The social economy as produced space: the 'here and now' of education in constructing alternatives

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Abstract

This article approaches adult learning within the social economy through a critical and spatial lens. First, I approach the critical pedagogy of Freire, outlining the dialectical relationship between subjectivity and objectivity enacted in the development of critical consciousness. Carrying this dialogical argumentative forward, I go on to show how the critical geography of Lefebvre 'unpacks' this dialectic onto space and place, grounding pedagogical apprehension in a critical geography which is more directly set up to confront and engage with capitalism as a spatial force. Drawing from some of the social enterprise literature, I then utilise Lefebvre's 'spatial triad' to demonstrate how the perceived, conceived and lived facets of space can shed light on integrative areas of adult learning that together constitute a platform for a potential 'trial by space' for alternatives.

Keywords: spatial dialectics; adult education; social economy; critical pedagogy; space and place

Introduction

How might the spatial turn shed light on tensions within the social economy and in doing so, illuminate opportunities for adult learning and the forging of alternatives to capitalism?[1] Here, the spatial turn refers only to a more explicit and deliberate emphasis on geography, space, and place as avenues for critical thought. Following the conceptual import of rural studies (Cloke, 2006) and Halfacree's (2006, 2007) reading of Lefebvre's spatial dialectics into a mature rural studies literature able to 'rematerialize, resocialize and repoliticize our understandings of the coming-together of rural space' (Cloke, 2006, p. 24), this paper seeks to engage the social economy across the uneven spatiality of capitalism and within the unique spatialities of different place scales. While this paper does not necessarily retain a rural focus,[2] I seek to contribute modestly to this thrust of thinking critically about the coming-together of place, and demonstrate how Lefebvre's ideas (and the conceptual rigour and flexibility that they have maintained up until the present) may reveal themselves to be particularly illuminating—especially given our emphasis here on alternatives to capitalism, place, and the entanglement of learning and education with everyday experience.

Let us quickly introduce the notion of the social economy. To start, we can borrow from Hall et al.'s (2011) glossing. These authors write:

> The promise of the Social Economy is that it provides a set of principles, practices, relationships and organizations that will allow individuals and communities to negotiate [contemporary challenges] more successfully, to ameliorate and begin to reverse [their] worst effects, and to propose and experiment with alternative ways of regulation, organization and delivery. (p. 1)

Adding to this, Sousa and Wulff (2012) consider the social economy 'as a framework comprised of features of the public and private sectors, which is not to imply or suggest it is a hybrid of the two' (p. ii). This quick treatment does not speak to the ongoing and diverse contestations surrounding the social economy and its conceptualisation more broadly, but it does help us to formulate some related assumptions that will help us to more explicitly connect the social economy, space, and adult education. The first is that the social economy certainly has a learning dimension; negotiating contemporary challenges through the act of experimentation is itself an educational endeavour in the broadest sense. The aim of the social economy to strengthen local communities' capacities 'to respond to greater domestic and global challenges' (Sousa & Wulff, 2012, p. i) is one that is intertwined with adults who are learning to grapple with the world. The second is that the social economy seems to hover around the notion of community; the social economy 'is typically seen in the work of community-oriented organizations at the neighbourhood or city level […]' (p. i). The promise of 'alternativeness' within the social economy in many ways piggybacks on this ability and propensity within communities to "do it our own way" and is an invitation for the notions of place-building and social economy to take each other up. However, there is also the recognition (within the Canadian context) that 'robust social economy entities and formations exist at regional, provincial, and national levels as well' (Sousa & Wulff, 2012, p. i); social economy actors as well as their enabling actors can certainly act across space and from a distance. The third assumption is that social economy activity is not bound to the world of organisations and organisational thinking; policy makers, academics, organisational actors, entrepreneurs, customers/beneficiaries, and the environment collectively enact social economy systems.

Given these assumptions, I argue that it makes sense to conceptualise the learning dimensions of the social economy around place contexts and geographies. Such a move also allows for the abandonment of the social economy as an object of inquiry, for a more integrative 'object' that we might call the spaces of the social economy. Such a turn toward geography mirrors Muñoz's treatment of a geographical research agenda for social enterprise; Muñoz (2010) tells us that it may be fruitful to

> […] examine the two-way relationship between spatial context and social enterprise – considering the kinds of spaces that are 'created' and 'shaped' by the activities of social enterprise and, in turn, how these spaces are experienced by all those that are touched by social enterprise activity. Drawing on post-structural theory could help tease out the power relationships between social enterprises as organisational 'actors' that shape, and are shaped by the spatial context within which they operate. (p. 307)

In considering the *spaces* of the social economy—and their production—as entangled with adult learning and capacity development, Lauzon's (2013) question of 'capacity for whom, to do what?' (p. 4) is one of spatial apprehension and interrogation; capacity for whom, to enact what sort of space? In this light, the notion of learning is grounded in

'its effectiveness in bringing about social change and transformation' (p. 4), albeit an emergent change/transformation interrogated in spatial terms.

