



RURAL EDUCATION: SOME SOCIOLOGICAL PROVOCATIONS FOR THE FIELD¹

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ABSTRACT

In this piece I raise a number of rural education issues that I think might be productively engaged through a sociological lens. The paper has developed from notes on ‘international trends in rural education’ for a pre-conference workshop of AARE in December of 2014. My general conclusion is that the field of rural education, at least as it exists in Australia and in North America, has not yet adequately addressed problems of globalisation tending instead to operate within the space of what might be called traditional rural imaginaries. Specifically, I address a range of issues and trends that I think can engender better scholarship in the field of rural education. These issues range from problems of definition, demographics, mobilities, and geographies through to more fluid network and poststructural constructions of what constitutes rural space. Questions of power and the formation and surveillance of rural populations are also dimensions of rural education analysis that have not been given sufficient attention. My general argument is for a stronger engagement of the conceptual tools sociology and contemporary social theory in rural education scholarship.

Key words: globalisation, demographics, mobilities, social theory, rural education scholarship

INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

At the preconference for the AARE Rural SIG in November of 2014, I was asked to speak about international trends in rural education. It is now well understood that rurality is both a demographic/material construction and a symbolic/imaginary one (Green, 2013; Corbett, 2015). Trends in the latter sense of the term might have to do with the way that rurality is represented, experienced and imagined. It is not easy to think about this in a global context other than to say that there is a tendency to position rurality as a receding and even vestigial space in the face of the big story of modernity, which is positioned as urban. At one level, there is a retreat from the material implied in this linguistic construction of rurality that those of us who work in rural areas understand to be problematic. While it is difficult to define conclusively, there is a materiality to rural life that troubles purely linguistic conceptions of rurality, just as symbolic and imaginary constructions of rurality trouble the history of failed attempts to define the rural in material terms (Cloke, 1997; Pahl, 1966).

Much of the important work in contemporary spatial theory has this metrocentric character (i.e. Soja, 1996, 2010; Lefebvre, 1992), with I think the notable exception of the work of Doreen

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Massey (2005) and those spatial theorists who work specifically in rural studies (Cloke, Marsden, & Mooney, 2006) or rural geographers (Woods, 2010). Additionally, the most visible contemporary work that takes up questions of globalization and economic development has a distinctively urban teleology. The work of most neoliberal economic theorists along with contemporary high modern or postmodern sociologies effectively sideline questions of rural life. The voluminous works of Thomas Friedman (2005), Richard Florida (2004, 2009) Anthony Giddens (1991), Zygmunt Bauman (2000, 2001), Saskia Sassen (2001, 2014), Thomas Piketty (2014) all illustrate this trend. The same is also true of political and economic reportage. As I was writing this paragraph a typical news feed came up on my screen announcing a story from Ottawa about the upcoming Canadian federal election entitled: 'With election focus on urban Canada, influence of rural votes diminished' (Ryckewaert, 2015).

What then can we say about education in small, more or less remote places? One way to think about this in material terms is to use the proxy of community size. There is no clear relationship between community size and educational 'performance' on large-scale international tests, but there is an emerging trend. In some countries (e.g. Italy, the US and the UK) there is evidence that students living in smaller communities perform better. In Australia, there is a fairly linear relationship between community size and educational performance, while in Canada and several other countries mid-sized communities often perform well relative to large cities in some subject areas. Overall, looking at the 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment data for instance, it is pretty safe to say that larger communities tend to score better on the test.

However, the PISA's five community size categories hide considerable diversity. The overall sociological conclusion that socioeconomic status is the best predictor of school success is mediated by the way that rurality and urbanity inflect the nature of poverty and what it looks like (Howley & Howley, 2010; Howley, Howley, & Johnson, 2014; Corbett, 2014a). There is a lot of interest in place-based education (Gruenewald, 2003; Haas & Nachtigal, 1998; Smith, 2002; Smith & Gruenewald, 2007), but there is little recognition that poverty is place-based as well. What is clear is that we don't really understand very well how some schools in rural contexts handle and possibly mitigate the effects of poverty. I have written that given their relative economic disadvantage that rural schools may well be over performing in terms of the results they achieve vis a vis their wealthier urban counterparts (Corbett, 2014b).

