Full Employment in a Green Society

by Steve Dawe
London Metropolitan University

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Abstract

This article is an attempt to re-conceptualise Full Employment. The UK context is the main geographical focus. A normative route to the rehabilitation of Full Employment is offered - recast here as 'Green Full Employment' - utilising a variety of Green perspectives from sociology, politics and economics. This contribution to the debate about Full Employment is 'normative', because without ethical values we may lack a moral compass to motivate policies. Green Full Employment is presented here not simply as a potential 'active labour market' policy, but as a contributory facet of the on-going 'Green Industrial Revolution.' Inevitably, this reconceptualization raises questions about the value of many forms of contemporary work and what purpose they serve. The potential resistance of neoliberal forces to Green Full Employment is noted, before future lines of research are suggested.

Keywords: *Full Employment, Work, Sustainability, Active Labour Market Policies, Neoliberalism*

Part One: Reconceptualising full employment: The debate about work and the recession as context

1.1 Is being at work in the formal economy an adequate assessment of who may be working, or an adequate basis for valuing the actual work they are doing? From a Green perspective work has value if it serves both ecological and social needs and aspirations. Green perspectives are not uniform, but key Green literature seems to emphasise this point (Bookchin 2004; Dobson 2000; Eckersley 1992). Schumacher was influential in beginning a debate about what constituted 'good work' and at what scale human activities could take place in a manner which best utilised both skills and technology (Schumacher 1974, 1980). However, he does not appear to have addressed the issue of Full Employment. Robertson (1985) was more focussed on the detail of types of employment, especially self-employment and its role in creating a better society. But it is perhaps more useful for the contemporary context to consider the work of Molly Scott Cato (2009, 2011). Her personal research emphasis on cooperatives incorporates the issues of greater equity in workplace power and decision-making within Green approaches to work. She examines the issue of Full Employment within a greener society (2009: p. 56-59) and recognises the debate between some analysts who assume Greens want a lot less of many types of work to exist and others who recognise the need for remedial work for environmental enhancement, and for creating essentials like sustainable energy and transportation. This would add appreciably to formal work. It is very difficult to see how meeting social needs adequately – education, health care, care of the elderly and ecological imperatives – would lead to less formal employment in practice.

1.2 Consequently, a basis for a reconceptualization of Full Employment should arguably have two aspects: what we actually mean by 'unemployment' and 'work' and the real and lasting value of activities which address social necessities as mentioned above, social justice, energy and ecological challenges to create Green Full Employment (GFE). GFE would mean that a society had adopted a planned trend towards a Green society, with more formal or informal work being compatible with social justice as a key Green value and sustainability as a societal imperative. Such a societal goal would clearly mean the diminution of social injustice and a planned decline in forms of informal or formal work which were maintaining injustice or were unsustainable. Put simply, the pursuit of a carbon-free society in terms of energy, production and transportation is united in GFE with enhanced social justice for all groups being marginalised or discriminated against by existing society. The eventual goal of a Green society would be measured by the minimization of physically finite inputs necessary to sustain it and by the degree of

satisfaction or happiness of those who lived in it. But GFE and a Green society might well take decades to achieve.

1.3 Clearly, how work and unemployment are used as terms is open to question. Governmental usage in the UK sometimes seems to be an exercise in pejorative stereotyping of certain social groupings rather than impartial assessment. By GFE, in contrast, implies employment which is consistent with ecologically sustainable development, essentially a 'strong' version of the commonly-quoted Brundtland definition (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, p. 43). Whether this work is in the formal or informal economy is not a primary concern.

1.4 Before turning to some consideration about the nature of contemporary unemployment, the nature of the current recession in the UK context should be briefly examined. About one million young people aged 18-24 are not in employment; over one million women are unemployed; ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented in both these categories and also in the category of unemployment as formally recognised. In general, well over two and a half million people are unemployed. However, the TUC's assessments of unemployment, including what may be called under-employment, suggest an actual unemployment figure of about 6.3 million (TUC 2012). Whilst this may represent a well-judged attempt to compensate for the Government's counting methods, it offers nothing to tell us what those 6.3 million people might be doing, and whether what they are doing has value for society or not.