Freire (1970/2013) reminds us of the fundamentally narrative character of education. Jumping from pedagogy to space, we can draw from Soja (1989) who, drawing from Berger, tells us that 'any contemporary narrative which ignores the urgency of spatial dimension is incomplete and acquires the oversimplified character of a fable' (p. 24). Thus, this paper is part of a continued engagement with critical geography as an avenue for exploring the learning dimensions within the social economy. While the critical geography literature certainly and fruitfully has much to offer, I will approach the social economy through the lens of Henri Lefebvre's spatial dialectics. Lefebvre's spatial dialectics can perhaps usher us quickly to both an appreciation of the dialectical nature of space and place as well as an apprehension of our entanglement and engagement with it. The rest of the paper will proceed as follows. The next section will briefly explore Lefebvre's spatial project and how it intersects broadly with the notion of education. Next, in order to bring Lefebvre's spatial dialectics and spatial ontology closer to the realm of education, I will approach the notion of the dialectic as it is identified by Freire through his ontological commitment to humanisation and his critical pedagogy. Next, I will approach Lefebvre's spatial ontology and then his 'spatial triad' as a way to begin unpacking a dialectical conceptualisation of the learning dimensions of the social economy; on a broad and conceptual level, I will look at the spatial practice, the representations of space, and the everyday lives that are intertwined with social economy activity. The paper concludes with a brief discussion about what this apprehension of spatial elements might mean for our conceptualisation of adult learning in the social economy.

Lefebvre, space, and education

Following the words of Kipfer, Saberi and Wieditz (2012), Lefebvre's work certainly assumes a 'circuitous' character. Today there are multiple Lefebvres floating about and this is partly due to 'the current conditions of interpretations which are characterized by deep political uncertainties compounded by an enduring postmodern eclecticism' (Kipfer et al., 2012, p. 116). This eclecticism speaks also to Lefebvre as a foundational reading of space; writing of the vigorous and pioneering voices of postmodern geography, Soja (1989) tells us '[t]he most persistent, insistent, and consistent of these spatializing voices belonged to the French Marxist philosopher, Henri Lefebvre' (p. 16). Thus, Lefebvre most certainly plays an important role in our contemporary understandings of space and place. The overarching thesis in his aptly-titled book *The Production of Space* is that space is in fact *produced*—a view that contrasts markedly with the idea that space is simply an abstract and empty container waiting to be filled— a 'passive receptacle' (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 90). Like Marx, who demonstrated that the fetishism of commodities under capitalism lends itself to our inability to apprehend the social reality that lies behind these commodities, Lefebvre argued that hegemonic and abstract theories of space embodied in capitalism work to alienate and subsequently deny the 'rights to space' that belong to individuals and communities. Merrifield (1993) reminds us that Lefebvre's thesis 'effectively represents a spatialized rendition of Marx's conception of fetishism' (p. 520); if we cannot illuminate the production of space—'we fall into the trap of treating space as space "in itself", as space as such' (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 90). Lefebvre leads us to acknowledge that—and perhaps this is too swift a glossing—a particular society cannot exist without producing and

maintaining a space for itself (whether we are aware of this production or not). Thus, a capitalist society cannot exist without perpetuating and maintaining a space or spaces for itself, in the same way that a communist society cannot; nothing at all can escape what Lefebvre (1974/1991) calls a 'trial by space.' Thus, for the social economy, which we can assume at the outset as harbouring a latent potential to *challenge* the dominant logics of capitalism, a spatial interrogation of social economy activity might offer a rich and open lens through which to critically asses the connections between alternative spaces and the learning that helps constitute said spaces. In other words, if adult education does not effectively push the social economy to *produce* a space—a 'produced difference' in the face of dominant expression—then what sort of educational endeavour is it?

