critical, public geographies analyzing the academy, I see a need to decolonize the Self

Part of any resistance has to be a re-visioning of our selves and activities: as long as we want what the system as currently structured offers us, then we will remain slaves to that system, and enslave others around us.

D panic resistance measures you mean?!! Richard Collier (2004), over the road, is very good on exposing the need for a critical analysis of the modern university and academic life. For instance, he's argued, that, *"Within scholarship in the field of higher education there appears to be a general consensus that we are, internationally, living in a 'new era' for universities; a time when traditional understandings of what universities are 'for', and of the scope of academic disciplines themselves, are each being reshaped in some far-reaching ways" (p. 503).*

Richard's work highlights, from within the realm of Law, that there is already a developing, 'rich' literature regarding the variously termed 'restructured', 'corporatised', or 'entrepreneurial' university, where key-words of 'commodification', 'privatisation', 'managerialism', 'credentialism', and 'bureaucratisation' appear and re-appear, and in which the notion of the global knowledge economy is central.

These ideas and our discussions really made me think about the need for any public geographies focus on what has been termed the 'political economy' in which academic research, teaching, and lives are (re)produced, and the impacts these issues have on us as academics. For instance, on a general level Richard explores how a general shift of public policy away from '(ill-defined, contested) ideas of social good' towards a need to reduce public expenditure (Collier, 2004: 509), has had a range of consequences for the kinds of activities that universities do, can, or should be engaged in, most notably through, *"an explicit redirection, experienced at all levels of the institution, towards an 'intensified emphasis' on the capitalisation and exploitation of learning and 'knowledge practices'"* (ibid. 509-510).

So, and as we all know and experience daily (and nightly!) universities now compete against one another for 'customers' (for example, students, public and private research monies) through their 'products' offered (for example, courses, skilled staff), and also seek ways to generate their own income (such as patents, campus companies, consultancy, endowed chairs) to fund their activities (see Fuller and Kitchin, 2004b). The terms 'corporatisation' and 'entrepreneurial' are used again and again in the literature on these issues, seemingly to emphasise the 'heightened interconnection between the objectives, goals and practices of the business and academic worlds' (Collier, 2004: 510); a drive to transform public universities from sites of learning per se to institutions that more directly serve the wider interests of state, industry, and the public (see Bassett 1996, Mitchell 1999, Castree and Sparke 2000).

K well, now, that has some resonance with the advert for new VCs at our place we were just looking at…

D you mean the one that states that applicants will have 'a strong personal commitment to agreed corporate objectives and the energy, enthusiasm and stamina to consistently deliver these' you mean…?! Hmmm, corporate links are not, simply, an add-on to the old university model are they? As Richard suggests, they are best thought of as an 'add-into', *"producing qualitative and far-reaching changes in the institution and the practices of academics themselves. In turn, these changes then pervade many aspects of the university, not least in terms of its overarching culture, operating practices, funding systems and reward structures" (Collier, 2004: 510*), as

witnessed through such developments as spin-off companies, golden hellos, performance related pay, marketing awards, start-up hatcheries, corporate branding, and so on..

K what I call ***'the rise of strategy - mark I'***!

D yes VC!

K very funny. Geography departments hatching 5 or 10 year plans regarding which 'direction' they *need* to go in? New research centres, new research clusters – 'where's the theory gap? We need to identify it and fill it…thus being able to sell our particular expertise' - get more research funding, more written academic output, higher RAE status, more/better calibre students…. University P is strong on geographies of food; Q does non-representational theory and affect; R excels in rural geographies….

