



## Extreme neo-liberalism: an introduction

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### context

During the *Historical Materialism* Conference (2009), Stefano Harney gave a talk within an *ephemera* session on 'Politics in the Business School' which we organised in preparation for this special issue. This piece offers a full transcription of that talk and is prefaced here by some introductory remarks from Stefano. The question and answer session which followed the talk has also been made available online as an audio file. Special thanks are due to Demet Dimler for inviting *ephemera* to organise a session at *Historical Materialism*, to Matteo Mandarini for chairing the session, to Tim Edkins for recording the session and to Alison Shalaby for transcribing the talk.

### Introductory Remarks

Business education is mass education today. So it should be no surprise to discover that the actually existing business school is both more disturbing and more interesting than the current stereotype of the business school as simply a place where the cadets of high finance are put through their drills suggests (Harney, 2010). With one in eight university undergraduates in Britain studying business and management (UCAS, 2010), business education in Britain now resembles a kind of liberal arts education without the liberal arts<sup>1</sup>.

Very few of these business school students, or the thousands more studying for British business and management degrees by distance, will ever find themselves worrying about having their bonuses taxed. The imagined alliance between the business schools and capital is, for the vast majority of students, and not a few lecturers, just that: imagined. Indeed, contrary to the cliché, it's possible to suggest that of all the academic disciplines, business and management is in practice the discipline not closest to capital, but closest to labour. For it is in the business school classroom that the students stand before the university as naked labour, unadorned, unmediated by literature, or art, or even technology, and ask to be made useful to capital. And it is in the contradictory fullness of this nakedness that these students bring down upon their bodies the direct

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1 Or it might be better to say a liberal arts education without the idea of the liberal arts as preparation of the cultured citizen, because in practice undergraduate business education scavenges the humanities for ideas that might prepare the student to become a citizen of work.

attention of what might be called *extreme neo-liberalism* (Dunne and Harney, forthcoming).

At least, that is the argument made in the talk that follows. This talk was given under the auspices of Ephemera at the Historical Materialism Conference in December 2009. This annual conference has proved itself a place to turn for a critique of capital, especially in light of the ongoing financial crisis, but it ought equally to be a place from which to see crisis, and its potential, from the perspective of labour. From the perspective of labour we could say that a certain level of exhaustion at the level of the individuated subject had set in long before the banks collapsed under the weight of their own contradictions<sup>2</sup>. Because extreme neoliberalism pulls labour in opposite directions, embracing its mysteries at one moment, stripping it bare in another. At one level, we are quite aware of extreme neo-liberalism. It is that strange combination of extreme externalisation and extreme regulation that characterizes our daily life. At this intuitive level extreme neo-liberalism is that everyday experience of being a talking resume, someone who is supposed to be a free agent in a free market but who discovers that the price for this freedom is a constant accounting for oneself within the terms of this freedom, promising not to cost anybody anything and to add value, while all the time calibrating and communicating this promise anew. We know this to be an exhausting way to live, even if we should also recognise it is our collective *inexhaustibility* that provokes extreme neo-liberalism.

Naturally at the moment, with the financial crisis, the focus is on the dangers of extreme externalization in the form of bank deregulation. This extreme deregulation, which is at one and the same time the ability to externalize almost all costs in production (and not just as for bourgeois economists in the moment of transaction), has been blamed for the collapse of the banks, and subsequently much of the economy in the developed world. Understandably, under these circumstances, there has been a widespread call for regulation. But of course, there is equally no era in history as regulated as our own. Anyone who knows the intensification of measurement and targets characteristic of the National Health Service in Britain, or for that matter the private insurers in the US, or anyone who has been subjected to a research assessment exercise in the UK, or tenure process in the US, or indeed anyone who has been subject to a mystery diner or shopper could not fail to recognize the irony of a sudden call for regulation.

