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Critical education for sustainability and Chantal Mouffe's green democratic revolution

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Abstract

How should the curriculum for older school students address the transition to sustainable futures? This article seeks to answer this question by reference to the marginalisation of education for sustainability (EfS) in England after 2010; its re-emergence around 2020, prompted largely by students' protests over climate change: and the continuing need for critical approaches that acknowledge the contested nature of sustainability. Gramsci's theory of hegemony as developed by Gilbert and Williams, is used to explain the marginalisation of EfS while Mouffe's advocacy of a green democratic revolution, shaped by a blend of eco-socialist, post-developmental and decolonial thought, suggests what a critical EfS should cover and why it should be linked to radical global citizenship education. Neoliberal, socially democratic and eco-socialist discourses of sustainability and a green transition should feature in the curriculum and agonistic pedagogy should be employed to enable students to reflect and act on these and so develop their political literacy. The Curriculum for Wales can accommodate such pedagogy and an incoming Labour government in Westminster can learn from its example.

KEYWORDS

agonism, citizenship, discourse, hegemony, sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Critical education for sustainability (CEfS) seeks to combine critical theories of sustainability and education and apply them to the design and delivery of the curriculum in schools and other educational settings. Often given the label eco-pedagogy (Kahn, 2010), it enables

students and teachers to reflect and act on currently dominant or hegemonic forms of political economy that result in the current crisis of unsustainability and those reformist and transformative forms that may deliver sustainability. It draws on critical theory and pedagogy that critiques modernity/coloniality*[1] and employs the concepts of hegemony, ideology and discourse to explain why citizens both accept and resist unsustainable power relations.

CEfS regards education for sustainable development (ESD) as too compromised by mainstream notions of development and education for environmental sustainability (EfES) to be too focussed on the environmental dimension of sustainability while neglecting the economic and social dimensions. It maintains that creating sustainable societies that live within planetary boundaries (Carrington, 2023) requires the equitable distribution of wealth, the constant regeneration and recycling of resources, and attention to the well-being of both present and future human and non-human nature (Rayworth, 2018). This requires new forms of global democracy and citizenship.

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Education for sustainability (EfS) is a concern of the environmental and development education communities and of such subject communities as those focussed on geography, science and citizenship. It gained recognition in England under the 1997–2010 Labour government when the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority introduced the global dimension and sustainable development as one of seven cross-curriculum dimensions and published related guidance on sustainable development in action (Huckle, 2008; QCA, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2009a, 2009b). Education is a devolved responsibility in the United Kingdom; its other nations are more progressive than England in their policies and provision of EfS (Glover, 2022; Martin et al., 2013).

I introduced readers of this journal to CEfS in an article I contributed to a special issue on ESD (Huckle, 2013). In their editorial for this issue, Firth and Smith (2013) set progress in the United Kingdom in the context of the UN Decade of ESD and the policies of the Labour government and noted that progress in England had gone in reverse under the then coalition government. It was largely the failure of schools to adequately address climate change (Harvey, 2022) and students' related protests that brought EfS back onto the agenda in the period immediately preceding the COVID-19 pandemic. Legislation on climate change education was introduced into both Houses of Parliament; the Department for Education published a climate change and sustainability strategy for education and children's services systems in England (DfE, Department for Education, 2022a) together with new guidance on political neutrality in schools (DfE, Department for Education, 2022b); and a BERA research commission produced a Manifesto for EFES (BERA, British Educational Research Association, 2021). The National Association for Environmental Education also published a manifesto (NAEE, 2022); subject associations defended their offerings (e.g. Kinder, 2020) and long established and new NGOs took advantage of new opportunities (Finlayson, 2022; Ministry of Eco-Education, n.d.). EfS also gained renewed attention from networks of researchers and teachers in universities (Blum & Hunt, 2022; Roach, 2023; Walshe, 2023).

HEGEMONY AND THE CURRENT CRISIS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Hegemony is a concept introduced by Gramsci* to describe a ‘system of power where a small group leads a larger one, typically seen in complex societies’ (Gilbert & Williams, 2022:

254). He suggested that the ruling class sustained its power not via force but by rendering its view of the world 'common sense'. Through consciousness raising and political education, socialists had to convince citizens to adopt an alternative 'good sense'. This practice of articulation is about 'building alliances of class factions through finding common cause in shared interests' and results in 'the emergence into clarity of a counter hegemonic project' (Gilbert & Williams, 2022: 253). Gramsci's ideas are associated with such theorists as Hall* and Williams (1980) and have shaped critical education and pedagogy (Gadotti, 1996; Manojan, 2019).