1.5 Strangleman and Warren offer a concentrated analysis of what we might mean by unemployment (2008: p. 250-273). Of particular interest here is what they refer to as 'hidden work.' Work which is categorised as not officially recorded (p. 269-270) is present everywhere and far from easy to research since not everyone is classed as a volunteer and illegal internships may not be identified or policed by the institutions of the State. How should we consider the unpaid work in growing food on allotments or in gardens, some of which is distributed to neighbours and relatives when in surplus: free exchange of immense value to the recipient household but exceptionally difficult to measure or quantify? But, more challenging for the status quo, do people obtain more satisfaction from such acts of free exchange or community solidarity than they do from low-paid and banal work in a supermarket or a fast-food chain? Instinctively, we may suspect that this is so. If so, how we might 'colour' a wider range of forms of work with such satisfaction is a challenge within the idea of GFE? We might wonder whether those formally registered as unemployed and looking for work may be working on their own behalf, since to work to feed oneself and the household is included here, although not in the otherwise thoughtful considerations of Grint (2005: p. 36-37). Pettinger and colleagues (2005) and Edgell (2006) have offered useful assessments of both formal and informal work although neither work mentions Full Employment. Vallas offers an introduction to work that does not mention Full Employment, McDonaldization or regulationist approaches to theories about work, although distinctions between formal and informal work and gender and race issues do feature in his account (Vallas 2012). Beck (2000), however, devotes a considerable effort to discussing Full Employment whilst demonstrating awareness of both the formal and informal economies, which may contribute to an effort to reconceptualise Full Employment.

1.6 Beck (2000) notes the insecurity of employment and the decline of the certainty of full employment in industrialised society (p. 2-5). He questions the legitimacy of a form of capitalism that, by pursuing neoliberal values that undermine its own promises of prosperity, at least for the poorest groups, in fact ensures income, security and stability under Full Employment are being sacrificed to a market fundamentalism. He even questions whether democracy is possible, perhaps he means meaningful, after full employment is discarded. He notes that the rhetoric of Full Employment is retained whilst its key features – job security and protection in sickness and old age – are undermined (p. 64-65). In consequence he emphasises the need to secure and protect the right to breaks in formal work, and the need for protection in informal employment as well (p. 90-91).

1.7 In the contemporary context, we could add to 'unemployment' those who are not able-bodied as serious illness or particularly debilitating disability afflicts them long-term, making any likelihood of sustaining a role in the formal economy improbable; addicts of various types; persistent offenders who are effectively unemployable; those whose income arises from the 'grey economy' which may be illegal or legal, depending upon the actual level of income obtained and whether it is appropriately taxed. There are a wide variety of others 'Not in Education, Employment or Training', including people not formally recognised as carers and those in seasonal employment, with incomes which may often be below tax and national insurance thresholds. There is abundant evidence about how those excluded from formal employment are disproportionately female and/or from ethnic minorities. We may also question the idea, to be found in DWP literature, that a single parent must of necessity work in the formal economy. The value of childcare is challenged by the questionable idea that a paid job – any job – is better than time with one's own child. From a Green perspective, the preference of the adult or adults involved is paramount not the preference of the State.

1.8 If we recognise the value to society of many forms of unpaid work such as housework, childcare, growing food and sustaining community organisations then we may be closer to what GFE might look like. We should also recognise that working part time in the formal economy may be good for some types of voluntary association activities (Kamerâde 2009), since it makes time available. We also need to recognise work at the edges of legality and in the various categories above, and consider those who are really excluded from all definitions of work to be very much fewer than suggested by official approaches. However, bearing in mind Green approaches to social justice (See: Barry 1999, chapters 2 and 3; Dobson 1998; Goodin 1992: Chapter 2) this analysis does imply that the State should ensure a minimum income to all to guarantee useful work of all kinds is protected and valued, not rejected or under-valued because some of it is outside the formal economy.