But this is more than irony. Indeed I would like to suggest that it is an absolutely necessary complement to extreme externalisation. Both result from the same condition. Capital increasingly must bring more and more of labour into its heart (despite its fantasy to the contrary and some very poor analysis suggesting it is succeeding) (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007). As the Italian autonomist first recognised, today it is the soul of the worker that descends onto the factory floor. Today it is communication, affect, opinion, attention, and taste that capital engages to make and to sell, to circulate, and to realise its commodities<sup>3</sup>. And its first commodity, labour, is both discovered to

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2 On this exhaustion see Berardi (2009).

3 This journal has been a consistent source of thought of these developments. See in particular Dowling et al. (2007).

be the endless, inexhaustible source of this value, and encouraged to develop this value in forms that are useful to capital.

And yet, although we may give freely our ideas and our love in social life, these things are very costly to capital, in two ways. Firstly, they are costly because they transfer the central means of production from machines to bodies. Far from man stepping to the side of the machines as Marx predicted, machines step to the side of bodies in communication, in affective modulation. More and more bodies are machine-aided. Machines are less and less run by bodies, even if this still happens. It is costly to keep up bodies as means of production and not just as factors thereof. Extreme externalisation, for its part, is designed to confront these costs. There is no better example of this than the viral growth of the intern in the creative industries: all of the affect, all of the creativity - none of the costs. The costs, of course, are political too.

To bring all of this labour to the heart of production, to bring in so much sociality, so much communication, so much affective connection, so much interdependence, is to risk an autonomy at the very core of capital. The founding and re-founding of this autonomy, labour's plan of its own, is the risk capital runs for its greed, its need to try to swallow the social whole. And it only further provokes this new republic of labour when the time comes to extract profit, exploit this common, and reveal its hand. It is at *that* moment that labour may become truly fugitive, that it may go on the run with the (un)stolen wealth it has gathered as what Antonio Negri once called in his classic essay 'Domination and Sabotage' (2005) a new accumulation of needs. And it is at that moment that it may discover in refuge, in flight, in bad debt to each other, those who have long been in the undercommons of its own organisation, those whose wealth has been long sought, whose kinship has been long hunted for, those who have been long prepared to fight. Capital cannot let this happen. It must put up resistance. And through extreme regulation it does so. Whatever it cannot contain, desocialize, deracinate through regulation it will expel through extreme externalisation, into the dead zones, prisons, and borderlands of privatization.

Extreme neo-liberalism is nothing other than the capitalist strategy of resistance to immaterial labour. But of course, for this to make sense we must always understand immaterial labour as the attention to society itself, even the labour of the care of society. If we do this then we can see that immaterial labour originates not in Web 2.0 communities or arts quarters in Europe, but in the great movements of the last century: the anti-colonial struggles, the peace struggles, the feminist struggles, the anti-racist and anti-fascist struggles. It is here that capital found, stole, and distorted its contemporary organisational principles, but far from co-opting them, as theorists like Boltanski and Chiapello think (2007), this theft has forced capital to adopt the most extreme methods to protect itself from their ongoing effect, the ongoing autonomous planning at the heart of this expropriation.

All of this may seem very far from the business school, but actually the business school seems a very good example of extreme neo-liberalism, as I have tried to suggest in this talk. Think of the way the business school, business curriculum, and popular business writing can appear so empty, so devoid of any content, genuine meaning, or original thought. There is even a formula we can make out of this impression. If we look at

business school scholarship, we note that it has very little to say about the struggles we identified as helping to found immaterial labour. It takes as its subject, under the name of business, capitalism without attention to such struggles<sup>4</sup>. But from the perspective of a critique of capital, these struggles are the very essence of capitalism. Capitalism is a set of social relations conceived in struggle and maintained through struggle, through conflict of capital and labour, and ultimately the conflict of capital and society, as capital attempts to devour society. Therefore, if business scholarship equals the study of capitalism minus struggle, but struggle defines capitalism, then logically business studies equals zero.

