The labour of academia

ephemera: theory & politics in organization

What is *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*?

ephemera is an independent journal, founded in 2001. *ephemera* provides its content free of charge, and charges its readers only with free thought.

theory
ephemera encourages contributions that explicitly engage with theoretical and conceptual understandings of organizational issues, organizational processes and organizational life. This does not preclude empirical studies or commentaries on contemporary issues, but such contributions consider how theory and practice intersect in these cases. We especially publish articles that apply or develop theoretical insights that are not part of the established canon of organization studies. *ephemera* counters the current hegemonization of social theory and operates at the borders of organization studies in that it continuously seeks to question what organization studies is and what it can become.

politics
ephemera encourages the amplification of the political problematics of organization within academic debate, which today is being actively de-politized by the current organization of thought within and without universities and business schools. We welcome papers that engage the political in a variety of ways as required by the organizational forms being interrogated in a given instance.

organization
Articles published in *ephemera* are concerned with theoretical and political aspects of organizations, organization and organizing. We refrain from imposing a narrow definition of organization, which would unnecessarily halt debate. Eager to avoid the charge of 'anything goes' however, we do invite our authors to state how their contributions connect to questions of organization and organizing, both theoretical and practical.

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ephemera 17(3), Aug 2017

The labour of academia

Nick Butler, Helen Delaney and Martyna Śliwa

in association with:
mayfly
www.mayflybooks.org

Published by the *ephemera* editorial collective: Bent Meier Sørensen, Bernadette Loacker, Birke Otto, Christian Garmann Johnsen, Christos Giotitsas, Ekaterina Chertkovskaya, Emma Jeanes, Helen Delaney, Justine Grønbæk Pors, Katie Sullivan, Kenneth Weir, Konstantin Stoborod, Lena Olaison, Márton Rácz, Martyna Śliwa, Matthew Allen, Nick Butler, Ozan Nadir Alakavuklar, Randi Heinrichs, Rowland Curtis, Sara Louise Muhr, Stephen Dunne.

First published for free online at www.ephemerajournal.org and in print in association with MayFlyBooks (www.mayflybooks.org) in 2017.

ISSN (Online) 1473-2866
ISSN (Print) 2052-1499

ISBN (Print) 978-1-906948-38-2

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

Table of Contents

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 467-480

The labour of academia

Nick Butler, Helen Delaney and Martyna Śliwa

Introduction

Universities around the world are responding to a myriad of changes, pressures and opportunities in weird and wonderful ways, both of which require critical scrutiny and creative action. Take, for example, the University of Warwick's recent branding strategy. In 2015, alongside a visual make-over and redesigned logo, the university issued a set of guidelines laying out the 'Warwick tone of voice'. These guidelines instruct university staff how to communicate 'in a tone that's true to our brand'. The 12-page document implores employees to 'embed the language of possibility' into every aspect of their communication by adopting the rhetoric of 'what if?':

> What if there were a world-leading university with the highest academic and research standards, the acumen of a business and for whom entrepreneurialism, innovation and international were a way of life, not buzzwords? (http://www.dcscience.net/warwick-tone-of-voice.pdf)

Warwick University is by no means alone in welcoming brand managers into administrative offices and lecture halls. In other Western countries, universities have embarked on their own brand journeys, complete with references to 'brand toolkits' (University of Western Australia), 'image brochures' (University of Zürich), 'visual identity assets' (University of British Columbia) and 'creation stories' (Michigan State University). These examples tell us that the nature and purpose of the contemporary university is being radically transformed by the encroachment of corporate imperatives into higher education (Beverungen, et al., 2008; Svensson, et al., 2010). They also compel us to think about possible expressions of critique and forms of action within higher education today.

There is a case to be made that the modern university is founded on principles of rationalization and bureaucratization; there has always been a close link between money, markets and higher education (Collini, 2013). But the massification of higher education in recent years, combined with reductions in state funding, has led to the university being managed in much the same way as any other large industrial organization (Morley, 2003; Deem, et al., 2007). This is particularly pronounced in an economy that privileges knowledge-based labour over other forms of productive activity, which underlines Bill Readings' (1996: 22) point that the university is not just being run *like* a corporation – it *is* a corporation. We witness this trend in the introduction of tuition fees, which turns students into consumers, universities into service-providers, and degree programmes into investment projects (Lawrence and Sharma, 2002). We also see it in the increasing prominence of mission statements, university branding and cost-benefit analysis (Bok, 2009). Universities are now in the business of selling intangible goods, not least of all the ineffable product of 'employability' (Chertkovskaya, et al., 2013).

This has inevitable consequences for managerial interventions, research and teaching audits, and funding structures. Indeed, there has been a marked intensification of academic labour in recent years, manifested in higher work-loads, longer hours, precarious contracts and more invasive management control via key performance indicators (Morley and Walsh, 1996; Bryson, 2004; Archer, 2008; Bousquet, 2008). The personal and professional lives of academic staff are deeply affected by such changes in the structures of higher education, leading to increased stress, alienation, feelings of guilt and other negative emotions (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004; Clarke, et al., 2012; Gill, 2017).

The quality of scholarship can also be damaged by these changes. Recent studies suggest that academics may be more willing to 'play the publication game' at the expense of genuine critical inquiry (Butler and Spoelstra, 2012; 2014). There is a palpable sense that 'journal list fetishism' (Willmott, 2011) is coming to shape not only patterns of knowledge production in higher education but also how academics are coming to relate to themselves and their own research. These trends suggest that the Humboldtian idea of the university – which measures the value of scientific-philosophical knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) according to the degree of cultivation (*Bildung*) it produces – has been superseded by a regime based on journal rankings, citation rates, impact factors and other quantitative metrics used to assess and reward research 'output' (Lucas, 2006).

Some scholars have pointed to the possibilities for resistance to the regime of academic capitalism. Some propose to short-circuit the publishing game by asking 'inappropriate' or 'indecent' questions about the value of research

assessments at departmental meetings (Bristow, 2012: 238), or finding ways to become 'less excellent' within a system skewed towards highly ranked journals (Butler and Spoelstra, 2017). Rolfe (2013) goes further and suggests that what is required is the development of a 'rhizomatic paraversity' that operates below the surface of the neoliberal university. This would serve to reintroduce the 'non-productive labour of thought' (2013: 53) into university life, thereby emphasizing quality over quantity and critique over careerism. Efforts such as Edu-factory may also point towards fruitful directions for the future of higher education beyond corporate imperatives (Edu-factory Collective, 2009). We might also become university managers ourselves, with all the risks, tensions and paradoxes this entails (Parker, 2004), with the hope of creating change from within.

In this special issue, we aim to survey the state of the contemporary university as well as uncover potentialities for dwelling subversively and creatively within and outside it. Towards this end, this special issue explores questions about how the work of scholars is being shaped, managed and controlled under the burgeoning regime of 'academic capitalism' (Rhoades and Slaughter, 2004) and in turn to ask what might be done about it. Our editorial reflects this trajectory from critical diagnosis to reflective action by turning now to a narrative of academic work written by one of the issue editors, Martyna Śliwa. Many of the problems that confront modern universities are reflected in the concrete practices that academics face in daily life. For this reason, the narrative of one academic can help to illustrate both how these challenges emerge, but also what can be done to deal with them.

The happy academic?

It's Friday morning, 8.25am. Gently and slowly, the teacher instructs us: '*Ad-ho-mu-ka-sva-na-sa-na*. Your *drishti*, the looking point, should be on the navel, but you can also focus your gaze between the legs. Lift your hips up towards the ceiling'. Seven middle-aged women and one man, gathered in a North London church hall that rents its space out for yoga and pilates classes, try to bend their bodies into the downward facing dog pose. The pose has numerous benefits for the physical health, and is also an exercise in cultivation of stability and spaciousness in life.

I'm one of the group and am not gazing at my navel. In fact, my gaze is not focused anywhere specific. I have a vague awareness of the appearance of the purple mat underneath my hands and feet, the wooden floor, the grey-black-white pattern printed on the fabric of my yoga leggings, and the green leaves of the tree which I can see through the church's window. At this very moment,

stability and spaciousness appear to be abstract and distant concepts. The mind is racing, the throat is tight, and there is this slightly nauseous feeling in my stomach. While the teacher reminds us to inhale and exhale, I'm mentally immersed in organising my work for the coming days. What needs to be prioritised above anything else on the 'to do' list? What am I behind with? How much will I manage to do today, on Saturday and Sunday? Can I switch off the email for a few hours today and write, or will this result in an overwhelming email traffic jam that will require to be dissipated by me over the weekend, so that Monday doesn't have to start with uncluttering the inbox? If today I concentrate on writing, then how many words, realistically, will I have written until this evening? Will this be enough? Anxiety level rises, then a calmer inner voice reassures me: 'Well, if I work flat-out today and all weekend, I'll get a lot done'. I must get a lot done because next week will be very busy, too. But the body and mind also need rest at some point. As I'm being instructed to rotate the forearms inwards so that the insides of my elbows face each other, the mental counting and list-making continues: of the hours of work I'll be able to 'put in' before a new week begins, of the matters I should be able to attend to within that time, of the sparse non-work time on Saturday and Sunday and how I might spend it. 'Find your edge', says the yoga teacher, 'make sure you are challenged but be careful not to strain or harm yourself'. This is inspiring.

What is my 'edge' then? I consider myself a happy academic. Most of the time, I genuinely like the work I do. I am lucky to have a body and mind capable of engaging in paid labour and would not like to have to earn my living in any different way. But I spend most of the time working and find it difficult to work less, because when I try, I fall 'behind' and then find myself working even more just to 'catch up'. There is always so much to do. 'Academic work', as Berg and Seeber (2016: 3) argue in their book *The slow professor: Challenging the culture of speed in the academy*, 'by its very nature is never done'. They continue:

> Our responses to student papers could always be fuller; our reading of scholarly literature could always be more up-to-date; and our books could always be more exhaustive. These self-expectations are escalated by the additional external pressures of the changing academic culture. In the past two decades, our work has changed due to the rise in contractual positions, expanding class sizes, increased use of technology, downloading of clerical tasks onto faculty, and the shift to managerialism – all part of the corporatization of the university.

This is impossible to disagree with. What is more, existing critiques of the neoliberal university confront me with the idea that I might be close to tipping over my 'edge', and that – through my work ethics and professional ambition – I am complicit in this process. In Ros Gill's (2010: 241) words, 'neoliberalism found fertile ground in academics whose predispositions to "work hard" and "do

well" meshed perfectly with its demands for autonomous, self-motivating, responsibilised subjects'. I can certainly identify with the description of someone socialized from an early age into the ideals of hard work coupled with and legitimized by a wish to do well. At the same time, the critiques of the neoliberal university often follow a century-old tradition – which arguably has its roots in Veblen's (1918) damning assessment of US university presidents of his time – of blaming university managers for the problems observed within higher education. Now, after sixteen years of employment in academia, I have accumulated extensive experience of managing and organizing in this context. What does this mean in practice though? More broadly, what is the place within the current HE system not just for me but for academics in general? What kind of organizational citizenship should we pursue?

Wherever possible, I would recommend academics to get involved in managing and organizing in their universities – be it through taking up formal management roles or through participating in initiatives where we can create something meaningful, and shape what is done, and the way things are done in our institutions. To quote Berg and Seeber (2016: ix) again: 'Those of us in tenured positions, given the privileges we enjoy, have an obligation to try to improve in our own ways the working climate for all of us'. From the perspective of my own discipline of management and organization studies, we might want to add here: those of us aware of the origin, content and oftentimes problematic implications and consequences of management, given the knowledge we have built within our academic field, have an obligation to contribute to the running of universities.

Those of us in tenured positions, let us not be tempted to engage in a brand of critique of contemporary academia that permits us to enjoy an above-average level of job security and income while at the same time strengthening the same system of neoliberal oppression with which we claim to disagree. The risk, after all, is that we may more or less unreflexively perpetuate the problematic aspects of the corporatized university by articulating our discontent with it within the pages of commercially-oriented outlets – one highly ranked publication at a time – for the benefit of research assessment audits, publishers' profits and our own careers. Instead of settling into self-denial about our role in this system, let us take responsibility for it. Back (2016: 11) explains that 'to carry on with an intellectual vocation...entails the cultivation of judicious speech and crafted attentiveness'. Our own employing organizations are spaces that we can transform by putting our knowledge to good use through judicious speech and crafted attentiveness exercised in order to shape and influence decision-making.

Why is it more productive for academia if scholars *become* involved in university management rather than *fight* it? The external conditions within which universities operate these days have not been created by university management but by governments and policymakers. To change these conditions requires involvement in political action – which is a different task from managing HE institutions internally. Collini (2017) offers an insightful analysis of changes in the UK HE sector, where there are currently over 140 higher education institutions providing courses to nearly 2.5 million students. He charts the gradual withdrawal of the state from funding higher education and the introduction of tuition fees, coupled with globalization, technological change, 'marketization', and a range of regulations and processes aimed at measuring universities' performance along simplistically conceived criteria centred on HEIs' usefulness for economic growth. All these changes have turned UK universities into organizations that are forced to act like commercial businesses, in the sense of having to earn income and generate profit, in order to survive and prosper. Collini (2017) proposes a solution to this through introducing a radically different approach to university funding, relying on suitably generous resources drawn from public finances.

We would like our students to be able to study without having to pay tuition fees, to choose what they wish to study solely on the basis of their interests, to graduate without debt, and to not have to worry about whether they are going to be able to find decently paid, secure jobs upon graduation. While we might not be able to change the broader socioeconomic landscape of the countries we work in, let us consider it our responsibility to help students navigate through the world they are going to live in in the future. In this respect, there is a lot we can and should do by getting involved in managing and shaping the university organizations we work for. Is this an easy thing to do? Not always. Does this not carry the risk of further overwork, possibly bringing our academic 'labour of love' (Clarke et al., 2012) ever closer to the 'edge'? Quite likely. So let's organise, shape and manage, for our students' and for each other's sake, while being careful not to harm or strain ourselves.

What can be done?

When we speak of 'managing', we mean many different ways in which we can shape, influence and change the universities we work for. Indeed, there are a myriad of roles, relationships and interactions in which we can bring more humanity into the hallowed halls. This could entail working directly – and differently – with some of the dominant discourses promulgated by branding strategists. As critical scholars, we are aware of the problematic dimensions of

these discourses. Rather than dismissing them out of hand, how can we engage with them through an exercise of judicious speech and crafted attentiveness?

Take the idea of 'employability'. Can we afford, for example, not to broach the subject of employability with our PhD students? The great majority of them undertake doctoral study with the intention of becoming academics. The reality is that much less than half of them will end up in academic posts. Some will choose to do something else, many will want to stay in academia but will not have the resources that could allow them to wait until they are offered a 'proper' position as an escape route from precarious, zero-hours, fractional, temporary teaching or research assistant contracts. It is therefore our responsibility to support them in thinking throughout the PhD process about the different employment and career options, and the kinds of skills they will need in order to find a job upon graduation. Having pragmatic and supportive conversations, and developing such skills while studying for a degree, including a doctorate, has now become part of university education, and part of the responsibility that we as academics have towards our students. Let us not leave the content of these conversations and skills to careers officers. Let us define and shape them. Talking to our students about employability and skills might not be easy; not talking to them about these things is unfair.

Consider, also, the idea of 'wellbeing'. Another buzzword, often combined with others, such as 'mindfulness' and 'resilience'. We know what is wrong with corporate wellness initiatives (Cederström and Spicer, 2015). But we also know that students' mental health problems are on the increase, and this is a serious matter. Sometimes they become ill while at university, and sometimes a tragedy happens when a life is lost to depression. Can we afford not to be concerned enough to try and do something about it? When we know, for example, that there are students we teach for whom the very idea of 'mental health' is a cultural taboo, can we choose to dismiss or be ignorant about the wellbeing initiatives and support our universities offer? Can we justify not being aware of what mental health 'first aid' consists of? If we reject the concept of a student as a 'customer', let us not leave the task of bringing it to life to marketing officers. Let us, academics, work out – through our organizational practices and through engagement in decision-making – a model of approaching our students (and our colleagues) as human beings who we care about and whose wellbeing means something to us.

And how about the way we relate to otherness and difference in our professional lives? We hear a lot about 'diversity' in HR meetings with university managers. Indeed, academic institutions *are* highly diverse – and yet disparities still exist between how women and men progress up the organizational ranks and how

much they are paid. Black and minority ethnic groups are under-represented among academics. Everyone knows someone who has experienced harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimization – or perhaps we have experienced this ourselves. As scholars, we are aware of these phenomena, both in terms of their systemic causes and micro-level dynamics, and we believe that their occurrence is unacceptable. With this knowledge, can we absolve ourselves of the responsibility to put into practice the ideals of equality and respect for individuals that we hold dear and that are integral to our scholarly ethos?

We all have the duty to point out what is problematic about contemporary academia, especially as our professional socialization adds clarity and sensitivity to our observation of everyday academic labour. Within the current system of HE, all the roles we adopt – whether as teachers, supervisors, managers, departmental colleagues, co-authors, committee members, journal editors or conference organizers – provide space for us to engage constructively, shape academia and relate to each other in accordance with an ethics of care. This points to the possibility of hope and community within a competitive institutional landscape that is increasingly governed by the diktats of cost-benefit analysis and cutthroat careerism.

Contributions

In the first contribution to our special issue, Robinson, Bristow and Ratle (this issue) reflect on the implications of the increasingly uncertain and challenging conditions within academia for Early Career Academics (ECAs). They offer a fine-grained account of the different transitions that emerging Critical Management Studies (CMS) scholars go through in order to be able to practise in their academic field and negotiate their place within it. While pointing out that the experiences of this group are often painful, the authors highlight that, ultimately, ECAs consider this professional transition process and its outcomes worthwhile. The authors argue that rather than simply learning and adjusting to the already existing 'rules of the game', new CMS academics might also be able to develop their own rules and ways of 'playing' in the academic field.

Next, McGregor and Knox (this issue) challenge some of the dualisms that frame debates about academia and activism. In particular, the authors critically examine the normative valuing of speed and mobility in assemblage theory, and caution against such a stance in order to avoid oppositional orientations in social justice knowledge production and practice. Ultimately, the paper poses provocative and thoughtful questions about the complex relations between the university and political action.

Further developing this theme, Stewart and Martínez (this issue) map out the connections between political commitment and research practice. If the aim of the radical intellectual is to strive towards social change and class transformation beyond the confines of academia, how may we best accomplish this task whilst still remaining within the norms of scholarly practice? For the authors, this conundrum may be resolved by adopting an avowedly 'partisan' approach that makes its political allegiances clear without, however, foregoing its commitment to academic values. Such a move is much needed within a university system that erroneously views political neutrality as a by-product of methodological 'objectivity'. The question they address is therefore: how – and with whom – do we practice radical participatory action research whilst avoiding the hierarchical division between 'researcher' and 'researched'?

Turning to the effects of university governance systems, Steinthorsdottir, Heijstra and Einarsdottir (this issue) explore the way in which the discourse of 'excellence', combined with the application of new public management (NPM), influences gender equality. Drawing on examples from two disciplines in the Icelandic higher education context, the authors show how financial and managerial instruments result in outcomes that are more advantageous for the allocation of research and teaching resources in male-dominated fields. Driven by the pursuit of equality, Steinthorsdottir, et al. argue for the need to take gender into account when organizational decisions are made in universities.

In the final article, Brandist (this issue) offers a provocative comparison between university reforms in Britain under neoliberalism and higher education during the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union. By presenting a historical analysis of the two tertiary education systems, Brandist examines the 'proletarianization' of university staff in the UK since 1979 and in the USSR in the 1930s and highlights the striking similarities (as well as important differences) between them – not least the use of competition, metrics, targets, performance indicators, and funding bodies to regulate professional labour by the state. At stake for Brandist is the modes of resistance that such reforms generate: forms of micro- and macro-rebellion that play out among a workforce that has been rendered precarious by decreasing pay, short-term contracts and temporary employment positions.

Opening the note section, Spoelstra (this issue) offers an elegant, meta-level meditation on the nature and purpose of 'special sections' in academic journals. Seen as a space that is paradoxically both inside and outside the publishing economy, special sections provide a forum for research that falls below the threshold of a conventional peer-reviewed article yet – for this very reason – is often more interesting and creative than standard academic papers. Spoelstra

suggests that what lies at the heart of special sections is a collective shame about what journal publishing has become – that is, a sausage factory churning out scholarship that is formulaic, irrelevant and downright boring.

Ruth (this issue), meanwhile, presents a darkly poetic rumination on dead spaces in the academic office – half-empty shelves, unused filing cabinets, second-hand furniture, unplugged telephones, outdated staff directories, random boxes, torn posters, chipped paintwork, as well as those haunted souls who reside within them, hunched over desks piled high with long-forgotten paperwork, old student essays and unopened textbooks. These dead spaces – like special sections in academic journals – tell us that academia is full of holes, voids, and absences; spaces out of which something new may arise (or perhaps into which something strange may crawl and make its home).

Next, Alakavuklar (this issue) offers a very personal reflection on his progress through academia. By way of a biographical sketch, Alakavuklar charts his transition from a mainstream business school student in Turkey to a critical management studies scholar in New Zealand. In doing so, he provides an insight into the ambiguities and tensions that are keenly felt by non-Western scholars who find themselves having to acclimatize to Western research norms. To preserve his voice as a non-native English speaker, and to underscore his identity as a non-Western scholar, the editors of this special issue agreed not to copy-edit Alakavuklar's note for style or grammar (correcting only spelling errors). Such an experiment in language provides a rare opportunity to reflect upon what is usually obscured or erased in the process of Anglophonic academic publication, thus revealing – by way of photographic negative, as it were – the long shadow neo-colonialism casts across the publishing economy.

Turner, et al.'s note (this issue) reports on an experiment the authors conducted to render the neoliberal university 'playable' – thereby opening up new horizons for the role of higher education in society beyond the instrumental logic of cost-benefit analysis. While dissent to the structural transformation of HE along corporate lines is usually expressed via academic publication or public protest, the authors instead devised a series of game workshops for university staff (both academic and administrative) to stimulate discussion about what a 'liveable' university might look like. Such a playfulness stands in opposition to the serious business of neoliberal econometrics, and shows that another university is possible – one that is collectively constructed and collegially governed.

The Tim-adical Writing Collective (this issue) is a group of six international researchers committed to promoting action change through their collective writing projects that is simultaneously timid and radical ('Tim-adical'). In their

note, the collective reflect on their experiences as early-career academics with regard to navigating the pressures and tensions of contemporary university life. Through a series of honest and revealing vignettes, the collective shed a much-needed light on how individuals may unwittingly become complicit in maintaining some of the injustices and vulnerabilities that characterise some university workplaces. The authors illustrate the potential for micro acts of resistance in order to regain a sense of individual and collective agency.

In the final note, Coin (this issue) reflects on the causes of 'quitting' higher education – a trend she identifies as increasingly common amongst scholars who feel alienated by the working conditions and culture within the competitive and entrepreneurial neoliberal university. With specific reference to the US, and tracing the roots of changes in higher education to Reagan's views on the need to remove certain 'intellectual luxuries' (such as curiosity and wonder) previously at the disposal of American scholars, Coin discusses the underlying reasons and mechanisms through which academic labour can become precarious and exploitative. She concludes with the call to take quitting seriously, as a warning sign and a step towards transforming academia into an institution where 'collaboration is the method and the object is to change our world' (735).

The issue closes with two book reviews. The first, written by John Mingers, provides a comprehensive summary of Derek Sayer's book *Rank hypocrisies: The insult of the REF*. Both the review and the book speak to a number of themes evident in the special issue, notably the politics of research assessments and journal rankings in a changing HE landscape. The second review, written by Ajnesh Prasad and Paulina Segarra, centres on Thomas Docherty's book *Universities at war*. The reviewers describe how the production of Docherty's book coincided with his almost year-long suspension from his professorial position. In doing so, the review offers a chilling analysis about the risks and repercussions of dissent in contemporary higher education.

references

Archer, L. (2008) 'The new neoliberal subjects? Young/er academics' constructions of professional identity', *Journal of Education Policy*, 23(3): 265-285.

Back, L. (2016) *Academic diary: Or why higher education still matters*. London: Goldsmiths Press.

Berg, M. and B.K. Seeber (2016) *The slow professor: Challenging the culture of speed in the academy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Beverungen, A., S. Dunne and B.M. Sørensen (2008) 'University, failed', *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*, 8(3): 232-237.

Bok, D. (2009) *Universities in the marketplace: The commercialization of higher education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bousquet, M. (2008) *How the university works: Higher education and the low-wage nation*. New York: NYU Press.

Bristow, A. (2012) 'On life, death and radical critique: A non-survival guide to the brave new higher education for the intellectually pregnant', *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 28(3): 234-241.

Bryson, C. (2004) 'What about the workers? The expansion of higher education and the transformation of academic work', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 35(1): 38-57.

Butler, N. and Spoelstra, S. (2012) 'Your Excellency', *Organization* 19(6): 891-903.

Butler, N. and S. Spoelstra (2014) 'The regime of excellence and the erosion of ethos in critical management studies', *British Journal of Management*, 25(3): 538-550.

Butler, N. and S. Spoelstra (2017) 'How to become less excellent', in M. Benner, T. Huzzard and D. Kärreman (eds.) *The corporatization of business education: Minerva meets the market*. London and New York: Routledge.

Cederström, C. and A. Spicer (2015) *The wellness syndrome*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Chertkovskaya, E., P. Watt, S. Tramer and S. Spoelstra (2013) 'Giving notice to employability', *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*, 13(4): 701-716.

Clarke, C., D. Knights, and C. Jarvis (2012) 'A labour of love? Academics in business schools', *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 28(1): 5-15.

Collini, S. (2013) 'Sold out', *London Review of Books*, 35(20): 3-12.

Collini, S. (2017) *Speaking of universities*. London: Verso.

Deem, R., S. Hillyard and M. Reed (2007) *Knowledge, higher education, and the new managerialism: The changing management of UK universities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Edu-factory Collective (2009) *Towards a global autonomous university*. New York: Autonomedia.

Fleming, P. and A. Spicer (2003) 'Working at a cynical distance: Implications for power, subjectivity and resistance', *Organization* 10(1): 157-179.

Gill, R. (2010) 'Secrets, silences and toxic shame in the neoliberal university', in R. Flood and R. Gill (eds.) *Secrecy and silence in the research process: Feminist reflections*. London: Routledge.

Gill, R. (2017). 'Beyond individualism: The psychosocial life of the neoliberal university', in M. Spooner (Ed.) *A critical guide to higher education and the politics of evidence: Resisting colonialism, neoliberalism, and audit culture*. Regina, Canada: University of Regina Press.

Lawrence, S. and U. Sharma (2002) 'Commodification of education and academic labour: Using the balanced scorecard in a university setting', *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 13(5): 661-677.

Lucas, L. (2006) *The research game in academic life*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill International.

Morley, L. (2003) *Quality and power in higher education*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill International.

Morley, L. and V. Walsh (eds.) (1996) *Breaking boundaries: Women in higher education*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Ogbonna, E. and L.C. Harris (2004) 'Work intensification and emotional labour among UK university lecturers: An exploratory study', *Organization Studies*, 25(7): 1185-1203.

Parker, M. (2004) 'Becoming manager: Or, the werewolf looks anxiously in the mirror, checking for unusual facial hair', *Management Learning*, 35(1): 45-59.

Readings, B. (1996) *The university in ruins*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Rolfe, G. (2013) *The university in dissent: Scholarship in the corporate university*. London: Routledge.

Rhoades, G. and S. Slaughter (2004) *Academic capitalism and the new economy: Markets, state, and higher education*. Baltimore: JHU Press.

Raunig, G. (2013) *Factories of knowledge, industries of creativity*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Svensson, P., S. Spoelstra, M. Pedersen and S. Schreven (2010) 'The excellent institution', *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*, 10(1): 1-6.

Willmott, H. (2011) 'Journal list fetishism and the perversion of scholarship: reactivity and the ABS list', *Organization*, 18(4): 429-442.

the editors

Nick Butler is a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera*
Email: nick.butler@sbs.su.se

Helen Delaney is a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera*
Email: h.delaney@auckland.ac.nz

Martyna Śliwa is a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera*
Email: martyna.sliwa@essex.ac.uk

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 481-508

Labour pains: Starting a career within the neo-liberal university

Sarah Robinson, Olivier Ratle and Alexandra Bristow

abstract

This paper explores how early career academics (ECAs) come to understand their future and the nature of their academic labour at a time when the profession as a whole faces increasingly uncertain and challenging working conditions. Focusing on a group of 20 ECAs with an allegiance to critical management studies (CMS), we explore how they attempt to find their feet and to practise in ways compatible with their own values within environments and evaluation systems potentially at odds with their CMS agendas. We draw on Bourdieu's theory of practice and his concepts of 'hysteresis' and 'illusio' to understand the various transitions they have to make to practise in this academic field and why they feel the investment is nevertheless worthwhile. In so doing we paint a rich description of the often painful experiences of this group and identify a series of disjunctures between their habitus and the current field. We then explore how they use these disjunctures as springboards for learning how to manoeuver within the field through developing what we term a 'critical' habitus. We argue that their role as outsiders and their experiences of disjuncture might help these ECAs to negotiate the complex field, not only in working out the rules of the game but also in developing a facility to bend them and develop their own personal rules.

Introduction

Changes over the past decade-and-a-half in the way in which the key outputs of academic labour, namely teaching, research and administration, are evaluated and audited throw up many dilemmas and hard choices for academics, especially in terms of negotiating performance management and career development (Anderson, 2008; Hayes and Wynyard, 2002; Strathern, 2000). Some find it possible to adapt skills and habits developed previously to rise to the challenges

and perceived opportunities of the neoliberal university's focus on 'excellence' and audit culture (Butler and Spoelstra, 2012). Others find it difficult to respond to the increasingly narrow way in which their work is judged and valued, and what might be seen as an encroachment on academic freedom and the Weberian notions of vocation (Weber, 2004). This trend, it could be argued, has knock-on effects on concepts of professionalism within academia (Archer, 2008a) and on constructs of academic identity (Tight, 2000; Trowler, 1998).

Managerialist governmentality within UK universities (Deem and Brehomy, 2005; Mingers and Willmott, 2013) is portrayed as being acute, particularly in the years running up to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) review in 2014. Studies of established academics during this period report loss, pain and stress, and bittersweet relations (Knights and Clarke, 2014) with their employers, colleagues, and with their own academic identities as they cope with delivering on the demands on their academic labour from an increasing emphasis on evaluations, accreditation, and research rankings (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014). Examples are also given of members of the professoriate and established academics being seen as either 'selling out' or 'floundering' in the way they respond to the resulting expectations placed on them as they try to reconcile their established professional practices with the changing face of the university (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014; Clarke et al., 2012). Meanwhile academic managers also find it increasingly difficult to encourage or help colleagues to deliver on and balance potentially unrealistic targets from senior management (Bryman and Lilley, 2009; Preston and Price, 2012).

At a time of uncertainty, where the rules of the game are up in the air, even established academics are facing difficulties practising within the complexities of the new academic landscape (Clegg, 2008). So, what is it like for those who have only recently started their academic careers and as such are already transitioning in a variety of ways?

In this paper therefore, and in keeping with the stated aims of this special issue 'to explore questions about how the work of scholars is being shaped, managed and controlled', we focus attention on early career academics (ECAs) as an incoming group trying to work out how to practise in a changing academic environment, one rife with tensions, contradictions and mixed messages coming from both their employers and the wider academic community. We focus on ECAs (early career academics) rather than ECRs (early career researchers) because the latter term excludes teaching – a key part of academic labour in higher education institutions (HEIs) that, as shall be seen, is very important for our interviewees' experiences, teaching being a significant component of the

critical management studies (CMS) project from which we select our sample of ECAs (see Research design).

In order to shed light on ECAs' understandings of the nature of contemporary academic labour and the difficulties they encounter in enacting it, we pose the following questions: 1. What is it like to be an ECA in these transitional and unsettled times, and what disjunctures and transitions do they experience on entering the field? 2. What coping practices do they develop, and how might their disjunctures and outsider positions in some ways facilitate their positioning within the field? 3. What support do they draw on in developing these endeavours and in moving forward? In following this line of enquiry with reference to this specific group, our concern here is firstly, to shed light on the nature of the academic labour of the new generation of scholars, but also to consider how to help, nurture and metaphorically arm ECAs at a time when even more seasoned colleagues are finding it increasingly difficult to manage their own careers and academic trajectories (Knights and Clarke, 2014).

In addressing our research questions, this paper is structured in the following way. Firstly, the context in which this research is situated and existing work on ECA experiences is outlined. Secondly, the key concepts from Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977b; 1990) and the related concepts of 'illusio' and 'hysteresis' as used to construct the theoretical framework of this paper are presented. Then the research design and justifications for choices made are discussed. We then move on to discuss our interview data, painting a picture of what it is like to be an ECA in these unsettled times, focusing on the complex nature of their experiences of engaging with various forms of transition both personal and field-related, while at the same time trying to preserve and develop their ideals, thus developing their specific academic habitus. We then discuss how the application of Bourdieu's theory of practice and his concepts of hysteresis and illusio have helped shed light on the nature of academic labour for this specific group of academic workers. Finally, we consider how these ECAs might be better prepared and supported for the realities of this unsettled workplace.

Context

As previously stated, changes in higher education over the past decade due to the influence of neoliberalism, new public managerialism, performance management, and the culture of excellence (Archer, 2008b; Butler and Spoelstra, 2012; Deem and Brehony, 2005; Willmott, 2003) have made it increasingly difficult for academics at all levels of the hierarchy, from departmental heads right through to ECAs, to manage and keep ownership of their academic careers.

The impact of changes within HEIs on academic work and identity is well documented (Hayes and Wynyard, 2002; Strathern, 2000) and stories abound of the effects of the pressures on academics to perform increasingly well in all aspects of their academic labour: on, for example, well-being, sense of worth and professional identity (Clegg, 2008). Debates about the ability of academics to resist increasing demands, how to collectively ameliorate working conditions, and what forms of resistance might be most effective are still ongoing (Anderson, 2008; Clarke et al., 2012; Willmott, 2013).

Although much of the existing literature focuses on the tribulations of the profession as a whole, there is an emergent literature that focuses on specific groups of academics: for example, academic managers (Bryman and Lilley, 2009; Preston and Price, 2012) and the professoriate (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014). There is also an emergent body of work depicting experiences of ECAs and ECRs, especially those in precarious employment conditions, for example, on short term contracts (see below). However, research in this area is still somewhat dispersed, inconclusive and contradictory.

Laudel and Gläser, in their study of ECRs argue that previous work (around the turn of the century) on junior academic faculty has portrayed them as 'the most vulnerable group in the science system [that] are therefore the first to suffer from the stress that has befallen this system' (Laudel and Gläser, 2008: 388). Their review of existing studies identified the increasing difficulty for ECRs of obtaining permanent positions and also a below average ability to secure funding (one of the key criteria on which academic labour is now judged). However, apart from these two aspects, Laudel and Gläser argue that ECRs' experiences, as portrayed, are not that different from other groups of academics. They imply that it is difficult to generalise as to the specific difficulties of this group and argue that one of the problems with previous studies is that they have not adequately examined specific scientific communities (Laudel and Gläser, 2008). Their own study, set in the Australian context, is a cross-sectional study of 16 ECAs, focusing on the issues of gaining permanent employment and the difficulties of achieving the publications necessary to secure this while working on research contracts. They found that many researchers respond to this need for 'research active time' by taking time out post-PhD to obtain the required number of publications before applying for permanent jobs which adds a worrying layer of unpaid work to our understanding of contemporary academic labour.

Archer's twin articles on the formation of contemporary academic identities (2008a, 2008b), draw on a study of eight ECAs, including contract researchers, from different disciplines within the UK context, and provide a rich description of the everyday life of early career academics. The studies highlight the

difficulties of achieving a work-life balance and of being accepted, taken seriously and socialised into existing academic communities. She suggests that the 'authentic' and 'successful' academic is a desired yet refused identity for many younger academics, who must negotiate on a daily basis not only their attempts at 'becoming' but also the threat of 'unbecoming' (Archer, 2008b: 385). In the sister paper, Archer (2008a) focuses attention on the effect of neoliberalism on the 'Thatcher's children' cadre of academics (those at the time of writing in 2008 at or under the age of 35). She concludes that although 'Neoliberalism infiltrated their bodies and minds', making it difficult to articulate what is happening to them, there were 'small spaces of hopefulness' as ECAs 'invested in producing critiques, resilience and resistances' (Archer, 2008a: 282).

Such research suggests that ECAs and ECRs are potentially quite well-positioned to develop ways of dealing with the competing pressures of contemporary academic life, albeit in some worrying ways. This potential is evident in the extremely reflexive autobiographic accounts by early-career (Bristow, 2012) and doctoral (Prasad, 2013) CMS scholars, of their experiences of the socialisation processes and of balancing dual strategies of compliance and resistance in 'playing the game and trying not to lose myself' (Prasad, 2013: 937) – although this is not to underplay the pain and personal loss experienced that comes through clearly in these accounts. Other articles (Prasad, 2015; Raineri, 2015) speak to this trend of PhD socialisation into the exigencies of the neoliberal audit culture – reflecting the view of the PhD as an academic apprenticeship (Austin, 2002, 2009; Bansel, 2011; Weidman and Stein, 2003), a transition from peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) to becoming a fully-fledged academic.

Much of the literature discussed above is essentially descriptive, highlighting themes of strong socialisation, dissonance and difficulty, and as such there is little exploration of, firstly, the underlying causes for these reactions and experiences of academic labour, expecially in relation to domination and power relations within the field. Secondly, there is little theoretical discussion of how we might understand the nature of ECAs' agency as that of potentially dominated agents (Bourdieu, 1993). We suggest that Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977b, 1990) and the related concepts of *hysteresis* and *illusio* make a good starting point as a theoretical lens for studying how the work of these scholars is being shaped, managed and controlled, and how at the same time ECAs try to actively manage the tensions of their academic labour in a complex interaction between embedded structures and individual agency.

Theoretical framework

Through his work, Bourdieu developed a theory of action that aims to overcome the traditional dualisms of mind-body, subjective-objective and structure-agency – the latter is of particular interest here. McDonough and Polzer (2012: 361), for example, argue that in studying complex organisational change, there is often a tendency to privilege either structure or agency, thus neglecting consideration of 'the co-constitutive character of change in the workplace'. Bourdieu applied his theory to a wide variety of objects – including sports, leisure, science, fashion, journalism, language, literature, and so on. What unites this wide array of interests theoretically are the interlinking concepts of field, capital and habitus, which we define below. In addition, Bourdieu's concepts of illusio and hysteresis, which we will also make use of, are defined.

Field. Bourdieu defines a field as 'a kind of arena in which people play a game which has certain rules, rules which are different from those of the game that is played in the adjacent space' (1991a: 215).

Fields are characterised by specific stakes and interests that are irreducible to the stakes and interests found in other fields. For a field to exist and to function, 'there have to be stakes and people prepared to play the game' (Bourdieu, 1993: 72). Those who are involved in a field, Bourdieu (1993: 73) argues, 'share a certain number of fundamental interests, namely everything that is linked to the very existence of the field'. Elsewhere, the concept of field has also been defined as 'a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital)' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 16). These forms of capital create the parameters that regulate the ways individuals behave and interact within a particular field (Bourdieu, 1991b: 215). The 'rules of the game' are neither explicit nor codified but are learnt through socialisation into the field and the process of acquisition of the right forms of *capital*.

Bourdieu (1996) argues that fields can be either autonomous or heteronomous. Heteronomy is taken as the extent to which its structure and logic is influenced by other fields (Gorski 2013: 3). Autonomous fields have strong entry requirements and clear rules whereas in a more heteronomous field rules are less clear and thus arguably give more room for interpretation. In more autonomous fields established field-specific forms of capital are required, whereas in a more heteronomous field forms of capital valued in other neighbouring fields may become preferred – as Gorski (2013: 340) suggests, 'a bit like a weak currency regime, in which strong foreign currencies are the preferred medium of exchange'. For the purposes of this research we take the

field under study to be the subfield of business schools within the academic field in the UK at the current time.

Capital. Bourdieu (1986) identifies four distinct forms of capital: *economic* (e.g. money, material possessions), *cultural* (e.g. knowledge, skills, educational qualifications) and *social* (e.g. the networks a person can draw on as a resource). *Symbolic capital* is the accumulated prestige or honor one derives from the accumulation of the three primary forms, and is significant in distinguishing one's self within a given field.

Habitus. The habitus is a system of dispositions and a scheme of perception. As a system of dispositions, it accounts for the stability of social practices: 'the principle of the continuity and regularity which objectivism sees in social practices without being able to account for it' (Bourdieu, 1990: 54). It is a product of history and of the past experiences deposited in individuals. As a scheme of perception, thought and action, it tends to guarantee the adequacy of practices and their constancy over time. The habitus is stable but malleable to an extent, bounded by the limits initially set on its invention. It implies a view of human development as a constant dialectic between external determinations and internal representations, rather than as a simple accumulation of experiences (Bronckart and Schurmans, 1999).

Illusio. A field can be compared to a game, in as much as it follows some rules (although neither explicit nor codified), it has stakes that are the product of the competition between players, and those players have an investment in the game – Bourdieu terms this investment illusio (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 98). By playing the game, players tacitly agree that the game is worth playing. Bourdieu points out that agents themselves may or may not experience their activity as a game:

> It is only exceptionally, especially in moments of crisis, that certain agents may develop a conscious and explicit representation of the game as a game, one which destroys the investment in the game, the illusio, by making it appear what it always objectively is (to an observer foreign to the game, indifferent to it) – that is, a historical fiction or, in Durkheim's terms, a 'well-founded illusion'. (1996: 382n19)

The game metaphor and the connected concept of illusio have recently been used by management and organisation scholars in the study of higher education (Taksa and Kalfa, 2015), and of a professional occupation (Lupu and Empson, 2015) and has the potential to inform our understanding of ECAs commitment to (or disengagement from) 'the game'.

Hysteresis. As individuals generally succeed in making sense of the world around them, the habitus is normally protected from crisis and challenges. However, the capacity of the habitus to defend or to adapt itself is not always guaranteed. When a field starts to change, the abilty of a person's habitus to keep up with or adapt to the demands of the changing field is brought into question. Bourdieu's concept of the *hysteresis effect* describes this disjuncture between the field and the habitus – a maladjustment between the practical schemes underpinning action and the new conditions. Developed in Bourdieu (1977a) and (2002), the concept is particularly well illustrated in a study by Bourdieu and Sayad (1977) on the effects of colonial policies in Algeria. It follows the fate of the peasants who were strongly encouraged to move to cities, turning upside-down all the social structures of the peasant society within only a few years. Thus, the authors show how the peasants are maladjusted to their new environment, since their practices are generated by a habitus that has not adjusted itself to the new conditions.

In *Pascalian Meditations* (2000) Bourdieu suggests that the concept of hysteresis could be applied more widely to situations of change, and stresses the importance of reflexivity of social actors when 'the coincidence between structure and habitus is increasingly disrupted' (Bourdieu, 2000: 263). That is, in a changing field, there is a *dissonance* or disjuncture between the demands of the new, emergent rules of the game and the habitus. During a period of hysteresis, social actors may continue to rely on past behaviours, which effectively 'help to plunge them deeper into failure' (Bourdieu 2000: 161). However, some actors in the field are able to survive the hysteresis effect by adopting reflective behaviours to identify and acquire the new forms of capital deemed valuable within the changing field, such as knowledge, qualifications and social networks.

The concept of hysteresis has been used by organisation and management scholars to understand the strategies of 'dominated' actors in a specific period of social and organisational transition (e.g. Kerr and Robinson, 2009) and in understanding public sector workers' reactions to change (e.g. McDonough and Polzer, 2012). We now move on to outline the research design for this study.

Research design

This paper draws on an ongoing study of CMS ECAs. We chose to focus on this group of ECAs for the following reasons: firstly, our starting assumption is that they are in overt (or covert) opposition to the performative, managerialist drive of the 'new higher education' (Jary and Parker, 1998) in that the anti-performative, reflexive ethos of CMS (Fournier and Grey, 2000) to which they subscribe implies the general questioning of the spread of managerialism (Alvesson et al.,

2009). Secondly, this dissonance would suggest that CMS ECAs are often painfully aware of the conflicts and contradictions involved in being a CMS academic in the neoliberal business school and, as organisation scholars, are often finely attuned to issues of power and domination. They are therefore well-positioned to make sense of their environment and to develop and articulate ways of reworking and reshaping the competing pressures (see Bristow, 2012; Prasad, 2013). Our intention therefore is to see what we can learn from this group and the potential agency of its members to develop and practise in ways which help them to establish, maintain and safeguard critical practices crucial to the preservation and development of the integrity of the CMS academic community, rather than to focus on ECAs' marginality, degradation or powerlessness (Laudel and Gläser, 2008).

In crafting this paper we are making use of an ongoing study, and drawing on the experiences of the first 20 ECAs interviewed. We regard this as an exploratory study which will then grow and spread in terms of reach and diversity of participants. For the first 20 participants, however, we limited our sampling to CMS ECA academics who work, or until recently worked, in UK business schools. We have chosen the UK as an historical centre for non-mainstream approaches (Üsdiken, 2010) containing recognised hubs of CMS research (Fournier and Grey, 2000), and thus being a good starting place for this on-going study, especially given the rapid changes in UK universities in the past decade (Butler and Spoelstra, 2012, 2014; Deem and Brehony, 2005). Being ourselves members of this relatively small research community, we identified and recruited our research subjects via a chain-referral sampling strategy, whereby we invited the first participants through personal contacts. These then acted as recruitment 'seeds' for subsequent participants (Heckathron, 2011) and as news of this project spread through the community several participants contacted us directly with a wish to participate.

We defined ECAs, following other writers (e.g. Laudel and Gläser, 2008), as those employed in a full-time lecturer post or equivalent for up to six years. In borderline cases we asked potential participants whether they still self-identified as an ECA and for what reasons, before including them in the study. Our current sample of 20 participants consists of what we feel is a representative mix of ECAs in terms of age, calculated from date of birth (this ranged from mid 20s to mid 40s), career age (up to 6 years) and type and number of universities studied at and worked in. The sample consisted of at least 12 different nationalities, with eleven of our participants being male and nine female – however, we acknowledge that a sampling limitation is that we do not delve further into the intersectionality of our research participants, for example, sexual orientation and class. At the time of the interviews, a significantly higher proportion of

participants was employed in the pre-1992 sector (traditional universities) than in the post-1992 sector (former polytechnics), although many participants had experience of working in both.

As relatively young academics and members of the CMS community ourselves, we have, in order to prevent ourselves being swayed too much by our own assumptions, been through a rigorous process of data analysis going through various cycles of interpretation (see below). In so doing, we follow other management researchers in finding reflexive ways of researching their own contexts (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014; Elliot and Robinson, 2012; Knights and Clarke, 2014).

The interviews were semi-structured, as we drew on an interview guide consisting of eight themes with prompt questions, which were explorative in nature and gave plenty of room for participants to craft their own narratives and give deep description of their own experiences. The interviews ranged between one and two-and-a-half hours in length, were voice-recorded and transcribed. The data analysis was carried out in several stages, involving all three authors of the paper. Firstly, the initial codes were collectively agreed based on research questions and previous literature. Secondly, data were independently coded by the three authors, aided by the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. In addition to the pre-agreed codes, this coding process also yielded new inductive codes emerging from our interpretations of the responses. In the final stage of analysis, we reviewed and renegotiated both the use of the initial codes and the new inductive codes, arriving at a collective interpretation of the data.

Becoming a CMS ECA within in the contemporary Business School

In presentation of the analysis of the interviews, we use concepts from Bourdieu's theory of practice as an underlying analytical framework throughout. The way in which the findings are organised is intended as a mapping of ECA experiences rather than depicting a linear progression towards success (indeed, as will be seen below, many of our participants' experiences were characterised by drawbacks, turning points, loss, failure and other such aspects as to make them far removed from a positivist idea of career progress). Instead, as ECAs are potentially dominated agents within the field they are entering, we consider how successful their efforts are in the light of their relations with the wider power structures or hierarchies within the field.

We focus firstly on the *'labour pains'* of the early stages of an academic career. These labour pains are understood as common (among our participants)

transition experiences set within the context of wider institutional change. By using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field and the wider notion of hysteresis, we identify and discuss different types of disjuncture between the two as types of labour pains ECAs experienced in developing their academic practice.

Secondly, using the concepts forms of capital and illusio, we explore processes of *birth or development* of the (new) CMS academic within the context of the neoliberal business school. We look at how the disjunctures identified prompted ECAs to focus on trying to keep their CMS faith and learning to navigate the field by acquiring appropriate forms of capital so they can practice accordingly, with varying degrees of success.

In this section we use quotes from our participants' interviews as subheadings to demonstrate how the ECAs' experiences can speak to the theoretical framework used.

Labour pains: Personal transitions in times of change

Entering the field:

> when you are doing a PhD, you think this is the hardest time of your life, but you're not even close to what it's like being an ECA (ECA 4)

The first type of labour pain comes from disjunctures between expectations of academic life and ECA experiences in full-time paid employment as lecturers within UK Business Schools. ECAs reported feelings of bewilderment, tiredness, frustration, disappointment and being lost, stemming from disconnects between conceptions of academic work acquired during their PhD studies in the context of CMS and the audit culture of the field:

> [As doctoral students] we had been led to believe that it was all about reading books, about engaging with colleagues about interesting theories, that you would be reading all the time, and talking about ideas and books, rather than merely talking about publications. So the transition [...] was a bit awkward and I felt lost. [...] My identity as an academic was a little bit lost for the first year, maybe even two. It felt like the rug had been pulled from beneath my feet. (ECA 3)

Another disjuncture with expectations for some ECAs was the sheer amount of work given to them by their departments. In the following extract an ECA describes her first batch of marking which also challenged her ideals of fair employment and good teaching practices:

> I was like a robot, I marked them until 2 in the morning and then went to sleep on the sofa, woke up and marked some more all day Sunday. That was just my life for

> a week or two... I got very quick at marking that particular assignment but I thought, this is so unfair on the students and unfair on me. (ECA 12)

Physical and mental exhaustion are common themes: these had a cumulative effect as time went by. Expectations of what the academic job entailed, especially the space to write/publish were compromised:

> *I spent the first year acclimatising and trying to get up to speed. I wrote a conference paper, but then the second year, the Head of School gave me three brand new modules to run in one semester. I was falling asleep at the dinner table and I fell asleep at a gig – how bad is that? I was that tired. The second semester I just could not write. I was so exhausted from marking and writing new lectures. (ECA 8)*

Similarly, disjunctures between expectations of collegiality, support, a duty of care and ECAs' experiences of being treated as the academic precariat surface clearly in descriptions of the probation process.

Adapting to the field:

> 'I guess part of the experience of being on probation is you learn...you are not in a position to challenge anything and I am not sure whether that changes, but my mood continues to be that I adapt to what is happening around me' (ECA 1)

Experiences of probation were varied but seemed to fuel ECAs' sense of vulnerability: in some cases they experienced a culture of micro-managing and strong socialisation, representing a disjuncture from expectations of academic freedom and autonomy:

> Every six months I am asked to write a list of where I am up to on publications and where I am going next. It feels like we are not being trusted to get on with it ourselves. I had a probation thing and all this paperwork and then six months later I had to do something else for my PDR [performance and development review] and then six months later something else to show what I am doing in the next five years. (ECA 7)

In other cases the lack of direction on probation objectives was equally disconcerting:

> I was appointed on probation for three years, I didn't have any probation criteria for completing probation. For that matter, I still don't have any! That was something that worried me continually. (ECA 12)

Many of our interviewees perceived probation as a tool for exerting pressure to publish: this was perhaps not unexpected, but the nature of the demands (to publish in 4* journals) from the outset and the consequences of not doing so were in some cases destabilising and upsetting:

> As a junior academic, I was given six months to get a favourable journal review, which is almost being set up for failure. It made me feel disposable, and that changed my mood about the institution. [...] For me, there was suddenly a shift in the psychological contract. (ECA 1)

Such a combination of pressure and lack of directed guidance could lead to false starts and loss of direction:

> ...over time I think I found my research interests being more realigned, gradually and without really noticing. So by the end of my second year, perhaps as late as my third year... I was reading only [mainstream theory] articles and I would say that was the low point of my academic history so far. Just paper after paper of boring stuff that didn't interest me, didn't inspire me... I tried and importantly failed to publish in 4*journals, [and] realised I had lost my research interests. (ECA 3)

Yet ironically, such socialisation processes often served to highlight another common disjuncture for this group: that between having a CMS orientation (habitus) and working in largely mainstream business schools where the contribution of CMS work was not recognised.

CMS habitus:

> Everything I do my colleagues think is out of the ordinary (ECA 12)

Most of our respondents identified openly with CMS but were surprised to find this was regarded as strange or that it was not understood in their workplaces:

> My CMS identity... as part of my interview process to the department, I didn't even think about it, I just said this is my research, take it on board. It is interesting how I have spoken to some people and they just don't understand what it is about at all. (ECA 15)

Another ECA describes the disjuncture and discomfort between her given job title and her research orientations:

> I would definitely say that I am CMS. I find the label of Organisational Behaviour [...] acceptable in a teaching context but in a research context I think it has taken a more North American, managerialist [connotation]. So I try to steer away from using OB as a research label. (ECA 17)

In addition, ridicule by colleagues was an upsetting experience reflecting a disjuncture between concepts of academic freedom and the disciplinary behaviour of colleagues:

> ...the few people who are aware of it make jokey comments, on more than one occasion. I think I am known, at least locally here as the CMS person. (ECA 15)

The experiences presented here could be interpreted as just part of the learning curve in the transition from PhD student to lecturer. Yet we see the dawning realisation of what we argue as a series of disjunctures between the (PhD/CMS) habitus and the demands of the contemporary academic field – a mismatch between what ECAs expected to find in the field and what they actually found. Examples include: academic exploration versus writing to publish in 4* journals; ideals of giving good constructive feedback versus heavy marking loads; the notion of an academic career versus becoming a member of the academic precariat.

Can such misunderstandings be dismissed as ignorance and naivety or indeed has the field that they had been prepared to work in changed quite rapidly? The field seems to be in transition from an autonomous field where the academic rules of the game are clearer to a more heteronomous field which is difficult for all actors to understand. It could perhaps be argued that what we are seeing here is an example of the hysteresis effect for this group (almost by proxy) in that those advising them and helping to prepare for academic careers, supervisors, PhD directors and so on are not really aware of the effects the changing nature of the field can have on new entrants to the field.

The implicit criticisms of the current state of the field certainly suggest that there are wider transitional processes in play, resulting in some of the disjunctures they experience. These stories also indicate a hard induction into the power relations and politics of the contemporary academic workplace. Here we suggest that what we are seeing are not just the normal pains of socialisation into a new workplace but the potential exploitation of new faculty members who have no yardsticks to go by, a feeling confirmed by one of our research participants: 'I think it could be so easy to be exploited as an ECA because you are not aware of the bigger picture' (ECA 17) – this perhaps points to strains and tensions within the wider field.

We can see the pressures of systemic issues emanating from changes in the field, such as increasing student numbers and the dominance of the REF, impinging on ECAs' transition experiences. There are questions to be asked here about how these incidents were handled by heads of schools and line managers, and what pressures they themselves are under that prompt them to give such workloads and set unrealistic targets for new faculty members. Another possible factor to consider here is that some ECAs (but not all) changed from universities where they did their PhDs (many of these were traditional pre-1992 universities) to post-1992 institutions where teaching loads might be heavier – this might explain some of the dissonance between some of their expectations and what they encounter.

Such experiences of disjuncture perhaps constitute a painful loss of innocence but the experience of hysteresis can lead to a wider reflexivity (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) due to the need to try to work out both how to survive and to, at least in part, achieve their aims and ideals for their academic careers in spite of the difficulties in their way:

> It is like getting used to a little bit of disappointment and compromise, a good bit of life preparation and that doesn't necessarily turn you into a passive guy but it might deepen your agency in a strong way. (ECA 1)

So rather than totally capitulating to this socialisation process, there is evidence of the habitus fighting back. We now turn to how ECAs try to exercise agency within the demands of the field to try and shape their practice accordingly.

Becoming a CMS academic within a complex field

Roles and rules:

> Trying to find your feet... [F]inding out what the role is, in a sense, it is there on paper but it is not obvious (ECA 15)

The interviews describe iterative processes of working out what is important both to ECAs' employers and to themselves. We could see this as striking a delicate balance between acquiring field-related forms of capital and keeping their illusio.

One challenge for many was how to find time and space to publish, understood as key to keeping their present job and establishing an academic career:

> You find yourself battling to balance your teaching and your research time. [...] You have to work within the constraints to come through. (ECA 14)

A related challenge was to balance what individual ECAs *wanted* to write – often what they had become accustomed to seeing as interesting CMS work – with what was interpreted as institutional demands for more mainstream 4* publications (understood as the dominant form of cultural capital within the field). Some ECAs were able to identify contradictions or loopholes in institutional messages, giving the possibility to follow their own research paths and interests within the constraints of the system: 'they don't bother you about what your research is about, as long as you are publishing in 4* journals' (ECA 2).

We see some disjuncture here with the assumption that research should be challenging, meaningful and making a difference versus the realisation that all

that is valued (as capital) is publication rather than the message of the research itself:

> [A]ll you have to do is what they tell you, you get to keep your job. This also destroys the challenge of the job. (ECA 6)

One strategy was to fight back through a double game of delivering what ECAs thought was wanted but using it as leverage to achieve success on their own terms, which, here, is implicitly seen as *being interesting* and following your own research priorities:

> Don't be led into uninteresting directions because you think it might be good for your career, because ultimately your career is based on what you write, and if it is uninteresting you will be seen as an uninteresting person and be surrounded by uninteresting people who have different priorities. Figure out what your priorities are. (ECA 3)

What is emerging here is the importance of believing in wider outcomes of academic labour rather than (just) the ones deemed to be valued by the neoliberal academic field. What is of note is the time it takes for ECAs to come to such realisations despite the apparently inherent reflexivity of their CMS PhD apprenticeships. We could surmise that the messages to publish (in a specific way) are coming louder from academic mentors and line managers than messages relating to academic freedom and vocation even in CMS contexts.

Thus here emerges a potential disjuncture between what CMS ECAs would want academic labour to achieve and how they think they need to behave in order to achieve the targets placed on them, which can lead to the realisation of the need to focus and prioritise: 'I think one thing you learn through the PhD and early academic life is working out what is important' (ECA 1).

Although times are undoubtedly hard for ECAs, there is also evidence of endurance and tenacity in that they can be very committed to their careers, or the (CMS) imaginary (Taylor, 2002) of what they perceive their career to be:

> I worked for 12 years outside of academia and this is more frustrating and disappointing than any other job I have done but I still wouldn't want to go back to them. It is also more engaging and fun and interesting than any other job I have had. (ECA 7)

So rather than walking away (although several of our respondents have changed universities and in some cases countries quite frequently), there was still a feeling that this was a career worth having. Personal reward and satisfaction as well as working for a greater cause, such as what was understood to be within the

remit of CMS, and wider notions of academic freedom and vocation were highly valued ideals among our interviewees.

The contemporary academic landscape seems to have been perceived by many of our participants as one where workaholism and constant pressure for excellence on all levels loomed large. Therefore, developing agency to carve out a space in such an environment was important:

> I think you have to be very resourceful and resilient and not give up, continue experimenting and innovating new ways that work for you, design new ways of inspiring yourself despite all the challenges. (ECA13)

What we therefore can see in the following stories are attempts to develop the habitus to both comply with and resist the demands of the field in a balance with their own personal agendas.

Balance and negotiations:

> I didn't work for two weekends, and I realised the world doesn't stop (ECA 2)

In order to achieve this balance many ECAs actively reflected on the current nature of the field itself and its effects, giving them some insight into their own (potential) marginality, which we suggest, then acted as a springboard towards rectifying and/or challenging their marginal status:

> It is almost exploitative because you are not aware politically and strategically of what is going on. It is not about just accepting it, it is about negotiating it. (ECA 17)

However on occasions, the situation was made worse by their own habitus (for example, a belief in academic collegiality): 'I did have a bad habit about volunteering for things which I have this year tried to stop doing' (ECA 12).

Many of our participants also critically reflected on their early experiences in terms of lessons learnt or mistakes not to be repeated:

> I'd say to myself: refuse to do three brand new modules. You have the option of saying no. As an ECA [...], you forget that you can say no. There are reasonable expectations, and there are unreasonable expectations. (ECA 8)

Those who may have felt powerless considered the groundwork they could do to make things better for themselves (and others) in the future.

> ...you can't make any difference in the present but what you do is make sure you are in a situation where you might be able to make a difference in the future.

> There are things you can do in the long term which can enhance your ability to shape your environment or to protect things that are important to you. (ECA 1)

Others, unhappy with a current situation, were able to identify the (specific) problem and were prepared to walk away if what was making them unhappy (a disjuncture between the field and the habitus) was not resolved:

> Something will have to change with the teaching, so either I will have to make it mine here or I will have to go somewhere else. I don't want to be teaching this stuff for the next 20 years. It has to be more meaningful, the teaching. (ECA 7)

Such labour is difficult to sustain as an individual project and there was a widespread acknowledgement of the importance of support from various sectors of the academic community.

Social capital:

> You can't easily change the system but you can change your relationship with people (ECA 13)

There was a certain consensus among our interviewees that formal institutional support through line management or formal mentoring was lacking and certainly insufficient to help ECAs establish themselves. This also included a feeling of the dearth of support from senior CMS colleagues, whether formal or informal:

> I think what is needed more is how the senior academics can support young scholars like myself and others get through and get published and find our voices. I think that is important. (ECA 14)

Other ECAs seemed undaunted by this lack of support and told us how when they were working on papers they actively identified and approached more experienced scholars inviting them to become collaborators to 'workup' the paper for publication thus developing social capital in order to acquire cultural capital, for example, good publications: 'my current strategy is, I am working with people who have got more experience, who are either generally readers or senior lecturers, or professors…' (ECA 15).

Many of our interviewees acknowledged that it was of high importance to them to build strong (informal) relationships with colleagues of all levels. For example, informal CMS mentoring and attending CMS conferences was important to many of our participants as part of developing some security, nurturing their academic identity and maintaining the (CMS) illusio: 'I feel so high at conferences surrounded by like-minded people' (ECA 20). Some of our interviewees took on very active roles in the CMS community, whether it is as

editors or even founding editors of critical journals, or as founders of CMS scholarly societies, and told us of the significance the networks developed as a result of such involvement had in their development as CMS academics. For many of our ECAs growing such social capital was part and parcel of resisting demands of the new neoliberal field – for instance, one interviewee told us how she deliberately chose to write with people considered as 'undesirable' by her line manager in order to maintain her sense of critical scholarly identity.

We now move on to discuss our research questions in the light of the data analysis and to consider how our theoretical framework has helped in building an understanding of the nature or academic labour for this specific group of academics.

Concluding discussion: From labour pains to the birth of the new CMS academic?

At the outset we posed three questions: 1. What is it like to be an ECA in these transitional and unsettled times, and what disjunctures and transitions do they experience on entering the field? 2. What coping practices do they develop, and how might their outsider positions in some ways facilitate their positioning within the field? 3. What support do they draw on in developing these endeavours and in moving forward?