The bringing together of geography and emancipatory education is of course not a new sort of synthesis. As Springer (2012) reminds us, 'Reclus and Kropotkin demonstrated long ago that geography lends itself to emancipatory ideas' (p. 1613). The emancipatory spirit within critical geography, which has turned our attention 'to certain notions of space as a concept for discursive analysis and moreover, the ground for transformative action' (Kitchens, 2009, p. 241), retains a decidedly *educational* quality; Lefebvre's insistence on the centrality of everyday life, his opposition to the idea of politics as an elitist activity (Shields, 1999), and his hope for 'the possibility of people realising and empowering themselves as "total persons"' (Shields, 1999, p. 183) suggest that Lefebvre's spatial project shares a certain transformational ethos with contemporary radical outlooks of adult education. Radical schools of thought within adult education that seek to challenge the foundations of professionalism—an 'ism' with the tendency to conceptualise the 'incompleteness' of people in a very limiting fashion—mirror Lefebvre's demand for 'an end to the technocratic specialisation of academia and the organisation of government' (Shields, 1999, p. 141). Lauzon (1998) suggests that under the professionalism view, adult education 'is presented as apolitical and knowledge is believed to be value neutral. Education is explicitly linked to the economy and education is usually viewed in terms of job preparation or retraining' (p. 133). Lauzon (1998) contrasts this modernist view of professionalism with a more radical view of adult education which is itself a response to the challenges of the postmodern moment—'a moment that is not grounded in *a* particular political project, but a moment that attempts to acknowledge and respect various discourses through redrawing and re-presenting the boundaries of culture' (p. 133, *original emphasis*). In this light, Lefebvre's spatial project certainly has room for itself to become a vehicle for a postmodern 'redrawing' of new social realities and alternatives—by understanding the spatial 'as an issue cutting across disciplines' (Shields, 1999, p. 141) and with the potential to illuminate and short-circuit totalising discourses through an explicit focus on space and place. It is under this light that we can also begin to conceptualise adult education surrounding the social economy, not as an essential and linear 'catching up' to ideologies that have been decided and agreed upon elsewhere, but as an integrative *apprehension* of the spatial terrain on which the forging of alternatives rests.

Critical pedagogy and critical geography

Freire's (1970/2013) pedagogy places ontological primacy on the dehumanisation and humanisation of men and women—that is, Freire sees these situations as *realities*; he writes, '[w]ithin history, in concrete, objective contexts, both humanization and dehumanization are possibilities for a person as an uncompleted being conscious of

their incompletion' (Freire, 1970/2013, p. 43). However, Freire is quick to remind us that it is humanisation only that represents the people's 'ontological vocation'; to become more human, we must realise ourselves as Subjects who can act upon and transform the world. The learning process that describes this engagement is what Freire (1970/2013) refers to as *conscientização*; it is 'the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence' (p. 109) and amounts to 'learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality' (Freire, 1970/2013, p. 35, editors note). It is this critical awareness—this learning—and the movement between the objective and the subjective that I would like to focus on here. For Freire, the objective and the subjective are opposites that interrelate dialectically and cannot be separated. Freire (1970/2013) writes:

> The separation of objectivity from subjectivity, the denial of the latter when analyzing reality or acting upon it, is objectivism. On the other hand, the denial of objectivity in analysis or action, resulting in a subjectivism which leads to solipsistic positions, denies action itself by denying objective reality. (p. 50)

In Freire's liberating education—or problem-posing education—individuals and groups become aware of their situation of oppression through an invoked 'dance' between the abstract and concrete elements of their world. Freire (1970/2013) tells us that in order to critically perceive one's contextual reality, especially if it is viewed at the outset as 'dense, impenetrable, and enveloping' (p. 105), it is necessary to employ a dialectical method of 'decoding' which requires a movement from the abstract to the concrete. Freire (1970/2013) continues:

> […] this requires moving from the part to the whole and then returning to the parts; this in turn requires that the Subject recognize himself in the object (the coded concrete existential situation) and recognize the object as a situation in which he finds himself, together with other Subjects. (p. 105)

Thus, the dialectical method that Freire calls for is one that exists *in reflection* within the Subject(s)—the incomplete human whose humanisation receives ontological status.

When we approach the social economy as potentially offering viable alternatives to capitalism, and when we assume that the forging of these alternatives will certainly involve an educational endeavour (whether we are talking about teacher/student relationships explicitly or, more broadly, the development of critical consciousness for social transformation in the world), the ontological status awarded to humanisation is one that is difficult to surrender. Indeed, this *should* be difficult. Alternatives to capitalism are not alternative for the sake of themselves; they are the becoming-alternative through the reflection, imagination, and action of the people. However, when we attempt to understand how these alternatives are constituted *spatially* using the critical geography of Lefebvre (which is the primary aim here), we inevitably encounter changes in language and in ontological primacy that differ slightly from that of Freire's pedagogy. This is certainly not to say that these theorists are both not committed to the underpinnings of dialectical materialism, or that one employs the dialectical method to a 'more correct' degree than the other, but rather, that their positions employ this philosophical worldview in unique ways in order to highlight differently the fluidity and incompleteness of the world. Indeed, it has been speculatively suggested that the take up of spatial thinking in educational studies has been slow because 'questions of social justice in education have tended to be the prerogative of critical pedagogic thought in

the lineage of Freire' (Bright, Manchester, & Allendyke, 2013, p. 749). Kitchens (2009) writes:

> […] like critical pedagogy, Critical Geography is concerned with working against oppressive elements in society, but the latter addresses localities with a more deliberate emphasis on the spatialization, or the "production of space" both in its positive and negative characteristics. (p. 245)

It is this 'deliberate emphasis' that speaks to how critical geographers choose to view and talk about the world. In Freire's pedagogy, the 'dance' between the abstract and the concrete as a dialectical argumentative—through reflection and dialogue—'leads to the supersedence of the abstraction *by* the critical perception of the concrete, which has already ceased to be a dense, impenetrable reality' (Freire, 1970/2013, p. 105, *original emphasis*). However, this supersedence can be articulated quite differently when the urgency of the spatial dimension is explicitly brought to the forefront.

