Journal of Economic Geography **11** (2011) pp. 319–331 doi:10.1093/jeg/lbq049
Advance Access Published on 24 December 2010

Geographical political economy

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Abstract

The line of scholarship dominating Anglophone geographers' approaches to studying economic geography since 1980 can be characterized as geographical political economy; an approach prioritizing commodity production over market exchange. Here the spatialities of capitalism co-evolve with its economic processes and economic, political, cultural and biophysical processes are co-implicated with one another. Disequilibrium is normal and space/time an emergent feature. This approach is very different from geographical economics. Mutual engagement is desirable and most easily approached via the geographical sub-field of regional political economy. Regional political economy demonstrates that capitalism's spatialities increase agents' uncertainty and the likelihood of unintended consequences, that microfoundations are inadequate, and that capitalism is generative of economic inequality and uneven geographical development. The scope of geographical political economy is illustrated by the geography of commodity production.

Keywords: geography, political economy, uneven development, disequilibrium dynamics
JEL classifications: R00, O10
Date submitted: 22 June 2010 **Date accepted:** 23 November 2010

1. Introduction

Scholarship undertaken under the label of 'economic geography', and published and/or presented in Anglophone geographical journals and conferences, remains a remarkably vibrant and broad field. Ten years after co-editing *The Companion to Economic Geography*, I am helping compile a *New Companion*; there is much new to report. At the same time, the kind of economic geography that dominates geographical venues remains distinct from that characteristic of economic venues—a sign that the mission of this journal (catalyzing engagement across these two clusters) remains challenging (cf. Sheppard, 2001). In this brief essay, I attempt to characterize the nature and evolution of 'geographical' approaches. I seek to clarify the grounds for geographers' distinctive trajectory, while identifying possibilities for productive exchange (cf. Garretsen and Martin, 2010).

Any attempt to gather geographical approaches under a single umbrella characterization is tendentious, reflecting the positionality of the narrator; this is no exception. I begin by arguing that geographical scholarship can be gathered under the label 'geographical political economy' and explain what this entails. I then introduce the sub-field of regional political economy, in my view the most likely foundation for critical engagement between geographical political economy and geographical economics, indicating how this calls into question the methodological individualism and equilibrium modeling relied on by economists.[1] Third, I illustrate the scope of geographical political economy using the case of the geography of production. Finally, I look forward.

2. Geographical political economy

Like any term, ‘political economy’ has many potential meanings, reflecting the various genealogical paths along which it has (co)evolved.[2] Within the Anglophone geographical literature, its genealogy can be traced back to the radical geography that emerged in the early 1970s and its ongoing engagement with Marxian thinking. The foundational theoretical intervention was David Harvey’s *The Limits to Capital*, a geographical critique and extension of Marx’ theory of capitalism and uneven development (Harvey, 1982). Geographical political economy, then, is rooted in a particular variant of 18th and 19th century British political economy—Marx’ critique of such forebears as Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo (a critique that was sidelined in mainstream economics by utilitarians and marginalists, e.g. William Stanley Jevons and Leon Walras, as the late 19th century waned, cf. Pasinetti, 1981). This is quite different from, indeed opposed to, the pro-market/neoliberal usage of political economy pioneered in the mid-20th century by public choice theorists (e.g. James Buchanan) and other Chicago economists (Milton Friedman)—instantiated in *The Journal of Political Economy*.

Yet contemporary geographical political economy is by no means reducible to some variant of Marx’ theory of capitalism. Diversifying remarkably since the 1990s under the influence of feminist and post-prefixed epistemologies, it now embraces many trenchant critics of Marxian economic geography’s economism and ‘capitocentralism’ (Gibson-Graham, 1996).[3] Yet it remains haunted by Marx: a post-Marxist subdiscipline (cf. Derrida, 1994). Indeed, Harvey remains a profoundly influential figure: Critics of a squarely Marxist account still feel compelled to establish their position by distancing themselves from him (Amin and Thrift, 2005). Notwithstanding such philosophical and epistemological divisions and disagreements, however, the consensus among economic geographers is that capitalism is conflictual and unstable, incapable of solving its own internal problems and productive of the very socio-spatial inequalities that its proponents believe it can (at least in principle) overcome. There is also shared skepticism of equilibrium, methodological individualism, quantitative theorization and analysis (unfortunately) and of the separability of economic from co-evolving socionatural processes (particularly, of any attempt to reduce the latter to the former).