ECA experiences: Disjunctures and transitions

The snapshot of academic labour given in this paper depicts pains of transition, becoming, growing and developing within what is already an uncertain and turbulent environment. As previously stated, much of the existing research about this group of academics is primarily descriptive and, although painting vivid pictures of their experiences (see Archer 2008a, 2008b), does not sytematically use theory to shed light on the nature of their marginality, issues of power and exploitation, and their stuggle against it.

What our application of Bourdieu's theory of practice has enabled us to do therefore is to demonstrate the complex relationships within the changing academic field and disjunctures between the expectations of the field and the habitus of the actors within it. In the case of the ECAs in our study, disjunctures between the habitus and the field they are entering and which emerge from the empirical analysis include: a. PhD eclecticism and the consequent expectations of doing interesting research which feeds into teaching, versus rigidity of publication culture and expectations of engaging (solely) with mainstream publication and teaching; b. wider academic ideals of academic freedom versus

controlling probation and appraisal systems; c. expectations of good teaching and learning versus the conveyor belt mentality; d. belief in CMS versus lack of understanding or suspicion of CMS initiatives. Such disjunctures, we could argue, could be seen as different (but interconnected) modes of hysteresis.

These (personal) disjunctures are, we suggest, further aggravated by ECAs' induction into the power relations within the field. This is possibly made worse for them due to senior members of the academic community experiencing forms of hysteresis of their own and reacting in different ways such as defaulting to careerism (Clarke and Knights, 2015). Certainly practices of domination and exploitation, as well as the lack of support were apparent in the stories – for example, probation objectives set were seen by some of our interviewees as, at best ill thought-out and at worst, exploitative.

It could of course be argued that the apparatus of PhD training and induction to an extent prepares PhD students for the neoliberal academic environment, with the emphasis on publishing in the right journals and so on (Prasad, 2013, 2015; Raineri, 2015) and yet, as we can see from the disjunctures identified above, although they might be aware of the nature of the challenge there is still something in the PhD process and possibly in the wider trajectories of the individual ECA – at least in the context of CMS – which inculcates wider academic ideals (see Bristow, 2012). This inculcation may be more intense in the critical hubs where many of the ECAs in our sample were educated. So we suggest that, in terms of a theory of practice, on entering the field they are already developing/have developed a 'critical habitus' which helps them to reconcile and balance these tensions within the field. This further helps them navigate a difficult and changing field relatively effectively by recognising what forms of capital will be of use to them despite their (arguably) dominated and precarious position. On the other hand such disjunctures can also lead to disenchantment and disengagement.

ECA practices and positioning within the field

Due to their newness to the field, it is possible to argue that navigating the neoliberal academic field is more difficult for ECAs than for more established academics. Conversely however, it could also be argued that their role of outsiders puts them in a better position to navigate the conflicting demands of the current heteronomous field and widen their academic ideals. That is, compared to those more used to a more autonomous field where the rules of engagement were possibly clearer (though not without their tensions and contradictions). Processes of figuring out the new rules of the game (new to them as ECAs as well as new in the context of the changing field) and their

(semi) outsider positions perhaps help them to see more clearly than more established academics arguably caught up in a more intense experience of hysteresis.

Certainly we can see from the stories presented above a complex game of compliance and resistance being played vis-à-vis the demands of the field – and this is perhaps seen more vividly than in other studies of ECAs which tend to emphasise one or the other (Archer 2008a, 2008b; Laudel and Gläser, 2008). Such complex and potentially contradictory practices can result in exhaustion and disillusionment but also possibly in creating some space to follow their own agendas. A balance can arguably be created between playing by the rules, bending the rules and starting to play by multiple rules. In so doing some ECAs are able to arrive at a space where they can in part challenge and resist the excesses and homogenisation tendencies of the neoliberal university (Deem and Brehomy, 2005; Mingers and Willmott, 2013).

It is also possible that disjunctures between habitus and field (Bourdieu, 2000) may lead, paradoxically, to the emergence of new practices which are beneficial to the CMS community (or subfield), understood to be under threat from wider societal changes (namely, from neoliberal universities' audit culture and the wider field's acceptance of these). For instance, several of our interviewees were involved in the development of new modes of open-access publishing, which, whilst sustaining the importance of academic publication in general, attempted to cut against the performative culture of '4-star' journals and the dominance of for-profit publishers. On the other hand, it is also of course possible that such disjunctures may result either in capitulation and co-optation or to abandonment of academia altogether, options that, as far as we know, have not as yet been taken by our interviewees, although we are aware that such cases exist.

Adding to our own experiences, our study has made us appreciate in more depth the challenges of becoming a critical scholar in business schools at a time when the critical habitus is arguably dissonant with the dominant logics of managerialism, impact and relevance (Butler and Spoelstra, 2012, 2014; Deem and Brehony, 2005). We might however argue that being in potentially hostile environments can lead to the development of a strong reflexivity in this group as to how they develop their own academic labour through incorporating a very well-developed political sensitivity, possibly similar to that of the corporate dissidents described by Kerr and Robinson (2009), and which could lead, on the one hand, to effective critical scholarship, but also, on the other, to the development of successful practices of resistance and change within their own institutions. Optimistically then we could argue that these labour pains might

give birth to a new type of CMS academic well placed to balance the many challenges and competing demands of the field.

Using Bourdieu's theory of practice helps us to understand the struggles of ECAs to work out the complex rules of the game and to operate well within this changing academic field while at the same time holding values of vocation and personal integrity related to different conceptions of academic labour. Our study also shows that ECAs strive for some security and comfort in their day-to-day lives, perhaps indicating that they believe there will come a time when the field will settle down and return back to business as usual (Bourdieu, 1996). Yet what we also see is a nuanced understanding of the difficulties of the current situation and the power relations this engenders. One thing that struck us in the analysis of these experiences was that there was a widespread view of the lack of and/or ineffectiveness of formal institutional support and mentoring.

Support for CMS ECAs

We would therefore also strongly argue that, although relatively well equipped to support themselves, this group also needs the wider support of the CMS community. This raises questions as to how this group can best be supported and nurtured. We suggest that there is a need to develop more sophisticated and robust – diverse, effective and encompassing – sources and forms of support in order to foster the many (often fragile and uncertain) processes involved nowadays in the birth and growth of CMS academics. Whilst the bases of many potential sources of support are already in existence, in most cases they do not provide sufficient coverage or continuity for ECA experiences. For instance, ECA workshops at the CMS Division of the Academy of Management Meeting and at the CMS conference may be inspiring and uplifting but happen only once a year in the case of the former and biennially in the case of the latter. This is a long time to wait for encouragement, especially for those feeling isolated in mainstream institutions. It is, we would argue, in the interests of the CMS community to look after its ECAs more thoroughly and consider how the wider CMS networks and informal training, institutional mechanisms such as doctoral training and more formal mentoring, and more specialist support networks such as the VIDA network for critical women scholars (see VIDA, 2016) can be built on to create a more nurturing ECA environment.

Suggestions for future research

This research has identified, surfaced and started to explore some key issues in contemporary academic labour relating to how the work of scholars is being shaped, managed and controlled. It also demonstrates how the ECAs we studied

were, at least to an extent, able to manage, shape and control their own career directions and choices. We do, however, feel this area could benefit from more research in the following areas. Firstly, as regards the application of our theoretical framework, we have only explored the experiences of this group of scholars at one moment in time, one to six years into their academic careers. We suggest longitudinal work would be interesting in exploring how the hysteresis effect and its associated disjunctures endure, to what extent a critical habitus can be developed and fine-tuned over a sustained period of time, and, in addition, how a critical illusio can be maintained. A connected research avenue would be to explore further the development over time of social capital (especially informal networks), which has emerged in this study as being significant in supporting junior academics negotiating the tensions and disjunctures inherent in their roles. Such an approach would mirror Bourdieu's 'methodological shift' in his study of academics, from the study of a contextually specific moment of time (Bourdieu, 1988) to the study of a longitudinal case (Bourdieu, 2007). Then, looking beyond the academic context, we wonder how the concepts of hysteresis and illusio could be used to follow early career journeys of other young professionals where the professional field is undergoing considerable change, for example in the very topical case of junior doctors.

Secondly, this research indicates that management appraisal and probation systems for academics, particularly, although not exclusively, for ECAs, is due some critical scrutiny as it is becoming clear that such mechanisms are being increasingly used to achieve REF and other targets. This, as we have seen, can result in unrealistic demands being put on academics, leading to despondency and a decline in well-being. Research which highlights these problems and explores alternative ways of inducting and appraising staff in line with personal as well as institutional objectives would constitute a welcome follow-up to this study. A connected research avenue would be to extend work on how academic middle managers (Bryman and Lilley, 2009; Preston and Price, 2012) can fulfil their roles of mentoring and supporting junior colleagues when they face their own challenges of hysteresis and dilemmas in ensuring performance targets from senior managers are delivered.

To conclude, in this paper we have demonstrated that rather than obediently capitulating to the demands of the emergent heteronomous field with its currency of wider neoliberal values, the ECAs in our study have developed an ability to read, resist and play such demands. Much of the time this does not seem to be done in a cynical way but in an attempt to balance self-preservation and defence of core intellectual principles (or an academic imaginary), that is, the illusio to which they are committed and which guides them. However, this is not to down-play the pain of the labour process. We would therefore like to conclude

with an appeal to the wider CMS community to engage in different forms of action, including further research, as mentioned above, to shed further light on these issues and also in forms of collective and individual support to help to strengthen the agency of new CMS academics to resist the pressures to capitulate to the demands of the neoliberal university or the urge to exit academia altogether.

references

Alvesson, M., T. Bridgman and H. Willmott (2009) 'Introduction', in M. Alvesson, T. Bridgman and H. Willmott (eds.) *The Oxford handbook of critical management studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Anderson, G. (2008) 'Mapping academic resistance in the managerial university', *Organization*, 15(2): 251-270.

Archer, L. (2008a) 'The new neoliberal subjects? Young/er academics' constructions of professional identity', *Journal of Education Policy*, 23(3): 265-285.

Archer, L. (2008b) 'Younger academics constructions of authenticity, success and professional identify', *Studies in Higher Education*, 33(4): 385-403.

Austin, A.E. (2002) 'Preparing the next generation of faculty: Graduate education as socialization to the academic career', *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73(1): 94-122.

Austin, A.E. (2009) 'Cognitive apprenticeship theory and its implications for doctoral education: A case example from a doctoral program in higher and adult education', *International Journal for Academic Development,* 14(3): 173-183.

Bansel, P. (2011) 'Becoming academic: A reflection on doctoral candidacy', *Studies in Higher Education*', 36(5): 543-556.

Bourdieu, P. (1977a) *Algérie 60*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

Bourdieu, P. (1977b) *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986) 'The forms of capital', in J.G. Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. New York: Greenwood Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1988) *Homo academicus*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1990) *The logic of practice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1991a) *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1991b) *The political ontology of Martin Heidegger*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1993) *Sociology in question*. London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. (1996) *The rules of art: Genesis and structure of the literary field*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2000) *Pascalian meditations*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2002) *Le bal des célibataires: Crise de la société paysanne en Béarn*. Paris: Seuil.

Bourdieu, P. (2007) *Sketch for a self-analysis*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. and A. Sayad (1977) *Le Déracinement* (2nd ed.). Paris: Minuit.

Bourdieu, P. and L. Wacquant (1992) *Invitation to a reflexive sociology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Bristow A. (2012) 'On life, death and radical critique: A non-survival guide to the brave new higher education for the intellectually pregnant', *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 28(3): 234-241.

Bronckart, J.-P. and M.-N. Schurmans (1999). 'Pierre Bourdieu – Jean Piaget: habitus, schèmes et construction du psychologique', in B. Lahire (ed.) *Le travail sociologique de Pierre Bourdieu: Dettes et critiques*. Paris: La Découverte.

Bryman, A. and S. Lilley (2009) 'Leadership researchers on leadership in higher education', *Leadership*, 5(3): 331-346.

Butler, N. and S. Spoelstra (2012) 'Your excellency', *Organization*, 19(6): 891-903.

Butler, N. and S. Spoelstra (2014) 'The regime of excellence and the erosion of ethos in critical management studies', *British Journal of Management*, 25(3): 538-550.

Clarke, C.A., D. Knights and C. Jarvis (2012) 'A labour of love? Academics in business schools', *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 28(3): 5-15.

Clarke, C.A. and D. Knights (2015) 'Careering through academia: Securing identities or engaging ethical subjectivities?', *Human Relations*, 68(12): 1865-1888.

Clegg, S. (2008) 'Academic identities under threat?', *British Educational Research Journal*, 34(3): 329-45.

Deem, R. and K.J. Brehony (2005) 'Management as ideology: The case of "new managerialism" in higher education', *Oxford Review of Education*, 31(2): 217-235.

Elliott, C. and S. Robinson (2012) 'MBA Imaginaries – projections of internationalisation', *Management Learning*, 43(2): 157-181.

Fournier, V. and C. Grey (2000) 'At the critical moment: Conditions and prospects for critical management studies', *Human Relations*, 53(1): 7-32.

Gorski, P.S. (2013) 'Bourdieusian theory and historical analysis: Maps, mechanisms, and methods', in P.S. Gorski (ed.) *Bourdieu and historical analysis*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Hayes, D. and R. Wynyard (eds.) (2002) *The McDonaldization of higher education*. London: Greenwood Press.

Heckathron, D. (2011) 'Comment: Snowball versus respondent-driven sampling', *Sociological Methodology*, 41(1): 355-366.

Jary, D. and M. Parker (1998) 'Introduction', in D. Jary and M. Parker (eds.) *The new higher education: Dilemas and directions for the post-Dearing university*. Stoke-on-Trent: Staffordshire University Press.

Kerr, R. and S. Robinson (2009) 'The hysteresis effect as creative adaptation of the habitus: Dissent and transition to the "corporate" in post-Soviet Ukraine', *Organization*, 16(6): 800-829.

Knights, D. and C.A. Clarke (2014) 'It's a bittersweet symphony, this life: Fragile academic selves and insecure identities at work', *Organization Studies*, 35(3): 335-357.

Laudel, G. and J. Gläser (2008) 'From apprentice to colleague: The metamorphosis of early career researchers', *Higher Education*, 55(3): 387-406.

Lave, J. and E. Wenger (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lupu, I. and L. Empson (2015) 'Illusio and overwork: Playing the game in the accounting field', *Accounting, Auditing and Accountibility*, 28(8): 1310-1340.

McDonough, P. and J. Polzer (2012) 'Habitus, hysteresis, and organisational change in the public sector', *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 37(4): 357 -379.

Mingers, J. and H. Willmott (2013) 'Taylorizing business school research: On the "one best way" performative effects of journal ranking lists', *Human Relations*, 66(8): 1051-1073.

Prasad, A. (2013) 'Playing the game and trying not to lose myself: A doctoral student's perspective on the institutional pressures for research output', *Organization*, 20(6): 936-948.

Prasad, A. (2015) 'Liminal transgressions, or where should the critical academy go from here? Reimagining the future of doctoral education to engender research sustainability', *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 26(1): 108-116.

Preston, D. and D. Price (2012) '"I see it as a phase: I don't see it as the future": Academics as managers in a UK university', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 34(4): 409-419.

Raineri, N. (2015) 'Business doctoral education as a liminal period of transition: Comparing theory and practice', *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 26(1): 99-107.

Strathern, M. (ed.) (2000) *Audit cultures: Anthropological studies in accountability, ethics and the academy*. London: Routledge.

Taksa, L., and S. Kalfa (2015) 'Illusio in the game of higher education: An empirical exploration of interconnections between fields and academic habitus', in A. Tatli, M. Özbilgin and M. Karatas-Özkan (eds.) *Pierre Bourdieu, organisation and management*. New York: Routledge.

Taylor, C. (2002) 'Modern social imaginaries', *Public Culture*, 14(1): 91-124.

Tight, M. (ed.) (2000) *Academic work and life: What it is to be an academic, and how this is changing*. Oxford: Elsevier Science.

Trowler, P.R. (1998) *Academics responding to change. New higher education frameworks and academic cultures*. Buckingham: SRHE/Open University Press.

Üsdiken, B. (2010) 'Between contending perspectives and logics: Organizational studies in Europe', *Organization Studies*, 31(6): 715-735.

VIDA (2016) website of the Critical Management Studies Women's Association (VIDA). [www.vidascholars.org]

Weber, M. (2004) *The vocation lectures: 'Science as a vocation' and 'Politics as a vocation'*. Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing.

Weidman, J.C. and E.L. Stein (2003) 'Socialization of doctoral students to academic norms', *Research in Higher Education*, 44(6): 641-656.

Willmott, H. (2003) 'Commercialising higher education in the UK: The state, industry and peer review', *Studies in Higher Education*, 28(2): 129-141.

Willmott, H. (2013) '"The substitution of one piece of nonsense for another": Reflections on resistance, gaming, and subjugation', *Journal of Management Studies*, 50(3): 443-473.

the authors

Sarah Robinson is Reader in Management and Organisation Studies at the Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow. She has worked at the Open University and Universities of Leicester and Lancaster where she also completed her PhD. Her interests include management education, organisational and management learning, critical management studies and the application of the work of Bourdieu to organisation studies.
Email: Sarah.Robinson.2@glasgow.ac.uk

Olivier Ratle is Senior Lecturer in Organisation Studies at the University of the West of England. He received his PhD from Lancaster University. His interests revolve around research philosophy and methods, organisational change, and the politics of knowledge production in management studies.
Email: Olivier.ratle@uwe.ac.uk

Alexandra Bristow (a.bristow.work@gmail.com) is Visiting Fellow at the University of Surrey, where she was previously Lecturer in Organisational Behaviour. Before that she was previously at Lancaster University Management School, where she completed a PhD thesis examining the work of editors of leading management journals. Her thesis is joint winner of the AOM best dissertation award in CMS division (2011). Her interests include academic work and knowledge, resistance, change, and research philosophy.
Email: a.bristow@surrey.ac.uk

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 509-532

Activism and the academy: Assembling knowledge for social justice

Callum McGregor and Jeremy Knox

abstract

This paper asks whether assemblage theory provides a useful way of thinking through the challenges of knowledge production for social justice in the context of the relationship between social movement activism and the academy. We begin by describing the problems associated with spatial metaphors that reinforce reified generalities whereby 'horizontal' social movements are opposed to hierarchical higher education (HE) institutions. We then give a brief account of DeLanda's (2006) interpretation of the assemblage, focusing on the concepts of immanence and difference, actual and virtual and de- and re-territorialisation. Having described the problem and sketched out the theoretical context, we move on to consider the analytical value of assemblage theory, focusing on the merits of its materialist anti-essentialism. This leads on to a critical discussion of the ways in which speed and mobility are inscribed with normative value in some political readings of assemblage theory. We argue against the temptation to imbue any particular spatial or temporal mode with normative value. Instead, we suggest that an explicit recognition of time as a universal stake in social justice knowledge production helps us to move beyond discourses that reproduce reified oppositions.

Introduction

Given the extent to which academic labour has been colonised by the neoliberal logic, the worth of positioning oneself 'in and against' the academy quite rightly has been posed as a foundational dilemma to be addressed in this special issue. However, in *ephemera's* issue on the 'Excellent Institution', Hoofd (2010) astutely reminds us just how problematic the very terms of this debate are, as binaries such as academy | activism, institution | movement, ivory tower | rhizome, continue to mutually presuppose and reproduce one another in a circular

fashion. Thus, despite the 'unprecedented gulf between theorists of the revolution and its practitioners' routinely lamented by activist-intellectuals' (Graeber, 2002: 61), we share the frustrations of those dissatisfied with aspects of the debates around knowledge production for social justice (e.g. Autonomous Geographies Collective, 2010; Hoofd, 2010), which work to reproduce contingent boundaries and borders and obfuscate important power dynamics as a consequence.

Our contribution to the dialogue is a modest inquiry into the extent to which assemblage theory provides a useful way of challenging such dualisms. Firstly, we name the problem by explaining what is wrong with 'reified generalities' in this context (DeLanda, 2006). Secondly, we give a necessarily brief account of assemblage theory, outlining its key concepts. This allows us to appraise the analytical value of assemblage theory for better understanding the material, and therefore also spatio-temporal, complexities at play in social justice knowledge production. However, there has been a tendency on the Left to ascribe spatio-temporal norms when taking up assemblage theory. In this paper we focus on one particularly prominent valorisation: the combination of speed and nomadism in pursuit of social justice knowledge.

Whilst we recognise that time and mobility are key stakes for any materialist analysis of social justice, we contend that accelerationist (a term that we will go on to explain) accounts of social justice knowledge production wrongly equate slowness with Left anachronism. Moreover, a critical materialist reading of the privileging of speed and nomadism reveals a problematic propensity for social justice activism to become caught in the same capitalist rhythms that compromise Higher Education as a site of emancipatory knowledge. In others words, without normative distortions, assemblage theory can productively work to critique the reified generalities that separate activism from the academy. The final section suggests that one way in which activist/academic knowledge can make common cause is through an incorporation of slow politics, which is in no way incommensurate with the notion of assemblage. Valorising neither slowness nor speed, stasis or mobility, this section calls for proper recognition of the complexity of spatio-temporal conditions that *matter* for generating social justice knowledge.

What's the problem with reified generalities?

Assemblage theorist DeLanda (2006) proposes that a challenge for the Left is to replace analyses based on 'reified generalities' with analyses of populations of concrete assemblages. DeLanda uses the term 'reified generalities' to refer to

abstract concepts (generalities) brought into being through classificatory systems (reified) that spuriously ascribe essential characteristics to what are actually populations of historical singularities. Examples of such commonly invoked reified generalities might be 'the market', 'the state' or 'the academy'. We take this insight as our starting point in this section. The history of debate surrounding the relationship between Left academia and social justice activism provides a window into several issues that remain salient to this special issue on academic labour. For one, there is the issue of the relevance of social movement scholarship to activists. For example, Bevington and Dixon's (2005) influential study suggested that many North American social justice activists do not find academic social movement theory to be particularly insightful or 'operationalisable' in a practical sense. Generally, the criticism of detached social movement scholarship, developed in recent years by numerous activist-intellectuals, has been well received by activist constituencies (e.g. Choudry and Kapoor, 2010; Croteau et al., 2005; Graeber, 2002; Shukaitis et al., 2007).

On the other side of this longstanding debate, and in spite of claims that academic research and theorising into social movements is often 'extractive' (worse still 'parasitic'), several academics have explored the problematic assumption that social justice scholarship must, or should be, spontaneously applicable to the practice of activist constituencies (e.g. Amsler, 2013; Edelman, 2009; Rootes, 1990). Such positions often are rooted in a reasonable scepticism about the instrumentalisation of creative intellectual inquiry, whose utility cannot be known *a priori*.

These debates are certainly nothing new and share an enduring concern with the relationship between the material and the ideational in the context of political reform and revolution. For example, Adorno (critical theorist of the Frankfurt School) writing in 1978, lamented the fact that the Left's rhetorical adoption of the dialectical unity of theory and practice, seemed to inevitably give way in the end to a suspicion that those unwilling to engage at a moment's notice in activist practices are worthy of distrust. In fact, he termed much activism 'pseudo activity' in the sense that participants derive comfort from just doing *something*, regardless of its efficacy.

Although such debates have as much contemporary relevance as ever, our concern lies more with the ways in which commentators problematically position *themselves* and the complex practices that they engage in. Social justice discourse habitually makes use of reified binary opposites such as such 'grassroots' knowledge | 'ivory tower'; knowledge 'from below' | knowledge 'from above'; 'theorists' of the revolution | 'practitioners' of the revolution, and so on. It might be argued that such binaries help us to make important analytical distinctions.

Nevertheless, we have some specific concerns. Social movements and HE institutions are obviously not hermetically sealed spaces of knowledge production. To constantly reinforce such distinctions (tacitly or intentionally), not only masks the complex processes through which knowledge and understanding about/for social justice come about, but also blinds one to the persistent bending of capitalist production (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2006). To assume that one escapes the logic of capital simply through replicating established activist pursuits, serves not only to cloud the complex dynamics through which capital operates, but also to bolster the very structures it purports to circumvent. It's not just that these reified binaries are wrong; rather their active use reterritorialises systems that, in some circumstances, move us further away from understanding the actual material and expressive practices through which social justice might come about.

We begin from the recognition that 'grassroots' organising and in particular, 'horizontality', are not anterior material realities but rather, *discursive* devices which serve to bolster the foundational separation of contemporary movements from stereotypical forms of hierarchy (Juris, 2005; Nunes, 2005). By 'horizontality' we mean the propensity towards forms of organising that avoid hierarchical relationships. In the former case, by invoking the *roots*, social movement discourse often obfuscates *routes* – meaning the pathways that particular individuals have travelled – so that they are equipped to participate in specific social practices codified as 'active'. Often, routes to activism pass through the academy (Morris and Staggenborg, 2004; Rootes, 2004; Rootes, 1995). The following diverse examples illustrate this process.

Firstly, the relocalisation-oriented Transition movement has turned its attention to how local community action in response to climate change and fossil fuel depletion can also address social justice issues. It trades on its 'horizontal' and 'open space' approach to knowledge production (Hopkins, 2011). The spatiality of the movement's knowledge production is premised on a combination of 'grassroots' local community learning and simultaneous rapid 'rhizomatic' knowledge sharing through digital space. Consequently, such discourse distances itself from what is perceived to be 'elite knowledge':

> Everything you read in this book is a result of real work in the real world, with community engagement at its heart. There's not an ivory tower in sight; no professors in musty oak-panelled studies churning out erudite papers. (Hopkins, 2011: 17)

Yet existing studies of this particular movement highlight that it continues to be overwhelmingly composed of the 'civic core'; that is, middle aged and 'well resourced – financially, educationally and with time' (Aiken, 2010: 96).

Moreover, such claims of 'real work' appear to retain a problematic 'humanist dialectic of action and thought' (Hoofd, 2010: 19), in which the former is privileged as emancipatory and self-empowering, and devoid of the exclusivity and discrimination of the institution. To perceive knowledge-through-action, however 'open' without partiality and prejudice, obfuscates power relations.

Secondly, in the context of the alter-globalisation movement, several ethnographic accounts of World Social Forum (WSF) (e.g. Choudry and Kapoor, 2010; Juris, 2005; Nunes, 2005), US Social Forum (USSF) (e.g. Juris, 2008), and European Social Forum (ESF) (e.g. della Porta, 2005) processes have noted how an analogous cultural orientation towards open space and horizontal modes of knowledge production, have obscured the political economy of participation, resulting in exclusionary practices whereby processes become dominated by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and those with the necessary resources and capabilities. Therefore, one is required to already possess particular and privileged abilities in order to simply enter the highly-competitive world of social justice activism. Horizontality and openness are not the radical other to the supposed hierarchy of the institution and its increasingly pervasive neoliberal engine; they are precisely their symptom (Hoofd, 2010).

Various poor peoples' movements are subject to similarly problematic assertions, despite the fact that they often utilise the material and cognitive resources of universities and 'Western' NGOs to further their struggle whilst trying to avoid co-option. Kinchy's (2010) research into farmers' activism against transgenic maize in New Mexico uses the term 'epistemic boomerang' as a metaphor for this kind of process. Alternatively, McFarlane's (2009: 567) ethnographic research reveals how 'many urban social movements in Mumbai are mobilised and led by middle-class activists in positions of relative power, with particular formal educational attainments, connections in government or with donors, and distinct resources that they can draw upon'. As one final example, we offer Gill's (2014) ethnographic study of the Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) shack dwellers movement in Durban, South Africa. Gill's (2014: 215) account of the AbM recognises the tension between the movement's own pedagogical praxis and academics who reinforce vanguardism and 'assume they know better than, or can speak for the poor'. However, AbM activist-intellectuals have cautiously made connections with middle-class academics, locally and through digital technologies, in order to connect their struggle to a wider network of resources and 'engage in mutual learning' (*ibid*.: 216).

What these fairly diverse examples illustrate is that representations of social movements as grassroots/horizontal entities, and universities as archaic and isolated knowledge producing entities are common but untenable, and serve to

obfuscate the ways in which the practice of social justice is materially constrained and mediated by persistent power relations. In what follows, we explore assemblage theory as a way to rethink the relationships between social movements and the academy, in an area which has tended to reassert dualisms, totalities and essential identities.

A brief explanation of assemblage theory

In this section we draw primarily on the assemblage theory of DeLanda (2006), which is derived from the philosophy of Deleuze (1994) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987). As such, we cannot isolate the concept of the assemblage from the broader ontological commitments in this work without diluting to some extent the potency of the ideas (Phillips, 2006). The purpose of this section is simply to outline, in broad terms, important aspects of assemblage theory. As such, we do not focus too heavily on the connections with activism and academia, a fuller discussion of which will follow.

Immanence and difference

DeLanda's work on assemblage is about theorising what he calls 'morphogenesis' (understood as the birth of form, irrespective of whether the entity in question is geological, biological, linguistic, political and so on). Morphogenesis 'gets rid of all transcendent factors using exclusively form-generating resources which are immanent to the material world' (DeLanda, 2002: 10). This foregrounding of immanence over transcendence is grounded in the Deleuzian concept of difference as a process (Deleuze, 1994). For DeLanda, Deleuze 'conceives difference not negatively, as lack of resemblance, but positively or productively, as that which drives a dynamical process' (2002: 4). In other words, difference is the process through which things *differentiate and become what they are* through relations with each other, rather than an abstract set of categorisations by which things are classified (by 'us') as *different from*. '[I]nstead of something distinguished from something else', Deleuze 'imagine[s] something which distinguishes itself' (1994: 28).

In order to foreground immanence, DeLanda (2006) sets up an analytical opposition between 'relations of interiority' and 'relations of exteriority' as ways of thinking about wholes, structures, or bodies (call them what you will). Within the terms of this opposition, two further fundamental distinctions are respectively derived: these are logical obligation and contingent obligation. Relations of interiority are logically obliged in the sense that the relationships between 'parts' are 'logically necessary' to make the organism function as a structured totality. Both Hegelian dialectics and structuralism are positioned as

archetypal modes of thinking in which relations of interiority are foundational, and where 'the entities themselves are the absolutes, and all relations between them are merely accidental' (Shaviro, 2007).

In opposition, DeLanda (2006) suggests *relations of exteriority*, which require a shift from focussing on the *properties* of components in the system, towards an additional concern for *capacities*, that is, potential linkages and connections with elements outside of the 'body' in question. The way that both properties and capacities are conceived here is crucial, because it provides assemblage theory with the means to avoid deterministic positions. An entity can retain properties that are not defined entirely from its current set of relations, and these properties can be understood to derive from previous relational states. As such, properties are understood to be contingently obligatory 'all the way down', rather than essential. An entity is therefore not entirely determined by an outside, and nor is it governed solely by intrinsic properties. In other words, the 'things' of the world do not have essence, only a continual production through co-constitutive relations, or 'becoming', and nor are they thought to derive exclusively from any present configuration of relations. Capacities are the means through which relations can happen, and are contingent. In other words, an entity's potential to relate in a certain way must be matched by another entity's potential to receive the particularities of that relationship. New relations require corresponding capacities, and this allows assemblage theory to acknowledge both the potentials and limits of change, and to identify the specifics of such eventualities. In such ways, acknowledging both the properties and capacities of entities, bodies, or structures provides the conceptual means to interrogate the complexity of given situations, rather than rely on the abstract ideals and norms offered by the kinds of generalities discussed previously.

Our contention is that the generalities 'activism' and 'academia' appear to structure and maintain divisions between singular assemblages, and that the assemblage requires us to actively engage with the broad and complex processes that impinge upon and shape them. Assemblage theory encourages us to be specific: to consider what might be engrained properties, hardened through important historical relations, as well as what might be capacities for new associations and structural change. In this sense, we cannot begin with the 'academy' and 'social movement activism' as predetermined, distinct, and bounded categories, but rather we have to work through the processes of differentiation through which they have been *produced* as such, as well as the important avenues through which relational change might occur. In this way, proponents suggest that assemblage theory is not abstract theorising, but rather the attempt to take specific and tangible factors into account. Rather than relying on generalised terms to denote difference, the focus shifts to exploring *how*

difference has come about, and in such a way, perhaps work more productively towards influencing the kind of differences we want to see come about in the future. This is an important point to stress here, because that which we call 'the academy' and that which we might term 'social movement activism' *are* different in important ways. However, we must recognise that that difference is not because of an abstract measure of an ideal state in either case, but because of processes of differentiation. In other words, institutions have *become* hardened and standardised around particular formalities and hierarchies, and these processes of differentiation are identical to those that have produced the customs and patterns associated with social movements. The very point of defining difference in this way is to get closer to what is possible and what is not possible in terms of change. If we maintain reified generalities, we are less inclined to recognise where and how the institution and the movement might actively and productively transform, especially in terms of their relations with each other.

Actual and virtual

An important nuance to highlight, and the substantive difference between the relations of exteriority and interiority of the assemblage, is that the analogy of the 'network' is not quite enough. The assemblage is not merely a set of determinable relations between identifiable things, but a theory that attempts to account for the actual *and the virtual* (Phillips, 2006). In other words, the assemblage is a set of relations that includes the *potential* encapsulated in the idea of capacity. We suggest that this is of central importance in critically assessing assemblage theory here, because potential, or more accurately the limitations and possibilities for *the virtual becoming actual*, is the site at which social justice praxis could productively operate. DeLanda articulates the notion of capacity in terms of 'degrees of freedom' (2006), attesting to the idea that the ability to relate remains a site of productive potential, but also signalling that one has to acknowledge the substantive limitations structured-in through previous relations that have shaped and affected the entities themselves.

This concern for leaving open the potential for productive change is met, we suggest, in the actual and virtual structure of the assemblage. Where reified generalities tend to maintain categorisations in which transcendent models serve as the measure and limit of what one is considering – here the educational institution and the social movement – then the scope for action is significantly constrained. If one already assumes a particular definition of the 'university', against which any actual conditions are to be measured, the possibilities for one's creative action seem to be confined by the boundaries of the transcendent form. The advantage of the actual and virtual ontology described here is that, to

paraphrase the Deleuzian take on Spinoza, 'we don't know what a university or a movement can do'. What is virtual, and what can be rendered actual through cohering capacities, remains unknown, and therefore an affirmative space for pursuing social justice praxis.

The pragmatics of the assemblage as actual-and-virtual comes to the fore here: assemblages must be created not discovered. In other words, we must recognise that this 'virtual' we have been speaking of is, in part, conditioned through the ways that assemblage is brought into being. A crucial part of this bringing-into-being is 'who' might be doing that, and this importantly enfolds the subject of research with the object of enquiry. Any identified assemblage is not an objective state, but a contingent set of relations brought into being through particular circumstances. Critically, this foregrounds responsibility for the ways that debates are framed. Assemblage theory therefore encourages us to bring into being the kind of activism and social justice one wants to make actual, rather than, through the very same process, to produce unhelpful differences, incommensurable distinctions, and insurmountable disparities. Indeed, we might then say that the claim of transcendent differences between the academy and social movement activism might be interpreted as the very 'fatalism' so often assumed of the 'post-modern' and 'post-structuralist' orientations attributed to assemblage theory.

Turning to the specific theme of this paper, we can say that assemblage theory encourages one to perceive entities such as the educational institution and the social movement as *made actual* through persistent relational activity. However, what is made actual and what is not, and thus what these entities or systems manifest as at any given moment, is determined by the virtual. As we have seen, the appeal of DeLanda's (2006) rendition of assemblage theory here is in the way we can account for the specific limitations and possibilities in this movement from the virtual to the actual. The academy and the social movement have properties that make them distinct, and these properties also define what domains of the virtual are open to becoming actual.

Territorialisation

Importantly, we also need to introduce the notion of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, through which assemblage theory provides a useful analysis of the processes of assemblage formation that we have been describing above. DeLanda (2006) situates these processes on a continuum: at one end we have the assemblage forming through homogenisation; material and expressive processes which standardise and regulate, and which require an analysis immanent to the qualitative and scalar particularities of any given assemblage. At

the other end of the axis we have processes that operationalize heterogeneity; destabilising commonality and establishing difference. It is important to emphasise a literal (as opposed to metaphorical) interpretation of territorialisation here: the colonisation or devolution of social movements and the academy, for example, must be considered in spatial and material terms.

For example, HE institutions as orderings of human bodies within brick and mortar campuses are deterritorialised through digital technologies on the one hand, and are reterritorialised on the other, as distance learning programmes and massive open online courses (MOOCs) offer new avenues for institutional market expansion. This is a complex dynamic, as the perceived materiality of the campus frequently *expresses* historical and cultural clout ('traditional authority') that legitimates the enterprise that the distance learner engages with (Bayne et al., 2014). At the same time, the campus continues to act as a concentrated spatial ordering of bodies necessary to reproduce 'bureaucratic authority'. In other words, it is doubtful that the institutional assemblage could function if its core staff were dispersed over long distances in different cities and countries. Within the institution, the physical co-location of small teams in marginal programmes (as is often the case in the social sciences and humanities) is often pivotal, as rationales for overcoming so-called 'silo' mentalities and increasing 'cross-pollination' are used to justify 'divide and rule' management tactics.

This has the potential to be compounded by moves towards shifting modular content to online modes of delivery. On the other hand, marginalised teams might have small 'degrees of freedom' to use 'internationalisation' and 'e-learning' agendas as opportunities to widen their constituency and develop trans-local and trans-national solidarity with students and academics who share particular commitments in relation to social justice. It is within these ambivalent spaces that opportunities for collaboration with social movement constituencies may exist.

In summary then, there are three important terms we need to clarify by way of defining assemblage theory, and specifically why it might be important to our considerations of activism and the academy. Firstly, we need to think about difference differently; not as a way of comparing things according to abstract categories, but rather as the process through which things change through immanent relations. This would encourage us not to think about activism and academia as self-identical ideas differing from one another, or as dialectical opposites, which may or may not be synthesised. Secondly, the set of relations in an assemblage must be considered to span both actual and virtual connections, thus allowing for a coherent analysis of the potentials and limitations for change. This is particularly important for recognising the ways in which activism and the

academy can identify common causes, and acknowledge the specific kind of relations that might lead to productive transformations. Thirdly, processes of de- and re-territorialisation allow us to take account of the complex contexts through which things form through sameness, or change through difference. In the context of assembling social justice knowledge, this means paying particular attention to the material and expressive processes that seek to de-territorialise particular assemblages whilst re-territorialising others. Having outlined key concepts from assemblage theory, the following sections will further assess its value in the context of social justice, activism and academia.

The analytical value of assemblage theory

In order to further understand the analytical import of assemblage theory and its key propositions outlined above, we must begin with the specific manner in which it combines *materialist* analysis with ontological commitments to anti-essentialism and realism. We do not need assemblage theory to deconstruct the linguistic categories 'activist', 'academy' and their various conceptual analogues, as articulated in the above section on reified generalities. Poststructuralist arguments in this vein are well established. Whilst such endeavours ostensibly remain within the remit of 'semiotic politics', assemblage theory encourages us to move towards what assemblage theorist Levi Bryant (2014) calls 'thermodynamic politics'. This approach, Bryant argues, is a 'form of political engagement', which targets an assemblage's material 'sources of energy and capacity for work' – essentially through mapping its degrees of freedom – in order to further social justice struggles. In other words, while assemblage theory and poststructuralism share an anti-essentialist stance, the difference lies in the emphasis on *materiality* in the former, and specifically how accounting for this dimension sharpens the analytical critique. A general position that assemblage theorists share is that the 'linguistic turn' taken by Left intellectuals has had deleterious effects on the production of effective social justice knowledge and, in any case, is 'confused about what it is doing' (Bryant, 2014: 73).

In what sense is this claimed to be the case? The first half of this critique addresses what assemblage theorist DeLanda (2006) calls 'macro reductionism'. This position states that organising around big reified generalities is ineffectual since such generalities do not explain but require explanation. For example, Bryant (2014: 186-97) notes contemporary assemblage theorists' dissatisfaction with what he calls 'occult' explanations of events and processes where it seems that black boxed 'social forces' are offered as pseudo-causes without the need to show the manifold *material* mediations – 'powerlines, televisions, coal burning

power plants, governments, people' (*ibid.*: 190) – that properly constitute the social realm.

Secondly, at the other end of the spectrum we find the dismissal of both 'micro reductionism' and anthropocentrism. As Bryant puts it:

> [s]emiotic politics is confused in that it is premised on producing change through ethical persuasion, and thereby assumes that institutional machines [...] are open to the same sorts of communicative flows as *humans* [...] Persuading a corporation through ethical appeals is about as effective as trying to explain calculus to a cat. (2014: 73)

In other words, effective social justice knowledge should attempt to generate a form of sensitivity towards the kinds of expressive and material functions that work to de- or re-territorialise any given assemblage. 'Semiotic politics' are therefore merely part of the expressive function of assemblages undergoing ongoing processes of de- and re-territorialisation. DeLanda (2006: 62), in his discussion of the 'territorialising' effects of language argues that 'activists trying to change a given category are not negotiating over meanings, as if changing the semantic content of a word automatically meant a real change in the opportunities and risks faced by a given social group, but over access to resources (income, education, health services) and relief from constraints'.

One might conclude that this amounts to a statement of the obvious masquerading as insight. Yet we are tempted to suggest that something like 'thermodynamic politics' and an acknowledgement of materiality, is useful insofar as it calls our attention to the relationship between spatial, temporal and energetic requirements of social justice knowledge production. In doing so, it arguably exposes the idealist scholasticism of some variants of 'semiotic' ideology critique. People, imbricated as they are in particular material conditions, firstly have to reckon with the obstacles of time poverty, lack of access to common public space, and cognitive and affective exhaustion before tussling with their 'interpolation' into whichever ideological edifice 'distorts' their reality (Bryant, 2014: 174). In other words, *actual* material conditions and limitations are enfolded in, and restrict any *virtual* capacities for change that might be brought about through critical awareness. As a consequence, materialist theories of social justice must consider time and space as a key stakes since space-time unproductive of exchange value might always be used to question the configuration of dominant social assemblages.

This, if we follow the arguments of assemblage theorists, it opens up a sensibility that addresses different concerns to those generated by 'semiotic politics'. For example, Emejulu and Bassel's (2015) empirical research provides insight into

the material – and therefore spatio-temporal and energetic – impacts of austerity on minority women in relation to 'creative political work' against it. We can see this relationship between time, space and exhaustion in the following quote from 'a Scottish Pakistani woman volunteering at a minority women-led community organisation in Glasgow':

> We've got a lot of stuff we have to do. Like the kids' breakfast and stuff, it's mainly us women that are doing it. Bringing and dropping them off at schools, even at the mosque, that's mainly women that's doing that. So it [cuts to services] does [have an impact], it quite tires a woman out. When it comes to the weekend when you want to spend time with the kids more, you're more reluctant, [you want] to be staying in bed. (*ibid.:* 89)

As blogger James put it so well in the context of precarious information work

> [i]f a worker spends 8 hours of her day at work, operating in two temporalities via her body and her immersion in a disembodying digital temporality [...] [c]hronic overstimulation and under nutrition mean her brain is burned out, exhausted, and she must get to bed rather than crack open a copy of *Capital* or *Hatred of Democracy*. (2013)

Therefore, some more 'lines of flight' in relation to understanding the 'virtual capacity' for social justice knowledge assemblages might, for example, involve inquiry into: the cognitive fatigue generated by prolonged periods of mundane data entry work and digital overstimulation; the ways in which new forms of time discipline are imposed, particularly where digital technologies blur the distinctions between production/consumption, work/leisure; and sleep itself as a site of struggle, under '24/7' global capitalism (Crary, 2013). Many more such questions could, and should, be asked that all materially relate space, time and energy to issues of social justice knowledge production. Arguably, assemblage theory provides one such analytical 'lens' for doing so. A detailed exposition of how this might look in particular circumstances lies outside the scope of this discussion. Our modest aim here is to make clear a general sense of the approach in this context to generate further discussion.

At this point, it is worth re-emphasising that the utility of assemblage theory in this context is analytical rather than normative. The question of whether or not any normative implications can be extrapolated from assemblage theory, as we have summarised it, takes us into an altogether more difficult and contentious terrain. Although this is a complex question, what we limit ourselves to discussing here are the ways in which some popular political readings of assemblage theory after Deleuze and Guattari, ascribe normative value to becoming over permanence, to mobility over stasis, speed over slowness and so on. For example, Foucault's reading of Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory raised nomadism to the level of an ethical imperative: 'Believe that what is

productive is not sedentary but nomadic' (Foucault cited in Buchanan, 2011: 11). What is interesting is the way in which these preferences are given normative context in a precisely *materialist* context. This normative privileging of speed and nomadism plays a key role in reproducing the reified generalities that we have identified as problematic.

Speed and mobility as normative categories in assemblage theory: A critical intervention

This section critically explores the relationship between assemblage theory and the notion that the generation of social justice knowledge might emerge from a techno-infused rapidity. It is generally known that Deleuze regarded the proper role of philosophy as the generation of new ideas. To the extent that this is also a prime task for the social justice oriented Left, it is instructive to ground the claims in this section by clarifying Deleuze (and Guattari's) view of the relationship between creativity, speed and nomadism.

It has been suggested that some of the interpretive challenges of reading Deleuze are down to the fact that he wrote using a kind of impatient shorthand. For example, DeLanda (2006) usefully points out that Deleuze's work becomes clearer if we take his use of 'affect' to simply mean 'capacity to affect and be affected'. Particularly in *A thousand plateaus*, there is often a particular relationship between speed and mobility, where the 'concept' is understood to be a 'vector', meaning 'the point of application of a force moving through space at a given velocity in a given direction' (Massumi cited in Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: xii). There is a sense in which the *qualitatively new* is sought after through an attempt to escape the 'abstract idea' by creating the conditions for processes of rapid bricolage. Deleuze and Guattari together use *A thousand plateaus* itself as a thought experiment in the sense that its concepts are immanent to this logic. To offer just one example:

> Make rhizomes, not roots, never plant! Don't sow, grow offshoots! [...] Run lines, never plot a point! Speed turns the point into a line! Be quick, even when standing still! Line of chance, line of hips, line of flight. Don't bring out the General in you! Don't have just ideas, just have an idea (Godard). Have short-term ideas. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 2-3)

Nevertheless, in their last writing together Deleuze and Guattari (2015) reflected on the tensions between this orientation towards speed, nomadism and the consequences of corporeal limits; specifically, anxiety and depression. Thus, it is not so much the work of Deleuze and Guattari *per se*, so much as the ways in

which a particular 'vector' of their own thought has been developed by succeeding Left intellectuals who have made an '-ism' out of acceleration.

Accelerationists (e.g. Mackay and Avanessian, 2014; Williams and Srnicek, 2013) believe that the generation of emancipatory knowledge is suppressed by the pernicious 'folk' tendencies of the Left. Instead, accelerationists start from the premise that the Left must move closer towards the temporality of techno-capitalism and harness its 'deterritorialising' forces for egalitarian ends. That is, the technologies and productive forces unleashed by capitalism should be accelerated beyond the 'value system, governance structures and mass pathologies' of 'late capitalism' in a process of globalisation 'from below' (Williams and Srnicek, 2013). As Cunningham (2015) highlights in his critical engagement with accelerationist thought, a line can be drawn here from Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage thinking, through 'cyberpunk' culture and to the present 'theoretical enterprises that aim to conceptualise the future outside of traditional critiques and regressive, decelerative or restorative solutions' (Mackay and Avanessian, 2014: 10).

Accelerationists argue that traditional socio-political assemblages are ineffectual in the face of phenomena such as high-frequency trading algorithms that exceed the temporality, and therefore agency, of human thought as well as political and democratic processes (e.g. Rosa, 2015; Williams and Srnicek, 2013). An implication for accelerationists is that social justice knowledge must emerge from, and take account of, 'thermodynamic politics' (Bryant, 2014), which as we have outlined above is fundamentally about understanding the ways in which human 'social' agency is enmeshed with, and inseparable from, wider ecologies of matter in order to produce better maps for intervention. Yet beyond this analytical bent, who is the subject of the 'accelerationist' future? Where are the silences and what does this mean for an 'assemblage theory' reading of the relationship between activist and academic knowledge production?

Arguably, this is just part of a broader narrative tendency within Left intelligentsia that moves too quickly to naively posit the immanent self-organisation of digitally mediated social justice-oriented assemblages. In moving too quickly towards such grand narratives, the classed, gendered and raced social relations, which capitalism depends upon, are obfuscated. The implicit subject seems to be one at ease in an environment of rapid constant technological change, able to exist, adapt, 'become' within capital's 'deterritorialising' tendencies.

We see no justification for imbuing speed and mobility with normative tendencies just as we see no logical connection between speed, mobility and

creativity in the context of social justice knowledge production. If the 'virtual' potential for such utopian assemblages is misrecognised as 'actual' then how do the protagonists of such discourse avoid the dangers of moving towards a techno-vanguardism which merely hardens perceived differences between the 'grassroots' knowledge of the have-nots and the 'elite' knowledge of the haves?

Avoiding this isn't only a matter of a privileged Left making common cause with those less privileged. The simplification of the tendency towards a multitude of singularities acting in unison also fails to adequately reckon with the ideological work that would have to occur for those 'virtual' privileged change agents to recognise their potential in such terms as agents operating both 'in and against' flexible capitalism. The idea of the nomadic subject is easily conflated with what Boltanksi and Chiapello (2006) call the 'new spirit of capitalism': networked, flexible, constantly 'becoming', but resilient where it counts in the face of external pressure (Zizek, 2004). Boltanski and Chiapello's (2006) basic proposition is that initially an anti-capitalist 'artistic critique' of alienation and cultural authenticity promulgated by new social movements emerging in the late 1960s was easily co-opted by an emergent 'new managerial order':

> This 'ideal typical' figure is a nomadic 'network-extender', mobile, tolerant of difference and ambivalence [...] Those lacking the requisite flexibility, who cannot become the nodal point of various networks, thus generating the necessary activity, or otherwise engage, communicate, market, innovate, add value, and so on and so forth, have little hope of success. (Du Gay and Morgan, 2013: 24)

In this context, the mobile and time-rich are likely to succeed in activist as much as in academic milieus. Of course, their time and mobility in each context is underwritten by the reproduction of material infrastructures by an equally precarious, but necessarily immobile lower-skilled workforce. Ironically, in this version of events, the elevation of normative aspects of assemblage theory (the 'nomad', the 'rhizome') to the level of 'reified generality' emerged not from materialist critique but an abandonment of it (Du Gay and Morgan, 2013; Zizek, 2004).

At this point in the argument, we might re-emphasise our view that that there is no necessary connection between assemblage thinking and good or bad spatio-temporalities. For example, the mobility of capital across borders and physical mobility of bodies across borders have very different ethical implications. Rather than hitch our wagon to particular spatial or temporal modes, assemblage thinking might be productive in restricting itself to an analysis of the material dynamics of knowledge production. Thus, we find it important to stress that this is not a call to reify slowness as the ultimate condition required for an emancipatory form of academic scholarship. That would be to retain the

problematic oppositional stance that this paper is attempting to overcome. Our point is to call for recognition of the value of slowness to scholarship, as part of a necessarily complex dynamic that involves both accelerated and decelerated momentum. However, in the closing section, we would like to provide a corrective to the normative excesses of speed and mobility in some interpretations of assemblage theory by drawing attention to the universality of time as a key stake in social justice knowledge production.

Time for social justice knowledge production

It is surely an uncontentious fact that one of the common effects of poverty is to be trapped in the tyranny of the moment, which has deleterious consequences for long-term critical and creative thinking. On the other hand, received wisdom would have it that academics have space and time to think and reflect. Whilst we by no means are trying to justify detached scholarship through making dubious equivalences between academics and the oppressed, we would like to argue that time is a key stake for the production of emancipatory knowledge in any context.

Social movement occupations are partially so threatening to the status quo because they disrupt particular rhythms of capitalist assemblages on a localised scale. It is worth speculating whether 'network society' evangelists have gotten it precisely the wrong way round: does the growth of the digital commons signal a tentative 'actualisation' of 'virtual' post-capitalist social arrangements? Or does the speed at which their 'offline' manifestations are dissolved by state-corporate power (such as seen in various Occupy encampments) not tell us something about the fact that digital spaces can proliferate as much as they like as long as there are no limiting factors to their production that infringe on the generation of profit?

Even network society utopian Castells (2012: 169) has recently conceded that contemporary social justice movements such as Occupy and the 15-M movement are at least partially about egalitarian access to what he himself has called 'parentheses' in frenetic rhythms of capital accumulation as experienced in every life. This has a dual aspect: on the one hand, they literally (if only on a micro scale) disrupt the material (and therefore spatial, temporal and energetic) flows that ensure these rhythms; on the other hand, they have been commonly described as 'prefigurative' movements. This phrase is significant because what it draws attention to is precisely the relationship between the generation of emancipatory knowledge and the material need for assemblages that, through deterritorialising urban space-times, are marked by stasis and deceleration rather than speed and hypermobility. To put it in assemblage language, the *material*

functions of occupations are simultaneously *expressive* in the sense that merely occupying particular urban spaces starkly reveals patterns of ownership, the sociomaterial organisation of power, and its lack of tolerance for the disruption of urban rhythms normally dominated by the need to be, above all, *productive of exchange value*. Since control over the production and use of urban space is an issue directly affecting all urbanites, challenges directed at the organisers of space generate all manner of unlikely alliances and relationships. Under such circumstances, participants and bystanders cannot help but learn in and from such activity in unpredictable ways. In other words, such processes are educative in simply revealing the sheer lack of public space, time and resources available for engagement in collective non-commodified cultural and intellectual activity.

To highlight another example touched on above, the Transition Towns movement explicitly connects knowledge production and collective learning with energy descent (moving away from fossil fuel reliance), relocalisation and *slowing down* the pace of daily life. And to return to just one more example discussed previously, the lack of time and space for collective intellectual inquiry is a perpetual challenge for poor peoples' movements such as the AbM (Gill, 2014: 215).

One urgent task for social justice activists and educators is to find ways to articulate these connections between diverse movements and between activism and the academy. It is not our purpose here to further rehearse observations and arguments around academic intensification (which we assume are well known, particularly to the readership of this special issue). Rather it is to highlight the task of making common cause and to think about the role that assemblage thinking might play.

The neoliberalisation of HE and an uncritical embrace of digital technology are two intertwined strands of the 'accelerating' academy. One way of explaining the pernicious effects on academic knowledge production is to use Erikson's (2001) distinction between 'fast time' and 'slow time' in the context of his work on the 'tyranny of the moment' in the 'information age'. The tyranny of the moment refers to a state of frenetic standstill, a perpetual present, and its ideal typical mode of knowledge production becomes one of rapid 'vertical stacking', which threatens the collective endeavour for coherence. This is compounded with the increasing casualisation of academic staff. The pernicious implications for social justice knowledge production and creative inquiry are obvious, as depth and duration of collective engagement diminishes, and in so doing, prevents the territorialisation of such assemblages in institutional contexts.

However, it is important to emphasise that the 'tyranny of the moment' is not strictly something new to the advent of 'network time': as touched on above, people living in poverty know all about the tyranny of the moment as dealing with perpetual crises, and working long hours for unfair wages, rob one of time and energy for engagement in emancipatory politics. Here (around the universal recognition of time as a key stake) is the opportunity for mutual learning and mutual engagement, which might help to dissolve unhelpful reified generalities. But this involves precisely the kind of assemblage thinking, which connects the lived concerns and material circumstances of the *entire* institutional assemblage (catering staff, technicians, students, cleaning staff, academics, administrative staff, security their various unions and so on) with the various kinds of social movements to which we have alluded. *One* way of approaching this is through finding common cause with, and catalysing processes of learning between, various 'slow movements'. In 2010, a 'Slow Science' academy was founded in Germany, whose manifesto states for example:

> We do need time to think. We do need time to digest. We do need time to misunderstand each other, especially when fostering lost dialogue between humanities and natural sciences. We cannot continuously tell you what our science means; what it will be good for; because we simply don't know yet. (Slow Science Academy, 2010)

In the same way that the Slow Food movement has argued for slowness as important to food 'excellence', Brian Treanor's (2006) manifesto for the 'Slow University' and Hartman and Darab's (2012) arguments for 'slow scholarship' might be marshalled in the context of the euphemistic 'excellence' regime of contemporary HE. However, as we have argued, it is important that we do not fetishise 'fastness' or 'slowness' in lieu of an analysis of social relations under particular economic arrangements. In Martell's (2014) critical engagement with the concept of slow scholarship, he asks two crucial questions: 'what is slow actually about?' and 'who can go slow?'. In attempting to answer the first question, Martell argues that 'slow' lumps together several arguments about the corporatisation of HE, the role of digital technology in capitalism and 'employer power over labour'. The second question is, in our view, absolutely key. It is key because it urges caution over voluntarist arguments that are as salient for academic labour as they are for social justice movements. It recognises that 'go slow' is often code for 'I have money to take time' (Martell, 2014). Moreover, as education trade unions have increasingly recognised, actions short of strike such as the 'go slow', whilst available for some in secure employment, are increasingly unavailable for academics in precarious employment and on 'zero hours' contracts.

Treanor's 2008 postscript to his manifesto contains some interesting reflection on his limited success in claiming 'slow time' to create a 'robust intellectual community'. Although it recognises institutional constraints, it is written as though it is simply a matter of personal choice to slow down. Lacking is much sense of the urgent need to connect with other social movements (actually not by analogy) and trade unions since this is a fundamentally political act. It is true that the 'excellent institution' doesn't recognise risk, indeterminacy and failure as necessary components of the creative engine of academic inquiry. However, recognising this means that academics should be prepared to, for example, stand alongside and vocally support 'prefigurative' movements like Occupy, whose protestors were pilloried in the popular media for their lack of programmatic demands. Morevoer, these protestors would have to work to find ways to act on the recognition that the time and resources *to* occupy are privileged capacities not accessible to those parts of the '99%' they symbolically claim to speak for.

Concluding remarks

We began this essay by explaining why we speak poorly when we couch debates about academic labour in terms of 'activism' and the 'academy'. Such reified generalities were shown to continually resurface in contemporary debates, too often representing social movements as horizontal planes of a-hierarchical relations, and institutions as archaic, inaccessible and sedentary. We suggested assemblage theory as a way of rethinking the dualist relationships habitually assumed between social movements and the academy. We defined assemblage theory through the concepts of *immanence and difference*, *actual and virtual*, and *territorialisation*, drawing principally on the work of DeLanda (2006). We elaborated on the analytical value of this theory, and emphasised the importance of the *materialist* perspectives, alongside a more-established anti-essentialist theoretical position. The key point here is that assemblages must be understood as more-than-the-social. Therefore, we must understand the linguistic categories 'activism' and 'academy' to *require explanation*, rather than serving to explain the complex human and non-human relations that combine to produce the conditions they supposedly represent. Furthermore, we must also recognise that such complex assemblages cannot simply respond as if they were rational social entities.

While we maintain that assemblage theory provides the theoretical means to penetrate the often complex spatio-temporal and energetic aspects of social life, in the final sections of the paper we highlighted the problematic tendency to adopt normative positions amongst some proponents of the theory. Specifically, we highlighted the predominance of movement in material space over fixity, for

'rhizomatic' material arrangements over 'arborescent' ones, and for speed over slowness. We suggest assemblage theory to have significant potential for pushing forward our understandings of the relationships between educational institutions and social movements. However we caution against such normative inclinations, through which oppositional orientations are maintained rather than questioned. Speed elitism and nomadism too often promise a utopic escape from the material conditions through which social justice knowledge might be pursued. Chiefly, we highlight the tendency to valorise digital networks for their spatio-temporal capacities to amplify collective learning and action in ways that are liberated from hierarchical modes of institutional knowledge production (e.g. Castells, 2012).

Ultimately, we call for social justice activists and educators to find ways to articulate the material – that is spatio-temporal and energetic – connections *between* diverse movements and *between* activism and the academy, and it is in this pursuit that assemblage theory can be productively put to use.

references

Adorno, T. (1978) 'Resignation', *Telos*, 35(Spring): 165-168.

Aiken, G. (2010) 'Community transitions to low-carbon futures in the Transition Town Network (TTN)', *Geography Compass*, 6(2): 89-99.

Amsler, S. (2013) 'Sarah Amsler on critical pedagogy, critical theory and critical hope', in S. Cowden and G. Singh (eds.) *Acts of knowing: Critical pedagogy in, against and beyond the university*. London: Bloomsbury.

Autonomous Geographies Collective (2010) 'Beyond scholar activism: Making strategic interventions inside and outside the neoliberal university', *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 9(2): 245-275.

Bayne, S., M.S. Gallagher and J. Lamb (2014) 'Being "at" university: The social topologies of distance students', *Higher Education*, 67(5): 569-583.

Bevington, D. and C. Dixon (2005) 'Movement-relevant theory: Rethinking social movement scholarship and activism', *Social Movement Studies*, 4(3): 185-208.

Boltanski, L. and E. Chiapello (2006) *The new spirit of capitalism*. London: Verso.

Bryant, L. (2014) *Onto-cartography: An ontology of machines and media*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Buchanan, I. (2011) 'Deleuze and ethics', *Deleuze Studies*, 5, supplement: 7-20.

Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the internet age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Choudry, A. and D. Kapoor (eds.) (2010) *Learning from the ground up: Global perspectives on social movements and knowledge production*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Crary, J. (2013) *24/7: Late capitalism and the ends of sleep*. London: Verso.

Croteau, D., W. Hoynes and C. Ryan (eds.) (2005) *Rhyming hope and history: Activists, academics and social movement scholarship*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Cunningham, D. (2015) 'A marxist heresy? Accelerationism and its discontents'. *Radical Philosophy*, 191(May/June): 29-38.

DeLanda, M. (2002) *Intensive science and virtual philosophy*. London: Continuum.

DeLanda, M. (2006) *A new philosophy of society: Assemblage theory and social complexity*. London: Continuum.

Deleuze, G. (1994) *Difference and repetition*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (1987) *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (2015) *What is philosophy?* London: Verso.

della Porta, D. (2005) 'Making the polis: Social forums and democracy in the global justice movement', *Mobilization: An International Journal*, 10(1): 73-94.

Du Gay, P. and G. Morgan (2013) 'New spirits of Capitalism? Crises, justifications and dynamics', in P. Du Gay and G. Morgan (eds.) *New spirits of capitalism? Crises, justifications and dynamics*. Oxford Scholarship Online.

Edelman, M. (2009) 'Synergies and tensions between rural social movements and professional researchers', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36(1): 245-265.

Emejulu, A. and L. Bassel (2015) 'Minority women, austerity and activism', *Race & Class*, 57(2): 86-95.

Eriksen, T.H. (2001) *Tyranny of the moment: Fast and slow time in the information age*. London: Pluto Press.

Gill, G. (2014) 'Knowledge practices in the Abahlali baseMjondolo', *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements*, 6(1): 211-229.

Graeber, D. (2002) 'The New Anarchists', *New Left Review*, 13(Jan-Feb): 61-73.

Hartman, Y. and S. Darab (2012) 'A call for slow scholarship: A case study on the intensification of academic life and its implications for pedagogy', *Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies*, 34(1-2): 49-60.

Hoofd, I. (2010) 'The accelerated university: Activist-academic alliances and simulation of thought', *ephemera*, 10(1): 7-24.

Hopkins, R. (2011) *The Transition companion: Making your community more resilient in uncertain times*. Totnes: Green Books.