Gilbert and Williams maintain that the current sustainability crisis, with its environmental, economic, social and geopolitical aspects, is essentially a crisis of neoliberal capitalism in decline. This 'reactionary movement to route around all the efforts to restrain capital that were developed in the early twentieth century' (Gilbert & Williams, 2022: ix) led to ways of organising capitalist society based on the deregulation of markets, financialisation of assets, anti-egalitarianism, social liberalisation, globalisation, austerity and the digitalisation of media and information. Neoliberalism* expressed the interests and values of a coalition of class interests and has resulted in the hegemony of an elite who control the technology and finance sectors and their allies in the political and managerial classes. They have the capacity to organise society, schooling and social change to their advantage and neoliberal school reform (Ingleby, 2021) explains the marginalisation of EfS within the curriculum of English state schools. Conservative government minister Gove's membership of the right think-tank Policy Exchange and their combined impact on educational and environmental policy provide an insight into how hegemony works (Griffin, 2023; Monbiot, 2020, 2023).

THE MARGINALISATION OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Glakin and King (2020) take stock of secondary school environmental education (EE) policy in England by analysing national policy documents, local authority and Multi-Academy Trust policies, and individual school planning documents. They find a general absence of policy, patchy and restrictive provision, and where identified, a rhetoric or discourse focussed on conservative reform and learning about the environment rather than progressive learning from the environment or critical learning for the environment (Huckle, 1983; Lucas, 1972; Stevenson, 2007). They suggest that a focus on the green economy may raise EE's profile and act as a temporary bridge from which to launch the necessary wider debate on the purpose of schooling and the eventual root and branch revision of the curriculum. Such thinking is in line with an argument I have outlined elsewhere (Huckle, 2010) and is further developed below.

As regards development education, Bourn and Hatley (2022) review the progress of schools in England in meeting Target 4.7 of the UN's sustainable development goals (Unesco, n.d.). The vast majority of schools include some, if not all, of the themes embraced by the target, but as with EE, the obstacles recognised reflect the hold of neoliberal hegemony over schooling.

Research on citizenship education also reveals the marginalisation of socially critical approaches (Weinberg & Flinders, 2018). The Politics in Schools project (Weinberg, 2020) distinguished between education about, through and for citizenship (Kerr, 2000: 210). The government had allowed official support and funding for citizenship education to decline to 'a parlous state' (House of Lords, 2018) so that 'formal and informal political education remains a peripheral feature of many secondary schools' (Weinberg, 2020: 3).

Surveys carried out by Schools Organising for Sustainability between 2018 and 2021 provide insights into school students views on topics relating to EfS (Students Organising

for Sustainability, n.d.) at a time when young voters were turning to the left (Milburn, 2019). A report from Policy Exchange (Kaufmann, 2022) associated this turn with the impact of ideas of critical social justice on the school curriculum and urged new safeguards to ensure political neutrality (DfE, Department for Education, 2022b).

THE BERA RESEARCH COMMISSION ON EFES AND THE DFE STRATEGY

Dunlop et al. (2022) describe the inclusive, participatory and consensus-orientated process used to create the BERA manifesto for EfES (BERA, British Educational Research Association, 2021). Working with a sample of over 200 young people (aged 16–18 years), teachers and teacher educators from across the United Kingdom, they used futures and visualisation workshops to identify shared understandings of five themes of environmental sustainability and their priorities for EfES at the levels of classroom, school, community and policy.

The resulting manifesto takes the form of an attractive, seven-page pamphlet with bullet points under six headings: values we share; capabilities we need; classroom solutions; school solutions; community solutions; and policy solutions. While a welcome introduction to EfS for many teachers, its orientation towards consensus leaves too much unexamined. It gives little indication of what the bullet points mean when translated into curriculum; how the listed values, capabilities and solutions are to be realised; and the powerful obstacles (such as resourcing) that face their implementation. It can be seen to be somewhat politically naïve in that it fails to acknowledge the politics of environmental sustainability and address how teachers and older students should reflect and act on different proposed routes to sustainability.