Spatial dialectics and the social economy

Since the aim of this paper is to approach the learning dimensions of the social economy through an inward 'turn' towards *place*, it would be useful here to approach the work of Merrifield (1993), who utilises the spatial dialectic of Lefebvre to reassert 'the basic *ontological* nature of place itself' (p. 516, *original emphasis*). Merrifield (1993) argues that 'Lefebvre's maverick, non-dogmatic *spatialized* reading of Marx's materialist dialectic (a project he termed *spatiology*) offers the most fruitful route for broaching the problematic of place as well as permitting the formation of a robust politics of place' (p. 517, *original emphasis*). For Merrifield, place can be problematic at the outset if the manner in which geographers construct place as an 'object' of inquiry ignores its dialectic nature; reasserting the dialectical mode of argumentation can contribute to 'reconciling the way in which experience is lived and acted out in place, and how this relates to, and is embedded in, political and economic practices that are operative over broader spatial scales' (Merrifield, 1993, p. 517). Through the dialectical method, we can begin to recognise place not as a fusion of space and experience, which Merrifield identifies as a Cartesian view of place, but instead, as part of a larger and integrative totality; place and space are both ontologically real but 'melt' into each other. The difference, then, is that place is where basic social practices are lived out. Merrifield (1993) writes, '[a]s a moment of capitalist space, place is where everyday life is *situated*' (p. 522, *original emphasis*). It is in place where the forces and contradictions of an abstract capitalist space are ultimately expressed, but also where they can be contested, as 'place-specific ingredients and the politics of place are not innocent and passive in the formation of overall capitalist social space' (Merrifield, 1993, p. 522). Thus, the 'dense, impenetrable, and enveloping' (Freire, 1970/2013, p. 105) character of certain expressions of the capitalist system in particular places can be overcome through the supersedence of place-specific ingredients and a place politic—an apprehension that becomes central to educational endeavours within a social economy that is committed to producing *real* alternative spaces.

How then, does Lefevbre's spatial dialectics inform this apprehension of place within a totality of capitalist logic? Let us turn now to Lefebvre's spatial triad, which Merrifield (1993) describes as 'an extremely suggestive and flexible heuristic device for interpreting the mode of mediation between space and place which can shed light on the nature of place and how it, in turn, relates to the broader social whole' (p. 522). Quite

inventively, Lefebvre's spatial triad decomposes the dialectic, producing 'what might best be called a cumulative *trialectics* that is radically open to additional otherness, to a continued expansion of spatial knowledge' (Soja, 1996, p. 61, *original emphasis*); the triad explicitly spatialises dialectical reasoning, rendering the apprehension of place as a complex bringing together of diverse interpretations. Let us now turn our attention towards the three facets of space that make up Lefebvre's spatial dialectics. These facets, as introduced by Lefebvre, are *spatial practices*, *representations of space*, and *spaces of representation* (or *everyday lives*). It is important to remember that following the dialectical method, each of these facets cannot be understood in their own isolation; Halfacree (2007) reminds us that, '[i]n line with Lefebvre's irreducibly historical sensitivity, the three facets of space are seen as *intrinsically dynamic*, as are the relations between them' (p. 127, *original emphasis*). I now move on to re-introduce each facet and in the same breath begin to demonstrate how these facets can perhaps begin to shed light on the integrative spatial elements of social economy systems.

Given the diversity of organisational forms within the social economy (charities, non-profits, social enterprises, cooperatives, etc.) and the diversity of contexts, places, and spatial scales over which social economy activity is situated and practiced, the specific and grounded explorations of each facet will of course remain entirely partial and will by no means speak to the entirety of social economy activity or potential. This is perhaps an apt shortcoming; while the spatial triad should always certainly be employed in concrete situations (Lefebvre, 1974/1991) and '*embodied* with actual flesh and blood and culture, with real life relationships and events' (Merrifield, 2000, p. 175, *original emphasis*), the intent here is to encourage the conceptual import of the triad into the social economy at large and usher forth a spatial open-endedness into educational endeavours. However, in an attempt to *approach* some sort of concreteness and to help sketch these facets of space, I will draw from some of the literature surrounding social entrepreneurship and social enterprising activity more generally. These activities are appropriate for our purposes here for two reasons; first, the 'hybrid' nature of social enterprise as existing both within the market and within the realm of social purpose, speaks to a potential 'un-hinging' from the hegemonic marketisation of capitalist systems, but also its potential to be subsumed back into it—as a 'reduced' difference (Lefebvre, 1974/1991); second, there has been increased policy attention surrounding how social enterprise and social entrepreneurship should be conceived— that is, 'social enterprise is politically contested by different actors around competing discourses' (Teasdale, 2011, p. 100). These factors render social enterprise and social entrepreneurship—a particular and 'unfinished' corner of the social economy—as one appropriate vehicle for introducing and highlighting how the facets of space relate to the social economy and how educational endeavours might navigate the tensions within and between these facets.