In the end, it seems to me that our best hope of understanding the educational implications of rurality is to follow Ted Coladarci's (2007) directive and consider very carefully what is specifically rural about the research we claim to be taking up under the rubric of rural education research. To work at this level is to have a more sophisticated sense of the geography and sociology of communities outside the metropolis and to understand for instance how gender works in such locations (Annes et al., 2015; Kenway & Hickey-Moody, 2006; Pini, Brandth, & Little, 2014; Pini & Leach, 2011). The same could be said for work that investigates the way that social class (Howley et al., 2014), or race relations (Tieken, 2015) are inflected in rural locations. The work of Jane Jensen (2002), Carr and Kefalas (2009), and Jennifer Sherman (2009) each point to moralities and mobilities relating to the presence or absence of work that prove crucially important in shaping the way that education is understood in rural communities.

It is qualitative work such as this that can nuance and explain the cruder quantitative constructions of rural communities as marginal and troubled spaces within advanced capitalist societies (Corbett, 2015). This work relates only tangentially to the bulk of rural experience that is to be found in 'developing' societies that are only now emerging on the map of educational research. For instance there is a burgeoning literature on rural education in China as that country works out its internal economic, mobility, employment, developmental and environmental politics (Lu, 2012; Wang & Zhao, 2011). In other words, I think we need nuanced sociologically informed studies that investigate the effect of rural community life and school practices on academic achievement. I keep returning to a Canadian study from the early 2000s that looked at reading scores comparing rural and urban places. Overall, rural youth performed less well than urban young people. Yet, when the authors controlled for SES, the predicted scores for rural

youth in all provinces, except Alberta, were higher than for urban youth. This study indicated that rural schools may actually be doing something to mitigate the relative poverty that rurality represents in Canada.

SOME ISSUES

I want to go on from here to address some issues that I think we might explore as we work toward understanding the complexity of the relationships around schooling in rural places and in a sense catching up with the spatial turn and complex geographies.

1. **Definitions, Space and Peripherality :**

What counts as rural today? The formation and management of peripheral and marginal populations is a large part of the work of the contemporary state. It is notoriously difficult to define what is and what is not rural in exclusively material terms and attempts to do so have essentially been abandoned (Cloke, 1997). The ready associations between lifeways and certain defining forms of resource extraction (mining settlement, fishing village), or cultivation (agricultural community) no longer obtain, if every they did. What remains are linguistic and other symbolic constructions that represent fluid and multifaceted conceptions of what constitutes the rural. Rurality can be represented both as a soothing space of relaxation and respite (Kelly, 2013) and simultaneously, a site of peripherality, cultural backwardness and dysfunction (Rofe, 2013) which ironically can generate 'dark tourism' that play on dystopian imaginaries (Podoshen, Venkatesh, Wallin, Andrzejewski, & Jin, 2015; Rofe, 2013).

I went to visit the dentist a couple of weeks ago and the television on the ceiling looped a travel video for the enjoyment of the stressed patients on their backs in the chair. The images were mainly of rural tourist destinations in Europe. The video at the dentist's suggests a European rurality that is a highly managed productive space that can be relatively close up to the urban. The same is true in Japan or Korea for instance. Such images in such places present a rural population that sits very close to urban space. In North America, Australia or Scandinavia it is something different, something that represents land and people at the margins more or less isolated in 'the bush' (Watson, 2014). The idea of isolation itself is a creation of a constructed concentric geography that positions select urban locations as central and others as marginal. The world looks different from a rural perspective where any imagined isolation from cities can either dismissed as insignificant or interpreted in a positive light. Ironically, these rural marginal spaces represented by the farm, the station, the bush, the north, the village, etc. are constructed as the 'heart' or the essence of the national character and founding mythology.

This peripherality has educational consequences in the sense that educational purposes and policy relating to rural areas tend to address the kind of peripherality a particular geography contains. Each periphery is and imagined construction set in relation to a central or metropolitan other. In Norway a key locus of peripherality is spatialized as the 'north'. In Australia it is the 'red centre', or the outback. In Canada it can be the east, west or north, or really anything above the narrow band of population stretched out along the American border. Coastal Australia, southern Norway, and the Canadian borderlands contain the large cities that now house the majority of each nation's people. So rurality is defined in conjunction with population concentrations.

This leads to a concern with population more generally in the sense that Foucault (2001) talked about the formation of populations. Rural populations are constructed predominantly as those who live outside the mainstream of urban national cultures represented by global cities, or who move in and out of these cities as casual labour. In rural China, Mexico, and India, for instance, rural populations are both constructed as rustic and simultaneously exploited as cheap labour in the cities from which they are jettisoned when capital contracts. This is currently happening in Greece where the economic crisis has driven thousands of urban dwellers back to the land

(Gkartzios & Scott, 2015; Smith, 2011). To paraphrase my own working class ancestors who were part of an interwar migration in Atlantic Canada, *you had to go where the work is* (Corbett, 2013).