Beyond conceptualizing capitalism as an unstable economic system, characterized by uneven geographical development, geographical political economists insist on the following. First, capitalism is just one way of organizing the economic imperatives of

1 Ottaviano and Thisse (2004) coined ‘geographical economics’ to describe economists’ contributions to economic geography.

2 For a fuller account, see Sheppard (2006b)

3 ‘Post-prefixed’ refers to post-modern, post-structural, post-colonial and post-humanist approaches—each present within the pantheon of geographical political economy. These share with contemporary feminist and queer theorists the view that broad overarching theories are unproductive ‘meta-narratives’, that all knowledge is situated, and partial and that reflexive ethnography and interpretation are thus more appropriate methodologies than mathematical and statistical modeling.

any society (i.e., production of a surplus, transforming ‘nature’ into objects of use, exchanging such products, distributing the surplus among participants, setting aside surplus for accumulation and/or reproduction, improving technical knowhow and waste creation and disposal). While capitalism may be hegemonic, it is neither necessarily superior to alternatives nor the only form of economy worthy of serious consideration. Second, geography is not exogenous to the economy, a constraint on or determinant of economic possibilities, but is produced alongside economic activities. These produced spatialities nonetheless shape ongoing trajectories: A socio-spatial dialectic (Soja, 1980). Third, economic processes must be considered in relation to the biophysical, cultural and social processes with which they co-evolve (the formation of soils, water and other ‘natural resources’, gender, social class, subject and identity formation, etc.). Climate both affects and is affected by economic geographies and by the same token culture and the economy are co-implicated—neither being separable from or reducible to the other.

From the perspective of mainstream/geographical economics, geographical political economy seems distinctly ‘heterodox’—close to such marginalized subfields as radical, post-Keynesian, feminist and ecological economics, and a fellow-traveler with economic sociology and economic anthropology. Although some geographers eschew the possibility, afraid of being enrolled into the mighty discipline of Economics, mutual engagement is neither impossible nor unproductive (Barnes and Sheppard, 2010). When pressed, most economists and geographers are willing to acknowledge that their favored approaches amount to what Helen Longino calls local epistemologies: particular perspectives on the world, always vulnerable to criticism from others’ situated perspectives (Longino, 2002). The challenge has been finding a common language for such engagement; economists’ predilections for microfoundations, equilibrium and mathematical reasoning match poorly with geographers’ inclinations toward structuration, disequilibrium and non-quantitative approaches. In my view, the best vehicle for such engagement is a small and somewhat neglected subfield of geographical political economy whose proponents share with economists mathematics as a language for theorization: regional political economy.

3. Regional political economy

Geographical political economy’s aversion to mathematical and statistical formulations was set early in its evolution: the founding figures of radical geography included prominent defectors from the 1960s location theory and its associated mathematical methodologies (e.g. Harvey, Ron Horvath, Doreen Massey, Gunnar Olsson, Richard Peet and Edward Soja). Critical of the ‘spatial fetishism’ that beset this era of quantitative economic geography in the spirit of Johann Friedrich von Thünen, Alfred Weber, August Lösch and Walter Christaller, of its neoclassical economic theorizations and of the logical empiricist epistemologies mobilized in the name of spatial science, they found Marx helpful in articulating a critique of the limits to capitalism as the basis for societal improvement (Sheppard, 1995). Yet the turn away from mathematics was unnecessary. Indeed, over the past 20 years a small sub-group (to which I belong), self-styled as undertaking regional political economy, has explored the connections between mathematics and geographical political economy. This scholarship provides analytical logical foundations (for those who require these) underwriting the worldview of geographical political economy summarized above. For geographical economists interested in engaging with geographical political economy, this is the most natural gateway in.

Mathematical formulations of Marx' theory of capitalism, and associated critiques of mainstream economics, did not originate in geography. Piero Sraffa's critiques of macroeconomic theories of marginal productivity pricing and social distribution, and of monopolistic competition, combined with Michio Morishima's mathematical proofs of Marx' theories of exploitation and John Roemer's microfoundational formulations of Marx' theory, established that neoclassical economic theory cannot be justified on grounds of logico-deductive superiority (Sraffa, 1926, 1960; Harcourt, 1972; Morishima, 1973; Pasinetti, 1977, 1981; Roemer, 1981, 1982). For example, in a heterogeneous multi-sectoral competitive capitalist economy, of the sort represented in input–output models, the neoclassical claim that wages and profits simply reflect the marginal productivity of capital and labor turns out to be as fragile as Marx' mathematical derivation of the transformation of prices of production into labor value—undermining Paul Samuelson's notorious claim, in his 1961 American Economic Association presidential address, that Marx was no more than a 'minor post-Ricardian' (Samuelson, 1962: 12).

