The Activist Scholar In, and Against, the Neoliberal University
For the cover design of this issue I wanted to create a thoughtful and provocative concept idea rather than a clichéd image reflecting the issues that seem to be tearing at the fabric of scholarly activism and threatening the role of university academia in advocating for progressive social change. There are three key themes across the issue: ‘the activist scholar’, ‘inside the neoliberal university’ and ‘the activist scholar in action’. Each paper addresses one or more of these themes (Shultz et al. 2019 p 3), therefore the concept for the cover needed to address all three themes. On page 64 of this issue is a commentary provocation ‘Letter to Charles Darwin’ authored by Professor Michael Quinlan that I felt encapsulated all the themes for this issue. Charles Darwin, most noted for his contributions to the science of evolution by natural selection, was a radical and highly controversial thinker at the time. He also suffered a life-time of chronic anxiety, an affliction that many in the university sector may suffer due to what Brennan sees as ‘a range of institutional, ideological and legislative mechanisms [that] are regularly employed to suppress and even punish dissent (Shultz et al. 2019 p 4). I sourced an unusual image (redesigned for the cover image) of an aged Darwin with his finger on his lips as if to communicate that we are expected to stay quiet amongst constantly changing university managerial decision making. The ‘Letter to Charles Darwin’ themed commentary engages the three themes and epitomises the constant strategic realignments in the university sector.

References:
The journal has grappled with matters of contemporary concern for four decades, publishing articles and themed issues on topics such as peace and conflict, racism, indigenous rights, social justice, human rights, inequality and the environment. Please show your support by subscribing to the journal. For other enquiries please contact a member of the Editorial Collective.

The Editorial Collective

Editorial decisions are made democratically by the Social Alternatives editorial collective. Each edition involves the work and cooperation of a guest editor, liaison editor (to assist guest editors), general editor, poetry editor, short story editor, book reviews editor, cover designer and desktop publisher. A liaison editor is responsible for managing the editing and publication process. After contributions are blind refereed, the editorial collective has final control over publication. Where necessary the editorial collective calls on the advisory board to assist with refereeing articles.

Contributions

Social Alternatives accepts work focused on the aims of the journal. The journal also accepts proposals for themed issues from guest editors. Proposals may emerge from workshops, networks or conferences. For specific enquiries about the submission of articles, short stories, poetry or book reviews please contact an editor with appropriate responsibilities.

Submissions of articles, commentaries, reviews and fictional works are subject to double blind peer review and should be emailed to the general article editor. Authors are encouraged to consider and reference papers previously published in Social Alternatives to promote ongoing discussion. Submissions should be double-spaced with page numbers on the bottom right. Academic articles should be approximately 3,000-5,000 words, commentaries and review essays between 800 to 1,500 words, book reviews 800 words, short stories 1,000 words and poetry up to 25 lines. Submissions must include:

- copyright release form
- title page listing contributing authors, contact details, affiliation and short bio of approximately 80 words
- abstract should be a maximum of 150 words
- three - five keywords.

Please use Australian/English spelling and follow Harvard referencing. Submit tables, graphs, pictures and diagrams on separate pages. Remove in-text references identifying authors and replace with [name removed for the review process].

For further information please consult our website: http://www.socialalternatives.com/ and our Facebook page.
Introduction
3 The Activist Scholar In, and Against, the Neoliberal University ..............................................................Samantha Schulz, Shani Sniedze-Gregory and Grant Banfield

Themed Articles
7 What makes an activist scholar?: Reflexivity and the internal conversation of academic activists...Celina Valente
14 Academic Freedom: Defending democracy in the corporate university............................................Andrew Miller
21 Teaching the Goose that Layeth: Education at the crux of Capital’s accumulatory imperative and its implications
   for scholar-activists.................................................................John Rice
28 How Council-Management Governance Troubles Australian University Labours and Futures: Simplistic
   assumptions and complex consequences......................................................................................Lew Zipin
36 Strengthening of the Case for Teacher Judgement: A critique of the rationalities and technologies underpinning
   Gonski 2.0’s renewed call for evidence-based practice..............................................................Bev Rogers
42 ‘Being Restructured’: A student’s perspective ...............................................................................Stefaniya Rozitis
48 A Conversation with a Bogan Academic Activist........................................................................Nadine Schoen
56 Scholarly Activism In and For Renewed Australian Universities......................................................Marie Brennan