And yet those of us who teach in a business school know that it is not an empty place. We know that though our students may be stripped of the mediations of the other disciplines, they are not empty. We know that in the seminar room and lecture hall a spirit of real study, real investigation, and even what Gayatri Spivak calls a non-coercive rearrangement of desires (Spivak, 2007) can take place. And we also know that we can, if we wish, make critiques like the one in this talk from within the business school, at least in some cases. At the same time as all of this, we know that the business school is an exemplary space of extreme regulation and extreme externalisation. Citation algorithms and research audits attack our plans to study and inquire together. We are asked to regulate ourselves and others as never before. Yet in the background of this regulation we hear the siren song of the market, promising us merit pay, labour mobility, and intellectual property rights. This extreme dream of the market and this extreme dream of neoliberal subject goes beyond the ordo-liberalism studied by Michel Foucault (2008). It is not a question of how to govern the market just enough, but rather of how to resist the extremes at the heart of that market, and the extremes this capitalist resistance must, in turn, take.

This is to say nothing of how the business school is understood inside the university itself, where it represents both the bringing of the market into the university, and the spread of new management techniques (and indeed new managers) across the university. But even this popular academic image of extreme neo-liberalism requires some thought if extreme neo-liberalism is not merely to be dismissed as the spread of empty terms like excellence or entrepreneurship, forward spies for the invasion of market relations. Indeed, if we turn this around a bit we can see that to focus on the movement of the market into the university, through the conduit of business school misses its other important half: the movement of the university out into the metropolis.

This other movement, this *metroiversity* offers its own incubated techniques of university management to private firms and local governments, techniques for the management of the production and circulation of knowledge. After all, what organisation is more experienced at encouraging, capturing, and exploiting knowledge than the university? Its techniques today can be found in every technology park (not accidentally sometimes called technology campusus), creative industries district, financial centre, and multiculturally marketed neighbourhood. Peer review, departmental democracy, university governance, mentoring and probation, research

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4 This is more than an impression of the scholarship. We have shown empirically that this is the case in Dunne et al. (2007).

sandpits, interdisciplinary initiatives, and collaborative learning - are these not the most advanced techniques for managing the so-called knowledge workers? Were they not themselves pioneered in the university? Indeed the real impact of the university on business, the real knowledge transfer, is precisely this transfer of university management techniques from the university out into business. The university, not just the business school, is the primary site of extreme neo-liberalism. This emerging, invading metroversity is the spawn of extreme neo-liberalism. At any rate these are some of the arguments I try to pursue in what follows.

## Talk

*Stefano Harney:* Thanks for coming in on this early Saturday morning. I do want to give a bit of a paper in the sense of at least giving you a few theorisations but I thought, given the informality of the event, that it might also be good for us to enter into a fair amount of discussion. So certainly there will be time for that and I'll raise some questions that I think in answering will help you to feel like you want to participate even at this hour of the morning. I should say that despite the reduction of the panel, there's actually a number of us in the room here with some experience of raising this question of what it might mean to think about politics in and around the business school and the business curriculum, and indeed in and around business ideology and discourse, etc. So I'm not alone, thankfully, and there are others who I think probably can help me out here. But to start off I would like to just tell you what I've been thinking about recently. By way of doing that, and with apologies for people who already know me, I'll just tell you a bit more about my circumstance and the circumstance I share with Stephen and others.

I was someone who came up through cultural studies and sociology and got very accidentally involved in business schools in the UK because there were these sort of interesting openings that seemed to be going on around a field called critical management studies. When I got very close to it I was a bit disappointed at the actual field but I certainly am very grateful to the kinds of spaces it was already opening up in the business schools. Subsequently, I've been very involved in trying to build a proper political project inside one of the business schools, at Queen Mary University of London, and I owe a lot of thanks to others in the room including Matteo Mandarini and Emma Dowling who are involved in that project, and also to Gerry Hanlon who couldn't be here. As we've been building this project we've had to confront a lot of political questions about what it means to try to build a political project in the university, what that might mean in the first instance, what it might mean to do it in a business school, what if I need to do it across administration, administrative labour and teaching and some form of research. So all those things are in my mind as I think about what to say to you today and that's the background of where we find ourselves.