Of course, different (geography) departments/divisions/faculties – whatever! - have always had their specialisms, reflecting the interests of staff or the potential academic capital of such groups as identified by their RAE tsars, but I sense that over the past few years this has become far more *proactively driven* by this corporatisation. Bonnett (2003: 61) laments "the drift towards constituting universities as centres of entrepreneurial activity" as "locking researchers into structures of funding and consciousness" that inhibits any kind of public intellectualisms/geographies. I lament the morph of the academy into a Premiership-type system: again, there have always been particular (kinds of) universities fulfilling particular roles in a range of academic endeavours, but what corporate strategism curtails is the potential for institutions to shift from one role to another - either you're research-led or teaching-led (for example) and you'd better knuckle down and focus on that and do it well or there goes your piece of the financial pie. Universities, and higher education more broadly, thus become increasingly essentialised and fixed, restrictive not emancipatory – strategic thinking is the nemesis of public geographies! Unless, of course, we set out to specialize in 'doing' public geographies – is it too late? Damn, the gap in the market's already been filled …

D who needs decolonizing now, Askins! Linked to this, of course, are the concepts of 'useful knowledge', knowledge as a commodity, and debates (such as the one our own VC recently waded into – see Smith and King, 2006: 9; and http://icnewcastle.icnetwork.co.uk/journallive/thejournal/tm_method=full%26objectid=18116623%26siteid=50081-name_page.html) around the idea and purpose of universities….

K I feel a bit ambivalent about this issue actually. On the one hand, I've never been able to get with the 'knowledge for its own sake' thing … maybe it's my background in the voluntary sector, but I'm ideologically opposed to the (gated) ivory towers version of the academic (community). For me it's a question of moral responsibility. You have argued before, D (with Rob Kitchin, 2004b: 4), with respect to activism, that "academics have a social responsibility, given their training, access to information, and freedom of expression, to make a difference on the ground (rather than contribute from a distance)."

D yes, and that still upsets some people…

K but, I have an understanding of social – and I would argue collegiate – responsibility as central to public geographies, in the sense that as an academic I am accountable (and not in a 'value for money' way) to my peers, students and wider society. Surely this echoes others who have argued that 'activism' must also turn its attention to the academy itself (notably Castree, 2002)? Thus doing public geographies should challenge the gulf between 'lay' and 'expert'….

D *Must!* And in a sense the Participatory Geographies Working Group (see www.pygywg.org), another 'P'!!, was established to focus on such issues from within the academy…

K yes, and we should also be emphasizing the role of universities within social and civic capacity building, for example, echoing some of the recent work done by the GA in its 'Geography in Action' project with regard to geography education in schools (see http://www.geography.org.uk/) – that is, on the other hand, 'useful knowledge' is not, nor has to be a commodity for capital exploitation. The need to directly link a subject with employability alone is too narrow a focus…

D absolutely. And the 'Everyday Geographies', now 'Young Peoples Geographies', side of this in particular. Everyday geographies – what about the everyday geographies of the academy – our day-to-day confrontations with our institutions, and changes ushered in as a consequence of rampant privatization and corporatisation? As Richard highlights, the prevailing view is that there's no doubt that academic and management practices have been transformed towards leaner, more flexible, cost-efficient and accountable models, via such interventions as streamlined, central (often managerial elite) administrative systems that exert greater control over spending, 'flexible' staffing practices, re-evaluation of job-gradings and structures, downsizing packages…

…McDonaldized teaching, research and assessment management (Parker and Jary, 1995) and a 'new contractualism' (Yeatman, 1993, cited in Collier, 2004) in which the demands of the market and 'top down' imperatives rule. Clearly, all of these are are organisational change/dynamics – but what about impacts on the individual academic?

K well… one specific impact on individuals is how the shift in power we are witnessing is engendering new structures of inclusion/exclusion in the academy through the job market in particular. Case in point: the situation at our own gaff's English Language Centre in 2006 (see http://journals.aol.co.uk/rikowskigr/Volumizer/entries/1009). Sold off to Study Group International, owned by the Daily Mail Group, we were ultimately impotent bystanders - despite strong union opposition – to an ugly downgrading of skilled and professional staff as well as 'voluntary redundancies' and that played fast and loose with the term 'voluntary'. Just one example of how the entry bar to any kind of secure employment is now dictated by (academic and non-academic) managers under corporatising pressures, (and see more recently if you think we're making this up, www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A1=ind0610&L=crit-geog-forum)

D well, the university labour market has been going through some profound changes for a while now (see Fuller and Kitchin, 2004b; Shelton et al, 2001; Yates, 2000) with a desperate proportion of staff in the UK and US on fixed term, short or rolling contracts, with all the all too familiar associations with poor pay, few rights, limited benefits, ultimately leading to undervalued, marginalised and exploited staff within institutions, despite their central role in the delivery of teaching and completion of research projects.