Spatial practices

First, we have what Lefebvre calls *spatial practices*. These are the practices that 'secrete' the space of a particular society, 'facilitating both material expression and societal reproduction' (Halfacree, 2007, p. 126). These practices are inscribed routine activities; they structure daily life and bear a likeness to how we *perceive* the space around us. This perceived quality stems from our commonsensical understandings of space; there is a 'taken-for-granted' quality of daily life in sites that appear 'logically rationalised' (Shields, 1999). Spatial practices are unreflective and help 'to ensure social

continuity in a relatively cohesive fashion' (Sheilds, 1999, p. 162). Thus, spatial practices reflect the practical perception or 'spatial performance' of material/capital movements and the mobilities of people and information; spatial practices make up the quiet and banal world of velocities and directions, of liquids and solids. This facet of space 'is quite separate from and more reliable than stylistic measures, which are cultural and historico-geographically specific' (Shields, 1999, p. 162). This 'reliability' stems from an objective view of actuality; divorced from sense and meaning-making, the pathways and networks of societal reproduction emerge and are intuitively re-enforced. Drawing from Lefebvre and Harvey, Castree (2009), reminds us that 'space is materially produced by different societies in different ways'; '[t]hese forms and these scales are both the outcome and shaper of political economic processes that are general in nature' (p. 31). Thus, spatial practices are also interwoven with power relationships; in a particular place, the 'intuitiveness' of the spatial practice of capitalism is related to the degree said place is subsumed under the disciplinary pressure of capitalism as a discourse on space.

How then, could we begin to highlight the spatial practices of the social economy and social enterprise/entrepreneurship, more specifically? First, it would be useful to remind ourselves that the aim is not to approach particular place scales as bounded systems; while place certainly matters and can most certainly be our concern here, the spatial practices of the social economy are embedded in material systems that inevitably 'melt' into larger spatial scales including the global. Merrifield (1993) adds to this when he suggests that spatial practices fill an ambiguous regulatory role; spatial practices 'become the pressure point in keeping the space-place relationship together, yet apart' (p. 526). Thus, the spatial practices of the social economy in a particular place can, on the one hand, perpetuate the global space of capitalism, and on the other, be formulated 'in such a way as to confront the spatial sphere in which hegemonic forces are deployed' (Merrifield, 1993, p. 527). Second, in thinking about the spatial practices of the social economy, it would help to conceptualise activity within the sector as a performance that is not bound to the domains of social economy organisations. Certainly, there is a need to approach and recognise social economy organisations through an organisational lens—but just as important is the need to recognise the *swarm* of spatial practices that surround and constitute activity within the social economy. To compliment Lefebvre's spatial practice, we can briefly draw from de Certeau's (1980/1984) vantage point; within everyday spatial practices, '[t]he networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alternations of space […]' (p. 93). Hovering over the social economy, we can begin to ask ourselves, what is the 'text' of the social economy's spatial practice? Looking 'down' on a particular place and its intersections with space, what are the paths that are drawn and forgotten because of their everydayness?

Let us consider the 'swarm' of spatial practice that surrounds social enterprise and the services and/or products that these organisations provide to communities—services and products that are both produced and consumed across space. In a study conducted by Cooney (2011), even within a small sample of social purpose businesses there was a high degree of diversity in terms of what these enterprises were offering, including 'low-income housing, publishing, horticulture, agriculture, farming, retail, construction, pest control, light manufacturing, restaurant, food service, arts and crafts, furniture upholstery, and maintenance' (p. 190). Through content questions, we can begin to see how different practices 'inscribe' onto place differently; if a social enterprise delivers a product, where is the product manufactured and by whom? What materials go into the

production process and through what networks are these materials procured? Who ultimately consumes the product and what paths do they trace to enact this consumption? How much financial capital is moved across space to acquire said products and through what channels? Where does the product go after it is consumed? Does it become a waste product? Is it dispelled by the body? Does it offer some extended use-value? If a social enterprise delivers a service, what activities constitute the service itself and how are these activities enacted across space? Does the service offer employment to service deliverers? How far do customers travel to benefit from the service? Do they benefit from a distance? What are the tensions that emerge from these practices and how do these tensions lend themselves to sense-making experiences? If a social enterprise enacts a particular governance structure, how does this particular form of decision-making 'secrete' a spatial texture? This is of course a non-exhaustive list; the idea here is to turn our attention toward social enterprise as well as the social economy in general as a collection of practices that indeed make an imprint on (and receive an imprint from) the places and spaces they are situated in. In speaking of accountability, Connolly and Kelly (2011) write that the desire to 'do good deeds' within social enterprise 'does not mitigate an organisation's duty to be accountable or to engage with its stakeholders' (p. 234). Extending this out to the spatial practice of accountability, we might say that the activity of 'doing good deeds' is not divorced from the spatial texture that makes these 'good deeds' possible in the first place. If a social enterprise has made explicit the commitment to raise revenues through market initiatives and to re-invest these surpluses back into the community or the enterprise itself, then a 'topographical' view of the spatial practices of such an organisation should not be confined to the geographies produced by the 'point of sale' only. The question for the social economy becomes: what is the spatial texture intertwined with its production from top to bottom? Educational endeavours that support the production of truly alternative spaces within the social economy will be engaged fully with the spatial practicepractise of social economy activity.

