

## Commentary

# Disrupting and destabilizing Anglo-American and English-language hegemony in geography<sup>1</sup>

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*This commentary considers the perceived hegemonic status of Anglo-American Geography and the role of the English language as the lingua franca of academia. The first half of the paper outlines in brief the hegemonic status of Anglo-American Geography, the structures and practices of the global knowledge economy and Anglo-American Geography itself that help sustain and reproduce its hegemony, and the disciplining effects of this hegemonic status on geography practised elsewhere. The second half examines how Anglo-American norms and the hegemonic status of English as a global lingua franca are being, and might be further, challenged, resisted, subverted and re-shaped through discursive and practical interventions aimed at disrupting and destabilizing them. By focusing on how the history of the discipline is constructed, and the protocols of publishing and organizing conferences, how geography can be transformed to open it up to a plurality of (non-Anglo-American) voices, different ways of 'doing' geography, and alternative ways of valuing forms of geographical enterprise, are considered.*

**Key words:** Anglo-American hegemony, English language, publishing, conferences, theory.

### Introduction

At the International Critical Geography Conference held in Békéscsaba, Hungary, 25–30 June 2002, two of the issues that dominated discussion in and outside sessions were (1) Anglo-American hegemony in terms of the production of geographic knowledge and (2) the hegemonic status of the English language as the *lingua franca* of academic communication. At that conference, my own presentation sought

to reflect on ways to disrupt and destabilize these two interrelated hegemonies. In this paper, I develop these initial thoughts to consider in broad terms how geography as a discipline is structured and (re)produced globally and how the hegemonic status of Anglo-American theory and praxis, and the English language, can be challenged and resisted in productive ways.

In order to achieve these aims, the paper is divided into two main sections. The first outlines in brief the hegemonic status of Anglo-American

Geography, the structures and practices of the global knowledge economy and Anglo-American geography itself that help sustain and reproduce its hegemony, and the disciplining effects of this hegemonic status on geography practised elsewhere. The second section examines how Anglo-American norms and the hegemonic status of English as a *global lingua franca* are being, and might be further, challenged, resisted, subverted and re-shaped through discursive and practical interventions aimed at disrupting and destabilizing them. In particular, it is detailed how everyday geographical endeavours such as theorizing, publishing and attending conferences can be modified to open geography up to a plurality of (non-Anglo-American) voices, different ways of ‘doing’ geography, and alternative ways of valuing forms of geographical enterprise.

### Hegemony and Anglo-American Geography

[T]oday, the boundaries as well as the rules/coordinates of what passes for ‘international’ debate within our discipline are determined from within the Anglo-American universe. (Minca 2000: 287)

With a couple of notable exceptions,<sup>2</sup> at present, it is clear that Anglo-American<sup>3</sup> academics and institutions, in general, maintain a global hegemony in relation to the discipline of Geography, exerting an unequal influence in relation to what kinds of geography and geographical practices are to be valued, how geography should be produced and consumed, and the mechanisms of production and distribution (e.g. privileged access to the global—read English—publishing industry). While those inside the Anglo-American universe perhaps see this as

a ‘natural order’ (in the Gramscian sense of hegemony), those outside often do not, instead recognizing that although it is not ‘natural’ or commonsensical to play by Anglo-American rules on an Anglo-American playing field, it is the only way to get into the ‘international’ (read Anglo-American) game. This section examines in brief how Anglo-American hegemony is underpinned by changes in the global organization of education, a particular and privileged relationship to the political economy of publishing and English as a *lingua franca*, and is sustained from the inside by Anglo-American geographers through their actions/policy—‘technologies of the self’ (Foucault 1977)—at different scales, and outside (by those in other countries). It does not address, however, how Anglo-American Geography became hegemonic (for initial analysis, see Samers and Sidaway 2000).

The educational landscape of the USA and UK has undergone profound changes in the past twenty-five years. As a consequence, a number of commentators (e.g. Mitchell 1999; Readings 1996; Roberts 2000) contend that the idea of the Anglo-American university and its social practices have been fundamentally altered. In general terms, it has been argued that there has been a corporatization of universities, with the adoption of management practices from competitive businesses, and a new ethos centred on flexible accumulation dynamics. Here, the educational landscape has become an open market in which a variety of ‘products’ are offered (e.g. courses, skilled staff), so that universities compete for ‘customers’ (e.g. students, public and private research monies), and seek ways to generate their own income (e.g. through patents, campus companies, consultancy, endowed chairs). In effect, universities become part of the growing global ‘knowledge economy’. In the case of public institutions, the drive

has also been to change universities from sites of learning *per se* to institutes that more directly serve the wider interests of the state, industry and the public (instigated during the 1980s by the New Right in line with the growth of neo-liberalism and a shift to post-Fordist modes of production—see Bassett 1996; Castree and Sparke 2000; Mitchell 1999; Readings 1996). Accompanying this shift has been a drive to make these institutions more ‘open’ and accountable to the public. Here, the issue of tangibility and visibility is important—to be able to demonstrate accountability in some kind of quantifiable way. Consequently, there has been the introduction of discourses of corporate accountancy, where educational activities and outputs are quantified to reveal levels of ‘excellence’ (Castree and Sparke 2000).