Elsewhere Dunlop and Rushton (2022) present an analysis of the DfE's sustainability and climate change strategy for England referred to above. This appears to give licence to CEfS in that it seeks to 'empower all young people to be global citizens, through a better understanding of climate change (and) greater connection to nature', invites different views, opinions and solutions, and recognises that debates on sustainability need to be linked to education for democracy. But further examination, guided by Foucauldian discourse analysis of its contents and data collected when creating the BERA manifesto, shows that the strategy foregrounds economic concerns, gives priority to the government's 'net zero' policy agenda, and is over-reliant on science-focussed knowledge and skills. Dunlop and Rushton argue that the strategy risks becoming a placebo for policy, giving the appearance of 'doing something' whilst failing to address the fundamental policy problem (the hold of neoliberal hegemony over policy formation).

HEGEMONY, IDEOLOGY AND DISCOURSE

Critical educators employ theories of hegemony, ideology and discourse to explain how the social production and dissemination of knowledge secures citizens' consent to the systemic unsustainability of societies based on unjust power relations. Stoddart (2007) reviews major branches of theory and detects a shift from ideology through hegemony to discourse and an expansion away from class as the most salient political subject position to a greater focus on gender, race and coloniality. I will focus on Gramsci*, the post-structuralist and post-Marxist thinking of Laclau and Mouffe (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 2018; Nascimento, 2022), as revised by Gilbert and Williams (2022) and augmented by post-developmental and decolonial theory.

Gilbert and Williams extend Gramsci's concept of hegemony in several ways. First, they suggest that it comprises material, institutional and technological components alongside cultural or ideological components. Neoliberalism* then becomes a hegemonic regime that has become globally predominant by being exported, generalised and imposed on states throughout the world by, for example driving the global educational reform movement (Fuller & Stevenson, 2019). Second, they add a theory of passive consent, suggesting that the consent of UK citizens, including that of school students, is a mix of cynical resignation at their lack of political agency, a conscious but ineffectual critique of the selfishness and harm that capitalism engenders, and an embrace of the everyday pleasures that consumerism, the popular media and digital platforms provide. Lack of access to critical media and political education facilitates such consent, as does the marginalisation of critical education.

THE POST-STRUCTURALIST AND POST-MARXIST DISCOURSE THEORY OF ERNESTO LACLAU, CHANTAL MOUFFE

Laclau and Mouffe draw on and extend Gramsci's* concept of hegemony by suggesting that it is achieved through the discursive connection of subjects' positions within society and is more open and fluid than he envisaged. Discourses are 'invisible webs of meaning that permeate media and culture, underpin economic institutions, organisations, and technological systems, and shape our individual sense of identity and our relationships' (Riedy, 2020: 100).

Within discourses, sustainability, democracy and the green transition act as floating or empty signifiers (Brown, 2015), ambiguous concepts without fixed meaning that take on meaning as the articulation of a political project, such as the transition to sustainability, proceeds and different identities, interests and constituencies find a common cause (see intersectionality*). Hegemony is always contested, and in seeking to establish a counter-hegemony, the radical environmental movement links with other social movements in what Laclau and Mouffe term a politics of radical democracy.

Mouffe associates radical democracy with agonistic politics grounded in both reason and affect (emotions, feelings, passions and values). This encourages citizens to reflect on their interests, beliefs and affects as they debate and act with others and turn political antagonism into agonism (a form of educational praxis termed agonistic pedagogy). 'The aim of democratic politics is to construct the "them" in such a way that it is no longer perceived as an enemy to be destroyed but as an "adversary", that is somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question' (Mouffe, 2000: 15). While antagonism undermines trust in politics, agonism increases it by recognising the role that it plays in informing political interests and identities and the potentially positive aspects of certain but not all forms of political conflict (Barthold & Bloom, 2020). Agonism is key to anti-hegemonic struggle and the formation of a populist left bloc (Mouffe, 2018) that can further what Mouffe terms the green democratic revolution.