So if you don't know business schools I'm sure you have certain kinds of views of them which I think I might reinforce for a few minutes but only in the service of trying maybe to open up something else. I'm going to do that through a kind of concept that I've been working on a little bit recently, which is still fairly undeveloped, and that's

the concept of extreme neo-liberalism which actually first came to me when I was at a Marxist accounting conference...I'll give you a second to digest that!

At this conference, there was a scholar from Australia who said she'd been working on looking at the accounting industry in Australia. If you know accounting at all you'll know that a lot of it has mutated into management consultancy and often the big accounting firms will have a contract both to audit a big bank or a big corporation and to provide management services to it. This is obviously a conflict of interest and manifests itself periodically in things like the Enron and WorldCom crisis and more recently the failure of auditing processes inside the big banks in the UK and elsewhere. So she was studying these firms and trying to understand the cultures inside them a little better to get a handle on how they understand their ability to separate these two functions and how they justify what seem like pretty severe conflicts of interest, within a profession which has always had a very firm idea about notions of conflict of interest. So actually what she ends up hearing about, funnily enough, is a new management technique inside these firms which is called *extreme work/life balance*.

Extreme work/life balance pops up in speciality magazines produced for people working in and around the accounting and auditing firms, some directly with the big six/five/four firms as they've sort of conglomerated, and also in various smaller consultancies where these things are outsourced. The feature on extreme work/life balance in one of these magazines had all these quotations and profiles of managers and executives in these firms who would say things like I'm in a meeting until 6 but at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning I'll be on the slopes with my three children skiing but by 4 o'clock I'll be back on a conference call. I'm not willing to give up life just because work becomes more hectic so I'm ratcheting up my life to keep up with my work life. So it's all about this intensification of life experience, each moment of life is actually converted into this kind of recognisably scheduled wealth of experiences.

Anyway, that, in some fashion, led me to begin to think about this notion of extreme neo-liberalism. And when I think about extreme neo-liberalism I thought about it in terms of the business school where such ideas are produced and where it appears at least that extreme neo-liberalism might be characterised by something like an odd combination of extreme externalisation and extreme regulation going hand in hand, seemingly contradictory and yet obviously working with each other in some kind of important way. And when I was thinking about this, the first thing that came to mind was a study that Stephen Dunne and I had done. I didn't co-credit him with the term extreme neo-liberalism just yet because I'm not sure he really wants to be credited with it when it's so far a pretty dodgy term! But anyway, he's been helping me to develop it through a study that we've done in which we looked at 2,400 articles from business and management journals. We asked of those 2,400 articles ten questions to try to get at their content through a manual content analysis. We asked whether these articles addressed questions of environmental exploitation and degradation. Whether they addressed questions of labour exploitation, of employment laws etc. etc. In so doing, we got the results that you might predict – the very best articles paid almost no attention to any of these issues.

One of the formulas that came out of this, for us, was that if we could say, as I think I probably would say, that one way to understand capitalism is as struggle and that these articles constantly pushed out, externalised, any kind of notion of struggle, which we clearly showed in the study, then what we were left with was this notion that somehow business knowledge was what was left from capitalism after you took the struggle out. But of course if capitalism equals struggle then, you know, business minus struggle equals zero. So there was a way in which on the surface it looked like there was absolutely nothing going on. And similarly, when you get inside a business school it's easy to see that this kind of extreme neo-liberalism could make you feel like there's nothing going on and of course that's how a lot of people treat business schools on the left from the outside. In many cases rightly so because the effects of these things are real, it really is this kind of externalisation, it really is this kind of regulation. And inside a business school we have maybe among even the crazy kind of academic fields that exist around these issues, we probably have the most highly developed and centralised notion of the right kind of list from which you have to publish etc etc. We have an extreme amount of regulation. We may talk about entrepreneurship and free markets but it's an extremely regulated environment, mixed with an extremely externalising environment.