1.9 To distinguish a Green approach to social justice succinctly, it can be argued that achieving the

potentiality of individuals and groups within a Green, or 'greening', society implies that barriers to universal human rights should be removed, at the very least. However, Green authors argue that power and wealth are not simply about money or about the arbitrary exercise of power, but are also about the use of physical resources which underlie inequality. In short, inequality cannot be addressed effectively unless the physical resource base is included as a key factor.

1.10 A Citizens' Income approach (Lord 2003; Meade 1995; Walter 1989) or a minimum income and/or a Living Wage scheme (See for example: the Living Wage Campaign) are supported by Greens and others as a basic guarantee of a minimum lifestyle for all. The Citizens' Income would have the effect of providing a student grant, or minimum pension or guaranteed income to those with fluctuating incomes. Supplemented when necessary by a housing allowance not unlike a system of housing benefit, this minimum income would become a tax threshold level when an individual was working. Higher and more equitable forms of taxation are implied, including on environmentally-polluting or health damaging activities, but it can also be argued that higher productivity is likely to follow from cheaper access to further and higher education. This type of approach would certainly involve a rigorous and multi-faceted pursuit of equality (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010), or what Gorz calls 'sociality and cohesion' (Gorz 1999, p.77). But, even more seriously, we may first wish to as a false dichotomy the idea that formal, paid work is necessarily of greater value to society than unpaid work, or than paid work which offers little income. Unpaid work in the formal economy may appear to be about seeking job security rather than any financial gain, such as retail workers who arrive before shops open to clean, tidy and re-stock shops but are only paid when the shop opens, or illegal unpaid internships.

1.11 Some forms of paid work may well be seriously detrimental to society from a Green perspective: construction on land usable for agricultural production; the production of sugar and salt loaded foodstuffs that are known to be injurious to health; the manufacture of cigarettes; the production and sale of arms to authoritarian regimes. Security of the household, its housing and sufficient income, may allow a variety of mixes of what may be seen as legitimate formal and informal sources of household income without continuing unethical and unsustainable forms of work.

1.12 There is also the issue of 'under-employment.' Whilst some people prefer to work part-time, people may be working part-time who would prefer full-time work of the same nature. Also, 'under-employment' must be interpreted to include people working at a level below what their qualifications would permit. An aim of GFE should be a 'levelling up' in which those with graduate level skills, for example, get graduate level employment if they so wish. This has implications of increasing productivity for hours worked, and for re-skilling the economy in the sense of having more people doing what they were actually trained to do. We may also make the assumption that such a process would raise expectations, encouraging people to work in areas for which they were originally trained, building confidence and perhaps even creating more 'self-actualising individuals' over a period of years (Maslow 1970). This would also be a serious challenge to recent trends towards a growth in employment requiring no qualifications (Thompson and McHugh 2002, p. 171) or more generally, 'McDonaldization' (Ritzer 2006 and 2008) with some forms of employment apparently designed to turn people into machine-like automatons offering standard phrases as they purvey unsustainable and often unhealthy foodstuffs.

1.13 This analysis does imply a redistribution of incomes, re-structuring of organisations and a considered expansion of local employment opportunities, as well as a role-expansion for local government to include the support of new business creation. Unemployment or under-employment is not simply an economic or social problem, or narrowly a political failure. From a GFE perspective, both conditions are serious failures to recognise the potential for environmentally useful employment as a correction to a core deficiency of contemporary capitalism: the creation of numerous low-paid jobs of no discernible value to society. There is also the question of whether the use of 'teamwork' is intended to compensate for what may be dreary or demanding work conditions, substituting camaraderie perhaps for aspirations the work being done may not meet (Vogl 2009).

1.14 Bearing in mind the foregoing, why 'full employment in a Green society?' This is an attempt to respond to an arguably general social and ecological crisis very briefly. This crisis may be characterised in the following categories.

