

## Further thoughts on priorities

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I [asked a question](#) about what priorities readers thought I should have earlier this week. I did so for two reasons.

The first, very obvious reason is that I am considering them. I work across audit, accounting, economics, politics, tax and sustainability at present. The obvious question that I ask is whether this is too broad to be wholly effective.

The second reason for doing so is that I have learned that readers of this blog have opinions, many of which are worth noting.

One very obvious troll comment apart, the responses were interesting, and have been helpful. So, thank you.

I admit that there is no one conclusion. That said, some things did stand out. The first was that a couple of issues might require less attention from me. Green issues is one, unless they overlap with accounting and tax. There is ample expertise on green issues out there. There is not on green accounting and tax. So the focus need only be on those aspects of the issue.

The same is true of MMT. A few years ago this was unknown, and I think I assisted the promotion of the idea in the UK, albeit always with some caveats. Now debate on the issue is commonplace. It does not need the focus it had here. It is something that can now simply be taken as read. My interest in the issue can be reduced to where its thinking remains too limited, around tax, inequality and wealth consequences in particular.

On politics, the activity is limited, excepting the comments I make on here and on Twitter. They don't take a lot of time.

On political economy, my interest has always been in the power relationships that shape the allocation of resources in society, in which the role of tax and accounting have always played a major part that is far too little recognised. It's worth recalling in the context that I first got involved with Scottish issues because of an interest in the

accounting for its national income, and the false claims that this accounting gave rise to. When tax and accounting are thought of as macroeconomic issues (which far too few are willing to do) political economic discussion is the outcome. So, once again, the issues are related.

Audit is a subset of accounting concern. Since audit is an expression of an opinion on accounts it can never be otherwise. I put the two in one box in that case.

So the reality is that tax and accounting are what I really do, even if they are necessarily wrapped up in other ways, some of the time.

Or rather what I really do is look at these issues as narratives within the context of the quest for social justice that motivates my work and find them wanting as a result.

What are the implications of recognising that? I would suggest that there are three.

The first is to realise that thinking of this sort on these issues is far too rare. It is also very strongly resisted by the entrenched professional interests that surround these issues. Those professions seek to do what professions have always done.

They seek to erect barriers to understanding around their professional interest to secure exclusiveness for their understanding, which in turns increases opportunity for fee income.

Then they support this by seeking to control entry to the profession of which they are a part, in the process determining the scope of the professional education of those involved.

Finally, they do not encourage critical thinking about what they do. There is good reason for that. They have no intention of questioning the social worth that they believe what they do might have, and would rather others did not do so either.

The result is that education in these areas is not just uncritical, but also intensely micro-focussed so that a mass of compliant thinking is required to secure access to the enhanced income streams acceptance into an inner sanctum of recognised detailed expertise affords, from which career pathway there is rarely much deviance because departure imposes a cost. In that case it is unsurprising that critical thinking is hard to find.

The second implication of this is to realise that to offer such alternative thinking is important, most especially when there is so little of it, most particularly from someone who has been within those professions.

Third, that suggests a renewed focus upon them with a combined theme of creating new ideas, offering education on alternatives and, hopefully, encouraging others to join in from within those professions, seems appropriate.

I stress, this does not mean that other issues will not be discussed. They will be. But, as I hope I have explained, the area where there is a shortage of expertise seems to be in applied thinking on the social and political economic aspects of tax and accounting. Given the importance of the latter in almost all decision making and the former in shaping many dimensions of society that is more than enough to build on. And it's been worthwhile working that through in my own mind, which is why I am sharing it.