So we're completely responsible for being able to submit to this regulation and being able to operate this regulation. In a way you could say that there is nothing in there, that it's all being removed all the time, it's all being regulated in a way. But of course it begs the question of why? What's the need for that extreme neo-liberalism? What's the need for the extreme externalisation? What's the need for the extreme regulation? It leads me to say that the need is actually, that there's quite a bit. In fact in some ways from a business's perspective everything's allowed. But bringing everything into the business school in this way brings up the problem first of all about cost, which tends to be dealt with through the extreme externalisation, and all the value, which tends to be dealt with through extreme regulations so that it can be valorised in various certain particular kinds of ways.

So I think rather than seeing the business school as empty, seeing the business curriculum as empty etc etc, it actually might be interesting to think of it as particularly full and as having occasioned this kind of resistance in the form of very extreme regulation and very extreme externalisation, precisely because of its fullness. That then to me leads to certain kinds of political questions about how you operate in an environment where you have a sense that maybe there is something quite full there but you're also aware of what are some pretty forceful mechanisms at work to make sure that we can't do anything with all that might be inside the business school. So that's the frame that I'd like to start to talk about and then there's two registers I'd like to talk about it in first and then maybe to say a few words about, particularly about teaching, which I think maybe would be an opportunity for me to ask for some help and advice from others who have some interesting experiences there.

But first I'd like to just say a few words about governance and a few words about finance, as registers, as ways to maybe understand some of what might actually be going on in the business school which would lead us to be interested in it and to see if there's something that we can get quite close to, despite all this regulation and despite

all this externalisation. So I wanted to start with a term that I've been thinking about a lot and it's this term *governance* because I haven't been satisfied with the ways in which I have seen it understood and because I also think it's beginning to operate in a certain way which can tell us something about this extreme neo-liberalism and perhaps, I hope, maybe also help us to open something up.

So generally I think that when we think about governance, we have a kind of popular discourse of governance and in that popular discourse everything requires governance: so one way to understand it is that it's this kind of heightened level of comparison of management. And certainly some of that is true. We also have this other notion of governance that somehow it more finely tunes and lines up our individual desires with governmental desires. So we have a sense of it as an extension of governmentalities, so it grows with saying governance that way, as a kind of subtle version of government if you like, as an extension of governmentality into more and more realms.

On the other hand we also can have a sense of governance which emerges I think partly from the the Italian Autonomist movement where governance is almost immediately understood as a term of the economy now so that governance actually is about collecting, accumulating, all the new kinds of labour capacity so that it becomes so important for what Italian Autonomists might call immaterial labour. So now that what's really important is our ability to communicate, what's really important is our ability to make judgements on each other, what's really important is our ability to collect and disseminate different kinds of public opinion, what's really important is our ability to marshal certain kinds of aesthetic judgements or to develop certain kinds of moods. Now that these are the things, these are the kinds of labour, that really add value, as they say in a business school, that really make money, then governance becomes a way of talking about those and that position might be a position that you wouldn't associate with someone like Lazarato.

I'd like to suggest that although there's obviously some truth in both of those, that actually governance operates somewhere in between those two registers in a way that it's not just about compromising the two but it's completely crucial that in fact what governance is doing is holding open the difference between politics and economy in a way that's absolutely vital for what we heard this week, Mark Bousquet, a great critic of the American university was here, and he was talking about the American university as the prime site now of production of informal labour. He said in his view in the US, the production of informal labour's prime site has moved from migrancy into the university and among the student. Now whether that in particular is still true, and of course he said that it doesn't mean that it stopped on migrants, I think the idea of this production of the informal labour conditions is absolutely crucial and it's the thing I think that governance is actually doing. It does that not by immediately collapsing economy and politics but by holding it open enough so that certain kinds of production can occur. And in particular I think the kind of production that we see through governance is this production of something that I would call *interests*. When I say interests what I mean is I think that what capital needs is in a way to discover aspects of our sociality, aspects of our social individuality, that aren't immediately apparent, that can become new sources of wealth to it but can't be accessed directly. So it's fine to say that our communication skills are the most important but how do you get to those? That's not so immediately

apparent. When you work in a business school you realise how that's not so immediately apparent because it's called knowledge management and it's ridiculous.