- **Energy:** Available evidence strongly suggests that a major decline in accessible and affordable fossil fuel use is in progress and a Green industrial revolution is slowly gathering pace. Insulation as a basic household and energy efficiency measure is very gradually being supplemented by the installation of renewable energy technologies, primarily but not exclusively throughout the industrialised world. The employment potential in this area is significant (Campaign Against Climate Change 2010)^[1].
- **Climate:** Consensual scientific evidence appears not only to suggest our climate is being changed by human action, but that the rate of change is increasing and for the worse (see for example Cox et al 2007 and the reports of National Snow and Ice Data Center Colorado, on the status of ice cover around the world; Urry 2011, chapter 3).
- **Food and Population Growth:** Rising food prices are forcing UK households to grow more food for themselves (Midgley 2010^[2]). Biofuel production is displacing land use for food in many parts of the world^[3].
- **Economic:** The ecocidal character of neoliberalism including over-reliance on under-regulated financial institutions; placing market fundamentalism above ecological sustainability by supporting almost any market activity, no matter how ecologically or socially damaging. This is coupled by pressure for excessively low levels of taxation, a diminished state and, in its worst form, a model of sustainable development which places the poorest communities at the margin of subsistence with little resilience against external shocks (Deb 2009; Duffield 2007).

- **Sociological:** There is a major problem of societal adaptation to changes which must now be very rapid to prevent serious climate change, radical depletion of biodiversity and soils and unprecedented movements of people (Black et al 2008, p 31-32; Schipper and Burton 2009; Toulmin 2009, p. 119-120; Urry 2011). However, disagreeing with Urry, this is not a situation where a 'post-carbon sociology' (Urry 2011, p.16) will suffice. Urry argues that modernity could be seen as a 'carbonized' world, but that this has been largely ignored by sociologists. Urry suggests that the '...resource and energy bases of economic and social life...' (Urry 2011, p.16) need to become foundations of a post-carbon sociology and a post carbon society. However, he attempts to do this as a reform of the discipline of sociology, rather than as a holistic or interdisciplinary effort. Rather than seeking to make any special pleading for a mono-disciplinary approach, it can be argued, as this article demonstrates, that effective policy responses building on the idea of GFE involve a highly interdisciplinary approach in which boundaries between the social and natural sciences should, quite reasonably, be breached. This is to aver that the urgency of ecological challenges requires a collective interdisciplinary response which breaches partitions between disciplines and perhaps between ideologies in pursuit of an 'active' consensus for change. Since Urry devotes a considerable effort to explaining and utilising scientific information about climate change (Urry 2011), he does not really succeed in making his own argument for a more exclusive 'post-carbon sociology.'

1.15 It is reasonable to assert that a more ecologically sustainable society cannot be avoided since key physical resources will diminish in quantity during this century and become more expensive, rendering their use far less affordable and less frequent other than in cases where re-use and recycling are practical. Beck (2000) emphasises a green critique of a restored full employment that does not embody the removal of 'nature-destroying...' aspects of contemporary employment (p.65). He also connects his comments on contemporary work with expressing urgency for 'radical measures on the environment' (p.158).

1.16 In a society where GFE is a shared social goal, productivity and efficiency would not be about making more short-life goods or providing more services that appear, at best, peripheral or ephemeral to needs or reasonable aspirations. A new 'planned permanence' rather than planned obsolescence of goods might well fundamentally challenge the nature of contemporary capitalism. Instead of long hours producing short life goods and low value services, lower formal working hours for those who want them would allow more time for gardening, food production, family, friends, culture and community action. We should note the implication that this is about restoring and improving manufacturing and assembly within the UK, rather than continuing to import many manufactured goods from poorer states.

1.17 In the work-life balance, 'life' could become dominant. This could alter the work-life balance dynamics noted by Abendroth and den Dulk (2011) and have significant implications for the distribution of happiness (Layard 2005). The production of more and more of less and less value could be scorned, even legislated against. The right of many workers to telework would be seen as a human right of comparable value to freedom of speech. Elderly people could go on doing some work in the formal economy for as long as they felt able - if fixed retirement ages were abolished.

1.18 GFE, however optimistically, offers a basis for the restoration of social hope. The aspirations for security of home and employment have arguably been undermined since the Labour Government public spending cuts of the 1970s. Employment rights and housing security were not improved by the transition from Conservative to Labour in 1997. This led to a financially-based recession closely related to an oil crisis (Urry 2011). Anxiety about long term recession can also be seen in the more rapid repayment of household debts, including mortgages and credit card debts, probably due to fears about job security.