Themed Commentary
64 Letter to Charles Darwin ..................................................................................................................Professor Michael Quinlan

General Article
67 Towards a Good Anthropocene for North-West Tasmania: Transforming the role of a regional university campus
..........................................................................................................................Caroline Smith and Robin Krabbe

Gallery Showcase
76 Glimpses of Sunshine Beach, Australia and Berlin, Germany ............................................................Ulrike Sturm

Poetry
6 What is the point.................................................................Jeremy Gadd
6 Movement's a Poultice........................................................Mags Webster
20 The Kitchen Garden...............................................................Anum Sattar
20 Women that never were No. 5812........................................Monica Carroll
20 things a man may never think about (i).............................................Helen Thurloe
27 jellyfish and sea-snail........................................................................Jenny Blackford
35 Yours truly......................................................................................................................Ugo Rotellini
47 The Child is the Father....................................................................................Justin Lowe
55 Domestic lepidoptery.....................................................................................Helen Thurloe
62 Mulch..............................................................................................................Lynda Hawryluk
63 Recycle...........................................................................................Lynda Hawryluk
66 Head Room......................................................................................Fleur Beaupert
75 The Coat is Too Poor............................................................................Nod Ghosh
The papers in this edition of Social Alternatives are self-conscious expressions of scholar activism. Collectively, the papers draw attention to the role of education in mobilising the possibility of progressive social change. All of them, bar one, represent the outcome of a conference and writing workshop for education activists held at Flinders University, South Australia, on 8 and 9 November 2018. Brought together under the banner of The Future University, the two days were attended by researchers, scholars and educationalists within and beyond the university sector.

The Future University was one strategy initiative in a year-long staff and student campaign of campus activism directed against a corporatised neoliberal restructure of Flinders University. Its intent was twofold. The first was activist: to build campus awareness of, and resistance to, the restructure. However, conference organisers and participants were fully cognisant of the fact that the neoliberal project is not only pervasive within Australian education (Connell 2013; Fraser and Taylor 2016) but also globally hegemonic (Harvey 2005). This demanded an explanatory basis for action and reveals the second intent of The Future University. It was scholarly: to connect immediate conditions with broader socio-historical forces that made a specific university restructure possible. As John Smyth (2017: 28) has put it in his interrogation of the ‘toxic university’, ‘unless we “name the crisis” confronting us, there is a loss of the connecting narratives that constitute the basis for identifying the resources for thinking beyond it.’ The activist scholar carries the ethical responsibility of ‘speaking out’, ‘speaking to’ and ‘acting for’.

Paramount in the minds of the conference organisers and participants was the view that to be an activist-scholar demands informed concrete engagement in the world for the public good. Criticism is often – and rightly – levelled at university academics for being removed from the ‘real world’, locked away in ivory towers with little practical assistance to offer (Tilley and Taylor 2014; Chatterton et al. 2010). This is not the view – nor is it the disposition – of the activist scholars whose words appear in the pages that follow. Nor do they hold to the idea that the university is the sole domain or natural home of the activist scholar. Not only does the concept of the activist scholar point to a rejection of a clear distinction between academia and wider society but also it insists that intellectual endeavour and political activism are human capacities. If a general premise underlies the papers it is that we are human when we find our agency in and through collective struggle for the common good. More particularly, the papers are carried by three themes: ‘the activist scholar’, ‘inside the neoliberal university’ and ‘the activist scholar in action’. Each paper addresses one or more of these themes.