Representations of space

Next, we have what Lefebvre refers to as *representations of space*. Within this facet, we encounter formal conceptions of space that are *conceived* and 'discursively constructed' (Merrifield, 1993, p. 523) by professionals and technocrats such as businesspeople, planners, engineers, developers, academics, and scientists. These spaces are certainly abstract, and are made up of and expressed through arcane jargon, codifications, and objectified and conceptual depictions. Merrifield (1993) reminds us that, according to Lefebvre, this space 'subsumes ideology and knowledge within its practice' (p. 523)—and often from a distance; representations of space 'might equally be thought of as discourses *on* space' (Shields, 1999, p. 161, *original emphasis*). Representations of space are not *lived*; they are directly linked to the *imposed* nature of the relations of production. Most crucially, writes Shields (1999), representations of space 'are central to forms of knowledge and claims of truth made in the social sciences, which (today) in turn ground the rational/professional power structure of the capitalist state' (p. 164).
How then, do representations of space impose themselves into the realm of the social economy? How does Lefebvre's concept of 'representations of space' lend itself to interrogating power within the social economy? A partial and introductory answer would be through policy building. Policy is a representation of space in that it guides action and behaviour and in turn defines what is appropriate; Nguyễn (2010) writes that

'[c]onventional orientations to policy and policy analysis often privilege legitimated governing bodies authorized to decipher the public good and to then formulate statements of intent and action' (p. 181). Thus, policy *conceives* of a space in a particular fashion and subsequently *represents* that space. The often top-down and prescriptive nature of knowledge legitimization through policy building is mirrored in Lefebvre's discussion of representations of space; in speaking about the city and urbanity, Lefebvre (1974/1991) writes that the intervention by representations of space in part

> […] occurs by way of construction – in other words, by way of architecture, conceived of not as the building of a particular structure, palace or monument, but rather as a project embedded in a spatial context and a texture which call for 'representations' that will not vanish into the symbolic or imaginary realms. (p. 42)

The imagery evoked here is complementary to that of thinking about policies as existing 'in silos'—structures that are raised not only for the purposes and domains they serve, but as a place holder for legitimisation—for power; if 'knowledge' is found to be different tomorrow, it will exuberate from the silo. The project of building policy as a *product*—a silo—is not meant to vanish into the symbolic or imaginary realms; it is meant to take a front seat in establishing the relations between objects, people, and the world.

It would be impossible here to paint a complete 'representational' picture of the social economy at large, as well as social entrepreneurship and social enterprise more specifically; not only do representations vary across states and regions, but the framing of the prescribed role of the social economy and subsequent organisational forms are themselves moving targets. Here, it would be beneficial to continue drawing from a broad treatment. For example, the increased acceptance of social entrepreneurship as operating from a 'hybrid' positioning between social change and economic benefit makes way for its normative positioning in a grand-narrative; drawing from Mair and Marti (2006), Dey and Steyaert (2010) tell us that social entrepreneurship 'gets portrayed not only as an economic force that, for instance, replaces public services with market or quasi-market based offerings, but also as a guardian of virtue and morality' (p. 91). Adding to this, Teasdale (2011) draws from Parkinson and Howorth (2008) who describe this grand-narrative as 'downplaying' the agency of front-line social entrepreneurs and practitioners in forging and attaching their own meanings to the work that they do. It is in this light that the grand-narrative of social entrepreneurship under neoliberalism has framed and *represented* what social entrepreneurship *is* and what it is capable of doing. Wound up with policy, the academic sphere seems to echo this representation as well; for instance, there seems to be a lack of imagination and diversity in terms of social entrepreneurship research. Dey and Steyaert (2012) presume that

> […] prevailing conceptions of social entrepreneurship are united by a problematic tendency: they harbour a kind of end-orientation and conservatism which neutralises the concept's radically transformative possibilities. That is, since they are more and more often evaluated in terms of their immediate "use value" (as defined from the perspective of ruling power), any radical enactments of the social are sacrificed to the ostensible "real-life" pressures of the day. (p. 91)