This is particularly the case in publicly funded educational systems which are increasingly having to be seen as ‘value-for-money’, prestige research institutions who want to maintain reputations, and other institutions that want to create a public reputation or achieve some kind of upgrade in their status.<sup>4</sup> In the UK, for example, this has led to a massive academic accounting industry, including the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), peer-review of funded projects, teaching quality audits and assessment of postgraduate programmes, with rewards in the way of financial incentives to those who perform well under the designated criteria and penalties of restricted funding or exclusion from funding lines for those that perform poorly. While there is little doubt that this transition is positive in some respects, making universities more accountable to society, the mechanism of achieving transition has also led to significant problems and inequalities by valuing some educational practices and devaluing others and fostering particular

modes of production (e.g. rise of contract work; Shelton et al. 2001).

These transformations are, to a large degree, fuelling changes well beyond the Anglo-American educational sector. For example, the Irish academic system is in the process of re-inventing itself as it seeks to gain a foothold in the global knowledge economy and sustain Ireland’s economic ‘miracle’. Previously a set of predominately teaching institutions, in recent years there has been a remarkable government investment into research in the university sector (over €1 billion). However, this has generally not been accompanied by an investment in teaching staff (Irish universities have the highest staff/student ratios in the European Union). Instead academic staff are expected to massively expand (and target) their research outputs and research supervision while maintaining very high teaching levels. At the same time there has been a huge increase in the numbers of research postgraduates and contract researchers.

Moreover, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities (CHIUI) have recently published the Skilbeck Report—*The University Challenge* (2001)—which provides a blueprint of their future vision of Irish academia. It calls for: greater links between the university sector, private industry and the wider community; increased numbers of mature, postgraduate and international students; greater numbers of part-time programmes; the publication of internal evaluations of how departments/faculties are performing; and the development of a national quality assurance system. It explicitly calls for ‘the academic community to become . . . footsoldiers to government and economic policy’, and in the foreword to the report it is stated: ‘the university is no longer a quiet place to teach and do scholarly work . . . and contemplate the universe at a leisurely

pace' (cited in the *Irish Times*, 7 January 2002). In other words, the radical changes in the Irish university system are set to continue for the foreseeable future, adopting neo-liberal practices centred on a particular notion of a global, political economy of knowledge. This has been supplemented by an OECD report (2004) that echoes many of these claims.

Other States similarly want to promote and sell their knowledge production in the global knowledge economy. As a consequence, many are adopting Anglo-American educational models and aspirations. One example of this adoption is the pressure states are putting on universities and their employees to publish in 'top-rated', 'international' journals, providing rewards for compliance and penalties for being parochial.<sup>5</sup> For example, Garcia Ramon (2003) notes that citation indexes are increasingly becoming the reference point for national boards beyond Anglo-America for measuring the quality of academic outputs. As discussed below, this inevitably means writing in English as it has become *the* language of global intellectual discourse (Short, Boniche, Kim and Li Li 2001).

This changing educational landscape, both within Anglo-American educational systems and beyond it, have led to a number of specific changes in how geography is practised worldwide. These effects in themselves feed into mechanisms of reproduction, helping to further deepen the hegemonic status of Anglo-American Geography. For example, cultural globalization (in relation to business and entertainment) and the creation of a global educational landscape has led to English becoming its *lingua franca*. This has strengthened the position of both English-language publishing houses and 'native' English writers through the creation of asymmetrical power relations (Garcia Ramon 2003). Working in tandem, English-language publishers and academics have become dominant

intellectual gatekeepers deciding who and what gets published in English. So, at the same time as pressure is being applied to non-English writers to publish in English, the top 'international' journals (defined by perception and citation indexes), almost exclusively edited, refereed and published by Anglo-American academics and publishers, actively act as gatekeepers, disciplining and policing modes of communication, ideas, interpretation and foci that do not conform to standards set by themselves.<sup>6</sup> A general observation is that these 'international' journals increasingly publish particular kinds of articles, ones that are highly theoretically driven and written in a certain style that can often seem impenetrable. In contrast, non-Anglo-American research is often more applied, policy-relevant and accessible, and less tied into theoretic debate, and is often thus seen as unsuitable for publication. Consequently, many supposedly 'international' journals are seen as elitist and exclusionary, promoting their own theories and empirical research, and being intolerant to different ways of researching, knowing, interpreting and writing. For example, Gregson, Simonsen and Vaiou state:

Anglophonic geographical journal space increasingly needs to be construed as writing space infused with and constituted through precise lines of power; specifically as a writing space imagined through hierarchies of power which position some journals as mattering rather more than others and which see these same 'core' journals as capturing, controlling and regulating the 'international' (read theoretical and/or conceptual) high ground, its cutting edges. (2002: 10)

Similarly, Minca argues:

there is a widespread conviction both among many Italian geographers as well as among many of my

European colleagues that these journals' implicit claims of being 'international' ... are patently absurd if not downright pretentious ... After they have experienced the repeated rejection of the use of any references and methodological frameworks which do not fit into the appointed disciplinary cosmologies, references, and frameworks somehow alien to the above-noted national discourse, many continental geographers ... are left with the clear impression of having brushed up against a barbed wire fence, of having attempted to breach a sort of magical confine of a universe which is hegemonic precisely because it thrives on a set of concrete principles commonly recognised by the dominant part of the geographical community and endowed with extraordinary sanctioning power towards any external infiltrations. (2000: 287)

Analyses of the extent to which geography journals are in fact international in nature reveals a telling picture. Gutiérrez and López-Nieva (2001) report that of the nineteen 'international' journals they analysed for the period 1991–1997, 73.39 per cent of articles were authored by academics from the UK or USA. Of the remaining articles, a further 14.43 per cent were from other anglophone countries, namely Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. In relation to the composition of editorial boards, 78.77 percent were from the UK or USA, with a further 10.3 per cent from the other anglophone countries. Similarly, Short, Boniche, Kim and Li Li (2001) found that between 92.6 and 94.9 per cent of articles were from anglophone academics in the sixteen 'international' journals they analysed for the period 1981–1996. Further, they note that either implicitly or explicitly these journals have adopted single-language policies, namely publication in English.

It should be noted that this pressure to conform is also placed on UK and North America academics who are strongly

encouraged to adopt certain kinds of publishing strategies—that is, the hegemony is also interiorized through a particularized regulatory framework. For example, the RAE in the UK and tenure-track programmes in North America work to discipline academics by creating systems that reward (e.g. rapid promotion, access to research monies, stable employment) publication in the 'right' journals (as designated by citation indexes) and punish those that fail to do so (e.g. discontinuation of employment, stalled career paths, higher teaching loads). Moreover, peer pressure to conform is created as, with the example of the RAE, it is not only the individual that is rewarded or penalized, but the whole department (whose budget is dependent on collective performance). Here, explicit value is placed on the outlets of academic work, so that articles in English-language, 'international' peer-reviewed journals with high citation index scores and monographs published by major, global publishing houses become highly valued. This, in general, has had the converse effect of devaluing other forms of publication. So, for example, in the UK, reports, pamphlets, papers in lower-ranked journals, online articles, magazine and newspaper articles, conference papers published in proceedings, websites, textbooks for both school and university level, and other forms of dissemination are effectively worthless in regards to departmental reviews and individual promotion applications. Dissemination of geographical knowledge is no longer—if it ever was—about reaching wide audiences, but about reaching particular kinds of audiences, and in particular other academics. This is a clear articulation of what Foucault would recognize as new forms of governmentality aimed to reproduce a hegemony underpinned by neo-liberal values and interiorized forms of power—'technologies of the self' that

encourage self-policing in line with the values of the hegemony. As noted above, these accounting systems unwittingly place pressures on academics outside of their immediate remit. For example, in my own case, although I am not presently based in the UK I still have to play the RAE 'game' in case I ever wanted to move back. Moreover, Irish staff and post-graduates compete in the same job market and a number of recent Irish jobs have gone to academics leaving the UK (who have more 'competitive' vitae).