1.19 GFE is not a suggestion that some static or ideal point may be achieved. Following Daly, (1992) the stability of inputs in an ecologically-informed economy is constrained by the issue of ecological sustainability but not by aversion to innovation or greater efficiency. A 'steady state economy' is to be socially, ecologically and economically stable and secure but not in any sense unchanging. This concern is comparable to that expressed by Beveridge (see below and Beveridge 1944, p.20) that innovation and initiative should always be present and attract rewards. This implies that Full Employment does not mean that all jobs can be for life, as technologies, wants and even what a society sees as needs may change. A child without a home PC could be considered to be 'deprived' in the UK today.

1.20 Full Employment in a Green society is emphatically not coterminous or compatible with the 'Big Society' vision of the Coalition government elected in 2010. This Government is undermining minimum incomes by not indexing the minimum wage to inflation or accepting the idea of a Living Wage, and by reducing useful employment in central and local government. Inequality and social justice do not appear to be amongst its concerns (Yeates et al 2011 SPA). In addition, the Coalition seeks to undermine security of housing tenure, favouring the expansion of a much-criticised private rented sector. In contrast, GFE means valuing the contributions everyone can make without discriminating against those on the lowest incomes or those who work in public services. It does not mean making even less secure the precarious position of the poorest in society. The tax burden of the richest, upon their land, property and income, arguably remains small in the UK as there is no land value taxation and UK residents are free to use tax havens, many of them based in UK-controlled territories (Palan 2010; Shaxson 2011).

1.21 Nothing suggested so far guarantees adequate employment or income to all households. If, by re-conceptualising full employment, we may address issues of transition to a different type of society and the pursuit of greater equality at the same time, then the possibility of influencing and changing the existing political consensus may exist. To put this another way, research presented here suggests dropping the earlier concept of Full Employment in the 1970s, before the first Thatcher Government, was a mistake. It was also a mistake to abolish the 1980s Community Programme as a scheme ensuring work

and training options were made available locally where needed, following the principle that nothing was to be done by the scheme that the private sector or existing public sector was able to do^[4]. It can also be considered a mistake to charge tuition fees at all in a country where skills shortages in sectors such as engineering, planning and languages arguably threaten a Green industrial transition and the pursuit of happiness in a greener society. At the time of writing, massive increases in Open University and Postgraduate fees are likely. Full Employment in a Green society, recognising the need of households for income and support for valuable activities throughout the UK and not just in the most-favoured regions or localities, offers an opportunity to correct these actual and potential errors from a Green point of view based on motives that are both ideological and practical in effect. And this means far more investigation and discussion about full employment needs to occur in the area of the Sociology of Work.

Part Two: Considering reconceptualising full employment bearing in mind Beveridge: Past times

2.1 Reconceptualization and assessment of what might be possible in the future needs to make some use of past discussions and models of full employment. This is a very limited overview. Beveridge argued that full employment did not mean everyone would be in formal work all the time (p. 125). In the Preface to *Full Employment in a Free Society*, Beveridge offered three key assumptions concerning 'the Plan for Social Security.' These were children's allowances, what he described as a 'comprehensive health and rehabilitation service' and 'maintenance of employment.' (p. 11). Each of these three are under pressure by the current Coalition Government's spending policies, prompting this attempt at reconceptualization.

2.2 Beveridge's argument for Full Employment was introduced in a state-centric formulation:

'To look to individual employers for maintenance of demand and full employment is absurd. These things are not within the power of employers. They must therefore be undertaken by the State, under the supervision and pressure of democracy.....' (p.16)

2.3 Full Employment meant unemployment was to be for short periods and that the availability of vacancies meant labour would be a 'seller's market rather than a buyer's market' (p. 18-19). Today, such a view – implying restricted availability of labour and a wartime-like availability of work in the formal economy – may seem unrealistic. Apart from the constant references to men, as if only men were employed in the overall war effort at Beveridge's time of writing in 1944, his *Full Employment* seems to unconsciously assume a closed labour market with little or no capacity or desire to draw in labour from abroad. His three 'routes' to Full Employment were even presented with the stated assumption that import and export policy would not change (p. 142) which is at odds with his stated preference for continued research and innovation. He offers the idea that trade is about mutual advantage and not about the export of unemployment (p. 219), an arguably heroic assumption in the current period. His comments on the issues of age and retirement are perhaps rather more perceptive (p. 69-72) and show that he recognised premature retirement as a factor behind unemployment, an issue which retains contemporary relevance.