The Activist Scholar

The two papers by Lew Zipin and Marie Brennan offer a framing for the collection. Zipin’s contribution directs our attention to the nature of university governance. The specific explanatory concept he uses to interrogate what has become its hegemonic form or ‘mode’ is Council-Management Governance (CMG). For Zipin, CMG comprises an executive (Senior Management and University Council) and a chain of management command extending from the executive to the ground depths of university life. As John Smyth (2017: 28) has put it in his interrogation of the ‘toxic university’, ‘unless we “name the crisis” confronting us, there is a loss of the connecting narratives that constitute the basis for identifying the resources for thinking beyond it.’ The activist scholar carries the ethical responsibility of ‘speaking out’, ‘speaking to’ and ‘acting for’.

Paramount in the minds of the conference organisers and participants was the view that to be an activist-scholar demands informed concrete engagement in the world for the public good. Criticism is often – and rightly – levelled at university academics for being removed from the ‘real world’, locked away in ivory towers with little practical assistance to offer (Tilley and Taylor 2014; Chatterton et al. 2010). This is not the view – nor is it the disposition – of the activist scholars whose words appear in the pages that follow. Nor do they hold to the idea that the university is the sole domain or natural home of the activist scholar. Not only does the concept of the activist scholar point to a rejection of a clear distinction between academia and wider society but also it insists that intellectual endeavour and political activism are human capacities. If a general premise underlines the papers it is that we are human when we find our agency in and through collective struggle for the common good. More particularly, the papers are carried by three themes: ‘the activist scholar’, ‘inside the neoliberal university’ and ‘the activist scholar in action’. Each paper addresses one or more of these themes.
consciousness’. His contribution deliberately stops short of exploring in detail concrete actions emerging from his analysis. This space is left for Marie Brennan to explore in her paper. We stress that readers are to see the two papers as complementary, providing an analytic frame for interpreting the contributions if necessary.

In picking up on Zipin’s provocation, Brennan sets out to explicate the characteristics of scholarly activism. She reminds us that in Western liberal democracies a range of institutional, ideological and legislative mechanisms are regularly employed to suppress and even punish dissent. While universities have been a key aspect of democratic architecture of nations like Australia it is important not to romanticise this fact. The history of the Western university reveals intellectual freedom and its consequential actions are not to be assumed as given (Banfield et al. 2016). Rather, they are the outcome of constant and ever renewed struggle. The university, like human freedom has to be won – again and again. It is here that Brennan identifies what she sees as the three main foci for scholarly activist work. The first is acting as a public intellectual contributing to debate and the raising of public consciousness around the ‘glitches’ (crises, contradictions) of everyday life. Attention and explanation are given to ‘problems that matter’ to people such as inequality, injustice and exploitation. Second, the activist scholar can be a source of expertise for activist movements, political organisations or local community groups. This is what Brennan usefully refers to as the ‘horizontal work’ of building alliances. It requires a blurring of the boundaries between the community and the university in ways that aren’t dictated by bringing in money to the latter. Third, the activist scholar must be committed to a fearless critique of their institution. Brennan insists that this demands working for the interest of the public, and the public university over privatised interests and the corporate university.

Inside the Neoliberal University

There are ‘default settings of university policy’ however, that give rise to issues such as academic freedom, casualisation of academic work and managerial governance that act as barriers to action. They are also glitches or points of crisis that, as the contributors to this collection pick up on, are activist opportunities. For example, in his contribution, Andrew Miller draws attention to academic freedom as the lifeblood of scholarly activism and the very possibility of the public university. The latter is denied by the corporate university where the interests of the particular trump the generalised public good. Andrew demonstrates that, more than an individual right, academic freedom describes the collective responsibility, borne by academics and other university staff, to speak truth to power in the interests of the greater good. Academic freedom is thus a mechanism for protecting collective wellbeing even if, or rather, especially when this requires that staff critique the functioning of their own institution. Inside the corporate university, however, this reflex is diluted by processes specifically designed to silence dissent, for instance, intensifying job insecurity, inserting policy clauses that defend the university’s market position above all else, or stacking core decision-making bodies with management sympathisers. For Andrew, this highlights both a crucial tension and critical opportunity: when the right to speak is countered by the right to silence speech, those of us imbued with the role of defending the social good must reignite an impulse for reflexivity and the will to stand up.