As Berg and Kearns (1998) note, the reproduction of what kinds of knowledge and ways of knowing are deemed valuable consists of more than use of language, with peripheral Anglophone countries such as New Zealand often seen as mere case studies rather than sites of wider interest. Drawing on the work of Meaghan Morris (1992) and Elspeth Probyn (1990), they note that such positioning casts the centre—USA and UK—as universal and the periphery as specific:

In this discursive frame, geographies of the United Kingdom and America are unmarked by limits—they constitute the field of geography. British and American geographers are thus always, already in the field. By contrast, geographies of other people and places become marked as Other—exotic, transgressive, extraordinary, and by no means representative ... In short, the unlimited and unmarked geographies of Anglo-American Same mark out, constitute, and limit the geographies of Other. (Berg and Kearns 1998: 129)

Gregson, Simonsen and Vaiou (2002) note that this is accentuated by the fact that when papers and commentaries from non-Anglo-American journals are included in journals, they are often marked (e.g. in an editorial) as from a particular location, as a 'view from the margins'. As Berg and Kearns (1998)

note, this centre-periphery imaginary is legitimated and reproduced by dominant accounts of the history of geography (e.g. Cloke 1991, Philo and Sadler 1992; Hubbard, Kitchin, Bartley and Fuller 2002; Johnston 1991; Peet 1998; Unwin 1992), which place Anglo-American ideas and debates firmly at the core, with the work from beyond the centre peripheralized or completely silenced, so that while the margins are occasionally allowed to participate in debates, they rarely set the agenda or influence trajectory (Berg and Kearns 1998; also see Gregson, Simonsen and Vaiou 2002; Minca 2000). Consequently, such disciplining serves to reproduce the hegemonic relationship between the dominant, Anglo-American centre and a peripheral, rest of the world.

This hegemony clearly places many non-Anglo-American geographers in an awkward position, with (depending on location) both their employers and gatekeepers applying pressure to make them conform to the hegemonic practices and ideas/theory/foci of Anglo-American Geography. This is clearly problematic in a number of respects. For example, Minca (2000) and Gregson, Simonsen and Vaiou (2002) note that many young, non-Anglo-American geographers are caught between their own national traditions and Anglo-American work, a position that implicitly acknowledges and reproduces a peripheral identity. It also fails to recognize issues such as differential (financial) access to resources/literatures located at the centre and different ways of knowing and writing. At its most insidious it casts much of the world's geography into silence beyond its own community or it is altering the characteristics of the discipline as practised within different countries, re-making the discipline in the image of Anglo-American Geography. So, for example, research programmes are brought into



line with the ‘centre’ in regards to foci and theorization. Here, the centre leads and the periphery (reluctantly) follows.

This is not, of course, to deny that Anglo-American Geography is itself riddled with accepted, dominant norms about what kinds of geography and geographical practices are valued. While the dominant history of geography is undoubtedly Anglo-American, the emphasis on understanding this history through a paradigmatic conceptualization illustrates the hegemonic power relations that underlie what kinds of geography, and how it should be produced, are encouraged. Ron Johnston, in particular in his books *Philosophy and Human Geography* (two editions) and *Geography and Geographers* (six editions), drawing on the work of Kuhn (1970), has provided accounts of the discipline that privilege Anglo-American Geography and certain types of geography at certain times. However, as Hubbard, Kitchin, Bartley and Fuller (2002) note, any attempt to write a recent history of geographical thought in terms of distinct paradigms is highly problematic. Such a strategy imposes an artificial constancy on what Livingstone (1992) termed the ‘situated messiness’ of geographical endeavour. In particular, the idea that Geography has moved through unified (and generational), hegemonic paradigms glosses over or excludes altogether ideas and practices associated with those who did not conform to the dominant or fashionable way of doing things. Consequently, dissenting voices, alternative traditions within Anglo-American Geography, and voices from outside of Anglo-American Geography are obliterated from (Anglo-American) geographic history (Hubbard, Kitchin, Bartley and Fuller 2002; Sibley 1995).

Further, the movement away from education as sites of knowledge and learning to sites of knowledge production in a free-market economy means that there is increasing pressure to

produce particular kinds of knowledge for particular purposes. Presently, the pressure from many Western governments is for universities to become agents for state and business (as illustrated by the Skilbeck Report, noted above). This view has been interiorized within geography through the mechanisms of reward and punishment employed within universities, but also through the messages promoted by institutions such as the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) and Association of American Geographers (AAG), and key individuals writing in particular journals. For example, The AAG and RGS have for a number of years, through their newsletters, urged geographers to become more policy-focused and ‘applied’ in their endeavours, making consultative partnerships and alliances with—rather than critiquing—state and business. Similarly, Ron Martin—used his influence as editor of one of the top-cited English-language, human geography journal, *Transactions of the IBG*—to articulated his vision of how geography should re-image and re-market itself to become more ‘relevant’ in a global, neo-liberal, knowledge economy, and popular in the context of it losing ground to other disciplines in terms of student numbers, research income and perceived importance. This strategic positioning casts Geography’s value in a very particular way that places emphasis on creating a discipline that is a tool of the state and business and designates other ways of doing geography as of less worth.