2.4 Beveridge's optimism that Full Employment can be achieved in peace time, based on the special experience of the Second World War, is obvious (p. 29 and p. 128). But his fear of a constant pressure for better wages being reflected in rising prices is also present (p. 22 and p. 202). This makes his assessment of the transition to a peace-time economy with Full Employment questionable since adversarial positions between capital and labour might have been reasonably assumed to re-emerge without the apparent constraints and potentially unifying effects of the war.

2.5 Beveridge suggested unemployment should be no more than about 3% (p. 21 and Appendix D, p. 408-410). His Frictional – Seasonal – Structural unemployment formulation was highly restrictive and needs significant qualification and additions in the present era (p. 408-410). He did reject evidence that pre-war seasonal unemployment was actually 2% of unemployment, and suggested some of it was unjustifiable (p. 127). His 97% employment aim was set against an inter-war average of 86% (p. 129) subject to the limitations of data collection at the time.

2.6 Beveridge commented on the desirability of liberty and choice under conditions of full employment, as might be expected of a Liberal of his era (p. 249-250). But he also expounded upon ideas such as the controlled location of industry and gave a centralist or perhaps we should say incentivised view of the 'free' mobility of labour (p. 32 and p. 62). These apparently contradictory positions remain present in the current period: should work be moved to people or should people move to work? If people cannot afford to move given factors such as higher housing transaction costs, declining availability of housing benefit at an adequate level, expensive mortgages, and private sector rents that are still rising in many areas, it would seem that locally-based GFE approaches will be needed to address employment needs in differing localities. And Beveridge does rather contradict what appears to begin as a state-centric approach by advocating that Full Employment would be largely a result of actions by local government, rather than central (p. 36). He stops short of recognising that localities have distinct economies with very different needs, despite presenting evidence which shows pre-War conditions of unemployment in southern England at less than half that recorded for northern areas (p. 60-61), which is still a concern today.

2.7 Beveridge adroitly side-steps the issue of private versus public ownership (p. 37), suggesting that Full Employment could be accepted by people with different views about ownership and social justice. This assertion does not carry weight today, as neoliberals – and institutions wedded to neoliberal ideas like the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank – overtly favour private enterprise very strongly over the State, generally ignore social justice as a question, and are antagonistic to re-nationalisation (See: MacEwan 1999; Whitfield 2001; Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005). In short, we cannot necessarily expect neoliberal bodies, including liberal and social democratic parties of the Right, to

respond readily to the pursuit of GFE. The construction of a new consensus is suggested. We should perhaps consider actions already being taken to create and to advocate greener forms of employment to already be counter-hegemonic, transfiguring aspects of a Green society. Examples include Low Carbon Community projects and the Transition Town movement. (See <<http://lowcarboncommunities.net/>>; Chamberlin 2009; Hopkins 2008; Urry 2011).

2.8 Beveridge commends Keynes and offers an exposition on the General Theory of 1936 (Keynes 1936) in relation to the idea of full employment (p. 93-105). We should note that Keynes appears to have thought full employment was a matter of political determination rather than achieving a precise 3%, with Government steering a course between supply and demand in the economy through control of the Budget (Skidelsky 2003, p. 713-714). Keynes felt that 5% unemployment was a realistic estimate of unemployment in earlier decades (p. 712); making 3% something he felt was a challenge to achieve. But neither Beveridge nor Keynes appears to have shown awareness of the informal economy or the immense contribution of unpaid work to society, particularly that performed – to this day – mainly by women. However, Beveridge strongly emphasises greater equality as an effect of full employment (p. 95-96), something which he notes Keynes skirts (p. 101). He does agree with the Keynes's view that employment that appears useless, such as digging holes and filling them in again or making armaments, may add to prosperity (p. 209). This is to place no value at all upon the person doing the work, their aspirations or potential, and separates both men from GFE, in which all work is to be purposeful and not contradicting ecological sustainability. This is intended to be in the context of a fully realised operating definition of Sustainable Development in all of its economic, social, environmental and political aspects.