While the Green New Deal (GND) has been described as 'an amorphous body of thought and discursive crusade' (Meaney, 2022: 81) that has emerged from the English-speaking left over the past fifteen years ((Beuret, 2019; Bloomfield & Stewart, 2020; Gilbert & Williams, 2022; GNDG, n.d.; Pettifor, 2019), its foundations are socially democratic (reflecting Roosevelt's New Deal of the 1930s). It currently offers a counter-hegemony and political project which Mouffe regards as a floating signifier and opportunity to articulate a green democratic revolution. This would politicise environmental issues, critique neoliberal financialised capitalism, build on the theory and practice of eco-socialism (Kovel, 2001; Lowry, 2019), rescue democratic ideals from capitalism, colonialism, and modernity, and

create a hegemonic signifier around which diverse interests and affects, focussed on security, protection, equality, and freedom, can crystallise (Brown, 2015). Schneider (2022), Murray (2022) and Gilbert and Williams (2022) are among those who have used Mouffe's ideas when considering the future of the British left and some regard their testbed to be those nations and localities that are experimenting with radical municipalism (Thompson, 2023) and the foundational economy (FEC, Foundational Economy Collective, 2022). This emerging form of political economy will be considered below.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF POST-DEVELOPMENTAL AND DECOLONIAL THEORY

In recent decades, critical social theory developed in the global north has been complemented by that developed in the south to create global social theory (Bhambra, n.d.). This suggests that the concepts of modernity and coloniality* are inseparable and that the imposition of modern knowledge (its ways of knowing and conceiving of the world) was/is a key factor in Northern colonialism/imperialism. Post-development theory links modernity/coloniality to universalist notions of development as capitalist economic growth and urges alternatives while postcolonialism* and decoloniality* seek recognition for the 'pluriverse' of knowledges (Reiter, 2018) that modernity/coloniality has suppressed. Mignolo* and Santos* are key thinkers in this regard.

Pluriverse, a Post-Development Dictionary (Kothari et al., 2019) provides an overview of over 100 post-developmental/decolonial initiatives and associated discourses that challenge modern development and neoliberal hegemony. Some its editors consider reformist (e.g. sustainable development, ecological modernisation, the circular economy, and transhumanism), while others they consider transformative (e.g. agroecology, degrowth, eco-socialism and the transition movement). The transformative initiatives take sustainability discourse beyond the epistemological and ontological hegemonies of mainstream thought by recognising the structures and processes shaping surface events and experiences and rejecting modern dualisms (nature/society, mind/body, us/them, here/there, male/female, etc). They recognise modern citizens' metaphysical entrapment within modernity and advocate other modes of existence based on different cosmologies and ways of knowing. The Progressive International (n.d.) and DiEM 25 (DiEM25, Democracy in Europe Movement 2025, 2019) are examples of organisations that foster debate within global civil society on an international GND to which diverse transformative voices contribute.

GLOBAL DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

The global movement to create a global counter-hegemony to challenge neoliberalism and unite anti-capitalist factions unites around a vision of global democracy in which radical democracy is a feature of all spheres of social life (economic, political and cultural); global citizens' duty of care is extended to other peoples and species distant in space and time (future generations); and citizens' rights to security, social justice and sustainability are guaranteed. Such an understanding of global democracy and citizenship is shown by those who argue for radical ecological democracy (Kothari, 2019) and ecological (Melo-Escrihuela, 2008) or sustainability citizenship (Dobson, 2011; Huckle, 2016). It also underpins Mouffe's advocacy of a green democratic revolution (Mouffe, 2022).

Machin (2019) argues that the three challenges posed by the Anthropocene* (the current geological period when human activity has become the dominant influence on the environment) can renew and radicalise democracy as they are subjected to

agonistic debate. The challenge of knowledge is that posed by decolonial and post-development theory. The challenge of time focuses on the costs of adopting short-time horizons and a linear view of time and the advantages of longer horizons and a circular (ecological) view. The challenge of boundaries stresses the advantage of crossing boundaries, whether they be geographical (global democracy) or conceptual (overcoming the limitations of modern thought). Westall (2015) and Smith (2021) are among those who consider how liberal democracy should be reformed to enable sustainability.

The Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective (GTDFC) offers teachers support in addressing these challenges with a study guide to global citizenship education 'otherwise' (Andreotti et al., 2019) that is based on decolonial theory. This encourages teachers and students to question the epistemological and ontological hegemony shaping modern school knowledge and offers pedagogy to enable them to address three modern denials (of systemic and violent complicity in harm elsewhere, of planetary limits, and of entrapment in a cosmology of duality) and help them to know, be, relate and desire differently.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND THE FOUNDATIONAL ECONOMY: A COUNTER HEGEMONY?

In the United Kingdom, social democracy and socialism are the two main models of political economy that offer reformist and transformative knowledge to challenge neoliberal discourse. Social democracy was hegemonic from 1945 to 1980 and fostered a foundational economy (and welfare state) that comprised providential (e.g. healthcare, education, police and planning); material (utilities, transport and food) and overlooked sectors (organisations providing goods and services outside the market). The subsequent turn to neoliberalism subjected welfare services, such as health and education, and utilities such as water, electricity and broadband, to financialised private provision and related outsourcing (Blakeley, 2019; Bowman et al., 2014) with the result that by the early 21C there was a worsening crisis of sustainability. Neoliberalism had proved incapable of reproducing the conditions of production (natural resources and services, healthy and educated workers, space free of congestion and pollution) on which both citizens and ultimately capitalists depend. Financial returns to shareholders had taken priority over meeting of social needs; public expenditure had been reduced in real terms; and the central state was left in a position that made it difficult for it to revive social democracy, as the Foundational Economy Collective explains:

> Central state politicians are preoccupied with making promises they cannot keep when tax reform is off the agenda, the state has limited administrative capacity, and economic policy has been subcontracted to central banks and finance ministries whose policy objectives are sound money and keeping the financial markets going
>
> (FEC, Foundational Economy Collective, 2022, xxxii).

The crisis of sustainability coincided with the 2008 financial crisis, the 2020 Covid crisis, withdrawal from the European Union, the 2022 cost of living crisis, linked to but not wholly caused by the war in Ukraine and a period of chaotic governance that has worsened the crisis (Marr, 2023). It provoked populist reaction on both the right and left (Mouffe, 2018), with the counter-hegemonic project of Corbynism (2016–2019) attracting many young voters but failing to break through (Winlow & Hall, 2022).

THE FOUNDATIONAL ECONOMY AS A REALISTIC COUNTER HEGEMONY

In the absence of a green or sustainability state in Westminster ('a fundamental reconstruction of the state along ideals of strong ecological sustainability and eco-centric values, often challenging the primacy of traditional state functions such as securing economic growth and profit accumulation' (Hausknost & Hammond, 2020: 2), it is local states and devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland who have been pioneering a socially democratic counter hegemony. Here, radical municipalism (Thompson, 2023) focusses on restoring the collective provision of the goods and services essential to everyday life and rendering it subject to democratic control. In what amounts to a counter-hegemonic discourse, foundational economics shifts the focus of economic policy from the relatively small competitive, tradeable, and high-tech sectors of the economy (the subject of industrial strategy) to the providential, material and overlooked sectors. It assesses performance in terms of meeting citizens' basic needs within planetary limits and enlarging their capacity to lead the lives they choose to live. It experiments with new ways of providing, funding and regulating the 'reliance systems' on which citizens depend and new forms of political engagement and participation to monitor their beliefs and affects and develop their global citizenship. These include new forms of community wealth building, the licensing of corporate businesses operating in foundational sectors, the creation of hybrid political alliances to drive change, and the reinvention of taxation to secure a revenue base. The FEC's manifesto (Bentham et al., 2013) and working papers (Foundational Economy, n.d.) are a rich resource for those developing the CEfS curriculum, as is Wahlund and Hansen's (2022) comparison of the foundational economy and doughnut economics.

THREE COMPETING DISCOURSES OF THE GREEN TRANSITION

Whilst the reality is more complex, older school students should be encouraged to reflect and act on a necessary transition to a sustainable future, in terms of three competing discourses: a green industrial revolution (neoliberal); a Green New Deal (socially democratic); and a green democratic revolution (eco-socialist). Table 1 is a guide to recognising the three discourses but it should be approached with caution since it overlooks much diversity within forms and overlap across forms and other forms. Further insights into the discourses surrounding sustainability and a green transition can be gained from Barthold and Bloom (2020), Dryzek (2021), Jessop (2012), Pepper (1996), Riedy (2020) and Seaton (2019).