James, A. (2013) 'Time (without monads)'. [http://attemptsatliving.wordpress.com/2013/05/06/time-without-monads]

Juris, J.S. (2005) 'Social Forums and their margins: Networking logics and the cultural politics of autonomous space', *ephemera*, 5(2): 253-272.

Juris, J.S. (2008) 'Spaces of intentionality: Race, class and horizontality at the United States Social Forum', *Mobilization: An International Journal*, 13(4): 353-371.

Kinchy, A. (2010) 'Epistemic boomerang: Expert policy advice as leverage in the campaign against transgenic maize in Mexico', *Mobilization*, 15(2): 179-198.

Mackay, R and A. Avanessian (2014) *#ACCELERATE: The accelerationist reader*. Falmouth: Urbanomic.

Martell, L. (2014) 'The slow university: Inequality, power and alternatives', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 15(3). [http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/2223/3692#g7]

McFarlane, C. (2009) 'Translocal assemblages: Space, power and social movements', *Geoforum*, 40(4): 561-567.

Morris, A.D. and S. Staggenborg (2004) 'Leadership in social movements', in D.A Snow, S.A Soule and H. Kriesi (eds.) *The Blackwell companion to social movements*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Nunes, J.A. (2005) 'Networks, open spaces, horizontality: Instantiations', *ephemera*, 5(2): 297-318.

Phillips, J. (2006) 'Agencement / Assemblage', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23(2-3): 108-109.

Rootes, C. (1990) 'Theory for social movements: Theory of social movements', *Philosophy and Social Action*, 16(4): 5-17.

Rootes, C. (1995) 'A new class? The higher educated and the new politics', in L. Maheu (ed.) *Social movements and social classes: The future of collective action*. London: SAGE.

Rootes, C. (2004) 'Environmental movements', in D.A Snow, S.A. Soule and H. Kriesi (eds.) *The Blackwell companion to social movements*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Rosa, H. (2013) *Social acceleration: A new theory of modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Shaviro, S. (2007) 'DeLanda, A new philosophy of society'. [http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=541]

Shukatis, S., D. Graeber and E. Biddle (eds.) (2007) *Constituent imagination: Militant investigations, collective theorisation*. Oakland: AK Press.

Slow Science Academy (2010) 'The slow science manifesto'. [http://slow-science.org/]

Treanor, B. (2006) 'Slow university: A manifesto'. [http://faculty.lmu.edu/briantreanor/slow-university-a-manifesto/]

Treanor, B. (2008) 'Slow university: A Manifesto—Postscript'. [http://faculty.lmu.edu/briantreanor/slow-university-a-manifesto/]

Williams, A. and N. Srnicek (2013) '#ACCELERATE MANIFESTO for an accelerationist politics', *Critical Legal Thinking*. [http://criticallegalthinking.com/2013/05/14/accelerate-manifesto-for-an-accelerationist-politics/]

Zizek, S. (2004) *Organs without bodies: On Deleuze and consequences*. London: Routledge.

the authors

Dr Callum McGregor is a Lecturer in Education at the University of Edinburgh with particular teaching interests in social justice education and critical pedagogies. His research focuses on the relationship between social movement activism and education.
Email: callum.mcgregor@ed.ac.uk

Dr Jeremy Knox is a Lecturer in Digital Education at the University of Edinburgh and a core member of the Digital Cultures in Education research group. His research is in the area of open and online education, and is grounded in critical approaches to pedagogy, technology, higher education and culture.
Email: jeremy.knox@ed.ac.uk

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 533-556

Research, participation and the neo-liberal context: The challenges of emergent participatory and emancipatory research approaches*

Paul Stewart and Miguel Martínez Lucio

abstract

Political commitment linked to robust research is seen as a major challenge amongst progressive researchers. Many suggest that one way forward is to engage with those being researched in novel and participative ways so that a democratic spirit is sustained. The preferred methodology is 'participatory action research' (PAR). The paper begins with an outline of PAR and its attraction for balancing political commitment with value-neutrality in research. It then discusses the importance, purpose and radicalness of what we interpret as a 'left-radical' methodology for making alliances with those excluded in myriad ways. The paper subsequently insists on the need to understand the limitations of PAR used by those working from within the neo-liberal academy. We insist that its utility depends upon context, feasibility and desirability. Without this awareness, and without connecting with a broader understanding of the notion of organic and committed intellectuals, then PAR (still a relatively unused research practice) becomes practically limited if not merely symbolic. First, PAR is not inherently democratic – it has radical usage but it is a methodology subject to various social appropriations. Second, when used by left-radical researchers, PAR should be emancipatory; however, it is not the only or the best way to engage with people outside the academy. Third, while some of us working within the academy have been fortunate to use PAR, there are constraints due to the rise of the neo-liberal university.

* We would like to thank Nick Butler and the anonymous referees for their insightful and helpful recommendations.

Introduction

This article is a contribution to the growing interest in the question of how academics, specifically self-declared radical and progressive academics, should intervene in the world beyond the academy while maintaining a semblance of what is commonly understood as 'professional independence' (the latter being something we argue is under extreme pressure). To explore this commonly perceived dilemma – maintaining objectivity while practising social and political commitment – the argument will be made that research methods and social commitment are not simply sustained by becoming more scientific. Rather, seemingly paradoxically, researchers need to become more sensitive to, and engage with, power relations in the research process.

The article will start with perspectives on 'participatory action research' (PAR). It will highlight some difficulties associated with what we see as second order problems of research procedure and technique, sometimes interpreted as necessary measures to adopt in pursuit of a critical-radical science for those committed to social change. Researchers often flag these special methodological measures as a way to prove one's scientific expertise, and on occasion radical social scientists may utilise a number of features from the toolbox of critical realism as a means by which to establish their scientific credentials.

Specifically, the article contributes to the debate on the role of professional academics researching labour and other marginalised and disempowered social groups in contemporary capitalist society in a way that is inclusive and political, yet thorough and robust in academic terms (see Brook and Darlington, 2013). This is part of a broader argument as to how important it is to sustain rigorous scholarship whilst not being 'detached'. Echoing Darlington and Dobson (2013) we support their push for a partisan perspective. This is especially important in a context where we are asked to focus our attention on more commercial or commercially related activities and where the context of our work as academics has become increasingly defined by neo-liberal institutional restraints (Durand and Stewart, 2014). These developments are not just specific to the academy. We have argued previously that the growing forms and patterns of incorporation typical of academics and their research endeavour have been paralleled by similar processes amongst many trade unions and other groups and social organisations (see Stewart and Martínez Lucio, 2011). This recognition formed part of the discussion in our 2011 article where we abjured counterpoising a stereotypical academic-participant/subject narrative but considered rather the intellectual and political processes in terms of research and learning amongst 'those researched' in general. Hence, we attempted to widen the discussion by starting not from the vantage point of the academy, where we worked, but rather the political

challenges of researching in a more emancipatory manner. In so doing we sought to use a broader approach to the notion of organic intellectuals so as to question the binary between the 'thinking activist' and the oppressed – the traditional view privileging the university academic. At that point we recognised that mapping the nature of the impact of engagement with people beyond the academy over time required continuous reflection on the relations and interests of those we research. Edwards (2015b) later addressed the idea that reflection itself should address the challenges presented by engaging with others at different stages of academic research. Our paper tried to focus on questions of power and voice with respect to the way in which 'subjects' are engaged.

Building upon this previous study, our argument here is three-fold. First, that to critically engage with those politically marginalised (in labour, social movements and those with no movements) requires, to begin with, a critical understanding of the relationships in the sites of research (i.e. in the 'academy' today and in the 'field'). Second, we call for recognition that the methodologies required for engaging with people as research participants beyond conventional research agendas are, perhaps unfortunately, inherently political and unstable even if desirable. Third, the development of arguments that are unashamed, transparent and honest in their political commitment free from the insinuation of the loss of value neutrality has become increasingly necessary (Darlington and Dobson, 2013).

If the matter concerning engagement with those we research was relatively easily resolved through the use of such approaches as PAR, then one could argue that more researchers, for there are still a number of radical researchers today despite the impact of neo-liberalism in the sector, would use this methodology. This is not to say that it is straightforward, or that in any case it is always possible, let alone desirable, to use participative action methodologies since it all depends upon the objective of the research. As Burawoy (2009), a leading exponent of a public sociology, has argued, participative research, as utilised by him in the context of what he termed the 'extended case method', requires considerable time and commitment not only from the researcher but as much from the research participants for whom in some instances the research may be life changing. Thus, the investment of time and effort, including methods, is context dependent. Engagement with PAR is not as straightforward as first imagined.

The paper will start with an outline of participatory action research and its attraction for balancing 'political commitment' with 'objectivity' in research. It will then discuss the importance of the purpose and radicalness of left approaches to the study of work and how a 'left-radical' public sociology may be constructed. However, the paper will insist in its later sections on the need to

understand the significance of political factors and the limits to establishing a participatory research agenda in a neo-liberal context. Without this awareness, and a commitment to connecting with a broader understanding of organic and committed intellectuals that includes those organised voices within studied communities, such new research trajectories become symbolic or practically limited.

The importance and ironies of participatory action research

In this section the paper explores the justification for the perception of PAR as the inherently radical research methodology. For us, PAR can indeed be a key research strategy but there is more than one way to use PAR. We argue that to assume, as some recent converts have, that PAR is inherently anti-system, is a misjudgement. Originating in the work of Tavistock Institute's 'action research' (AR) agenda in post-war Britain (Lewin, 1946), despite more recent use in radical democratic research portfolios, action research together with research participant involvement can also be used as a managerial tool for delivering consensus. Moreover, links between action research (it can be argued that in the hands of some researchers PAR is nothing more than AR practiced with a contemporary democratic flavour), and socio technical systems, has been highlighted by, for example, Greenwood and González Santos (1991) and Crézé and Liu (2006). Recognising that PAR has developed out of an approach to action research which historically has been concerned with group dynamics and processes associated with organisational development leading to peaceful, consensual, workplace agendas for 'healthy organisations' should give pause for thought. For instance, variants of action research in social services in the 1980s in the UK provided an important bedrock to a range of 'intermediate treatment' (IT) schemes with young people. On occasion, IT became a managerial tool for individualising a range of collective problems encountered by social and community workers. In other words, this is not a story about how AR is an inherently beneficial radical research tool. What can happen is that transformative ideas – if we can describe aspects of early AR in this way – may be domesticated by management ideologues. Boltanski and Chiapello describe this elegantly as a process by which management 'delegitimate[s] previous spirits and strip[s] them of their effectiveness' (2007: 28-30, emphasis in the original). In a different register, Jameson (2014) sees contemporary hegemonic strategies as instantiating discourses sustaining a philosophy of social democratic compliance.

PAR, in our view, is no more likely to be used in a democratic way in research practice than any other approach for engagement between researcher and research participant. While we are not arguing for Boltanski and Chiapello's

hard line, nevertheless management ideological capture has to be an ever-present concern. Our argument is that PAR is not radical in itself as such, but rather it is the socio-political orientation of the researcher. In a recent example of the process by which originally transformative and *potentially* revolutionary ideas may end up chanting orthodoxy, a social science department in a UK university advertised for a researcher skilled in PAR practices (for the sake of anonymity, a number of details have been changed):

> The Researcher will have the opportunity to undertake and direct all aspects of the project working with an already established group of citizens. A participatory model of research will be drawn upon. The methodology will include, focus groups and [...] use of quantitative and qualitative methods alongside experience working with those with lived experience.

This is an illustration of the way in which methodologies can become formalised, institutionalised and, in missing the point of their justification, abandon any hope of going beyond the potentially limited practices between researcher and researched they were originally intended to challenge. In the case above PAR is a seen as a toolkit more than a set of principles. The division between researcher and researched indeed tells its own tale. Perhaps we should not be surprised. PAR is, after all, visible in the formation of aspects of policy and practice in some local authorities in Britain (see Brock and Pettit, 2007). One can highlight the methodological practices of a range of researchers whose work would comfortably embrace McTaggart's (1989) well known '16 tenets of participatory action research'. More recent vintage linking PAR to a specific radical political agenda is witnessed in work by Cahill and Elana Torre, (2007) who argue that PAR, while essential for radical democratic engagement with research participants, carries the expectation that it goes beyond methods for getting a better grasp on the specificity of how any social relationship works. For these writers, PAR is inherently disruptive to the situation the researcher finds him- or herself in. The leitmotif of the approach is that it turns the politics of particular situations and people involved, co-researchers, into active, political agents seeking change. When Cahill and Elana Torre (2007) argue that PAR is important as a means to 'provoke action by research', this presumes a praxis for the purpose of understanding that the situation is one which also anticipates activity to change it.

As researchers and co-participants therefore we are concerned to actively promote our research politically. This was a critical feature in the setting up of the Migrant Action Research Network (MARN) in the north of Ireland in 2007 (Garvey and Stewart, 2015). MARN was developed specifically using PAR as a means to develop an emancipatory agenda for researchers who emerged from a number of migrant communities in the north of Ireland. The original meetings

were convened by a community activist working for a community trade union and a university researcher. The subsequent meetings, which brought together a number of migrant workers and families, developed a research agenda as a means to advance strategies that might tackle a range of labour and extra labour market issues including exclusion in the work place, racism and sectarianism in the community. More fully reported in Garvey and Stewart (2015) and Garvey et al. (2011) nevertheless we can repeat here that the seminal outcomes included the development of a number of political interventions. One precipitated the self-unionisation of migrant workers in a food processing facility and a recycling plant. These interventions also led variously to the implementation of a number of work place rights (see the migrant workers' report to the government and the subsequent response from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister Northern Ireland, personal correspondence).

What can be said is that to be distinctively radical, researchers employing a PAR agenda will typically orientate their activity around a number of premises. First, what are research methods for? Second and relatedly, who can use them – who wants to avail themselves of the results of the research? If PAR is about tools of analysis only (as we see in the Tavistock's earlier agenda) then politics and notably the politics of method will not be at issue. However, if political matters are of concern – and moreover a politics for (radical) change – then radical researchers seeking alliances with those engaged in what should be a form of collective fieldwork will see that methodology is a political matter. In this regard, following Freire (1970), if our research is concerned with the position of those we are engaged with the starting point must be that we work and research with them on the basis that they will be our co-participants – as we endeavoured to achieve with our co-participants who became researchers with us in the north of Ireland. They were not our research *subjects*: this opens up the space of the political within the research agenda bringing with it new challenges. This is indeed another way of saying that while it is perfectly possible to utilise a range of democratic approaches to research and data collection which can be defined as PAR, the idea that PAR is implicitly more 'radical' is open to question if we are not alert to the political and social dimensions of research spaces. Perhaps we can say that PAR comprises a spectrum running from the formally engaged research participant (subject) deliberating research results, to the other end of the spectrum, on which 'subjects' are full participants deciding not only how and who does the research but why. Furthermore, the purpose of the research will be not merely to understand more fully, and more satisfactorily, the quality of research outcomes. Specifically, the reason that the 'why' (the purpose) question is indelibly tied to the 'how' (tools of analysis) question is because, from this radical end of the spectrum, they are both made sense of by the question of how one views the origins of the problems they are studying and the objectives of one's research.

This is what delineates a radical PAR from mainstream PAR and a more regular action research agenda. Thus, from our perspective, deciding to engage with people in research in terms of assumed participative equality (remembering however that not everyone can do, nor wants to do, what everyone else does in a collective research project) is not the same as a radical view of PAR which sees research participants as engaged with researchers in terms of political correspondence – i.e. collective participation in a project of social change. Indeed, a radical PAR seems to be concerned with a commitment to systemic change, not merely with tinkering although this is not a universal understanding of PAR. A radical PAR makes sense of the research field by assuming conflict and potential crisis as incipient in the ontology of the social milieu: recognizing the fundamentally conflictual nature of social formations thus provides the starting point to the beginnings of a radical PAR. Jameson (2014), Reason and Bradbury (2001; 2008) and notably Kemmis and McTaggart's (2005) PAR principles provide a reasonable stylised brief for the beginnings of a radical PAR.[I] We therefore now turn to a recent argument for the methodological tool of choice by a number of radical researchers.

The purpose of radical approaches to the sociology of work: The 'critical distance problem'

In a compelling argument for critical researchers to adopt a more politically engaged PAR research methodology, Brook and Darlington (2013) pose the question of what it is that radical intellectuals aim to achieve not only by their research but also *in* their research. We can describe this as the 'why' and the 'how to' couplet: the *raison d'être* question. Yet we wish to add to the *raison d'être* question a problem. Although 'why' we research poses the question of 'how' we research, a crucial issue to take into consideration must be the political context of research. Political context includes issues such as research funding protocol, the consequent wider concerns over the scope for research autonomy, and the cultural and socio-political disposition of the researcher.

Emphatically, we would maintain that this question of political context impacts on a number of concerns for our research practice. Amongst these is the problem presented by mainstream researchers critical of radical approaches to

[I] Kemmis and McTaggart's (2005) key variables, in no particular order, are: *Planning* change/ *Acting* and *observing* processes and outcomes of change/ *Reflecting* on the latter/ once more - *Acting* and *observing*/ *Reflecting* once more. These, it is argued, allow individual participants to reexamine their own and others actions within organisations while laying the basis for equity (their own and others). Reflexivity and change, after all, are central to the objective of PAR.

research. The former argue that radical approaches involving commitment to those researched commonly lack critical (*qua* 'objective') distance between the researcher and the researched (Brook and Darlington, 2013: 237). This is said to arise when those researching socially marginalised social groups are unable to maintain value free objectivity. We might describe this as the 'critical distance problem'. We argue that while methods matter (no one gains from inadequate methodological practices), greater attention to scientific rigour in itself will not convince hegemonic social institutional peer groups (especially in the universities), let alone government and other policy cadre, that 'scientific objectivity' makes critical social researchers' objectively derived results *convincing* (i.e. acceptable). Our view is that research by radical intellectuals should as a precondition also challenge *inter alia*, the social framing and assumptions, and thus socially and politically constructed notions of value neutrality as the answer to a wider acceptance of one's research results. We should be alert to the limitations of trying to reconstruct such scientific concerns as they are always contingent in some respects and determined by extant power relations (Edwards, 2015b; Ram et al., 2015).

Specifically Brook and Darlington's (2013) answer to the so-called 'critical distance problem' is, in our view, to insist that while partisanship is not only defensible but necessary to engage in critical research, value neutrality will be sustained and publically demonstrated (and for this they draw from Siraj-Blatchford, 1995) by keeping a 'critical distance from agents to avoid the danger of wrongly asserting political faith over the contrary evidence' (Brook and Darlington, 2013: 237). However, as their reference to Beynon's *Working for Ford* (1973) illustrates, it does not matter how sound the research is, if it challenges capital its credibility is always likely to be questioned especially when, as with Beynon's canonical piece, there is a clear counter narrative or critical position taken in terms of the research. Our point is that critical distance is a much greater challenge than meets the eye and we should perhaps be more aware of the limitations of trying to sustain it.

Yet this is a key concern, and Brook and Darlington's (2013) attempted resolution to their 'critical distance problem' posed to any radical intellectual (left radicals) engaged in researching those who are socially excluded, requires attention. This is a key issue because from our perspective, it is not just about engaging with those described by them as the socially 'marginalised and labour' (*ibid.*: 232-233). It is not just the requirement to engage with workers or the marginalised more generally that challenges the boundaries of committed research. We need to continue to emphasise engagement with, and exemplify the needs and concerns of, not just the marginalised. Also, we should recognise that the marginalised are the outcome of specific social, economic and political practices of exclusion,

which frame our own relation with the researched. Second, organised networks and voices within those constituencies that we research must be viewed as more active agents engaged with intellectual and research agendas in their own right.

This presents special problems familiar to all research of a critical nature. The issue for us, in short, is not one of ensuring sufficient critical distance but on the contrary, how to ensure much *less* critical distance from those who collectively challenge contemporary forms and patterns of oppression, and develop their own voice and agendas of a critical nature. This is another way of saying that our principal concern is not with the assessment of the institutional impact of our work, but rather our concern is with the intellectual agendas and projects of those excluded and challenging systemic subordination. In brief, it is possible to be close, committed and engaged while providing rigorous research. In the next section we consider how this might be achieved by using PAR.

Constructing a left-radical approach to research at work

For Brook and Darlington (2013) barriers to active participation between organic intellectuals within the academy, labour and others who are socially and otherwise excluded, are to an extent surmountable through the adoption of a PAR frame of reference. A PAR agenda will allow those they describe as 'left-radical intellectuals' to democratically participate with those they research in order to change both the nature of the relationship between researcher and researched, but principally in order to engage in social processes leading to, or outlining the terms of, progressive socio-economic change. Yet we would argue that understanding the organisational context of research and the pressures of the academy, and on the critical networks amongst those researched, are vital.

At the heart of this concern is the notion of the 'organic intellectual' (Gramsci, 1971). It is often felt in radical and critical approaches that organic intellectuals must seek space to 'engage actively with the marginalised and labour in the co-creation of knowledge that aids their struggles for change' (Brook and Darlington, 2013: 232). This is deemed preferable by Brook and Darlington to Bourdieu's (1998) limited, because avowedly still hierarchical, nomenclature defining the 'expert committed scholar' (Brook and Darlington, 2013: 234-5). The latter argue that PAR as we know is based upon democratic participation arranged in a non-hierarchical manner between both 'researcher' and 'researched' such that the latter becomes not, in fact, a researchee, but a co-producer of knowledge (*ibid.*). This is contrasted to a more limited understanding of PAR as understood by others (notably Huzzard and Bjorkman, 2012), 'who omit its widely held emancipatory principal' (Brook and Darlington, 2013: 238).

Emancipation must be the central determinant of a real PAR agenda premised upon commitment to shared engagement (viz., research, including methodology and putative social change). Moreover, the nature and form of engagement is important since unless one specifies the necessity to engage with a radical PAR, method cannot deliver the radical cutting edge required for radical social critique and change. Citing Reid and Frisby, they state, 'PAR is a critical approach that focuses on "democratizing the research process, acknowledging lived experiences and contributing to social justice agendas to counter prevailing relations that are deeply gendered, classed and racialized" (Reid and Frisby, 2008: 93)' (as quoted in Brook and Darlington, 2013: 238).[2]

However, our concern is that there can be limitations to the ability to use the kind of radical PAR that we and others would advocate. To assume – as do many – that determined acts of individual engagement will allow radical academics to engage democratically with socially marginalised workers and others outside employment who are socially excluded, risks relying upon a form of voluntarism. This is problematic in our view. Though the *leitmotif* of our research practice shares this motive of socio-political engagement, we would argue that such motives may be driven as much by altruism – for example, the need to support subordinate workers – as by systematic critiques of the causes of exclusion. Goodly and understandable though altruistic motives are, they may not always be locked into a collective or emancipatory agenda. We cannot take it for granted that they will be. Second, for a radical PAR to work properly, to ensure 'the people' are with the organic intellectuals and the organic intellectuals are with 'the people', we need a suitably rigorous, some would argue value-neutral, methodology and for some (including Brook and Darlington [2013]), critical realism appears to be answer. Nevertheless, we would maintain that we do not

[2] We do not know whether Huzzard and Bjorkman (2012) would be opposed to this view. Certainly, it is perverse to argue that Bourdieu, the central anti-democratic methodological villain in the piece, failed to promote PAR when the *leitmotif* of his active research engagement was precisely geared towards social movement participants as 'leaders everywhere' (see *inter alia* Bourdieu, 1998). While Huzzard and Bjorkman may not make the case in the source cited it is not clear from their other published work that their point of departure limits recognition of PAR's more 'emancipatory principle' (2012: 238). What is clear, however, is that the prospectus Brook and Darlington (2013: 238) offer tends to downplay key obstacles to its realisation as a form of radical engagement mainly animated by an act of will: 'Corresponding to PAR's principles of co-operative participation, the researcher's committed engagement from the outset should be marked by a continuous, interactive reflexivity framed by accountable, democratized relations with agents. [...] a researcher's organic connections to agents entails forging an interdependent relationship between co-researchers, comprising continual collective, critical reflection and open debate in their shared pursuit of organizational/social change'.

require a gloss to our commitment to partisan research. It may be that some feel the need to offer benediction to the concerns of the academy, the concerns of those who would dispute our research due to its partisanship. Some see the adoption of critical realism in itself as a sound way to demonstrate our 'objectivity' despite our partisanship, that it might offer a balm to some concerned by the sanction of partiality but we would dispute there has to be – nor that there could be – a common way we do radical research that will undermine and even perhaps defeat those in positions of power.

One key problem we outline below is that reality points to a range of roles and players within the process of reflection and learning, and this means that within the academy there are competing actors and vantage points as is also the case for those being researched. There will be uncommon ways of doing PAR. In effect, regardless of one's ontological underpinnings, we need to show greater sensitivity to the positions of power and dependency from whichever vantage point of PAR we adopt. Below, we build on the understandings of our colleagues by outlining some of the insights and challenges that we have experienced as researchers.

The politics and challenges of alternative PAR methods

In this section we argue that while PAR is often necessary its utility always depends upon context. Second, when we do use PAR it has been for the purpose of supporting collective action. This is because as radical researchers we are committed to a politics of social and class transformation: our objective is to structurally challenge social subordination arising out of class society. We would not advocate its use just because it sounds like a good idea, as one might interpret the job advert above. Aside from political objectives, the impact on those we research with outside the academy may be quite profound so that its utility has to be measured sensitively. So, we would argue that the debate over the character of the relationship between researcher (the organic intellectual for many) and the participant in research and/or those with whom organic intellectuals make alliances in the pursuit of social change, is reflective of at least two things: the first is the site of the academic and the second is the site of the researched.

Firstly, from the point view of radicals in the academy, to what extent is our research – what we research – and the manner in which we research, still indelibly linked, if not over-determined by, what is going on in the academy today especially with respect to its increasingly commercial transformations? To what extent is our bid to defend notions of independence and autonomy being

undermined? This goes back to the need to discuss the question of researching those without a voice in the context of understanding why they do not have a voice due to extant systems of representation and control. For sure this is so, yet we come to our central point which is that one cannot just decide to do PAR because it seems like an elegant research method. This means – as stated previously – we need to address the social and political context of exclusion alongside our work with the 'marginalised'. Method is not enough for as we know PAR has, from its origins in the Tavistock Institute, been as concerned with reconstituting dominant social relations in a search for workplace consensus as it has been with Freire's liberation sociology's democratic transformational change by action-participant researchers in the global south. Thus, we need to be clear as to our roles in the process of researching with those marginalised who are collectively challenging the status quo in determinate ways. Yet, we cannot understand our role, nor what we can do to engage with others, unless we are aware of how our environment, how the academy, has changed and become commodified through neo-liberalism for this may determine what it is that we are able to do – or not. For, if we cannot understand the ways in which the academy is being shaped and *further hierarchically structured* by the complex forces of neo-liberalism and other changes affecting what and why we research, how we research and when we research, then simply saying that we need to be open and honest with those *who* we research and generically include them may miss the point. If we recognise that one of the issues we need to address is to do with the autonomy we have for engaging in transformational research, we might recall that our autonomy has never been a straightforward given. Even during the period of the post Second World War consensus, and the subsequent liberalising of the university during and since the 1960s, when liberal democratic norms based upon collegiality allowed more scope for critical research engagement, we should not imagine halcyon days free from constraints.

Still, whatever the limitations on our research practice in the past, the neoliberal university is changing how we can engage with various communities in a profoundly detrimental way (Durand and Stewart, 2014). This has resulted from the exigencies of neo-liberalism's various forms of internal and external control of academic practice today. Specifically, the engagement debate at the heart of PAR is actually being redefined around a more elitist understanding of the research community (e.g. the latter are seen predominantly as represented by businesses or elite policy makers).[3]

[3] One of the limits to democratic engagement in terms of open research is the nature of contemporary political economy and arguably, it is why, in this particular instance, accountability matters in a way that is different from orthodox (hegemonic)

Second, following on from this, there is also a need to understand the dynamics of changes taking place within the politics of the spaces researched. Let us illustrate this with an example drawn from the authors' research. When studying the emergence of what some label 'new management practices' in various industries in the 1990s – in terms of the way management was attempting to control and incorporate workers through new forms of quality oriented participation and surveillance mechanisms at work (Garrahan and Stewart, 1992; Martínez Lucio and Weston, 1994) – we noted that academic engagement with the labour movement was less than straightforward. Worker activists themselves had been engaging – mainly in isolation – with developments such as new management practices highlighting their highly exploitative nature. This emerged from various independent worker networks, trade union educationalists and critical activists within the labour movement. This also led to a range of independent publications as well led by worker activists and educators.

We would consider them 'organic intellectuals' in that they provided a rationale and scoping of a political nature. In particular, they addressed the character and social consequences of 'new management' practices that were becoming hegemonic across industry and the public sector. Furthermore, many of these networks of activists were concerned with the way that official trade union hierarchies to some degree were willing to turn a blind eye to such developments in the hope that multinational corporations and employers generally would not disinvest or close down workplaces. There was a particular pattern of political and discursive closure within the labour movement on such issues especially various official dimensions of it. This closure was sometimes blocking attempts by organic worker intellectuals to develop patterns of social, political and intellectual autonomy from increasingly hegemonic forces by expounding narratives akin to new management practices. Business facing and more bureaucratic oriented trade union leaders and officials were utilizing a version of new management practices to shield themselves from work place organic intellectuals while sustaining a much closer relation to employers. For radical academics aligning themselves with workers and other subjugated groups

---

institutional understandings. For us, in contrast to the contrived notion of accountability decreed by university management, accountability needs to be seen through the prism of democratic engagement with all those we research with based on a critique of their social relations and our organisational relations as researchers with them. Accountability matters not so that everyone can do what everyone else does, but rather accountability, *qua democratic accountability*, matters so that everyone can decide on the purpose and applicability of the research. The 'everyone' to whom we refer is those with whom we research for the purposes of social transformation: hence our insistence on the need to emphasise the purpose and politics (the 'why') of research and not only participatory processes in our methodology.

around these developments in management practices, in many instances they were confronted with a highly organised set of alternative networks and debates in advance of their own position. This required a different logic of engagement and mutual support between worker intellectuals and radical academics. As radical academics, we and others developed forms of research and alliances with such independent networks in sectors such as automotive manufacturing, airlines, postal services and food manufacturing.

Thus, we need to revive a closer engagement with labour-in-work and the diversity of collective worker narratives (and their politics) (Stewart and Martínez Lucio, 2011) and not just 'provide voice' for workers in an individualist manner. We need to understand the political dynamics and tensions within which labour operates including how, in various ways, it responds collectively.[4] There are debates in those spaces even before the 'explorer academic' sets foot in those environments. In effect, in many cases, as for example in those outlined above of the north of Ireland and the trade union networks in the UK, there were competing views, perspectives and actors engaging with the issues being researched. Whilst not concurring with the radical pluralist perspective of Edwards (2015a) we do nevertheless agree with the argument that there may be multiple interests for workers in a concrete situation – including sometimes contradictory ones – such that the 'researched' display complex and not always inclusive relations. Nevertheless, we would add that these interests will in turn play out around political discourses and tensions – relations of hierarchy and power – and that within those contexts these interests will be articulated not just by individual workers but by collective networks and bodies. In this respect, in order to be clear about the purposes of the research, an initial meeting and ongoing dialogue seeking a consensual alignment between the objectives of the radical researchers and those they are working with is necessary.

Thus, far from assuming a hierarchical division between workers and radical-partisan intellectuals in the academy, we would argue that it is defensible to articulate common political and intellectual trajectories. This dialogue around transparent political agendas is necessary to make sense of the roles in research and learning as well the political constraints and challenges on different nodes within a PAR approach.

[4] This reanimation has become increasingly necessary because the academy and a number of trade union officers together with their various research departments have in some cases become concerned with an employer or business oriented as opposed to a worker-centered agenda: thus space for critical research is now more complex (Stewart and Martínez Lucio, 2011).

In the UK, beyond radical publications (including for example, *Capital and Class* and *Race and Class*) this issue of the politics amongst those studied, or those doing the studying, is rarely discussed within radical or critical approaches. Yet for those radical scholars who are concerned with closer engagement, the aim is how to seek *closer* links with people, not to fret over the judgement made by establishment norms of how to make proper good research relationships with those with whom we engage. This is because, and indeed as our colleagues Brook and Darlington (2013: 237) argue, whatever you do, 'There is the perennial risk of research being stigmatised as political activism rather than scholarship'. Yet the issue is not about stigma as such. The challenge is to recognise the ever more political nature of the research field.

This is because no degree of scientific methodology let alone realistic criticism will necessarily convince those who manage us that the arguments of the marginalised matter because the objectivity of the supposedly scientific methodology tells the world, if not the whole truth about power (in a realistic way) then at least the better part of the truth. Utilising what some see as otherwise useful techniques such as critical realism cannot do it either because not only does it not tell any truth better than the one told by Beynon's *Working for Ford* (Brook and Darlington's exemplar of a radical researcher pilloried by the employer for a lack of sociological impartiality), it does not convey in any meaningful way the actual practice of radical organic intellectuals. It's not about methodology – it's indeed about politics in the broader sense. Whatever truths are revealed by the methods radicals employ, hegemonic forces in society in many ways seek to deride them. So our colleagues are right about the need for democratic participation in research collaboration even if they tend to overplay the nature of, and capacity for, critical openness. Nonetheless, we need to be alert to a broader political reality and set of engagements within which our work is framed.

This is why it is not so much about the procedures or rationales of research methodology including methods of research engagement that matter. More pointedly, it is not solely a matter of which methodology will convey value neutrality and thus be regarded as 'truth', since the nature of research engagement with those subordinated is also the problem today for those in dominant positions in the academic hierarchy. If shackles are increasingly being placed on all forms of engagement and especially radical forms, how might these be broken, or at least loosened? This is important because despite the common knowledge of many that the world is exploitative, every individual's particular expertise is limited by their own experience and while they are able to make wider, generalisable, understandings of others' worlds (the necessary starting point for all politics) any individual's expertise is necessarily to be matched by

those whose own knowledge necessarily adds to the possibility of generalisability. This includes those academics themselves who may have a peculiarly framed experience that lacks understanding of specific issues. It also means being open and honest about one's perspectives as an academic in terms of affiliation, funding and purpose (Darlington and Dobson, 2013: 294). The political context may vary in terms of the extent of acceptance of such transparency and in some cases the level of tolerance of radical and emancipatory research may be quite limited.

Expanding and radicalising the understanding of intellectual and research activity: Widening our understanding of radical research and participation.

While method indeed matters, method should be understood as politically informed analysis that is located in a critique of social contexts and positions. Thus, it is odd that when we are encouraged to imagine a form of critical, participatory engagement, that the practices of an increasingly conventional social research agenda, critical realism, is conjured up by many when this is in any case quite limited in terms of participatory practice. Even where it is possible to use critical realism as a research agenda this would tell us little of its practical and transformational possibilities (Archer, 1995). This is curious because since the 1970s (*inter alia* Freire, 1970) it has become increasingly difficult to imagine the value of a radical participatory, transformative, research agenda that does not align openly with those it is designed to engage with beyond the academy. In our reading, the utility of Archer's critical realism for radical and critical engagement with people in struggle would be of limited value. Arguably, whatever the method adopted, given the constraints of the neo-liberal university we have highlighted, perhaps we are more pessimistic than others due to this context.

Yet we are keen to continue to engage with those beyond the academy where and when we can by using the radical PAR we have practiced in the past. This PAR envisages the adoption of a radical and transformative agenda premised upon recognition of the political and the plurality – and hence challenge – of engaging with external agency in a radical manner. However, to be 'radical' is to be more than just 'critical'. It requires the inclusion of other voices together in an alignment with those concerned with democratic deficits and other, broader, and often emancipatory agenda. Our view, our intervention, requires that the 'researched' and 'non-academic' consist of organic intellectuals who form counter narratives and research agendas having their own politics and perspective on the meaning of emancipation. This is quite a specific and significant departure from the normal sense that everything, because it is interesting, necessarily represents the same politically researchable value for

radical researchers. Of course, the notion of the professional academic with his/her independence can act in various ways to limit critical engagement with those communities beyond the academy we seek to work and research with. It can, in these times of neo-liberal duress, including the impact of neo-liberal managerial protocol, understandably serve to reduce time and commitment to anything other than standard, *qua scientised*, approaches to research. Time is more limited today and 'committed' research carries many risks that were less threatening to job security in the era of social democratic state pluralism (Durand and Stewart, 2014). Nevertheless, our point is that we still have a choice about how and in what contexts we utilise PAR.

Would that it were so straightforward because within various radical Marxist and broader emancipatory constituencies there has recently been a deeper questioning of the power relations of contemporary society including the employment relationship around precisely this theme of the balance between moral and professional interests. Another way of presenting the dilemma for critical researchers from a range of radical traditions is to pose it thus: how might some of the problems today confronting partisan intellectuals in the UK committed to marginalised workers and labour and other excluded social forces be understood? This is a pressing issue as we are propelled increasingly into a neo-liberal context of instrumental educational objectives. By way of illustration of the torpor exuded by neo-liberalism in the academy we cite Perry Anderson's censure. Comparing the ebullience of the academy in France with the relative intellectual impoverishment of UK universities, he argued:

> [...] the contrast with the blighted landscape of higher learning of England, where the very idea of institutes of this kind is unthinkable, as universities risk reduction to so many sales outlets for customers in need of livery for the market, remains arresting. Stefan Collini has compared the vice-chancellors and assorted notables who acquiesced in this disaster with the collaborators of occupied France. But Vichy was never just an isolated handful of traitors. How should the failure of the English academy as a whole to put up any serious resistance to its degradation, by Conservative and New Labour regimes alike, be described? 'Spineless' [...] (Anderson, 2014: 39)

Without having to accept the full voluntarist judgment issued in Anderson's polemic it is nevertheless likely academics in the UK will understand his reasoning. Those he sees as managers of 'sales outlets' would be (are) especially ill at ease with critical researchers who throw down the gauntlet for a partisan engagement with subordinate communities beyond the academy.

Thus, to recapitulate, any discussion of the role of radical or partisan academics and the challenge of aligning ourselves with the marginalised, while maintaining some semblance of professional rigour, must start with an awareness of the

organisational, political and economic context of the university system *and beyond in the economy and civil society*. This fundamental shift in the organisational landscape is central to any engagement with the important and welcome contribution by a number of critical academics. Hence, any declaration of interest may help nuance the role of the academic and union or social activist researcher or intellectual (Darlington and Dobson, 2013). Nevertheless, as we pointed out with respect to the impact of neo-liberalism in terms of the research environment, that can also limit the space for the academic or activist to operate within.

Discussion and conclusion

Interventions such as Brook and Darlington's (2013) in attempting to rethink PAR and the role of the partisan academic are fundamentally important because at their heart is the concern with inclusion, knowledge and emancipation. There has to be a balance between democracy and what might best be described as technical proficiency (professionalism) in social research. However, like us they are following a path not unknown to radical academic researchers. While the list is long we identified briefly the work of Kemmis and McTaggart's (2005) eight PAR principles, Reason and Bradbury (2001; 2008) and especially the call for committed engagement pursued by Cahill and Elana Torre (2007). Many academics have also pursued more committed and inclusive approaches to research that are alert to the political narratives we noted above (see Connolly, 2010). It is part of a serious discussion about how as academics we ensure we are not pulled further into neo-liberal and new hierarchical relations in terms of research activity but rather maintain independence and (here is the dilemma) democratic, progressive, and socially inclusive aspirations. More than this, it is about how we create the possibility for greater emancipation through our research. Ultimately, the challenge is to sustain a critical awareness as to who it is we research *with* and how their role is not just tokenistic. More than this, the issue is about how we re-landscape politics and discussion in our research.

However, since the external sphere of research and the internal space of its design is already politicised we require a clear view of the external/the research space as being problematic and diverse. We argue this because otherwise one could use a critical research agenda to corporatise radical research by just stating that we need to be 'closer' to the researched and 'work with those' acting as the exploiters. The examples here could include, inter alia, senior management, senior accountants, senior policy makers, and others in various hierarchical locations (see Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007). The problems we face within our own environment are common in state agencies, trade unions and social

movements in terms of their knowledge related activities.[5] It is therefore important to engage with the realities of political relations and narratives within public bodies and social organisations.

In this respect at the heart of the radical participatory agenda research must be an emancipatory, radically democratic one which in fact creates mutual support and relations across and against the undermining strategies and institutions of contemporary capitalist societies. It must be an agenda promoting an understanding that methodology (even when participatory and engaged – and jointly designed) is insufficient without a political, more open, discussion as to the context in which the participants find themselves, their reflections and discussions. This agenda promoting open commitment is feasible, necessary and desirable for anyone describing themselves as a radical academic. In the end, the starting point may not be the role of the academic but the role of the academic as part of a broader alliance across subjugated groups and networks. In effect, there are limits to academic methods and good intentions unless a broader, political, view of research and purpose is made salient. Otherwise we reproduce a hierarchical view of the radical research process driven less by research humility.

This perception also involves recognition of the structural limits imposed by contemporary employment regimes in all sectors including the academy. It is also about acknowledging that we are not solely the arbiters of knowledge but that there exist countless points of resistance and emancipatory networks consisting of organic intellectuals in the broader sense and a range of alternative narratives (see, *inter alia*, research by Garvey, Connolly and others highlighted above). In this respect, we may not have to see the academy as the privileged starting point for such work any longer and realise that whilst objectivity, transparency and openness are very important we nevertheless need to realise that the current rush of interest in this topic must be a bit more mindful of the political shifts and impact of neo-liberal orthodoxy on the relations we are discussing.

Hence we would argue that, to add to the already important contributions to the debate on the efficacy of radical research methodologies utilising a PAR perspective, our departure makes three modest observations that we feel problematise the engagement of radical research activists including ourselves based in the academy. First, the nature of the socio-economic transformations of the last three decades have meant that academics wishing to use this radical research methodology are having to negotiate certain previously taken for

[5] As pointed out, the origins of PAR, reaching back to the objectives of the Tavistock Institute, can be defined in this way.

granted relationships. Utilising PAR does not require an academic position in a university, as we know, and working as a radical (PAR) researcher outside the academy has its own difficulties. However, utilising PAR while working in the academy has another set of unique concerns. Research methodologies are now subject to increasing external political interference while being constrained by sometimes positivistic protocol under the auspices of new forms of academic research evaluation such as the Research Excellence Framework and its various antecedents, in the case of the UK. Second, because PAR is time and resource intensive, it does not lend itself to the current drama of *get-rich-quick* research activity. Third, since our co-participants are also subject to variant forms of neo-liberal subordinations – and previous forms of subordinations too – in their own lives, the risk of activism-with-researchers is problematic. We have found this to be the case in our work in a range of sectors from automotive manufacturing, postal services, trade union policy formation, and the study of migrant communities and the politics of their representation.

Relatedly, being a politically engaged academic researcher does not require that PAR is either always appropriate or the necessary starting point for radical research with others beyond the academy. Moreover, neither is it obvious that when working with people beyond the academy, or when working with others who are researchers in the community, that PAR *in itself* will change perceptions, undermine hierarchies or create a better knowledge than existing approaches. Nor are we convinced that for PAR to be always successful that this definition of de-hierarchicalisation is required. Class divisions in capitalist society are culturally disempowering and at the same time if community activists want a researcher's engagement it will because s/he has a useful role to play. The struggle for transformation belongs to the community/union committee/refugee group. Accordingly, besides PAR there are different ways to be 'really democratic' when engaging in research with those excluded by neo-liberalism.[6] We dispute that all those proselytising PAR recognise this. Bourdieu (2012) despite the rejection of his self-described democratic research protocol by many committed to PAR, was certainly democratic in his research as was demonstrated in his exploration of the habitus in which the struggle for Algerian independence was played out. This could be taken as another way of arguing, again, that the focus and issues are as much about politics as they are about methods when it comes to determining the democratic character of our research. Following on from this, methodology cannot in itself be the salve for delivering truth. Our concern is

[6] Once again, we are not referring to those non-academics using PAR, including social movement activist researchers. They have quite different problems as we discussed in the context of our research with automotive assembly and postal workers (Stewart and Martínez Lucio, 2011).

merely to point out that if researchers are anxious that the public reception of their work will be enhanced when the scientificity of their results is confirmed then this assumes an openly receptive and apolitical research environment in terms of funders and users.

It seems to us therefore that it is entirely reasonable to argue that radical engaged research can only happen in a truly transformative way by means of democratic participation and an open approach to what knowledge is. Democratic engagement between researcher and research participant, whatever the sector or the radical social movement, potentially transforms the nature of the outcomes of the research while it may potentially transform the lives of others participating in it. One of our key points of intervention here is to emphasise that the constraining nature of context needs to be recognised. To be radical is not solely to engage with workers and citizens in a participative manner but also to use this to raise an awareness of the limitations of democratic dialogue within our social and economic context. To be radical is to intervene progressively and to also point to the 'iron cages' that constrain us. PAR is indeed about power.

references

Anderson, P. (2014) 'Diary', *London Review of Books,* January.

Archer, M. (1995) *Realist social theory: The morphogenetic approach*. Cambridge: CUP.

Beynon, H. (1973) *Working for Ford*. London: Penguin.

Boltanski, L. and E. Chiapello (2007) *The new spirit of capitalism*. London: Verso.

Bourdieu, P. (1998) *Contre-feux*. Paris: Editions Liber-Raisons d'Agir.

Bourdieu, P. (2012) *Picturing Algeria*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Brock, K. and J. Petit (2007) *Springs of participation: Creating and evolving methods for participatory development*. Warwickshire: Practical Action.

Brook, P. and R. Darlington (2013) 'Partisan, scholarly and active: arguments for an organic public sociology of work', *Work, Employment and Society,* 27(2): 232-243.

Burawoy, M. (2009) *The extended case method: Four countries, four decades, four great transformations, and one theoretical tradition*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Cahill, C. and M.E. Elana Torre (2007) 'Beyond the journal article: Representations, audience, and the presentation of participatory research', in

S. Kindon, R. Pain and M. Kesby (eds.) *Participatory action research approaches and methods: Connecting people, participation and place*. London: Routledge.

Connolly, H. (2010) *Renewal in the French trade union movement: A grassroots perspective*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Crézé, F. and M. Liu (coord.) (2006) *La recherche-action et les transformations sociales*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Darlington, R. and J. Dobson (2013) 'Objective but not detached: Partisanship in industrial relations research', *Capital & Class*, 37(2): 285-297.

Durand, J.-P. and P. Stewart (2014) 'The birth of French labour sociology after the War: Some reflections on the nature of the corporate state and intellectual engagement for the sociology of work in the UK today', *Work, Employment and Society,* 28(6): 1003-1015.

Edwards, P. (2015a). 'Industrial relations, critical social science and reform: I, principles of engagement', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 46(3): 173-186.

Edwards, P. (2015b). 'Industrial relations, critical social science and reform: II, development and applications', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 46(3): 275-292.

Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, London: Continuum.

Garrahan, P. and P. Stewart (1992) *The Nissan enigma. Flexibility at work in local economy*. London: Mansell.

Garvey, B. and P. Stewart (2015) 'Migrant workers and the north of Ireland: Between neoliberalism and sectarianism', *Work, Employment and Society,* 29(3): 392-408.

Garvey, B., P. Stewart, J. Kulinska and R. Campuzano (eds.) (2011) *The new workers: Migration, labour and citizenship in Northern Ireland in the 21st century*. Belfast: Consensus Initiative of Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre.

Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Greenwood, D.J. and J. González Santos (1991) *Industrial democracy as process: Participatory action research in the Fagor Cooperative Group of Mondragón*. Assen/Maastricht and Stockholm: Van Gorcum Arbetslivscentrum.

Huzzard, T. and H. Bjorkman (2012) 'Trade unions and action research', *Work, Employment and Society,* 26(1): 161-171.

Jameson, F. (2014) *Representing capital: A commentary on Volume One*. London: Verso.

Kemmis, S. and R. McTaggart (2005). 'Participatory action research: Communicative action and the public sphere', in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.) *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.

Lewin, K. (1946) 'Action research and minority problems', *Journal of Social Issues,* 2(4): 34-46.

Martínez Lucio, M., and S. Weston (1994) 'New management practices in a multinational corporation: The restructuring of worker representation and rights?' *Industrial Relations Journal* 25(2): 110-121.

McTaggart, R (1989) '16 Tenets of Participatory Action Research' http://www.caledonia.org.uk/par.htm.

Ram, M., P. Edwards, T. Jones, A. Kiselinchev and L. Muchenje. (2015) 'Getting your hands dirty: Critical action research in a state agency', *Work, Employment and Society,* 29(3): 462-478.

Reason, P. and H. Bradbury (eds.) (2001) *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. London: Sage.

Reason, P. and H. Bradbury (2008) *The Sage handbook of action research*. London: Sage.

Reid C and Frisby W (2008) 'Continuing the journey: articulating dimensions of feminist participatory research (FPAR).' In: Reason P and Bradbury H (eds,) *Sage Handbook of Action Research*. London: Sage, 93–105.

Siraj-Blatchford I (1995) Critical social research and the academy: the role of organic intellectuals in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 16(2): 205–20.

Stewart, P. and M. Martínez Lucio (2011) 'Collective narratives and politics in the contemporary study of work: The new management practices debate', *Work, Employment and Society,* 25(2): 327-341.

the authors

Paul Stewart is Professor of the Sociology of Work and Employment at the University of Strathclyde and was coordinator of the international Marie Curie ITN 'Changing Employment' programme. He is a member of CAIRDE Teo in Armagh City in the north of Ireland, a social economy organization working in the medium of the Irish language, and co-founded Migrant Worker Research Network. He is member of UNITE.
Email: paul.stewart.100@strath.ac.uk

Miguel Martinez Lucio works at the University of Manchester and is Professor of International HRM & Comparative Industrial Relations. He is involved in the Work and Equalities Institute. He writes on the changing nature of worker representation and

employment regulation. He also researches the impact of privatisation, managerialisation and commercialisation on work and employment.
Email: mmartinezlucio@yahoo.co.uk

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 557-582

The making of the 'excellent' university: A drawback for gender equality

Finnborg Salome Steinþórsdóttir, Thamar Melanie Heijstra and Þorgerður Jennýjardóttir Einarsdóttir

abstract

In the 'era of global competition', academic institutions are progressively managed as efficient organisations, with a strong emphasis on scientific productivity. This paper examines the impact of the prevalent discourses on 'excellence' and the increased use of private sector managerial techniques within academia on gender equality. This paper is based on data collected in an Icelandic academic institution, the organisational policies and practices of which reveal a strong emphasis on becoming an 'excellent university' through international recognition, while simultaneously taking much pride in being 'at the forefront' of gender equality. We argue that an increased focus on 'academic excellence' within the contemporary university, by means of New Public Management, maintains structural gender inequality within academic institutions. By comparing two academic fields, we show that the financial and managerial procedures and processes that direct resources are more favourable for research and teaching in male-dominated fields, which affects women and men working in academia. We do this to demonstrate the importance of including gender in the financial and managerial decision-making in academic institutions. We will introduce gender budgeting as an instrument to uncover the differential impact of budgeting on women and men in academia, in order to reconstruct resource distributions to promote gender equality.

Introduction

In the 'era of global competition' (Marginson and Van der Wende, 2007), internationalisation and marketisation have become essential to the managing and financing of academic institutions (Rothe et al., 2008; Välimaa, 2012). This trend is visible in the growing interest in various performance measures of

academic institutions, such as student surveys, module feedback and numerous commercial newspaper league tables and rankings. The most notable are the Global Ranking Systems – such as the Shanghai Jiao Tong University list (SJTU) – and the Times Higher Education Supplement rankings (THE). Through these lists, nations and academic institutions compete for status, with one of the main qualifiers being 'excellence'. On this path towards excellence, academic institutions have been increasingly introducing private sector managerial techniques and ideologies, often referred to as New Public Management (NPM) techniques, which entail performance measurements in the name of efficiency and competition (Barry et al., 2012; Butler and Spoelstra, 2014; Chandler et al., 2004).

By the means of NPM excellence is operationalised by quantitative criteria, such as publication rates, journal rankings, citation indexes and funding success rates (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014; Svensson et al., 2010). Excellence is generally seen as an objective and gender neutral standard of merit; however, research shows that academic excellence can also be an evasive social construct that is inherently gendered (O'Connor and O'Hagan, 2015; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2012). Nations and academic institutions are attracted, or even compelled, to this competition, even though, as Marginson and Van der Wende (2007) point out, this global comparison of universities is designed around comprehensive research-intensive universities that are science-orientated and English literate.

In this article, we examine the extent to which the prevalent discourse on 'excellence' within academia and subsequent private sector managerial instruments have gendered consequences as they steer the distribution of funding. Such consequences are a drawback for gender equality. We approach the subject from the perspective of gender budgeting and apply gender impact analysis to the financial and managerial procedures and processes that are currently in place within an Icelandic academic institution.

Gender budgeting is a way of linking equality with the budgetary process. It starts with assessing the impact of the budget on women and men and proceeds to integrate a gender perspective into budget-planning in order to promote gender equality (Quinn, 2009). In using the term 'gender' we refer to both sex and gender, in the sense of sex being of the categories 'women' and 'men' and gender a system of socially-shaped cultural arrangements (Rubin, 1975). We draw on empirical data collected as part of a research project supported by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Union. The project examines two out of five schools within the University of Iceland: the School of Engineering and Natural Sciences, hereafter STEM, and the School of Social Sciences, hereafter SSH. The gendered nature of the academic fields is apparent, with STEM being a

male-dominated field and SSH a more feminised field (i.e. in terms of gender proportions regarding students and academic staff and subject subfields). Within both fields, the organisational structures are gendered, with men occupying higher and more permanent positions and women occupying the lower and more precarious positions. Although we employed the first phase of gender budgeting in only two academic fields, we believe our approach can be extended to other fields represented in the university and to the larger international academic environment. In this paper, we explore whether institutional financial and managerial procedures and processes create inequalities, with the aim of encouraging the restructuring of the financial system in order promote gender equality in academia. In order to do this, we put forward the following research question: Does the allocation of public funding within the university by means of the current organisational policies and practices have gendered consequences, and if so, how are they manifested?

Before we turn to the findings and discussion, we will first introduce the concepts of gendered institutions, NPM, and gender budgeting, followed by an elaboration of the specific context of the study. In this way, and throughout this part, we will critically examine elements that have so far been overlooked in the literature, topics that are worth investigating further, and how our research contributes to this field of study.

Gendered institutions, NPM and gender budgeting

In 1992, Acker introduced the term 'gendered institutions' as an indicator that bureaucratic organisations are not gender neutral, despite their initial appearance as such. Following Acker, many scholars have developed the concept of the gendered institution (Adkins, 1995; Halford and Leonard, 2001; Pringle, 1998; Wajcman, 1998). Inspired by these contributions, Menéndez et al. summarised the meaning of the term 'gendered institution' as follows:

> job design, career ladders, work practises, recruitment and selection methods, and the culture of organizations are invested with assumptions and expectations about gender appropriate roles; organisational structures and processes are thus 'gendered' rather than gender neutral. (2012: 4)

Academic institutions are no exception to this description. Many studies provide examples about the different manifestations of gendering within academic institutions, (e.g. O'Connor and O'Hagan, 2015), on excellence in academic staff examination, (e.g. Þorvaldsdóttir, 2004), on hiring and promotion processes within academia (e.g. Van den Brink and Benschop, 2012), and on the systematic underestimation and minimisation of women's qualifications in academia, the so

called 'Matilda effect' (e.g. Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2013). Furthermore, extensive literature is available showing lower publication rates of women and the various explanations for this trend, such as fewer co-authoring possibilities for women (Lee and Bozeman, 2005; Long et al., 1993), quantitatively orientated scientific journals (Özbilgin, 2009), extensive teaching responsibilities (Suitor et al., 2001), unequal resource distributions of space, equipment and time (Xie and Shauman, 2003), and differences in level of research specialisation (Leahey, 2006). The gendered structures and processes of the academic financial system that create the inequalities manifested in the literature are worth investigating; however, they have so far been largely overlooked. By directing our attention to gendered financial and managerial procedures and processes that are often considered to be objective and gender neutral, we aim to further increase the awareness of gender inequality within academia.

According to Acker (2006: 452), gender inequality within organisations is a matter of visibility, which she defines as 'the degree of awareness of inequalities'. In this context, she explains that a lack of gender inequality awareness can be both intentional and unintentional. For the advantaged, it can be difficult to grasp the occurrence of inequality because they perceive the matter from their own privileged situation, which they presume to be the normative standard. Acker (2006) also discusses the concept of legitimacy within this same context, arguing that inequality in rigid bureaucracies is highly legitimate. Because the advantaged perceive their own situation as one they are entitled to, inequality is deemed legitimate. The academic system, with its ideology of meritocracy and notion of excellence, further underlines these feelings of entitlement. Heijstra, O'Connor and Rafnsdóttir (2013) examined visibility from Acker's viewpoint (2006) by analysing the perceptions of academics in Iceland with regard to the lower rate of women in full professor positions. The majority of male academics legitimised the situation by arguing that the rate of female professors will surely rise in the future, and that it is merely a matter of time rather than of indirect discriminatory practices. We suggest that gender budgeting can be a tool to unpack the normative standards, to question the legitimacy of inequality and to increase the visibility of the gender inequalities fostered by the managerial and financial systems in academic institutions.

In order to participate in the competition of 'global excellence', academic institutions are increasingly managed and financed in the spirit of an efficient organisation (Symon et al., 2008) and therefore increasingly run like corporations (O'Connor, 2014; Farnham, 1999; Gouthro, 2002). This trend has been described in terms such as 'McUniversity' (Parker and Jary, 1995), 'corporate university' and 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter and Leslie, 2001). Because of the NPM performance measurements, academics are now required to

turn their work into auditable documents, which has led Power (1997) to label the university as an 'audit society'. However, various scholars have expressed their concern about this development and the consequences it may entail for the quality of scholarship. A study by Butler and Spoelstra (2014) on the relationship between the regime of excellence and critical management studies reveals that performance measurements are increasingly affecting scholars' research and publication choices. Willmott (2011) describes this situation as 'journal list fetishism': when the ranking of the publication, as measured by the academic journal lists, becomes more important than its scholarly content. Approaching the topic from a slightly different angle, Özbilgin (2009: 112) points out that the journal ranking system, which disadvantages women and faculty members of colour, contributes to discriminatory practices within academia because of its link with 'hegemonic structures of gender, race and class inequality and disadvantage, which plague the academic labor process and markets'.

Discriminatory practices within organisations – and within academic institutions in particular – have indeed drawn attention to gendered aspects of this process. Thomas and Davies (2002) have addressed the gendered nature of NPM and the way in which women respond to what they call the 'managerialist challenge' within the British higher education system. In line with some of the work on gendered institutions (e.g. Halford and Leonard, 2001) Thomas and Davies (2002) suggests that NPM reforms are carriers of a masculine discourse – which emphasises competition, instrumentality and individuality – that strengthens the gendered institution and does not benefit women. However, there are also studies that emphasise the potential benefits of NPM with regard to gender equality. For instance, Rothe et al. (2008) point out that NPM instruments enhance transparency, facilitate the monitoring of systems and can be utilised as a tool to raise awareness on the matter of equality. Subsequently, NPM instruments can be the starting point for gender budgeting.

Turning to gender budgeting, this has been defined by the Council of Europe (2010) as

> an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It means a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.

Although gender mainstreaming has been criticised for reproducing neoliberal principles and policy agendas (Bacchi and Eveline, 2003), the literature on gender budgeting generally considers it to be a powerful instrument to improve unequal and unfair budgeting policies and processes (Budlender and Hewitt, 2002; Directorate General of Human Rights Council of Europe, 2005; Erbe,

2015; Quinn, 2009; Rothe et al., 2008). In addition to increased transparency, Himmelweit (2002) and Addabbo, Gunluk-Senesen and O'Hagan (2015) have argued that gender budgeting can facilitate the identification of opportunities for the redistribution of resources and enable the achievement of gender equality goals more effectively. Hence, gender budgeting can be seen as a feminist policy change that aims to 'dismantle hierarchies of power that privilege men and the masculine, and the sexual division of labour that devalues women and the feminine' (Htun and Weldon, 2010 in O'Hagan, 2015: 235) and 'seeks a more equitable distribution of resources between women and men' (O'Hagan, 2015: 235). In our research, by utilising gender budgeting, we identify the power hierarchies that dominate within academic institutions, and by doing so, we intend to promote gender equality.

Since Rothe et al. (2008) conducted transnational research in Austria, Germany and Poland, the knowledge on gender budgeting as a strategy in academia has been growing. In a recent publication, Erbe (2015) discusses the effect of gender equality with regard to two funding tools in 13 state-run universities in Germany: the performance-based allocation of funding and the target agreements. Her research indicates that external pressure, as well as linking the allocations of funds to progress in gender equality, increases the willingness of academic institutions to work towards gender equality. In their research, Addabbo, Rodríguez-Moroño and Gálvez-Muños (2015: 196) evaluate budgets and policies in two academic institutions in Spain and Italy from the perspective of wellbeing and gender budgeting in order to promote gender equality in the students' development of capabilities; that is, the 'individual's opportunities to achieve functioning' during their studying period. However, the focus in the literature is on how finances can be used to encourage gender equality in general within the academic system. In our study, we want to focus more specifically on budgeting and to take a step back and pay attention to the structural hindrances created by the managerial and financial systems that create and foster inequality. This approach aligns with Bacchi's (2009) line of reasoning by focusing on the following question: 'What's the problem represented to be?' Heijstra, Steinþórsdóttir and Einarsdóttir (2016) research on 'academic housework' and other academic activities that are poorly valued within academia reveals the importance of investigating financial systems through the lens of gender budgeting. A key dimension of a budget's impact is the amount of unpaid and often invisible work that must be done, and this counts no less in discussions on gender equality within academic institutions. However, in this study, we focus on the academic activities that are valued by the system, and we direct our attention towards the market-driven financial and managerial procedures and processes that are employed in academic institutions. In this way, we can uncover its

differential impact on women and men in order to reconstruct the academic financial system and to work towards equality.

This framework allows us to focus on the gendered aspects of contemporary academic institutions that have the mission of moving upwards in the global rankings. Building on this literature, we intend to illuminate the gendered consequences of financial and managerial procedures and processes utilised to reach the goal of academic excellence, in which we see a risk of drawbacks for gender equality within academic institutions. We do this to demonstrate the importance of including gender in the academic institution's financial and managerial procedures and processes. With this paper, we address the impact of NPM in academic institutions, and we draw special attention to the gendered aspects of the issue. This paper contributes to the literature on gender budgeting by adapting the technique to the academic context. Furthermore, this paper highlights the importance of directing attention to the gendered nature of academic fields when assessing the allocation of resources. Because the distribution of funding has long-term consequences for the work situations of academics and faculties, this paper promotes awareness of the larger picture. This is something that has been lacking within the literature. However, before we turn to this larger picture, we will first describe the context and the methodology of the study.

Context: The 'excellent' and 'gender equal' university

The academic institution under study, the University of Iceland, is the largest in the country and receives recognition as the country's national university. It is a comprehensive research and educational institution consisting of five schools and 29 faculties, and it offers up to 400 programmes – which require no tuition fees – for approximately 13,000 registered students. The institution's organisational policies reveal a strong emphasis on becoming an 'excellent university' through means of international recognition, while simultaneously taking much pride in being 'at the forefront' of gender equality.