Of course, all derivations are contingent on the theorist's worldview, as captured in the assumptions/axioms she finds acceptable as the starting point of analysis. If she is willing to characterize capitalist society as composed of equally empowered, autonomous, self-interested and more-or-less fully informed rational agents, with given preferences and endowments, engaged in instantaneous monetarized market exchange under the benevolent eye of a 'Walrasian auctioneer', and also is willing the neglect the complications associated with heterogeneous technologies and inter-sectoral interdependencies, then neoclassical theorems naturally follow. Suppose, by contrast, she sees capitalism as characterized by already existing social inequality, partitionable into social classes; where the principal concern is the spatio-temporally extended process of commodity production and circulation for profit, not instantaneous exchange; with production undertaken in firms using different technologies to produce different kinds of capital goods for other firms, as well as consumer goods. In this case, Marxian theorems are an equally logical consequence.

Mathematical Marxian analyses show that macroeconomic equilibrium in a competitive capitalist economy is unstable—subject to disruption because representatives of the owners of the various factors of production (labor, money capital, land and resources) can improve their returns through political organization (i.e., class struggle). The question posed by regional political economists is whether attention to the geographies of capitalism further disrupts these assertions from ageographical economic theories. The answer, in brief, is affirmative.[4]

Attending to the geography of capitalism implies conceptualizing how this geography co-evolves with processes of commodity production, market exchange and accumulation. One way in which geographies are produced is through the production of

4 Some geographical economists have come to related conclusions (Koopmans, 1957; Starrett, 1978), captured by Ottaviano and Thisse (2004, 2572) as the spatial impossibility theorem: 'If space is homogeneous, transport is costly and preferences are locally nonsatiated, then there is no competitive equilibrium involving transportation'. Yet those stemming from geographical political economy are more deeply disruptive.

accessibility—the production of transportation and communications technologies and infrastructures. When spatiality is endogenized into capitalism in this way, it profoundly complicates the capacity of individual agents to realize their goals (Sheppard and Barnes, 1990; Barnes and Sheppard, 1992). The endogenized spatial and intersectoral connections that characterize the economy become so complex and contingent that agents find it impossible to compute the consequences of their actions in advance—implying that 'best laid plans. . .gang aft agley' (Burns, 1786). Outcomes may well be unintended, undermining profit- and utility-maximizing intention. This calls into question some core principles of geographical economics, such as: the ability of land markets to allocate land to its 'best' use, marginal cost pricing for factors of production (which no longer need move from places of surplus to those of shortage), comparative advantage, and even the rationality of individual actions. This resonates with Harvey's claim that such counter-intentional outcomes are generative of instability and contradiction in a capitalist space economy (Harvey, 1982)—even if his claims about the generalizability of Marxian value theory to the space economy are questionable (Sheppard, 2004).

A second complication ensuing from taking space seriously is the unevenness of geographical space. In the spirit of August Lösch, Krugman (1993) insisted that geographical economic theory focus on isotropic spaces, in order to account for the production of 'second nature': the morphogenesis of heterogeneous spatial economic landscapes from a uniform spatial backcloth. Geographical political economists share his concern for produced geographies, but insist that integrating already existing geographical unevenness into the analysis, again, can make a significant difference. It has been shown, for example, that markets do not function in the ways presumed by mainstream microeconomic theory in the presence of spatial heterogeneity (Sheppard et al., 1992; Sheppard et al.,1998; Plummer et al., 2011). Consider the case of retailers engaged in monopolistic spatial price competition, selling a homogeneous product to spatially dispersed consumers with delimited choice sets. First, the stability conditions of the market equilibrium are at best weak (local quasi-stability), implying that equilibria are unlikely to be observed and should not be the focus of analysis. Second, instead of maximizing total profits, firms should maximize their rate of profit on capital advanced (a result more consistent with Marxian and post-Keynesian than neoclassical theories of firm behavior; Lee, 1998).