Resistance

3.1 One significant caveat applies to this re-conceptualisation: resistance. Sources of resistance could be deemed to include: developers wishing to use greenfield sites at the periphery of urban areas, otherwise an ideal location for extra allotments and small-scale food production; local planning committees – for example - opposing onshore wind turbines, solar panels in conservation areas, bio-gas digesters in the countryside; employers who resist higher pay for the lowest paid, flexible working including teleworking and who decline to invest in energy saving measures even for their own business. So GFE faces the challenge of conservatism and deep commitments to inequality and to environmentally inefficient technologies and practices in society and in Government (See Dorling 2010). Collectively, these challenges may be described as neoliberalism. These have been characterised by Colin Leys (2001, Chapter 3) and strongly questioned as routes to full employment by Beck (2000) (p. 67-68). How neoliberalism undermines democracy is a common theme in literature on the subject (MacEwan 1999; Saad-Filho 2005; Whitfield 2001). a

3.2 Contemporary capitalism may restrain the creation of new employment in the private sector. One example is the way in which commercial rents are set in the UK, which leaves huge numbers of shop fronts empty. Another is the impact of supermarkets upon competitors. There is also the related question of whether a greener society might view some work activities as actually antithetical to reason itself or to newly consensual values and the ecology on which this reconceptualization is based.

3.3 Neoliberalism will probably continue to resist any idea of full employment. It is by no means clear that such neoliberal resistance would not include actually existing social democracy in the UK. Currently existing social democracy in the UK has shown itself unsympathetic in some respects to both student and trade union campaigning for just policies under the Coalition Government formed in 2010. Access to exploitable labour at the lowest possible wage appears to be a shared value which dominates current UK politics. This means UK society has a strong trend towards increasing poverty and inequality: benefits are being scaled down and pay increases are small or non-existent perhaps for the majority.

3.4 Full employment in a Green society does imply the idea that human beings have rights and responsibilities (Dobson 1998). It is much easier to imagine that the latter are obtainable if the former are being respected, in the workplace as elsewhere. And, to return to Beveridge, the idea of GFE 'does not stand or fall' by numbers: "It stands on its argument – on the need and on the possibility of intelligent flexible planning with means of adjustment to changing circumstances." (p. 15)

3.5 There is an appreciable overall argument for GFE that neoliberalism will find hard to combat, as suggested above. To outline this briefly, GFE implies both motive and alibi. Motivation for creating environmentally-conscious employment is provided by the current ecological and economic crisis and forces neoliberals to constantly defend polluting and environmentally-damaging industries everywhere and the abuse of human rights in the workplace and in society used to suppress dissent through illiberal laws. GFE, to achieve eventual consensual support in a society such as the UK, needs the alibi of really useful job creation with the attendant promise of job satisfaction to justify re-directing resources and taxation, and consequently people, away from activities which are either unsustainable or that are seen through a Green cognitive frame as unethical.

3.6 GFE is clearly a long-term goal. It is intended as a feature of a socially-unifying project to enhance social hope, ecological resilience, equality and to meet basic human needs. We can reiterate that the motive for creating environmentally-conscious employment is provided by the current ecologically challenging situation. An alibi – a highly-motivating life-threatening actual ecological crisis as outlined above - is required to ensure that what begins as counter-hegemonic action within a single society along lines suggested by Gramsci is not stalled by resistance to re-directing resources and people away from activities that are unsustainable, abusive or otherwise unethical in terms of Green values. Davies (2011) has written instructively challenging the assumptions of network-based models of governance and grounding theories of governance in Gramscian ideas instead. This is relevant to this analysis since re-asserting and re-formulating Full Employment might well be seen as a 'war of position.' And, of course,

none of the above should suggest this pursuit of GFE should be confined to the UK. GFE may be seen as the seed of a Green International Political Economy in the long-term (Dunn 2009, p. 60-68).