Since 2006, the University of Iceland has worked intensely towards the goal of becoming 'one of the leading universities in the world' (University of Iceland, 2011: 9; also see University of Iceland, 2006). It is explicitly written in its policies that this academic institution is putting great emphasis on research related activities, such as a higher quantity of publications within Thomson Reuters/ISI Web of Science (ISI) journals, increased collaborations with world-leading foreign universities, the strengthening of research centres, increases in funding from both non-government sources and competitive funds, increased numbers

of post-doctoral fellowships and the quintupling of the number of PhD graduates (University of Iceland, 2006; University of Iceland, 2011). The intensified emphasis on research related activities underlines the criteria of the global academic ranking systems, especially as presented within the SJTU (Marginson and Van der Wende, 2007).

However, obtaining a position on one of the global academic ranking lists is not the only objective of the university; 'excellence' in all its diversity has become the organising principle of this academic institution's policy in other activities as well. This is clear in the foreword of the 2011–2016 policy written by the rector, where it can be seen that the students and staff of the academic institution are 'determined to strengthen the Icelandic community by achieving excellence in teaching, research, and innovation' (University of Iceland, 2011: 3). The aim described by the rector is to become an excellent, innovative and highly ranked academic research institution, as well as an excellent teaching institution. However, as Marginson and Van der Wende (2007) have pointed out, even though academic institutions are competing internationally through those lists, the academic ranking system tends to favour small institutions that focus on graduate education and research rather than large national academic institutions. However, the academic institution is serious in its attempt to fulfil the objective of excellence. Reorganisations have taken place, and changes have been made to the wage and evaluation system, which can be traced back to 1989 (Einarsdóttir, 1998). A new emphasis has also been introduced through the evaluation system and an increased focus on rewarding academic staff research points for 'excellent' research practices, such as success in obtaining funding and high publication productivity rates, which impacts the position, salaries and opportunities of the individual scholar and the funding distributed to the researchers' faculty or research centre (University of Iceland, n.d.-b).

The University of Iceland represents itself as being 'committed to promoting equality and diversity in all fields' and 'striv[ing] to be at the forefront in all areas of equality' (University of Iceland, n.d.-d). The visibility of equality work within the institution is in line with that ambitious goal. The institution employs an equality policy, an equal rights committee and a professional council that responds to gender-related, sexual harassment and other sexual violence issues. A full-time equal opportunities officer works alongside the equality committee and oversees equality related matters, and all five of the university's schools have equality policies (University of Iceland, n.d.-d). Moreover, Icelandic legislation, such as the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men no. 10/2008, prescribes equal gender representation on public committees, councils and boards, which therefore also applies to the University of Iceland. Hence, equal participation is now expected by law, but not guaranteed. This is visible

within the University Council, which now has almost as many female as male representatives (University of Iceland, n.d.-a). Furthermore, a woman was elected rector of the university in 2005, a position she occupied for 10 years. When she ran for office, it was the first time a woman had stood for rector in the almost century-old history of the institution, and gender equality gained momentum through the symbolic value of a female candidate. Her candidacy was closely connected to gender equality, primarily because she was seen as a role model for women, but her focal interest was on 'excellence', especially on the goal of making the University of Iceland a 'world leading research university' ('Rannsóknarháskóli í fremstu röð', 2005). Still, it can be argued that right under the surface, traditional gender perspectives prevail at this university, a pattern that is also observable in Icelandic society (Bjarnason and Hjálmsdóttir, 2008; Gíslason, 2009; Heijstra and Rafnsdóttir, 2010; Pétursdóttir, 2009; Rafnsdóttir and Heijstra, 2013).

Pétursdóttir (2009) has described the situation in Iceland as an 'aura of gender equality', referring to the belief that equality reigns, despite practical evidence indicating otherwise. Having an equality policy, equality rights committee, an equal opportunities officer and a gender equal University Council and University Council committees – not to mention a woman as head of the institution – enhances the 'aura of gender equality'. This idea of equality reigning derives, in the first place, from all the formal equality work that is in place at the university. This implies that there is a certain level of what Acker (2006) termed 'visibility' and awareness with regard to the inequality issue. Although there is evidence that many academics are not familiar with the exact content of the equality policy (Arnalds et al., 2012) or show little interest in the matter (Heijstra et al., 2016), there is a certain overall perception among academics that these policies have been implemented within their work organisation. Second, an aura of gender equality can appear from the gender representation at the highest managerial level of the university. Having formal equality work and a woman as head of the institution may provide the image of a gender equal institution, in which it is achievable for women to climb to the very top. However, women in top positions, working in environments that are dominated by men, have been labelled within the literature as 'token women' that are put in place to present a more positive image of the situation (Gheaus, 2015). This means that a token woman, such as a female rector within a male-dominated administration, may conceal the visibility of gender inequality.

Methodology

Inspired by the study of Rothe et al. (2008), this article derives from a multi-method study of a contemporary academic institution in Iceland. Like those of other countries, the Icelandic academic system is currently under transition. This is reflected by an increased emphasis on managerialism, in which research and innovation have been closely linked to the goal of economic growth (Jóhannesson, 2013). A comparison between seven European academic institutions has revealed that this particular academic institution has maximised the operationalisation of reaching the goal of 'excellence' (Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2016). This is why the research context in this current study is deemed particularly meaningful; it may facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the 'global competition' phenomenon, as is apparent within contemporary academic institutions.

For this study, we rely on multiple sources of data that were obtained by means of multiple data collection methods. Both our data sources and collection methods are commonly discussed in the literature with regard to triangulation purposes (Denzin, 1978), but they are also invaluable when outlining and scrutinising opaque and complex systems, such as the allocation of funding within academic institutions. Ussher (1999: 43) describes this research situation as follows: 'It is only when we put the different pieces of the jigsaw together that we see a broader picture and gain some insight into the complexity'.

The pieces of our own research jigsaw include data on student numbers and academic staff with or without tenure and/or temporary contracts for the years 2008–2013. We use descriptive statistical measures to analyse these data, and we do the same for the statistical data on academics' research points for 2013, research points by publication outlet for 2013, ISI-journal publications of academic's between 2008 and 2013, and data on European grants that were obtained between 2008 and 2014.

In addition, we rely on governmental and institutional documents, such as fiscal budget information, agreements between the University of Iceland and the state, and the university's policies, annual reports, and information received from the institutions central administration that was available on the university's inner website regarding teaching/research performance measurements and job descriptions. Altogether, we consulted around 100 of written documents.

However, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 181) have pointed out, 'because documents generally are not produced for research purposes, the information they offer may not be in a form that is useful (or understandable) to the

investigator'. Although the documents examined were illuminating, some aspects of the system were still opaque to us at this stage. Therefore, we continued our data collection by conducting five fact-finding interviews with key administrative players of the academic institution. The interviews lasted between 40 and 75 minutes, and they were transcribed and utilised as jigsaw pieces to map the university's funding allocation system in all its complexity. At this stage, the researchers felt the data collection had reached its saturation point (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which made further data collection redundant (Hennink et al., 2011). We applied a qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012), in which we focused on assessing the gender impact of the institutional financial and managerial procedures and practises with regard to the male-dominated STEM and the more feminised SSH fields. The objective of the gender impact assessment was to compare and assess the trends resulting from policies. Gender impact assessments take multiple pieces of information into account, including existing gender differences in participation, distribution of resources, norms, values and rights (European Commission, 1998). The results of our assessment are discussed in the following chapter.

Findings

Equality work is still a separate and independent project at the University of Iceland. Gender is not mainstreamed in the financial and managerial decision-making procedures and processes, despite the fact that this is required by the Act of Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men no. 10/2008. Although the university's policy mentions equality and diversity, it does not specifically mention gender equality or the equal rights policy. The University of Iceland's policy for 2011-2016 has 40 performance measurements (University of Iceland, 2011), all of which are represented as objective and gender neutral, which indicates that there is a clear emphasis on NPM. The managerial instruments used to reach those performance measurements do not mention gender, nor are they related to gender equality work (University of Iceland, n.d.-b; University of Iceland, n.d.-c). However, a gender impact assessment of the financial and managerial instruments reveals that there are hierarchies of power within this academic institution that privilege men and the masculine and devalue women and the feminine. The evaluation of work is tailored around the conditions and the needs of male-dominated fields, in which tasks – both related to teaching and research – are more valued and rewarded than these same tasks when performed within more feminised fields. This becomes apparent from the gendered conditions and how the financial system is designed and directs resources, from the state to the academic institution; from the institution to the academic schools and within the academic schools. We will discuss the manifestation of these

biases in the following paragraphs, starting with the gendered academic conditions and followed by gendered financial and managerial procedures and processes.

Gendered academic conditions

The University of Iceland has wrapped itself in an aura of gender equality, but our findings reveal that this academic institution is highly gendered. Gender segregation is prevalent within this university, despite the fact that women have constituted more than half of the university's students for the past three decades (Ministry of Culture and Education, 2002). A horizontal division is apparent; the majority of academics and students in STEM are men, whereas in SSH the gender representation is more equal among the academic staff and the majority of students are women. As Table 1 reveals, there is also vertical segregation, with men dominating permanent and full-time positions and women occupying the more precarious positions of temporary and often part-time contracts. The more precarious positions – those of adjuncts and sessional teachers – are most often teaching positions with little room for research. These positions entail low wages and temporary employment contracts with few legal rights and benefits. This division also applies to the two academic schools; however, the gender segregation is more obvious in STEM. We thus conclude that STEM is a male-dominated field and SSH a more feminised field.

	UI		**STEM**		**SSH**	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Deans	60%	40%	100%	0%	100%	0%
Heads of faculties	70%	30%	85%	15%	85%	15%
Full professors	70%	30%	85%	15%	60%	40%
Associate professors	60%	40%	60%	40%	60%	40%
Assistant professor	45%	55%	60%	40%	55%	45%
Adjuncts	40%	60%	35%	65%	45%	55%
Sessional teachers	40%	60%	65%	35%	40%	60%

Table 1: Academic position in UI, STEM and SSH in 2013 by gender

The gendering of academic fields is also reflected by the worth assigned to the disciplines, with the male-dominated fields receiving considerably higher funding for teaching than the more feminised fields. The academic institution is mainly financed with public funding, and about two-thirds of the institution's funding deriving from the state is based on teaching agreements. The state has formed a classificatory system for the amount of funding the institution receives for a single full-time student – a price tag – depending on their discipline. The annual funding from the state for STEM students is 60-100% higher than the annual funding for SSH students (The 2015 Fiscal Budget).

The academic institution has full autonomy over the funding it receives from the state; the institution receives one appropriation that the governing body distributes between teaching and research. The decision-making is in the hands of the financial committee, whose members are the deans of the five schools and the chief executive officer of the university. Even though the academic institution has full autonomy over the internal distribution of public funding, it tends to follow the price tags put forward in the classificatory system formed by the state. From the interviews with key administrative players, it becomes clear that this is not set in stone and that the state's funding formula can be tampered with by the finance committee, e.g. some disciplines have been moved up to a higher price category. It is not clear which disciplines get this special treatment within the allocation of funding. Generally, according to the classificatory system, the faculties in SSH are in the lowest price category, although, as a key player revealed in an interview, the financial committee upgraded the only 'male-dominated' faculty in SSH to the STEM price category.

With lower funding, the faculties have less leeway to hire full-time teachers to maintain an appropriate student/teacher ratio. In 2013, the student/teacher ratio in SSH was 43:1, whereas in STEM it was 21:1. Still, the University of Iceland aims to provide 'outstanding undergraduate education' (University of Iceland, 2011: 13). The development of the student/teacher ratio, which has been negative since the financial crisis in 2008, suggests that teaching may not be a priority at this university after all.

Following the crisis, educational expenditure cuts were extensive, and despite the cuts in education, the enrolment of students at the tertiary level increased significantly (see also Ólafsson, 2012). In 2009, the student/teacher ratio in SSH went up to 52:1, whereas the ratio was 18:1 in STEM. This disparity creates more favourable conditions in male-dominated fields, both for students and academics. In comparison with other fields, the students in the male-dominated fields may receive better education and more time with their teachers, and the academics have smaller teaching workloads. The academic staff with larger teaching

workloads have less time to attend activities that pay-off in the system, such as internationally visible research, which therefore can slow down their career progress. Hence, the conditions for progressing on the academic career ladder vary by academic field, and within the gender-segregated University of Iceland, these conditions are more likely to negatively impact women than men. Hence, the financial system is doing the opposite of promoting gender equality; it is maintaining the persistent gender hierarchy, which is a drawback for equality.

Gendered financial and managerial procedures and processes

Bias is also apparent in the evaluation of the work of academics, which directs the distribution of public funding. Through the evaluation system, the work of academics is assessed, and academics receive research points for research, teaching, administration and services. In line with the academic institution's aim of becoming an 'excellent research University', the main emphasis is on research related activities, and the points rewarded are supposed to stimulate research output. This turns out to be at the expense of teaching related activities, even though it is stated in the most recent policy that 'teaching and research always enjoy the same priority' (University of Iceland, 2011: 13). A standard number of points is awarded annually to academics with teaching duties (University of Iceland, n.d.-c). The number of students that are attending classes is not part of the formula, though it is a known fact that the workload increases with more students, not in the least because of 'academic housework' (see also Heijstra et al., 2016). This is especially apparent within the SSH departments, where the student/teacher ratio is the most unfavourable.

Being a successful researcher entails positive effects in terms of promotion, salary, payment from productivity evaluation funds, sabbaticals and the allocation of research funds (Agreement on teaching and research, appendix 1, 2012; Regulation no. 263/2010; Regulation no. 569/2009; Regulation no. 605/2006; Regulations no. 971/2009). In addition, by building on the academics' performance in research, the university allocates financial resources to the researcher's faculty or research centre (University of Iceland, n.d.-b). 'Hence, low research activity is no longer a private matter of the employee, which only would affect him personally to lower wages, but low activity reduces the financial income of the respective faculty' (Agreement on teaching and research, appendix 1, 2012: 34). In 2013, academics in STEM received 20% more research points than academics in SSH (112 academics in each school). In STEM, 70% of the research points were for 'quality' research related activities, whereas these activities only accounted for 55% of the SSH research points (University of Iceland, n.d.-g). Subsequently, academics in STEM, mostly men, are receiving higher salaries and have more opportunities than academics in SSH.

Furthermore, male-dominated fields are receiving more public funds. What could explain this discrepancy is a bias in the evaluation system that rewards research and teaching in the male-dominated STEM more than in other fields.

This bias can also be observed in the assessment of research, which is largely based on the publication outlet, a factor that is more favourable towards STEM research than that of SSH disciplines. Research appearing in books and book chapters from 'prestigious' publishing houses and in high ranked journals on the ISI and European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH)-journal lists are most valued in terms of research points. Moreover, the evaluation system rewards multi-authorship, for which there is a strong tradition in STEM. If a publication has multiple authors, it generates additional points, up to a certain ceiling. The total number of points associated with a particular publication therefore becomes a function of the number of authors. Multi-authorship results in a higher number of points for the faculties. The publication, however, produces slightly fewer research points for each co-authoring individual than if the publication were to be authored by a single person (University of Iceland, n.d.-c).

Even though the evaluation system communicates the idea that quantity is more important than quality, the University of Iceland stresses its interest in increasing the number of 'high quality publications' (University of Iceland, 2011: 10). If an article is published in a 'superior' journal, the scholar can receive up to double the amount of research points. According to the University of Iceland, these 'superior' journals are *Nature, Science, Cell* and the *New England Journal of Medicine* (University of Iceland, n.d.-f). All these journals primarily publish work from STEM and the health sciences.

In 2013, the year for which we analysed academic publications in journals registered in the ISI database, we see that for every publication from academics in SSH, STEM academics have nine publications (1:9). In addition, two thirds of the articles published by STEM academics were in top 20% ISI journals, that is with a high impact factor, whereas high-impact journal publications only accounted for one third of the articles published by SSH academics (University of Iceland, n.d.-e). Out of all the ISI publications in the years 2008–2012, STEM scholars published 1,429 articles, whereas SSH published 142 articles. Overall, STEM scholars were 45% of the authors and SSH scholars authored 5% of all the ISI journal articles published from the University of Iceland, and together with scholars from the School of Health Sciences, STEM scholars authored 91% of all the articles published in ISI journals (University of Iceland, n.d.-e). The difference in publications may be partly explained by the fact that there is group of academic research specialists in STEM that mostly work on research and do

not have any teaching obligations. The opposite is the case in SSH, where there are not any academic research specialists, but instead a group of adjuncts that have predominantly teaching obligations (Regulation no. 605/2006).

What is more, the different traditions within the different schools when it comes to publications are not taken into account in the research assessment, which leads to biases between academics of different schools. None of the Icelandic journals or publishing houses are defined as prestigious or as having a high impact factor (University of Iceland n.d.-h), despite the fact that it is noted in the policy that 'the University [...] plays a unique role in the research of Icelandic culture and society and seeks to publish its research findings in domestic and international venues' (University of Iceland, 2011: 10). Nevertheless, this is not reflected within the evaluation system; international publications are generally more rewarded than domestic publications (University of Iceland, n.d.-c). This therefore creates a paradoxical situation: it is seen as an important part of the work within certain SSH fields to share knowledge with Icelandic society, but this same work is undervalued in the University of Iceland's evaluation and incentive system. This is also reflected in the research points rewarded to STEM and SSH in 2013 when said points are analysed according to the status of the journal in the evaluation system. For every research point received by SSH scholars (184 points) for articles in the top 20% of journals registered on the ISI and ERIH-A lists, STEM scholars (1,644 points) received nine (1:9). STEM scholars (1061 points) received 17% more research points than SSH scholars (904 points) for publications in other journals registered in the ISI database, ERIH-B journals and top Icelandic journals. However, the opposite is the case for publications in other Icelandic journals and in ERIH-C journals, in which for every research point received in STEM (155 points), SSH (330 points) received two (1:2) (University of Iceland n.d.-h).

For the University of Iceland, obtaining funding is of utmost importance, and through the incentives present at this university (both in the form of research points to the academic staff and rewards to the academic fields) a bias is created, because the male-dominated fields have more access to external funding than other fields (University of Iceland, 2011; University of Iceland, n.d.-b; University of Iceland, n.d.-c). Scholars who are successful in obtaining grants from competitive funds and funds from parties outside the university are rewarded with points that affect their monthly salary (Agreement on teaching and research, appendix 1; University of Iceland, n.d.-c). Furthermore, within a frame of annual limits for each project, the faculty obtains 20-60% matching funds, according to a rule for internal allocation of state funding. This means that the highest matching funds go to grants obtained in international competitive funds, and the lowest reward goes to grants obtained from non-competitive national funds.

Information on received grants – deriving from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for the years 2008–2014 – reveal that STEM received funding for 29 projects (21 male and eight female project leaders), SSH for six projects (two male and four female project leaders) and collaborations between SSH and STEM for two projects (two male project leaders). Information was available on 27 of the STEM projects, with the total amount of grant money received reaching up to 7,898,100 EUR, whereas the four SSH projects obtained funding for 1,754,842 EUR (University of Iceland, 2014).

When looking past the different number of grants and amounts distributed to men and women and to STEM and SSH and concentrating instead on how this funding steers the distribution of public resources within the university (through the matching funds and the evaluation system), we observe that the system is vulnerable to inequality. STEM faculties that attain a grant will get additional funding as a matching fund from the academic institution, which is taken from the governmental appropriation. Other faculties that do not receive any or few grants, especially from international competitive funds, are therefore denied this financial compensation based on matching funds. In addition, the academic institution plans to intensify their managerial interventions to increase extramural funding, as stated in the university's policy: 'Salary and terms of employment will in greater measure take into account employees' results in obtaining grants from competitive funds' (University of Iceland, 2011: 9). According to this, grants will increasingly control the labour of academia.

Discussion and conclusion

In this article, we examined how the emerging discourse on excellence within academia and the financial and managerial procedures and processes used to reach that goal impact the distribution of funding, with subsequent gendered consequences. We found that the process of making an 'excellent university', through gender blind and objective financial and managerial procedures and processes, results in a drawback for gender equality.

The financial system impacts the two gendered academic fields, STEM and SSH, differently and maintains structural gender inequality within the academic institution. The financial and managerial procedures and processes used at the University of Iceland favour male-dominated STEM subjects, both in relation to research and teaching. When it comes to research related activities, the evaluation system is built on STEM focused performance measurements and traditions, such as the amount of attained international competitive funding, publications in international 'excellent' and 'superior' journals and multi-

authorship on publications. When it comes to teaching related activities, the evaluation system undervalues the heavy workload that academics must put up with (such as academic housework), especially within the more feminised SSH faculties, where the student/teacher ratio is the most unfavourable and the annual funding from the state is lower than for STEM students. Because the evaluation system is directly connected to the distribution of funding and affecting different fields differently, this results in an unequal distribution of public funds within the university.

As for gender budgeting, it is crucial to ask ourselves whether there are logical explanations for these differences or whether they are caused by biases within the system. There is a highly legitimised argument, in the meaning of Acker (2006), that STEM subjects need more expensive equipment for research, and therefore e.g. research grants are considerably higher than SSH grants. We acknowledge that this may sometimes be the case; nevertheless, whether that argument justifies the higher matching funds from the academic institution is a vexed question.

Özbilgin (2009) describes this financial system as a form of discriminatory practice in academia because of the connection to the gendered hegemonic structure of academic institutions. By rewarding fields that are male dominated, the current financial and managerial procedures and processes increase indirect gender discrimination in academia. Male-dominated fields receive more funding, which has great impact on the conditions offered to the predominately male academic staff and students in these fields. This has direct consequences for women and men working in academia. Academics within the male-dominated fields not only receive more research points for their research publications (because of the STEM focused evaluation standards) but also have more time to do what is most valued in the system (because of a more favourable student/teacher ratio and less academic housework) than academics in other fields. This highly affects the academics' opportunities to get out of a precarious position and move up the tenure track, to gain financial benefits and opportunities within the academic institution, such as sabbaticals and research grants. Hence, by rewarding scholars in accordance with the current evaluation system and not taking into account the different circumstances within the academic fields, the financial and managerial procedures and processes benefit men and male-dominated fields and maintain structural gender inequality within the university.

Earlier, we referred to Pétursdóttir (2009), who describes aura of gender equality. Under this phenomenon, all seems well at first sight, but right under the surface, men and women still hold on to traditional gender relations. Having

an equal opportunities officer, equal participation of women and men in the University Council, an equality policy and a female head of the institution creates an 'aura of gender equality'. We argue that there is a certain level of visibility, in the meaning of Acker (2006), because of the female rector and the university's formal equality. However, while the rector was in office, she represented values that were highly connected to STEM. The same visibility is connected to the University of Iceland's formal equality work; there is a certain perception among academics that the equality policy has been implemented within the academic institution, although they may not even know the content of this policy (Arnalds et al., 2012; Heijstra et al., 2014). Furthermore, taking pride in equality and describing the University of Iceland as being at the forefront of gender equality work increases the invisibility of gender inequality within this academic institution. When inequality is visible, such as gender representation in the decision-making body and in academic senior positions, the situation is legitimised by pointing at the 'token women' (Gheaus, 2014), by arguing that gender equality is just around the corner and by stating that the situation will resolve itself in time. In this way, inequality becomes highly legitimated (Acker, 2006).

Inspired by Bacchi (2009), we frequently stopped during the writing process and asked ourselves 'What's the problem represented to be?' while working on this paper. Why is an academic institution in Iceland aiming to be one of the leading universities in the world, why is the institution taking part in the global competition, and why do we assess our university with international instruments, such as high-impact publications and citation indexes? Who decides that this is what the academic institution should aim for? Although the University of Iceland's policy is allegedly formed and shaped by the university itself, it nevertheless reflects international hegemonic discourses in academia. This development may be at the cost of gender equality, as we have shown, but we still see some opportunities. Because this analysis reveals that resources are not distributed in a gender equitable way, it creates an opportunity to readdress the inequity and reconstruct academic financial and managerial procedures and processes in order to obtain more balanced access to resources in academia. Further research is encouraged on the gendered implications and consequences of internationalism and marketisation on academia, for instance how these trends translate into research grant systems and impact the positions of academics in the first stages of their career and academics in precarious positions. Simultaneously, it is important to identify possibilities for advancing gender equality. With gender budgeting, it is possible to make gendered patterns and biases visible, revise what is valued and measured and what is not, reassesses what is 'excellent' within academia and integrate a gender analysis into financial and managerial decisions to identify possibilities for the redistribution of

resources to correct imbalances in women's and men's use of and access to resources.

Referring to Bacchi and Eveline (2003) – who point out that gender mainstreaming reproduces neoliberal principles and policy agendas – and inspired by Audre Lorde's essay, 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' (1984), we have asked ourselves how neoliberal and gendered tools can be utilised to examine and change the outcome of neoliberal and gendered thought. In this paper, we have shown that by using gender impact assessments and critically analysing the academic institution's financial and managerial procedures and processes, we have demonstrated that there are gendered consequences and biases. Given that gender budgeting provides the university with more detailed information on the effects of their financial system, from now on, they will be better equipped to make informed decisions. By applying gender budgeting to existing financial and managerial procedures and processes, we believe we are offering a realistic and effective tool that will not only raise awareness on the matter of equality but also result in better governance by enhancing transparency and facilitating the monitoring of systems (Rothe et al., 2008). By re-shaping the current academic system from within, it seems plausible to get a step closer to transforming academic institutions and forming a better and more equal academic work environment.

references

Acker, J. (1992) 'From sex roles to gendered institutions', *Contemporary Sociology,* 21(5): 565-569.

Acker, J. (2006) 'Inequality regimes: Gender, class, and race in organizations', *Gender & Society,* 20(4): 441-464.

Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men no. 10/2008 (Icel.).

Addabbo T., G. Gunluk-Senesen and A. O'Hagan (2015) 'Gender budgeting: Insights from current methodologies and experiences in Europe', *Politica Economica / Journal of Economic Policy,* XXXI(2): 125-134.

Addabbo T., P. Rodríguez-Moroño and L. Gálvez-Muños (2015) 'Gender budgeting in education from a wellbeing approach: An application to Italy and Spain', *Politica Economica / Journal of Economic Policy,* XXXI(2): 195-212.

Adkins, L. (1995) *Gendered work, sexuality, family and the labour market.* Bristol: Open University Press.

Agreement on teaching and research between University of Iceland and the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture 2012-2016, appendix 1. (Icel.).

Arnalds, Á.A., A.M. Leiknisdóttir, G.A. Jónsdóttir, G.B Tryggvadóttir, H.H. Jónsdóttir and H. Guðmundsdóttir (2012) *Status and Development regarding Equality at the University of Iceland 2008-2011*. Reykjavík: University of Iceland's Social Science Research Institute.

[http://english.hi.is/files/arnarg/status_and_development_regarding_equality_at_the_university_of_iceland_2008_2011.pdf]

Bacchi, C. (2009) *Analysing policy: What's the problem represented to be?* French's Forest, NSW: Pearson Education.

Bacchi, C. and J. Eveline (2003) 'Mainstreaming and neoliberalism: A contested relationship', *Policy and Society*, 22(2): 98-118.

Barry, J., E. Berg and J. Chandler (2012) 'Movement and coalition in contention: Gender, management and academe in England and Sweden', *Gender, Work & Organization*, 19(1): 52-70.

Bjarnason, T. and A. Hjálmsdóttir (2008) 'Egalitarian attitudes toward the division of household labor among adolescents in Iceland', *Sex Roles,* 59(1/2): 49-60.

Budlender, D. and G. Hewitt (2002) *Gender budgets make more cents*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Butler, N. and S. Spoelstra (2014) 'The regime of excellence and the erosion of ethos in critical management studies', *British Journal of Management,* 25(3): 538-550.

Chandler, J., J. Barry and E. Berg (2004) 'Reforming managerialism? Gender and the navigation of change in higher education in Sweden and England' in R. Thomas, A.J. Mills and J.H. Mills (eds.) *Identity politics at work: Resisting gender, gendering resistance* (p. 123-140). London: Routledge.

Council of Europe (2010) Parliamentary Assembly: Recommendation 1921 (2010).

Denzin, N.K. (1978) *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (2nd ed). New York: MCGraw-Hill.

Directorate General of Human Rights Council of Europe (2005) *Gender Budgeting*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Einarsdóttir, Þ. (1998) Kynjamunur í vinnumatskerfi háskólakennara [Gender inequality in the universty incentive system], *Fréttablað Háskóla Íslands,* 1: 32-33.

Erbe, B. (2015) 'Gender mainstreaming in public financing of universities: Central findings for Germany', *Politica economica / Journal of Economic Policy*, XXXI(2): 213-232.

European Commission (1998) 'A guide to gender impact assessment'. [http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/a-guide-to-gender-impact-assessment-pbCE1698788/]

Farnham, P. (1999) *Managing academic staff in changing university system: International trends and comparisons*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Gíslason, I.V. (2009) 'Gender changes in Iceland: From rigid roles to negotiations', *Arctic & Antarctic,* 3(3): 121-149.

Gheaus, A. (2015) 'Three cheers for the token woman!', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 32(2): 163-176.

Glaser, B. and A. Strauss (1967) *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Gouthro, P.A. (2002) 'What counts? Examining academic values and women's life experiences from a critical feminist perspective', *CJSAE/RCÉÉA,* 16(1): 1-10.

Halford, S. and P. Leonard (2001) *Gender, power and organisations: An Introduction*. Hamshire: Palgrave.

Heijstra, T.M., T. Bjarnason and G.L. Rafnsdóttir (2014) 'Predictors of gender inequalities in the rank of full professor', *Scandinavian Journal of Educational research*, 59(2): 1-17.

Heijstra, T.M., P. O'Connor and G.L. Rafnsdóttir (2013) 'Explaining gender inequality in Iceland: what makes the difference?', *European Journal of Higher Education,* 3(4): 324-341.

Heijstra, T.M. and G.L. Rafnsdóttir (2010) 'The Internet and academics' workload and work-family balance', *The Internet and Higher Education,* 13(3): 158-163.

Heijstra, T.M., F.S. Steinþórsdóttir and Þ. Einarsdóttir (2016) 'Academic career making and the double-edged role of academic housework', *Gender and Education*, 29(6): 1-17.

Hennink, M., I. Hutter and A. Bailey (2011) *Qualitative research methods*. London: Sage.

Himmelweit, S. (2002) 'Making visible the hidden economy: The case for gender-impact analysis of economic policy', *Feminist Economics,* 8(1): 49-70.

Jóhannesson, I.A. (2013) 'Excellence, innovation and academic freedom in university policy in Iceland', *Icelandic Review of Politics and Administration*, 9(1): 79-99.

Knobloch-Westerwick, S., C.J. Glynn and M. Huge (2013) 'The Matilda Effect in science communication an experiment on gender bias in publication quality perceptions and collaboration interest', *Science Communication*, 35(5): 603-625.

Leahey, E. (2006) 'Gender differences in productivity research specialization as a missing link', *Gender & Society*, 20(6): 754-780.

Lee, S. and B. Bozeman (2005) 'The impact of research collaboration on scientific productivity', *Social Studies of Science*, 35(5): 673-702.

Long, S., P. Allison and R. McGinnis (1993) 'Rank advancement in academic careers: Sex differences and the effects of productivity', *American Sociological Review*, 58(5): 703-722.

Lorde, A. (1984) *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.

Marginson, S. and M. Van der Wende (2007) 'To rank or to be ranked: The impact of global rankings in higher education', *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3-4): 306-329.

Menéndez, M., C. Fagan and S. Ansón (2012) 'Introduction', in C. Fagan, M. Menéndez and S. Ansón (eds.) *Women on corporate boards and in top management: European trends and policy*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Merriam, S. and E. Tisdell (2016) *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ministry of Culture and Education (2002) *Konur í vísindum* [Women in science]. Reykjavík: Ministry of Culture and Education.

O'Connor, P. (2014) *Management and gender in higher education*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

O'Connor, P. and C. O'Hagan (2015) 'Excellence in university academic staff evaluation: A problematic reality?', *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(11): 1-15.

O'Hagan, A. (2015) 'Favourable conditions for the adoption and implementation of gender budgeting: Insights from comparative analysis', *Politica economica / Journal of Economic Policy*, XXXI(2): 233-252.

Ólafsson, S. (2012) 'The Icelandic way out of the crisis: Welfarism, redistribution and austerity', working paper, Social Research Centre, University of Iceland.

Özbilgin, M. (2009) 'From journal rankings to making sense of the world', *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 8(1): 113-121.

Parker, M. and D. Jary (1995) 'The McUniversity: Organization, management and academic subjectivity', *Organization*, 2(2): 319-338.

Pétursdóttir, G.M. (2009) 'Within the aura of gender equality: Icelandic work cultures, gender relations and family responsibility: a holistic approach', PhD thesis, Faculty of Political Science, University of Iceland.

Power, M. (1997) *The audit society: Rituals of verification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pringle, R. (1998) *Sex and medicine: Gender, power and authority in the medical profession*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Quinn, S. (2009) *Gender budgeting: Practical implementation*, Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs Council of Europe. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Rafnsdóttir, G.L. and T.M. Heijstra (2013) Balancing Work-Family Life in Academia. The Power of Time. *Gender, Work and Organizations,* 20(3): 283-296.

Rannsóknarháskóli í fremstu röð [Leading research university] (2005) *Morgunblaðið,* 10 March.

Regulation on academic teachers and specialists responsibilities, no. 605/2006 (Icel.).

Regulation for the University of Iceland no. 569/2009 (Icel.).

Regulations on performance-related transfer of work-obligations at University of Iceland no. 971/2009 (Icel.)

Regulation on the promotion and permanent appointment of academic staff at the University of Iceland, no. 263/2010 (Icel.).

Rothe, A., B. Erbe, W. Fröhlich, E. Klatzer, Z. Lapniewska, M. Mayrhofer, M. Neumayr, M. Pichlbauer, M. Tarasiewiczm, J. Zebisch and M. Debski (2008) *Gender Budgeting as a Management Strategy for Gender Equality at Universities: Concluding Project Report,* Frauenakademie München (ISBN-13:978-3-937120-09-6).

Rubin, G. (1975) 'The traffic in women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of sex', in R. Reiter (ed.) *Toward an anthropology of women*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Schreier, M. (2012) *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. London: Sage.

Slaughter, S. and L.L. Leslie (2001) 'Expanding and elaborating the concept of academic capitalism', *Organization,* 8(2): 154-161.

Steinþórsdóttir, F.S., T.M. Heijstra, Þ. Einarsdóttir and G.M. Pétursdóttir (eds.) (2016) 'Gender budgeting in academia', *GARCIA working papers no. 8*. University of Trento (ISBN 978-88-8443-675-7).

Suitor, J.J., D. Mecom and I.S. Feld (2001) 'Gender, household labor, and scholarly productivity among university professors', *Gender Issues*, 19(4): 50-67.

Svensson, P., S. Spoelstra, M. Pedersen and S. Schreven (2010) 'The excellent institution', *ephemera,* 10(1): 1-6.

Symon, R., A. Buehring, P. Johnson and C. Cassell (2008) 'Positioning qualitative research as resistance to the institutionalization of the academic labour process', *Organization Studies,* 29(19): 1315-1336.

The 2015 Fiscal Budget (Icel.).

Thomas, R. and A. Davies (2002) 'Gender and new public management: Reconstituting academic subjectivities', *Gender, Work and Organizations,* 9(4): 372-397.

Þorvaldsdóttir, Þ. (2004) 'Engendered opinions in placement committee decisions', *Gender and Excellence in the Making*. Brussels: European Commission, Research Directorate-General.

University of Iceland (n.d.-a) 'Configuration of the University Council'. [http://english.hi.is/university/configuration_of_the_university_council]

University of Iceland (n.d.-b) 'Deililíkan fyrir útdeilingu fjár til sviða/deilda' [Distribution formula of funding to schools/faculties].

University of Iceland (n.d.-c) 'Evaluation system for public universities'. [http://english.hi.is/files/sverrirg/evaluation_system_english.pdf]

University of Iceland (n.d.-d) 'Equality and diversity in the University of Iceland'. [http://english.hi.is/university/equality_ui]

University of Iceland (n.d.-e) 'Fjöldi greina í ISI-tímaritum' [Articles in ISI-journals]. [http://www.hi.is/node/303281]

University of Iceland (n.d.-f) 'Mat á greinum úr framúrskarandi tímaritum' [Evaluation of articles in superior journals], published on University of Iceland intranet. [http://ugla.hi.is]

University of Iceland (n.d.-g) 'Rannsóknarstig 2013' [Research points 2013]. [http://www.hi.is/node/303281]

University of Iceland (n.d.-h) 'Ritvirkni og flokkun ritverka árið 2013 – stig' [Research productivity and publication outlet in 2013 – research points]. [http://www.hi.is/sites/default/files/sverrirg/rivirkni_flokkun_ritverka.xlsx]

University of Iceland (2006) 'Policy of the University of Iceland 2006-2011'. [http://english.hi.is/files/bryndjo/policy_of_the_university_of_iceland_2006.pdf]

University of Iceland (2011) 'Policy of the University of Iceland 2011-2016'. [http://english.hi.is/files/afmaeliforsida/policy_2011-2016.pdf]

University of Iceland (2014) 'Verkefni innan HÍ sem hafa hlotið styrk úr 7RÁ' [Projects within UI that have received FP7 funding]. [www.hi.is/sites/default/files/mas/onnur.../fp7_verkefni_hi.xlsx]

Ussher, J.M. (1999) 'Eclecticism and methodological pluralism: The way forward for feminist research', *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 23: 41-46.

Van den Brink, M. and Y. Benschop (2012) 'Gender practices in the construction of academic excellence: Sheep with five legs', *Organization*, 19(4): 507-524.

Välimaa, J. (2012) 'The Corporatization of National Universities in Finland' in B. Pusser, K. Kemper, S. Marginson and I. Ordorika (eds.) *Universities and the public sphere: Knowledge creation and state building in the era of globalization*. New York: Routledge.

Wajcman, J. (1998) *Managing like a man: Women and men in corporate management*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Willmott, H. (2011) 'Journal list fetishism and the perversion of scholarship: Reactivity and the ABS list', *Organization,* 18(4): 429-442.

Xie, Y. and K. Shauman (2003) *Women in science: Career processes and outcomes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

the authors

Finnborg Salome Steinþórsdóttir is a PhD student in gender studies at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland. Her research interests are gender budgeting, gender power relations and organizational cultures. Email: finnborg@hi.is

Thamar Melanie Heijstra is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland. Her research interests are work cultures, well-being and gender relations. Email: thamar@hi.is

Þorgerður Jennýjardóttir Einarsdóttir is a full professor in gender studies at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Iceland, Reykjavík, Iceland. Her research interests are feminist social sciences in the broadest sense. Email: the@hi.is

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 583-608

The *perestroika* of academic labour: The neoliberal transformation of higher education and the resurrection of the 'command economy'

Craig Brandist

abstract

This paper compares the changing function and organisation of higher education (HE) under neoliberal reforms, with particular focus on the UK, with those introduced by the Stalin regime in the 1930s and developed in the decades that followed. Although ideologically contrasting, many policies developed to subordinate HE and other state enterprises more directly to the accumulation of capital driven by competition are in many respects strikingly similar in each case. The historical development of each is examined, along with the political economy underlying them, highlighting the most important common features and differences. The proletarianisation of HE in the UK is shown to have encouraged the adoption of 'spontaneous' forms of resistance reminiscent of those workers adopted in the USSR to protect themselves from bureaucratic pressure. The paper suggests ways in which these forms of resistance might be incorporated into a more general struggle against the encroachment of neoliberalism.

Introduction

Once quite privileged professionals, university staff in the UK and elsewhere have undergone a dramatic process of proletarianisation over the last thirty years. This has resulted in stagnating and, recently, actually falling levels of pay, a huge growth in student numbers without corresponding increases in funding, and a massive increase in the number of precarious, hourly-paid lecturers. Professional autonomy has rapidly been eroded with the rise of a powerful and centralised institutional apparatus charged with imposing state-defined imperatives and subordinating academic to administrative priorities. Though supported by

rhetorical appeals to private enterprise and deregulation, the structure of higher education (HE) as it emerges from its neoliberal restructuring and reorientation (the Russian *perestroika* captures this conception) bears comparison in fundamental ways with the Soviet command economy in the Stalin period and after. Given that the USSR hardly stands as a beacon of academic freedom and intellectual integrity, there are good reasons to be concerned about this. The differences between the two systems and ideologies are, of course, numerous and obvious. To note just a few: education was considered a public good in the USSR and is treated mainly as a private good in the neoliberal UK; the neoliberal ideology of education as a market and the student as 'customer' finds no parallel in the USSR, and, of course, state repression is not something outspoken academics in the UK generally need to worry about. Nevertheless, as I have shown elsewhere (Brandist, 2014), the parallels are striking in a number of areas: the imperative for competition between institutions; the subordination of intellectual endeavor to extrinsic metrics; the lurching of departments and institutions from one target to another heedless of coherence; the need to couch research in terms of impact on the economy and social cohesion; the import of industrial performance management tactics; and the echoing of government slogans by funders (of which the Arts and Humanities Research Council's invocation of the 'Big Society' some years ago is only the most crass example). These parallels are no less instructive than the differences.

While consideration of these parallels helps to bring important contours of the current state of HE into sharper focus, and I make no claim to be the first person to notice many of them (see, for instance, Amann, 2003; Lorentz, 2012; Radice 2008),[I] a more substantial analysis requires us to look more deeply at what lies beneath these similarities. We must consider the political economy underlying the transformation of HE which gives rise to the formal continuities between the Stalinist and neoliberal regimes. We also need a historical analysis of the ways in which the Western and Soviet systems interacted and underwent transformations at the turn of the century. Here we build upon but move beyond the delineation of parallels and seek to identify their underlying, generative mechanisms. The current article thus seeks to advance our understanding of the nature and significance of the neoliberal transformation of HE, but also to suggest ways in which it might effectively be resisted.

While the neoliberal transformation of HE has affected most, if not all, education systems in the world to some extent, the current article concentrates on HE in the UK, as a particularly acute case. It has proven so acute because a) successive

[I] I was, however, unaware of these sources when writing my initial work on the subject.

governments since 1979 have been ideologically committed to the neoliberal transformation of the public sector as a whole; b) they have been able successfully to transmit their demands down the state's vertical hierarchies (albeit in the face of considerable opposition);[2] and c) the constitutional and structural position of central government in the UK has allowed it to carry out wide-ranging reforms right across the public sector in ways that have not been possible in federal states like Germany or the United States (Pollitt, 2011). The fact that the USSR and UK both displayed centralised constitutional arrangements allows the common features to emerge quite clearly, despite their seemingly contradictory ideological motivations.

The neoliberal transformation of academic labour

HE across much of the world has undergone a significant restructuring and reorientation over the last three decades. It is no longer a novelty to speak of the very idea of the university to be in crisis today as new, commercial imperatives impinge upon, but have yet been unable fully to supplant, continuities with a non-commercial past. As Ruth Barcan (2013) has persuasively argued, the university has acquired a 'palimpsesitic' character, with its original identity as a scholarly community being overlain first by a bureaucracy and more recently by a corporate-commercial institution, each with its own logic and demands. The mediaeval idea of a scholarly vocation, the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, has been brought under a corporate form based on knowledge conceived as a commodity. Some disciplines have fared better than others in this new situation, but the maintenance of the 'scholarly paradigm remains symbolically and economically central to the success of the corporation; it is a significant, indeed a key component of the university's "brand value"' (Barcan, 2013: 88). A sharp intensification of labour has resulted from the competition that has been introduced into the system, converging with the underfunded expansion of HE, the proliferation of academic tasks through the addition of bureaucratic and corporate imperatives, the consequences of casualisation as well as the growth of knowledge itself (Barcan, 2013: 93).

The notion of the 'palimpsestic' nature of the university today is helpful in understanding the dilemmas faced by university staff who remain committed to central aspects of the original scholarly 'vocation' that has been hijacked by the corporate form. It tends, however, to understate the essential contradictions that arise, such as the need for corporations to protect their 'brand' from prominent,

[2] The Thatcher government's defeat of the Miners' Union in the great 1984-5 national strike was undoubtedly a key moment in weakening the workers' movement to a point that it was able to implement such reforms.

but insubordinate academics with outspoken opinions, while at the same time respecting 'academic freedom'. [3] Direct censorship and state repression characteristic of the USSR in the Stalin years are fortunately not features of academic life in the bourgeois democracies, but a number of high profile cases have shown outspoken academics to be vulnerable to disciplinary action on precisely these grounds.[4] It is in the very nature of the commercial pressures that have been brought into university life that it threatens to subordinate all trends and logics that obstruct its expansion. Emergent and residual factors are locked into a struggle that is both irresolvable and insurmountable without wider social transformation. The university 'body', which once sought to encapsulate Humboldtian ideals in an image of classical harmony and proportion, has now become an unstable, unintentionally grotesque phenomenon. Its 'unseemly' openness to economic nourishment becomes ever more obvious and exaggerated as institutions perform endless contortions to secure funds and to avoid complete dismemberment. Meanwhile, the requirement that academic staff become beings that can 'embody' the demands of each palimpsestic 'layer' has led to longer working hours, multitasking, increased levels of stress and a multitude of consequent pathologies.

Increasing dislocation of staff from, and cynicism towards, such managerialism is evident throughout the system, but this does not directly undermine the effectiveness of the administration in directing researchers into what may be perceived as 'safe' projects likely to yield publications in the most prestigious journals. Indeed, this 'cultural revolution' spawns some new cadres who, motivated by career considerations, step forward as willing implementers of the new policy. The resulting conservatism extends beyond encouraging academics to restrict themselves to established patterns of research behavior, impinging on the ideological content of what is produced. In this Kuhnian world of 'normal science', the established paradigm remains unchallenged. As Frederic Lee (2007) has shown with reference to economics departments in the UK, requirements to succeed in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE, now replaced by the

[3] Defined in the UK Education Reform Act 1988, Section 202 (2) as the need for University Commissioners 'to ensure that academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions'.

[4] The cases of the 'insubordinate' Professor Thomas Docherty at Warwick University, suspended for nine months for making ironic comments and projecting negative body language, Carole McCartney, reprimanded for 'political tweeting' at the University of Leeds and, most troubling of all, Steven Salaita at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign whose job offer was rescinded for sending assertive tweets about the Gaza conflict are but the most recent cases.

Research Excellence Framework, REF) compelled departments to maximise publications in neo-classical 'diamond list' journals. This led to a sharp decline in recruitment of 'heterodox' faculty and an ideological homogenisation of approach.

There is an inescapable irony that the ideological basis of the reforms has been a commitment to privatisation of state assets and deregulation. While deregulation of the financial sector proceeded, with disastrous consequences largely unanticipated by neoclassical economists, this has been complemented by the hyper-regulation of the remaining state sector under the guise of what is now generally called 'New Public Management' (NPM) (Hood, 1991; Pollitt, 1990). This is a strategy for reorienting existing state institutions, which were already geared towards serving the interests of capital in a general sense, according to the imperatives of neoliberalism. In NPM the managerial mode of evaluation colonises all spheres once regarded as at least semi-detached from the sphere of business, resulting in forms and practices that are distinctly reminiscent of the command economy established by the Stalin regime. This convergence of the running of British HE in particular, resulting from neo-liberal reforms, with central features of the now defunct Soviet central planning model would cheer the most unreformed Hegelian: apparent opposites interpenetrate, but are caught midway, unable to complete a transition.

Of course one should never take ideological veneers at face value. Both the Soviet Party and the 'neoliberal thought collective' (Hayek's Mont Pèlerin Society and others) developed what Philip Mirowski (2013: 68) calls a 'double truth doctrine' according to which there is an 'exoteric version of its doctrine for the masses' and 'an esoteric doctrine for a small closed elite', and that these are radically in contradiction with each other. Appropriately enough Mirowski calls the neoliberal version a 'Russian doll' (2013: 75) with multiple levels as, *inter alia*, warnings of expanding state activity conceal an advocacy of a strong state and portrayals of the market as something natural conceals a requirement for state intervention constantly to reconstruct it (2013: 69). Alexander Obolonsky similarly presents official Soviet ideology as having an 'external layer' that 'preached the doctrine of equality', and an 'internal layer' that 'condoned rampant privilege, nepotism, protectionism and caste discrimination' (cited in Ryavec, 2003: 12). In each case it is the 'internal layer' that embodies its 'true' ideology and where correspondences are to be found.

Parallels between the Soviet command economy and the managerialism of British HE has been the focus of at least two incisive studies (Amann, 2003; Radice, 2008; see also Lorentz, 2012; Radice, 2013), revealing the way in which the introduction of quasi-markets and an audit culture have replicated some

important patterns and pathologies of the Soviet model. The main factor is the control of HE institutions by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) through mechanisms such as the RAE/REF, and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), along with the impending Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Targets that can be monitored through audits are imposed, while unquantifiable but crucial features like professional integrity and collegiality are undermined. As David Harvie has argued, the usurpation of the 'use-value' of research outputs by 'RAE-value' determined by 'some notion of "socially necessary" research labour time' (2000: 111) leads many people's experience of research work increasingly to be a 'chore imposed by others [...] undertaken merely to satisfy needs external to the activity itself' (2000: 114). The audit-values that increasingly determine what and how teaching should take place similarly erode the professional autonomy and intrinsic satisfaction of pedagogical work.

Thatcherism and 'New Labour'

University reform in the UK developed as part of the Thatcher government's ideologically driven attempt to cut public spending by bringing quasi-markets into the public sector and making the distinction between purchasers and providers fundamental to the functioning of state enterprises. So how did it end up establishing a system resembling the twentieth century's main attempt to repress all market forces? True enough the fact that quasi-markets replaced real markets and 'organisational proxies' replaced real customers in the new system was important (Amann, 2003: 292), for this replicated some of the reforms Soviet administrators introduced in the post-Stalin period to deal with the tendency towards stagnation that the Soviet economy experienced (Kähönen, 2014). But this does not explain why this path was taken in the first place. At a relatively early stage of the reform process, in 1988, the conservative historian Elie Kedourie suggested that 'why it should be thought right and necessary for universities to be submitted to a regime akin to that of a command economy is quite obscure' (1988: 26). Some ideologues of *laissez-faire* economics raised critical voices at the very time the new system began to form, with some even pointing out parallels with the USSR command economy. The economist Deepak Lal argued that the government effectively nationalised universities as the only way to reconcile political pressures. Chief among them were the desires: 1) to control public expenditure on HE; 2) not to alienate the middle class benefiting from subsidised HE; 3) to maintain 'parity of esteem' among academics and Vice-Chancellors; and 4) to raise the proportion of school leavers entering HE (Lal, 1989: 5-6). The initial reforms did indeed balance these pressures, but they actually inaugurated a process whereby the inequity of various institutions has become ever more apparent. Lal recommended cutting universities free of state

control, abandoning the aim of maintaining a 'parity of esteem', introducing market-level fees, and providing state loans and some grants for students. Successive governments have only partially implemented this agenda, and for good reasons.

The rhetorical claims of consumer choice in HE have largely been undermined by recent research. As Roger Brown in particular has shown, the comparative information universities are now compelled to provide in order to facilitate educated consumer choice between programmes is incoherent at best since programmes 1) have no comparable aims, structure, content, learning outcomes, delivery and support; 2) have no comparable assessment methods, criteria and outcomes (marks or grades); 3) have no way of ensuring assessment judgements are valid, reliable and consistent; and 4) students pursuing the programmes (and/or interested in pursuing the programmes) have no comparable starting attainments, aspirations, motivations, learning objectives, etc. (Brown, 2007; 2011a). As Brown put it in his evidence to the UK parliament:

> There are simply too many variables and unknowns for meaningful comparative information of the kind found in a typical consumer market to be produced. Nor is there any evidence that students would be any more rational in using it than consumers of conventional goods or services. (Brown, 2011b)

Unsurprisingly cynicism among academic staff in UK universities about the validity of quasi-market indicators remains at a high level.[5] For example, the National Student Survey (NSS), essentially a customer satisfaction survey that final-year undergraduates are encouraged to complete, is widely regarded as, in the words of former director of research and evaluation at the Higher Education Academy Lee Harvey (2008), 'shallow, costly, widely manipulated and methodologically worthless', indeed 'laughable'.[6]

The Thatcher government may have been wedded to the rhetoric of 'market sovereignty', but ministers evidently had a firmer grasp of 'really existing capitalism' than many economists. British HE and the private sector were already entangled to a significant extent in the 1960s, as was most dramatically revealed with the publication of documents discovered during a student occupation at the

---

5 HEFCE has had to admit as much in its 2015 document 'The metric tide', which states: 'There is considerable scepticism among researchers, universities, representative bodies and learned societies about the broader use of metrics in research assessment and management'. The report is online at http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/Year/2015/metrictide/Title,104463,en.html.

6 The National Union of Students' July 2016 decision to boycott the NSS marks an important milestone in undermining its credibility. For information see http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/motion-201-the-nss-boycott-or-sabotage.

University of Warwick in 1970 (Thompson, 2013 [1970]), but this intensified significantly with the removal of the 'buffer' between state policy and universities when the Universities Funding Council and then HEFCE replaced the University Grants Commission (UGC) in 1988 and 1992 respectively (Pratt, 1997: 10).[7] The UCG 'bridge and buffer' had served to maintain the institutions necessary to integrate 'the old aristocracy with the upper middle class of professionals needed to run a world empire', i.e. Oxbridge, and develop new ones to 'train the researchers and specialists required for a modern industrial capitalist economy, as well as the workforce of the expanding education system itself' (Callinicos, 2006: 24). Britain's imperial decline undermined this function. In the 1960s new universities more closely connected to the expansion of private capital were established to help the UK maintain its position at the heart of the international capitalist system. Institutions now lobbied for funds within UGC, Westminster and the establishment's London clubs.[8] When capital shifted manufacturing abroad in search of cheaper and more compliant labour power, cutting back on vocational training, it was only universities that could provide the training needed to meet the anticipated demand for forms of skilled labour. The very existence of a buffer between policy and HE now became a 'fetter' on the further development of the productive forces. The intensification of competition between institutions in the UK led to a centralisation of power akin to Soviet-style 'one-man management', as representative committees through which academic members of staff influenced policy and advanced their own professional principles have been neutered. Powerful vice-chancellors, with their executive-level remuneration packages and supported by their executive boards, now drive measures to subordinate all practices to competition throughout the institutions they lead.

What many early commentators failed to understand was that neoliberalism is not an ideology of *laissez faire* but of continual state intervention to fabricate the 'subjectivities, social relations and collective representations suited to making the fiction of markets real and consequential' (Peck, 2010: 3). For all the talk about the sovereignty of markets, Thatcher's ministers aimed for the subordination of HE to the accumulation of private capital as a major policy goal. One of the key

---

7 Halsey (2012: 62-63) quotes the UGC's own retrospective description of its role: 'It relieved the government of assuming direct responsibility for the universities, and it safeguarded the universities from political interference. More positively, it was an earnest of the government's willingness to provide money for the universities "without strings", and it enabled the universities to enjoy public funds without the fear that the gift might turn out to be a Greek one [...] The Treasury was deeply committed to the "buffer" principle, and guarded most jealously the Committee's independent status'.

8 I am indebted to Hugo Radice, personal communication, for this point.

functions the state plays for capital is to ensure a plentiful supply of 'free' labour with sufficient skills. The skills needed by the service industries that were expected to replace manufacturing were difficult to anticipate in detail, and it was unclear how the grounds would be prepared without a reorientation of HE. Thatcher's Education Secretary, Kenneth Baker undoubtedly had this in mind when he argued that 'above all there is an urgent need, in the interests of the nation as a whole [...] for higher education to take increasing account of the economic requirements of the country' (quoted in Lal, 1989: 8). It was the state that had to try to anticipate the types of labour power that would be required, and UK universities had nothing like the buoyant endowments that enabled private universities in the United States to take on some of this role as well as to reproduce a coherent dominant class.

The Blair-Brown Labour government that followed in May 1997 intensified and systematised the same policy, with ex-Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) ideologues playing a role in giving the policy coherence. *Marxism Today*, the journal of the Eurocommunist wing of the CPGB, was important here, promoting a left-sounding rationale for New Labour's embrace of the neoliberal agenda (Pimlott, 2004; 2005). One former *Marxism Today* writer, Charles Leadbeater, who became one of Tony Blair's advisors, went as far as to argue that

> [u]niversities should become not just centres of teaching and research but hubs for innovation networks in local economies, helping to spin off companies for universities, for example. Universities should become the open-cast mines of the knowledge economy. (Leadbeater, 1999: 114)

Education secretary Charles Clarke correspondingly set one of his main goals in 2003 to be 'better progress in harnessing knowledge to wealth creation' (Clarke, 2003: 2). It was indeed with the Blair-Brown government that the ideologies of the market and command economies found their tightest embrace. In June 2007 governmental responsibility for universities was removed from the department responsible for general education, with the formation of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (from 2009, The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills). Its strategic objectives explicitly specified the pursuit of research and teaching 'in line with employer demand' and 'sustaining economic competitiveness'.[9]

[9] The National Archive: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/tna/+/http://www.dius.gov.uk/about_DIUS/what_we_do/objectives/.

Soviet HE

As in the UK, Soviet HE expanded considerably in the post-World War 2 era to provide the educated workforce needed to drive the unprecedented economic expansion which, to a significant extent, was driven by the state spending on armaments during the Cold War. Needing to substitute imports in all areas of the economy and to maintain a military apparatus much larger than that typical of a middle-sized economy, the USSR developed a disproportionally large HE sector. The humanities did relatively well in such conditions since foreign language skills had a number of direct applications and the arts were fundamental to the cultural dimension of the struggle for hegemony.[10] The autonomy of relatively inexpensive areas of research from direct bureaucratic control, i.e. academic freedom, was one aspect of this ideological struggle in the West, yielding benefits in detection of and finding administrative solutions to the most acute social problems in conditions where living standards were rising and the welfare state was relatively well funded. The more directly repressive USSR had much less scope for such activities, so researchers in the humanities were rewarded for providing 'scientific ideologies' in support of their rulers, or retreated into a formalism where they said little essential or did so in such a way that it was accessible only to the initiated.[11] The scholasticism of Soviet philosophy and social science became notorious by the 1960s (Blakeley, 1961), though important achievements were nevertheless forthcoming.

The much narrower space for critical research in the USSR did not simply express the authoritarian proclivities of policymakers, but the institutional dynamics that resulted from external pressure. Surrounded by hostile powers with a much greater capacity for belligerence, Stalin launched the USSR on an irreversible path towards the complete subjugation of economic development to military competition with the First Five Year Plan of 1929-32. With private enterprise already subordinated to the state as a result of revolution and civil war (what Lenin termed 'state capitalism'), the institutions of the state were now reorganised to serve the process of capital accumulation, rationalising working practices through the 'scientific organisation of labour' (NOT), and tightening up management through so-called 'institutions of agitation' (Beissinger, 1988; Zhukova, 1990). Schools that had been pioneers in the progressive teaching methods advocated by John Dewey and others underwent a dramatic 'instrumentalisation', with a return to traditional methods of instruction.[12]

[10] On the importance of the cultural dimension of this struggle in the USSR in Stalin's time, see Clark (2011).

[11] On the principles being invoked here see Bourdieu (1975).

[12] On shifts in Soviet school policy and practice see, especially, Holmes (1991).

Universities faced existential threats during the turmoil of the 1929-32 transition, but what emerged was a 'palimpsestic' formation in which the prestigious institutions established by the bureaucracy of the Tsarist absolutist state were overlain by the requirement to be linked to raising production, which was enforced by 'one-man management' (see David-Fox, 2000). Natural science and engineering was geared towards the development of means of production and destruction (the military), the social sciences towards the most effective mobilisation of the labour power of the population, and the humanities towards techniques of persuasion and ideological consolidation at home and abroad.

The great purges of the late 1930s, which centred on repression of the Bolshevik 'old guard' and national Communists, also had serious ramifications for many intellectuals in HE institutions in the USSR. It should be noted, however, that apart from the repression of intellectuals specifically associated with the political opposition, the targets of the purges were poorly defined. Stalin's exhortations to 'purge the Party and the economic organisations of unreliable, unstable and degenerate elements' (Stalin, 1972 [1934]: 376) had more direct effects on the administration than faculty, even if it encouraged denunciations driven by localised institutional politics. Systematic repression of advocates of specific theories within academia was rare, especially in areas relatively detached from administrative practice. In the humanities, for instance, a similar number of vocal supporters of the officially-supported (between 1932 and 1950) 'Marrist' current in linguistics perished as their opponents, while even the most outspoken representatives of the defeated Russian Formalist school of literary criticism survived and continued to work, while many of the supposedly victorious Marxist critics perished.[13] It was the humanities that generally proved the most difficult to manage by their very nature, and a certain plurality of perspectives was required to keep the system alive, but this needed constantly to be policed to prevent the emergence of coherent, oppositional currents.

After Stalin's death there was a significant loosening of restrictions within institutions as economic growth outstripped that of the West, but enduring Cold War pressures and restive satellite states in Eastern Europe imposed limits on any scope for dissent. As economic contradictions became more acute in the 1970s, Cold War pressures intensified at the end of that decade, and some dissident intellectuals chafed against the constraints of the system, repression became more visible once more. Finally the USSR was forced to yield its position in the hierarchy of states and the reform era began.

[13] 'Marrism' pertains to linguistic ideas centred on the ideas of Nikolai Marr (see Brandist, 2015: 193-220).

The cases of a few high-profile, dissident intellectuals led to a general impression that it was formal censorship and state repression that was the fundamental method through which ideological conformity was maintained in Soviet HE. This was not the case, especially after Stalin's death in 1953. The occasional and very visible intervention by state censors only served to set markers and deal with failures in more routine forms of regulation.[14] The institutional structures that channeled competition for resources, reputation and professional advancement in ways serving the imperative of capital accumulation and so the perpetuation of the power structure were generally sufficient to orient intellectual labour. An elaborate apparatus distributed resources according to such criteria as the 'linking' or 'coordination of scholarship and society' (*uviazka nauki i obshchestva*), which needed to be demonstrated in applications and justified in periodic reports to funding bodies (see, for instance, Fortescue, 1990: passim; Josephson, 1997: 277ff). Research teams and institutions competed with each other according to elaborate metrics, with information flowing upwards, from *kafedra* (department) through faculty to the education ministries and targets descending from the administration and ultimately the state by the same route. Periodic inspections enforced coherence and conformity, imposing strict limits on professional autonomy, while special funds encouraged the development of research areas held to be topical. Such mechanisms were merely the way in which the general dynamic of the command economy manifested itself in HE.

Accumulation, competition and centralisation

It is, however, the more general internal structures and practices of the Soviet command economy rather than the specific features of Soviet HE that find echoes in the new managerialism of neoliberal HE. As Hugo Radice (2008: 117) notes, an understanding of this requires that the question is placed in its 'broader social context', meaning the complex relationship between the Soviet system and 'capitalism, as both origin and adversary', and in the 'growing imbrication' of British HE 'with the private sector'. It may well be, however, that we are not dealing with mere analogy and resemblance but with a more fundamental adoption of Soviet-style practices and organisational forms by the neoliberal state.