Although the issues described here have not been widely discussed in geography, they are central to specifying the differences separating, and the possibility of engagement between, geographical political economy and geographical economics. For example, proponents of geographical economics have complained about the lack of attention to microfoundations in geographical political economy (Storper, 2001). There has, in fact, been no shortage of attention to the actions and behavior of firms, consumers and other economic agents in the latter literature—but in a very different form to the reductionism of microfoundations. There is a sound theoretical basis for this. Full information is impossible in a spatially extensive economy. Further, the disequilibrating nature of any capitalist space-economy, compounded by the enhanced probability of counter-intentional outcomes described above, undermines the possibility of rational expectations. Indeed, the micro-foundations of Krugman's foundational model in geographical economics seem implausible if it is not already in equilibrium (Fowler, 2007, 2010). The least worst option is to designate individual agents with the ability to acquire local time-specific information, making choices that seem rational given what they know, rather than presuming any fore-knowledge of putative equilibria. Computational models of capitalism based on such considerations may evolve toward equilibrium, but they also exhibit aperiodic, irregular and persistent out-of-equilibrium dynamics—even in the absence of any attempt to pursue the disequilibrating class interests noted above (Plummer, 1996; Bergmann et al., 2009; Plummer et al., 2011; Bergmann, 2011).

Based on these considerations, regional political economy implies that the relevant socio-spatial ontology for geographical political economy is a socio-spatial dialectic, not microfoundations:

> Here, spatial structures shape spatial interdependencies, but in turn are shaped by those same interdependencies. Human agency shapes structure, but broader structural changes may undermine the efficacy of agency. Individuals share interests across class and space lines (not to mention gender, race, etc.) that can result in collective action and social conflict. Markets cannot automatically arbitrate these, and market-based outcomes need not be socially beneficial. [The] space economy may be a complex, non-linear system; one in which space is no longer Newtonian and time is an emergent property. (Plummer and Sheppard, 2006, 615)

There has been some controversy among geographical political economists as to whether dialectical reasoning is adequate to its post-structural variants, and among a variety of scholars as to whether mathematical reasoning can be dialectical. Beyond this, geographical political economy is experiencing a 'relational turn'—again at times opposed to the 'structural' dialectics of Marxian political economy (Yeung, 2005). Yet dialectical reasoning is not necessarily inconsistent with post-structural approaches or the relational turn, or even mathematical reasoning of the kind associated with complex non-linear dynamics (cf. Cilliers, 1998; Rosser Jr, 2000; Sheppard, 2006a, 2008).

Regional political economy may provide a basis for engagement with geographical economists, yet it remains peripheral within the variety of epistemological and methodological approaches making up geographical political economy. Within the confines of this brief essay, I cannot detail all the research threads currently woven into the cloth of geographical political economy. I illustrate its scope, however, by summarizing scholarship on geographies of commodity production.

4. Geographies of production

Geographical political economy begins with the actions of capitalists setting aside capital to finance the production of commodities, rather than at the moment of exchange. Commodity production entails the transformation of 'natural resources' (themselves a social construction) into other material and immaterial objects, whose production and exchange are believed to be profitable. Production is thus entangled with biophysical, social, political and cultural processes and presupposes the commodification of nature (Smith, 1984; Castree, 2003). Such commodification, often by dispossession, is always a highly politicized process in which pre-existing power inequalities operating at a variety of geographical scales shape who gains control of what aspects of nature, to which effects (Robbins, 2004). Commodity production also is shaped by the materiality of the commoditized human and non-human participants in the process: biophysical processes must be respected even as they are transformed to enhance profitability; machines break down; waste is created; human bodies and minds are co-implicated and transformed. Waste is not simply a deduction from the economic account but constitutes material objects and relationships that must be accommodated within society's socionatural processes; it is also subject to commodification—too often by the labor of society's most marginalized populations, who do not reap the value created (Gidwani, 2008).

Processes of commodity production and the realization of profits create complex, shifting geographies as commodity chains assemble materials for production and humans mobilize to seek work. Production occurs in (and transforms) various places: farms, factories, offices, stores, cities, regions and nations. Reducing this complexity to a production function, instantaneously converting quantities of abstracted factors of production into a certain quantity of a standardized product ('widgets') for sale, does violence to the complexity, contingency, uncertainty, materiality and complex spatio-temporalities that accompany production.

Consider, now, the labor assembled to undertake, and already embedded within, commodity production. Again, this cannot be reduced to a labor market conceived as an even-handed exchange of between those supplying labor and those demanding it, without profoundly distorting what is a much more complex, spatially differentiated and contested process. The labor market is not an abstract space occupied by autonomous individuals with equal opportunities to benefit from exchange, but a complex geography of overlapping sub-markets in which negotiating power depends on social background, geographic location and economic power (Peck, 1996).