The three transitions are reflected in the policies of businesses, political parties and civil society organisations and shape (and are shaped by) people's beliefs and affects. Agonistic pedagogy provides a means of infusing them into the school curriculum in ways that develop political literacy.

AGONISTIC PEDAGOGY AND RADICAL GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Agonistic pedagogy requires students to understand beliefs, affects, identities, discourse, hegemony, articulation and counter-hegemonic coalitions, and to have studied the process of articulation at work in local and more distant settings where disputes over sustainability and probable and possible futures have arisen. Teachers adopting such pedagogy should have a sound understanding of the politics of sustainability (Scoones, 2016), its

TABLE 1 Three discourses of the green transition.

A neoliberal transition or green industrial revolution	A socially democratic transition or green new Deal (GND)	An eco-socialist transition or green democratic revolution
The market knows best. It produces knowledge that can be used to know and control nature.	The liberal democratic state knows best. Public and government action, guided by reformist knowledge (Kothari et al., 2019), is needed to correct market failures.	Nature knows best. A socialist democratic state should plan the economy in ways that respect planetary boundaries and promote social and environmental justice (Kovel, 2001, Lowry, 2019). Such revolutionary change should be guided by transformative knowledge (Kothari et al., 2019).
All of nature and society should be set to the logic of the market by a liberal democracy that puts few constraints on free enterprise. Then prices will deliver resource savings, cut pollution and deliver sustainability. Capitalism can thrive by protecting the environment.	States should adopt policies of sustainable development that seek to manage capitalism in ways that balance economic growth with environmental protection and social justice. This requires liberal democracies to adopt new laws, new means of citizen participation and new cooperative forms of global governance.	Critique of capitalism should be combined with critique of modernity-coloniality*; modern forms of democracy, progress and development; and modern forms of knowledge that foster dualistic thinking.
Supporters of capitalism have neutralised radical environmentalism using the language of sustainability within the neoliberal project (Mulvihill & Bruzzone, 2018; Sklair, 2019; Tulloch & Neilson, 2014).	The GND is a fiscal stimulus designed to accelerate the transition to sustainable development. It offers a green transition with high-quality jobs and other social and environmental benefits. (GNDG, n.d.; Pettifor, 2019). Other possible elements include nationalising power supply, insulating housing, electrifying transport, 'levelling up' and introducing basic incomes and services.	The GND is an opportunity for radical parties and movements around the world to unite and promote a new world order or a global radical ecological democracy that corrects the mistakes of modern development.
The GND is a fiscal stimulus that offers new opportunities for capital accumulation via green growth based on such innovations as green technology, green consumerism, geoengineering, carbon capture and storage and solar radiation management. A 'green industrial revolution' or the 'greening of capitalism' (Stern et al., 2023).	In 2023, GNDs were being implemented in the United States (Biden's Inflation Reduction Act) and the EU. The UK Labour Party's proposed green prosperity plan (Labour Party, 2023) was more modest in terms of the planned level of fiscal stimulus. Also, see Green Party (2019).	An ecological definition of the working class (Huber, 2022) sees it lacking control over both the mode and conditions of production or the ecological means of life. Increased difficulties in obtaining the basics (food, energy, satisfying well-paid work, housing, health care, green spaces, etc.) mean that a green democratic revolution appeals to the young and to the populist left, which attributes such difficulties to the hegemony of the capitalist class.

