



Call for papers for an *ephemera* special issue on:

## **The labour of academia**

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It is well known that the 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;). This has inevitable consequences for managerial interventions, research audits and funding structures. But it also impacts on the working conditions of academic staff in university institutions in terms of teaching, research, administration and public engagement. Focusing on this level of analysis, the special issue seeks to explore 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.

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 efforts to reduce the reliance on 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 increasing prominence of mission statements, university branding and cost-benefit analysis (Bok, 2009). We also see it 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). Universities are now in the business of selling intangible goods, not least of all the ineffable product of 'employability' (Chertkovskaya, et al., 2013).

In parallel, 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 performance indicators such as TQM and the balanced scorecard (Morley and Walsh, 1996; Bryson, 2004; Archer, 2008; Bousquet, 2008; Clarke, et al., 2012). 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).

While many scholars suffer under these conditions, others find themselves adapting to the tenets of academic enterprise culture in order to seek out opportunities for career development and professional advancement. The consequences for the quality of scholarship, however, may be far from positive. Indeed, recent studies suggest that academics may be more willing to 'play the publication game' at the expense of genuine critical inquiry (Butler and Spoelstra, 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. Rolfe (2013) 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 neoliberal imperatives (Edu-factory Collective, 2009). In this special issue, we seek to diagnose the state of the contemporary university as well as uncover potentialities for dwelling subversively within and outside the 'ruins of the university' (Readings, 1996; Raunig, 2013). Towards this aim, we invite submissions that consider the following questions:

- What are the new and emerging discourses of academic work?
- What is being commodified under conditions of academic capitalism and what are the consequences?

- How are current trends shaping the way academics relate to themselves, their research, peers, students, the public and other stakeholders?
- How does alienation and exploitation occur in the academic labour process?
- In what ways do gender, race, sexuality, age and class matter to the study of academic labour?
- What is happening to academic identity, ethos and ideals in the contemporary university?
- How do academics cope with the demands and tensions of their work?
- How can we theorise the historical shifts surrounding academic labour?
- How is the academic labour market being polarized?
- What are the varieties of academic capitalism in different terrains?
- How do we account for the historical shift in academic labour?
- What are the rewards and riches of contemporary academic labour?
- How can we imagine alternative choices, collectives, discourses and identities in the university?
- Is it worth defending the current conditions of academic work?

## **Deadline for submissions: 28th February 2015**

All contributions should be submitted to one of the issue editors: Nick Butler (nick.butler@fek.lu.se), Helen Delaney (h.delaney@auckland.ac.nz) or Martyna Śliwa (masliwa@essex.ac.uk). Please note that three categories of contributions are invited for the special issue: articles, notes, and reviews. All submissions should follow *ephemera's* submissions guidelines ([www.ephemerajournal.org/how-submit](http://www.ephemerajournal.org/how-submit)). Articles will undergo a double blind review process. For further information, please contact one of the special issue editors.

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