Entering the place of production, social relationships are transformed: 'On leaving this sphere of simple circulation or of exchange of commodities, which furnishes the "Free-trader Vulgaris" with . . . the standard by which he judges a society based on capital and wages, we think we can perceive a change in the physiognomy of our dramatis personae. He, who before was the money-owner, now strides in front as capitalist; the possessor of labor-power follows as his laborer. The one . . . intent on business; the other, timid and holding back' (Marx, 1967 [1867], 175–176). Geographical political economists have invested much effort in understanding how work is organized and to what effect. They have examined cultural aspects: How workers' predispositions are shaped by their subjectivities; how gender norms affect, and are shaped through, the microgeographies of labor relations in the place of production; and cultural norms shaping the actions of management (Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1997, 2003; Schoenberger, 1997; Wright, 1999, 2006). They also attend to the political struggle over profits versus wages, played out both within places of production but also across broader scales (Herod, 1998, 2001). These more specific struggles themselves reflect and are shaped by the complex, co-evolving, geographies of social class—geographies that immensely complexify Marx's 'workers versus capitalists' narrative (Sheppard and Barnes, 1990; Gibson-Graham et al., 2000; Sadler, 2000; Sheppard and Glassman, 2010).

Driven by the pressure to compete, seeking to maximize their rate of profit in a non-ergodic world characterized by spatially distributed information of uncertain reliability, capitalist firms complement strategies that enhance labor productivity with searches for new techniques and products, and locational strategies (Webber et al., 1992; Rigby and Essletzbichler, 1997). From the beginning, different capitalists are unequally positioned in this spatial competition, in terms of location, economic and political power, strategic acumen, ruthlessness and know-how (Sheppard, 2000). They are also highly interdependent: Each firm's competitiveness depends on the actions of its suppliers and customers (other firms and consumers). As argued in evolutionary economic geography, firms' spatial, labor and technological strategies are closely inter-related, creating new geographies that themselves feed back to shape future actions (Boschma and Martin, 2007; Essletzbichler, 2009; MacKinnon et al., 2009). In the process, firms co-evolve with places and territorial economies, are embedded in multi-scalar corporate and governance hierarchies, and stretch their relations across space through polyvalent networks—the socio-spatial dialectic.

The emergence of space-stretching information technologies during the past 30 years, motivated by the enhanced profitability of a faster and more seamlessly interconnected capitalist economy, has resulted in distinct spatial/labor/technological complexes. For example, geographers have examined the emergence of flexible specialization after the 'second industrial divide' (Piore and Sabel, 1986) and the concomitant flourishing of industrial districts, whose evolution is shaped by their embeddedness within the places they have helped shape (Scott, 1988, 2006; Storper and Walker, 1989; Storper, 1997). The industrial districts literature has emphasized place-based relational assets, also teasing out the very different forms that agglomerations take: from dynamic Marshallian clusters, to corporate dominated ones (e.g. Toyota City) and the brutally exploitative conditions in some export processing zones. Each is constructed through the nature of the profit-motivated firms that come together in such places, with distinct implications for their inhabitants (cf. Markusen, 1996). The last two variants make room for a different spatiality: Space-transcending production networks. Non-local connectivities affect industrial clusters (Bathelt et al., 2004), but global production networks have received particular attention (Coe et al., 2004; Hess and Yeung, 2006).[5]

Understanding the spatio-temporalities of governance is essential to illuminating shifting geographies of production, given the complex ways in which states and markets are co-implicated. Marshallian clusters often rely on the local political and cultural institutions that catalyze and nurture, but may also undermine, their profitability. Local entrepreneurialism manipulates place to attract investment. This can function synergistically, but continually is threatened by firms' constant search for new technological and political formations elsewhere that enhance profitability—the 'spatial fix' (Harvey, 1989; Storper and Walker, 1989; Leitner, 1990; Sayer and Walker, 1992; Sheppard, 2000). At broader scales, firms' corporate strategies intersect with unevenly empowered state governance systems (Dicken et al., 2001; Coe et al., 2004). Given the inability of capitalism to regulate itself, state regulation of the economy is a constant struggle between conflicting objectives, with different resolutions of the relationship between the state and the capitalist economy emerging in different contexts. Economic geographers have devoted considerable effort to tracking the spatio-temporal variegation of capitalism, examining: the transition from Fordist national state-led demand-side philosophies and practices of the 1960s and 1970s to the supply side neoliberal globalization of the 1980s; national-scale spatial variegation in the nature of state regulation and governance; interscalar differences (and the production of such scalar formations); the role of discourse, ideology and policy networks in the shaping of such variegation; subject formation within different regimes, and; contestation, crisis and transformation of particular modes of governance (Webber and Rigby, 1996;