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

A neoliberal transition or green industrial revolution	A socially democratic transition or green new Deal (GND)	An eco-socialist transition or green democratic revolution
Many neoliberals seek to divert attention from capitalism by encouraging a post-political view of the world that claims that everyone is equally to blame for the environmental crisis and promotes behaviour change over system change. Some capitalist enterprises engage in 'greenwashing' to mask their true environmental costs. Some neoliberals join with the populist right in blaming declining living standards and 'left behind' places on environmentalists, immigrants, and all things 'woke'. They may encourage culture wars on environmentalism with the aid of the popular media. At the extreme, this leads to eco-fascism (Corgione, 2020).	Critics warn that a GND may face fiscal constraints (Elliott, 2023); may be undermined by international competitors; and may have adverse consequences for the global South (Ajl, 2021). Beuret (2019) warns that while it is broadly progressive, the GND is not a deal with the international community and global south or a deal with the rest of nature or 'more than human world'.	The key debate on the green left is between accelerationists who call for the intensification of growth and technological change to destabilise existing systems and create radical social transformation (Bastani, 2019; Mason, 2015) and supporters of degrowth (Burton & Sommerville, 2019; Demaria & Latouche, 2019, Schmeizer et al., 2022). These positions may be compatible in that a period of growth (based on sustainability rather than profit) is needed to meet humanity's basic needs (the UN's sustainable development goals) before a transition to degrowth takes place (Positive Money, n.d.).
Under conditions of neoliberal hegemony or capitalist realism, many school students display both passive consent and reflexive impotence. 'They know things are bad, but more than that, they know they cannot do anything about it'. (Fisher, 2009: 21)	In the United Kingdom, radical municipalism (Thompson, 2023) and the foundational economy (FEC, 2022) are in the vanguard of sustainability by re-focussing the economy on human needs and linking citizenship to universal entitlements and responsibilities rather than national territory.	
If successful, the green industrial revolution will restore growth, productivity and profitability while deflecting and absorbing the growing radicalism displayed by young citizens.	If successful, the GND will restore welfare capitalism, improve young citizens' life chances, and cause them to re-engage with politics via new means of participation.	If successful, a green revolution will usher in sustainable modes of social organisation and offer young citizens new ways of knowing, being, relating and desiring differently (Andreotti et al., 2019).

TABLE 1 (Continued)

A neoliberal transition or green industrial revolution	A socially democratic transition or green new Deal (GND)	An eco-socialist transition or green democratic revolution
Supported by a hegemonic coalition of the global capitalist class and their supporters in government, the media, and educational institutions. Their power has produced a post-ecological society based on sustaining the unsustainable (Blűdhorn (2020) and Blűdhorn and Deflorian (2021).	Supported by a reformist anti-hegemonic coalition of the global middle or knowledge class, many of whom may be idealists in regarding education as the key to realising sustainability (Huber, 2022).	Supported by a radical, multi-cultural, anti-hegemonic coalition of the global working class and precariat, radical social movements and associated transformative intellectuals.

ethical foundations (ECI, Earth Charter Initiative, n.d.) and the forms of political economy (Quastel, 2016; Rayworth, 2018; Wahlund & Hansen, 2022), and associated forms of democracy and citizenship that may be required for its realisation. In planning the curriculum, they can draw on media and events that reflect the politics of the green transition; for example, PM Sunak's U turn on green targets in September 2023 (Crerar et al., 2023).

Snir (2017) examines what is involved in developing students' ability to express their beliefs and affects and explore their political differences, identities and demands. He suggests that agonistic pedagogy has three elements (Table 2) that take place simultaneously rather than sequentially. It reflects the work of counter-hegemonic agents outside the classroom in that it is about building chains of equivalence (what we have in common) and discourse coalitions; growing to understand one another; broadening and deepening one's identity; and arriving at a 'conflictual consensus' that accepts 'that there will always be disagreement about how to interpret and attain sustainable development' (Håkansson et al., 2019: 25).

Snir draws on Gramsci* to see the teacher as a transformative intellectual. S/he is engaged personally in the process of articulation along with students while making available relevant discourses and developing political literacy. S/he directs rather than provides articulation, not imposing political ideas but allowing these to arise in discussion, offering 'a compass and roadmap but not assuming the role of navigator' (Snir, 2017: 11). Readers can judge for themselves whether such pedagogy meets the DfE's guidance on political neutrality (ACT, 2022, DfE, Department for Education, 2022b).

Ruttenburg (2009) has applied agonistic pedagogy to radical global citizenship education (RGCE). She suggests that RGCE should educate the emotions (Mouffe's affects) by developing an understanding of the difference between moral and political disputes. As they study and debate discourses surrounding a green transition, students should understand the difference between private and collective emotions; the ways in which emotions are collaboratively constructed in movements and parties; and how they are associated with views on desirable social and environmental relations and with hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses.