K and, for me, this situation is closely intertwined with all that stuff around accountability, audit and academic identity (Collier, 2004)…

D aha! That is, the manner in which the tools that are employed to contain, constrain and control academics - the 'diverse range' of instruments of accountability, audit, and apparent quality assurances that have been unleashed on the UK university/HE sector in recent years – have affected the behaviour of individual academics and which Richard explores through Lyotard's concept of 'performativity', "*the way both individual academics and the universities in which they work have come to be judged, across a range of areas, on the basis of their performance, as measured against an input/output equation in such a way as to determine notions of efficiency and inefficiency against predetermined criteria (for example, research income, number and quality of publications, number of research students and so forth). The appeal of performativity matrices for senior*

management seeking to institute change is…not hard to understand as soon as performance indicators are set, and the formula is put into the computer, data can be entered from each academic/school and aggregated, with funds distributed accordingly. The system itself appears 'objective'" (p. 515).

K this notion of 'performativity' is intriguing, given the current conceptual work prevalent among human geographers around 'embodiment'. Is performance as BEING not so far from performance as MEASURED in that academics are performing themselves sub/consciously, dictated to by a restructured university and a repositioned knowledge economy (internalised disciplining)? …

D that's the idea it seems – with individuals being pushed and pulled in various ways; or more evocatively embodied in the notion of the "*the performative and politicised 'dance of the academic', wherein academics can be perceived as being caught in a series of different 'dances' (teacher, supervisor, mentor, administrator, committee member, chairperson, researcher, writer, editor, reviewer, adviser, examiner, manager, conference organiser, activist), set to different 'tunes' (university, students, colleagues, collaborators, contributors, publishers, committees,*

academic bodies, research and funding agencies, research participants)" (Fuller and Kitchin, 2004b:8)

K yeah, I think of it more as the 'lurch of the academic'…

as I stumble from one role to another!

D … but that's what we do, isn't it – we're all juggling, dancing, or jigging about like chipmunks as our teaching, research administration and so on are quantified and 'balanced', as we are 'appraised' and our time 'managed', as we are 'evaluated', both in terms of our teaching 'quality', and, of course, our research 'quality' and productivity (in terms of (the best place for) journal articles and (the most prestigious sources of) research income). How many times have we heard about staff are being pressurized to adopt certain kinds of research profiles, namely that which is seen to be more applied, instrumental, practical, socially 'relevant' (e.g. relates to policy), and marketable to government and business, devaluing 'pure', basic, and, more crucially, in relation to arguments set out above, activist research…?

K hmmm, I agree with the last point but think the landscape in geography is probably a bit different to that in legal studies …

D by the sounds of it, I hope so!!

K my (limited) experience is that applied, relevant, policy related work has been demoted/avoided, and deep, heavy, (often but not always inaccessible) theory most highly valued. That's not to say theoretical work isn't vital in policy engagement, nor that deep theorists never engage with relevance – but publishing in policy journals/writing policy reports etc. don't count for zip, do they? And this has unfortunately engendered what I call ***'the rise of strategy – mark II'***:

'You really should get a couple of journal articles out before you finish your PhD' – sensible strategy when viewing the competition in the job market;
'Submit to journals that will develop your profile in a coherent way' – smart strategy looking ahead to securing those all important research council grants;
'Network selectively and efficiently, develop ties with people who are a) influential and b) productive (in an academic writing sense)' – obvious strategy really to get invited to be 'in' on book proposals, special editions, conference panels, funding bids, etc.;
'Think about what outputs (read journal papers) *your research will have'* – essential strategy for the CV these days …

Sorry, is this a bit too cynical?

D never!