Research Paths

4.1 One costed approach by the Campaign Against Climate Change appears to be the nearest formulation available which is comparable to the idea of GFE (Campaign Against Climate Change 2010). The Zero Carbon Britain reports also contribute to thinking on this topic, and all are worthy of serious investigation elsewhere^[5]. Earlier versions of such approaches include Robertson (1985 and 1989), Jacobs (1991, especially p. 178-180) and Booth (1998), notably p. 167 on the need 'To accomplish macroeconomic stability and full employment...' which '...would consequently require macroeconomic policy measures that are not part of the contemporary policy discourse.' So there is a need in further research to consider both micro-situations – what GFE would look like at community level and macro – what might be implied at an international level. Work is both influenced by international conditions and very much more local conditions at the level of communities. Watson (2009) has pointed out how '...continuities and changes in work activities occur outside of formal workplaces as well as within...' and also '...within the social processes of consumption as well as production.' (p. 869). In short, changing consumption cannot be assumed, or ignored when pursuing an ecologically-sustainable and just, GFE. In short, reformulating Full Employment can be related to consideration of how a new Green International Political Economy might evolve from environmental approaches to International Political Economy into a more effective counter-hegemony to the currently dominant ideology: neoliberalism.

Conclusion

5.1 This reconceptualization of the idea of Full Employment is a preparatory effort, or adumbration. Lines of future research are suggested that will involve considering how the proposal of GFE may be formulated to transform it from normative conceptualisation to policy which can be made operational and implemented. Clearly, all forms of work however defined are related to demand and consumption and to the potentially quite difficult goal of sustainable consumption in a diverse and democratic Green society. Resistance to better distributions of income, wealth, useful work and access to sustainable physical resources has been noted and placed under the category of 'neoliberalism' for convenience. However, the specific and unavoidable pressures on current forms of work, both formal and informal, created by recession, neoliberal responses to recession and the on-going ecological crisis are argued to create pressures forcing societies to consider a path towards a greener model for societies, regions and localities. It may be argued that grossly inequitable developing countries in which the benefits of this planet are allocated to, by and for the wealthiest demonstrate both the past history of neoliberalism and the possible future consequences of failing to adopt GFE and a Green society as societal goals. Therefore, no assumptions are made here that pressures generated by ecological crisis, social decline and unchecked neoliberalism can necessarily be overcome: the only assumption made here is that another form of full employment is possible as part of dismantling the unfortunate past in the pursuit of a more inclusive future.

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Notes

¹The scarcity of cheap recoverable Oil has attracted considerable research and controversy. However, summaries of the research can be coupled with claims in the most recent International Energy Agency report for 2010 in which the usually conservative body indicates its belief that global oil supplies peaked in 2006. Summaries of research on Peak Oil include: <<http://www.tsl.uu.se/uhdsg/Publications/PeakOilAge.pdf>> & a report to the Bush presidency: <http://www.mnforsustain.org/oil_peaking_of_world_oil_production_study_hirsch.htm> and a report issued by the UK Energy Research Council: <<http://www.ukerc.ac.uk/support/tiki-index.php>> These summaries conclude a high probability of Peak Oil before 2020.

²See for example: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2017643/Digging-deep-Quarter-householders-grow-vegetables-bid-beat-food-price-hikes.html> And the UK Allotment waiting list grew by 20% in 2010: <<http://www.mintel.com/press-centre/press-releases/617/mintel-reveals-consumer-trends-for-2011>>.

³Christian Aid, Oxfam, the World Bank and the IMF have all noted that biofuel production is displacing land use for food. SEE: <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/trade/downloads/bn_biofuels.pdf> <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam_in_action/issues/biofuels.html> <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/jul/03/biofuels.renewableenergy>> <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam_in_action/issues/biofuels.html>.

⁴The author was Assistant Community Programme Manager, Canterbury City Council, 1984-1985. The Zero Carbon Britain reports are available at: <<http://www.zerocarbonbritain.co.uk/>>.

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