NPM is the form in which the neoliberal reorientation of state institutions more directly to support the competitiveness of capitals within its orbit embeds the logic of competition throughout those institutions. Though having important intellectual roots in Public Choice Theory and the new Institutional Economics that developed in US business schools (Gruening, 2001; Peters, 2013), influence

[14] On similar developments in Soviet mass media, see Sparks and Reading (1998).

has flowed in two directions. NPM maintains important connections with Scientific Management, the various systems of factory organisation that had developed from the system of Frederick Winslow Taylor. Taylorism 'shifted effective control from the shop floor to management', engineering the entire work process from beginning to end (Rabinbach, 1990: 239). More specifically, it sought the most efficient method of fulfilling all tasks on the shop floor by dividing them into 'replicable units', while 'linking wages to productivity through "time and motion" studies, keyed to the speed and output of the individual worker' (Rabinbach, 1990: 239). Moving from the factory to the entire administrative process required considerable modifications to the Taylorist system, which Soviet administrators were in the forefront of institutionalising and developing in the 1920s, when industrial psychology, psychotechnics, and the training of both managers and shop-floor workers had been incorporated. As Beissinger (1988: 84) notes, '[i]n their scope and reach, Soviet attempts in the 1920s to infuse administration with the principles and methods of Scientific Management far surpassed any of the concurrent efforts directed by Western governments'. At the end of that decade both manager and worker resistance to rationalisation was very considerable and results of rationalisation were in many cases marginal. Stalin's 'great break' of 1928-32 involved arrests of prominent specialists in the production process for sabotage and wrecking and a sharp increase use of coercion in the productive process. The result was a well-known vicious circle in which planners set challenging targets, managers hoarded supplies and capacity to be able to respond to further increased targets, workers worked slowly to be able to accelerate when faced with those targets and planners responding by increasing targets.

More sophisticated techniques saw a sharp resurgence under Khrushchev's *perestroika*, with the introduction of notions of profit into accounting and the proliferation of market analogues. It was at this time that a number of economists, including Galbraith (1967), hypothesised the convergence of Soviet and Western economies on the basis of industrial development and the emergence of the new forms of pricing and planning in the USSR.[15] The extent of any convergence was, however, severely limited because of the USSR's capacity to obstruct the globalising trends of western capital. Nevertheless, the relationship between the Soviet system and capitalism resulted in the internalisation of the main dynamic of latter by the former, though it manifested

[15] The trend was arguably begun by the Dutch economist Jan Tinbergen (1961), but became quite widespread, even finding an echo in the work of the Frankfurt School philosopher Herbert Marcuse (1964). Marcuse's work on 'one-dimensional' language and thought seems rather more suited to neoliberalism than the corporate forms it was designed to analyse. See also Gouré et al. (1973).

itself in a specific way. The state bureaucracy, like the management of a large corporation, became the institutional personification of capital, accumulating for the sake of accumulation in order to withstand the pressures of competition. The fact that the form the competition took was primarily military did not alter the fundamental principle that was in operation since the proportion of the economy dedicated to military production was so much greater than in the West. The same competitive logic was passed down through the entire system in the name of 'socialist competition' (*sotsialisticheskoe sorevnevanie*), which Isaac Deutscher (1952: 387) aptly labeled 'bourgeois competition' with 'ideological embellishments'. The very logic of this struggle led to the centralisation of control, 'one-man management' that allowed often unpopular but 'necessary' policies, e.g. to raise productivity or close uncompetitive units of production, to be imposed throughout each enterprise without recourse to negotiation.

Despite their opposing starting points as far as the modality of relations between state and economy is concerned, the Stalinist and neo-liberal projects share something more fundamental: both projects aim at the complete subordination of all social institutions to the accumulation of capital. This is reflected in highly utopian political programmes based on the myth that managers could harmonise economy and society or, more accurately, engineer social institutions to serve a reified, economic idol.[16] The drive to accumulate capital is, in the Soviet and Western capitalist cases, imposed by the logic of competition – in varying proportions commercial, military and geostrategic. Fundamentally, capital accumulation is in both cases secured through the exploitation of labour power. It was, moreover, this common ground that allowed the transfer from post-Stalinist modes of *de facto* collective-bureaucratic 'ownership' and control to private, openly capitalist, modes of ownership and control to take place as the Soviet Union approached disintegration, without any revolutionary transformation. Already in the early 1970s groups of neoliberal intellectuals were working in academic think-tanks in the USSR under the protection of powerful *apparatchiki* like Iurii Andropov (Flaherty, 1991: 129), but it was not until the post-Stalinist system began to collapse that they were able to exert a significant influence. *De facto* privatisation took place under Gorbachev, and *de jure* privatisation under Yeltsin, with directors of nationalised enterprises becoming directors of privatised enterprises. As Bukharin and Preobrazhensky (1969 [1919]: 163) had put it, discussing nationalisation of industry during the 1914-18 war, 'the capitalists simply transferred their possessions from one pocket to another; the possessions remained as large as ever'.

[16] Common invocations of the 'health' or 'needs' of the economy in isolation from, or even in contradistinction to, how well or poorly the majority of the population actually live, are clear examples of this ideological formation.

Thus, when western neo-conservatives met with East-European advocates of 'market socialism' in such fora as the Centre for the Study of Economic and Social Problems (CESES) in Milan (Bockman, 2007; 2011) they shared more than a belief in neo-classical economics. 'Market socialists' hoped to gear the state towards maximising competition between enterprises and guarding against the emergence of monopolies. While critical of the Soviet command system, and keen for economies to be free of its military demands, they failed to understand that any state integrated into the world economy has to assist *its* capitals in competition with foreign capitals, backed by foreign states, in the last instance militarily. They took the Soviet state's protection of enterprises against the pressures of international capital for granted. Once it had gone foreign capital, backed by their own states, overwhelmed the relatively weak enterprises of the Soviet bloc. Yet another crucial factor was in play: increased competition from rising Asian economies placed key sectors of the Western economy in a precarious position. Faced with this, US and European capitals required their states prioritise supporting their competitiveness rather than intervening to dampen business cycles and support full employment. This involved the inculcation of competitive behavior throughout the state and society in general and its presentation as natural. Crucial here was what Judith Merkle (1980: 262) calls 'the continual exchange of organisational techniques within [...] a common industrial – not political – culture; this international system of rational-technical organisation rested the foundations laid by the old international Scientific Management movement'. As Western consultants flooded into the former Eastern Bloc to advise on ways to dismantle obstacles to international capital and to pursue privatisation, they acquired greater awareness of the practices characteristic of post-Stalinist state institutions to promote and support the competitiveness of capitals based within its jurisdiction. NPM was the synthesis.

Resistance in the Soviet workplace

Fortunately this account of shifts in governmental policy and managerial practice is only part of the story. While the Soviet economy clearly achieved impressive results (the space programme and parity of nuclear weapons with the USA by 1970 perhaps the most symbolic), the bureaucratic system had a range of pathologies and generated patterns of resistance that ultimately undermined its effectiveness.[17] The Soviet workplace was not a harmonious environment. Not only were workers separated from all decision-making in workplaces, atomised

[17] For an interesting account of the ways in which repressive aspects of Taylorism reached their apogee in Stalin's Russia, while interacting with indigenous practices see Merkle (1980: 121-135).

by the widespread implementation of performance-related pay (piece-rates) and subjected to continual pressures to raise productivity, but this was justified in rhetoric that maintained the outward forms of the long-defeated revolutionary movement. The pressures of capital accumulation led to an experience of the workplace as an exploitative environment where appeals to the rhetorical shadow of residual 'socialist' forms were regarded with cynicism. Constant attempts to intensify the productivity of labour power failed in the last instance because despite their atomisation and incapacity to organise collectively for more than sporadic struggles, workers resisted intensification by asserting 'negative sanctions directly at the point of production' (Filtzer, 1996: 24). Problems that arose out of the bureaucracy's incapacity accurately to process data from millions of transactions were rendered chronic by the fact that workers experienced a profound level of alienation from the system, refused actively to participate in problem-solving, and instead took advantage of the slippages in the system to relieve pressure on themselves and their colleagues.

Attempts by senior managers to increase pressure by raising targets and tightening up the system proved ineffective because they increased alienation and encouraged the development of new tactics to absorb pressure from above. As Tony Cliff commented as early as 1955, the drive to raise the productivity of labour, to 'rationalise' and 'accentuate' exploitation, created its own impediment to raising productivity:

> By the effort to convert the worker into a cog of the bureaucrat's productive machine, they kill in him what they most need, productivity and creative ability...The more skilled and integrated the working class the more will it resist alienation and exploitation, but also show contempt for its exploiters and oppressors. The workers have lost respect for the bureaucracy as technical administrators. No ruling class can continue for long to maintain itself in the face of popular contempt. (Cliff, 1970 [1955]: 309-310)

The creativity and ingenuity of millions of workers that were needed to make the system work were instead diverted into negative forms of individualised resistance that opened space for indolence and, often, drunkenness. All this is quite familiar to anyone who worked in mass production industries during times of full employment, and was certainly not unique to the Soviet case (see, for instance, Hamper, 1992). Indeed, the histories of individual corporations like Ford, General Motors or IBM exhibit fundamentally the same practices and tendency toward stagnation, including phases of dictatorial expansion, limited pluralism, stagnation and restructuring that characterised the history of the USSR from the end of the 1920s (Halbertstam, 1986; Harman, 1989; Wilhelm, 1985; Wright, 1979).

Common patterns of resistance

Soviet bureaucrats proved ever less capable of appropriating what Marx called the 'general intellect', that is 'the faculty of language, the disposition to learn, memory, the capacity to abstract, and the inclinations towards self-reflexivity' (Virno, 2007: 6).[18] Indeed, these capacities were often employed to resist bureaucratic pressures and in ways detrimental to the productive process itself. Although many tactics adopted by workers were not theorised in the strict sense, they nevertheless achieved a form of articulation with the development of workplace jargon or even argot. These became a kind of shadow vocabulary to the widely derided language of Soviet managerialism, and which has found distinct echoes in the parasitic, 'bullshit' language of neoliberalism (Lorentz, 2012). It was quite common for petty managers to adopt the same conceptions as ways of developing a buffer between their superiors and subordinates. This led some commentators to claim an unusual level of collusion between Soviet managers and workers, but the very category of 'manager' is one that obscures much more than it reveals, and often deliberately so.

The proliferation of job titles bearing the word 'manager' and the re-description of routine administrative tasks as 'management' is so common in today's universities that it often passes without comment. This attempt to present everyday work as having managerial function is reinforced by training courses that constantly propagandise the idea that there is no real division between managers and other staff within the institution. We are, it seems, '*all* managers', however minimal supervisory roles may actually be, or else senior decision-makers are simply '*all* employees'. At the same time academics are expected to act as entrepreneurs, seeking out opportunities for funding and commercialisation. Disingenuous appeals to the image of a long-vanished collegiality, in which university staff exerted an unusual amount of control over their activities, are very much akin to the dominant Soviet ideology of the 'comradely' practices of the 'socialist' economy. In each case the structures of power over resources and people are deliberately obscured, even though they remain very real and actively experienced. There is a palpable and growing sense of 'us' and 'them' in universities, especially resulting from spiraling vice-chancellor remuneration, falling staff salaries and pensions, increasing workloads, and the imposition of bureaucratic imperatives that are often

[18] Tony Smith (2013) provides a penetrating critique of Paolo Virno and Carlo Vercellone's development of Marx's theory of capital into an analysis of post-fordism, noting that '*any and all* variants of capital rest on a "depository of cognitive competences that cannot be objectified", that is, on the general intellect with "operational materiality" insofar as it "organizes the production process and the 'life-world'"' *(ibid.*: 248).

antithetical to professional values. This proletarianisation has encouraged cynicism towards self-interested invocations of 'collegiality', and hostility among most staff towards the university management and government agencies. This is reflected in the transformation of the Association of University Teachers, an organisation that was caught midway between viewing itself as a trade union and professional association, into the University and College Union, unambiguously a trade union, which incorporates both Further and Higher Education staff.

While the union makes a real difference to everyday practices within institutions, recent campaigns over pay and pensions (deferred pay) have been miserable failures, to a considerable extent due to very poor national leadership, but also because the union has faced tightening legal constraints on its ability to take collective action that is effective. Action short of a strike, in the form of an assessment boycott, may now attract the complete withdrawal of salary, while strike action needs to be protracted in order to put any significant pressure on employers. Currently unable to challenge and overcome these limitations, the organisation has entered a period of retrenchment and the defense of past gains through attrition. Employee discontent and resentment, along with cynicism towards managerial metrics and imperatives are never far beneath the surface, but confidence to take collective action is low. The constraints on Soviet workers were considerably more severe than in the UK, but discontent nevertheless found expression through forms of informal resistance ranging from negative varieties of individual resistance (absences, unproductive working, sabotage) to forms of collusion, conspiracy and reciprocal support among those who fundamentally shared a position of alienation from the control of resources. Some of these forms are remarkably familiar to those operating in HE today.

In his 2003 article, Amann provocatively outlined parallels between the way in which practices then developing in British HE resembled those of Soviet administrators and workers alike, who 'became masters of prioritisation and learned to absorb huge amounts of administrative pressure', developing 'essential survival skills' that rendered the bureaucratic direction of the command economy ineffective (2003: 471). In the last decade collegiality has even further given way to instrumental behaviour, and alienation from the demands of 'corporate identity' has become ubiquitous. Senior managers strive to create an image of central omnipotence, intervening to ensure the fulfillment of targets (*podmena*) (Fortescue, 1983: 179), issuing internal communications that all is well with the institution (*vran'e*), while issuing guidelines and 'key performance indicators' to motivate staff (*melochnaia opeika*, micromanagement). Members of staff respond by ingratiating themselves with their superiors (*blat'*), and cover for each other in order to defend themselves from scrutiny (*krugovaia porukha*, *esprit*

de corps).[19] Individual staff evaluations, reports to funding bodies, departmental or team reports are routinely padded with superfluous detail to illustrate objectives have been 'met' and plans have been 'fulfilled' (*pripiska*), dazzling the reader with superficial show (*pokazukha*) in order to distract attention from failures (*ochkovtiratel' stvo*, literally eye-wiping, perhaps best rendered as eyewash, camouflage). Seeking to defend their own patch (*mestnichestvo*, *vedomstvennost'*), petty managers collude with other staff, tactically shifting between shows of deference, bluff and deception (*bumazhnoe tvorchestvo*, literally 'paper creation'), though they may, instead, choose to pass on the pressures from above and bully their subordinates. Senior managers respond by issuing polemics against tendencies that cannot successfully be coerced and issue more targets and pressures that perpetuate the cycle.[20] The whole process begins to resemble what Antonio Gramsci (1971: 149) was to call 'a game of blind man's buff', by which oppositional tendencies that cannot be coerced joust with agents of a ruling apparatus that cannot be overcome.

It would be tempting to designate these behavior patterns as 'spontaneous', though as Gramsci argued, 'pure spontaneity' is a myth. These practices are learned and passed on, so 'spontaneity' can at most signify that 'the [perhaps rudimentary] elements of "conscious leadership" cannot be checked, have left no conscious document' (Gramsci, 1971: 196). Moreover, in the USSR at least, they achieved a degree of self-reflexiveness, which then became embedded in popular culture through urban folklore (anecdotes and the like) and satire. The level of conceptualisation, and the extent to which it spread, suggests these forms of struggle developed beyond what Gramsci termed an 'immanent' or 'spontaneous grammar' to acquire a 'normative' status, a grammatical conformity 'made up of reciprocal monitoring, reciprocal teaching [...] and in mimicry and teasing' (Gramsci, 1985: 180).[21] The repressive conditions of Stalinist and post-Stalinist regimes made it very difficult to develop this 'normative grammar' into a systematic account of one's place within the institutional structure and within

---

19 On the history of the term *krugovaia porukha*, see Rowney (2009: 32).

20 Other pathologies of bureaucracy identified by Russian analysts include formalistic answers (*otpiski*), the turning of norms and rules into goals in themselves (*samotsel'*), pedantic execution of directives, humoring superiors, localism, departmentalism, 'over-insuring', passing the buck (Ryavec, 1996: 73-4; 2003: 97).

21 One cartoon by Mikhail Cheremnykh in the popular Soviet satirical magazine *Krokodil* from 1953 shows the vocabulary of the game of 'blind man's buff' was well established by the time of Stalin's death. It shows a group of four petty managers drawing up a report and one asking: 'Wouldn't it be too little if we write in [*pripisat'*] the report that we have only fulfilled the plan by 20%?' To which another answers 'It's sufficient, but they'll think it is a clear case of eyewash [*ochkovtiratel'stvo*]'. Online at http://second-person.livejournal.com/13656.html.

society as a whole. 'Organic intellectuals' remained atomised and the formation of independent organisation occasional and sporadic at best.

Here we can begin to see some of the practical implications of our study. The emergence of forms of struggle akin to those of Soviet workers and petty managers among UK university staff, and other areas of the public sector dominated by NPM, signifies the emergence of an incipient class-consciousness arising directly from the ongoing process of proletarianisation. While organising academics may still resemble herding cats, a greater consistency of orientation now emerges among the growing ranks of staff whose professional autonomy and access to resources is very narrow indeed. Significant obstacles to effective organisation and collective action remain, but they are on a scale nowhere near those that faced Soviet workers. In such circumstances it may well prove fruitful to supplement traditional forms of trades union organisation with attempts to structure and systematise the patterns of resistance emerging within institutions that imply a critique of neoliberal imperatives in HE. Their pursuit obstructs NPM while opening a space not simply for indolence but for the very autonomous professional activities NPM squeezes out. This may highlight and take advantage of the 'palimpsestic' nature of HE today, reconnecting with the sense of vocation many who work in HE retain despite the commodification of teaching and research. In order to make the connection most effective means simultaneously to pursue a relentless ideology-critique of NPM while articulating an alternative vision of HE based on those aspects of the university 'palimpsest' that are irreducible to corporate imperatives, while spurning all elitism. In short it means to provide intellectual leadership as well as to pursue bread-and-butter issues, indeed to bind them together, just as neoliberalism and NPM are bound together.

Conclusion

One reason the parallels between the (post-)Stalinist and neoliberal projects become particularly clear in the case of the latter's *perestroika* of HE is that both projects had important educational dimensions. In each case *homo politicus* is to be reduced to the ultimately manipulable *homo econonomicus* who accepts their ignorance and defers to the central bureaucratic apparatus or the market as supreme 'information processor' (Mirowski, 2013: 54-55). Those who sell their labour power must be taught to understand that the question of power (*vopros o vlasti*) is settled, the 'end of history' has arrived. For most, at least, education should now yield to the creation of subjectivities who constantly yield to the imperatives of capital, they must seek training to serve the indefinite expansion of value, and they must pay for the privilege. In reality, though, these are severely

malfunctioning systems that are redolent with contradictions and pathologies. Analysis and critique of these problems, as well as engagement in the ideological struggles over the future of HE and its place in society more generally are indispensible. They are only part of a larger process, however. Successful resistance requires an understanding of the forms of oppositional activity generated by the system itself and their coordination into a unified strategy with agreed aims and objectives. In other words, it requires a democratic, oppositional educational programme that makes explicit and structures the incipient and sporadic conception of the world that is embedded in the very process of resisting the rule of capital. This means to struggle for leadership at the micro and macro levels simultaneously, to articulate a vision that is consistent from the small, everyday acts of solidarity up to an alternative principle of social organisation.

references

Amann, R. (2003) 'A sovietological view of modern Britain', *The Political Quarterly*, 74(4): 287-301.

Barcan, R. (2013) *Academic life and labour in the new university: Hope and other choices*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Beissinger, M.R. (1988) *Scientific management, socialist discipline, and Soviet power*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bockman, J. (2007) 'The origins of neo-liberalism between Soviet socialism and Western capitalism: "A galaxy without borders"', *Theory and Society*, 36(4): 343-371.

Bockman, J. (2011) *Markets in the name of socialism: The left-wing origins of neoliberalism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1975) 'The specificity of the scientific field and the social conditions of the progress of reason', *Social Science Information*, 14(6): 19-47.

Blakeley, T.J. (1961) *Soviet scholasticism*. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Brandist, C. (2014) 'My rallies of endeavour will ensure the impact our dear leaders desire (a very Stalinist management model)', *Times Higher Education*, 29 May. [http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/comment/opinion/a-very-stalinist-management-model/2013616.article]

Brandist, C. (2015) *The dimensions of hegemony: Language, culture and politics in revolutionary Russia*. Leiden: Brill.

Brown, R. (2007) 'The information fallacy'. [http://www.hepi.ac.uk/pubdetail.asp?ID=229&DOC=seminarsa]

Brown, R. (ed.) (2011a) *Higher education and the market*. London: Routledge.

Brown, R. (2011b) 'Written evidence submitted by Professor Roger Brown, Professor of Higher Education Policy, Liverpool Hope University'. [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmbis/885/885vw07.htm]

Bukharin, N. and E. Preobrazhensky (1969) [1919] *The ABC of communism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Callinicos, A. (2006) *Universities in a neoliberal world*. London: Bookmarks.

Clark, K. (2011) *Moscow, the fourth Rome: Stalinism, cosmopolitanism and the evolution of Soviet culture, 1931-1941*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Clarke, C. (2003) 'Foreword', in *The future of higher education*. Cm5735.

Cliff, T. (1970) [1955] *Russia: A Marxist analysis*. London: International Socialism.

David-Fox, M. (2000) 'The assault on the universities and the dynamics of Stalin's "great break", 1928-1932', in M. David-Fox and G. Péteri (eds.) *Academia in upheaval: Origins, transfers and transformations of the communist academic regime in Russia and East Central Europe*. United States: Information Age.

Deutscher, I. (1952) 'Socialist competition', *Foreign Affairs*, 30(3): 376-390.

Filtzer, D. (1996) 'Labor discipline, the use of work time, and the decline of the Soviet system, 1928-1991', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 50(Fall): 9-28.

Flaherty, P. (1991) '*Perestroika* and the neo-liberal project', *The Socialist Register*, 27: 128-168.

Fortescue, S. (1983) 'Research institute party organizations and the right of control', *Soviet Studies*, 3(2): 175-195.

Fortescue, S. (1990) *Science policy in the Soviet Union*. New York: Routledge.

Galbraith, J.K. (1967) *The new industrial state*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Gouré, L., F.D. Kohler, R. Soll and A.E. Stiefbold (eds.) (1973) *Convergence of communism and capitalism: The Soviet view*. Miami: University of Miami.

Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the prison notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Gramsci, A. (1985) *Selections from the cultural writings*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Gruening, G. (2001) 'Origin and theoretical basis of new public management', *International Public Management Journal*, 4(1): 1-25.

Halbertstam, D. (1986) *The reckoning*. London: William Morrow.

Halsey, A.H. (2012) *Essays on the evolution of Oxford and Nuffield College*. Oxford: Nuffield College.

Hamper, B. (1992) *Rivethead: Tales from the assembly line*. New York: Warner Books.

Harman, C. (1989) 'The myth of market socialism', *International Socialism*, 42: 3-57.

Harvie, D. (2000) 'Alienation, class and enclosure in UK Universities', *Capital & Class*, 71: 103-132.

Harvey, L. (2008) 'Jumping through hoops on a white elephant: A survey signifying nothing', *Times Higher Education*, 12 June. [https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/jumping-through-hoops-on-a-white-elephant-a-survey-signifying-nothing/402335.article]

Holmes, L.E. (1991) *The Kremlin and the schoolhouse: Reforming education in Soviet Russia, 1917-1931*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Hood, C. (1991) 'A public management for all seasons?', *Public Administration*, 69: 3-19.

Josephson, P.R. (1997) *New Atlantis revisited: Akademgorodok, the Siberian city of science*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kähönen, A. (2014) 'Optimal planning, optimal economy, optimal life? The Kosygin reforms, 1965-72', in K. Miklóssy and M. Ilic (eds.) *Competition in socialist society*. London: Routledge.

Kedourie, E. (1988) *Diamonds into glass: The government and the universities*. London: Centre for Policy Studies (Policy Study No. 89).

Lal, D. (1989) *Nationalised universities: Paradox of the privatisation age*. London: Centre for Policy Studies (Policy Study No. 103).

Leadbeater, C. (1999) *Living on thin air: The new economy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Lee, F.S. (2007) 'The research assessment exercise, the state and the dominance of mainstream economics in British universities', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 31: 309-325.

Lorentz, C. (2012) 'If you're so smart, why are you under surveillance? Universities, neoliberalism, and new public management', *Critical Inquiry*, 38(3): 599-629.

Marcuse, H. (1964) *One dimensional man: The ideology of industrial society*. London: Sphere.

Merkle, J.A. (1980) *Management and ideology: The legacy of the international scientific management movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mirowski, P. (2013) *Never let a serious crisis go to waste: How neoliberalism survived the financial meltdown*. London: Verso.

Peck, J. (2010) *Constructions of neoliberal reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Peters, M. (2013) 'Managerialism and the neoliberal university: Prospects for new forms of "open management" in higher education', *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, 5(1): 11-26.

Pimlott, H.F. (2004) 'From the margins to the mainstream: The promotion and distribution of *Marxism Today*', *Journalism*, 5(2): 203-226.

Pimlott, H.F. (2005) 'From "old left" to "New Labour"? Eric Hobsbawm and the rhetoric of "realistic Marxism"', *Labour / La Travail*, 56: 175-197.

Pollitt, C. (1990) *Managerialism and the public services: The Anglo-American experience*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Pollitt, C. (2011) '30 years of public management reforms: Has there been a pattern?', background paper for the World Bank consultation exercise. [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGOVANTICORR/Resources/Politt.doc]

Pratt, J. (1997) *The polytechnic experiment 1965–1992*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Rabinbach, A. (1990) *The human motor: Energy, fatigue and the origins of modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Radice, H. (2008) 'Life after death? The Soviet system in British higher education', *International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy*, 3(2): 99-120.

Radice, H. (2013) 'How we got here: UK higher education under neoliberalism', *ACME*, 12(3): 407-418.

Rowney, D.K. (2009) 'Imperial Russian officialdom during modernization', in D.K. Rowney and E. Huskey (eds.) *Russian bureaucracy and the state officialdom from Alexander III to Vladimir Putin*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ryavec, K.W. (1996) 'Russo-Soviet bureaucratism: Recent Russian views', *Soviet and Post-Soviet Review*, 23(1): 67-84.

Ryavec, K.W. (2003) *Russian bureaucracy: Power and pathology*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Smith, T. (2013) 'The "general intellect" in the *Grundrisse* and beyond', *Historical Materialism,* 21(4): 235-55.

Sparks, C. and A. Reading (1998) *Communism, capitalism and the mass media*. London: Sage.

Stalin, J.V. (1972) [1934] 'Report to the seventeenth party congress on the work of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.(B.)', in *Works,* vol. 13. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.

Thompson, E.P. (2013) [1970] *Warwick University Ltd: Industry, management and the universities*. Nottingham: Spokesman Books.

Tinbergen, J. (1961) 'Do communist and free economies show a converging pattern?', *Soviet Studies*, 12: 333-341.

Virno, P. (2007) 'General intellect', *Historical Materialism*, 15(3): 3-8.

Wilhelm, J.H. (1985) 'The Soviet Union has an administered, not a planned economy', *Soviet Studies*, 37(1): 118-130.

Wright, J.P. (1979) *On a clear day you can see General Motors*. Grosse Point: Wright Enterprises.

Zhukova, E.E. (ed.) (1990) *U istokov NOT: zabytye diskussii i nerealizovannye idei*. Leningrad: Izd. Leningradskogo universiteta.

the author

Craig Brandist is Professor of Cultural Theory and Intellectual History and Director of the Bakhtin Centre at the University of Sheffield, UK. His most recent monograph is *The dimensions of hegemony: Language, culture and politics in revolutionary Russia* (Brill, 2015). He has written extensively on the development of linguistics, literary and cultural theory in the USSR in works such as *Politics and the theory of language in the USSR 1917-1938* (Anthem Press, 2010) and *The Bakhtin circle: Philosophy, culture and politics* (2002). He is currently working, with Peter Thomas, on a book about Antonio Gramsci's time in Moscow in the early 1920s.
Email: c.s.brandist@sheffield.ac.uk

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 609-618

A note on notes: On the rise of 'special sections' in academic journals

Sverre Spoelstra

Introduction

In this short paper I explore the rise of 'special sections' in academic journals (such as this 'Note' section in *ephemera*). Prior to the 1990s, management journals had two major sections: peer-reviewed articles and book reviews. There was very little published that did not fit into these categories: the occasional obituary, an erratum or retraction, a call for papers, some announcements, and very little else. All this started to change in the 1990s and 2000s with the emergence of special sections, i.e. a designated space within journals designed to host papers that fall outside the purview of a regular article (for an overview, see figure 1).[1] This note reflects on the rise of these special sections: what explains their popularity, and what do they accomplish? I argue that behind their various forms is a collective shame about what journal publishing has become.

In preparing this paper, I interviewed six former and current editors of five different management and organization journals who have been directly involved

[1] To my knowledge, the only special section that predates the 1990s is the section 'Research Notes', which was a regular feature in *Academy of Management Journal* between 1973 and 2005 and in *Organization Studies* between 1980 and 2000. We may further note that special issues and Special Research/Topic Forums have a similar history as the special sections discussed in this note: these are journal issues or themed sections 'outside of the ordinary'. Their popularity also took off in the 1990s (for instance, the first Special Research Forum in *Academy of Management Journal* was published in 1993 and the first special issue of *Human Relations* was published in 1994). There is also a more recent trend of virtual issues and 'best-of-compilations'.

with special sections. I also had email correspondence with another eight former and current editors about particular special sections. I spoke to the editors about their impressions of the rise of special sections, and about their experiences with the particular sections that they developed or worked with. Additionally, the paper draws on my own experiences as part of the *ephemera* editorial collective between 2004 and 2013.

What is a special section?

We may characterize a special section as a less defined space within a more defined space, like Freetown Christiania in the city of Copenhagen. Special sections represent an attempt to create a space where the rules of the larger space of which it is part (constituted by the rules of journal article publishing, or Danish law in the case of Christiania) are not in effect. Often this is accomplished by creating a different set of rules, which effectively protect the section from the rules of 'ordinary' journal publishing. However, it is not always clear what the rules of special sections are. In some cases, the rules that govern special sections are negative, in that they neutralize the 'normal' rules but do not themselves provide the section with clear guidelines for content. In other cases, the types of contributions that special sections call for are also positively defined.

An example of a purely negative definition is *M@n@gement*'s section 'Carte Blanche', which, as the name suggests, gives authors complete freedom to do whatever they wish to do: any normal rules are suspended and the editorial police is off-duty. The only catch is that you have to be a 'world-class scholar' who writes upon invitation of the editor.

For many journals, special sections are specifically designed to offer something that cannot be offered, or is too rarely offered, through regular articles. The main point, then, is that papers published in special sections don't look like typical academic papers. Hence, *ephemera*'s 'Note' section is 'outside of the constraints of a traditional academic article' (*ephemera*, 2016); papers in the 'Peripheral Vision' section of *Organization Studies*, 'are not part of the mainstream of the field – and by being so, they will hopefully challenge organizational researchers to think differently' (EGOS, 2016); papers published in *Organization*'s 'Speaking Out' are 'written to challenge contemporary orthodoxies' (*Organization*, 2016); and *Journal of Management Inquiry*'s 'Generative Curiosity' is dedicated to 'ideas' which, according to the section-editors, are a rare bird in management journals (Stackman and Hannah, 2017). As these descriptors suggest, special sections tend to distinguish between traditional publications and more novel papers –

papers that often, implicitly or explicitly, challenge the stuff that happens in the normal section.

Some of the editors I spoke to distinguish between the 'rigour' that constitutes regular publishing and the 'novelty' and 'creativity' that is offered by special sections. In this narrative, there is nothing wrong with regular publishing as such (it's of a high scientific standard, i.e. 'rigorous') but it is highly specialized and doesn't appeal to a broad audience, not even *within* the walls of the university. This increasing degree of specialization, the narrative continues, has created a demand for different kinds of writing, and special sections are an answer to this demand. Hence special sections are seen as add-ons to 'normal science', to use Thomas Kuhn's (1962) term, bringing something different to the table or opening something up for debate.

For other editors, however, the term 'rigour' – shorthand for the standard methodological rules for doing management research – is far too positive to capture the sorry state of 'normal science', which, to them, seems formulaic rather than rigorous. For instance, one of the editors I spoke to told me that

> the reason why there are increasingly more journals doing new kinds of sections [is] to get away from this very formulaic writing that we tend to have developed over the years. [...] In order to break with that very formulaic style of writing, these new sections have come up. (R1)

The difference between qualifying regular articles as rigorous and as formulaic is crucial. The term 'rigour' appeals to a certain image of science that holds that science follows rigorous methodological rules, demarcating it from non-science and pseudo-science. The term 'formulaic', by contrast, connotes a critical stance towards a mechanical approach to doing research; it is an implicit critique of the very idea that management research is driven by rigour alone. According to those who qualify regular articles as formulaic, the rules that make up the game of science do not only capture methodological rules, but also habits – such as inserting references to 'existing debates', i.e. other publications in that journal – that are heavily invested in the citation economy. The exemplar behind 'normal science' is here not evaluated positively (as it is in Kuhn) but rather negatively: as something that we ought to move away from.

Journal name (first volume)	Special sections*
Academy of Management Journal (1958)	Research Notes (1973-2005); Special Research Forum (1993-to date)
Academy of Management Learning and Education (2002)	Resource Review (2002-2004); Case Report (2002); Books and Resource Review (2003-to date); Interviews and Commentary (2007); Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2008); Research and Reviews (2009-to date); Exemplary Contributions (2009-to date); Essays, Dialogues and Interviews (2009-to date).
Academy of Management Review (1976)	Dialogue (1995-to date); Books and Resource Reviews (1996); Special Topic Forum (1996-to date); Note (1999-2008); Book Reviews: What the Academy is Reading (2014); What Inspires the Academy: Book Reviews and Beyond? (2015-to date)
Administrative Science Quarterly (1956)	No special sections
Culture and Organization (1995)	No special sections
British Journal of Management (1990)	Research Note (1991-1994; 2000-to date); Comment (1994- 1995); Commentaries (2001); Perspectives (2003-2006); Viewpoint Papers (2011); Response Paper (2012-to date); Methodology Corner (2013-to date); Learning and Outreach (2015-to date).
ephemera (2001)	Notes (2001-to date); Roundtable (2001-to date); Interview (2001-to date). A number of one-offs, including: Study in Practice, Forum, Playlist, and Commercial.
Gender, Work and Organization (1994)	Legal update (1994-1998); Policy update (1995); Research update (1996); Conference Plenary (2008); Political Voice (2012-to date)
Human Relations (1947)	Critical Essays (2015-to date)
Journal of Management (1975)	Occasional Research Notes.
Journal of Management Inquiry (1992)	Essays (1992-to date); Nontraditional Research (1992-to date); Reflections on Experience (1992-2010); Dialog (1992-to date); Reviews (1992-to date); Meet the Person (1992-to date); Global Voice (1993-1994); Editor's Choice (1998-to date); Provocations and Provocateurs (2005-to date); Out of Whack (2002-2011); Generative Curiosity (2017-to date)
Journal of Management Studies (1963)	Point-counterpoint (2004-to date); Classic JMS (2010-to date); JMSSays (2016-to date)
Journal of Organizational Behavior (1980)	Point-Counterpoint (1994-to date); The Incubator (1996-to date); Researcher's Notebook (2010-to date)
M@n@gement (1998)	Unplugged, including Unplugged – Carte Blanche and Unplugged – My Own Book Review (2009-to date)
Management Learning (1970)	Provocations to Debate (2016-to date)
Management Science (1954)	Management Insights (2006-to date)
Organization (1994)	Speaking Out (1994-to date); Connexions (1994-to date); Acting Up (2017-to date)
Organizational Research Methods (1998)	Point/counterpoint (1998-to date); Feature Topic (1999-to date); Methods Resources (2002); Software Reviews (2002-to date)
Organization Science (1990)	Crossroads (1993-to date); Perspective (1997-present)
Organization Studies (1980)	Research Note (1980-2000); Essai (1997-2010); Vita Contemplativa (2003-2006); Peripheral Vision (2004-2008); X and Organization Studies (2016-to date); Counterpoint From the Field (2012); Dialogue
Scandinavian Journal of Management (1985)	Research Note (1997-to date)

Figure 1: Overview of special sections in management and organization journal

* Not included are common sections such as 'Book Review', 'Announcements', 'From the Editor', 'Review Article' and 'Special Topic/Research Forum', nor the increasingly popular 'Corrigendum' and 'Retraction'.

A recent editorial of *Journal of Management Studies*, launching the new special section 'JMSSays', offers the same dichotomy between a formulaic standard and a more exciting outside. They write that they are 'strongly of the view that too much management scholarship has become formulaic, sterile and just plain dull' (Delbridge et al., 2016: 238-239) and express their hope that 'JMSSays' will 'provide a forum for scholarship which is not constrained by the norms of conventional academic research and theorizing' (Delbridge et al., 2016: 242). The same editorial also mentions 'institutional pressures' as the main reason why academics produce dull stuff. This, of course, includes pressures that come from journals themselves (not mentioned in their editorial), especially those journals that are heavily oriented towards journal ranking lists and impact factors (*Journal of Management Studies* included). One may guess, then, that some editors have excellent reasons to feel embarrassed about the regular stuff that fills the pages of their journal. Perhaps special sections are one way of softening this embarrassment.

A great variety

Despite the common theme of being outside the ordinary, there is great variety among special sections. Indeed, the openness that is called for in terms of submissions to special sections often goes hand in hand with great editorial flexibility in handling these submissions. Some special section submissions are blind peer reviewed, like regular submissions, but many journals treat special sections differently. For instance, papers may only go through one round of review or they are evaluated by special section-editors only. Hence, apart from double-blind review, one can also find variations such as single-blind or one-eyed and two-eyed review. For some sections the review process (or lack thereof) is publicly announced, but for other sections there is no such transparency.

Special sections may or may not be open for the general public of academics (and, occasionally, non-academics).[2] Quite a few special sections are set up as 'commissioned articles only' (e.g. *Academy of Learning and Education*'s 'Exemplary Contributions'), which – in practice – may mean that they are open to big names only (e.g. *Organization Studies*' 'Vita Contemplativa') or (especially)

[2] One of the founding editors of *ephemera* recalls that part of *ephemera*'s 'motivation [to include the 'Note' section] was to open up to authors not fully entrenched in university discourse' (R14, email correspondence). In practice, most notes published in *ephemera* have been written by academics, but also activists and practitioners have found this space.

open to friends and colleagues of the editors.[3] Other special sections, in contrast, are fully open.

There often is a tension between the formal rules, which you may read on a journal's website, and actual practices. The influence that editors have in this regard should not be underestimated. One editor of a top-ranked journal I spoke to said: 'You know, if I really wanted to, I could get everybody from [my university] to write, and then our department would look great' (R5). Of course, it is a myth to begin with that the review process of regular articles is blind (journal editors often have a great power in steering papers in the 'right' direction), but special section papers are even more dependent on editorial preferences, for better and for worse. In a rare public confession, Glassman and Cummings (2011: 352), both former editors of *Journal of Management Inquiry*, admit that they actively recruited 'eminent colleagues', while 'violating our public commitment that all articles would be double-blind reviewed'.

There is no common function behind formally or informally commissioned papers in special sections. In my experience in *ephemera*, commissioned notes have been popular especially for issues with a rather small amount of submissions. An editor of a different journal confirms that this is not unique to *ephemera*: special sections may be useful because 'you've got to fill space' (R4). But invited submissions, or what we could call 'red carpet papers', may also serve to bind big names to a journal. For instance, I spoke to one 'world-class' scholar who has published in the earlier mentioned 'Carte Blanche' section of *M@n@gement*. He confided that the paper in question was rejected by other journals because it contained a message that 'the field does not like to hear' (R9, email correspondence). The author was also eager 'to get it out', as some of its contents was (also) forthcoming in a book. In this way, the author could get a rejected paper through without too much of a hassle, and the journal binds a big name to the journal. A win-win, it may seem.

For a small journal, it can be hard to motivate established scholars to submit their papers. I know quite a few people who would not submit to a low-ranked (but highly regarded) journal like *ephemera* without the prospect of a trouble-free road to publication. Indeed, as an editor of *ephemera* I have more than once come across big name scholars who become irritated when their paper gets properly reviewed. In their mind, submitting a paper to a place that doesn't directly benefit their career or match their status ought to be received as a grand gesture,

[3] None of the editors I spoke to admitted to recruiting friends and colleagues for special sections, but it's an open secret that this is how things often work. Of course, it also goes in the other direction: for instance, I knew my friends were editing this issue, so I suggested this note.

with (near) immediate acceptance as the only appropriate response. If the editor stands their ground, there is a great pleasure in defying such expectations.

But many journals do try to attract big names to their journals, even when the paper isn't up to scratch. Special sections, as the space that tends to be governed the least, are a means that journals have at their disposal in achieving this aim. One editor I informally spoke to mentioned that special sections, in his view, are the place where 'the best and the worst papers get published'. If true, this may well be a consequence of the fact that many special sections are particularly open to big names, who may or may not put effort into their freebie. Anecdotally, I know of one professor who cut-and-pasted something together after being invited to submit to a special section of an ABS 4-rated journal – not always a recipe for (scholarly) success.

Also for the big journals, some with well over a 1000 submissions per year, special sections can be a way to attract prominent scholars who would otherwise not go through the trouble of a tiresome review process. One editor of an ABS 4-rated journal recalls that even with the red carpet in place it can be difficult to fill special sections with special guests:

> It was pulling teeth, a lot of people would promise then they would never come through [...] it was much harder than I ever dreamed it would be. (R5)

One reason for this difficulty is that papers in special sections are not always taken seriously. For some, special sections are filled with content that is not 'rigorous', and therefore do not count as an outlet for research proper. This is at times also reflected on an institutional level. A former editor of *Academy of Management Journal* recalls that *AMJ*'s section 'Research Notes' was partly terminated for that reason: 'it sort of devalued/demeaned the papers' that were published there, because some 'schools didn't credit authors for having a "note" in *AMJ*' (R11, email correspondence).[4]

The prospect of citations is a final factor that may be at play in special sections, but also here there is no standard. Some sections are set up in the hope that they cite well, while other special sections have been designed without projected returns in citations (e.g. this 'Note' section). Even when citation potential is part of the rationale, actuality may not confirm such hopes. Tsoukas (2008: 1095), in

[4] A second reason is that '*AMJ* was such a "big tent" journal (covering the full range of micro and macro topics and receiving *so many* submissions) [that] we felt some of the more specialized papers (e.g., replications) would be more appropriately placed in journals more specific to their domains' (R11, email correspondence).

his comments as departing editor, admits that papers published in *Organization Studies*' 'Vita Contemplativa' 'have not been cited as well as I had hoped'. A low return on investment in citations can also be a reason to cut the section entirely. I attended one meet-the-editor session where the editor of a fairly highly ranked journal (4-star ABS, with aspirations to compete with the most cited journals in the field) proudly announced that they got rid of a special section because it had a negative influence on their impact factor, 'despite the fact that the readers really liked it'.

Special sections as an expression of collective shame

Despite the variety in special sections and the different functions that they may serve, I believe it is possible to say something about their increasing popularity on a general level: they are an expression of a collective shame for what normal research has become, and they serve as a protective layer for the articles that we have become so ashamed of.

As we have seen, the rise of these sections could be interpreted as a playground within the reality of social science; a free space where the normal requirements of research do not apply. Outside these sections we find 'real' social science, and inside these sections we encounter free experimentation with ideas. Special sections, then, are the place where playfulness is allowed to happen.

Equally plausible, however, is the exact opposite thesis: we are all aware that 'game playing', this time used pejoratively, really takes place within the 'normal' process of journal publication, and that the only way out is to create space for 'reality' to re-enter in special sections. Special sections, on this view, are not special at all: they help us remember what normal research ought to look like. Continuing this thought, we may perhaps even say that *Organization*'s 'out' in 'Speaking Out' is the scream to re-connect to 'reality', to the *outside* of the games that academics play.

This, of course, is not to say that what happens in 'normal' papers is merely a game, and that real research is (today) relegated to special sections. These categories spill over in all directions. My point is to question the existence of the separation between the normal and the special in the first place. As I see it, the creation of special sections helps in coping with our shame, but thereby it also keeps the normal of which we are so ashamed in place.

I already mentioned Kuhn's concept of 'normal science', which, of course, exists only in relation to its counterpart 'extraordinary science'. We may say that the rise of special sections is a partial resolution of the paradigm debate of the 1980s

and 1990s (e.g. is normal science desirable in organization studies? should we be in a permanent state of extraordinary science?). Journals are now both 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary'; 'normal' and 'special'. They have their cake and eat it too. The problem, however, is that 'extraordinary sections' are far from a sign that normal science is in crisis, which is what extraordinary science signals in Kuhn. Indeed, the exact opposite is the case: they strengthen 'normal science' in its legitimacy.

(No) practical recommendations

I don't want to end this note with some practical recommendations with regards to special sections. Despite some reservations, I have nothing against special sections per se. Quite the contrary: they usually *really are* more interesting, through-provoking, readable, creative, and so on, than the normal stuff published in the field.

What I do find problematic is rather the ever-growing need for the distinction between 'normal articles' and 'special papers' that journals create within themselves (as well as some dubious motivations and practices that inevitably lurk behind the scenes – in spaces that are accessible only to journals editors, journal publishers and a handful of other players). From this perspective, I have great sympathy for two journals in particular: first, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, which, on paper, turned all its sections into 'special sections'. In reality two of these sections, 'Essays' and 'Nontraditional Research', are de facto regular sections that were supposed to give the journal 'academic legitimacy' (Glassman and Cummings, 2011: 351). But by refusing to succumb to a strict division between the ordinary and the extraordinary, they maintain an openness in journal publishing that is absent from most other management and organization journals. Second, *Culture and Organization*'s stoic refusal to adapt to new times: they still have just one section, which remains very open (more open than the few other journals that have never had special sections), which is to say that the articles that are published have not become more formulaic over time (at least not in my reading).

references

Delbridge, R., R. Suddaby and B. Harley (2016) 'Introducing JMSSays', *Journal of Management Studies*, 53(2): 238-243.

EGOS (2016) 'Aims and scope'. [http://www.egosnet.org/organization_studies/aims_and_scope]

ephemera (2016) 'How to submit'. [http://www.ephemerajournal.org/how-submit]

Organization (2016) 'Description'. [https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/journal/organization]

Glassman, A.M. and T. G. Cummings (2011) 'The wilderness years at JMI', *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 20(4): 349-354.

Kuhn, T. (1962) *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London.

Stackman, R. W. and D. R. Hannah (2017) 'Generative curiosity: Introducing JMI's newest section', *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 26(1): 112-115.

Tsoukas, H. (2008) 'Thank you and goodbye! Reflections of a departing editor-in-chief', *Organization Studies*, 29(8-9): 1085-1107.

the author

Sverre Spoelstra is an affiliate member of *ephemera*.
Email: sverre.spoelstra@fek.lu.se

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 619-639

The secret life of dead spaces in the academic office

Damian Ruth

> 'We are beginning to see that organization does not exist *in* space and time'
>
> (O'Doherty et al., 2013: 1431)

Introduction

Inspired by ethnographies in visual and material culture (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Miller, 2008; Whincup, 2004), I interviewed nine academics for about an hour each in which they described their offices and responded to questions. It soon became obvious that these spaces offered a rich source of data about identity and sense of purpose and well-being. Many of the things contained within were infused with meaning, and were what Heracleous and Jacobs (2008) call 'embodied metaphors'. However, one striking metaphor that emerged was curiously non-embodied, and that was 'dead' spaces that sometimes even occupants were not aware of.

A colleague describes a 'dead' corner in his office: 'Probably because my back's to it and I don't take much notice of it, it doesn't seem to exist'. I point out that 'it's got a box of tissues, a set of drawers, a telephone, your telephone books…'. 'That's not my telephone', he replies, 'that's a dead telephone in a dead corner and the tissues aren't there for weeping [...] those are my books, but no particular care has gone into the selection'. In another colleague's office, I point out a file holder, which seemed forgotten. She replied that it might contain 'folders from students [...] materials from courses now long past, dead, gone…'.

Dead.

The bluntness of the metaphor, the reference to dead spaces, was striking. This led me to consider other related metaphors: empty, absent, secret, hidden, forgotten and invisible. And yet, dead spaces also seemed to be connected with hoarding and obsolescence, with legacies and loss. A paradox emerged; these dead spaces had life, their silence was eloquent.

The point here is that spaces function.

> Space and its appurtenances [...] are decidedly not neutral with respect to power, values and other meanings. Organization spaces are not empty shells forming a backdrop to or stage-setting for the rest of human activity. (Yanow, 2010: 142)

What began to interest me was the ways in which even empty spaces which, by their very nature, do not present as observable, might reveal power, values and other meanings – not only at the individual level, but also at the organisational level. Gagliardi refers to Hall's (1959) claim about culture, and 'a universe of behavior [...] *hardly observable*, which operates without emerging into consciousness...' (Gagliardi, 1990: 12). The problem, suggests Gagliardi, is the emphasis on mental processes and cognition that leads to holes in current organisational analysis. The solution is to attend not only to 'logos' (beliefs) and 'ethos' (values) but also to 'pathos' (feeling). My thoughts wander from 'pathos' to 'eros' to 'thanatos'. Would it be useful, I began to wonder, to explore links between holes in current organisational analysis, a point revived again more recently by O'Doherty et al. (2013) and actual holes, gaps and dead spaces in academic offices?

What became apparent in the interviews was that death and secrets come in many forms and with many associations: hidden, put away, forgotten, out of sight, dumped, empty, finished with, useless. There can be absences in terms of sound, light and sight. There was an interplay between the external material circumstances and the personal felt experience of individuals. Absence can be a feeling of emptiness, and a refusal to use something, and leaving it empty can be a form of resistance. The title for addressing this theme is ironic, for the 'secret life' is not secret, and dead spaces may have life.

The theoretical contexts of this paper are space in organisations, the academic office, and specific consideration of 'dead' spaces. By illustrating my argument with comments from respondents/colleagues I develop the concept of 'the secret life of dead spaces' as a heuristic for analysing the intense yet ambiguous feelings that academics have about their work and which illuminate the dichotomies of presence/absence, public/private and even being or not-being in the institution. There is a constellation of spaces that relate to death, such as empty, absent, secret, hidden and invisible. There are connections with hoarding

and obsolescence, with legacies and loss. We are led to consider the ways in which academics are users of institutional space, or resident in their offices, or inhabitants of their 'habitus' in the context of the changing nature of universities and academic work. (I am indebted to one of the reviewers for this link.) This specific consideration of academic offices is used to contribute to the literature on spaces in the workplace and, specifically, the spatial turn in organisation studies.

Space and organisation

Whether we are aware of them or not, there are liminal, uneasy spaces in buildings that relate to the organisations that functions in them. Places of concourse such as corridors, stairwells and lifts are also places of chance meetings, welcome and unwanted; places of learning too, often of great liveliness, with more life than inside the lecture theatre (Hurdley, 2010). They are also places of unknown corners, secrets, and fear (Wasserman and Zimroni, 2012) and of chance meetings that become valuable (Iedema et al., 2010). One day, a ceiling panel in the corridor fell out and our digital lifelines were revealed. There is something uneasy about having the guts of our workplaces on show, hence the shock of the Georg Pompidou Centre when it was built. It would appear that there are such spaces within spaces in offices that can reveal the guts of more complex thoughts and feelings. But then, perhaps the whole office is such a site, a confluence of revelations.

It is not the only such site. One thinks of the railway carriage (Bailey, 2004), the beach (Preston-Whyte, 2004) and the hotel (Pritchard and Morgan, 2005). What Pritchard and Morgan (2005: 761) say of the hotel – 'a complex, culturally contested and ideologically-laden liminal place, where dominant discourses of space and wider hegemonic socio-cultural relations are resisted, contested or affirmed' – can also be said of the academic office. These authors all point out how ambiguous such spaces are, being sites of escape, erotic adventure, play, freedom and shifts in identity, as well places 'replete with darker images of threat and danger' (Preston-Whyte, 2004: 350). They all draw on Van Gennep's (1960) conceptulisation of rites of passage which has been extended from age associations to limbo, threshold, boundary, crossing and absence of norms. Van Gennep's rites of passage has explicit place reference: before the door, on the threshold, and in the house. These times and places are also connected to gifts and death (Hyde, 2006). The central idea is transition (Turner, 1974: 13), a gap between worlds 'where almost anything may happen'. In terms of the academic office, this sense of 'almost anything may happen' may be currently considered in terms of Gramsci's concept of 'interregnum', that space/time between the old

dying and new not yet born in which many morbid symptoms may arise. The academic office provides a prime site for examining the changing nature of the university, a kind of hologram of the university *and* a cabinet of curiosities. The curiosity cabinet emerged from the idea of a *wunderkammern* or *studioli*, places set aside for the storage and study of specimens (Adamson, 2014), which were succeeded by museums. Some observations offered by respondents suggest the office as an archaeological site, a site of stuff that is out of place, broken, no longer functional, or dead. And yet, paradoxically, the office affirms, like digital lifelines fallen out the ceiling, the entanglement of academics with one another (Ruth, 2015a).

The concept of space has a complex history and has been examined in sociology, anthropology and other social sciences (Wilwerding, 2013). According to Gieryn (2000: 456, cited in Wilwerding, 2013: 71), '[s]pace is what place becomes when the unique gathering of things, meanings and values are sucked out'. It is this particular view of space as something emptied that I wish to challenge. In fact, I shall go further and suggest that there is a kind of rhizome of these apparently empty, dead, forgotten spaces that are eloquent and particularly pertinent in higher education (Grellier, 2013). Higher education is a rite of passage and from the point of view of academics, cohorts of students are relatively ephemeral: most interactions between academics and students are short-lived. We shall see how this condition is 'rematerialised' in terms of dead stuff. My challenge is to respond to Van Marrewijk and Yanow (2010: 3) and explore organisation 'rematerialised' in terms of a space marked by non-materiality – by being dead, gone, empty.

Dale and Burrell are among many who have observed how the physical world affects us,

> how the physical world made social comes to constitute people through its very materiality. The spaces and places around us construct us as we construct them. (2008: 1)

If, as Lefebvre (1991) suggests, 'social space contains' and we consider the academic office as a social container, what can we say about the empty spaces, or dead spaces in them? What are these 'subspaces' and what do they contain? Shortt (2015: 636) examined those 'on the margin' spaces in hairdressing salons which highlighted Bachelard's (1994 [1954]) explorations of intimate spaces such as corners and secluded spaces in our everyday worlds. My exploration of how academics dwell in their offices led me to wonder, via dead or empty places, what, or who else, dwells in the 'empty' spaces of the office. Who or what is the academic, wittingly or unwittingly, hosting? A great deal, as we shall see.

If we step back for a moment and consider 'dead space', it is a surprisingly rich idea. There is the idea familiar to interior designers who work out how we can make good use of those dead spaces such as corners and stairwells. Thus, 'make use of a once dead space in your room and bring life to your working area' (www.lushome.com/deadspaces). Or,

> [m]aking the most of dead space is key to obtaining the most out of your kitchen [...] have you got a corner in some part of your house or apartment that is bare and empty, looking unloved and forlorn?' (www.houzz.com/use-the-dead-space).

'Unloved' space! Claims that dead space can be brought to life with just a little love and imagination abound. The point to be taken here is the plasticity of space, materially and conceptually.

In physiology, dead space is the volume of air which is inhaled that does not take part in the gas exchange. In other words, not all the air in each breath is available for the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide. There are benefits to this seemingly wasteful design for ventilation that includes dead space. Carbon dioxide is retained, making a bicarbonate-buffered blood and interstitium possible, inspired air is brought to body temperature, improving O_2 uptake and humidified, which improves the quality of airway mucus (West, 2011). Dead space, it appears, is useful.

Acoustic engineers create anechoic chambers to create acoustical 'dead' spaces, thereby improving the quality of sound in a space and providing privacy. But there are interesting qualities to silence. The longest that anyone has survived in the anechoic chamber at Orfield Laboratories in South Minneapolis is just 45 minutes. It's 99.99 per cent sound absorbent and holds the Guinness World Record for the world's quietest place, but stay there too long and you may start hallucinating. Steven Orfield explains that you 'hear your heart beating, sometimes you can hear your lungs, hear your stomach gurgling loudly [...] In the anechoic chamber, *you become the sound*' (The Daily Mail, 2014; emphasis added). And this is so disorientating that sitting down is a must, because we orient ourselves through the sounds we hear when we walk. Sound provides perceptual cues that allow us to balance and manoeuvre. The laboratories are used in product testing and people are asked to listen to product sounds based on semantic terms, like 'expensive' or 'low quality' and their feelings and associations are recorded. Silence, it seems, is not always golden, or experienced as such. Clearly, whilst dead space may have negative connotations, it also has life, usefulness and strange effects. We may extend our thinking about dead spaces in the way Latour (2006) considers objects, as a kind of translation, or as a medium like a table that translates qualities (Conrad and Richter, 2013: 120).

Certainly, and as we shall see, it is possible to have a range of complex responses to 'dead' space and such spaces can turn out to have interesting functions.

The academic office

The office has been studied from a functional point of view (Steele, 1973), in terms of dimensions and measures (Pfeffer, 1983), and as part of the physical environment in organisations (Davis, 1984). Davis cites Festinger et al. and Kotter who revealed the importance of relative location in buildings. There has also been a variety of ethnographic approaches to the academic office. Scheiberg (1990) used interviews and informal conversations with individuals from contrasting university units to develop a thematic analysis. Belk and Watson (1998) interviewed professors with different ranks, disciplines and genders, and provided detailed vignettes of each. Tian and Belk (2005) recruited participants from a new venture organisation to photograph valued objects in their workplace, followed by interviews. Cox et al. (2012) photographed one another's work spaces, and each interviewed and was re-interviewed by another member of the group, using the photographs as prompts. Kuntz et al. (2012) examined how changes in the built environment changed the professional practice and relationships of academics and produced a neo-liberal order.

Here, I combine a *focused* ethnography (Muecke, 1994) and an *institutional* ethnography (Smith, 2005) consisting of nine interviews conducted over several months. The interviews were professionally transcribed and sent to each interviewee so they could check and censor if they desired. A research assistant then independently coded the transcripts, which I used to check and elaborate my initial coding. Out of this, a more refined coding schema was developed and further analysed using NVivo. The focus was on discovering patterns and the approach may be described as a *collective* case study (Stake, 2005). In my interviews, I paid particular attention to how individuals had or had not personalised their work space (Scheiberg, 1990), and this possibly gave rise to colleagues realising that there were spaces in their offices that they hardly noticed. In the course of further writing, I discerned the theme of dead spaces. I then re-analysed the transcripts and picked up what seemed to me to be related phenomena, such as forgotten things, empty cabinets and hoarded stuff and ways in which lines of sight and invisibility had an organisational function. I realised that there were many comments suggesting intriguing relationships between spaces, organisation and the incumbent's sense of being in the organisation. In order to explore this angle, a larger framework for developing the concept of the secret life of dead spaces was required.

Academic offices are curious sites. They are repositories for the most intimate and the most public things, sanctuaries, data banks, memorials, 'rubbish' dumps, mini-libraries and storage places. On the one hand there is the study of the scholar – one thinks of St Jerome – or the study/library in the manor of the gentleman scholar – one thinks of large leather topped desks and walnut panelling. In what seems another extreme, there is the open plan office and the 'hotdesk', a kind of virtual, ephemeral and temporary office. Even more extreme is the virtual office on a mobile laptop, where the physical office, like so much else, has melted into thin air. (An academic at a European university told me about her office in a newly designed contemporary school building in which there was no place for books – books, in fact, were frowned upon – because they would interfere with the sleek glass 'walls' which rendered the academics continually observable.) The *academic* office has a curious identity in this array of possibilities, as indeed does the academic – see, for example, the comment above on academics as users of institutional space, resident in their offices, or inhabitants of their 'habitus'. Many academics speak of a study at home, and sometimes an office, but never of a study at work; 'study' and 'office' have quite different connotations. The academic office is replete with spaces that suggest tension between dwelling and transition, and public and private.

Academic offices contain different kinds of spaces. The evidence of the dead, the hidden, the secret, the forgotten, the private and similar phenomena resonate with denial and resistance on the part of institutional members. This reflects the irony or contradiction in academic work; the office is where researchers hide, conceal and deny as they explore, discover and expose. It is rarely where they teach but it is where the most personal contact between lecturers and students occur, and can be a site of intimacy and transitoriness. At the same time, complicating the issue, there is a kind of reciprocal transposition between the academic and the office, where the mind is in the office and office in the mind, and this composite entity functions as a refuge, sanctuary, repository, factory, bank or dump. The space *is* the mind of the occupant (Ruth, 2015b). One may ask if dead spaces are mirroring lacunae in the identity of the person, at least in that person's academic identity.

This relates to a particular ambivalence in the descriptions of certain spaces that I could not quite grasp until I read Jana Costas' problematisation of mobility, and her use of Sartre's metaphor of stickiness. She points out that the many social science metaphors of liquidity, fluidity, flows and nomads 'convey a kind of frictionless movement and floating' (Costas, 2013: 1468) which is misleading, for even the 'kinetic elite' experience tension, struggle and conflict. What I observed in academic offices was a kind of stickiness of non-spaces. One respondent spoke of 'legacies', but these were things which were in a sense dead. Could an un-

opened filing cabinet from a previous occupant qualify as a non-place (Auge, 1995) within the office? There was a kind of stickiness of emptiness and unwanted stuff.

These are the thoughts and questions that arose as I pondered the transcripts. As questions proliferated I began to construct two 'problematiques' without suggesting any neat correlations between the elements of each one. In the centre of one problematique is 'dead space', surrounded by its relatives, some more distant that others: gone, empty, discarded, obsolete, unused, hidden, secret, private, legacy. In the centre of the other is 'the person in the office' and the surrounding concepts here are: roles, blind spots, lines of sight, materiality of work, other people, time and space, absences/presence. Obviously I make no claim that these are exhaustive associations.

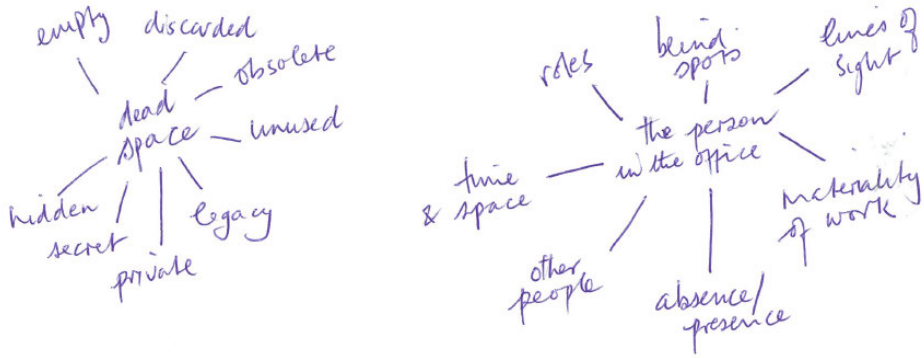

Figure 1. The problematiques

I began to see ways of understanding the point made by O'Doherty et al. that 'organization does not exist *in* space and time' (2013: 1431). It is the use of time and space that creates organisation. This reversal of the traditional organisation studies approach necessitates a broad understanding of what constitutes space, which I propose should include dead space.

We now turn to a close analysis of the ideas emerging from the comments of respondents. I begin with a focus on dead, gone, empty, discarded, obsolete, and then move on to private, hidden, secret, and finally address legacies. There is a certain arbitrariness about this approach. Some statements were illustrative of several themes, and single themes were illustrated by different statements. For discussion purposes I group them and proceed from one to another, but I invite the reader to consider metaphors like tapestry or rhizome as a framing device.