So there's the need for a kind of space in which we use the sociality that's been thrust upon us through capital to produce sets of interests. And if you think about how governance calls to you, that's the way it calls to you. It asks you not to align to a pre-existing interest but in fact to produce that loyalty through the production of your own interests. So rather than rallying around the pre-existing flag, if you think about the strategy process in any particular organisation now, they don't say this is the strategy, they say everybody get into breakout groups, we're going to make a strategy. This is a very different kind of government, a very different process of governance.

That's a term that needs to be explored in some other ways but one example that I would use of that, which I get partly from Randy Martin, is that where governance intersects with finance it demonstrates that what's interesting about governance is a kind of lining up, an alignment of these interests in a way where previously capital might have been making money through a clash of such interests. So if you think about this particular crisis and you can get passed all the crap that's currently being said about it, and remember that it's a crisis of the sub-prime debtor, then we can also recall that that sub-prime debtor has a long social history which I'd like to talk about it in two registers eventually. But in the first case it's a long social history that comes out of the American tradition of red line. Essentially what red line means is that banks draw a red line around neighbourhoods where they weren't going to make loans. Now of course that didn't mean that there wasn't all kinds of finance inside, it was just it was a different kind of finance. But what tended to happen with that different finance, previously, was that the interest of the finance dealers, if you want to call these loan sharks that, and the people who owned their homes, was opposite. So you made the big loan to the old lady because you wanted her to fail and then you took her house. That was the idea behind it. Not exclusively but that was part of it, it was a kind of constant sort of primitive accumulation of stuff. With the sub-prime mortgage, however, they didn't want people to default, nobody wanted anybody to default, nobody cared but at the same time nobody wanted it. Instead the homeowners society lined up all the people who were previously inside the red line with a certain new set of interests that were about starting to think to themselves, ok, actually, I don't mind mortgaging my labour forever in order to have this new arrangement about living. That represents an instance of governance being neither politics nor economics but actually an alignment of interests that then helps to further a certain kind of capital accumulation and expropriation.

Of course it's worth remembering that actually those sub-prime debtors had a completely different strategy at work. That completely different strategy is the actual strategy that gets securitised, collateralised, fed up into the very heights of finance and eventually creates the explosion. Because what was taken up from those sub-prime debtors, perceived as lined up interests, as something that would guarantee labour forever, was actually a quite different strategy. It was the ongoing strategy that always exists among the dispossessed in the US, which is, essentially, what am I going to do to live somewhere for the next couple of years? That's a very different strategy from the one perceived by the banks.

So, for instance, it's a bit apocryphal but there's some truth to it that one of the reasons that the sub-prime mortgage crisis was not caught sooner was that the people who were supposed to be watching it, most of whom were not watching it anyway but let's assume they actually were watching for this thing, have a pattern of understanding default, in which people would first default on credit cards and then they default on cars and then they default on homes. In the sub-prime mortgage crisis, there was an opposite pattern. People got in their cars, took their credit cards and drove away from their homes! On the sheet, this doesn't really predict for you what's actually going on but of course we know why that happens. You need your car to get to work in the US and you need a credit card for gas. You don't need a house. And of course, if you're part of the dispossessed in America, you have a 3, 4, 5 year strategy of understanding that: there's nothing new about that. In past cases this was called the crisis of the welfare mother and whatever else but the constant rearrangement of refuge in the US has a long tradition about which bankers would know nothing, of course. And yet, I would also say that I was recently at the *Rethinking Marxism* conference and they know nothing about it as well, apparently, since they thought it was all about Hilferding!