K we all do it to some extent, of course. But I've heard too many conversations that depress me: the high-up-the-ladder and well-connected individual who has the right connections to get a 'quick turn around' between submission and publication in one of The Top geography journals as a favour … a colleague watching out for ground-breaking articles in their field and writing a quick response so as to get cited alongside the original as a way to improve their citations … praise/value given to research proposals that are 'paper-heavy' …

D it's called 'playing the game', in an 'its ok really' guise isn't it…?

K BUT BUT BUT!!! … what are we producing, why and for whom? (And don't even get me started on the uncritical relationships between the academy and many major publishers, regarding their environmental and social records in business dealings …) Yes writing is imperative in our work – and especially for those who do not teach face-to-face (I'm thinking here in particular about distance learning courses, e.g. the Open University). But isn't anyone else at least dubious when they read essentially the same article/piece of research with a bit of re-structuring/shift in central focus in two (or more!) different journals? Or think that the call to 'let's do a book/special edition' seems to come suspiciously early on in conference proceedings at times? To what extent is *accountability* the driving motivation behind dissemination?

D a large extent, and it will always be so as long as research performance continues to be the key factor in determining status, financial health, and future of the 'unit of assessment'. Richard notes the linkages here to the transformation of what he terms 'the idea of the 'academic self'', where new modes of self-management have become 'internalised' with a range of physical, emotional and intellectual consequences for those concerned, such as a 'heightened state of individualism', and a need for a 'relentless promotion of the self', and epitomized, I guess, in the notion of the dance of the academic. These lead to, for example, increased competition (often between individuals in the same department/division) for the space, time, and resources to be able to produce research (and teach effectively) in the first place. And this has big consequences for those who seek to work (radically and critically) beyond this sort of system – constrained promotion, failure to obtain tenure, unofficial censorship, and so on … (again, see Fuller and Kitchin, 2004b).

K hadn't you better stop citing yourself now?!

D Its hard not to do you know – I get so *involved* (see Fuller, 1999)

K Ahem. I saw that! But yes, and not just radical/critical geographers, either. What happens when you have responsibilities outside work? Our conditions of labour are such that basic hours really don't cover doing all that strategy stuff (Wills, 1996). Anyone who is a carer (of children, family members) can't put in over and above the 37/ish hours/week most people are contracted to – or if they do there are serious sacrifices somewhere else. Trying to 'keep up' to avoid the penalties you mention has been linked with stress-related illness and depression among lecturers (Kinman, 1998; Collier, 2004); not 'keeping up' relegates you to the second tier of academia that you discussed above, D. Where are our collegiate ethics? For every hour we work over contract, we increasingly and actively marginalize those who cannot (personal commitments) or chose not (doing 'other' stuff, i.e. having a life/voluntary work, etc.). You work over your contracted hours or don't take annual leave, you are hurting me – let's get personal about this. Of course, we feel vocationally bound to our students and work (unpaid) overtime to get materials prepared for them, and this devotion was the key weakness in recent strike action, which the employers know all too well. More problematic, I think, is when we start excluding colleagues by putting in extra time to 'produce' work for the structure.

D well yes – perhaps the time the next slap on the back comes congratulating us on working beyond the call of duty, because 'we care', we should stand back and think just who benefits? And why? And we need to wake up to the ways in which our working environment is likely to frame, impinge upon, and inhibit attempts to create and make active meaningful public geographies. So we must confront it, expose it, organise against it, and engender change to create time and space for effecting effective public geography - to create, for example, more spaces such as the Birmingham Public Geographies event (and outside the 'meaningless' RAE endgame, the 6 months or so when academics can actually think, say, and write what they actually want to think, say, and write about) where warm invitations are made offering undirected opportunities to speak to an audience that is just interested in what they have to say… if only because *"one consequence of this 'privatisation thrust' and the associated drive to commercially sponsored research has been … a further erosion of the status of academics in the UK as 'public intellectuals'"(Collier, 2004: 511).*

K yes…

D and, at the same time, we must cling to the evidence that multifarious acts of resistance already exist, and are growing; colleagues are finding interesting and creative ways to make their efforts 'count' inside the academy as well as outside, through, for example, commodifying their activism into academic products, securing research funding for their activist projects, or finding ways to balance different roles. For instance, a developing focus on academics as professional activists (rather than activism being seen as separate from academia and conducted away from the university) has been accompanied by an exploration of participatory approaches and their potential place within geography (e.g. Fuller *et al*. 2003a&b, Kesby 2000, Kitchin 1999)…

K all of this is central to the kind of public geographies I envisage … and also crucial, as Calhoun (2005) writes regarding sociology, to a 'publicly valuable' academy is taking public significance seriously in *identifying research agendas*.

