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Brooks, Sue (2021) Redefining geographical boundaries.
[Editorial/Introduction]

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In this summer issue of Geography we have a wide range of articles that address important contemporary environmental topics in a way that provides fresh and new insight. In the four main articles, for example, we see heavy focus on providing new perspectives and approaches on the themes they address. Having taught Geography at Birkbeck for over 20 years, I am continually reminded by my students' tremendous efforts just how much they value their education and the sacrifices they are prepared to make to achieve the best grades within their grasp. The last year, in particular has been especially challenging for many as we have moved online and adopted a whole new way of learning, not necessarily for the worse.

So I was very drawn towards the first two articles in the journal which address issues concerning Cross Border Education and how we can bring a fresh perspective to the teaching of Geography in schools. In the first article "*Geographies of Education: cross-border schooling between Shenzhen and Hong Kong*", Waters and Leung illustrate in very graphic terms the sacrifices children, parent and grandparents make to secure what they believe is the best possible education for their children. Every day 30 000 children take up their daily rhythm of early rising and arduous journeys carrying their documents and "passes" to cross the border between Shenzhen and Hong Kong to obtain a rigorous education. Those involved talk of tiredness and exhaustion becoming an everyday experience that they are prepared to tolerate to achieve their goals. This practice has grown over the past 20 years and is also ongoing in many other countries, such as Mexico and the USA, Malaysia and Singapore as well as France and Switzerland. It makes me realise the huge responsibility we all have as educators to deliver our subject to the highest standard to make the sacrifices students make worthwhile at every level.

This brings me to the second article, which is a highly motivating imagining of ways we can teach geography that doesn't simply involve content cramming and rote learning. I love geography because it allows such a range of vital topics to be taught from the unique perspective of combining the physical with the social and political. So the framework that is contained within the article "Organising concepts in geography education: a model" has value for us all to reframe the ways we approach teaching geography. At the inner core are the geographical concepts of PLACE, SPACE and SCALE and moving to the next outer ring we encounter the concepts of CHANGE, PROCESSES as well as CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONS (Human-Nature). Finally the outermost ring introduces PATTERNS, SYSTEMS as well as PERSPECTIVES and VALUES. Thus the model can be subdivided to include some of the concepts in each of the three rings to provide a framework around which to pose questions for students to be challenged by. The example of studying cities (Bangkok and Stockholm) through concepts of PLACE (inner ring), CHANGE (middle ring) and PATTERNS (outer ring) provides an excellent way to construct questions for the students. Thus we have an enquiry based approach, rather than the learning of facts, which is more stimulating and enduring. I shall certainly be rethinking my online teaching approach around this model in future.

In the third and fourth articles we see a common theme of redefining our approach to the concepts of the Nation State and (Un)natural Hazards. Hammett and Jackson deliver some important ideas around the notion of borders and how nation states are defined. They highlight the dynamism inherent in defining Nation States in the age of Globalisation. Physical borders defined by coastlines, rivers or mountain chains, for example, make us "prisoners of geography" unable to redefine our status as citizens and the territories we occupy individually and collectively. Rather they see borders as both fixed and porous, requiring a focus on socio-political and economic constructs. They state

“while we are living in a world that is simultaneously becoming more and less divided in different ways the divisions are not innate or natural”. Rather, that the divisions are “a result of political processes – processes that continually reconstruct a sense of identity and belonging”. And finally in addressing unnatural hazards, Nayeri brings many deep questions to the table in discussing how we need to address hazards. It is not just the event itself, where emergency planning for evacuation might be needed, but it is learning to live with ongoing hazards, such as is the case for communities in South Iceland. The long-term physical, emotions and psychological effects of living in a tectonically active region, where volcanic eruptions occur frequently are shown to be just as important as dealing with the immediate impact of the event itself. We must learn to see disasters as not being “concentrated in space and time” and multiply the questions we ask around natural and unnatural hazards.

All these articles raise important new perspectives that we all need to think about. In the “Spotlight on” section there are two contributions that allow us to reflect upon psychological issues relevant to the subject. Firstly Kim outlines a project carried out with student teachers in South Korea addressing psychogeographic urban exploration and mapping. This project shows how urban fieldwork can be approached creatively and imaginatively, while generating new visualisations of urban spaces. I know only too well how fieldwork has been turned on its head by the COVID-19 pandemic and the spotlight piece by Rose also uses psychogeography to explore emotion and place. Through the Loiterers Resistance Movement (LRM) in Manchester we are shown that walks don’t just take us from A to B, but can drift under the influence of our instincts, imaginings and creativity. Take this quote from the LRM manifesto “Our city is wonderful and made for more than shopping. The streets belong to everyone and we want to reclaim them for play and revolutionary fun”. There is so much scope for fieldwork to become broader and creative after the pandemic and for our cities (and other communal places) to re-emerge as entirely different spaces.

Finally within This Changing World, Jones and Comfort deliver a powerful and thought provoking article on “*Animal Geographies: food retailers, fast food companies and animal welfare*”. They raise questions about the commitment of fast food companies to animal welfare and how much control the companies realistically have over their supply chains. It is an important ongoing issue, affecting us all and an appropriate way to round off this issue of journal. I hope you enjoy the issue and find it as stimulating and fascinating as I have done.