In that we have a couple of things going on. One is, I think there was an instance of governance, an attempt of governance there to draw out certain credit interests and align them in a way that couldn't be understood either as governmentality, because it was so directly about economic exploitation, but it wasn't really directly available in a way that I have made the mistake of collapsing into immaterial labour. But it's a straightforward issue. Again, business schools remind you that it's not so easy to capture all those kinds of socially effective capacities. But whatever it says that finance does for us, and this is where I'd like to come around a bit to some of the teaching and to include you in this speculation, is that if that's true that some of those strategies of the dispossessed were actually pulled up in this way, to the very heights of finance in this way, to the very heights of understanding about financial markets in this way, then why wouldn't you want to be close to that?

One place to be close to that is actually in the business school. We're not further from those strategies by being in the business school: we're actually very close to them. I'm not privileging the business school in a sense and saying that there aren't other places to be close to all of this but it is certainly an example of where I think we're quite close to some pretty interesting processes and politics, if we're just able to recognise that and if we're able to say: look there's something inside here that's worth looking at.

And that's where I come to the second part of this which is the question of teaching students who are in the business schools in Britain today and what are they doing? Within our own business school in Queen Mary they've got 300 or 400 students every year coming in, most of them are in E postcodes, as they say, so they're mostly East End kids, they're mostly working class kids, mostly their parents had not gone to full university, they're in undergraduate programmes. They come into a business school: why are they in there? Most of them are in there because they didn't know what else to do, or because they were worried that they might not get a job after they took this leap of going to university, or their parents said you should do business because that's where you're going to make money, or they had some fantasy from reality television. Some

combination of these things. What very many of these students will say to you is that they're just looking for as broad an education as they can find.

So you have this very interesting condition where you have students who therefore on the one hand have expectations but on the other hand have no curricular expectations. Mark Bousquet was talking about a hail to the curriculum: we don't have that in the business school. Business school students aren't there to say we need to do Melville or we need to do Thackeray. They don't have a preconception in that way. So in a way you have a condition that's reversed. Whereas in the US liberal arts today you see, for instance, an essentially disposable student but an essentially indisposable curriculum. We have the exact opposite in the business school. We have a completely disposable curriculum but we have indisposable students, who insist on their presence, who insist on asking you why am I here? This is the very opposite of what you get in NYU for example where you get kids saying I'm here god damn it, now where's my climbing wall!

So it's a very interesting condition to be in and the question is as follows: is there any space in there just to say anything or do anything in there? And what I've been trying to suggest is that, yes, on the surface it looks like there isn't any space, with this extreme externalisation they're constantly taught, if you look at the textbooks, none of it is your problem. If you make money you've done more good for society than all those people studying all those other things: they're taught that every day. There's an extreme externalisation and it also operates at the personal level of their bonds, you know, they work all the time, they have to go back and work for their parents, they have to live in their home etc etc, they're completely responsible for their own production, those students, we give them almost nothing.

At the same time they want us to test them, they're testing us, there's this heavyweight relationship that goes on in the business school which all the time they're trying to ratch it up at all the different levels, and yet I'd still maintain to you that despite this kind of extreme neo-liberalism, all of that is there because this is potentially such an unregulated and full and rich space that we have opportunity to do all kinds of things in there if we could just figure out how to do it within those kinds of resistances. And I guess if I were to try to get empirical about it I would simply say to you if you had the time and you came to the course on strategy that Matteo Mandarini and I co-lecture on for instance, or to Emma Dowling's course on organisational change or indeed what Stephen Dunne is doing up at Leicester, I think you'd get a feel for the purest way in which there's all kinds of space in the UK business school today for launching some kind of politics.

Now to say that, or to make that argument with you, is still to say: look, it's all still to be done, what this politics becomes or what this project becomes, what the relationship of the student labourer to the academic labourer to the administrative labourer: all that's still in some ways in front of us, but I would say that it's a moment when in fact as the business school gradually becomes the university, rather than abandoning that, there's also a possibility of just riding that and seeing where it might take us. So with that I'll leave it with the idea that you might want to question me on some of those things that I was asserting, which probably couldn't stand up to scrutiny, or we could have a

conversation about some of what we've been trying to do in business schools in a more concrete fashion. I'm happy to go in either direction. So thanks again for coming out this morning.

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