Dead, gone, empty...

Can we inherit deadness in the form of emptiness? I quoted respondents above on dead phones in dead corners, and on materials from courses 'now long past, dead, gone...' and on drawers unopened for years. In one office I remarked on two big four-drawer filing cabinets, and was told 'They're none of mine'. 'And nothing to do with you?', I asked. 'No, one of them was empty for me to fill and it's completely empty to this day [a period of almost a year]'.

Filing cabinets are quickly becoming obsolete, and maybe that is why they are often legacies of emptiness. They are a useful foil for considering the distinctions between happily taking over something, making do with what someone has left behind, putting up with someone else's rubbish or simply ignoring something. Use, or rather non-use, and emptiness are closely related to death. One respondent spoke of getting organised, and asked for filing racks which were in fact:

> Totally useless. I got them to organise things, you know, and – oh, those file things, so brilliant and so cool. 'Do you want one or two?' 'Give me three'. I'm organised, I'm gonna organise myself and I barely use them, and there's only just shit shoved into one of those, the other one is totally empty and I gave the other one away.

Oh, the constant effort to organise! And oh, how often do we confuse the material with the conceptual, and ourselves with our stuff! And yet, it is so and a tidy little industry is building on it – decluttering is the vogue. A lot of the effort put into organising comprises classifying things as dead or alive and putting things into empty spaces and making empty spaces. There is ambivalence at play, a sense of uneasy residual value connected to a fear of finality, of pronouncing a teaching role or a committee role or a period of worklife as definitively ended, dead:

> *Respondent (R)*: Well, up there is some sort of research projects and Masters and PhD students' files, my teaching files and up there – those three boxes are full of things I don't know what to do with, to do with teaching. This is [xyz] stuff I'm not sure whether to throw out or not cos I was on the [xyz] committee – actually that stuff over there is all [xyz] too. I don't know – I'll have to throw it out one day.
>
> *Interviewer (I)*: What stops you from throwing it out now?
>
> *R*: I'm not quite sure really, it's just – I probably wouldn't throw anything out probably because I spent so much time on it and I'm just reluctant to discard it.

Whilst an out-of-date textbook might as well be pulped, academics invest huge effort in creating and shaping courses. Why would they not gain the status of a

memento, or at least some kind of record? Good novels don't die. Why should well-designed courses? How may we understand this hanging on to old stuff and at the same time being dismissive of it, the ambivalence about the stuff of academia even whilst being committed to producing it? I suggest that it is because academic work is essentially conceptual and ephemeral. Whilst hardly on a daily time-span academics work one course at a time and one paper at a time with students that are qua students in transit. A lot of what we produce is in fact ephemeral. Furthermore, academics have an identity or develop a career (a relatively recent idea) premised on the life of the mind, even as they struggle with the material conditions thereof. Academic work has become increasingly materialised not because there is inherent value in materialising the conditions of academic work but as a result of auditing and compliance requirements. Hence the constant ambivalence and outright resistance, expressed through space.

Filing cabinets, emptiness and dead stuff seem to go together. Here is a commentary derived from a section of dialogue:

> It [filing cabinet] was there originally – somebody plonked it in my office, I didn't ask for it to be there and it's actually full of old files from somebody else. And some of them are actually personnel files and [laughter] [...] They're from the old [Department] and there's some quite personal things in there so I don't – try not to go in there too often – [laughter] I can't bring myself to throw them out because I think they're not mine to throw out but I don't know who to ask and then it will just get complicated so I just leave them, and don't open that top drawer. And behind the cabinet box files... Yes, with magazines...a collection of which I probably never looked at. That probably came from home because I got sick of them filling up my home office and so I brought them to work as another repository... We've got a box here! We've got empty files [laughter] padding for books, and I couldn't think what to do with those either, because they fill up my rubbish bin so they sort of sat there, they've been there for a long time as well... So it's possible that that box has been on that chair in that corner undisturbed for 9 months – that's quite feasible.

All this stuff from someone else! These empty cabinets, unasked for, 'plonked down'. And old personnel files. Is there always someone else in an academic's office? What ghosts lurk? And stuff from somewhere else, no longer looked at. The office as repository – or is it a mausoleum? A box undisturbed on the chair for 9 months, like a casket of ashes. There is more to what this colleague is talking about than simply indecision. One may connect this to Van Gennep's rites of passage in terms of liminal spaces; before the waste bin, in the waste bin, out the office. But even the waste bin can speak, as we shall see.

I referred above to a colleague who could not recall if he had opened two drawers in his desk in the two years that he had occupied the office. Drawers are spaces

that are easy to ignore. They are also ideal spaces for the suspension of decision. A colleague, asked about 'the drawers underneath your desk, do you use those much?' replied:

> Not a lot, expect for storage of stuff that I'm not quite sure where else to put and should probably be discarded. And, yes, an old phone book.

Drawers then can also hide from us the nature of what, besides decision-making, is being suspended. Thinking of the phone book in particular, and remembering another respondent's dead telephone, of course we note that it is now usually quicker to use the online directory and email, but still that sense of the past, the discarded and the obsolete, persists – we return to the idea of legacies below – hardly observable, under the presence of current appearances. However, it is not always unobservable, for what we may say about *under* the surface can also be quite visible on the surface. I offer a note on desks:

> *I*: To the right of your computer [...] we have plastic trays on top of the desk, sort of standard three-tier beige plastic tray and in front of it a couple of photographs, a cup, wallet, more books. Any commentary on that lot on your desk?
>
> *R*: No, although the beige tray is probably a wasted space so – they would only get cluttered with other things, so it prevents things from falling down the back of the desk where they might be lost in perpetuity.
>
> *I*: And I notice it's broken or not clipped in.
>
> *R*: No, it's broken.
>
> *I*: Of no consequence to you?
>
> *R*: No.

Here is a desktop with a prominent feature being something that is broken, and in terms of its original function, obsolete and discarded. It is not behind the person, or to the side, or behind the door: it is directly in line of sight, but probably no longer noticed. There was an odd piece of equipment on another colleague's desk. 'I've forgotten how it works', says the owner and laughs.

> No, it's not working today... Why do I keep it on my desk? I've no idea at all... I must have brought it in here to show somebody and never took it home again.

I note a note next to it – it is dated three years ago.

To make good on a promise about waste bins made above, here is an expression of the theme of dead, gone, empty, discarded, obsolete and absent:

I: How often do you empty your yellow recycling waste box?

R: I haven't since it was given to me.

I: How many years ago was that?

R: It must be three, mustn't it?

Private, hidden, secret...

A refusal to engage with the materiality of a space is an expression of a self in that space. This is a kind of 'use in reverse' of space. Protecting privacy can take the form of either not investing in a space or controlling the space. Resistance can be expressed through refusing to engage in the space as a whole. One colleague's office was ordered and sparse, with few personal things. Absenting one's self is a way of playing dead:

> *R*: I'm very private so I probably – there are probably a whole lot of things I could do to this [the office] to make it more me, but do I want more me here in this environment? I don't feel particularly valued as me here so why would I want more of me here. I'll keep me at home.
>
> I: But you're very valued as a colleague in work.
>
> *R*: Yeah, valued in some ways and not in others and I suppose it's less about value and more about fitting in, so I try to – there's a degree of camouflage and flying below radars and that sort of thing.
>
> *I*: Interesting – how people can use an aesthetic means to disguise and camouflage...
>
> *R*: So I just use an absence probably, yeah, whereas other people will send a message – I can think of a colleague's office down the corridor, I just probably abstain from showing very much of me in the space. It's a privacy thing; I think, yeah, protection.

The presence of emptiness as an eloquent expression of identity can cut in two ways. The colleague above has a rich, aesthetic, valued work life, which contrasts for example with the point made by Miller's (2008) ethnography of London's Stuart Street in which he described the flat of George who has nothing and therefore seems *to be* nothing with the house of The Clarkes who have so much and therefore seem *to be* so much.

Resistance can also be a refusal to engage with particular features of a space.

> *R*: They [these cupboards] came from information systems as well because I was head of department there so I got this big office with a table, chairs and these

> things. I brought them out, I didn't want these [grey steel cabinets] but I didn't have any choice…and I initially said I wasn't going to put anything in them.
>
> *I*: Was that as a protest?
>
> *R*: As a protest [laughter].

In an interesting further twist of rebellion, the unwanted artefact is appropriated, or, if you like, resurrected to a new life, like a broken beige tray. The colleague below is referring to a floor-to-ceiling glass panel next to the door. The architectural logic was that this would allow light from the office windows into the corridor. What the architects seemed to have forgotten was that there would often be a sentient person in the office between the window and the corridor. And so, the inevitable happened, and notwithstanding the official injunction not to block these panels, they were blocked, with posters and others paraphernalia.

> *R*: And I wanted them [shelves] across there too because I didn't want people to be able to look in here but I wasn't allowed that either.
>
> *I*: You weren't allowed to block off this glass area…
>
> *R*: You know we weren't. And why not?

The office incumbents wanted control over lines of sight, they wanted conscious control over knowing if the office was occupied or not, whether they were present or absent, and a common impulse was to use stuff they didn't want (cabinets, shelves) to block the line of sight making the use of the door the only way of knowing.

The relationships between private, personal, forgetting and hiding are subtle. When I pointed out a small rather chic suitcase in a colleague's office, she replied:

> I brought that in, my daughter was going away for a weekend I think and she just wanted a small suitcase and so I brought in two small ones and I never took that one home. And I keep forgetting that it's there. Yeah, I don't actually see it unless I stand over by the window.

In another office the incumbent has a collection of shoes. 'I should have hidden them', said their owner, 'but I thought I'd just leave them there'. Why? 'Well, I don't know why the black ones are there to be perfectly honest, but the other ones are just walking shoes…they really probably need to be thrown out'. It is clear by now that all the ideas associated with dead space (see Figure 1) can be over-determined. We can see nearly all of them in the following exchange:

> *R*: In the filing cabinet is stuff in a... kind of way that is squirreled away – thinking that it might be relevant at some point. [opens filing cabinet] Yeah, so it's got some questionnaires and data in there...and some old stuff from papers that I was teaching quite a few years ago.
>
> *I*: An interesting corner there. When did you last use the fan?
>
> *R*: Not for a while. The fan's actually a remnant from when we shifted down from our previous floor so the fan was a legacy item.
>
> *I*: Yeah. And the bags? A few black bags...different kinds...
>
> *R*: Again, one of them for instance is the old courier type bags and then they changed over and got us these camel bags so the old ones just sat there. It's been superseded.

The metaphor of squirrelling away suggests value, not disregard and nor indecision. Hoarding is a kind of stickiness (Costas, 2013). We may move on to different areas of inquiry but many of us continue to be held captive by a picture of our potential and squirrel stuff away as evidence of this potential and at the same time we hang on to the obsolete, the remnants, the superseded, the legacies of a time now dead and gone.

Legacy

Can we inherit deadness in the form of emptiness? I quoted respondents above on dead phones in dead corners, and on materials from dead courses, on empty filing cabinets and drawers with contents not known even after years. We are unwilling heirs it seems, but heirs to what?

> *R*: Yes, the photocopy lid is immediate work and the big boxes are legacies – they're legacy systems, they should go from the time that I moved up from the E-floor to here, and I've got another one under the desk so they... No, not empty they're full of old possessions, like notes, old disks...
>
> *I*: Could you just bin them as they are?
>
> *R*: I actually believe that I could.
>
> *I*: So, yeah, bits and pieces, when did you move up here?
>
> *R*: [laughs] Well, good gosh, oh, lord, where are we now? Would it be three, four years ago?
>
> *I*: Have they been moved in the last three or four years?
>
> *R*: [laughs] They haven't moved from there. I have opened them occasionally.

> *I*: There's another one under your desk. Why is that distinguished from the other two?
>
> *R*: I ran out of room over there [laughter].

The reference to the yellow waste baskets above was offered as a kind of emblematic metaphor. I now present comments on a notice board. In a sense, the notice board is the opposite of the recycling waste basket. It is a site for what is valued. It is commonly a site of ephemera, mementoes, and what needs to be kept in line of sight. It is often the most public of places in an office, and at the same time the site of personal artefacts, sometimes even photographs of loved ones. It can also be a wonderful record of, and an illustration of the theme of this paper. I have cited instances of colleagues having things from time long past and other places. Here is a colleague responding to the invitation to 'tell us a bit about your notice board':

> *R*: This is a legacy from my old office. Actually it dates back even further if you look at those little prints up there, apparently my predecessor in the old office liked colour prints, and I said, ok, a little bit of colour here without being overboard, so... [laughs]
>
> *I*: I can't help laughing – we're looking at four very faded impressionist prints. Rather ivory white background on a hessian board – ivory white wall. I mean –
>
> *R*: [playful laughter] But do you realise that was the natural effect caused by sunlight. They might be increasing in value all the time.
>
> *I*: Yes, ok, so there's a bit of colour in the office and you thought, why not? Your predecessor had those?
>
> *R*: Yes.
>
> *I*: Your predecessor prior to 1997?
>
> *R*: Yes.
>
> *I*: Hang on a minute, that's really interesting. That is a set of four faded prints stuck against A5 sheets of paper which are in turned stapled onto the hessian. So those were – whatever you want to say – bequeathed unto you – you got them, you were in a different office then, down there – then this entire block gets refurbished, those go into storage, they come out of storage –
>
> *R*: No, they were just relocated to my B-Level office when we were relocated
>
> *I*: So when you came to this office that entire pin board came back, was put up there, and these pictures have not moved off that pin board. So it is feasible that those pictures have been stapled to that pin board for well, nigh, 13/14 years.
>
> *R*: Oh, definitely, 14 years plus.

> *I*: Do you have very affectionate memories of your predecessor?
>
> *R*: I don't know him! [laughter] Apparently he was a colourful character.

I can only ask again, who and what, wittingly or unwittingly, willingly or unwillingly are academics hosting in their offices? Tho' much is taken, much abides...

Conclusion

The intangibility of our thinking and the valorisation of tacit knowledge has been challenged by the material turn of analysis. Pointing out the materiality of work leads to productive insights, but there are complex reversals at play. If academic offices are containers and contain dead spaces, perhaps the dead spaces are also containers for holding the ineffable and the tacit and variations on the theme of absence that seems an integral part of academic life. It seems quite appropriate that academic resistance could comprise the development of a rhizomatic paraversity that operates below the surface of the neoliberal university (Rolfe, 2013). It is worth noting that Gary Rolfe drew on Bill Readings' (1984) *The university in ruins* and specifically on Readings' explication of 'excellence' as an empty signifier, that most powerful homogenising but vacuous clarion call. This is why I suggest that there is a rhizome of these apparently empty, dead, forgotten spaces that are eloquent and particularly pertinent in higher education (Grellier, 2013) and how certain voices in the academy are silenced. There is a great deal going on in these sites/offices that contain so much dead space, so much emptiness, obliviousness, obsolescence, secrecy, hiddenness, transitoriness. They are sites of resistance, contestation and affirmation, intimacy and denial. They are sites of a persistent interregnum, filled with stickiness, with mementoes that, even as mementoes, have died.

Is there, I wonder, a link to the question on Yiannis Gabriel's blog:

> Are any of today's academic journals 'alive'... Or have journals become mere trucks or vans, of different prestige to be sure, but mere vehicles transferring articles from producers to consumers under different badges and logos? (2013)

Are offices also just containers for the dead? Responses to Gabriel are suggestive:

> If you find any alive journals, Yiannis, let me know. I could benefit from this knowledge as I have quite a few papers which are now unwanted by many.
>
> In a sense, journals are dead. No one reads them. Just look at them and then cite them.

Journals seem to have something in common with courses that academics design and then consign to oblivion in boxes on top of empty filing cabinets.

There is another dimension to this sense of the dead, gone or absent, which is more like a simply 'not there' and which is connected to the ephemerality of academic work. In the many lamentations about neo-liberalism and the corporatisation of universities and its effect on academic labour, it has been pointed out that universities are now in the business of selling 'employability' (Chertkovskaya et al., 2013). In other words, by definition, the student is working for something that is absent, that is yet to be. This intensifies the transitoriness of student life and drains it of substantive current meaning. The student, and by extension the academic, is engaged in a preparatory liminal state that has no intrinsic substance or meaning. They are in a kind of limbo, an Gramscian interregnum, where, as noted above, the old is dying and the new is not yet born and many morbid symptoms arise.

By attending to the materiality of work and the materiality of organisational life we have discovered that academics struggle with dead spaces and emptiness and that there is a suggestive link between the presence of such lacunae and holes in organisational analysis. Like the spaces discovered by the interior decorator, we hope that with a bit of love and imagination, we will be brought to life. It's getting hard to breath. We are like the occupants of the anechoic chamber, afraid of becoming the dead space, a blank spot between the supplier and the consumer, and that is our terrible secret. We may, like the filing cabinets have become empty relics or dumping grounds. No longer embodied as sensory entities but more like digital objects that have melted into thin air, we still hope we exist – although we can't be absolutely certain – in the cloud. What does seem certain and worthy of further investigation is that there are ways in which the academic in his or her office is a dead space, no longer in line of sight/site.

references

Adamson, G. (2014) 'The labor of division: Cabinetmaking and the production of knowledge', in H.J. Cook, P.H. Smith and A.R.W. Meyers (eds.) *Ways of making and knowing: The material culture of empirical knowledge*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

Auge, M. (1995) *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, trans. J. Howe. London: Verso.

Bachelard, G. (1994 / 1958) *Poetics of space: The classic look at how we experience intimate places*. Boston, MA.: Beacon.

Bailey, P. (2004) 'Adventures in space: Victorian railway erotics, or taking alienation for a ride', *Journal of Victorian Culture,* 9(1): 1-21.

Belk, R.W. and J.C. Watson (1998) 'Material culture and the extended or unextended self in our university offices', *Advances in Consumer Research,* 25: 305-310.

Chertkovskaya, E., P. Watt, S. Tramer and S. Spoelstra (2013) 'Giving notice to employability', *ephemera,* 13(4): 701-716.

Conrad, L. and N. Richter (2013) 'Materiality at work: A note on desks', *ephemera,* 13(1): 117-136.

Costas, J. (2013) 'Problematizing mobility: A metaphor of stickiness, non-places and the kinetic elite', *Organization Studies,* 34(10): 1467-1485.

Cox, A., T. Herrick and P. Keating (2012) 'Accommodations: staff identity and university space', *Teaching in Higher Education,* 17(6): 697-709.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. and E. Rochberg-Halton (1981) *The meaning of things: Domestic symbols and the self.* Cambridge: Cambrdige University Press.

Dale, K. and G. Burrell (2008) *The space of organization and the organization of space.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Davis, T.R.V. (1984) 'The influence of the physical environment in offices', *Academy of Management Review,* 9(2): 271-283.

Gabriel, Y. (2013) 'Are any academic journals still alive'. [http://www.yiannisgabriel.com/2013/12/are-any-academic-journals-still-alive.html].

Gagliardi, P. (1990) 'Artifacts as pathways and remains of organizational life', in P. Gagliardi (ed.) *Symbols and artifacts: Views of the corporate landscape.* New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Grellier, J. (2013) 'Rhizomatic mapping: Spaces for learning in higher education', *Higher Education Research & Development,* 32: 83-95.

Hall, E.T. (1959) *The silent language.* New York: Doubleday.

Heracleous, L. and C.D. Jacobs (2008) 'Understanding organizations through embodied metaphors', *Organization Studies,* 29: 45-78.

Hurdley, R. (2010) 'The power of corridors: Connecting doors, mobilising materials, plotting openness', *The Sociological Review,* 58(1): 45-64.

Hyde, L. (2006) *The gift: How the creative spirit transforms the world.* New York: Random House.

Iedema, R., D. Long and K. Carroll (2010) 'Corridor communication, spatial design and patient safety: Enacting and managing complexities', in A.H. van Marrewijk and D. Yanow (eds.) *Organizational spaces: Rematerializing the workaday world*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishers.

Kuntz, A.M., Petrovic, J.E. and L. Ginocchio (2012) 'A changing sense of place: A case study of academic culture and the built environment', *Higher Education Policy*, 25(4): 433-451.

Latour, B. (2006) 'The powers of association', in L. John (ed.) *Power, action and belief: A new sociology of knowledge?* Keele: The Sociological Review.

Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The production of space*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Miller, D. (2008) *The comfort of things*. Cambridge: Polity.

Muecke, M. (1994) 'On the evaluation of ethnographies', in J.M. Morse (ed.) *Critical issues in qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

O'Doherty, D., C. De Cock, A. Rehn and K.L. Ashcraft (2013) 'New site/sights: Exploring the white spaces of organization', *Organization Studies,* 34(10): 1427-1444.

Pfeffer, J. (1983) 'Organizational demography', in L.L. Cummings and B.M. Staw (eds.) *Research in organizational behavior*. Greenwich. CT: JAI Press.

Preston-Whyte, R. (2004) 'The beach as a liminal space', in A. Lew, C.M. Hall and A. Williams (eds.) *A companion to tourism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Pritchard, A. and M. Morgan (2005) 'Hotel Babylon? Exploring hotels as liminal sites of transition and transgression', *Tourism Management,* 27(5): 762-772.

Readings, B. (1996) *The university in ruins*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Rolfe, G. (2013) *The university in dissent: Scholarship in the corporate university*. London: Routledge.

Ruth, D.W. (2015a) 'The academic office: Constitutive entanglement and organizational matter', *Organisational Aesthetics,* 4(1): 32-45.

Ruth, D.W. (2015b) 'With the eyes of others: An ethnography of an academic office', *Ethnography and Education*, 11(3): 359-370.

Scheiberg, S.L. (1990) 'Emotions on display: The personal decoration of work space', *American Behavioral Scientist,* 33(3): 330-338.

Shortt, H. (2015) 'Liminality, space and the importance of "transitory dwelling places" at work', *Human Relations,* 68(4): 633-658.

Smith, D.E. (2005) *Institutional ethnography: A sociology for the people*. Toronto: AltaMira.

Stake, R.E. (2005) *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Steele, F. (1973) *Physical settings and organizational development*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

The Daily Mail (2014) 'We all crave it, but can you stand the silence?', 3 April. [http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2124581/The-worlds-quietest-place-chamber-Orfield-Laboratories.html#ixzz3EAjuLqju].

Tian, K. and R. W. Belk (2005) 'Extended self and possessions in the workplace', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(2): 297-310.

Turner, V. (1974) *Dramas, fields and metaphors*. Ithica, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Van Gennep, A. (1960 [1908]) *The rites of passage*. Chicago: University Press of Chicago.

Van Marrewijk A.H. and D. Yanow (2010) 'Introduction: The spatial turn in organizational studies', in A.H. van Marrewijk and D. Yanow (eds.) *Organizational spaces: Rematerializing the workaday world*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishers.

Wasserman, V. and H. Zimroni (2012) 'In-between the organizational corridors: A spatial perspective on the "unmanageable"', paper presented at the 28th EGOS Colloquium on design, Helsinki, Finland, July 5-7.

West, J. B. (2011) *Respiratory physiology: The essentials* (9th ed.). Baltimore: Lippincott Williams & Wilkin.

Whincup, T. (2004) 'Imaging the intangible', in C. Knowles and P. Sweetman (eds.) *Picturing the social landscape*. London: Routledge.

Wilwerding J. (2013) 'Meanings of design and space: A metaphysical groundwork', in T. Vaikla-Poldma (ed.) *Meanings of designed spaces*. New York: Fairchild Books.

Yanow, D. (2010) 'Giving voice to space: Academic practices and the material world', in A.H. van Marrewijk and D. Yanow (eds.) *Organizational spaces: Rematerializing the workaday world*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

the author

Damian Ruth lectures different areas of management at Massey University, New Zealand. He draws on the arts, humanities and social sciences to research management development and education with a focus on using craft, art and design to develop strategic thinking. He has published more than 100 journal articles, conference papers and reports on the role of universities and higher education, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. He is also a poet, a designer and a maker of things, and has

inhabited offices in South Africa, Ireland, England, Canada and New Zealand. His favourite place is the beach.
Email: d.w.ruth@massey.ac.nz

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 641-651

Labour of becoming a (critical) management scholar: Ambivalences, tensions and possibilities

Ozan Nadir Alakavuklar

Introduction

Recently there has been a discussion about the hardships of generating and maintaining the identity of 'critical scholar' in business schools while an alienating 'game' is upon us. As (particularly emerging) critical scholars argue about the difficulties of being outside of the mainstream and how the institutional mechanisms make things worse for them, they give voice in defence of the 'critical' work in business schools by telling personally how they confront with such challenges (Bristow, 2012; Cederström and Hoedemaekers, 2012; Prasad, 2013).

Following their reflexive arguments, I would like to contribute to this discussion with my own personal narrative to demonstrate how the labour of becoming a (critical) management scholar could be full of ambivalences, tensions and possibilities if you come from a different structural and cultural setting – in my case from Turkey. My objective is to provide a personal account about this labour process (agency) and how this 'being/becoming' turns into a struggle for self-existence, not just in my home country, but also in the community I believe I belong to (structure). Therefore, I want to problematise and write about mechanisms and tensions that already define a fragile and doubtful academic subjectivity for an emerging scholar. While I cannot help but compare differences in my background in terms of education, language, culture and history with my colleagues, inevitably I have been trying to understand the subjectivity of a critical (management) scholar – which may be broadly drawn as competent in Western critical/radical theories, writing clearly and with depth in English. Accordingly, the questioning follows: what kind of critical subjectivity

am I trying to fit into, how has my-self[1] been shaped throughout my own education and my career, can I really fit into this subjectivity as a non-native English speaker, and to what extent can I challenge this subjectivity?

Two main issues emerge in this note: (1) The position of the mainstream education I have been exposed to and my response to that in the form of approaching critical management studies (CMS) as an antidote – perhaps in a misleading way, as I will argue below. (2) The challenging position of English language, which while helping me access resources and communicate with others (i.e. creating possibilities), at the same time, has been a tool of colonial domination limiting my capabilities of expression, thinking and finding my own voice[2] – particularly after I began working in an English speaking country, Aotearoa New Zealand. While it seems that I am providing a personal narrative here, I believe that it expresses concerns that are shared widely among international scholars and therefore needs further discussion and problematisation inclusive of issues around the identity work of (critical) management scholarship, and use and domination of the English language in the academy leading to feelings of exclusion and incompetency.

Non-Western, Oriental, the Other, Hybrid: Who am I giving voice?

My approach in this note particularly relates to a broader conception of post-colonial theory; Said's (1979) orientalism may help me question the assumptions of the universality of the mainstream Western management education or the Eurocentrism of critical theories (am I the Oriental, the Other?), Bhabha (1994) may lead me to seek how Turkish management education mimics USA management education/research practices whilst forming some hybrid explanations or 'third spaces' in the fractures (am I the hybrid engaging with the mainstream and critiquing it?), and Spivak (1988) with her strategic essentialism perspective may assist my questioning about my position in the CMS community and the use of English language by a Turkish, middle class, male non-English speaker (am I the Turkish subaltern that cannot speak with/in the form of Western epistemologies/language?). In other words, am I the new Other? New Hybrid? Another subaltern of CMS? From my perspective, they are all valid questions and I have no answer as yet. In the following I derive some arguments from the abovementioned theoretical positions and this note is an effort to figure

[1] I deliberately write myself as my-self in order to point out how self is shaped through my experiences and how I try to fit this 'self' into subjectivities.

[2] In agreement with the editors, this note has not been copy-edited for style (only typographical errors) by the native English-speaking editors to preserve my voice and challenges I experience as a non-native English speaker.

it out. However, in the broader framework of postcolonial organisation studies, I will mostly depend on my own reaction to the epistemic coloniality (Ibarra-Colado, 2006) of mainstream management education which led me into contact with critical studies of management and organisation, and the accompanying struggles to become a management scholar.

It should be acknowledged that CMS is neither a 'theory' itself, nor representative of a 'discipline' given that it hosts various conflicting and diverse theoretical traditions. However, it is already institutionalised with conferences, handbooks, PhD programs and journals with/despite its own contradictions and issues related to the geographical, cultural differences, gendered asymmetrical power relations as well as other divisions, exclusions and marginalisations (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014; Faria, 2013; Tatli, 2012). In the following, in addition to aiming to answer whether or not I fit into the subjectivity of the critical scholar, I will explain my own relationship with this contested term and how I ascribed strong meanings to it. I begin my story from my undergraduate degree because this is the initial point where my structuration originated and for the first time where I met (was intoxicated?) with mainstream management education.

Structure: Writing from an epistemic coloniality (Thesis)

Business schools in Turkey were founded on the premise of transferred knowledge from the USA and that Turkish PhDs of business administration who got their degree in the USA were the pioneer scholars shaping management education and research in Turkey (Üsdiken and Wasti, 2009). It should be also noted that this trajectory is quite different from, for instance, the business schools in United Kingdom which, when they were founded, recruited many scholars from other disciplines including sociology, psychology and anthropology and thus brought significant critical flavour to management education and research (Grey and Willmott, 2005).

I got my undergraduate degree in business administration from a respectable business school giving education in English and this has been certainly a desirable asset and a privilege when it comes to being recruited by multinational companies. Our USA based textbooks published in the English language were also full of cases that originated in similar companies. Colonisation was in play already via such an education: You get a degree in business administration, in English, and a multinational company is your career destination.

Following my first year as an undergraduate the fragmentation of my identity began. In view of my social skills, my parents probably believed I would be successful in the business world. Also, having lived the negative outcomes of being political actors in different social movements in Turkey at the end of the 1970s, my parents may have assumed that studying at an apolitical business school would be better for my future (although that might be my own reasoning or attempt to ignore the fact that I purposely chose that department when I was young, attracted to the promises of the market ideology – you can be a CEO!). However, in line with this assumption of a-political-ness, in the school, even though there was a liberal environment in terms of initiating discussions regarding the role of businesses (especially in courses on ethics and management culture), it was very rare to have a critical/radical perspective on the role of managers and businesses. In this education, with hindsight, I can argue that capitalism was taken-for-granted as it was never a topic/part of a course, businesses were naturally blessed and there was no alternative to market economy to discuss. The general structure was more or less the same for postgraduate as in the undergraduate programs which I attended for my Master's (in English) and PhD (in Turkish); transferred, translated, USA originated and mildly localised management knowledge but devoid of critical theories of management and organisation. We were given the outcomes of discussions that took place in a different (say, Western) world – mostly positivistic, quantitative and seemingly without alternatives.

While studying towards my PhD, I worked as a graduate assistant in the same institution teaching management, in English, for more than seven years. In the beginning of my academic career I had sympathy for behavioural aspects of management believing that these represented the most humane face of management education (due to lack of a critical position, how could I know that behaviourism was driven by the performance orientation of the business discourse?). There was no place/opportunity to discuss epistemology and ontology (they were all taken-for-granted, another signifier of epistemic coloniality, I suppose). However, during the master's program I was still questioning the functionalist assumptions ('implications for managers') and extensive quantitative approaches while still exclusively reading organisational behaviour articles originated from USA business schools.

Apparently, throughout this process, I was colonised by the main assumptions of the positivist epistemology and quantitative methodology, and could not even imagine an alternative way of doing research. At the same time, while I was searching the Redhouse dictionary on my desk for the best suitable word and meaning to express my ideas in my Master's thesis, still, as a result of my fragmented academic-self, another part of me was asking lots of questions: Do

we need to produce knowledge for managers / businesses? What about capitalist relations and their impact? Why do we need to prioritise quantitative over qualitative methods? Even though I enjoyed the challenge of mastering English, owing to all these institutional and educational regimes (which paradoxically also helped me find an academic job), I was feeling like I did not belong to this field called business administration.

Agency – Opening a space with CMS (Anti-Thesis)

When I was a PhD student, just by chance I encountered some alternative and critical studies of management and organisation. Talking about power relations from critical/radical perspectives, and criticising the role of the businesses in regards to environmental degradation, social inequality and exploitative workplace arrangements, I was amazed how these assumptions fitted with my own worldview. I was thrilled by the level of theoretical discussion and positioning of the management knowledge. After being infiltrated by core business education for years with the given assumptions of market economy with performative businesses, I jumped in with both feet to understand what this thing called CMS is and embraced it as a resistance realm to the epistemic coloniality of mainstream education. Hence, I immediately began reading now-classics of foundational discussions around CMS and following critical journals such as *Organization*, *ephemera* and *Critical Perspectives on International Business*. However, this time I was reading the studies related to the other side of the Western context (the UK context, New Public Management reforms, managerialism and others), mostly carrying the traces of a different geography and history as well as criticisms of CMS in terms of its male domination, Eurocentrism, theoretical incoherency and pessimism. While I was trying to make sense of all these different (but valid) points, at the same time, in Turkish business schools we had a completely different agenda for studying businesses. Touching local issues was another matter of concern which required problematisation of the nature of CMS knowledge in regards to its use of abstract theory and lack of practical implications (Alakavuklar and Parker, 2011).

In the beginning of the third year of my PhD, I had chance to visit the University of Leicester School of Management where my entire understanding evolved and developed (special thanks to Stephen Dunne who was my mentor during my visit). I was a PhD student coming from the (mainstream) periphery and the School of Management at Leicester had a completely different context: a vibrant PhD community, dedicated and productive critical scholars. I even had chance to collaborate with prominent CMS scholar Martin Parker and the output helped

me begin talking to my own scholarly community for the first time while referring to my own local context in the study.

After coming back to Turkey, with the legitimacy of coming from a kind of centre, and, thanks to the understanding of my supervisors, I began writing a thesis with a critical perspective. I mention their support here because it was not common for a Turkish business school to approve a critical and conceptual PhD thesis. However, given the support I was receiving, most of the time it was a matter of concern for some of my professors how such an approach would be useful for Turkey, the Turkish context and Turkish businesses as well (thinking about this in retrospect, it was a fair question, although I would now argue how my thesis was useful for those who may have an anti-capitalist or anti-managerial stance). Eventually, after much hard work, not least struggling with feelings of insecurity and the need to gain approval, I was able to finish my PhD. However, I was not sure whether or not my work would be sufficient to speak to the international community of critical management scholars.[3]

Now I realise that the perspective of my PhD thesis was certainly critical but not sufficiently theoretically developed. Rather than getting deeper into a specific theory, I have skimmed the theoretical discussions around my topic and focussed on representing the main assumptions around the ethos of the CMS, in fact, belonging to somewhere else. Hence, I may have voluntarily changed my 'colonial master' during my PhD thesis, which subsequently took me from one subjectification to another coming with a different labour: the feeling of lack of self-confidence in regards to mastery of a specific Western critical theory because of not being supported intellectually, and the perception of being an outsider linguistically, geographically, historically and contextually. Perhaps, as Ibarra-Colado (2006) would argue, I should have rather focussed on forming my own genuine thoughts and producing critical knowledge related to my local context.

To demonstrate the hegemony of epistemic coloniality of mainstream education embedded in this structure and the perception of critical research, let me give a prominent example. In one of my presentations, in the last year of my PhD, at the National Congress of Management and Organization, one of the best-known and knowledgeable professors told me that it was probably the first time he had seen the name Braverman in the twenty-year-history of national congresses in Turkey. Naturally, I was in a compromising position as a mere graduate assistant

[3] However, as one of the reviewers fairly argued that there may not be such a community feeling and the community itself can be alienating or constraining for many others. As an early career academic coming from different background and attending international conferences very recently, it may have been my romanticisation and idealisation of a community 'out there'.

before the already solidified structure in Turkish academy, but I was still using every opportunity to present assumptions of critical work as a form of resistance.

While teaching as a graduate assistant, within the limited opportunities I tried to embed questions that would initiate discussions about the performance orientation of management practice and knowledge (e.g. 'what do you think about employee resistance to managerial control?'), or aimed to locate businesses in a broader context to demonstrate how they might be ignorant of social, ethical and environmental issues as a result of the market dynamics. In my research, I aimed to draw the attention of other scholars to how critical perspectives might be useful for understanding the contested political nature of organisations and management knowledge. I had some encouraging interest with discouraging suspicion as a reaction in conferences (e.g. 'What you argue seems interesting, but is it possible to publish with these theories in top journals?'). Generally, I was alone in this endeavour and I felt like I needed to engage with like-minded scholars to improve my academic skills. Beginning with my PhD process, an alternative academic subjectivity has emerged, one with fragmentations, feelings of vulnerability and new questions trying to locate this 'self' in the academy.

Connecting with the (idealised) community? (Synthesis – A new Thesis)

The synthesis brought me to a totally new context and to a new structure. After moving from one geo-episteme (Turkey) to another (Aotearoa New Zealand) (Faria, 2013) my epistemology and politics of knowledge have definitely changed. First, my new country is another interesting realm in terms of colonisation of the land, epistemology and linguistics, and second, now I feel that I am a part of like-minded critical scholars, and more often attending international conferences. However, when I assess my own personal history that brought me here, fractures and flaws of my subjectivity deepen as a result of dialectics that shape my fragility and identity, especially in relation to lack of mastery of critical theory and competency of my language skills. When I began engaging with my colleagues in various occasions including seminars, departmental discussions and reading groups, I had to confront with my intellectual and linguistic limits. While it is pretty easy for a colleague of mine to use their deep theoretical knowledge in a scholarly discussion – drawn from their PhD studies and delivered with the fluency of a native English speaker, inevitably I re-consider the limits of my PhD thesis and coursework, try to read more and more to fill the gaps in my knowledge about critical theories, and at the same time work on a new research agenda to prove how I am improving in scholarly terms. This means obviously more labour with full of ambivalence and tension in addition to frustration about the capabilities of my-self.

Wrestling with English is always an inseparable part of these practices in addition to research and teaching. It gets harder when you write manuscripts as journal articles are the only ways to talk to your community and to 'make myself heard' (Śliwa and Johansson, 2015): checking counts of Google for controlling which sentence structure or word order would make more sense; reading the requirements for polishing or about the need for grammatical control (including this submission) in nearly every review of my manuscripts (which may also require a budget to buy such a service); and, fighting each time with my imaginary successful academic-self about the perception of linguistic and intellectual incompetency. When teaching native English speakers, I have to be extremely careful about how to write my exam questions, how to respond to their e-mails and how to do 'jokes' in class. While lecturing, I find myself thinking twice about whether I used or will be using the correct tense of the most suitable verb or whether an article (definite or indefinite) is required in a particular instance. The constant anxiety of doing/speaking something wrong has become a normal and natural labour of my job. It is a concern whether one of the students will complain about my accent or my use of English in the next student survey.

Language turns out to be more than a communication tool, one that may easily transform into a power mechanism, and, along with the perceived feeling of incompetency, may limit my access to and participation in my community in terms of time, effort and cost, constrain dissemination of my knowledge and require negotiations and compromises about my identity as a non-native English speaker (e.g. perceived as more reserved or indirect) (see Śliwa and Johansson, 2015). Whilst I struggle to try to fit into the critical 'subjectivity', I cannot escape from another domination (can we say exclusion?) embodied in the form of language.

Conclusion

My subjectivity and labour of becoming a critical scholar is an ongoing, ceaseless, and delightful but at the same time painful process: How should I master a theoretical position? How should I improve my language competency? How can I prove my academic competency? This inevitably creates ongoing cycles of anxiety, anger and frustration with further struggles. However, as suggested by one of the reviewers, in fact, the writing experience has provided me the opportunity to question the dominant subjectivity and opened up a space to construct a possibility of an alternative academic identity to find my own voice – which has been an enlightening, liberating and reliving exercise so far. This process of 'making my-self heard' here then turns into a learning effort about proliferating other prospects in the academy as well as a practice of resistance

and challenge to singular perception of the critical subjectivity.[4] This note, consequently, is not to complain but to demonstrate this labour of becoming a critical management scholar coming with the feelings of ambivalence, tension and possibilities within these structural dynamics.

Apparently my colleagues who have been vocal from different Western institutions have their own struggles and tensions; yet, they may be also kind of privileged considering the positive structural and contextual factors supporting their intellectual development compared to my conditions. While their labour is about fighting to maintain the identity of the critical scholar against various institutional mechanisms, my labour has been about finding my way as a critical scholar accompanied by a struggle in relation to English language and theoretical/scholarly competency. Hence, in response to the critical subjectivity I aim to fit into, now I have an answer. I can argue that my labour of becoming is all about the abovementioned postcolonial positions as one of the multiple subjectivities with its own challenges and possibilities in the academy – the new 'Other' coming from Turkey into a project called CMS having its own issues and constraining aspects; 'the subaltern' due to struggles with English language and Western critical theories; and 'the hybrid' being exposed to mainstream business education but working hard to balance this view with alternative epistemologies.

I believe that, regardless of their theoretical approaches, there are many other scholars who have been through in similar labour processes in the academy. Hence, I would like to invite them, including native and non-native English speakers, who are exposed not only to the linguistic colonialism of the English language but also to the epistemic and gendered colonialism of the mainstream or critical assumptions, to be vocal. If we are to produce knowledge in English-only journals to survive in the academy and to communicate each other via such journals, why not submit our reflexive stories and research to those journals with the aim of exposing, intervening in, problematising and possibly resisting to the structural, contextual, gendered and institutional regimes that create inequalities in the (Anglophone) academy for us? Apparently, English language then may have a very ambivalent position for us, restricting on one hand, but enabling possibilities on the other to challenge what is imposed. Only insofar as we analyse these problems critically and show operation of power mechanisms openly can we imagine alternatives collectively (see Tietze and Dick, 2013). In doing this we should demonstrate how our subjectivities are defined and how we are disciplined (marginalised?) epistemologically/linguistically in the academy even by those (supposedly) critical assumptions as in the case of the CMS.

[4] Most likely idealised and constructed as a male critical management scholar who speaks and writes fluently in English and has lots of publications!

references

Alakavuklar, O. N. and M. Parker (2011) 'Responsibility and the local: The prospects for critical management in Turkey', *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 7(4): 326-342.

Bhabha, H. (1994) *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.

Bristow, A. (2012) 'On life, death and radical critique: A non-survival guide to the brave new higher education for the intellectually pregnant', *Scandinavian Journal of Management,* 28 (3): 234-241.

Butler, N. and S. Spoelstra (2014) 'The regime of excellence and the erosion of ethos in critical management studies', *British Journal of Management*, 25(3): 538-550.

Cederström, C. and C. Hoedemaekers (2012) 'On dead dogs and unwritten jokes: Life in the university today', *Scandinavian Journal of Management,* 28(3): 229-233.

Faria, A. (2013) 'Border thinking in action: Should critical management studies get anything done?', in V. Malin, J. Murphy and M. Siltaoja (eds.) *Getting things done (Dialogues in critical management studies, volume 2)*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Grey, C. and H. Willmott (2005) 'Introduction', in C. Grey and H. Willmott (eds.) *Critical management studies: A reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ibarra-Colado, E. (2006) 'Organization studies and epistemic coloniality in Latin America: Thinking otherness from the margins', *Organization,* 13(4): 463-488.

Prasad, A. (2013) 'Playing the game and trying not to lose myself: A doctoral student's perspective on the institutional pressures for research output', *Organization,* 20(6): 936-948.

Said, E. (1979) *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.

Śliwa M. and M. Johansson (2015) 'Playing in the academic field: Non-native English-speaking academics in UK business schools', *Culture and Organization*, 21(1): 78-95.

Spivak, G. (1988) 'Can the subaltern speak?', in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.) *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Tatli, A. (2012) 'On the power and poverty of critical (self) reflection in critical management studies: A comment on Ford, Harding and Learmonth', *British Journal of Management*, 23(1): 22-30.

Tietze, S. and P. Dick (2013) 'The victorious English language: Hegemonic practices in the management academy', *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 22(1): 122-134.

Üsdiken, B. and A. Wasti (2009) 'Preaching, teaching and researching at the periphery: Academic management literature in Turkey, 1970-1999', *Organization Studies*, 30(10): 1063-1082.

the author

Ozan Nadir Alakavuklar is a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera*.
Email: O.N.Alakavuklar@massey.ac.nz

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 653-671

Speculating on the university: Disruptive actions in today's corporate university*

Lenora Hanson and Elsa Noterman

abstract

In the last two weeks of February 2015, the University of Wisconsin System and UW-Madison administration went on the defensive against the hemorrhaging of state support for higher education in Governor Scott Walker's proposed Biennial Budget – including USD300 million in budget cuts to the university (the largest cut in the 44-year history of the UW System). However, in order to more clearly understand the situation, the budget cuts and university restructuring need to be analyzed within a larger historical and political context – one in which a push for privatized education has happened not simply due to partisan divisions at the state Capitol, but also because of financial and material incentives for the UW System. While the unprecedented cuts can be viewed as part of a nationwide trend of the contraction of state educational funding, they should also be viewed alongside the university administration's ongoing attempts to gain more control over construction projects and the student fees that pay for them. While university administrators position themselves as defenders of public education who are losing control of state financial support, we argue at the outset of our article that it is quite evident that they have been complicit – if not proactive – in seeking further separation from the state in order to gain the 'flexibility' to access and increase the student tuition dollars necessary to remain competitive within an academic capitalist market.

* This paper is connected to the larger project of the 2014 Immaterial Labor Workshop at the University of Wisconsin-Madison – an interdisciplinary research collective of graduate students, post-docs, faculty and staff – that sought to better understand how the university of today increasingly draws on speculative financial relations. Many thanks to the workshop participants, and, in particular, Keith Woodward and Taylan Acar, who offered commentary on the initial version of this paper. Finally, thanks to the editor and anonymous reviewers whose feedback helped us to refine the paper.

Introduction

> How is it that ratings activity and trading operations carried out in the plush offices of banks and investment institutions have an effect on unemployed, precarious, seasonal, occasional and temporary workers? (Lazzarato, 2012: 14)

In the summer of 2015, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker signed the state's biennial budget, which included $250 million in cuts to the University of Wisconsin System – the largest budget cut in the 44-year history of the UW System [I]. This followed months of negotiation with the university's administration, resistance from students and workers, and the political posturing of state legislators. While these cuts were not completely unexpected given recent trends in the state's political environment, this episode reveals some less obvious, but critical, transitions in higher education. In order to more clearly understand the situation, the budget cuts and related university restructuring need to be analyzed within a larger historical and political context – one in which a push for privatized education has happened not simply due to partisan divisions at the state Capitol, but also because of financial and material incentives for the UW System. While the unprecedented cuts can be viewed as part of a nationwide trend of the contraction of state educational funding, they should also be viewed alongside the university administration's ongoing attempts to gain more control over construction projects and the student fees that pay for them. Recent theorists of financialization and capital accumulation within the university have focused on the increasing investments in high-cost construction projects, which are meant to attract wealthy, out-of-state student 'consumers'. These investments require more easily allocable, or what Brian Whitener and Dan Nemser (2012) have called 'unrestricted,' capital than the state is willing to provide. Thus, while university administrators position themselves as defenders of public education who are losing control of state financial support, we argue at the outset of our article that it is quite evident that they have been complicit – if not proactive – in seeking further separation from the state in order to gain the 'flexibility' to access and increase the student tuition dollars necessary to remain competitive within an academic capitalist market.

This trend has significant and perhaps not immediately obvious consequences for UW system's students, faculty, campus workers, as well as the larger community. The second part of our argument thus turns to consider the ways in which that academic capitalist market has created a culture of discipline that the university employs to discourage ever-more precarious workers from

[I] State legislators ultimately reduced the Governor's proposed $300 million budget cut to $250 million, while at the same time removing tenure protections from state law.

participating in political actions against the state and the university. Historically, the UW system, like other universities, has considered implementing new forms of 'behavioral assessment' for selecting and hiring job candidates that privileges subjects unlikely to rock the proverbial boat. More recently, administrators have actively discouraged employees from participating in protests against the budget cuts as well as the increasingly corporate nature of the university. We argue that such discouragement is not simply a political calculation on the part of administration, but rather a product of a general tendency in higher education today to treat campuses as sites of investment. Thus, they must appear to be glossy investment portfolios, stable and unlikely to be threatened by disruptive actions like protest and occupations that cast students as agitators rather than consumers. We describe what the long-term mechanisms, both neoliberal and more explicitly direct applications of force, have been for creating a docile workforce. We conclude with an argument for the importance of disruptive actions such as occupations, tuition strikes and work stoppages that are coordinated across different labor sectors on campus as a way to make the immaterial, financialized nature of the university a material site, and a site for subjectivizing unruly subjects.

Rereading crisis and repositioning the university

In early 2015, one of the primary credit rating agencies in the world, Standard & Poor's (S&P), issued a report, *Upping the ante: Costs of luring top students keeps the outlook negative on U.S. not-for-profit higher education sector*, which lays out in stark terms the current dilemma faced by universities and colleges that try to balance the increasing costs of attracting students with the challenges to accessibility and affordability. As an assessment of the future prospects for investors in university debt, the report considers the question of whether higher education will continue to be a desirable commodity, concluding: 'while we believe the demand for higher education overall is sound and that the need for post-secondary education will increase over time, the viability of individual institutions will depend on how well they can demonstrate their value and respond to potential students' needs' (S&P, 2015: 2). In this formulation, the future of these educational institutions depends on two principal factors: demonstrable value and student needs. It is arguably in pursuit of these factors that university administrators from around the country are 'marketing their schools as luxury goods' and investing in non-academic 'lifestyle' student services (Strike Debt, 2014), subsequently increasing the pressure of costs and thus accessibility for students.

It is this well-spring of tuition that has led U.S. public universities, like those in Oregon, Texas and Virginia, to launch campaigns to gain the right to control

tuition setting. They want, and indeed are compelled, to be players on a market that seems relatively stable and secure, even if they are on the opposite end of the financial market from the investors and traders whose profits are floated by student debt.

Even well-informed and well-intentioned critics seem unaware of this context, presenting the crisis around student debt and the rationale for tuition increases as a problem strictly of declining state support.[2] Indeed, UW administrators oftentimes point to the fact that fifty years ago state dollars composed 90% of core educational costs, and that today state funding covers only 40% of the core budget and 15% of the overall UW-Madison budget. From their perspective, the spike in tuition costs is a product of the decline of the welfare state – one in which the stability of the university had been guaranteed by the state's investment in the public good that no longer holds today. Instead, we want to suggest that our analysis should attend to the speculative or future-oriented investment strategies that propels the risky drive to access tuition today in an increasingly corporatized university. From the former perspective, falling state investment needs to be replaced by student tuition and fees; but from the latter perspective we can see a qualitative difference between tuition dollars, which is the only unrestricted resource available to the university. Thus the relationship is less supplementary than it is speculative, less about decline and more about investment. While the more popularly accepted narrative focuses on two key revenue streams that come into the university, it neither attends to the way it is used nor to the ways in which labor is also restructured in the university.

Slaughter and Rhoades posit that changes in the neoliberal university have not resulted from externalized pressures, but from 'the internal embeddedness of profit-oriented activities as a point of reorganization (and new investment)' (2009: 11) within the university itself. They argue that even in periods of relatively strong state support universities have continued to pursue a market-based approach. Thus, the decrying of state defunding on the part of hamstrung administrators trying to do their best in an age of economic austerity does not fully account for the university's increased reliance and generation of other revenue streams.

In the contemporary context and with the chance of a soon-to-be busted tuition bubble, universities around the country are competing to attract the same wealthy out-of-state students to their campuses. As pointed out in the recent Standard & Poor's report, '[s]tudents have become more demanding' (S&P, 2015:

[2] See the report issued by PROFS (2015), a non-profit organization of UW-Madison faculty.

3), expecting a variety of amenities and upgrades such as climbing walls, private rooms, and state-of-the-art recreation centers. At UW, new, out-of-state freshmen increased by forty-two percent between 2003 and 2012 – and these out-of-state students paid more than twice as much as their in-state classmates (UW-Madison Academic Planning & Institutional Research, 2013).[3] To attract these non-resident students, administrators are increasingly taking on capital building projects such as recreational amenities. Since 2005 alone, the UW-Madison has completed capital projects totaling approximately $2.4 billion dollars. This building race – where universities are trying to out-build the competition – has lead to increases in tuition and fees. In Wisconsin, spending on non-instructional campus buildings has drastically increased in recent years.[4] On average, these building projects now cost each student $192 a year – and will continue to do so for up to 30 years (Secretary of the Faculty UW-Madison, 2014). Of course, this cost does not include the price of building maintenance, upkeep, and debt services (the interest that is paid, over many years, on the loans used to finance these projects). In the end, these building projects often cost more in debt service payments than the initial construction price tag. Currently, costs and debt service are largely guaranteed by fees and revenues generated from parking lots, dining halls and other non-instructional services. But with a public authority model that has been proposed alongside of the $300 million dollar cuts from the state, tuition is likely to become a significant – if not the primary – source for paying off bonds as well as providing the capital necessary for taking on future debt.

However, based on the recently released S&P assessment we mentioned above, it is safe to say that there is growing conservatism even on the side of investors to treat tuition as the never-ending promissory note that higher education administrators want it to be. In other words, while lenders and university administrators are looking at student debt from opposite sides of the table, in some sense they are both calculating its value and stability as a revenue stream in order to keep student debt circulating. The bets they are placing vary, but the

[3] According to the 2014-15 Data Digest, this number has fallen to around 11.7% for the 2012-14 years. Nonetheless, that decrease does not detract from the administration's overall attempt to drive up out-of-state student population numbers. Indeed, in response to the most recent round of budget cuts anticipated for 2016, in October 2015 the Board of Regents agreed to UW-Madison's proposal to lift the cap on out-of-state students entirely, circumventing years of resistance on the part of some faculty and staff to maintain the historic cap of 27.5%.

[4] General Fund Supported Borrowing' refers to bonds that are paid for by state funds. The majority of construction projects built since 2003-05 have been paid for by gifts, grants and overwhelmingly by 'Program Revenue', which includes student fees and revenues from transportation, housing and dining services.

most recent financial debacle in Wisconsin discussed below shows that the outcomes are as-yet undetermined and the promise of financialization continues to guide administrative decisions about the more traditional resource of labor – including the costs and management of workers.

The case of University of Wisconsin: The Midwest at the center of crisis

In this context, university administration has come to treat tuition as the most reliable source of future revenue – or, more appropriately, the money for investments. This could not be more relevant for the recent failed bid for autonomy from the state we recently saw in the University of Wisconsin System. In exchange for historic budget cuts, the UW System was offered 'freedom' from legislative control and continued, if not less inhibited, access to 'unrestricted' revenue. Foreshadowing this exchange, in the previous semester UW-Madison Chancellor Blank stated that increasing tuition not only makes the university more competitive, but is an imperative given that other funding sources such as federal research grants and private donations are less reliable. During a presentation to the UW Board of Regents, the Administration urged the Board to address the decreased tuition revenue that had resulted from the tuition freeze in 2013-2014, enforced by the State Legislature. Prior to the freeze, the System had hiked tuition at four-year campuses 5.5 percent annually in each of the previous six years. The proposed cut – $300 million-from the state's allocation to the UW System – equals 19 percent of the System's overall revenue. This makes it the *largest single budget cut in the 44-year history of the UW System*. Despite their outcry over the amount of the cuts, the administration also saw this as an opportunity to implement a public authority, also known as a public-benefit corporation, another name for the reduction of state regulation of the university.

The public authority model was vaguely articulated in the language of the budget and details were largely unknown when it was offered to the university (Herzog, 2015b).[5] The murkiness of a project for which the UW System was potentially accepting millions of dollars in cuts did not escape notice. Indeed, a graduate student asked the Vice-Chancellor of Finance and Administration at a budget forum, 'If we don't know what exactly the public authority model contains, why do we want it?' Because the intention of a public authority is to establish

[5] The public authority model was ultimately eliminated from the budget. Due to sustained critique by faculty, staff and students and concerns by the Board of Regents that serious legal issues were not considered when System President Ray Cross rushed it into the budget, legislators excised the provision in the final stages of budget negotiations. For a blow-by-blow account of the sea storm of debate over the public authority, see Professor Nick Fleisher's blog, languagepolitics.org.

independent oversight for a previously state-run institution, Wisconsin statutes did not provide a single definition or model for what UW System's public authority would look like. But the Governor's state budget asserted that it would increase the university administration's 'flexibility.' In short, as we wrote elsewhere,

> the public authority was to provide (1) the power to expand tuition revenue; (2) to have greater control over construction projects (both in development and issuing bonds); and (3) to have more control over employee compensation and the personnel system. (Hanson et al., 2015)

The growing administrative class in universities pursue such flexibilities, which we prefer to call 'hyper-extensions', in an attempt to increase access to tuition and student loans, which subsidize new construction projects (Hanson and Noterman, 2015), at the same time that they allow them to reduce labor costs through outsourcing (Lee, 2014), attacks on labor unions (Schirmer and Hanson, 2012), and increased managerial power.

In our particular example of the UW System, the public authority model would have, in theory, given the UW administration the 'flexibilities' to control both tuition rates and bond sales. While that model ultimately failed to pass legislative consideration, it is only the most recent proposal for autonomy in a long precedent previously set by the UW System. As we recounted in an earlier piece, 'the university's struggle to reduce reliance on state support reveals the proactive, rather than passive, work on the part of the administration to gain greater access to the unrestricted and debt-generated revenues' (Hanson et al., 2015).

While the state disagreed with the Task Force's recommendation to remove the state from the design and implementation of new buildings, they agreed that the System should be given the capacity to lease, or bond, their own projects. This ability, however, 'would require statutory changes' that the UW System did not have in 2012 (Special Task Force, 2012: 59). In making an appeal to the state for greater control over capital projects, the Task Force made an important point for us to keep in mind. Of *all* UW System projects, nearly 60 percent each biennium are funded by university-generated revenue and receive no taxpayer support. This means that only 40 percent of the construction projects built on UW System campuses are paid for by state tax dollars, and thus only 40 percent are built primarily or specifically for instructional purposes. So even though it does not have complete control over tuition and the ability to issue bonds, as some other universities do, the UW System has still been able to launch a building spree wherein the *majority* of their buildings are paid for by student-generated funds and are not primarily used for academic purposes.

The long-sought statutory changes recommended by the UW Task Force finally emerged in the recent budget bill proposed by Governor Walker, which sought to grant bonding issuance and management to the UW System for those projects not backed by public monies, or general purpose revenues. It explicitly would have allowed the System's Board of Regents to:

> *issue bonds that are not public debt* and specifies that the state pledges that, unless bondholders are adequately protected, the state will not limit or alter any rights before the UWSA satisfies the bonds. *The bill eliminates all appropriations to the UW System under current law, except general purpose revenues for educational programs and the payment of certain construction debt.*' (Wisconsin Legislature, 2015: 16-17, emphasis added)

The latter section of the above quote is important because it seems to suggest that funds to pay for non-instructional construction costs and debt service (the majority of construction projects on campus) would have no longer been guaranteed by the state, but by the UW Board of Regents (BOR) and its revenue sources. Historically, UW Madison's construction costs and debt service were backed by the state through general obligation bonds, which means they were backed by a certain percentage raise in taxes that could be levied to cover costs. In other words, all bonds issued to pay for university construction projects – for both academic and non-academic purpose buildings – were at least hypothetically backed by public debt. But what are the revenue sources that the BOR would have relied on had the public authority deal been successful?

In order to explain how the UW System would have paid for its future construction projects under a public authority model, we need to explain the important transition from the way that the UW System has previously played the 'buildings race' game. As we mentioned above, the System and UW-Madison in particular has already competed quite formidably. Since 2005, UW-Madison alone has completed 112 capital projects totaling approximately $2.4 billion dollars – not an inconsequential amount given that the number *does not* include the amount of debt service that will be paid off for each of those projects. In a 2013 presentation on the funding of capital projects on campus, the UW System reported that from 2013-15 its tax supported borrowing was $240 million while its program revenue, or student and operations generated revenue, borrowing total of $398 million. And as of 2014, there were approximately $399.8 million worth of capital projects at various phases of planning, design and construction. That the System has been able to compete relatively well with better endowed and higher priced universities like the University of Michigan and the University of California is impressive, given that they have not yet had the power to issue and guarantee their own bonds that the public authority would have given them.

The UW System instead relies on the State of Wisconsin, and by extension the credibility of the state's reputation, to issue and back bonds on its behalf. Their bonds are issued as General Obligation Bonds (GOB), which are backed by the state's ability to raise taxes up to 4% in the case of the UW System's, or any other state agency's, default. But this also means that the credit rating and thus its appeal to investors is not quite as high as that of the University of Michigan or the University of California system. Both likely maintain attractive status because they utilize General Revenue Bonds (GRB) instead of GOBs. GRB, as Bob Meister detailed in 2009, rely on campuses ability to promise, which is not the same thing as to spend or use, up to 100% of tuition revenues to guarantee debt repayment.[6] This means that while the UW System is not on the hook for bonds the way these other universities are, they also cannot attract the same kinds of investors or access the lower interest loans that Michigan and California can. That is, the good name of the state of Wisconsin is not worth as much as direct access to tuition revenues that can be raised at will. Up until this point the UW System has worked within the confines of its more limited prospects of indebtedness by maximizing the generation of other revenues, such as segregated fees.

In the last 10 years, on average, segregated fees at UW-Madison have increased by 90% – largely due to increases in non-allocables (student union, rec sports facilities, health services, childcare and tuition assistance programs) which have increased by 103% compared to a 45% increase in allocables (student organizations, student government, campus bus). Students have less control and input in altering non-allocable budgets which make up 80% of the segregated fee budget. In short, we do not need a crystal ball to know where the UW System is going – we only need to look to the past. In 2009, Meister sent shockwaves through the University of California system when he revealed that in order to continue funding the building boom on campuses across the state, the UC System had pledged access to *one hundred percent* of tuition revenues to pay off the debt service on those projects should all other revenues be cut. Why was tuition promised? Because, according to Meister:

> [A]lthough tuition can be used for the same purposes as state educational funds, it can also be used for other purposes including construction, the collateral for construction projects, and paying interest on those bonds. None of these latter uses is permissible for state funds. (Meister, 2009)

[6] Meister (2009) writes: 'By pledging "General Revenues" as security for each UC revenue bond, the Regents are pledging everything that they can, including tuition. This means that when any source of General Revenue goes up – including student tuition and fees – UC's ability to borrow on private capital markets goes up, and its dependency on state capital funding goes down'.

In other words, it is a more unrestricted and debt-generated source of revenue for the university administration. While the $300 million dollar cuts proposed in the Budget would have certainly necessitated tuition increases, so would have the UW System's newly acquired control over construction projects if they follow the trend suggested above. And if the cuts appeared as a surprise, the construction project 'flexibilities' were in the works for years.

Given the amplifying costs of debt service for capital projects, there is then a greater incentive (and arguably a financial imperative) for the university administration to regularly increase the price of university education. At the University of California System and University of Michigan tuition rates have increased dramatically. For example, between 2008 and 2010 student tuition rose by 109 percent across the UC system (Meister, 2009). At the University of Michigan, tuition has increased by 233 percent since 1990 (Occupy UMich, 2012). While the state of Wisconsin currently has a tuition freeze for in-state students at least until 2017, Chancellor Blank has asserted that she will be lobbying the Board of Regents to raise tuition for students not affected by the freeze – including nonresident students and those in professional schools (Herzog, 2015a). Given that after the last tuition freeze in 2004, tuition increased 18 percent (ASM, 2015), it is also very likely that following 2017, the cost of education will increase for all UW students.