Another way to think about the problem of population is to consider what kinds of rural communities presently exist in a regional or national context. What is actually happening in places beyond the metropolis, or is it possible to characterize rural places in terms of some more or less foundational activity pattern that defines them? Just as cities specialize, so too do rural areas. Understanding this matrix of ruralities and their specific specializations may contribute to a better understanding of the kinds of educational needs of a place. It is also worth keeping in mind that natural disasters and human-generated crises can drive people out of the cities, as has happened in the Soviet Union and its Eastern European and Central Asian satellite states (Elder, deHass, Principi, & Schewel, 2015; Gkartzios & Scott, 2015) and in contemporary Greece. This situation can, as Gkartzios and Scott argue, create new configurations of people and energies that have the potential to transform rural regions.

Trend: *Rurality as a population ‘assemblage’ brings together diverse and often contradictory imagery. Populations are defined into existence by power and differentiated from other populations and spaces of habitation. The complexity of rural space does not detract from its symbolic significance in the national imaginary, particularly in places such as Canada, Australia, Scandinavia, and to some extent, the United States where national ideologies² are deeply rooted in the rural experience and in rural space. Contemporary economic and environmental transformations are creating and are likely to continue to create unpredictable outcomes in and for non-metropolitan communities around the world.*

2. **The Population Implosion:**

I am thinking of population shifts here in a number of ways including: people leaving rural places for urban locales (old news); people being deployed in rural areas to deal with episodic capital expansion and extraction projects (more old news); and importantly, global migrants moving into rural areas as temporary foreign workers. Saskia Sassen’s (2014) idea of **expulsions** seem to encapsulate at least some of what is going on when she links ‘financialization’ to a kind of distancing of financial transactions from the actual substantive human activity that these essentially parasitic transactions are built upon.

Part of the process, and perhaps the one that is most consequential in non-metropolitan locations is the creation of what Sassen (2014) calls *dead land* or land that is effectively stripped of resources valuable to capitalism to the point where it is not easily recovered and regenerated (p. 149–210). The extraction of resources and the politics of land redistribution and real estate markets are key examples of how people are routinely thrown off territory they had previously inhabited and worked. For instance, people are expelled both from rural lands that are needed for production in various resource-driven clearances as well as the expulsions represented by the global housing market collapse of 2008–09 that still resonates today. Sassen’s idea of expulsions derives its power from the way that it encapsulates experience both in advanced capitalist and underdeveloped geographies.

What are the educational consequences of this phenomenon? Education is often positioned as a mechanism for economic restructuring; in fact, it is perhaps the quintessential social policy tool for reorienting social values and work forces. It is also an important mechanism for both social inclusion and social exclusion. Rural populations are often defined as deficient and marginal (i.e. illiterate—which to me is one of the key focal points in what we are calling rural literacies) and

² In an earlier draft of this paper I used the term ‘mythology’ here instead of ideology. An anonymous reviewer suggests that these imaginaries are better understood as ideological rather than mythological. The distinction is interesting. What indeed is the difference between myth and ideology? While the distinction between myth and ideology is murky, I chose to go with the reviewer’s suggestion because I can see how the overtly political content in these foundational narratives. I thank this reviewer for this insightful distinction.

thus, the need of education as a core part of the modernization that individuals who live rurally are alleged to require (Ching & Creed, 1997; Corbett, 2007).

Relating back to the first issue, the creation of populations (not their ‘discovery’) is crucial to the distribution of resources under capitalism. Rural people are blamed here for their relative poverty and marginality because the population formation they are constructed into is defined as deficient, irrational, traditional, conservative, rustic, etc. (Ching & Creed, 1997). They are said to be expelled through their own fault and their own failure to modernize/educate themselves or because they are insufficiently entrepreneurial and not because someone with power wants their land. These problems of power are reframed and individualized. This framing is typically constructed in terms of a lack of education which is blamed on attitudes, ignorance, or insufficient/inappropriate aspirations (Spohrer, 2011; Zipin, Sellar, Brennan, & Gale, 2015).

Framing the problem of declining population and the declining fortunes of a non-metropolitan community or a ‘rust-belt’ city in terms of the personality structures of the people is of course a classic neoliberal gambit. When this process extends to the dispositions and proclivities of children, it is, I would argue, anti-educational and even abusive. For instance, the notion that rural youth are ‘good with their hands’ or ‘natural’ physical and manual labourers is reminiscent of the way that African Americans were once characterized as educational subjects. The kinds of things to which they aspired often reflected a habitus that had changed little since the days of slavery and the occupational worlds they saw in their ‘line of sight’ largely involved manual work.