5 Consumption geographies are important, and have received attention taking up the same variety of issues as those addressed with respect to production, but there is no space to address this here (Valentine, 1999; Wrigley and Lowe, 2002; Cook et al., 2007).

Swyngedouw, 1997; Rose, 1999; Larner, 2000; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Brenner, 2004; Jessop and Sum, 2006; Leitner et al., 2007; Peck and Theodore, 2007; Barnett et al., 2008; Brenner et al., 2010; Sheppard and Leitner, 2010).

5. Conclusion

Geographical political economists have articulated a rigorous, wide ranging set of theories of the capitalist space economy, connecting agency with socio-spatial structure, through extensive multi-method case study research as well as theoretical analysis. This is quite distinct from the approach of geographical economics. Its theories are deduced from different assumptions about the nature of capitalism, its theoretical language is typically non-mathematical, and its methods qualitative and case study oriented.

Geographical political economy also comes to distinct conclusions. For example, unlike invisible hand arguments, it is able to account for the persistence of socio-spatial clusters of poverty and wealth, and why these have increased in many instances under neoliberalism. Again, unlike mainstream theories of economic development, there cannot be a single, quasi-Rostowian trajectory that all territorial economies should follow (Sheppard, 2011). Since uneven geographical development always accompanies capital accumulation, differently positioned territories are motivated to seek alternative development paths, notwithstanding the beliefs of those who have prospered that others should follow what they imagine to have been their recipe for success. Put otherwise, territories' future trajectories cannot be deduced from their place-based attributes, but are shaped just as much by their positionality within broader economic systems; their uneven connectivities with other places (greater connectedness need not reduce inequality); and their embeddedness within multi-scalar economic, political, cultural and biophysical processes (Amin, 2002; Sheppard, 2002, 2006c). Indeed, capitalism's many successes notwithstanding, the question of its adequacy, ubiquity and current hegemony have become the subject of a very active research agenda studying diverse and community economies, based on the premise that we have overlooked the potential of existing non-capitalist alternatives (Gibson-Graham, 1996, 2006; Williams, 2005; Lee, 2006). These different conclusions evidently entail quite different policy implications—although economic geographers often seem to shy away from policymaking.

Given such differences, how can geographical political economy and geographical economics constructively engage with one another? For the *Journal* to become a space for such 'engaged pluralism' during its second decade (Longino, 2002; Barnes and Sheppard, 2010), authors must be willing to reconsider our preconceptions about rigor, what counts as theory, method and capitalism itself. First, as argued above, a shared theoretical language can help make precise the differences between these local epistemologies. Hard core presuppositions are hard to shake, but engaged pluralism requires recognizing that others' positions are also worthy of consideration. Since mathematics can be used as effectively for theorizing geographical political economy as for theorizing geographical economics, this should provide a basis for such mutual recognition—although this has remained difficult to date. A second basis for engagement comes from recognizing the diversity of scholarship within any sub-field. Geographical political economists' caricatures of geographical economists as pro-market neoliberals, or economists' views that geographical political economists are woolly headed idealists, are as counter-productive as they are inaccurate. Many may be suspicious of engagement with the other, but conversations should start with those already interested in doing so. The fostering of mixed-methods approaches to empirical work is a third possibility. Deploying a palette of methods to make sense of vital empirical phenomena (e.g. the current crisis), ranging from discourse and textual analysis to ethnography, surveys and statistical analysis, can take advantage of the complementary domains of expertise of geographers and economists with shared concrete concerns—creating space for learning from and working with one another.

The challenge remains daunting. It entails acquiring a willingness to step outside our respective comfort zones, taking the risk of opening ourselves to critique from outside, in an academic culture that incentivizes the opposite (Barnes and Sheppard, 2010). Beyond this, is the difficulty and necessity of overcoming pre-existing academic power politics that stack the cards in favor of economists in any such exchange. But there is no alternative, if the *Journal* is to transcend current tendencies toward fragmented pluralism across the economics/geography divide.

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