In the current context, Chancellor Blank and UW-System Administration are walking a tightrope. On the one hand, they appeared to be shocked by the size of the cuts. On the other hand, they did not want to forgo the public authority opportunity, which would have given them the ability to control tuition and bonds. They publicly denied the connection between the two, officially opposing the cuts while supporting flexibilities. This leads us to conclude that an intensive project seems to have been underway in Wisconsin, in which the UW System and UW-Madison in particular are organizing themselves *as if* their financial power and reputation was already out on the market for assessment by agencies like Moody's and S&P, even if it means continual cuts from the state.

While they maintained a public image of opposition to the large cuts to the System budget, UW System and UW Madison administrators were eager to convince the UW community that cuts are inevitable and that we should all be ready to face the realities of the state's structural deficit. That reality required university employees to silently accept a deal with the Governor, which was brokered by the administration. At the Board of Regents meeting in March 2015, chancellors from the UW system universities and colleges reported rough estimations of how many jobs they might have to eliminate under the Governor's proposed budget (McCollum, 2015). According to chancellors' estimations, the

proposed budget would result in 50-90 positions lost at UW-Stout, and 200 to 300 positions at UW-Milwaukee. UW-Stevens Point may have to eliminate 115 positions. The Chancellors of UW-Madison and UW-River Falls also added that it is impossible for them to avoid the layoffs with budget cuts at the current level. Finally, the UW-Milwaukee Chancellor Mark Mone added that the university is likely to face $24 million in cuts for two years in addition to the continuing cuts from the previous budgets. Mone stated that UW-Milwaukee may have to rely more on adjunct faculty, a form of precarious employment model becoming more common around the country (Flaherty, 2015).

The urgency of the budget cuts already had an impact on the existing positions around UW system schools. Only a couple of weeks after the announcement of the budget plan, UW-Stevens Point suspended all funding for Women's and Gender Studies courses for the 2015-2016 academic year. On February 11, at a campus forum with custodial and blue-collar workers, UW-Madison Chancellor Blank did not hesitate to announce that the first round of lay-off notifications would go out as early as April (Glaze and Punzel, 2015). Blank added that while she was not yet sure about the sizes of the cuts, all campus units should expect the number to be around six percent (Simon, 2015).

Risky credit and labor resistance: Disciplining unruly subjects

S&P's approach to higher education investing, which once seemed full of secure promise now takes a cautious tone. Indeed the recent report notes that, 'Beyond the general risk management planning that most colleges and universities have been doing for the past several years, recent events have increased the focus on topics such as student safety and on-campus violence, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) violations, and cyber security' (S&P, 2015: 3). These recommendations have less to do with student safety than they do investment returns. In a recent presentation about the shift towards risk-averse investment practices, Amanda Armstrong, a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Michigan, carefully detailed how financial advisers are now backtracking from their previous enthusiasm for the university as a site for investment. Influential financial advisers (the firm KPMG) in the University of California System, for example, acknowledge that:

> [Earlier] ratios had not been conservative enough to protect against financial meltdowns, and even that university managers probably shouldn't have been relying on abstract ratios in making investment decisions in the first place. [...] In their contextualist 2010 edition, the only advice the KPMG authors confidently assert is that central administrators must systematically incorporate a "risk management" framework into all dimensions of university governance, lest they be caught off guard again by financial or other shocks. (Armstrong, 2015)

Armstrong goes on to detail the ways in which these risk-averse practices have been translated into new bonding and leasing structures at the university but also how university campuses are being policed. She notes that under the leadership of former Chief of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, the University of California System has increased attention on 'non-affiliates' or 'people perceived as having no direct tie to the university', whose presence on campus is considered to be 'a factor that increases the risk profile of a given event' (Armstrong, 2015). As a 'highly sexualized, racialized, and criminalized' figure, the 'non-affiliate' has been used by the administration to defend the use of violence against political protesters (Reclaim UC, 2012), such as in the case of Occupy Davis when 'UC Davis administrators, in justifying police violence against Occupy Davis protesters, attempted to associate the threat of sexual violence at occupy encampments with the presence of Oakland-based demonstrators on campus' (Armstrong, 2015).

Despite the very real differences in the options available to the UW System for promoting universities as a site of investment, it appears that these risk-averse tendencies are also influencing how employees and students are being instructed to respond to the recent fiscal crisis. Thus, the administration's response to the proposed budget has been to discourage protest as a form of political participation, and even to remind employees that protest actions and organizing cannot happen during work hours. On February 14, 2015, the fourth anniversary of the 'I Heart UW' Rally that initiated the occupation of the Wisconsin Capitol in 2011 by thousands of protesters, a couple of hundred UW community members assembled to demonstrate against Governor Walker's proposal to massively cut funding for Wisconsin's higher education. However, as we pointed out in another article, during the protest UW-Madison's Twitter page 'was busy issuing valentines to UW,' and 'gave no hint that active resistance was being organized on its campus that day, despite its subsequent attention on the front page of the *New York Times* and in the *Washington Post*' (Hanson et al., 2015). This is probably due, at least in part, to the fact that UW administrators actively discouraged resistance to the Governor's budget proposal.[7] Members of the UW Board of Regents also called for 'non-emotional' responses to the proposal (Schneider, 2015), 'invoking language loaded with gendered and racialized norms about "acceptable" forms of dissent' (Hanson et al., 2015).

[7] This fact was disclosed to members of the graduate student unions in Madison (Teaching Assistants' Association, TAA) and Milwaukee (Milwaukee Graduate Assistants' Association, MGAA). Members of MGAA made a video response to the email, titled *Visibility* (Daigle, 2015).

Thus, in a city that witnessed the largest labor direct action in recent memory, the 2011 Wisconsin Uprising, we are now seeing a massive political backlash on our campuses. What campus administrators and even many faculty members advocate for is a kind of respectability politics instead of organizing active resistance. Indeed, in the face of massive budget cuts, entire campuses are expected to act the part of 'good' students and workers, investing all hope in the highest echelons of management. In this context, 'consensus is a disciplining project', demanding 'compliance with an employer that is already assessing where to cut jobs' (Hanson et al., 2015). This disciplining procedure almost emerged as a precondition of employment in 2011, when the UW System began developing a new HR or personnel system. During their initial research and proposal phase, a 'behavior-based selection process' was recommended as part of employee recruitment and assessment (UW HR Design, 2011). Behavioral sifting of this kind is aimed towards stability, and against volatility. As we have written elsewhere, it might be thought of 'as the psychological adjunct to the financial landscape,' where implementing a hiring review process that includes 'behavior' in its criteria, can be seen as 'symptomatic of the culture of financialization that extends across higher education' (Hanson et al., 2015). However, we argue that 'seeking well-disciplined and normative employees who are increasingly likely to face precarious working conditions is much like relying on student debt to build expensive buildings on university campuses' (*ibid.*).

The irony, of course, is that this selection process is designed to locate stable subjects for a workplace that is increasingly precarious and psychologically unstable. As Adam Hefty (2014) documents in regards to the development of mood or behaviour management in the post-WWII era, a new and complicated norm of 'disordered but commonplace conditions which need to be managed in order to achieve optimum productivity, assertiveness, and affective engagement' (Hefty, 2014: 1) has emerged. This new norm establishes an oscillating zone between certain psychological conditions like depression or anxiety and stability, with management as the key mediating term in between. This gives management an unprecedented amount of power. And much like student debt, the transfer of emphasis from something like class and race dynamics in the workplace to buzzwords like 'merit', 'personality' and 'interpersonal skills' are highly individuating and replace mobilizing affects like antagonism with mystifying affects like 'trust'.

To be blunt, it appears that the UW administration actively seeks a form of management flexibility that requires silent employees even as their jobs are consistently on the line. The published email communications from system President Cross contained a message from Madison Chancellor Blank about UW-Madison's University Committee:

> We'll see what pops out publicly by tomorrow morning. I have my faculty exec comm [sic] committed to letting negotiations move forward without public outcry, but I don't know if they contain certain elements of the faculty. (Simmons, 2015)

Chancellor Blank clearly favors a passive faculty even though this passivity helped convince Governor Walker and other state politicians that 13% state funding cuts could succeed. To reinforce passivity, some now claim that the budget cuts derive not from the 'public authority' proposal that originated with the UW-Madison administration and Governor Walker, but from those who have been outspoken against Walker and UW administration's privatization efforts. Those respectability politics, reinforced by an individuated and psychologized workplace, are being 'encouraged' from within a system in which protections for workers' and students' rights to organize have been severely reduced and in which hiring practices seek workers ready and willing to be managed without question.

Within the financialized landscape of higher education, it is becoming increasingly clear that docile workers are important not only for their labor which keeps the university running, but also for the continuation of seamless investment practices. To wit, the University of Michigan's General Revenue Bond prospectus tells potential investors when campus union contracts expire, and thus when workers could go on strike. Behind the university's strictly pragmatic rhetoric and political strategy – explicitly a behind-closed-doors approach – exists the unifying principle of precarity across financial practices, behavioral testing and securitization. Our task is to reveal this principle and utilize it to intervene at sites where the university is itself most financially precarious, rather than continuing to rely largely on symbolic actions such as rallies and marches.

Conclusion

Under the guise of resolving the problems of decreasing public investment, the U.S. university today has increasingly reorganized itself as a financial operation liberated from state regulation and divorced from its goals to serve the public. Even a university system like Wisconsin, which is currently quite limited in the ways it has been able to utilize financial tools like bonds, appears to be making decisions about employment, workplace discipline, and construction projects in a wholly Althusserian manner – acting *as if* it had financial 'flexibilities' perhaps in the hopes that they will materialize. University budgets indeed suffer from state cuts. However, as we emphasized above, administrations' attempts to gain financial liberalization, i.e. ability to borrow freely and invest in capital building projects, precede the budget cuts. More importantly, university administrations –

or at least the one in Wisconsin – have not challenged the massive cuts from the Governor's successive budgets, but rather tried to capitalize on them for financial independence. Both under former Chancellor Martin and current Chancellor Blank, UW-Madison's administration sought to gain financial autonomy from the state in exchange for cuts. Regrettably, in these attempts, both administrations utterly disregarded any democratic decision making processes and shared governance structures of the institution.

Thus, as activists and scholars, we must reorient our analyses and organizing tactics around the fact that universities consider financial capital as the instrument by which freedom and flexibility will be achieved. This logic of flexibility is extremely antagonistic to workers and many students at the university and should be responded to in kind, given the precarious position that institutions have put themselves in by making credit ratings and debt the means of their continuation. Engaging in disruptive actions is understood to be risky for job security and professional development because it is antagonistic, but the logic of 'flexibility' employed today by the university is inherently antagonistic to workers and brokers their futures on the fantasy of an infallible market. Indeed, this position makes disruptive actions like work-stoppages and occupations ever more useful as tactics for winning longer term gains, and presents important weak spots to be strategically exploited. Sites of accumulation and investments, like new luxury dormitories, are ripe for disruptions – especially in concert with the low-wage workers that staff them. If students are expected to be inveterate consumers, then it is also important to use disruptive tactics to educate students about this new university that they support through their debt.

The reorganization of the university through financial capital puts the future of the university as a public institution and public employer into jeopardy. Only a campus and a system-wide coalition can intervene to remake the future of this overarching speculative transformation of the university. It is too late to challenge this transformation with budget forums and meetings with administrators, who tacitly accept austerity measures imposed upon the university. Instead, university workers and students should cultivate disruptive tactics like occupations, work stoppages and tuition strikes that are being explicitly discouraged and implicitly becoming a threat to employment in universities like the University of Wisconsin. University workers and students are told not to participate in actions but to line up behind the administration, which claims to be serving the interests of the campus community. Yet over and over again, we witness their policies produce nothing but precarity for workers, nothing but tuition hikes and obstacles to accessing higher education for students. Disruptive actions could be the only effective tactics to stop the

financialization of the university by making the consequences of these immaterial forces, explicitly material.

references

Armstrong, A. (2015) 'Securitization, risk management and the new university', *Reclaim UC,* 19 January. [http://reclaimuc.blogspot.com/2015/01/securitization-risk-management-and-new.html]

Associated Students of Madison (ASM) (2015) 'Press release: Students call on Joint Finance Committee to keep UW System affordable', *ASM University of Wisconsin-Madison Student Government*, posted on *The Wheeler Report*, 13 February. [http://www.thewheelerreport.com/wheeler_docs/files/0203asm.pdf]

Daigle, A. (2015) *Visibility*. Video essay. [https://vimeo.com/119091882]

Flaherty, C. (2015) 'A day without adjuncts', *Inside Higher Ed,* 27 January. [https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/01/27/national-adjunct-walkout-day-approaches-attracting-both-enthusiasm-and-questions]

Glaze, J. and D. Punzel (2015) 'Rebecca Blank: UW-Madison layoffs could begin in April', *Wisconsin State Journal*, 13 February. [http://host.madison.com/news/local/education/university/rebecca-blank-uw-madison-layoffs-could-begin-in-april/article_b7906d6e-3550-5552-8d88-bfec42dbb41f.html#ixzz3TpYbF07p]

Hanson, L. and E. Noterman (2015) 'What university administrators gain from $300 million in cuts', *Reclaim UC,* 9 February. [http://reclaimuc.blogspot.com/2015/02/what-university-administrators-gain.html]

Hanson, L., E. Noterman and E. Schirmer (2015) 'The high price of a public authority in Wisconsin', *Remaking the University Blog*, 24 February. [http://utotherescue.blogspot.com/2015/02/the-high-price-of-public-authority-in.html]

Hefty, A. (2014) 'Cultivating a new normal: Mood disorders in the DSM-III to -5 era', *PhænEx,* 2(Fall/Winter): 1-23.

Herzog, K. (2015a) 'UW-Madison chancellor fears cuts will hurt competitiveness', *Milwaukee-Wisconsin Journal Sentinel*, 5 February. [http://www.jsonline.com/news/statepolitics/blank-to-address-proposed-budget-cuts-at-regents-meeting-b99439791z1-290947951.html]

Herzog, K. (2015b) 'Cautious on public authority, regents seek flexibilities, smaller cut', *Milwaukee-Wisconsin Journal Sentinel*, 5 March.

[http://www.jsonline.com/news/education/uw-regents-take-steps-to-protect-shared-governance-and-tenure-b99456354z1-295220061.html]

Lazzarato, M. (2012) *The making of the indebted man: An essay on the neoliberal condition*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).

Lee, J. (2014) '"Flexibility" hits University of Wisconsin custodians', *Labor Notes,* 14 August. [http://www.labornotes.org/blogs/2014/08/flexibility-hits-university-wisconsin-custodians]

McCollum, M. (2015) 'UW Chancellors give rough estimates of job cuts under proposed budget: UW-Milwaukee Chancellor estimates 200-300 jobs would be lost at his campus', *Wisconsin Public Radio,* 6 March. [http://www.wpr.org/uw-chancellors-give-rough-estimates-job-cuts-under-proposed-budget]

Meister, B. (2009) 'They pledged your tuition (an open letter to UC students)', *The Council of UC Faculty Associations,* 11 October. [http://cucfa.org/news/2009_oct11.php]

Occupy UMich (2012) 'University of Michigan: Student debt and the for profit university', 1 April. [http://occupyumich.tumblr.com/post/19735255245/]

PROFS (2015) 'Tuition and state support'. [http://profs.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Tuition-State-Support1.pdf]

Reclaim UC (2012) 'On "non-affiliates" in the Reynoso/Kroll Report', *Reclaim UC Blog,* 14 April. [http://reclaimuc.blogspot.ca/2012/04/on-non-affiliates-in-reynosokroll.html]

Schirmer, E. and L. Hanson (2012) 'Wisconsin's new bad idea', *Truthout,* 28 May. [http://truth-out.org/news/item/9424-wisconsins-new-bad-idea]

Schneider, P. (2015) 'Demonstrators protest Gov. Scott Walker's budget cuts at meeting of UW Regents', *The Capital Times,* 6 May. [http://host.madison.com/news/local/writers/pat_schneider/demonstrators-protest-gov-scott-walker-s-budget-cuts-at-meeting/article_da433513-4323-5982-b74d-7cb39ee60893.html]

Secretary of the Faculty UW-Madison (2014) 'Report of the Ad Hoc Tuition Policy Faculty Committee', *UW-Madison,* Fac Doc 2470. [http://www.secfac.wisc.edu/senate/2014/0203/2470%20Ad%20hoc%20tuition%20report.pdf]

Simmons, D. (2015) 'UW System emails regarding budget cuts', *Wisconsin State Journal*, 11 February. [http://host.madison.com/uw-system-emails-regarding-budget-cuts/pdf_17fdd220-86a4-57c5-9a0f-acd95db17c5c.html]

Simon, M. (2015) 'Blank to UW staff: "I'm sorry" layoffs are coming', 12 February. [http://www.channel3000.com/news/blank-to-uw-staff-im-sorry-layoffs-are-coming/31230578]

Slaughter, S. and G. Rhoades (2009) *Academic capitalism and the new economy: Markets, state, and higher education*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Special Task Force on UW Restructuring and Operational Flexibilities (2012) 'Final report of the Special Task Force on UW restructuring and operational flexibilities', 13 August. [http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lfb/misc/130_final_report_of_the_special_task_force_on_uw_restructuring_8_13_12]

Standard & Poor's Financial Services (2015) 'Upping the ante: Costs of luring top students keeps the outlook negative on U.S. not-for-profit higher education sector'. [http://chronicle.com/blogs/ticker/files/2015/01/sandp.pdf]

Strike Debt (2014) *The debt resisters' operations manual*. PM Press.

UW HR Design (2011) 'Competencies summary', Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. [http://hrdesign.wisc.edu/competencies-summar/]

UW-Madison Academic Planning & Institutional Research (2013) '2012-2013 data digest'. Office of the Provost, Vice Chancellor for Finance & Administration. [http://apir.wisc.edu]

Whitener, B. and D. Nemser (2012) 'Circulation and the new university', *Reclamations Blog,* 8 June. [http://www.reclamationsjournal.org/blog/?p=596]

Wisconsin Legislature (2015) 'Senate bill 21: An act relating to: state finances and appropriations, constituting the executive budget act of the 2015 legislature'. [http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2015/proposals/sb21]

the authors

Lenora Hanson (received her PhD in 2017 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, currently Assistant Professor of English at New York University) and Elsa Noterman (PhD student in the Geography Department, University of Wisconsin-Madison) write about financialization and the public university. Together they have organized numerous workshops and written multiple blog posts about the role that credit, debt and finance play in the restructuring of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Their ongoing research includes projects on the University of Wisconsin-Madison's struggle for autonomy from the state as well as a new project on the financialized profits that have enabled technology transfer and the patenting of research to (misleadingly) appear as a new source of revenue for the university.
Email: lahanson3@gmail.com
Email: noterman@wisc.edu

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 673-690

The playable university

Stephen Turner, Anna Boswell, Niki Harré, Sean Sturm, Kirsten Locke and Dominic da Souza Correa

Introduction

We have a problem with conventional academic modes of posing problems. Without wishing to rehearse the critical posture – and while acknowledging that our own response takes the form of a scholarly article that sits more or less comfortably inside the field of critical university studies – we note that there is an expanding international body of research devoted to critique of the neoliberal university (NLU). Professional academic critics (Beverungen et al., 2008; Bok, 2009; Brenneis, et al., 2005; Butler and Spoelstra, 2014; Giroux, 2002; Larner and Le Heron, 2005; Rhoades and Slaughter, 2004; Svensson, et al., 2010; Vernon, 2010) describe its drivers as the privatisation of education; the commercialisation of research to compensate for government disinvestment; and the prioritisation of applied 'outputs' relevant to end-users and measureable by funders. These drivers are said to foster corporatised governance and management; the ascendency of administrators and systems to index quality ('excellence') and productivity ('efficiency'); the aggressive casualisation of academic work, which creates an underclass of adjunct academics; and the transfer of capital expenditure and operational costs to students, disadvantaging students of lesser means and promoting the pursuit of market-ready degrees.

Such criticisms are not wrong-headed or misguided. We feel keenly the crisis of the university – and crisis and critique, intriguingly, are akin etymologically ('crisis', denoting the turning point in a disease, comes from the Greek *krisis*, or 'decision'; 'critique' comes from the Greek *kritikē tekhnē*, or 'critical art'). The art of critique, we might say, is to precipitate crisis. And we note that the critic-and-conscience role of the university, enshrined in New Zealand in the *Education Act*

(Ministry of Education, 1989), makes critical reflexivity a statutory obligation of the university. Further, the Universitas 21 'Statement on sustainability' (2009) takes the university to be a microcosm, test-case and demonstration of social values. It thus behoves those who work in the university to examine its priorities and practices. In fact, critique of the NLU reminds us that academics are not powerless in the face of the 're-valuation' of the university that its corporatisation demands.

In part, our concern is that critique should be taken as an object of reflection and matter of social concern. Yet if, as Bruno Latour argues, academics are enjoined to 'bring the sword of criticism to criticism itself' (2004: 227), we also wonder whether and how it is possible to avoid being immobilised by this operation. Is anything beyond critique? Objections to the NLU, for example, are primarily articulated through protest and publication. Student and academic protest actions, as recent experiences at our university indicate, may be vital and vitalising, but tend to draw directly on highly theoretical – and, thus, élite – modes of scholarly critique. And the publications that result count as outputs for their authors and towards the ranking of their universities. Though there is something playful about these strategies, the NLU can understand itself only as a *serious* business. While students may treat the classroom as a game 'where the rules and pieces are all open to adjustment' and the campus as a 'playground' to be explored (University for Strategic Optimism, 2012: 8, 20), those on the university payroll are not allowed to play.

The self-seriousness of the NLU is always at risk of being exposed. Vice-Chancellors play at being CEOs, taking their cue from counterparts at other 'excellent' universities globally, when they are really custodians of public educational institutions. Research and international ranking regimes make a game of publication, which universities 'game' through culling non-research-productive academic staff before audits and separating teaching and research. Criticising the NLU through publication would seem to enable academics both to 'play the game' (Butler and Spoelstra, 2014) and draw attention to the 'gameness' of that game. Indeed, there is a dark playfulness evident in recent publications in critical university studies. The editors of *Zombies in the academy*, for instance, explain that

> The contributors [to this volume] break out of their fortified offices and bunkered lecture halls, and claw their way free of burial mounds of student marking, grant applications and committee minutes, equipped not with shotguns and fire axes, but with a radical metaphor and a critical eye. Alternately, they come shuffling and decrepit towards you out of the shadows, with lifeless expressions, blank hunger and the stench of death surrounding them. (Whelan, et al., 2013: 3)

But motifs of living death, disease, decay and apocalypse seem a peculiarly aestheticised response to the crisis of the NLU.

We perceive at least four problems with the tendency to criticise the NLU by means of conventional scholarship:

1. Universities are comprised of heterogeneous populations of workers and students unlikely to be engaged by the elitist theoretical discourse of many academic critics of the contemporary university. Thus, such criticism risks self-enclosure: speaking to an elite *for* people considered to be without a voice.

2. Universities' role as critic and conscience excludes professional staff, other workers and students (and conflicts with the stipulation in university contracts that employees can't bring the university 'into disrepute').

3. Academic critique has not to date been able to re-imagine the university, tending to deconstruct rather than reconstruct – and to preach to the converted: likeminded academics, Arts students, active union members and so on.

4. Academic critique is typically consensualist: as Stefano Harney and Fred Moten argue, 'to be a critical academic in the university is to be against the university, and to be against the university is always to recognize it and be recognized by it' (2013: 31). It does not question what makes its critique possible – and what distinguishes it from the feedback continually sought from academics by administrators.[1]

In describing social fields, Pierre Bourdieu invokes players being drawn into a game:

> Players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in their beliefs (*doxa*) in the game and its stakes; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning. Players agree, by the mere fact of playing, and not by way of a 'contract' that the game is worth playing [...] and this collusion is the very basis of their competition. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 99)

[1] This same problem of feedback applies to protest actions. Easton and Walters (2015), for example, quote Prime Minister John Key explaining that his press conference scheduled to take place at the University of Auckland on 5 March 2015 was cancelled because of the noise of protesters: 'I didn't really care about it: if you wanted some yahoos coming in and making a whole lot of noise, we could do it, but I don't think it would be conducive to a good press conference'.

Academics, students and other workers in the university are expected to play the 'university game' – which includes the playful work of protest and published critique. If there is already engagement with play-as-critique in the NLU, here we aim to explore play-as-agency. Play-as-agency relies on making room for a certain play, or 'give', in academic and administrative processes in the NLU, in order to reveal what the university might otherwise be.[2] This play allows for both the collective re-imagination and reconstruction of the rules of the university and 'playful' participation in university gatherings (meetings; courses and classes; orientation and training sessions, and so on). In particular, we ask about the value of games in the university, what games can tell us about the values of the university, and how the rules of the university game might be changed by playing it differently.

The university game

To this end, we developed a series of game workshops at the University of Auckland in July 2014. The workshops were conceived as part of a larger research project called 'The liveable university', [3] which considered the university's potential to be socially responsible, pro-creative and sustainable, and thus *liveable*. The project drew on Ron Barnett's (2011) idea of the university as an 'ecology', an intelligent system that works – or *ought* to work – for the flourishing of people and nourishing of place. Over a year, it undertook a range of activities: five workshops, a symposium on learning spaces (including a workshop on place-based pedagogy, a roundtable discussion on learning spaces and a campus *hikoi*, or walk) and an interactive exhibition (including various artefacts and performances, and the launch of a new journal, *Argos Aotearoa* [2014]). The

[2] Here we draw on but extend the work of seminal play theorists Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois, and also Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jane McGonigal. Huizinga's *Homo ludens* (1938) establishes the importance of the concept of play in human society and culture; Caillois's *Man, play and games* (1961) distinguishes styles and types of games and play. More importantly for our argument, Gadamer, in *Truth and method* (1960), argues that it is neither the player nor the game being played, but rather the movement, to and fro, that exists between them that defines games. This movement is characteristic of our concept of play as 'give'. McGonigal's *Reality is broken* (2011) updates the theory of games for immersive (virtual) gameplay.

[3] The 'Liveable University' project received seed funding from the *Transforming Cities: Innovations for Sustainable Futures* Thematic Research Initiative, hosted by the National Institute for Creative Arts and Industries (NICAI) at the University of Auckland, to support an application to the World Universities Network (WUN) to undertake research in the area of 'equity and access in higher education and research'. *Transforming Cities* (2010-2015) aimed 'to promote interdisciplinary, transformative research about cities and the way they function' (Transforming Cities, 2016).

workshops were designed both to explore *and embody* the idea of a liveable university.

Liveability takes in a number of dimensions: ecology (sustainable building and living), health (economic and emotional well-being), belonging (commitment to the institution and one's colleagues), and purpose (personal and social transformation). But it is an ambiguous idea. A large number of liveability surveys are conducted each year to produce league-tables that rank cities in terms of their living conditions – and used for marketing the cities and calculating relocation costs for new employees.[4] And such indices are now being applied to the university (Gallup, 2014). Thus, while liveability promises transformative living, belonging and well-being, it has come to be taken as quantifiably measureable and marketable ('econometric' [Sturm and Turner, 2011]) – and its units of measure to serve as expressions of the value of the entity itself. The workshops gave voice to those most affected by economically driven – but emotionally taxing – changes affecting the liveability of the university: students facing large fee increases, administrators beset by wholesale restructuring, casual academics undergoing workload abuse, and workers demanding a living wage (though many responded that they were simply too hard-pressed to attend). For this reason, liveability strikes us as an apt means to address the norms and drivers that make up the lived experience of a NLU driven by econometrics. Indeed, part of the 'play' of our game is that it offers participants opportunities to re-imagine and reconstruct existing indices of value in the NLU in order to materialise a university of different – or greater – value. With these circumstances in view, one focus of the workshops was to collectively generate and evaluate an expanded range of ideas of liveability.

The workshops involved

1. a one-hour time-slot;
2. a number of players;
3. a physical space in which the players could gather;
4. materials including jellybeans, small plastic cups, marker pens, small squares of paper ('cards') in five different colours, a box for collecting the

[4] For recent results see, for example, Monocle's 'Quality of life survey' (2014); the Economic Intelligence Unit's 'Global liveability ranking and report August 2014' (2014); Mercer's 'Quality of living worldwide city rankings' (2014); and the OECD's 'Better life index' (2014). Auckland is ranked as the third most liveable city in the world in the 2014 Mercer survey.

cards, and a table around which the players sat and on which to lay out the cards; and

5. a set of instructions that led players through four rounds.

The workshops hosted between 11-25 players; each game was conducted by an instructor, an observer and an usher. While the position and rank of the players remained unknown and their responses cannot be traced to individuals or groups, the broad proportions of categories of players can be estimated from their email signatures, which were visible to us when players registered (although some players represent more than one category). We estimate that the overall percentage of academics and postgraduate students was 51.6%, ranging in each game between 45.5% and 63.6%.[5] The overall percentage of professional and administrative staff was 38.7%, ranging between 27.3% and 48%. The overall percentage of managers was 9.7% and of undergraduate students, 8.1%. All academic faculties and several key university-wide support services (HR, student and academic services, communications and IT divisions and so on) were represented.

On arrival, the players were invited by the instructor to take a seat around the table. Players were required to organise themselves in groups of 3-5 people, depending on the total number of players. In the first three rounds of the game, the groups were asked by the instructor to discuss the following questions:

Round one:	What does the university value?
Round two:	What affects (feelings, desires, anxieties) make up the experience of the university?
Round three:	What strategies do you adopt, or do you see others adopting, to make the university liveable?

In each round, each group was allocated a set number of coloured cards on which to record their responses, one colour per round. The number of cards allocated per group per round in each game was determined by the usher according to the total number of players in the game and thus the size of each group. In each case, the ratio of cards to players was unequal (i.e. each group

[5] In producing these totals, we have split the student contingent, grouping postgraduate students with academics because postgraduate students are 'proto-academics'.

received fewer cards than it had members), necessitating deliberation amongst group members. Groups were restricted to offering one value, affect or strategy per card.

Midway through each round, the cards were collected by the usher. Once all cards had been submitted, the response recorded on each card was read out by the usher and the cards were placed in columns on the game table, in random order, with any identical terms stacked together. If a group felt that there was a key response missing, they could supplement the responses with another (yellow) card. Each group was then allocated ten multi-coloured (but not white) jellybeans. The groups were asked to weight the responses by placing jellybeans on the card/s that they felt offered their preferred response/s to the question. Then, based on how many beans had been played on each card, the cards were ranked from highest to lowest (from the top to the bottom of the table). By the end of the third round, the table pictured the hierarchy of responses. After each round, players were invited to form new groups.

In the fourth and final round, the players were asked for their individual response to the following question:

Round four:	What, in your view, would make the university more liveable?

If a player felt that there was a key response missing, they could supplement the responses with another (white) card. Each player was allocated five white jellybeans, each worth five coloured jellybeans, which they could use to trump previous responses. Finally, the cards were re-ranked from highest to lowest. (The choice of jellybeans both was and was not incidental. Jellybeans are humble, banal and edible, and their ability to colour-code responses to earlier and later phases of the game was especially useful. Their use blurred the lines between work and play, and distinguished the workshop from the normal round of classes and meetings – and also caused a number of participants to reflect on the activities of 'bean-counters' in the university.)

The format of the game was governed by four basic principles:

1. *Inclusiveness and heterogeneity*. An open invitation to participate in the game was distributed through university email and web networks; participants were asked to confirm by email. The games were scheduled at various times and kept to one hour to accommodate as many students,

professional staff and academic staff as possible, resulting in a mix of participants from right across the university.

2. *Democracy and anonymity*. Because participants in the game were sought who might ordinarily, given their positions in the university, find it difficult to give voice to their thoughts and feelings about it, the players were asked to introduce themselves to one another on a first-name basis only and to avoid referring to their surname, position or rank. A box was used to collect their responses to preserve their anonymity.

3. *Deliberation and collaboration*. The game was designed to produce collaborative deliberation. It enabled players to think and talk about the university without feeling that any specialised language was necessary or that non-academic views were inferior to academic ones. And it allowed for a different mix of participants in each group in each round. More fundamentally, it relied on the collaboration of the players and their agreement to follow the game's rules (or not): there was no way to win the game and nothing to gain by 'winning' it.[6]

4. *Responsibility and responsiveness*. Because the final, individual round of the game was preceded by three rounds of collaborative deliberation, the higher value jellybeans were played in ways that responded to the game itself and to players' re-imagination and reconstruction of their indices of value in the university.

Through these basic principles, the workshops were intended to develop the 'play principle'. Our premise was that the NLU works to block the deliberative and collaborative exercise of value – the human capacity *to be able to value* – by its students and workers. In order to recognise and exercise this capacity, the workshops were based on the idea of play as the decisive link between rules and their application (Virno, 2011). Play is more than the playing of a game or the deliberate exercise of the rules of a game. For us, it is the *give*, or pliancy, of a practice or structure. (Why, we ask, is good policy always construed as 'robust' rather than pliant, and why, in organisational terms, is 'compliance' consistently valued over 'risk'?). It is precisely this lack of play that defines the operation of the NLU, in which it is taken for granted that those who work there do not know what is best for it, and must be corralled by systems of measure that limit their agency. In such a context, being solicited to give feedback – as staff were in a

[6] See Carse's distinction between finite and infinite games: 'A finite game is played for the purpose of winning, an infinite game for the purpose of continuing the play' (2012: 3).

recent faculty administrative review at our university – is to be engaged in the manufacture of consensus through 'consultation'. As with the unsolicited feedback of academic protest and publication, staff are required to play by the rules of the university game, rather than re-imagine and reconstruct its rules. In such circumstances, however the rules are figured (as excellence, innovation, sustainability, and so on), they can only be taken as given, rather than responsive to those who make them work. For this reason, staff resort to 'clandestine' strategies (Docherty, 2011) to make unliveable environments more tolerable, strategies that our game sought to foreground. The workshops, then, were designed to work athwart dominant modes of feedback that treat feedback as a closed loop. They aimed to determine the rules that are at work in the university, but cannot be asked after through its normal processes, to explore the dimensions of liveability that neoliberal econometrics miss by ignoring the human capacity to value. Our intention was that the 'play' of the game would accommodate both the value of workers and students, and the value that they place in their work and learning, and in the university. This would produce a different version of the university – a university, within the terms of our game, responsive to the give-and-take of its occupants, a 'playable' university – a university with give.[7]

Results of the game

The first three rounds each focused on a different aspect of university life, as experienced by the players: round one on 'values', round two on 'affects', and round three on 'strategies'. The final round, round four, took in all three aspects and focussed on what would make the university more 'liveable'. It allowed players to supplement and trump their prior responses. To analyse the data, we identified the dominant themes of each aspect, working with the cards in play in round four of each workshop, and tested them against the data. We present these results in Tables 1-3, which show the themes for each aspect, a description of each theme, and the percentage of votes allocated to cards for each theme initially and with the final round added in. (Note that, for the initial round, players could cast votes only within an aspect; for the final round, on any card. Because the counts for the final round include those from earlier rounds, we created percentages that represent only the responses for each theme in Round 4.)

Theme	Description	Initial Round %	Final Round %

[7] As described by Julian Baggini, the Playable City Movement, launched in Bristol in 2014, aims to interrupt the utilitarian efficiency of the urban environment (2014).

Learning and creativity	Education, knowledge; innovation, growth	46	47
The collective	Practices that foster community	17	22
Reputation and status	Reputation and status	11	4
Striving and recognition	Individual aspiration and institutional recognition, including competition	9	10
Contribution	The social role of the university	7	7
Money	Money or finances	5	3
Integrity	Integrity	4	6
Managerialism	The structure and bureaucracy of the university	1	2

Table 1. Themes constructed for values and votes for each.

Theme	**Description**	**Initial Round %**	**Final Round %**
Stress	Stress, pressure, external demands	40	22
Excitement and stimulation	Joy and enthusiasm about research and the university	28	49
Alienation	Insecurity, disempowerment, and isolation from people and the institution	11	7
Belonging	Affirmation of the individual's place in the university	9	15
Pride	Pride in work and for university	6	2
Striving	The demand for individual and institutional 'success'	5	3
Agency	An individual's ability to feel strong, connected and mobile	2	3

Table 2. Themes constructed for affects and votes for each.

Theme	**Description**	**Initial round %**	**Final round %**
Engaging with	Socialising, collaborating and communicating	51	53

others			
Self-care	Perspective, balance, time to reflect	13	8
Personal development	Goal setting and self-improvement	13	6
Subversion	Humour and 'soft' resistance	11	11
Withdrawal	Limiting engagement	7	2
Environment	Respectful spaces	4	3
Challenging managerialism	Critique and reconstruction	1	17

Table 3. Themes constructed for 'strategies' and votes for each.

The top two values were *Learning and creativity* and *The collective*. Values shifted little between the initial and final round. One exception was *Reputation and status*, which received some support in the initial round as a current value of the university, but very little support in the final round as a value worth preserving – this despite our university branding itself as 'New Zealand's world-ranked university'. There was also a slight shift towards the value of *The collective*. Affects shifted significantly. First, *Stress* was the leading affect in participants' current experience of the university, with 40% of the votes, but fell to 22% in the final round, when its contribution to the liveability of the university was considered. Second, *Excitement and stimulation* rose from 28% to 49%. This suggests that participants want to be positively aroused by their work. Third, *Belonging* also gained support. Strategy was dominated by *Engaging with others*, which was seen as both currently favoured and desirable for liveability. *Personal development, Self-care* and *Withdrawal* all lost support in the final round, and *Challenging managerialism* went from last to second most favoured strategy by the end of the game. Interestingly, play was offered in only one of the four workshops, as a value; critique, likewise, as a strategy. Nonetheless, a number of playful strategies operated as a critique of the rules of the university game: 'Soft guerrilla warfare', 'Use of open space for idle behaviour', 'Little acts of subversion', 'Make jokes', and 'Strategise'. When we look at all three aspects of university life, we see that the game produced an increase in support for collaborative and political values, affects and strategies (*The collective, Belonging,* and *Challenging managerialism*), and a decrease in support for values, affects and strategies based on self-preservation, whether individual (*Stress, Self-care*) or institutional (*Reputation and status*). This begs the question: does giving people the chance to play without consequence also free them to transform from stressed alienated individuals who

work in line with the values of the NLU into excited political agents prepared to work together to make the institution truly liveable?

The game evades the standard discursive formulations of professional critics of the NLU through its format and mix of participants. As against conventional modes of demonstration like protest and published criticism, the game is a 'remonstration': a way to field a complaint, to 'have a problem' with the rules at play in a situation, that enables us to re-imagine and reconstruct that situation with a different set of rules. With liveability, for example, it works by highlighting the social deficits of the NLU's concept of liveability with a view to demonstrating how we might live otherwise. Its 'possibilising', or world-making, impulse produced in players a desire to produce a 'good' version of the university and to feel like good citizens for producing such a result. The values it produced were social in nature: collegiality, generosity and social interaction – in contrast with the values espoused by the university: world-ranked excellence, competitiveness and wealth. In part, this may well have been due to its rules fostering the movement of players between groups. But there is no doubt that players relished the opportunity to suspend the rules of the university game in order to imagine and construct a playable university.

While the game was designed in part as an analytical tool, through the play principle it exceeded any straightforwardly instrumental purpose – including serving as a demonstration against the instrumentalism of the NLU. The materials used and produced in the game – cards of various colours marked with values, affects and strategies; a record of the number and types of bean played on each card; notes taken by the observer on the basis of whole-group discussions at the end of each round of play – document what the game produced. However, the picture that these materials give us is necessarily incomplete. The deliberative conversations of the groups about which responses to field or how many beans to play on which responses in each round remain private, in keeping with what Johan Huizinga calls 'the feeling of being "apart together" [in games], of sharing something important, of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms' (1949: 12). What was most important in these deliberations was the collective airing of values – irrespective of the position or rank of the players, or their reasons for valuing what they did. That collective action is very different from the NLU's re-valuation of the university, in which the drive for 'transparency and information' (Docherty, 2011) serves corporate values like 'excellence', 'innovation' and 'productivity'.

The playable university

The game could be adapted in any number of ways. It could be played by more singular communities – of academics, or students, or managers, or professional staff, or by those affiliated with a particular faculty or campus or programme or organisational function. Games played by particular constituencies could well produce more striking or nuanced responses than games played by a mixed constituency. For example, would a game played by senior managers produce a liveable university that mirrored the existing one? What would a game played by undergraduate students produce (very few students, let alone undergraduates, participated in our games)? It could be argued that undergraduates – new to the university and its rules – would play in ways that most productively disturb the values of the NLU. As Harney and Moten put it, 'there's a kind of fear in the university [of] amateurism – immaturity, pre-maturity, not graduating, not being ready somehow – and the student represents that' (2013: 116). Students at higher levels who criticise the NLU have already subscribed to sophisticated critical modes that make them proto-academics. However, what students new to the university value in the university or what they think its social role might be are questions that can transform the playable university – and the university's mission. What would a game played at a different kind of tertiary institution or in a non-educational setting produce? For example, would not a game at a *wānanga*, or Māori institute of learning, likely produce a different differential between, say, the existing (collective) values of the wānanga and the regulations of the national regulatory body, the Tertiary Education Commission? Would not a game for participants in a non-educational setting reveal a differential between what those inside and outside tertiary education take the social value of the university to be?

It behoves us to conclude with a final set of principles that characterise the playable university:

1. The playable university makes the university a matter of experiment.

2. The playable university is created in the interaction of players. During the game, the players move from an individual focus to a collective one, perhaps through their private deliberative conversations that create a sense of community.

3. The playable university enables players to reflect on the norms that determine the operation of the university. The game, by returning to workers and students an agency that is usurped by neoliberal managerialism, enables the re-imagination and reconstruction of the values that such norms invariably distort like leadership, responsibility,

community, innovation and creativity. Thus, the experimental play of the playable university is an act of remonstration.

4. The playable university is necessarily ephemeral. The game 'matters' for as long as it is being played. The interaction of the players creates an 'interval' of intrinsic value, no matter what its consequences, whether in the data of the game or in the actions taken as a result of the game by players or the university. Indeed, the playable university may have no consequences at all – and certainly not in the form of manageable/measurable outputs.

5. The playable university addresses the social role and purpose of the university. The game does so because the interaction inherent in the game is social in nature and generated through collaborative deliberation. In the game, the norms of the university are suspended, with a view to their being transformed by the players – depending on what they think university should do or what it is for.

6. The playable university constructs or re-constructs the university. The play principle implies that all university activity conceals possible worlds that can be actualised by its participants through collaborative deliberation on norms, thereby returning to workers and students an agency and a capacity to value that have been usurped by managerialism and its econometrics. Seen in this way, the university could even be detached from campuses altogether and considered to be any site where such deliberation on norms takes place – were it not for the system of credentialising through which universities appropriate such activity for themselves.

7. The playable university produces a new subject of the university. The subject of the university is neither individual, rational nor self-interested; it is the aggregate subject of the social interaction of the game's players and groups. It emerges at the edge of the existing parameters of knowledge that define the university, as a cross-section of subjectivities and values expressed by the players.

To repeat: what is most important in the deliberations of the game is the collective airing of values, which demonstrates not only that another university is possible, but also that it is a university in the creation of which anyone can take part. And it must be said: the universities constructed in the games we played were indeed better – more collegial, generous and socially interactive – than the one most of us currently 'enjoy'. This suggests that the university poses a

'collective action problem' of regulation and governance that is soluble if its participants are prepared to work together to make it truly liveable (Ostrom, 1990).8 Working together to create a liveable university thus requires that we take seriously the stipulation of the Education Act of 1989, the founding document of universities in Aotearoa/New Zealand, that a university consists of 'its governing body, the chief executive, the teaching staff, general staff, the graduates and students, and such other people as the governing body may from time to time determine' (Ministry of Education, 1989: 279, section 163.1) – although the governing body must be fully representative. The Playable University makes this possible.

references

Argos Aotearoa (2014) The university beside itself. Special issue of *Argos Aotearoa*, 1.

Baggini, J. (2014) 'Playable cities: The city that plays together, stays together', *The Guardian*, 4 September. [http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/sep/04/playable-cities-the-city-that-plays-together-stays-together]

Barnett, R. (2011) 'The coming of the ecological university', *Oxford Review of Education*, 37(4): 439-455.

Beverungen, A., S. Dunne and B.M. Sorensen (2008) 'University, failed', *ephemera*, 8(3): 232-237.

Bok, D. (2009) *Universities in the marketplace: The commercialization of higher education*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bourdieu, P. and L. Wacquant (1992) *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brenneis, D., C. Shore and S. Wright (2005) 'Getting the measure of academia: Universities and the politics of accountability', *Anthropology in Action*, 12(1): 1-10.

8 In *Governing the commons* (1990: 90), Ostrom outlines the eight 'design principles' of long-enduring communal (CPR, or 'common-pool resource') institutions: 'clearly defined boundaries'; 'congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions'; 'collective-choice arrangements'; 'monitoring'; 'graduate sanctions'; 'conflict-resolution mechanisms'; 'minimal recognition of rights to organise'; and 'nested enterprises'. The playable university attends, in particular, to 'collective-choice arrangements', that is, collective regulation and governance.

Butler, N. and S. Spoelstra (2014) 'The regime of excellence and the erosion of ethos in critical management studies', *British Journal of Management*, 25(3): 538-550.

Caillois, R. (1961) *Man, play, and games*, trans. M. Barash. New York, NY: Schocken Books.

Carse, J.P. (2012) *Finite and infinite games: A vision of life as play and possibility*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Docherty, T. (2011) 'The unseen academy', *Times Higher Education*, 10 November. [http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/418076.article]

Easton, P. and L. Walters (2015) 'Protesters disrupt John Key Auckland appearance', *Stuff*, 5 March

[http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/66994165/protesters-disrupt-john-key-auckland-appearance]

Economic Intelligence Unit (2014) 'Global liveability ranking and report'. http://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=liveability2014]

Gadamer, H.-G. (1960) *Truth and method*. London: Sheed and Ward.

Gallup (2014) 'Great jobs, great lives: The 2014 Gallup-Purdue index inaugural national report'. [http://www.gallup.com/services/178496/gallup-purdue-index-inaugural-national-report.aspx]

Giroux, H.A. (2002) 'Neoliberalism, corporate culture, and the promise of higher education: The university as a democratic public sphere', *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(2): 425-463.

Harney, S. and F. Moten (2013) *The undercommons: Fugitive planning and black study*. New York, NY: Minor Compositions.

Huizinga, J.H. (1949) *Homo ludens: A study of the play element in culture*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Larner, W. and R. Le Heron (2005) 'Neoliberalising spaces and subjectivities: Reinventing New Zealand universities', *Organization*, 12(6): 843-862.

Latour, B. (2004) 'Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern', *Critical Inquiry*, 30(???): 225-248.

McGonigal, J. (2011) *Reality is broken: Why games make us better and how they can change the world*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Mercer (2014) 'Quality of living worldwide city rankings'. [http://www.mercer.com/content/mercer/global/all/en/newsroom/2014-quality-of-living-survey.html]

Ministry of Education (1989) *Education Act*, 29 September. [http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0080/latest/DLM175959.html]

Monocle (2014) 'Quality of life survey'. [http://monocle.com/film/affairs/quality-of-life-survey-2014/]

OECD (2014) 'Better life index'. [http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org]

Ostrom, E. (1990) *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Rhoades, G. and S. Slaughter (2004) *Academic capitalism and the new economy: Markets, state, and higher education*. Baltimore, MD: JHU Press.

Sturm, S. and S. Turner (2011) 'The idea of the university', *Arena Magazine*, 111(May): 16-19.

Svensson, P., S. Spoelstra, M. Pedersen and S. Schreven (2010) 'The excellent institution', *ephemera*, 10(1): 1-6.

Transforming Cities (2016) 'About the transforming cities project: Archive'. [http://www.creative.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/our-faculty/schools-programmes-and-centres/urban-research-network/transforming-cities-archive/AboutUs.html]

Universitas 21 (2009) 'U21 statement on sustainability'. [www.universitas21.com/relatedfile/download/165]

University for Strategic Optimism (2012) Undressing the academy or, the student handjob. London and New York, NY: Minor Compositions.

Vernon, J. (2010) 'The end of the public university in England'. [https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/globalhighered/the_end_of_the_public_university_in_england]

Virno, P. (2011) 'Wit and innovation', in G. Raunig, G. Ray and U. Wuggenig (eds.) *Critique of creativity: Precarity, subjectivity and resistance in the 'creative industries'*. London: Mayfly Books.

Whelan, A., R. Walker and C. Moore (2013) *Zombies in the academy: Living death in higher education*. Bristol and Chicago, IL: Intellect.

the authors

All the authors work at the University of Auckland, except Dominic, who is a graduate of the University. They are members of the Liveable University collective. Anna, Sean and Stephen were founding editors of Argos Aotearoa (http://argosaotearoa.org).

Anna Boswell (English, Drama and Writing Studies) teaches writing studies, and researches settler-colonial institutions, ecology and pedagogy in Aotearoa/New Zealand.
Email: a.boswell@auckland.ac.nz

Dominic da Souza Correa (English, Drama and Writing Studies) majored in English and Writing Studies and graduated from the University of Auckland in 2015.
Email: dominic.dasouza@gmail.com

Niki Harré (Psychology) teaches community and social psychology, and researches values, political activism and sustainability.
Email: n.harre@auckland.ac.nz

Kirsten Locke (Critical Studies in Education) teaches and researches the philosophy and sociology of education through a poststructuralist and feminist lens.
Email: k.locke@auckland.ac.nz

Sean Sturm (Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education) teaches and writes about higher education, writing and the digital humanities, often with Stephen.
Email: s.sturm@auckland.ac.nz

Stephen Turner (English, Drama and Writing Studies) teaches writing studies, and researches higher education, writing and the digital humanities, often with Sean, and settler-colonialism in Aotearoa/New Zealand.
Email: sf.turner@auckland.ac.nz

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 691-704

Vulnerabilities, complicities and injustices: 'Tim-adical' actions for change in the neoliberal academy

Tim-adical Writing Collective

abstract

Early career academics face their own particular set of issues when it comes to struggling with the neoliberal university. In this note, we consider how our responses to the neoliberalization of academia – whether in teaching, research or other activities – promote justice or not. Rather than theorize justice in the abstract, our goal is to tease apart the injustices, vulnerabilities and complicities of our workplaces. We draw upon our individual experiences, which span six institutions across six countries, to explore how mundane choices and everyday actions might enable us to resist the neoliberal pressures on our work and our labour. We do this by acknowledging that there is a real possibility that we come to embody neoliberalism in our choices, decisions and habits. That is, we are disciplined and become self-disciplining in turn, in order to survive. We explore this tension through a series of experiential vignettes that help to frame our everyday resistance as 'tim-adical' action, both radical and timid at the same time.

Introduction

While we could start this piece by theorizing 'the University' as a neoliberal institution, it is rather a redundant task when others have got there well before us. Various scholars, writers, journalists and activists have described, discussed and conceptualized the corporatization (e.g. Castree and Sparke, 2000), commercialization (e.g. Slaughter and Rhoades, 1996), commodification (e.g. Mirowski, 2011) and corruption (Gill, 2009) of higher education. This is not limited to one country or another, instead stretching from the antipodes to Europe and beyond (e.g. Belina et al., 2013; Cupples and Pawson, 2012; Dowling,

2008; Larner and LeHeron, 2005; NZGS-PG Network, 2014; Shore, 2010; Shore and McLauchlan, 2012).

As early career academics in both permanent and insecure positions in the tertiary sector, we think it is important to consider our own responses to this neoliberalization of the academy. For us, this raises a critical question: do our responses to neoliberalism (through our pedagogical approaches, our publications, our activism) that are intended to create progressive change in the academy actually promote justice? We ask this question acknowledging that we do not have a singular definition of justice against which to measure ourselves. The politics of distribution, representation, and recognition interweave in complex ways to create situations that we individually and collectively recognize as more or less just (Fraser, 2013).

Rather than theorize justice in the abstract, our goal is to tease apart the injustices, vulnerabilities and complicities of our workplaces. Although there have been numerous attempts to define justice in the face of neoliberalism (see for example Butler, 2004; Fraser, 2013; Sen, 2011; Young, 2011), we choose to work from the simple principle that injustice is perpetuated when the work, lives, and dignity of certain individuals and groups are valued less than others. We seek to identify the choices and actions we can take to support more just social relations on an everyday basis rather than asserting the need to storm the ramparts of the university. It is the daily, mundane, repetitive nature of our lives and their consequences that leads us to demand 'tim-adical' actions – timid, yet radical at the same time (The SIGJ2 Writing Collective, 2012a; 2012b). We believe tim-adical action to be an important intervention at this time, as it acknowledges the economic precarity many of us find ourselves in under the current neoliberal regime, while also providing space for our need to make change. We seek ways to incorporate justice into our work environments while also trying to maintain whatever job stability we do have. We find that we must negotiate a tenuous balance through these tim-adical actions.[I]

[I] The term 'tim-adical' emerged after an earlier publication (The SIGJ2 Writing Collective, 2012a) in which we problematized the precarity many of us felt as early career academics with the need to challenge and contest the uneven effects of the neoliberalization of the institutions in which we worked. We were later challenged for not being radical but being timid (Canally, 2012). In reply, we argued that yes perhaps our proposed actions were timid, but they were also radical in that they 'were motivated by a material recognition of the increasingly constrained spaces in which new academics work and the need for solidarity and action, however small' (The SIGJ2 Writing Collective, 2012b: 4). We have therefore embraced the term tim-adical to reflect this ongoing struggle.

In this short piece we seek to open up some spaces for debate about the position of new and early career academics in the neoliberal academy. We present a range of vignettes highlighting mundane and everyday injustices and responses to these injustices. The vignettes are reflections on our own experiences that spanned roles from senior doctoral candidate to relatively secure early career academic in six different institutions across six countries (Canada, Germany, New Zealand, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America), between 2013 and 2015.[2] While we recognize 'the historical contingency, geographical specificity and political complexity' of tertiary institutions (Larner and Le Heron, 2005: 845), we have intentionally avoided identifying the specific countries and institutions of the different vignettes because in some cases, anonymity is necessary to protect either authors and/or other parties referred to.

It is worth noting, though, that the tertiary education sector in the different countries has experienced similar neoliberalization processes, even if there is variability in the extent to which different processes and their effects have occurred. Considering the space available here, we can only indicate some of these processes and direct the reader to specific research in each of the countries. Neoliberalization in these tertiary sectors include calculative audit cultures, national research assessment exercises, erosion of collegial governance, growth of metric-based prestige systems, reduced funding and increased casualization of labour (for the UK, see Cruikshank, 2016; Pusey and Sealey-Huggins, 2013; for USA and Canada, see Mountz et al., 2015; for Aotearoa New Zealand, see Cupples and Pawson, 2012; for Germany, see Belina et al., 2013; and for the Netherlands, see Bal et al., 2014).

Our aim in the rest of this paper is to illustrate how the 'neoliberal academy' and its hierarchical predecessors are embodied in our choices, identities, performances and actions. Consequently, we argue that resistance to these pressures is also very much embodied and performative. Identifying where and how we might change the academy through our engagement in everyday moments is, therefore, an important task for understanding how we might change forms of vulnerable and unjust academic labour. When we think about what creating everyday spaces of justice means for us, we cannot help but think about the ways in which we are implicated in many of these systems of

[2] Each member of the Collective was asked to write a brief story about an experience of injustice occurring within the institution where they worked or were studying. We then discussed the various experiences, situated them within the growing body of literature on the neoliberalization of tertiary institutions with a view to writing an intervention that troubles the nexus of complicity and vulnerability for early career academics.

oppression and violence in our everyday decisions to be silent, to speak out, or to offer support.

Hierarchies and vulnerabilities

Vignette 1: Patriarchal impunity and emotional labour

The maintenance of the status quo has significant and ongoing effects on vulnerable individuals within our institutions. Sexism and racism within academia are painfully familiar tropes and practices that we recognize from the past, yet they are still very active in our contemporary academic environments, and, as we suggest, bound up with the divisions of power within neoliberal institutions. The ways in which research outputs and funding is prioritized under neoliberalized metrics and accounting practices privileges historical gendered hierarchies and networks within institutions and even protects those who breach regulations and norms of conduct but perform well within the audit culture. The vignette below demonstrates how the neoliberalization of institutions can intersect with and perpetuate more traditional patriarchal hierarchies. It also highlights the complexity invoked as academic subjectivities are reworked to 'serve institutional productivity in a way that entrenches the hierarchical valuation of "women's time"' (Mountz et al., 2015: 1242).

> There is a faculty member in our department who was found in violation of university policy regarding sexual harassment, but he continues working with no apparent restrictions on his teaching or access to undergraduates. Every time I see him walking through the halls of our department, my stomach turns and my face tightens as I try to swallow my anger. For those of us not directly involved, there is little we can do to pursue the case legally. Yet we still have to live with him and the impunity he enjoys in our work environment.
>
> Many of us in the department have taken on the informal emotional labour of protecting ourselves and others from his manipulations. When we see someone in his office who fits his 'type', we make a point of connecting with that person, gently suggesting that they not rely on him. We provide other resources, offering our own support or connecting them to other faculty members. We try to buffer vulnerable students from prolonged engagement with him. This work is done primarily by female graduate students and faculty members. It is an informal system through which we make life a little better for others, but it puts more work on us and is a drain on both time and emotion.

While academic institutions have traditionally been male-dominated spaces (Bondi, 1993; Bondi and Peake, 1988; Mahtani, 2006; Pulido, 2002), where 'predatory' sexual behaviour was common, we suggest that audit culture provides a means by which such behaviour continues to be condoned. One wonders whether the senior faculty member in this story would have been protected had

he not 'measured up' within the audit culture. And indeed, had he not, would the sexual harassment charge have been precisely the vehicle through which to end the tenure of a 'non-performing' faculty member. Simultaneously, while those within the inner circle of patriarchal power are protected, those in more vulnerable positions take on the emotional labour of protection with those subject to discrimination and harassment. This labour is made invisible within neoliberal institutions focused on measurable outputs and assessment matrices. While we would not stop this sort of supportive emotional labour, we question whether or not we are living our politics by doing so. While we believe it is important for the individuals we are supporting, we wonder if we are simultaneously letting the system discipline us into silence and acceptance of the institution's status quo.

Vignette 2: Intersecting vulnerabilities

The perpetual scarcity of funding in the neoliberal academy creates competition for the limited resources available. This competition tends to reinforce the status quo as those in positions of power become gatekeepers. Precarity becomes the norm for early career academics, precarity that is exacerbated by other forms of discrimination.

> A few years ago, our department had an accomplished post-doctoral fellow, a visible minority, doing postcolonial scholarship and practicing subaltern methodologies. Acknowledging that she was an asset to our intellectual community, the department offered her a fixed term, non-tenure track (NTT) line with the supposed goal of finding money for a tenure track position for her. But as soon as she went into the NTT, it was as if she lost all value. When a new tenure-track position was advertised in the department, the posting was not written to include her work. In the end, the position was offered to a white woman, a North American whose work closely aligned with others already in the department. In the process, our department lost the only postcolonial scholar specifically teaching non-eurocentric social theory.

What happened here? Was it that she challenged the theoretical assumptions of other faculty members? Or, as a visible minority, was she 'presumed incompetent' (Gutierrez y Mus et al., 2012)? Or, was it simply work overload that meant she could not publish? Of course, it was some combination of the above. Consequently, it is impossible to point the finger at any one person in any department for this type of outcome, but it is also impossible to accept that we had no control in this process. In this case, we question our complicity in perpetuating institutional structures and procedures by following 'the process'. Different departments have varying degrees of openness in the recruitment processes for new staff. Where they are open, we can ensure that we are actively engaged and vigilant to expose discriminatory practices for what they are. We can use our everyday connections with colleagues – our informal corridor chats – to

encourage different approaches to recruitment. That means being as engaged as possible in the hiring process and taking the time to meet with candidates. We are mindful that this puts yet more responsibility on us to do the labour of solidarity building and does not account for entrenched departmental politics, but it is at least a means of challenging the strict implementation of neoliberal matrices in assessing the value of a potential candidate.

Complicities with neoliberalism

Vignette 3: Hierarchical complicities

The trend of increasingly casualized teaching labour in the neoliberal academy is highly problematic – and it is probably down to those of us who have job security to step up to work toward solutions. There is a fine-grained hierarchy here, which generally includes: (a) graduate students who act as teaching assistants and sometimes run whole courses; (b) sessional or adjunct faculty who teach individual courses on a short-term, contractual basis; and (c) contract-limited faculty appointed on an annual or maybe longer-term basis, hired primarily to teach. If we then include permanent and secure faculty, there is a four-scale teaching hierarchy at most universities. Common to all institutions, however, is the dependence of permanent faculty on these precarious academic labourers – as is the university itself. Adjuncts take on extra teaching loads that result from sabbaticals and service or research buy-outs from teaching responsibilities for permanent faculty, as well as unexpected rises in student numbers, and so forth. They then take on the reverse livelihood burden (i.e. lost income) of losing teaching loads as permanent faculty return to teaching, student numbers decline, and so on. As much as it creates precarity, adjunctification can be identified as a neoliberal process of shifting responsibilities and management downwards onto permanent faculty – we become line managers, agents of discipline when it comes to the lives of adjuncts. There is a risk that our critical focus remains on our teaching and not its context; we find the time to challenge racism, sexism and inequality in our course content, but not always to change everyday working practices. In this we may be complicit as the following vignette illustrates:

> Here it is important to think about my own, complicit role in the exploitation of adjuncts and teaching assistants. It has not escaped my notice that they are often better teachers than I am, often more committed, and often know more than me about the area I teach. I like to think that I have a better handle on the overall objectives and purposes of my courses – but I have no proof to support this claim. So, I end up managing people who might be better positioned to deliver my courses than me, but who, because of their insecure position, keep quiet or phrase their criticism of my actions in ways that don't hurt my feelings (not all do so though!). I find myself sitting at the top of one hierarchy and with an enormous

> amount of influence over who works and who doesn't in my particular courses; for example, I am the one who selects the teaching assistants (TA) each year who work with me. Now, I don't know how this dependence on me impacts on these TAs lives and livelihoods, but I can guess [...] and in guessing, I realize how much power I exert in my daily life and through the decisions I make as a contributor to university governance.

How to counter this? Some of us try to share our workspaces with adjuncts who are not allocated space in the department. Others employ creative accounting by trying to pay more hours than are actually worked, adjusting pre-existing budgets upward wherever possible to account for the inevitable shortfall. We also try to provide other opportunities for publishing and research, mentoring where requested. And again the nature of these everyday subversions, while helpful and supportive to adjuncts, is individualized and may remain invisible. Strategically and openly discussing the nature of precarity inherent in the casualization of labour with senior (sympathetic) academics who may be in positions of relative power and who can shift hiring practices within departments is a further step in denaturalizing such hierarchies.