The result is that character structures have been ascribed to rural youth on the basis of aspirations and limits the economic and social structures imposed upon them. Their social status and all that goes with it are considered somehow ‘natural’. The problem of attitudes and aspirations is certainly conditioned by the state of economic development and population stability in a community and in a region, but the structural and economic juggernaut that many rural citizens face is perhaps more worthy of study than their alleged deficiencies. These arguments apply in the case of family farms, small rural businesses, and small boat fisheries for instance. But they may also apply to the exploitation, oppression and mobilization of labour (some of it refugee) out of the global south. Do African migrants heading out on leaky boats across the Mediterranean do so because of some wanderlust or because they are irrational? They do as they do because their lifeworld is imploding not entirely unlike the situation of the small farmer facing bankruptcy.

Declining rural populations is therefore a complex issue caught up with aspirations, structures of opportunity and established patterns of labour and resource distribution. How education includes and excludes, expels and welcomes is an important area of study for rural scholars and it is important to remember that there are still rural ‘boomtowns’ where resource extraction or tourism can create the impetus for growth and employment, at least in the short term. What does it mean to be educated in a place where ancestral lands are becoming desirable for new forms of resource exploitation and capitalist mass cultivation practices? The precarious world of the middle class youth (Standing, 2014; Ehrenreich, 1990) mirrors the precarious rural community whether it is in an expansion or contraction phase in its development. Labour is routinely deployed in military fashion into places where capital requires ready hands only to be jettisoned when the resources are depleted (Pini, McDonald, & Mayes, 2012; Forsey, 2015). As much as this is a contemporary story, it is the story of capitalism’s relentless quest for resources.

Trend: *Rural populations are still moving to the cities. But at the same time urban populations are moving to the country. Many rural areas are facing demographic challenges that include youth outmigration, the exodus of population for ‘deployments’ represented by increasingly mobile work, women leaving rural communities for higher education, etc. All of these western problems are dwarfed in a sense by the challenges faced by the mobility imperatives faced by people from rural China and rural women in the global south. I will return to this later.*

3. *The Changing Geography of Rural Schooling:*

The geography of schooling is caught up with ongoing demographic transformation. As Lefebvre (1992) pointed out long ago, space is produced. It is not simply there. Demographic transformation such as the movement from the country to the city is not an inevitability, but rather the result of decisions and profit making strategies and the complex interactions within and between what Deleuze and Guattari call 'assemblages' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; Sassen, 2014; Youdell, 2015). At the same time some cultural practices nested in communities persistently refuse to be transformed by the forces of capital (Scott, 1987, 1999). In the global south, rural places declared redundant are simply emptied, like the villages in the Indian and Chinese river valleys flooded out to provide power to global cities. In other places though, the struggle is more complex because historic political arrangements have given rural populations political power. The make-up of the national Senates in Australia and Canada, for instance, is designed to protect the rights of relatively sparsely populated areas of early European settlement. In such places the fate of rural schools can be quite uncertain particularly where funding comes from the level 'above' the jurisdiction responsible for educational delivery.³

The big story is school consolidation that mirrors the concentration of populations in urban areas. The project of public education has grown up with the phenomenon of urbanization in advanced capitalist nations and this has meant that there is an assumed and seemingly natural connection between the expansion of education, the centralization of schooling, and urbanization. Indeed this triad of education, bureaucratization/centralization and urbanization can be thought about as a proxy for modernization.

At the same time though the relationship between the rural and the urban is becoming increasingly integrated and overlapping. Population flows out of rural areas and into the cities, but also out of the cities and into the rural (e.g. exurbia). The movement of professional and artistic populations that may or may not be bound to place is a phenomenon that is likely to continue. It is also a phenomenon that has, in certain respects, given select rural communities typically in scenic locations, a new lease on life, or at least a lifeline through which struggles to maintain rural services including schools are joined. With these population movements will come different educational needs and desires. At the same time they illustrate the intimate connections between rural and urban spaces which are no longer easy to distinguish (if they ever were), which takes us back to #1 and the problem of definitions.

Another important part of the geography of rural schooling are questions concerning rural teacher education. How should rural teachers be prepared? How can teacher education programs support and encourage beginning teachers to work in rural areas?