### **Disrupting and destabilizing Anglo-American Geography**

As Berg and Kearns (1998) note, it seems ironic that at a time when critical geography is now firmly part of mainstream Anglo-American Geography, with ideas about marginality, periphery and exclusion, and the politics of identity,

place and knowledge commonplace, we have not systematically turned our gaze on the ways in which the institutionalized discursive and material practices of Anglo-American Geography marginalize other geographical knowledges and practices. Similarly, Castree and Sparke note that as geographers we have been remarkably slow in turning our critical lenses on how neo-liberal reforms and corporatization of knowledge production are altering the nature of academic life and the practices of geography:

...we have tended not to address as directly as we might the ways in which our own bodies as academics situated in universities are being fed, counted, and variously decorated, maintained, and exhausted in institutions altered at the very foundation by ... flexible accumulation dynamics. (2000: 222)

The hegemonic status of what kinds of geography and geographic practices are to be valued *is*, however, open to resistance as the work of feminist geographers makes clear. For the past two decades, feminist geographers have been making a sustained attack on masculinist ways of 'doing' geography, exposing the ways in which men have dominated debates about what should be studied and how best to conduct such studies, and, moreover, how men have reproduced masculinist science as rational and commonsensical, thus dismissing other approaches as untenable and writing them out of the history of the discipline (see Women and Geography Study Group 1997). While the battle is clearly not over, feminist geographers have made significant progress in transforming what are accepted ways of knowing, interpreting and writing, opening up the discipline to new ontologies and epistemologies. Moreover, they have sought to recover the silenced (female) voices from Geography's past. Debates in Development Studies and Postcolonial Studies have also similarly engaged with the processes

and politics of knowledge production. For example, David Slater (1992) and Jim Blaut (1993) have provided critiques of ethnocentrism—'Euro-Americanism'—or the 'colonizer's view of the world'.

Learning from and building upon the work of feminist, postcolonial and development geographers, it seems to me that there is a need to engage in a two-pronged attack designed to challenge and weaken the hegemony of Anglo-American Geography. First, there needs to be a sustained, critical engagement with the discursive practices that sustain and reproduce Anglo-American hegemony. Second, practical initiatives and critical interventions aimed at challenging and reformulating Anglo-American hegemony need to be *enacted*.

In relation to the first, there is a need for systematic critiques of the political economy of publishing, the global knowledge economy, the corporatization and marketization of the university sector, and the production of geographic knowledge and how the history of geography is written and sustained. Important work has begun on all these issues within and beyond geography. For example, Mohan (1994), Barnett and Low (1996), Readings (1996), Wills (1996), Nelson (1997), Sidaway (1997), Berg and Kearns (1998), Mitchell (1999), Rothenberg (2000), Samers and Sidaway (2000), Smith (2000), Berg (2001), Shelton et al. (2001), and the collection of articles in *Antipode* (2000) have all started to explore the political economy of higher education and to set out challenges to present trends.

A particularly important, and as yet largely undeveloped, tactic here is to undermine how paradigmatic and Anglo-American histories of the discipline help to sustain and reproduce common-sense and taken-for-granted ideas (held predominately by Anglo-American geographers) about what kinds of geography and



geographical practice should be undertaken. This would seek to build on work that has started to examine critically the development of the discipline, such as Livingstone's (1992) non-presentist history, Hubbard, Kitchin, Bartley and Fuller's (2002) non-paradigmatic history of Anglo-American Geography, projects within feminism that have sought to write women back into history of the discipline (Blunt and Rose 1994), and a general engagement with notions of geography as a situated practice. There is thus a need to develop non-presentist, non-teleological (see Warf 2002), non-paradigmatic histories; historical accounts of the landscape of geographical endeavour that illustrate the 'singular diversity' of geography, both within *and* beyond Anglo-America. This means creating histories that illustrate and value geographic knowledges across the globe, thus undermining the hegemony as an accepted 'norm'. So, for example, we might imagine a cross-national, collaborative project that seeks to create 'histories of geographies'; a project that explicitly charts the parallel and overlapping development of geographical traditions at different locations.<sup>7</sup> This would go some way towards Berg and Kearns (1998) call for a decentered geography.