D yes, a different approach and/or academic identity - 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 (Kitchin, 1999). Beyond this we should take great heart from the clear attempts that seek to challenge the dominant (and disabling, disempowering, anxiety and paralysis inducing) discourse of the entrepreneurial university (such as we're peddling here of course!!!) - to help recast and/or remove those (most often unnoticed) academic moments - taking inspiration from JK Gibson-Graham's (1996) analysis of capitalism as discourse and what can be achieved by its undermining and critiquing as an apparently all-powerful, all-pervasive concept that delimits and constrains alternative conceptualisations of how things might be. That, for example (and see Collier, 2004: 521) we need to explore how, since universities may actually now be more open, equitable places as the move has been made from the realms of patronage, elitism, unaccountability and a white, middle-class, male collegiality, this can be utilised to create more inclusive, emancipatory spaces of academic life? Or, rather than diminishing collegiality, new technologies have facilitated growth of new networks, communities etc. beyond the academy boundaries, and so there is a need to examine how these can be made to work for those striving to recreate our academic futures?

And perhaps these are interventions of what other apparent (after Burawoy) ilks of public geographers can contribute to - what Don Mitchell would perhaps call what academics do best "*…radical scholarship – that sometimes what activists and other non-academics most need is thorough academic analysis. To make a difference beyond the academy it is necessary to do good and important, and committed work, within the academy*" (Mitchell, 2004). So, and to give Burawoy his due, we do need to critically question such things as 'Is the market solution the only solution? Do we have to abandon the very idea of the university as a 'public' good?', not least because, *"the interest in a public sociology is, in part, a reaction and a response to the privatization of everything. Its vitality depends on the resuscitation of the very idea of 'public,' another casualty of the storm of progress' (Burawoy, 2005: 263).*

K ok, but I want to take those anti-discourses further to encompass the everyday overlaps and interconnections and webs between/across/through publics and academic environs. WE enact public geographies to a range of degrees, taking

the university out into our 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.

Plus the roles we have, in more structured ways, in society: local councillors, committee people, volunteers, etc. Castree (2006: 7) rightly, in my view, highlights Said (2002)'s view that "*most public intellectuals are not highly 'public' at all*", but undertake 'intellectual performances' in different places, in different ways, regarding a diversity of issues: we should similarly understand public geographies as multiple, widespread and 'not necessarily visible in the wider public sphere' – whose aggregate contributions are significant.

D beyond the academy, wherever that is...! Yes, cute idea.

K 'doing the do' inside the academy to the best of your ability is crucial, but there can be more, *there has to be more….* Surely we bring our geographical positionalities, identities, ideologies, etc. with us, to some degree, wherever we are?

D undoubtedly. We must participate in this contestation, at all levels, inside and outside our place of work, in all our guises as potential public geographers…

K YEAH!! So, let's stop writing now and get off to some other resistance then. As Cook says "Maybe it would be a good idea to shut down academic journals like this one and force academic geographers to write for more public audiences for a few years (Gregory, 2005, pers. com.)" Why stop there? Why not **stop writing** wherever possible for a while and be more imaginative with our output/activity/engagement in publics? Act out **SLOWER, MORE ENGAGED GEOGRAPHIES** that challenge Burawoy's angel of progress. That doesn't have to mean descent into invalidity and unreliability … wouldn't it be great to be asked to peer review a research project whose outcome is a community event?

D for maybe without such slower geographies, we simply won't have the time, the inclination, the space, or the audience(s) to perform to and enact any public geographies in any meaningful and sustained way…

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K anyone with us?

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