Trend: *It isn't getting any easier to know what is and isn't rural. At the same time we know quite well what rurality is and that it makes educational difference.*

4. **Networks:**

The impact of networked information technologies and literacies is central to how we understand the shaping and reshaping of rural space. The idea of the network is one that we have not yet begun to tackle in a serious way in rural education research. We are broadly aware that rural places are networked with urban spaces both through production and consumption chains and through information scapes and flows. The idea of the network remains a powerful conceptual tool (Latour, 1993, 2007). I think it can help us get beyond the stagnant discourse of

³ Again thanks to an anonymous reviewer for the reminder that in Australia the funds come from the federal government but education is a state responsibility. In Canada the problem is similar in the sense that education funding comes from the provinces but the schools are run by regional (sub-provincial) school boards. The position of rural schools in each of these funding systems would be a subject well worth future research. How decentralized systems compare with centralized national systems like that of Norway in terms of rural education provision would be an interesting problem for critical analysis.

structures that simply reproduce advantage and disadvantage. Networks breed new possibilities that structures can never fully hold in check and control. Structures themselves have resilience, but they change. The structural sociological ideas of race, class and sex/gender have not lost their power, but they are differently powerful in a world of ubiquitous networks. It is my sense that in the context of network society as envisioned by Castells (2000) and Latour (2007) for example, we see an emerging sense of the global while at the same time witnessing the birth of a newly individualized neoliberal social actor who is being systematically and forcefully weaned of dependence on the social settlements of the welfare state.

Part of this ‘weaning’ can be read as the systematic dissolution of those rural communities that are not considered ‘viable’. Places themselves are then assessed in terms of functional criteria that are applied to decisions around the continued functioning of key institutions such as community schools (Corbett & Mulcahy, 2006; Englund & Lausten, 2006). Yet we do not know enough about the impact of school closures on the economic and social viability of rural communities and there remain significant questions about the ultimate consequences of rural school closures in different contexts (Barakat, 2015; Oncescu, 2014; Slee & Miller, 2015).

The ultimate networked actor is the individualized consumer who browses and chooses and who shares his or her knowledge, choices, cultural and physical products, likes and dislikes with a vast array of connected others in the liquid spaces of late modernity (Bauman, 2000). I am not sure whether the networked rural cybernaut is more or less integrated into the matrix of networks, or which networks matter most in different places, but it is clear that the network society has thoroughly penetrated life in almost all but the most remote places. We see today an odd, and somewhat contradictory, convergence that brings together the country and the city and at the same time celebrates and trades on their uniqueness, differences and diversity. [In North America] we may all shop at Walmart (well actually Walmart is something of a rural phenomenon), but we also celebrate our diverse local cultures, geographies and histories.

***Trend:** Social space is transformed, compressed and folded by networked computing and mobile communications. This process both converges and diverges the rural from the urban in different ways at the same time.*

5. **Intersecting Structures/Assemblages:**

Along with the dynamic and constructive energy represented by networked connections, there are the relative durable and resilient structures of social, cultural and economic privilege and disadvantage. The most interesting structural work seeks to complicate the intersections between multiple forms of structural disadvantage. There is emerging work on the intersections of race and class in rural areas (Bhopal, 2013; Edgeworth, 2014; Howley et al., 2014; Popke, 2011; Tieken, 2014). We do not yet understand well enough the educational effects produced by nuanced connections between living rurally and living with a disability for instance; or the educational effects of intersectionalities of rurality, sex, gender, aboriginality, sexuality, religion, etc.

Emerging neoliberal forms of governance have turned much of the responsibility for the regulation of human endeavor back on the individual, largely through biopolitical mechanisms (Foucault, 2010) that charge each of us with the responsibility to become self-correcting, introspective subjects. At one level, the idea of community has faded into a nostalgic mist (Bauman, 2001) and neoliberal subjects are oriented to creating unique individual ‘projects’ of and in their lives (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992). Yet at the same time considerable attention has been given to what communitarians characterize as the loss of crucial community bonds (Etzioni, 1984; Theobald, 1997) and ‘social capital’ (Putnam, 2000).

Finally, educational policy studies have explored the way that educational governance simultaneously become coordinated and centralized representing what might seem like a countervailing or even contradictory movement away from the individualization I point to above.

What are emerging more clearly though are various assemblages of power and influence following the coordination made possible by centralized corporate capitalism and instantaneous and immediate electronic communication. Education is in this matrix of macro governance drawn into larger policy struggles and assemblages of state and/or corporate power (for example the integration of data sets in assessment instruments like the PISA or the NAPLAN. It is my sense that rural education studies have touched upon some of these issues, but that we have not done so in coordinated ways that seek to significantly investigate the interrelationships of nested, resilient structures that persist and continue to generate meaning, advantage and disadvantage.