Students should consider how power constitutes the United Kingdom and global society and develop political literacy, the ability to 'read the social order in terms of political disputes over liberty, equality and the hegemonic relations that should shape them' (Ruttenberg, 2009: 3). RGCE should explore how movements and parties have developed solidarity across space, time and species; why it is justifiable to feel anger on behalf of those (including other species) who suffer injustice; and how proposals to radicalise

TABLE 2 Radical democratic pedagogy and sustainability, based on Snir (2017).

	Radical democratic or agonistic pedagogy
Perform	Students perform their discursive identities: how they see themselves as environmental and global citizens and how their relations with the rest of nature and others at a distance in time and space give meaning to their lives. They reveal and debate valuable truths about themselves, including their preferred futures.
Connect	Students connect with discourses of sustainability, such as those associated with a GND. They recognise antagonism between discourses and engage in agonistic debate that may change the way they understand and experience the world.
Transform	Students' identities change as they engage in agonistic debate. They connect issues and positions and may become part of a counter-hegemonic front seeking radical global democracy and sustainability.

democracy and global governance would give global citizens greater voice (One World Trust, 2022).

To distinguish between moral and political anger, students need to understand power and the role of political economy and international relations in constituting fluid identities and an unsustainable/sustainable social order. Moral anger leads to acts of kindness such as charitable giving, while political anger leads to attempts to establish a more democratic, just and sustainable society. RGCE should frame debate not in terms of competition between moral enemies (with different interpretations of right and wrong) but as confrontation in the public sphere where political adversaries, with different interests and different views on sustainability, a desirable transition, and a desirable global society, engage in agonistic debate. This process contrasts with that based on consensus used to draw up the BERA manifesto on EfES, and it has been used by Sant et al. (2021) when running interactive workshops. They sum up agonistic pedagogy as eliciting worldviews, enabling conflict and resisting consensus.

Underhill argues that RGCE and radical social movements should inform each other about the use of such pedagogy and 'how it enables ideas of the self and "the other" to be imagined, reimagined, learned, and unlearned' (Underhill, 2019: 214). Civil society* is the space that is most likely to foster new articulations of sustainability (Brown, 2015), and Hayward (2012) explains how engagement with it can foster students' sustainability citizenship and counter their 'reflexive impotence' (Table 1, column one).

LOOKING TO WALES FOR A CRITICAL EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Wales has long provided education for sustainable development and global citizenship in its schools (Glover, 2022). In 2015, it adopted the Future Generations Act, requiring all public organisations to take decisions in ways that consider their long-term effects on the prosperity of the people in Wales, its environment, culture and communities (Smith, 2021). Subsequently, the Welsh Government adopted a foundational economy approach to economic planning and introduced the Curriculum for Wales (WG & EW, Welsh Government and Education Wales, n.d.) based on areas of learning experience, what matters statements and an integrating concept of cynefin, or sense of place.

Elsewhere (Huckle, 2022), I have suggested that the new Welsh curriculum lacks an underlying philosophy of knowledge to aid curriculum integration and development. Critical realism offers this in ways that allow students to explore discourses of sustainability current in Wales while developing their global citizenship in ways suggested by the GTDFC (Andreotti et al., 2019). Adams and Beauchamp (2022) have also drawn attention to the curriculum's potential to draw on different epistemological and ontological viewpoints when exploring the alternative ways of being and knowing oneself and the rest of nature that cynefin encompasses. The related guidance makes no reference to the Welsh foundational economy. This is a major omission, as related initiatives provide rich content for the CEfS curriculum (Business Wales, n.d.).

A new Labour government in Westminster would do well to look to Wales for inspiration as it recovers and resumes the progress on EfS made prior to 2010. CEfS continues to develop and viewing it as part of a green democratic revolution provides insights that this article has sought to reveal.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This author is an independent writer with no current institutional affiliations and the article draws only on already published writing/research. He therefore considers a conventional ethics statement to be unnecessary but hopes that the article reflects the ethics outlined in the Earth Charter (ECI, Earth Charter Initiative, n.d., https://earthcharter.org/read-the-earth-charter/)

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ENDNOTE

[1] An asterisk next to a concept, thinker or topic in this article denotes that there is related explanatory content on the Critical Global Theory website (Bhambra, n.d.).

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