In relation to the second initiative, the practices of Anglo-American Geography can be disrupted and destabilized through practical strategies. In the remainder of this section I outline some existing and potential strategies in relation to publishing and conference organization, using my own and others' work as illustrative examples (also see Garcia Ramon 2003).

### *Publishing*

At present, the publishing process for both journals and books are firmly set, embedded in the political economy of publishing,

traditionalized editorial practices and new hegemonies concerning publication 'value'. As with all hegemonies though, these are open to resistance and transformation.

For example, both the political economy of publishing and the political economy of knowledge production can be challenged through the explicit adoption of alternative forms of publishing. Here, the Internet opens up new possibilities. For example, *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* is a new 'international' journal that is an explicit attempt to challenge the political economy of publishing by not using a commercial publisher (see Moss, Berg and Desbiens 2002). They have also started an E-book series. Traditional editorial practices and structures can also be challenged by engaging with editors, contributors and potential contributors to discuss how journals are managed. For example, in my role as an editor of this journal I have taken part and organized 'meet the editors' sessions in which a panel of editors meets authors to discuss how journals operate, the 'rules' by which editors assess submissions, what tasks editors undertake, and so on. This has recently culminated in the development of a website (with Duncan Fuller)—<http://www.geo-publishing.org/>—designed to illustrate the geography publishing industry, provide practical advice on how to write and get articles published, present papers and organize conferences, and encourage 'best practice' by referees and journal editors. Importantly, this website is endorsed by the editors of thirty mainstream, 'international' human geography journals. Through dialogue between editors, in theory, it should be possible to address issues of Anglo-American and English-language hegemony by re-shaping the values and practices of individual journals, something that will be an ongoing pursuit.

*Social & Cultural Geography* itself has sought to address issues of Anglo-American

and English-language hegemony using a number of different strategies. First, while editors are drawn from the Anglo-American 'centre' (admittedly at the insistence of the publishers<sup>8</sup>), the editorial board is much more diverse so that sixteen nations are represented.<sup>9</sup> Second, authors can submit in a language other than English, so long as referees can be found to referee it in that language. Once accepted for publication translation, which is expensive, can be undertaken. Third, the abstracts and keywords for every paper or commentary are also published in French and Spanish. Fourth, authors from beyond Anglo-America are strongly encouraged to submit work to the journal. Fifth, the journal publishes the abstracts of doctoral theses and works hard to ensure representation from beyond Anglo-American Geography. Finally, a number of reports (at present over twenty) have been commissioned and are being published that document social and cultural geography in many countries. These reports are published in both English and, where appropriate, the author's own first language. It is hoped that the reports highlight the valuable work being conducted by academics from different nations and create a dialogue between geographers located in different locales and traditions that is respectful and two-way, and does not cast the writer as 'translator-cum-exotic' (Gregson, Simonsen and Vaiou 2002: 16).

While these strategies have had some effects, there is clearly a long way to go in the process of creating a more inclusionary journal that maintains particular standards of publication. Perhaps the next step is to address language issues systematically, to become more sensitive to different ways of writing and knowing, and to further de-centre content to make it more reflective of geography worldwide. Part of this process will no doubt necessitate a reflection upon the composition of editors and editorial

board when it next comes up for review. Importantly, I would argue that none of the strategies enacted have affected either the 'quality' or the political economy of the journal, in fact, in relation to the latter, I would suggest that it has made the journal more widely read across international audiences.

### *Conferences*

Conference organizing has now become a large, global industry and a means by which universities and institutional organizations can earn revenue. Moreover, they, as with publishing, have their own particular power geometries that shape how the conference is organized (e.g. cost, mobility, refereeing of papers, the use of English language, key note speakers), and therefore who is included and excluded. As such, conferences are power laden, a part of the political economy of education and a medium through which the academic conventions in the production of knowledge are reproduced and reinforced. Like publishing, how conferences are organized and run are open to resistance.

For example, meetings can be organized that challenge the political economy of conferences. There are many examples of conferences that are run at absolute minimum cost with delegates only charged for services they receive. Further, it is possible to challenge how existing (annual) conferences are organized. For example, members of the Disability Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers and the Geogable mailing list have actively campaigned for a number of years for improvements in conference facilities for disabled delegates, including issues of access, reduced fees, waiving of fees for personal assistants, the boycotting of venues that ban guide or assistance dogs or exclude disabled people in any way, and so on. Part of this has been a call to other delegates to

change their mode of presentation, taking into account that many delegates have reduced vision or hearing (whether they tell organizers or not). This has had limited, but some, success, particularly in relation to the Association of American Geographers conference where most efforts have been most consistently targeted.