Trend: *Rurality coexists with other geographic and sociological categories that are helpful for understanding how resources, knowledge and life chances are unevenly distributed across social space.*

6. **Polyoptical Surveillance, Neoliberal Governmentality and Liquid Learning:**

Schools have always had as their central mission: the governance of children and youth. I have begun to think about how surveillance and policy work has moved out of a panoptical frame and into a more complex, multi-faceted assemblages of social control and surveillance that are much more actively engaged both by governance authority and by those governed. Governance now includes at least four optical layers:

- a. **Panopticon**
- b. **Synopticon**
- c. **Banopticon**
- d. **Co-opticon**

Panoptical surveillance is well understood now in the wake of Foucault's (1977) brilliant success. This of course, is the idea of power as an effect of gaze and training. As the iconic architecture of disciplinary control, the panopticon is easily translated over to the architecture of the classroom where historic concern with the discipline and punishment of children has been replaced by discourses of training, surveillance and safety. It seems to me that the only explanation for the resilience of schools through the rapid and omnipresent changes of the last 50 years is our desire to control socialization and even more fundamentally to keep children safe (Corbett & Vibert, 2010). Rural schools are very often presented by those who study them (and I admit to often serving as a key offender here) as quintessentially safe, cozy, 'community' spaces.

Thomas Mathiesen, a sociologist of prison architecture has suggested another layer of surveillance that operates more on the principle of pleasure and the spectacle than the more serious structured, introspective panopticon. In Mathiesen's (1997) synopticon, it is the many who watch the few and the image of the child for instance, gazing at the mass produced media spectacle (Debord, 2000) is the key visual. It is very clear that synoptical power is an important part of the training apparatus today and that we are all subtly trained to cultivate our desire and construct ourselves through watching these mass entertainments.

This is not new, but what is new is the sophistication of the means of transmission and multiple platforms through which we are drawn into the synopticon. The increasing pressure to create credible and interesting, *reflexive project of the self* (Giddens, 1991, p. 52) or in Foucault's (2010) terms, to become an *entrepreneur of oneself* (p. 232) increases under the auspices of neoliberal governance. In many respects, schools have become a key part of the process of transmission and reception with the normalization of networked computers and tablet devices for instance in everyday schooling. In rural schools particularly, synoptical transmissions of lessons both formal and informal are creating new forms of learning and new configurations of both educational power and resistance. On the point of resistance, large numbers of youth are turning their backs on schooling and on higher education because they can learn what they want, when they want to learn it. This 'liquid learning' (Das, 2012; Seddon, 2016) threatens the bricks and mortar school in even its most sophisticated and modern forms. The synopticon teaches in a choice-driven,

individualized manner that the schools, particularly under-resourced rural schools, have a hard time keeping up with.

To complicate matters even further, a third layer in the surveillance apparatus is what Didier Bigo (2008) calls *banopticon*. Banopticon opens the governing gaze to intensify the panopticon's ability to watch and judge. Unlike the panopticon it has no particular interest in training, engaging or changing anyone. Where the panopticon and the synopticon are inclusive, the banopticon is exclusive. It is a mechanism for sorting out who may be admitted into exclusive spaces that can be as broad as a nation state policing its borders (think of the US/Mexico border as an example, but any international airport will serve to illustrate the point), to controlling access to a gated neighbourhood, a social club or a school building. Banopticon is the apparatus that cuts out individuals who may not enter this or that social space.

Schools have been, for a long time, in the business of the very kind of risk assessment that banopticon is founded upon today. The fundamental question according to Bigo is, in part, who has been found guilty and thus deserves to be banned, but also, who is likely to be guilty in the future. Banopticon then is a variant found in the American film *The Minority Report* (YEAR), a world where police are able to stop crimes before they happen through meticulous physical and psychological surveillance. Today young people are indeed banned from certain spaces and schools themselves represent exclusive, controlled and even policed spaces. The aspirations and educational attainment and measured performativity movements in education are essentially focused on supporting young people to create and recreate access to 'options' rather than becoming 'stuck' through what is alleged to be their own lack agency or inappropriate choices.

Today it can seem as though the central function of schools is to produce increasingly detailed behavioural and learning profiles of individual children that can later be used in more comprehensive risk profiles. The relative underperformance of rural schools indicates that they contain more children and youth who are 'at risk'.