Vignette 4: Self-disciplining complicity

Another form of self-disciplining complicity refers to performance metrics, an increasingly prevalent management tool in the neoliberal academy (Castree, 2006; Mountz et al., 2015; Shore, 2008). Such metrics often require we develop future research plans, graduate supervision goals, and teaching development programmes. In countries like the UK there is also an increasing emphasis on identifying the 'impact' of our research – no matter how impractical that may be (Collini, 2011). Like any good new academic worker, we all spend time filling out forms while also being aware of how it disciplines us to be a good academic worker – one that is mindful of the requirement to publish the 'right' kind of articles in the 'right' kinds of journals. How this management-through-metrics is experienced is demonstrated by the next vignette:

> My first formal professional development planning meeting was within three months of my arrival in my first academic post. I was nervous. It was the first meeting I'd had with the head of school since my appointment. I needn't have been – I was in and out of the meeting in less than 10 minutes. I had completed the required matrix, but I hadn't been told that the real purpose was to see how I was likely to perform in the national research assessment process that was coming up. If I had known, I would have included additional material and asked some further questions. I was duly assessed as an early career, and on the right track – better than the lowest category in which I might be at risk of being restructured out of a job (or had I been older, encouraged to retire early) and not close enough to the next category to be worth further thought. At the end of the meeting, I felt like I was dismissed, waved off, didn't really count. On the one hand, I felt relief – I had a license to not worry too much about my research outputs for the next 20

> months. But on the other hand I was annoyed at the attitude, at being assessed and categorized within a set of crazy metrics rather than undertaking some constructive career planning in a supportive meeting with my senior colleagues. I felt annoyed that I wasn't given any support that might encourage me to work harder; that they thought I wasn't worth that investment (e.g. teaching relief). I felt that the process was unjust. Not only did I take it personally, I felt that early career academics were immediately disadvantaged by the assessment categories.

Even in the midst of our frustration about such measurements, we are aware of how we are responding as neoliberal subjects, frequently being measured and found wanting. We aspire to be 'good academics' but how we define that role differs from and yet is entangled with the institutional definitions inscribed in performance measures. We are shaped by these even as we contest them. As Cupples and Pawson (2012) write, drawing on Judith Butler's ideas of subjectivity as always fragmented, in process and comprised of multiple subject positions, we are subject to these (neoliberal) disciplinary technologies in having to 'give an account of ourselves' even as we seek to articulate our own path as 'academics'. The shaping effects and tensions of being always 'in-against-and-beyond' the neoliberal university (Pusey and Sealey-Huggins, 2013), present us with the uneasiness of always being more or less neoliberal subjects, and complicit in that which we contest.

To achieve what we see as the possibilities of creating meaningful change to address injustices through academia (teaching, research, working with communities), we also have to comply with the institutional values, qualities and performance criteria we despise in academia – research outputs of a particular type, read only by those producing similar types of output, the increasingly metric focused assessments by citations, individual competition, and privileging research outputs at the expense of an appreciation of the value of learning and teaching. However, such metrics do not stop us finding alternative ways to produce and share our 'output' – like this article and its predecessors (The SIGJ2 Writing Collective, 2012a, 2012b). Here we have deliberately sought to frame our writing as a collective process, which is itself one of our tim-adical actions in the university. By doing so, we challenge the focus on individual intellectual value and promote a collective voice in knowledge production.

Undervalued labours

Vignette 5: Activism and advocacy

In our current work contexts, activism and community engagement are still marginalized and undervalued in our lives as academics. While there is a range of institutional responses to such work – from active discouragement to an

expectation that it is done as yet another component of (but not replacement for) academic publishing, we find we are institutionally incentivized and disciplined to reproduce a narrow, academic community to which we can belong.

> There are challenges with being, primarily, an academic and only secondarily a social justice advocate or activist. Often, important 'real world' work is sidelined in pursuit of my academic work. In some ways, apart from teaching, social justice seems to end up all but written out of the neoliberal universities equation.

This is, however, not always the case. For example, some scholar activists go out of their way to design classes that engage with community agreements. But this again comes at a cost:

> In one case, a colleague teaches a class that is rooted in engaging with a community group and creating a final project that ends up being a public event. The problem is that this colleague's work is less appreciated by the university at a variety of scales, precisely because of this important engagement. They had more difficulty with the promotion process and have been less able to devote time to other aspects of academic life because of the time commitment in this type of work. As academics, we are by and large not rewarded for being unconventional inside our institutions.

Generally, our concern is with the role that advocacy work plays. On the one hand, we believe engagement outside the university should be normal. We need to encourage our respective institutions to provide us, as graduate students and early career faculty, with the space for community engagement that leads to the promotion of our work as social justice advocates, and to value this work as we value research. On the other hand, we have to recognize that an important part of our role in society *is* to contribute to academic debates and to drive those debates – as arcane as they may feel sometimes – in ways that challenge naturalized neoliberal assumptions and open up other possible ways of thinking.

The way we value each other and the work we do in the academy is conditioned by particular expectations that must be learned. As we are disciplined, we expect the same of others; it is difficult to change how and what we value as academics if we do not challenge this. Some places are doing this with the introduction of community-focused academic career paths – e.g. Syracuse's Department of Geography has a 'community geographer' and evaluation mechanisms (e.g. tenure criteria) to support these. Others, like the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia, have launched a Professional Development network with a mentoring system providing opportunities for graduate students to leave academia altogether. These programs have little weight in terms of academic merit, nor are faculty expected to engage, but they do provide alternatives to academic pathways.

Vignette 6: Teaching

The limitations placed on our abilities to engage with social advocacy work can be challenged in the classroom. Teaching takes us away from the publications we, as neoliberal subjects, depend on for our advancement through the university hierarchy. Yet, it is also where our influence is most felt. The spectrum of political debate that is able to take place in classroom spaces requires us to question what sorts of justice and politics and what sorts of student subjectivities we (want to) produce and reproduce within its confines. Doing our jobs well means engaging with students to discuss the problems with agency and global inequalities of class, race, gender and wealth so that we can all take actions without reproducing these inequalities. But, for example, what do we do in pedagogical moments when a new text or a play or a protest or a film incites in our students the urge for an alternative vision of the way the world works, as the following vignette demonstrates?

> One of the films that I show while teaching about globalization and the intricacies of global connections is Darwin's Nightmare, a 2004 documentary film directed by the Austrian filmmaker, Hubert Sauper. It traces the links between the Nile perch, a predatory fish introduced to the waters of Lake Victoria in the 1950s, to the growth of the commercial export fishing industry in Mwanza, Tanzania, to the Ukrainian pilots who take fish and fruit from Africa to Europe, to the death of a Tanzanian sex worker at the hands of a violent pilot, to the EU officials who downplay the environmental and social impacts of the predator fish and encourage the growth of the export industry, to the street children who sniff glue made from the plastic fish packaging, and to the revelation that the pilots import arms and tanks from Europe for internal African wars. As one of the pilots laments, his voice choked with emotion and his head bowed low, 'the children of Africa receive guns for Christmas, the children of Europe receive grapes'. Frankly, the film is exhausting, upsetting, and fascinating, and the students feel these emotions acutely. Asking 'so...what did you think?' to prompt discussion after the film generates nothing but a weighty silence that fills the room. And after a minute or so, the first question is, 'So what can we do?' Followed by, 'We want to do something'.

Of course, new steps towards action are exciting, but complicated if we deal with those kinds of global connections. Thus, we must seek ways to couple our projects of raising students' awareness about injustice with examples and experiences of how to effect change so as not to leave our students or ourselves feeling paralyzed. We are not suggesting that all of our courses are embedded in local activism. Rather, we suggest a need to involve action within our course designs. Direct action within communities is great, but even incorporating case studies of action can show our students that it is possible to make a difference even if it is at a tiny scale in the context of broader issues.

Conclusion

Our effort to avoid paralysis spurred us on to write this article. We are each individually struggling to survive within our institutions while not losing our sense of purpose, our desire for a better world. Our suggestions for action may seem timid, and they are, but they keep us moving forward. They keep us from paralysis; they allow us to practice alternative ways of being in the midst of neoliberal institutions.

We have offered a range of ordinary, everyday instances that highlight the implications of neoliberalizing universities. In turn, we have also offered ordinary, everyday and mundane responses to these effects, what we call tim-adical actions. In so doing, we want to stress that the fight for justice is always a daily task: It is often mundane – speaking up in meetings, talking to someone, making connections across and beyond the institution, rethinking our comments, etc. – and has to be done on almost a daily basis. It does not have to be grandiose or global. What it does have to be, however, is thoughtful, especially in the combination of the means and the ends we seek.

Promoting justice can produce odd allies and this is where some of our greatest impacts will be felt – beyond fellow travellers or believers. Some of our best allies are already with us. In addition to the allies amongst our colleagues, friends, and families, we have potential allies amongst the students who we teach. It is easy to forget that 40-50 percent of people in many countries now go to university, meaning that nearly half the population ends up within our reach. Engaging with students can be a powerful way to promote justice – this can involve engaging with them in alternative ways of thinking about politics, advocacy, and social justice more broadly. Sharing visions and hopes for change are things we must work at together, and then leave students to get on with in their lives, in making the changes they think are just.

What this illustrates, to us at least, is that we need to engage as much with justice *inside* the university as *outside* it. To do this requires that we change the university along with ourselves. If our aim is justice, our means are our research, our teaching and our service – we must combine these aims and means or we lose the critical, yet mundane meaning of justice we wish to support. The university is not lost to neoliberalism just yet. There is still room to reclaim it as a space of hope and change, as demonstrated by recent calls for radical provocations against the university that begin as a struggle from *within*.[3] To do so requires that we face

[3] See for example "Call for Provocations: Stealing from the University: Within, Against, and Beyond the Criminal Institution" http://undercommoning.org/cfp-stealing/, accessed 29 April 2016

up to and challenge the vulnerabilities, hierarchies and complicities we are implicated in. We must also remember that we are not alone. The more neoliberal thought tries to separate, individualize and weaken us as self-seeking individuals, the more we have to remember our greatest strength is our ability to forge connections and work together.

references

Bal, E., E. Grassiani and K. Kirk (2014) 'Neoliberal individualism in Dutch universities: Teaching and learning anthropology in an insecure environment', *Learning and Teaching,* 7(3): 46-72.

Belina, B., T. Petzold., J. Schardt and S. Schipper (2013) 'Neoliberalising the Fordist university: A tale of two campuses in Frankfurt a. M., Germany', *Antipode*, 45(3): 738-759.

Bondi, L. (1993) 'Gender and geography: Crossing boundaries', *Progress in Human Geography*, 17(2): 241-246.

Bondi, L. and L. Peake (1988) 'Fending for ourselves: women as teachers of geography in higher education', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education,* 12(2): 216-218.

Butler, J. (2004) *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. London: Verso.

Canally, C. (2012) 'Timidity and the radical academic mind: A response to The SIGJ2 Writing Collective'.

[https://radicalantipode.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/culum-canally-response-to-sigj2.pdf]

Castree, N. (2006). 'Research assessment and the production of geographical knowledge', *Progress in Human Geography*, 30(6): 747-782.

Castree, N. and M. Sparke (2000) 'Introduction: Professional geography and the corporatization of the university: Experiences, evaluations, and engagements', *Antipode*, 32(3): 222-229.

Collini, S. (2011) 'Research must not be tied to politics', *The Guardian*, 1 April. [http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/apr/01/research-arts-and-humanities-research-council]

Cruikshank, J. (2016) 'Putting business at the heart of higher education: On neoliberal interventionism and audit culture in UK universities', *Open Library of Humanities*, 2(1): 1-33.

Cupples, J. and E. Pawson (2012) 'Giving an account of oneself: The PBRF and the neoliberal university', *New Zealand Geographer*, 68(1): 14-23.

Dowling, R. (2008) 'Geographies of identity: labouring in the "neoliberal" university', *Progress in Human Geography*, 32(6): 812-820.

Fraser, N. (2013) *Scales of justice: Reimagining political space in a globalizing world*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gill, R. (2009) 'Breaking the silence: The hidden injuries of neo-liberal academia', in R. Flood and R. Gill (eds.) *Secrecy and silence in the research process: Feminist reflections*. London: Routledge.

Gutierrez y Mus, G., Y.F. Niemann, C.G. Gonzalez and A.P. Harris (2012) *Presumed incompetent: The intersections of race and class for women in academia*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

Larner, W. and R. Le Heron (2005) 'Neo-liberalizing spaces and subjectivities: Reinventing New Zealand universities', *Organization*, 12(6): 843-862.

Mahtani, M. (2006) 'Challenging the ivory tower: Proposing anti-racist geographies within the academy', *Gender, Place and Culture,* 13(1): 21-25.

Mirowski, P. (2011) *ScienceMart*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mountz, A., A. Bonds, B. Mansfield, J. Loyd, J. Hyndman, M. Walton-Roberts, R. Basu, R. Whitson, R. Hawkins, T. Hamilton and W. Curran (2015) 'For slow scholarship: A feminist politics of resistance through collective action in the neoliberal university', *ACME*, 14(4): 1235-1259.

NZGS PG Network (2014). 'Postgraduates performing powerfully in a changing academic environment', *New Zealand Geographer*, *70*, 61-68.

Pulido, L. (2002) 'Reflections on a white discipline', *The Professional Geographer,* 54(1): 42-49.

Pusey, A. and L. Sealey-Huggins (2013) 'Transforming the university: Beyond students and cuts, *ACME,* 12(3): 433-458.

Sen, A. (2011) *The idea of justice*. Harvard University Press.

Shore, C. (2008) 'Audit culture and illiberal governance: Universities and the politics of accountability', *Anthropological Theory*, 8(3): 278-298.

Shore, C. (2010) 'Beyond the multiversity: Neoliberalism and the rise of the schizophrenic university', *Social Anthropology*, 18(1): 15-29.

Shore, C. and L. McLauchlan (2012) '"Third mission" activities, commercialisation and academic entrepreneurs', *Social Anthropology*, 20(3): 267-286.

Slaughter, S. and G. Rhoades (1996) 'The emergence of a competitiveness research and development policy coalition and the commercialization of academic science and technology', *Science, Technology & Human Values*, 21(3): 303-339.

The SIGJ Writing Collective (2012a) 'What can we do? The challenge of being new academics in neoliberal universities', *Antipode*, 44(4): 1055-58.

The SIGJ Writing Collective (2012b) '"Tim-adical" action: A reply to Culum Canally'. [https://radicalantipode.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/sigj2-reply-to-culum-canally.pdf]

Young, I.M. (2011) *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton University Press.

the authors

The Tim-adical Writing Collective is an international group of scholars who met in Manchester, at the second annual Antipode Summer Institute for the Geographies of Justice (SIGJ2) in 2009 (see https://antipodefoundation.org/institute-for-the-%20geographies-of-justice/). The current authors were part of the 16 member SIGJ2 Writing Collective that formed as a result of that Summer Institute. The Tim-adical Writing Collective comprises six authors from the SIGJ2 collective who published under that name in 2012, but who have now refined their mission, which is to promote tim-adical change, (i.e. timid and radical action - see footnote 1 above) in the academy through their collective writing projects. The collective members are Kean Birch (York University, Canada), Sophie Bond (University of Otago, Aotearoa New Zealand), Tina Harris (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands), Dawn Hoogeveen (University of British Columbia, Canada), Nicole Laliberte (University of Toronto, Canada) & Marit Rosol (University of Calgary, Canada).

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 705-719

On quitting

Francesca Coin

abstract

Over the past few years, there has been an ostensible growth in 'quit lit', a new genre of literature made of columns and opinion editorials detailing the reasons why scholars – with or without tenure – leave academia. This paper examines the impact of the neoliberal academia on subjectivity. In the neoliberal university, subjectivity is caught into a web of conflicting expectations. On the one hand, it is expected to live up to high standards of competition. On the other hand, the body experiences competition as a celebrated form of self-abuse. In this context, quitting is not merely about resigning an academic position. It is a symptom of the urge to create a space between the neoliberal discourse and the sense of self; an act of rebellion intended to abdicate the competitive rationality of neoliberal academia and embrace different values and principles.

Introduction

On May 3rd, 2013, Keguro Macharia wrote a piece for *The New Inquiry* called 'On quitting'. It was a courageous, painfully beautiful piece that started with a diagnosis: 'bipolar disorder, an oscillation between periods of frenetic activity and periods of profound depression' (Macharia, 2013). This is a condition perfectly compatible with the academic calendar, he added, chronicled by an alternation of almost drug-induced bursts of mental productivity followed by a near-catatonic state of exhaustion and prolonged delays.

> I spend glorious summer days in bed, unable to move, unable to muster up the energy to turn on the fan, unable to shower, unable to think. I find solace in trash romance and children's books. Reading sustains something, a faint flicker of something. It gets far worse than I will ever confess. And then worse than that. (Macharia, 2013)

Keguro Macharia's is a story of psychic health and academic production. The story of a black man in post-racial U.S. who simply was unable to bear the enduring violence of Western modernity. Tenure and full professorship 'come with immense benefits... Being located in a research institution provides privilege and access: from here, the gaze is always upwards' (Macharia, 2013). Yet, the pursuit of excellence exudes toxicity and turmoil.

I read his article over and over. It was painfully familiar. It brought me back to an uncanny territory that was both attractive and repulsive, like a pain I knew only too well. I did my PhD in the United States. I arrived in the summer of 2001, just a few weeks before the collapse of the Twin Towers and a few weeks after the 2001 G8 Summit in Genoa. Despite the tremendous shock caused by 9/11 to the social psyche, those were years of academic conformity and competition. The Occupy generation was still nascent, high tuition and debt were still portrayed as private responsibilities, graduate students were still teaching full time as a cheap, underpaid labor force and, especially during the early years of my experience, nights were still haunted by the ghosts of 9/11. Notwithstanding its racial contours, there were words in Keguro Macharia's story that stirred my soul. They reminded me of the dynamics of competition and coercion that cut across racial boundaries – gestures of interpersonal violence so wearing that my body responded to the memories of those years with spasms of anxiety and repulsion.

I have been enamored with Keguro Macharia's words for a long time, with his poetic evocation of our darkest secrets and our most shameful frailties. Yet it took me years to work out why I felt so vulnerable and exposed as a PhD student in the US. All I could articulate was that the demand for efficiency and functionalism made my life dysfunctional. For me, Ayn Rand's *Virtue of selfishness* (1964) and the preclusion of cooperation translated into a chronic feeling of peril. As John T. Cacioppo and William Patrick argue in their beautiful book *Loneliness* (2008), competition impairs our ability to connect and trust each other. In my case this translated into long periods of silence when I was simply afraid; afraid of people, afraid of judgement, afraid of hostility and afraid of retaliation. It reminded me of an article by Tom Terez (2001) which describes a market-research firm where management uses intimidation and punishment to implement efficiency. 'Did you see all those rats?', said one employee watching a TV show called *Fear Factor* where each person was strapped in a pit with hundreds of rats. 'That's how I feel when I'm at work', he added. 'It's that scary' (Terez, 2001). That is how I felt too. Being in that competitive space created a sense of tension as if rats were crawling over my body. For several years I sedated the anxiety with binge eating followed by feelings of self-condemnation. At the end of my PhD I left the United States with a one-way ticket to Bangkok, after

packing up my life into a rucksack. Similarly, Keguro Macharia resigned from his job, left the United States and moved back to Kenya.

Several years later I realized that it was not just about me or Keguro Macharia. 'Quitting' was a widespread trend in academia and it involved over-exploited adjuncts as well as full professors. In fact, exhaustion and self-abuse were symptoms of a conflict much broader than I could grasp back then. The transition from industrial to cognitive capitalism had transformed universities into a new frontier of accumulation, the feeding ground intended to produce human capital, value and truth (Coin, 2014; 2017). Within a context of crisis chronicled by a transition into post-Fordism, universities were the golden goose meant to bring the profit rate back up to the levels enjoyed many years before. Gradually, universities became market enterprises characterized by a neo-liberal governance, stakeholder expectations and a culture of entrepreneurship. The academic subject was facing an *impasse*. On the one hand, it was 'fixed capital' in charge of economic growth. At the same time, it was a bundle of hopes and desires longing for self-expression. In the neoliberal academia, subjectivity became a battlefield. While capital used casualization to command subjectivity and crowd-source innovation, the academic subject hankered after room for self-determination, a pursuit that ought not to be sidetracked by the dire need for social recognition or financial security.

This paper analyses the causes of quitting academia: the growing discomfort of cognitive laborers whose ethical values, material needs and social ideals are increasingly at odds with the isolated entrepreneur of the neo-liberal university. Over the past few years, there has been an ostensible growth in 'quit lit', a new genre of literature made up of columns and op-eds detailing the reasons why scholars – with or without tenure – leave academia. These public columns transform the act of quitting into a political process whereby the subject abdicates its competitive rationality to embrace a fundamental loyalty to different values and principles. In neo-liberal academia, the subject is requested to embrace the entrepreneurial values as its own. In recent times, many scholars have felt a growing conflict between their ethical ideals and the array of measured, meaningless and bureaucratized tasks that fill their lives. An ambivalent phenomenon, quitting describes a choice often made in isolation which signals a sense of powerlessness before the growing demands of neo-liberal academia. At the same time, quitting chronicles the desire to rebel against its values. A symbol of the uneasy relationship between academic labor and the organizational strains of neo-liberal academia, quitting can be interpreted as a sign of weakness before the invasive demands of market competition as well as an attempt to interrupt the neoliberal discourse and its self-positing structures. Margaret Thatcher used to say, 'Economics are the method: the object is to

change the soul'. In this context, quitting can be understood as a spontaneous act of disobedience. A political decision aimed at creating a space for self-crafting.

In order to analyze quitting, this paper frames it within the neoliberal attempt to capture the general intellect and use it as a source of innovation. Within this context, it looks at the double-bind that confronts the academic subject. A phenomenon rooted in the need to un-tie a different self, quitting can be interpreted as a last resort to resolve the disarray between what people are asked to do and what they wish to become. At the same time, it is the stepping stone in a collective discourse that ought to transform an inner conflict into a political alternative.

Claiming apathy back into academia

Let us start from the beginning. It was in the late Sixties that the purpose of higher education changed. During a press conference held by Ronald Reagan on February 28th, 1967, a month into his term, the Republican Governor of California assured everyone that 'there is no one in this administration that intends to do anything that will be harmful for education. But', he added, 'we do believe that there are certain intellectual luxuries that perhaps we could do without' (Reagan, 1967). When asked to define the notion of intellectual luxury, Reagan described a four-credit course at the University of California at Davis for learning how to demonstrate and organize demonstrations (Berrett, 2015). 'I figure that carrying a picket sign is sort of like, oh, a lot of things you pick up naturally', he said, 'like learning how to swim by falling off the end of a dock'. 'Taxpayers', he concluded, shouldn't be 'subsidizing intellectual curiosity' (Reagan, 1967; Berrett, 2015). What was happening?

As Andrew Ross reported in his book *Creditocracy* (2014), in those years 'the college-educated population merited special attention' (2014: 103). The effective functioning of a democratic political system requires 'some measure of apathy and non-involvement on the part of some individuals and groups', maintained Samuel Huntington in the Trilateral Commission report, *The Crisis of Democracy* (Crozier et al., 1975: 169).

The growing discomfort of the Reagan administration with the liberal conception of education as a public good intended to enlarge the capacity of all to access and produce knowledge (Caffentzis, 2005) was symbolic of a major shift. As suggested by the analysis of cognitive capitalism (Vercellone, 2007), the development of political skepticism towards an emancipatory use of knowledge reflects the crisis of the progressive development of capitalism. During the

Fordist years, the progressive development of capitalism was the propulsive heart of an unprecedented growth of science and technology which created the conditions for the development of mass production. At the same time, such unprecedented intellectual activity nurtured the most informed generation in human history. At the end of the Sixties, the scientific and technological growth of industrial capitalism came to a halt. The tremendous growth in the organic composition of capital was no longer able to 'suck surplus-value from working-class living labor' (Marazzi, 2011: 30). To put it with Gramsci in the *Prison Notebooks*, in the long run the organic composition of capital grows to such an extent that the rate of profit will fall even if the rate of exploitation is rising (1971: 280). In this context, social antagonism took the form of a conflict between knowledge as innovation and knowledge as power (Vercellone, 2007). In other words, knowledge was no longer considered as a common good intended to create aware citizens and a free society, but as a private commodity instrumental to economic growth. In this sense, subsidizing knowledge was useful only insofar as it produced discernible impact on innovation and competitiveness. As Milton Friedman maintained since *Capitalism and freedom* (1962), higher education has some positive externalities and many negative ones. Moreover, knowledge was an intellectual luxury that came at a high a political cost. It produced unruly citizens and unnecessary social turmoil. In sum, it had to be made accountable. Since then, the restructuring of higher education echoed an old Marxian prophecy whereby:

> beyond a certain point, the development of the powers of production becomes a barrier for capital; hence capital becomes a barrier for the development of the productive powers of labor. When it has reached this point, capital, i.e. wage labour, enters into the same relation towards the development of social wealth and of the forces of production as the guild system, serfdom, slavery, and is necessarily stripped off as a fetter [...] This is in every respect the most important law of modern political economy, and the most essential for understanding the most difficult relations. It is the most important law from the historical standpoint. It is a law which, despite its simplicity, has never before been grasped and, even less, consciously articulated. (Marx, 1973:749)

Subjectivity as a battlefield

After the Seventies, the purpose of education changed. In those years, the Thatcher administration called for the reform of curricula as a public backlash against student protests (Ferlie and Andresani, 2009). At the same time, US President Ronald Reagan was becoming infamous for his condemnations of protesting students, arguing that 'hippies, radicals and filthy speech advocates' should be 'taken by the scruff of the neck and thrown off campus – permanently' (Ferlie and Andresani, 2009: 180; also see Clabaugh, 2004; Turner, 1966). In

line with the main argument of Human Capital Theory and Endogenous Growth Theory, policy interventions focused on giving incentives for the production of innovation, and considered synchronizing academic production with market demands (Livingstone, 1997: 5). Slowly, the enclosure of academic production became the strategy expected to fuel economic growth and employment rates. The assumption was that growth could be endless if only human capacities were effectively exploited. Since academic institutions are provided with extensive public support, private actors became increasingly interested in research that may have a positive impact on the corporate world. Slowly, universities became accountable for delivering innovation and human capital according to market demands, encouraging the development of innovation as a direct force of production. In this context, subjectivity became a battlefield, the target of technologies that forced each individual to implement their performance in a global pipeline of talent and skills.

Since the Eighties and Nineties, the neoliberal reform of global education supported the international restructuring of the entire supply-chain of education from the top down, hence tailoring teaching, pre-establishing research objectives, filtering international curricula and transforming research into a form of *deliverology,* a notion used by the Blair administration to demonstrate the progress of public services in delivering established results – in our case, *research on demand*. From primary school to tertiary education, curricula were re-defined according to specific teaching goals and desired learning outcomes. Research practices also underwent a profound transformation, relying on different technologies to measure academic performance across national boundaries, but ultimately relying on evaluative metrics to enumerate, classify, group and rank productivity, with the ultimate goal of placing each individual and institution into a hierarchy that would allow stakeholders to restrict funding to those projects that respond to market needs (Arrow, 1975; Morrissey, 2013). Evaluation metrics have often been explained as a technology of governmentality capable of producing performative subjects and entrepreneurs of the self (Rose and Miller, 2008).

Deleuze's notion of control, however, facilitates an analysis of the effects of governmentality on the subject, highlighting how recognition and merit often translate on the body into sources of self-abuse. In *Postscript on the societies of control,* Deleuze (1995) uses the notion of 'salary according to merit' to describe the transformation of subjectivity in the society of control. Paraphrasing Deleuze's expression, we could argue that academic capitalism relied on external funding to guide the transition from industrial to cognitive capitalism. Since the Eighties, 'financial vocabularies, grammars and judgments have infiltrated higher education, transforming teaching and research into outputs that can be calculable in financial terms' (Rose, 1999: 152). This process amounted 'to a re-

examination and eventual rejection of deeply entrenched traditional concepts and beliefs' (Mokyr, 2003: 36), a process whereby knowledge can find validation only if it reflects market priorities. Be it researchers who compete for grants, students who compete for loans, or seventeen thousand universities competing for reputational credit, evaluation acts as a filter, 'a screening device, in that it sorts out individuals of differing abilities, thereby conveying information to the purchasers of labor' (Arrow, 1973: 194). Through evaluation, capital measures, compares, ranks, validates or dismisses forms of conduct according to their ability to meet its goals. In so doing, it

> diminishes labor time in the necessary form so as to increase it in the superfluous form; hence posits the superfluous in growing measure as a condition – question of life or death – for the necessary. On the one side, then, it calls to life all the powers of science and of nature, as of social combination and of social intercourse, in order to make the creation of wealth independent (relatively) of the labour time employed on it. On the other side, it wants to use labour time as the measuring rod for the giant social forces thereby created, and to confine them within the limits required to maintain the already created value as value. (Marx, 1973: 706)

We are right in the middle of the so-called 'Fragment on machines' in Marx's *Grundrisse*, and it feels normal because it is a daily experience for many of us. The transformation of academic labor into a precarious occupation binds the pursuit of funding to the achievement of pre-established goals. Here the introduction of grants, loans or external resources, reduces paid labor time to a minimum while it increases labor in the superfluous form, thus ensuring that capital acts as a subjectivity of command enforcing working as much as possible as the only conduct capable of securing access to credit. In this context, self-exploitation is defined as a meritorious form of conduct. Under these conditions, subjectivity is forced to constitute itself according to the market priorities and at the same time is wounded by a constant process of self-abuse.

Imprisoned in a web of conflicting expectations about how one is supposed to be, subjectivity is caught in a double-bind, expected to live up to high standards of competition and at the same time unable to fulfill them or, to put it as Mark Fisher does, 'good for nothing' (2014). In this context, Keguro Macharia's diagnosis of a bipolar disorder seems not an exception but rather the symbol of the neoliberal age. As Mark Fisher (2014) explains, neoliberal rationality maintains 'that it is within every individual's power to make themselves whatever they want to be', while the same population that has all its life been sent the message that it can do anything it wants, feels 'the underlying conviction that we are all uniquely responsible for our own misery and therefore deserve it'. The construction of subjectivity is split between a coercive command that posits market recognition as a reward for competition and an embodied experience that

perceives merit as 'a glorified and socially acceptable form of self-abuse' (Beusman, 2013).

Undoing the neoliberal academic

In time it would become clear that the problem was not just me or Keguro Macharia. Quitting was a widespread trend in academia and it involved over-exploited adjuncts as well as full professors. Over the past few years hundreds such letters have been published on this topic, part of which were collected into an open Google Doc by Sydni Dunn (2013). The question is why so many academics jump off the ivory tower – why do they leave what is considered to be one of the most prestigious jobs in the world?

As Scott Burns (2014) argued in his article, the current situation requires scientists to devote an increasing proportion of their time to secure funding. As mentioned above, the externalization of funding reduces labor in the necessary form and increases it in the superfluous form, thus transforming unpaid labor into a structural component of neo-liberal academia for both tenured and untenured faculty. Writers such as Rebecca Shuman and Katie Ropie who have eloquently written about the neoliberal reform of academic labor have maintained that the university is becoming a de facto exploitative labor market (Collier, 2013). Graduate students, post-docs and adjunct professors often work long hours in hopes of nebulous rewards such as co-authoring papers, receiving recommendation letters or vague promises of future employment. In these instances, precarious workers are often confronted with an overloaded schedule, insufficient reward and growing casualization (Malesic, 2016). At the same time, they are forced to use unpaid labor as a hedge against future unemployment (Ross, 2014). Trapped in the urge to be competitive in the labor market, a growing contingent of PhD students and adjuncts take on debt in order to outsource reproduction tasks hence buying time to compete more (Rampell, 2013). Taking on debt to outsource tedious, unskilled reproductive tasks becomes an opportunity to buy more time for higher-value activities in the future. This paradoxical situation is symbolic of the exploitative arrangement that structures the neoliberal academia, which thrives on casualization to ensure efficiency while it leaves precarious workers no other choice than working as much as possible to increase their hopes of future earnings. In the meantime, an adjunct who teaches several classes to make ends meet while struggling to find time to publish in order not to be at a disadvantage in the labor market, may enter the slippery slope of debt. In this context, the labor of academia can lead to a vicious cycle of overload and burn out, producing a tremendous dislocation within the academic subject. The constant mis-match between organizational strain and personal

values produce burn-out and ethical conflicts particularly in those individuals who perceive academic labor as a passion or a labor of love (Malesic, 2016; Maslach, 2003).

In the Seventies, Silvia Federici argued that one of the main challenges in the 'Wages for housework' campaign lay in the fact that women's exploitation was presented as a 'labor of love', a natural attribute of female personality. In other words, housework was a predisposition:

> a natural attribute of our female physique and personality, an internal need, an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of our female character. [In fact] housework had to be transformed into a natural attribute rather than be recognized as a social contract because from the beginning of capital's scheme for women this work was destined to be unwaged. (Federici, 1975: 2)

Similarly, intellectual labor is often presented as a personality trait of the academic subject, an internal need and even an inner aspiration of its character. Though such labor may have penetrated the affective domain of our lives, its material conditions can be so demanding that it makes it a hard passion to endure.

Especially for part-time or contingent instructors who have no benefits, no office and often no reimbursement for their expenses, quitting their job sometimes outweighs the benefits of staying. According to a recent UC Berkeley report, a quarter of all part-time college faculty and their families are enrolled in public assistance programs, relying on food stamps or Medicaid to help cover basic expenses (Jacobs et al., 2015). It should be added that in many instances contingent faculty outnumbered permanent faculty (Erwin and Wood, 2014). In general, rampant casualization and persistent financial stress put tremendous strain on individuals, often leading them to reduce their expenses, seek a secondary job and ultimately take advantage of weekends and vacations to earn more or finish their work. In this sense, the labor of academia is often said to take a toll on relationships leading to a breakdown of community and long periods of isolation. Rather than a labor of love, academic labor sometimes appears an abusive relationship, an exploitative system characterized by high expectations and uncertain prospects. Neo-liberal academia uses the promise of future employment as the affective currency of unpaid work (Bascetta, 2015). Yet at the same time, rather than a real plan for the future, such promise feels as a soul-sourcing device, a hook meant to capture desire and transform it into a lever for exploitation.

In 2014, Maurizio Lazzarato wrote a critique of the notion of governmentality that speaks directly to the relationship between the academic subject and neo-

liberal academia. Referring to Michel Foucault's analysis of neoliberalism, Lazzarato (2014) argued that the 'entrepreneur of the self', who can be understood as the very embodiment of an individual who seeks reward in its labor, needs to be rethought. From the Eighties, the notion of governmentality has sometimes been interpreted aesthetically as a sophisticated description of the entrepreneur of the self. Yet neoliberal subjectivity does not represent a natural byproduct of bio-capitalism nor are we talking about an ontological mutation. It is rather the result of coercion and blackmail. The academic subject works an unrealistic, 24/7 schedule chronicled by constant overload and frequent burnout. It acts as an individual enterprise whose desire for self-realization translates into being constantly frustrated by feelings of dissatisfaction and an unmanageable workload. What I intend to do here is keep some distance from those interpretations of governmentality which consider competition as an internalized trait free from coercion. As Lazzarato argued elsewhere,

> To become human capital or an entrepreneur of the self means assuming the costs as well as the risks of a flexible and financialized economy, costs and risks which are not only – far from it – those of innovation, but also and especially those of precariousness, poverty, unemployment, a failing health system, housing shortages, etcetera. (Lazzarato, 2012: 51)

It would be useful to read the entire debate between Lazzarato and the post-workerist milieu, which for the most part was published in the Italian Journal *Quaderni di San Precario* (Chicchi, Lucarelli and Mezzadra, 2013) because it highlights the inner dislocation that tears the neoliberal subject. The neoliberal attempt to crowd-source the general intellect and use it as a source of free labor has confronted academics with an aching conflict between the prominence of their ideals and the reality of their daily lives.

Foucault wrote, 'There must be an uprooting that interrupts the unfolding of history, and its long series of reasons why, for a man "really" to prefer the risk of death over the certainty of having to obey' (2005: 263). The uprooting describes the moment of rupture whereby obedience is a greater threat than rebellion. When competition becomes so costly that it entails a constant betrayal of dignity, then all of a sudden the risk of quitting appears less frightening than the prospect of staying. As counter-intuitive as it seems, academic burn-out has become so impairing that some prefer to quit. In this sense, there is sometimes a blurry boundary between an act of defiance and an act of rebellion. In fact, when Camus speaks of the rebel, he may as well refer to the subject who quits. 'What is a rebel?', he asks. 'A man who says no'.

> What does he mean by saying 'no'? He means, for example, that 'this has been going on too long', 'up to this point yes, beyond it no', 'you are going too far', or,

> again, 'there is a limit beyond which you shall not go'. In other words, his no affirms the existence of a borderline (Camus, 1956: 13).

In saying 'no', the rebel reveals the existence of a borderline. Just like Foucault's uprooting, Camus' borderline indicates the boundary beyond which self-abuse cannot be tolerated, a borderline beyond which the status quo must change.

In this sense quitting can be understood as a process of rebellion and self-preservation. Subjectivity is no longer defined by the values of neoliberalism: it unveils a certain loyalty to different values and principles. For more and more academics, the inner dislocation between their inner longing and their obligations finds resolution in an audacity that leads them to choose the risk of unemployment over the betrayal of dignity. In this case, quitting is also a way to find one's own voice. Several times, quitting academia reflects a process of self-preservation and at the same time, a process of self-revelation that shift expectations about who one wants to be (Backer, 2013). Often these writings unveil a sense of excitement at the very decision to quit, as if quitting meant un-muting a neglected part of themselves. Some reports speak of an excited nervousness and disbelief at the very act of resigning, as if creating some distance from academia marked a possibility for liberation and relief (Musselman, 2010). In these reports, the toxic architecture of today's academe seems to devour rather than nourish individual creativity, shedding light on the human cost of academic recognition.

Over the past few years, there have been several instances of activists and academics who have enacted alternative experiments in cooperative universities. From students' activism against the marketization of education (Edu-Factory Collective, 2013) to radical alternatives based on not-for-profit, co-operative models of higher education (Neary and Winn, 2017), these projects intend to build progressive forms of autonomous education based on a more general socialization of access to knowledge, critical theory and cooperation. As far as I am concerned, I have currently a tenured job in Italy. Like many colleagues, I resolve the dislocation between what I have to do and what I wish to do by doubling the amount of work. Ultimately, it is radical alternatives such as the ones I have just mentioned that keep me rooted in the purpose of this job. I have come to believe that the entire purpose of the global restructuring of education that has taken place over the past thirty years was training individuals to accept growing rates of social inequality in our society. Neo-liberal academia trains students to think that everyone is in debt unless they earn credits and that inequalities are inevitable in our society just as inevitable are merit and guilt. I am not at peace with the 'disvalues' that nurture academia and that academia itself contributes to nurture, its cynicism, its accent on individualism and

competition. At the same time, I am persuaded that the cultural conflict that is currently taking place in academia has great importance and broad implications. Neoliberal violence is concealed in narratives of merit and guilt. It follows that producing counter-narratives is paramount to the production of a less unequal world. In this sense, I thoroughly understand why sensitive academics are unwilling to cope with the neoliberal values. At the same time, I believe it is corporate interest that should quit academia, rather than them. In this sense, I am persuaded we should take the act of quitting very seriously as it speaks the truth about learning and teaching conditions in today's academic system. Yet I am afraid that quitting alone should be interpreted rather as a warning sign than as a solution. Quitting is a sign of the growing discomfort academics feel in their labor. My wish is that it also be a stepping stone towards a political alternative where collaboration is the method and the object is to change our world.

references

Arrow, K.J. (1973) 'Higher education as a filter', *Journal of Public Economics*, 2(3): 193-216.

Backer K. J. (2013) 'How to (not) avoid the job market'. [https://chroniclevitae.com/news/214-how-to-not-avoid-the-job-market]

Bascetta, M. (2015) *Economia politica della promessa*. Roma: Manifesto Libri.

Berrett, D. (2015), 'The day the purpose of education changed', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 25 January. [http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Day-the-Purpose-of-College/151359/]

Beusman, C. (2013) 'Study: College makes you feel like shit about yourself', *Jezebel*, 9 September. [http://jezebel.com/study-college-makes-you-feel-like-shit-about-yourself-1402677342]

Burns, S. (2014) 'Miscellaneous thoughts on the academic STEM brain drain or how I learned to stop worrying and leave the lab'. [http://sburns.org/2014/07/10/brain-drain.html]

Cacioppo, J.T. and W. Patrick (2008) *Loneliness: Human nature and the need for social connection*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Caffentzis, G. (2005) 'Academic freedom, the crisis of neoliberalism and the epistemology of torture and espionage: Some cautions', *Review of African Political Economy*, 32(106): 599-608.

Camus, A. (1956) *The rebel: An essay on man in revolt*. London: Vintage.

Chicchi, F., S. Lucarelli and S. Mezzadra (2013) 'Forum su Maurizio Lazzarato', in E. Leonardi (ed.) *Quaderni di San Precario*. [http://quaderni.sanprecario.info/2014/02/governare-e-punire-interiorizzazione-della-colpa-e-governamentalita-autoritaria-parte-ii-di-emanuele-leonardi/]

Clabaugh, G.K. (2004) 'The educational legacy of Ronald Reagan', *Educational Horizons*, 82(4): 256-259.

Coin, F. (2014) 'Turning contradictions into subjects: The cultural logic of university assessment', *Knowledge Cultures*, 1(4): 145-173.

Coin, F. (2017) 'Tearing the neoliberal subject', in E. von Samsonov (ed.) *Epidemic subjects – Radical ontology*. Berlin: Diaphanes.

Crozier, M., S.P. Huntington and J. Watanuki (1975) *The crisis of democracy. Report on the governability of democracies to the Trilateral Commission*. New York: New York University Press.

Collier, J. (2013) 'Jail-breaking my academic career'. [https://medium.com/altac-chronicles/jailbreaking-my-academic-career-3ec7b0fe1671]

Deleuze, G. (1995) 'Postscript on control societies', in *Negotiations*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Dunn, S. (2013) 'Why so many academics quit and tell?', *Chronicle Vitae*. [https://chroniclevitae.com/news/216-why-so-many-academics-quit-and-tell?CID=VTKT1#sthash.2IJLtEqE.dpuf]

Edu-Factory Collective (2013) *Towards a global autonomous university*. New York: Autonomedia.

Erwin, A. and M. Wood (2014) 'The one percent at State U: How university presidents profit from rising student debt and low-wage faculty labor', The Institute for Policy Studies report. [http://www.ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/IPS-One-Percent-at-State-Universities-May2014.pdf]

Federici, S. (1975) *Wages for housework*. Bristol: Falling Wall Press.

Ferlie, E. and Andresani, G. (2009) 'United Kingdom from bureau professionalism to new public management?', in C. Paradeise et al. (eds.) *University governance: Western European comparative perspectives*. London: Springer.

Fisher, M. (2014) 'Good for nothing', *The Occupied Times*. [http://theoccupiedtimes.org/?p=12841]

Friedman, M. (1962), *Capitalism and freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gramsci, A. (1971) *Prison notebook,* trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith. New York: International Publishers.

Jacobs, K., I. Perry and J. MacGillvary (2015) 'The high public cost of low wages. Poverty-level wages cost U.S. taxpayers $152.8 billion each year in public support for working families', UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education. [http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2015/the-high-public-cost-of-low-wages.pdf]

Lazzarato, M. (2012) *The making of the indebted man*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).

Lazzarato, M. (2014) 'Governare e punire interiorizzazione della colpa e governamentalità autoritaria'. [http://quaderni.sanprecario.info/2014/02/governare-e-punire-interiorizzazione-della-colpa-e-governamentalita-autoritaria-parte-iii-risposta-di-maurizio-lazzarato/]

Livingstone, W. (1997) 'The limits of human capital', *Policy Options*, 18(6): 9-13.

Macharia, K. (2013) 'On quitting', *The New Enquiry*, 3 May. [http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/on-quitting/]

Malesic, J. (2016) 'The 40-year-old burnout. Why I gave up tenure for a yet-to-be-determined career', *Chronicle of Higher Education,* 5 October. [http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-40-Year-Old-Burnout/237979]

Maslach, C. (2003) *Burnout: The cost of caring*. Los Altos: Malor Books.

Marazzi, C. (2011) *Violence of financial capitalism*. New York: Semiotext(e).

Marx, K. (1973) *Grundrisse: Foundations of the critique of political economy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Mokyr, J. (2003) 'Mercantilism, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution', in R. Findlay, R.G.H. Henriksson, H. Lindgren and M. Lundahl (eds.) *Eli Heckscher international trade and economic history*. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press.

Morrissey, J. (2013) 'Governing the academic subject: Foucault, governmentality and the performing university', *Oxford Review of Education,* 39(6): 797-810.

Musselman, E.G. (2010) 'Midlife crisis averted'. [http://darkmatterknits.wordpress.com/2010/12/03/midlife-crisis-averted/]

Neary, M. and J. Winn (2017) 'Beyond public and private: A framework for co-operative higher education', *Open Library of Humanities,* 3(2): 1-36.

Rampell, C. (2013) 'Outsource your way to success', *New York Times*, 5 November. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/10/magazine/outsource-your-way-to-success.html?smid=tw-share&_r=0]

Rand, A. (1964) *The Virtue of selfishness: A new concept of egoism*. New York: Penguin.

Reagan, R. (1967) *Press conference of Governor Ronald Reagan*, February 28. Reported by A.C. Kaempfer. [http://www.chronicle.com/items/biz/pdf/Reagan_press_conference_02-28-1967.pdf]

Rose, N. (1999) *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, N. and P. Miller (2008) *Governing the present: Administering economic, social and personal life*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Ross, A. (2014) *Creditocracy and the case for debt refusal*. New York: OR Books.

Terez, T. (2001) 'When fear strikes the workplace', *Workforce*, 80(8): 24. [https://www.questia.com/magazine/1P3-76851906/when-fear-strikes-the-workplace].

Turner, W. (1966) 'Reagan demands Berkeley inquiry; 'Beatniks' and 'Radicals' scored at G.O.P. rally' (special dispatch), *New York Times*, 14 May.

Vercellone, C. (2007) 'From formal subsumption to general intellect: Elements for a Marxist reading of the thesis of cognitive capitalism', *Historical Materialism*, 15(1): 13-36.

the author

Francesca Coin is a lecturer in Sociology at Cà Foscari University of Venice, where she teaches Neoliberal Policies and Global Social Movements. Her research focuses on money, labor and subjectivity. She has published extensively on the evolution of precarious, unpaid and digital labor in a neoliberal society. She is currently working on a book on the relationship between the nature of money and social movements in the current European crisis.
Email: fracoin@unive.it

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 721-725

The "rough beast" that is the REF

John Mingers

review of

Sayer, D. (2015) Rank hypocrisies: The insult of the REF. London: Sage. (HB, pp. 128, £45.00, ISBN: 9781473906563).

This important book should be read, and reflected on, by academics, academic managers, university managers, HEFCE, and those parts of Government that are responsible for creating the 'rough beast' (Yeats, 1994 [1921]) that the research assessment exercise (RAE) has become.

It is no exaggeration to say that the various RAEs (Research Excellence Framework (REF) in its latest 2014 guise) have become the single most important driver of university behaviour in the UK over the last twenty years. Originally intended only to help the Government allocate research funding, they now generate league table positions of particular importance for the research intensive universities. The exercise has become increasingly bloated in terms of the time and resources that it uses – 2014's was estimated to have cost £250 million (*Times Higher*, 2015a)! One could forgive this if the exercise were seen to have beneficial results in terms of improving the UK's research quality and evaluating universities' contributions equitably but it is manifestly the case that it does not, and that it has serious deleterious effects that Sayer forensically documents.

There are many negative impacts of the REF/RAE, not least the closure of healthy departments, job losses, discriminatory practices, huge amounts of

unnecessary psychological stress, and ultimately a loss of innovatory, blue-skies research that will undermine the research of future generations. Sayer accepts all these but makes clear that his book intends to focus primarily on only one element of the assessment regime, that is 'the claim from which the REF derives its entire authority as a mechanism for funding allocation and on which it stakes its entire legitimacy as a process of research evaluation – *the claim that it is a process of expert peer review'* [2]. This makes the book very focused but at the same time obviously limits the scope of the critique, which is a shame.

After the Introduction, Chapter 1 sets out what Sayer calls international benchmarks for peer review. Here, he largely draws on American models used for tenure and promotion decisions. As he states, apart from Australia and New Zealand, which are in any case modelled on the RAE, there are no other national research evaluation systems against which ours can be compared. The main points he wishes to make are that a properly constituted peer review evaluation system should:

- be transparent in making absolutely clear all the stages and processes that will lead to the decisions;

- be accountable in identifying all the people involved in the process (except expert reviewers), specifying their responsibilities, and justifying their conclusions;

- be expert in ensuring that the reviewers are both eminent in the profession and specialists in the appropriate academic area.

Most of the rest of the book is devoted to showing that the REF does not meet up to these criteria and so does not constitute an equitable peer review system.

Chapter 2 outlines the history of the many different forms of research exercise, beginning with the very small-scale one in 1986 that, at first, was little remarked on until its results were used to create league tables with very unexpected results. Relatively new universities such as Warwick came in well above some of the long-established ones such as Liverpool or Birmingham. From these fairly small scale beginnings, the REF has become ever more complex, rule-governed and, perhaps because of this, opaque. This is the central 'hypocrisy' of the title – the official claims about how transparent the exercise was in contrast with the reality that the real decisions, such as Panel membership, selection of academics, and the final evaluations, were shrouded in mystery.

This chapter covers the debate about the use of metrics, i.e. citation counts as well as, or instead of, peer review. It was proposed to use metrics in 2008 but after much protest from academics the idea was dropped and even in 2014 only a few Panels used them at all. The suspicion is that metrics would not favour the established universities such as the Russell Group and might instead reveal that there is much high quality research going on elsewhere. The Establishment fought, and won, the battle to ensure that their 'academic judgements' were not in any way clouded by actual data about which papers were read and cited. My own Panel – that of Business and Management – resolutely refused to even see any citation data!

Sayer goes on to highlight many other shortcomings of the REF procedures:

- the secretive and opaque nature of the appointment of Panel members;
- the extent to which Panels merely represented the established pecking order;
- problems with the Panel having the necessary expertise to properly evaluate all the areas of the submissions;
- the huge workload which meant that in practice, whatever the rhetoric, often only the titles and abstracts of papers were read and reliance was placed on things like journal ranking lists;
- the refusal to use external indicators such as citations;
- the lack of international members when it was supposed to be an international benchmark;
- the effects of the changes to the funding formula in favour of only 4* papers which pushed universities in to being highly selective in staff submitted.

These deficiencies at the level of the REF nationally were complemented by many equally poor practices at the university level, especially in terms of procedures for selecting staff. This is documented in Chapter 3 through a detailed analysis of the author's own History Department at Lancaster University, and also a survey of staff who were not submitted at Warwick University. The facts of the matter are that virtually all universities were driven, both by the funding formula and also the presumption that league tables would only be based on the overall grade point average thus excluding the volume of staff, to being much more selective in

terms of their staff submitted. The most research intensive, which had been up at 90% in 2008, went down often to around 70%, and some universities were at 20% or below. This Chapter reveals the machinations that went on, often very secretively and often in contradiction to the codes of practice that had been agreed. This led to many staff being omitted, almost certainly to the detriment of their careers, with little transparency as to the who, how, and why.

I should issue one word of warning in that this is purely Sayer's account of the situation and in fact a number of members of his History Department wrote a letter to the *Times Higher* disagreeing with his account (*Times Higher*, 2015b), to which he responded (*Times Higher*, 2015c).

The final chapter is in some ways the most interesting. It asks the question why, given that the REF is so flawed (I am sure that the vast majority of academics would agree), HEFCE and, complicitly, university managements defend and maintain it? And why, given that they could produce broadly similar results at much lower costs, are metrics shunned? The answer given, and I do not disagree, is that it must be that

> it works admirably as a disciplinary tool for university management. It also provides an excellent vehicle for the legitimation and replication of the country's established academic elites. [4]

Overall, this is an important book in uncovering the profound dysfunctions of the processes of the REF. Its main weakness is that it focusses very much on the REF as an illegitimate form of peer review but does not elaborate on the many other more general effects that the REF has had on individual academics, departments, innovative research and ultimately our research culture as a whole.

references

Times Higher (2015a) 'REF 2014 cost almost £250 million', 13 July.

Times Higher (2015b) 'REF: late crusaders and early adopters', 8 January.

Times Higher (2015c) 'REF: how a one-man crusade got started', 15 January.

Yeats, W.B. (1994 [1921]) 'The second coming', in *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*. Ware: Wordsworth Press.

the author

John Mingers is Professor of Management Science and Information Systems at Kent Business School, University of Kent. He has research interests in the field of bibliometrics and the evaluation of research. He was Director of Research and later Director of the Business School in the lead up to the 2014 REF.
Email: J.Mingers@kent.ac.uk

ephemera
theory & politics in organization

ISSN 1473-2866 (Online)
ISSN 2052-1499 (Print)
www.ephemerajournal.org
volume 17(3): 727-732

Academe under siege and the atrophy of today's universities

Ajnesh Prasad and Paulina Segarra

review of

Docherty, T. (2015) *Universities at war*. London: Sage. (HB, pp xi + 146, £45.00, ISBN 978-1-4739-0778-2)

> [T]he marketization of knowledge is one of the world's greatest threats to democracy. [33].

The abrogation of academic freedom

In January 2014, a professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Warwick was suspended by members of its senior administration. Amongst the charges laid against him justifying the suspension were allegations of 'inappropriate sighing', 'making ironic comments', and 'projecting negative body language' (Gardner, 2014) – behaviors which were said to undermine the authority of, who was then, the professor's head of department. To say that these charges appear specious – even if wholly true (which we are not necessarily conceding) – would be a gross understatement. Indeed, hypothetically speaking, under any set of institutional conditions in which these behaviors would offer sufficient grounds for suspension or termination of employment, many academics, if not most, would have been legitimately removed from their appointments at some point during their careers. Certainly, academic faculty members critical of the university or otherwise critical of the decisions made by its leaders, would have had their positions disposed of using nebulous accusations of giving off 'negative vibes', as was the professor in question

(Gardner, 2014). It would not require too great a leap of faith to argue that such institutional conditions would propagate a Draconian environment in which academic freedom was more a pipedream than reality, and where academics' survivability in universities and the ability to serve the desires of senior administration would become conflated as one and the same.

The professor who we describe above is Thomas Docherty, a long standing researcher and critic of the prevailing higher education system. In an ironic coincidence, Docherty completed and published his latest book on the subject, *Universities at war*, during the height of the controversy. In the preface to the text, Docherty recalls some of the challenges that he encountered as a consequence of his suspension:

> The final research and writing of this book were carried out under awkward circumstances – while I was suspended from my position at the University of Warwick. During the period of suspension (almost a full year as I write, today, 23 July 2014), I have been supported by family, colleagues and friends. When I was initially suspended, I was told that I was to have no contact with colleagues and students and that, if I did, then such contact would be regarded as actionable under disciplinary procedures that could lead to my summary dismissal from employment. [x]

In what would be a prophetic twist of fate, many of the dynamics of contemporary universities that Docherty criticizes in the book would materialize in his own case.

Universities at war

Universities at war is organized into four substantive chapters along with a preceding introduction. The book ultimately seeks to illuminate the 'war on [...] the future of the university as an institution' [1]. Each of the chapters is dedicated to a particular theme, though collectively they are intended to forewarn readers of the consequences that would be the outcome of acquiescing to some of the current trends in the higher education sector. To flesh out, and to give veracity to, the myriad claims offered in the book concerning the decline of the university, Docherty seamlessly invokes relevant and insightful examples from literature. As such, we found *Universities at war* to not only present an incisive critique of today's universities but, in so doing, to also engage an important conversation that is posited at the interface between the humanities and the social sciences.

Chapter 1 interrogates the nexus between force and the university. Docherty takes his analytical departure from the assumption that, 'the university institution, as a force within civil society, has been systematically diminished' [23]. Working from

this claim, he endeavors to demonstrate the destabilization of the normative equilibrium in society caused by the steady negation of the 'force' traditionally held by the university. This negation, for Docherty, paradoxically comes part and parcel with the university authority's utilization of formal state powers – increasingly in the form of campus and city police and, less pervasively, the military – to 'quash protest, dissent or criticism' [27]. Under such oppressive conditions, far from having critical thinking – once the very hallmark of the university – celebrated, it is castigated. In the process, the university is transformed into a tool that functions to maintain rather than subvert society's existing inequalities. As Docherty identifies, 'in this *coup*, the university has become an instrument for advancing and furthering inequalities of wealth, presenting such inequalities as "natural", and thereby disqualifying anything critical of such positions as "unnatural"' [39]. In sum, Docherty concludes that '[m]oney talks, citizens don't' [41], and explains how this phenomenon is only exalted by the university.

Chapter 2 points to the emergence of an uncritical mode of education, which is described as 'an activity that delivers the past tradition and simply hands it down' [53]. Through this mode of education, students are led to conformism, due to education being treated as private property. Docherty critiques what he calls 'the cult of managerialism' [61], which entails constant surveillance and depriving people of personal and professional authority; a phenomenon that ultimately leads to the establishment of compliant students and faculty bodies. Within this purview, students are considered customers, and are to become the working capital of efficiency striving enterprises. This perspective effectively christens the discourse that 'getting a degree' is more important than 'getting the time to think'; a form of instrumentality that, in the process, reduces degrees to nothing more than 'passports to wealth' [67]. Docherty further brings attention to 'massive online open courses' (MOOCs) and to the 'speed-efficiency opportunity-cost model' [67] it represents. He claims that 'the prioritization of speed yields an efficiency whose effect is to evacuate the university of thought and to transform it [...] to be a mere initiation rite through which one enters the hallowed realm of personal wealth acquisition' [67]. Docherty concludes this chapter by inviting readers to imagine the benefits and the possibilities to society that a university system that is grounded in social obligations holds, as opposed to one in which care towards others is an irrelevant or an incidental consideration. Indeed, Docherty considers the university as 'the site where friendship, love and neighbourliness are all made possible' [74].

Chapter 3 commences by questioning the notion of universities 'producing' graduates, asserting 'universities claim that is they who "produce" graduates, and not the graduates who produce themselves and their own autonomous lives' [76].

These graduates go on to become 'branded goods' who tend to be highly competitive and individualistic in a global race of wealth acquisition, prompting important ethical questions unless 'one subscribes to an ideology designed to justify increased disparities of wealth or life-chances' [79]. This phenomenon has only been exacerbated by the fact that the burgeoning cost of university tuition has come hand in hand with the systematic reduction in funding for the arts, the humanities, and the social sciences – areas of study not considered relevant for the promotion of the state. This adds to Docherty's claim that students have become only 'human capital', reducing the function of university to that of 'preparation for jobs and not for life' [85]. Moreover, he extends his critique to the current trend for quantification of quality empowered by 'the tyranny of number, an abstract entity of measurement that substitutes measure itself for truth' [104]. Docherty observes that universities have come to normalize inequality, not only when related to access to the institution, but in the social sphere where mobility is not desired. Put differently, education becomes a privilege of the few who can afford it and allows for inequality to prevail. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the university is not a market place but 'a mode of being together, of seeking communities and forging shared futures [...] immune from measurement, but open to questions of quality' [105]. While the pursuit of knowledge should be the main ambition for those in the university sector, this aspiration is, alarmingly, becoming less and less common.

Chapter 4 is introduced with an interesting juxtaposition between government and university governance. In comparing these two sectors, Docherty claims that they share some level of institutional affinity – 'the thing that has to be governed [in both arenas], above all is the tongue' [107]. Much akin to how members of a political party must toe the official party line, so too must academic staff confer loyalty to the brand of the university that senior administration has constructed and reified. It is, indeed, the reification of brand loyalty, as the undergirding ideology of the university, which has salient implications for the institution and, by extension, society. At the very least, Docherty observes that a system based on brand loyalty – or, more tersely, the unitary narrative of the governing oligarchy – engenders, 'reduction in free speech [and] democratic participation' [114]. Within such an institutional arrangement, 'the model academic is she or he who carries the brand; our speech has to be "approved" in the conformist fashion' [131]. Docherty presages that if academics who genuinely care about the university – as not only the site of research and teaching but also the quintessential space of social inquiry – remain silent about current trends, it might transform into yet another institution that seeks to maintain the status quo and, specifically, the social, political and economic inequalities that prevail in society (Fotaki and Prasad, 2015).

Implications for Business Schools (and Beyond)

Docherty's text poses important implications for several ongoing discourses emanating in business schools. Indeed, academics have been increasingly reflexive and critical of the dynamics that have emerged within contemporary business schools. For instance, questions concerning its relevance (Dennis and O'Toole, 2005), the nature of the institutional pressures within them (Butler and Spoelstra, 2012; Tourish, 2011; Willmott, 2011), and the implications that such pressures have on the most junior members of the academy (Prasad, 2013; 2015; 2016) have been raised. *Universities at war* helps frame some of these debates by positing them within a broader discourse that considers the disturbing state of the university system today. It reveals, for example, how the regime of accountability through rankings comes at the detriment to: i) the traditional value of the university in society as the vanguard for social inquiry, and, ii) the systematic atrophy of academic freedom.

The suspension of Thomas Docherty by an established research university should be a cause for grave concern to the entire academic community. Unfortunately, however, this case is not an isolated event; it represents, instead, a disconcerting trend in higher education. In addition to the fact that a growing number of universities use contingent labor to deliver more than half of its teaching (Edmonds, 2015), even conventionally secure academic contracts, in the form of tenured or continuing appointments, are being subjected to attack. Indeed, the cases of Norman Finkelstein at DePaul University and Steven Salaita at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, poignantly reveal how the steady erosion of academic freedom is occurring alongside – and is, perhaps more aptly, the corollary of – the burgeoning corporatization of the university. If only for shedding light on these timely subjects, *Universities at war* merits being read widely. It may be best to conclude this review by returning to Docherty's reflection on the steadfast abrogation of the university in the last several decades: 'This is *politically and pedagogically* unacceptable to anyone who has a serious interest in the proper activities of a university' [124].

references

Bennis, W.G. and J. O'Toole (2005) 'How business schools lost their way', *Harvard Business Review*, 83(5): 1-9.

Butler, N. and S. Spoelstra (2012) 'Your excellency', *Organization*, 19(6): 891-903.

Edmonds, D. (2015) 'More than half of college faculty are adjuncts: Should you care?', *Forbes*, 28 May.

Fotaki, M. and A. Prasad (2015) 'Questioning neoliberal capitalism and economic inequality in business schools', *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 14(4): 556-575.

Gardner, B. (2014) 'Professor suspended from top university for giving off "negative vibes"', *Telegraph*, 24 October.

Prasad, A. (2013) 'Playing the game and trying not to lose myself: A doctoral student's perspective on the institutional pressures for research output', *Organization*, 20(6): 936-948.

Prasad, A. (2015) 'Liminal transgressions, or where should the critical academy go from here? Reimagining the future of doctoral education to engender research sustainability', *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 26: 108-116.

Prasad, A. (Ed.) (2016) Contesting institutional hegemony in today's business schools: Doctoral students speak out. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited

Tourish, D. (2011) 'Journal rankings, academic freedom and performativity: What is, or should be, the future of Leadership', *Leadership*, 7(3): 367-381.

Willmott, H. (2011) 'Journal list fetishism and the perversion of scholarship: Reactivity and the ABS list', *Organization*, 18(4): 429-442.

the authors

Ajnesh Prasad is Research Professor and Chair of the Entrepreneurship and Leadership Research Group at Tecnológico de Monterrey's EGADE Business School. His research interests broadly span the areas of entrepreneurship, gender and diversity issues in organizations, and interpretive methods. He earned his PhD in Organization Studies from York University's Schulich School of Business.
Email: ajnesh_prasad@yahoo.ca

Paulina Segarra is a doctoral candidate at Tecnológico de Monterrey's EGADE Business School. Her current research interests focus on the implications of Hannah Arendt's political philosophy for the field of organization studies.
Email: paulina.segarra@gmail.com