The International Critical Geography Conference, mindful of the politics of international conferences, has sought to locate the conference venue strategically (with the last two conferences in South Korea and Hungary, the next in Mexico) and to think through issues relating to the power geometries operating. However, as noted in the Introduction, it too has still run into a number of problems most notably that of language and custom. English is often taken for granted as the *lingua franca* at international conferences with little explicit resistance. Such a position is highly problematic and creates particular power-geometries that favour those for whom English is their first language (also see Minca 2000). There is little doubt that there needs to be much more conscious effort made to address this issue.<sup>10</sup> Conference materials must be produced in more than one language, workshops in good practice in communication (e.g. presentation, conduct, conference customs, body language) should be held at the start of each conference, speakers need to recognize that colloquialisms and slang will not be understood by the majority in the audience, talks should be paraphrased on overheads as well as read out (many people read English better than they can follow the spoken word), compensation needs to be made in terms of speed of speaking, where possible there needs to be experimentation with translation, and so on. While professional interpreters are one potential solution, they are extremely expensive and push conference costs up significantly, thus excluding those with limited budgets. One aspect little considered is customs, body language and what might be

termed ‘name-badge politics’—how people are treated differently depending on their position of seniority<sup>11</sup> or how well known they are—which can be difficult for people from different places to understand or read and react appropriately to. In relation to the latter, one delegate at the International Critical Geography Conference conference in Hungary noted that one of the most insidious aspects of the conference being in English was that native English-speakers also took it for granted that the social norms of English-speaking societies were also the conference norm. Because English is the *lingua franca* (as a necessity to allow dialogue), it does not necessarily mean that Anglo-American norms of social interaction, body language, public behaviour, speaker-audience interaction, ways of asking questions, ways of addressing peers, should be conference norms. As Minca (2000) notes, helpful here would be for attendees to be prepared to ‘step outside’ of their own traditions and to engage with new ways of knowing and doing without simply rejecting them ‘out of hand’ because they fail to meet their own standards (whatever they may be).

None of these potential solutions are particularly onerous and yet they could transform conferences to make them much more inclusive, highlighting and challenging the hegemony of the English language and taken-for-granted conference norms.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to outline Anglo-American and English-language hegemony in relation to the discipline of geography, how these hegemonies are sustained and reproduced (both internally and externally), their effects on geography, and to demonstrate through examples how productive interventions can and might be made in regards to disrupting and

destabilizing them. Central to this project is the critical examination of power and value—a focus on how the intersections of the political economies of education and publishing leads to the re-valuing of academic practices that creates new, power-laden, academic landscapes that operate over scales from the local to global—and an envisioning of alternative, more inclusionary, non-hegemonic landscapes. In regards to the latter, there is need for (Anglo-American) academics ‘to think much harder about what we actually do; about the practices we engage in, which define what we do, and about the products we both produce and consume’ (Gregson, Simonsen and Vaiou 2002: 5), a need to acknowledge and celebrate different ways of knowing, doing, writing and interpreting, opening up and valuing geographical practices and endeavours silenced within and beyond Anglo-American Geography, and a need to make constructive interventions that actually seek to make a difference. This involves more than making the apparatus of Anglo-American Geography (e.g. ‘international’ journals) more receptive to work from outside, but also making Anglo-American geographers look beyond their own horizons to realize and appreciate that there are geographies being created elsewhere and to engage in productive ways with these geographers and their ideas (rather than simply bringing these ideas back to the centre and appropriating them).

By discussing my own and others attempts to intervene, it has hopefully been illustrated that hegemonic practices can be challenged, resisted and subverted. Such resistances, I would argue, are not mere insignificant ventures of a wider, utopian hope, but instead offer real avenues of potential transformation. It must be remembered that it is academics themselves who decide what is ‘valuable’ and oversee many of the accounting systems that govern their practices; it is academics who edit journals; it is academics

who organize conferences; it is academics who write their disciplinary histories; it is academics who valorize certain ways of knowing and doing at the expense of others. To take one specific example, it seems to me that at a time when nearly all the major human geography journals are edited by so-called critical geographers, who are meant to be sensitive to issues of power, it should be possible to transform the ways in which these journals operate. Through re-visioning and interventions, it should therefore be possible to create a decentred geography that is respectful, inclusionary and reflexive in nature.