The final fold in contemporary surveillance is what I am calling the 'coopticon'. The coopticon is the most elaborate surveillance space because in many ways it incorporates elements of the previous three elements. The coopticon is distinguished by the way that those under surveillance are coopted into policing themselves and into actively creating their own data profiles. The social network is the most prevalent form taken by the coopticon. We are coopted into providing data to Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter for instance because the linked mediascapes they offer us allow us to do many things ranging from keeping in touch with near and distant peers and loved ones to broadcasting our images and opinions more or less creatively to anyone who will pay attention. The coopticon thus, combines the inclusivity of the synopticon, with the exclusivity of banopticon, and the less sophisticated and relatively weaker inclusive/exclusive surveillance space of the panopticon.

It is easy to think though that the coopticon is a space that mimics the panopticon and that it is fundamentally a strong tool for the exercise of biopower. It does indeed have enormous potential and is a surveillance and control mechanism as well as an information-gathering tool for marketing and warp-speed conduit for automatic financial transactions. At the same time though, coopticon allows independent producers of information the ability to organize and share in ways that are unprecedented making possible expanded forms and scope of agency (Hands, 2011; Harp, Bachmann, & Guo 2012). So while the technology has frightening potential for social and political control, because it relies on the feedback on multiple users who are more or less free to communicate and move about in cyberspace, it may hold at the same time potential for resistance. The extent to which insider talk in social media spaces connects with actual on-the-ground political action is not yet well understood (Miller, 2015).

So these layered spaces of surveillance are also the emerging spaces of knowledge production and optics that work simultaneously in multiple directions. I call the whole thing the **polyopticon** or the **multiopticon**. Gaze works here in multiple directions simultaneously. We watch the stars, while we are watched by the marketers who monitor our mouse clicks and sell the results to big

capital and to government who may also be watching independently. This is the key emerging educational space and it is one in which physical geography will be transformed to a certain extent in its ability to shape what may be known and done.

Trend: *We are all governed in ways that are both increasingly sophisticated and in which we willingly participate. Rural places are no longer outside the optics of governance, surveillance and coordination. There is no hiding from the tentacles of contemporary capitalism and bureaucracy (which are in my estimation, intricately linked today). How are rural communities within them included in and excluded from participation in emerging spaces of production, consumption and governance?*

7. **Deficit Discourse:**

When we return, as we must, to the corporeal foundation of things, we land back in rural and metropolitan space that is hierarchically organized. The city (or at least some parts of some cities, cf. Florida, 2004, 2009) is imagined as a place of growth and vibrancy, where people come together to share and to create. The country is the opposite of this image. In too many cases this can be quite accurate. How can rural education researchers support the positioning rurality as a strength rather than as a deficit? And furthermore, how can we encourage the kind of creative ferment that we associate with the urban in the countryside? Or as I have argued elsewhere (Corbett, 2013), how might we tap into the innovative, improvisational traditions that have marked rural living where people have always had to figure things out for themselves and develop multiple skill sets. This improvisational skill is combined with the binary vocational default that is ascribed to rural people who are said to be concrete rather than theoretical in their orientation. Bourdieu (1984) calls this *making a virtue of necessity* (p. 175) but I see it more as a creative response to the conditions at hand. Having to figure things out creates resilient and innovative people who not only have to solve the problems of day to day living in community, but increasingly, they must solve the problems associated with confronting powerful others who want them out of the way.

Trend: *Rural places are almost always presented as culturally and economically deficient. They are sometimes represented as socially efficient and as places that contain natural beauty and social solidarity. Regardless of whether or not this is the case, the challenge is of re-presenting rural places as a source of wealth and strength and as delicate environments that require stewardship.*

8. **Mobilities:**

I have one simple question about the relationship between mobilities and schooling which is Schooling as we understand it in the West, is about the promotion of individual choice and movement. The development of individuals rather than small-scale collectives or communities tends to be outside the frame of what it is that schools do. The American educational sociologists Carr and Kefalas (2009) found rural educators to be fully aware of what I called the irony of rural schooling, that they support the exodus of those deemed to be their best students. They were deeply ambivalent about this but really couldn't imagine how it could be otherwise.

Perhaps they are right and ambivalence is inevitable. Perhaps the best we can do is to say that young people who leave for higher education may stand the best chance of returning and making a good life for both themselves as individuals and for the community as well. Can we imagine a form of rural schooling in which success does not involve the movement of what are alleged to be the most able students out of their rural communities? What might that education look like? I offer no suggestions here because I am fully aware of just how powerfully the suggestion of a place-based education rubs up against core liberal values and the foundational notion that education can only be about broadening the ambit of choice for the individual who now lives within a mobile, connected, mutable, globalized world (Nespor, 2008). What I do believe is that a

complex policy conversation about rural education and mobility out of rural communities is long overdue.