The authors go on to argue that social entrepreneurship is by no means a concept that is taken to its extreme; instead, social entrepreneurship is conceived of solely 'as an economically viable, yet largely de-politicised, blueprint for dealing with societal

problems' (Dey & Steyaert, 2012, p. 91). Thus, the enabling ability of research and the academy, as well as of policy and the state, is perhaps dampened by its procedural ability to reduce the *material* and the *lived* elements of alternativeness into a 'locked-in' prescriptive representation; '[l]ike all complex systems, the culture and structures of mainstream policy development can become set in ways that prevent social innovation and reject alternatives consciously or because of implicit assumptions embedded in policy approaches and processes' (Gismondi & Cannon, 2012, p. 61). Educational endeavours that support the production of truly alternative spaces within the social economy will engage with and confront representations, whether these representations act from within place, or across and 'on' space.

Spaces of representation & everyday lives

Finally, we have what Lefebvre calls *spaces of representation*. Here, and to avoid confusion with Lefebvre's representations of space, spaces of representation will also be called *everyday lives*. These spaces are comprised of what Halfacree (2007) describes as 'diverse and often incoherent images and symbols' (p. 126) which are associated with space as *directly lived*. This facet of space is one where the centrality of life is experienced and felt; for Merrifield (1993), everyday life is 'a practical and sensual activity acted out in place' (p. 525). Drawing from Lefebvre, Merrifield reminds us that spaces of representation are *alive*; they embrace 'the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately [imply] time' (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 42). Thus, spaces of representation or everyday lives have the ability to *arrest* time; there are 'points of rapture within the repetition of everyday life' through which humans are able to 'let out the moments of spirit' (Shields, 1999, p. 187) and escape/subvert disciplinary pressures. Halfacree (2007) refers to everyday lives as 'appropriations by users into quotidian meanings and local knowledges' (p. 126); these quotidian or everyday meanings are a reflection of the 'authentic shards of spatiality' (Shields, 1999, p. 165) that inevitably have a central role in worldview construction and meaning-making activities.

Thus, when thinking about the *lived* spaces of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise, it becomes possible to imagine the myriad of *lived* experiences that surround such activities. To exist as a social entrepreneur or as a practitioner of social enterprise is not to exist in a world defined only by capital movements and the material expressions of services/products and their revenue streams—nor is it an existence that is confined to the domain of policy and representation—it also 'bursts forth' as an existence that is *lived* out cognitively by real people in real places and cannot be reduced to simple abstraction. Similarly, the experience of engaging with alternative spaces produced by the social economy as a customer/client/beneficiary is one that cannot be reduced to abstraction and retains a lived quality which speaks to everyday meaning-making and the forging of identities. Furthermore, when we approach the social economy at the outset as harbouring radical potential in terms of offering alternatives to capitalism, the 'authentic shards of spatiality' (Shields, 1999, p. 165) that describe how these alternatives might be *experienced* as a part of everyday life certainly take on a particular and invaluable significance. Here, the critique of transgression, as articulated by Dey and Steyaert (2012), can add to our understanding of Lefebvre's spaces of representation in terms of the social economy, as the critique of transgression 'takes people's perspectives, utterances, stories, etc. directly into account' (p. 99). Drawing from Foucault, these authors write that individuals 'might punctuate, breach,

and creatively reassemble that which is given and taken for granted, thus creating conditions that facilitate "becoming other"' (Dey & Steyaert, 2012, p. 99); this harkens to Halfacree's (2006) reading of the spatial dialectic, in which 'formal representations never completely overwhelm the experience of everyday life – although they may come close […]' (pp. 51–52). Thus, as Shields (1999) writes, spaces of representation or everyday lives as a facet of space 'forms the social imaginary' (p. 164) that influences how we think about the possible and the achievable; for social entrepreneurship, this facet of space speaks to not only the agency of practitioners to resist formal representation, but also 'to redefine the conditions under which something new can be produced' (Dey & Steyaert, 2012, p. 101). Now that we have taken a brief look at each of the facets of space, let us now turn towards a synthesis and what that synthesis might mean for adult education.

A 'trial by space' for alternatives

Following Halfacree (2007), perhaps the best way to bring together the three facets of space is Lefebvre's concept of 'trial by space' which can speak to the *spatial* process of allowing alternatives to emerge. On this notion, Lefebvre (1974/1991), writes:

> […] nothing and no one can avoid *trial by space* […] It is in space […] that each idea of 'value' acquires or loses its distinctiveness through confrontation with the other values and ideas that it encounters there […] Ideas, representations or values which do not succeed in making their mark on space, and thus generating (or producing) an appropriate morphology, will lose all pith and become mere signs, resolve themselves into abstract descriptions, or mutate into fantasies. (pp. 416–417, *original emphasis*)

Thus, if we accept that the forging of alternatives is a *spatial* endeavour, and we accept that it is indeed an endeavour with an educational quality, then the task for education within the social economy should then be to support a successful 'trial by space' for alternatives—alternatives that are constituted *spatially* by an engagement with the three facets of space we have reviewed above. As we have already seen, the facets of space should not be conceptualised in isolation from one another. This is not simply a reminder for critical geographers; an apprehension of how these facets melt into one another is essential to a critical pedagogy of place, where the separation of objective/abstract and subjective/concrete is overcome through Lefebrve's 'trialectic' method of de-coding space. This de-coding as an educational endeavour—of learning and exercising a critical consciousness—puts individuals and communities in a better position to understand and interrogate the places they live both as sites where outside forces come into play and where their struggle to confront these forces to create something new is situated.