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### Notes

- 1 This paper was originally published in Catalan as Kitchin, R. (2003) Disrupting and destabilizing Anglo-American and English-language hegemony in geography, *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica* 42: 17–36. It is translated and reproduced with permission.
- 2 It should be noted that the hegemonic status of Anglo-American Geography is by no means complete. For example, it exerts little influence over French geography which has its own tradition. Similarly, other countries have their own traditions (and their own institutional structures), though increasingly it seems they are aligning their theories and praxis with that of Anglo-American Geography.
- 3 I am aware that the division between Anglo-America and elsewhere adopted in this paper is not solidly fixed and that boundaries between the two are porous and blurred. For example, the transnational migration of scholars between posts and training in different countries means that many academics do not easily identify as Anglo-American or ‘Other’. I, for example, trained in the UK and have worked in Ireland for

the past eight years, and this paper is written from the reflexive perspective of an Anglo-American scholar located on the periphery of that hegemony.

- 4 Several former colleges of education in the UK have sought and achieved university status by altering their outputs and inputs. Waterford Institute of Technology in Ireland is presently employing a strategy of increasing tangible research outputs and chasing public and private research monies in order to try to gain university status.
- 5 Admittedly, many of the key journals for a particular topic are not 'international' in scope by their nature. For example, the *Japanese Journal of American Studies* is the journal for academics working on American Studies in Japan. Its readership, however, is decidedly not international.
- 6 This is also the case for many scholars schooled in different geographic traditions within Anglo-American Geography, let alone for those for whom English is a second language.
- 7 The creation of such a project is presently being explored that would link geographers in several European countries.
- 8 The publishers insisted that the journal have an editor based in the USA.
- 9 While this might be read as tokenism, this was in fact a deliberate strategy to try to decentre the journal. Admittedly, those chosen to sit on the editorial board were selected on the basis of their already established connections to Anglo-American Geography.
- 10 Here I mean conferences aimed at international audiences, not necessarily conferences that have international delegates but are in fact national conferences such as Association of American Geographers or Royal Geographical Society meetings.
- 11 Some countries, such as Japan, have very hierarchical seniority structures that dictate personal interaction.

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### Abstract translations

*Perturber et déstabiliser l'hégémonie anglo-américaine et anglophone dans le domaine de la géographie*

Cet article examine la position jugée hégémonique de la géographie anglo-américaine et le rôle de l'anglais comme langue véhiculaire dans le monde universitaire. La première moitié de cet article esquisse brièvement la position de la géographie anglo-américaine, les structures et les pratiques de l'économie du savoir mondialisée et la géographie anglo-américaine en soi, qui contribuent dans leur ensemble à maintenir et à perpétuer cette hégémonie. Il expose aussi les grandes lignes des effets disciplinaires de ce statut hégémonique sur la pratique de la géographie ailleurs. La seconde moitié étudie les normes anglo-américaines et le statut hégémonique de la langue anglaise en tant que *lingua franca* mondiale et propose d'examiner comment ces normes et ce statut sont, et pourraient être davantage défiés, contrecarrés, minés et remaniés par des interventions discursives et concrètes destinées à les perturber et les déstabiliser. En se focalisant sur l'histoire de l'élaboration de la discipline et sur les règles protocolaires de l'édition et de l'organisation des colloques, une exploration est conduite sur les possibilités dont la géographie peut être modifiée pour laisser s'exprimer une pluralité de voix (et non pas anglo-américaines), des modalités différentes de «faire» de la géographie, et des manières alternatives d'évaluer les formes d'activités géographiques.

**Mots-clefs:** hégémonie anglo-américaine, langue anglaise, édition, colloques, théorie.

*Como trastocar y desestabilizar la hegemonía anglo-americana y la hegemonía de la lengua inglesa en la geografía*

Este papel reflexiona sobre el estatus hegemónico de la geografía anglo-americana y el papel del inglés como *lingua franca* del mundo académico.



La primera parte del papel ofrece una descripción en breve del estatus hegemónico de la geografía anglo-americana, las estructuras y los costumbres de la economía mundial de conocimientos y de la propia geografía anglo-americana que mantienen y reproducen su hegemonía, y los efectos disciplinarios de este estatus hegemónico sobre la geografía de otros países. La segunda parte examina como se están cuestionando, resistiendo, trastocando y remodelando las normas y el estatus hegemónico del inglés como lingua franca mundial por intervenciones discursivas y prácticas con el fin de

desestabilizarlos. Centrándome en la construcción de la historia de la disciplina y los protocolos para la organización de conferencias, considero como se puede transformar la geografía y abrirla a la pluralidad de voces (no anglo-americanas) y contemplo diferentes modos de 'hacer' la geografía y maneras alternativas de valorar iniciativas geográficas.

**Palabras claves:** hegemonía anglo-americana, lengua inglesa, el campo editorial, conferencias, teoría.