Trend: Schools continue to promote the exodus of academically able youth. However, schools also continue to designate who is and who is not fit to leave. We are also seeing an influx of middle class settlers, sojourners, and tourists into rural places. Mobilities have shaped the nature and purpose of rural schooling for generations. In the current circumstance, there are multiple forms of rural community and multiple parenting and career strategies that need to be considered not en masse, but in terms of ‘thisness’ as Pat Thomson (2000) put it referring to the specifics of this family, this child and/or this community.

9. **Working in the Contact Zone:**

Much of what is written about under the umbrella of rural education, and indeed, in rural studies more generally is quite distinct from work in the fields of Peasant Studies and Indigenous Studies. Rurality in many respects maps on to whiteness and onto Christianity even though rural North America is increasingly multiethnic and it has always been multiethnic. Few studies in rural western developed education have problematized the diversity of rural contexts, with notable exceptions (Bhopal, 2013; Edgeworth, 2014; Howley et al., 2014; Tieken, 2014). Yet, most people who claim a rural identity and who are positioned by biopolitical agencies, as rural populations are often imagined as a quintessence of established settler populations in Canada, Australia and in North America.⁴ In the United States, the red states (supposedly rural, conservative, monoethnic, Republican) contrast the blue states (supposedly urban, multiethnic, liberal, Democrat). There is however, plenty of evidence that with Hispanic migrations into rural regions in the United States that this mythology is out of touch with reality (Lichter, 2012).

All of this imagines rurality as a rather stagnant, static space and little of the work I have seen in rural education has done much to challenge this tendency. As always there are notable exceptions (Green, 2013; Reid, C., 2015; Reid, J., et al., 2010) For instance, rural education scholarship has not, in my estimation, seriously investigated and theorized what I might call the encounters between settler and Indigenous populations (Corbett, 2009; Faircloth, 2009; Greenwood, 2009;). It is my sense that work in the contact zone where Indigenous peoples meet those claiming land-based rural identities is potentially very fruitful for important work in environmental protection, stewardship, food security, sustainable development, cultural pluralism and policy, etc.

Trend: We face a collective catastrophe that we seem to realize and accept and yet, we are as Naomi Kline (2015) suggests, largely incapable of confronting or acting on what we know. Perhaps our best hope for confronting environmental problems on the scale of the climate change crisis, food security and energy security is to be found in relationships between Aboriginal people and those rural people who have an intimate knowledge and a love for country.

10. **Immiseration:**

I begin from the assumption that most educational researchers seek to connect support the struggles of marginalized people living in places outside the metropolis where some of the most desperate forms of poverty are found. In this work I think we must find a way to connect these largely western struggles with the immiseration of the rural poor on a global scale. What connections can western and northern rural education scholars make, how can we make them, and what can we do to connect our work to the range of struggles for social justice found in places labeled as rural?

⁴ In a recent election campaign debate Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper uttered the phrase ‘old stock Canadians’, juxtaposing it to ‘new Canadians’. This might seem to be a major gaff in a multicultural modern society. It might also be seen as a calculated move clearly designed to appeal to elements of his conservative political base whose identity is tied up in binary distinctions such as the one Harper drew.

Trend: Rural people on a global scale are amongst the super-exploited. Sassen sees the global city as the best hope for resistance to the excesses and expulsions of global capitalism. And yet, as Arundati Roy (2014), Gayatri Spivak (2012), James Scott (1999) and others have argued, most of the world's successful resistance movements have had their origins in rural places because they represent precarious life and death struggles undertaken by people who are literally forced out of their places.

A COMPLEX SPACE

Rural education scholarship, I argue here, can benefit from a careful consideration of some crucial sociological issues that illustrate both how rurality is differentiated from urban social space and how at the same time it is integrated into global processes and forces that transform virtually every place on the globe today. I have spent my career working with people in Atlantic Canada, the United States, Scandinavia, Australia and in other parts of the world where the term 'rural' means something immediate. It is that place where people struggle to protect land they love and material production they see as worthwhile and deserving of respect and reasonable compensation. So what are we doing about that? And what do our schools do to support these struggles? And how do we as researchers position ourselves in the politics generated by these struggles?

These are all questions that I think are worth tackling in a rural education research agenda for the 21st century.

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