But how could this de-coding of place enter into adult education surrounding the social economy in a meaningful and explicit way? Here, I am not pushing for a prescriptive 'curriculum' of sorts, where practitioners go through the motions of interrogating—of uncovering—the tensions within and between the facets. Instead, I invoke the term *eventful space* to help conceptualise how the learning might take place. Fendler (2013), who focuses on learning not 'as a scholastic objective subject to an assessment but as a multilocational and processural experience', asks, '[w]here, then, does learning take place? How can we discuss a space characterized by invisible learning?' (p. 787). Fendler then draws from Crang and Thrift's (2000) notion of *eventful space* as a term that allows us 'to name a terrain that encompasses the relational

activities of becoming-learner, the observation of which allows us to attend the manner in which affinity and action generate learning landscapes' (Fendler, 2013, p. 787). The imagery of the 'learning landscape' lends itself to the idea of nomadic pedagogy, which Fendler (2013) reminds us is not actually about traveling but about the 'subversive actions that defy, or at least resist, convention' (p. 787). In relation to nomadic practices, Fendler (2013) continues:

> […] the eventful space of learning becomes a space of experiential learning. As a space characterized by the potential it has to evoke change, it comes to be defined by a double movement, where learning practices are displaced (becoming mobile) and where learning itself is its own form of displacement (i.e., change in one's worldview). In this context, learners as nomadic subjects are involved in becoming-other, engaging in a relationship with their surroundings in a process of (continual) deterritorialization. (pp. 787–788)

While Fendler's treatment is focused around the education of young people, I argue that these concepts are especially useful for our purposes here as well, as they help us to position learning within the social economy as surrounding a 'named terrain'—a trial by space—where the tensions of the trial become opportunities for learning events that engage many elements, activities, and people.

Within this light, adult learning within the social economy 'hovers' around the named terrain of a trial by space for alternatives—alternatives that are etched out in place contexts. Thus, confrontations (wherever they may occur) between social economy representation/policy and any emergent forms of practice as they appear 'on the ground' are themselves opportunities for educational endeavours. An interrogation of the tensions between the everyday meanings attached to social economy activities and the banality of material and spatial practice can be an illuminating activity. Contradictions between the felt experience within place contexts and the social economy discourses that act 'on' space and from a distance can create opportunities for resolution and capacity building. The spatial triad allows adult learning within the social economy to explicitly surround the terrain of place production and a politics of place; adult learning as a collection of events is not confined to the individual but is, through a spatial ontology, intertwined with place-making or with what we might call the becoming-place. Through people, organisations, and policy-makers, places can come to recognise their own unique learning events and to create an 'alternativeness'—which is in itself a slippery concept, 'resisting definition and shifting as soon as attempts are made to tie it down' (Holloway et al., 2007, p. 5). Learning *in place*, as a context-specific endeavour that inevitably produces a dialogue with the state and their abstractions, may lead to a 'negative capability' where place-learners *teach* governments to 'let go' and adopt an enabling role; this negative capability does not describe a capacity to do wrong, but rather, a capacity to produce a new sound. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) ask,

> How could lines of deterritorialization be assignable outside of circuits of territoriality? Where else but in wide expanses, and in major upheavals in those expanses, could a tiny rivulet of new intensity suddenly start to flow? What do you *not* have to do in order to produce a new sound? (p. 35, *emphasis mine*)

Thus, meaningful adult learning within the social economy partially comprises the deterritorialization of dominant spatial practices and representations and the forging of an alternativeness described as 'a self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 22). It is perhaps through an engagement with a spatial ontology as well

as Lefebvre's three facets of space that the social economy can 'turn' educational endeavours towards an apprehension of the 'here and now' of the production of space.

Acknowledgements

Endnotes

[1] Here, 'alternatives to capitalism' is read through Wright's (2016) eroding of capitalism linked with the 'taming' capacity of social democracy, as opposed to the smashing of or escaping from capitalism.

[2] This paper is in many ways a partial iteration of a larger project that aims to bring spatial dialectics in contact with conversations surrounding rural social enterprise in Ontario, Canada. Here, the focus remains entirely abstract and in the context of the broader social economy as a force of production intertwined with adult learning.

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