The issue of academic freedom is also at the heart of Michael Quinlan’s creative provocation. He asks us to imagine how great thinkers and scientists of the past would be viewed by current university neoliberalisers who are committed to market priorities, short-term economic logic and regimes of micro-surveillance. In an imaginary letter written by the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the fictitious South London University of Science & Technology to a young Charles Darwin, Michael suggests the reception would not be positive. His message is that scientific advances, and the deliberate serious research scholarship they demand, take time. In essence, he tells us that human creativity is a slow-cook. It cannot be realised, for example, in the regimented fast-cooker of a McDonald’s kitchen. This theme reverberates through the papers in the collection. We need to get active about scholarship and scholarly about activism.

As John Rice points out in his offering, capitalism is founded on creativity. The McDonaldisation of science, creativity and inquiry ultimately cooks the goose that lays its golden egg. His historical materialist analysis serves to bring educators from schooling, vocational education and higher education sectors together in a common struggle against not just neoliberalism but also capital in general. John’s argument points to the urgency of our time: fundamental societal change is the only realistic option remaining on the table if a truly human future is to be forged. The time for – or even the possibility of – social reform is long gone. Sober critique is to be partnered with deliberate transformative action.

The Activist Scholar in Action

The question of analysis and action, theory and practice, comes to the fore in Nadine Schoen’s piece. Nadine was a leader of the student activism at Flinders University through 2018. An educator in the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system, she came to Flinders with a rich life history of activism. Her motivation to re-enter higher education as a student was to bring critical sober reflection to her activist armoury. In a biographically reflective account, Nadine talks of the real-life tension wrapped up in the ideal of the ‘activist scholar’. To draw
on Celina Valente’s critical realist humanist offering, Nadine’s story is one of becoming and the ‘rippling’ effects this has on the agency of self and other.

In giving close philosophical attention to the process of becoming, Celina Valente offers a fine-grained reading of what it means to ‘be’ an activist scholar within the context of a corporate university. Drawing on her current PhD research, she reflects on a single, in-depth interview with an activist scholar. Celina uses a critical realist lens to argue that our understanding of activism be strategically broadened to include ‘multiple levels and dimensions of reality’ that are not exclusively of the social world. She asks us to think about the ways in which our ‘inner world’ of internal conversations and emotions (i.e. what activates us into motion) and the ‘outer world’ of social existence and political action are mutually informing. In changing the world, we change ourselves. Celina argues that to grasp this process of mutual becoming requires reflexivity. This is the bridge to our inner and outer worlds; to both the foundations and objects of our agency. Reflexivity is the bedrock of the activist scholar. It opens the possibility that even the smallest act of defiance or the seemingly futile stand against oppression can have significant multi-dimensional ripple effects.

Bev Rogers brings concrete consideration to Valente’s question of reflexivity. By inviting us into the world of the teacher educator, Rogers argues the need to re-imagine a scholarly stance for teaching that involves recognising and developing the capacities of teacher autonomy and professional judgement. This is not easy in current times. Rogers demonstrates system resistance to reflexivity and the scholarly stance to teaching via an incisive critique of the latest ‘wave’ of ‘evidence-based’ discourse in educational policy and practice in Australian schooling. Rogers focuses on the most recent iteration of the Gonski Report – Through Growth to Achievement: Gonski 2.0. She demonstrates how this signals a stark departure from Gonski’s original focus on equitable funding as a pathway to equitable outcomes in Australia’s increasingly stratified education terrain. The dominant discourse of evidence-based practice, in its current manifestation, purports that practices leading to ‘good outcomes’ in one educational context can be transposed to other contexts to bear the same, standardised fruit. Alarmingly, the ‘evidence’ that the report draws on to make these claims stems from clinical medicine. This not only undermines teaching and learning as fundamentally about human encounter, but also decontextualises education. In the process, teachers are effectively stripped of professional autonomy and judgement.

Stef Rozitis’s paper offers an impassioned window onto the experience of ‘being restructured’ from the standpoint of a student. Her insights illuminate what students really need from tertiary education, and importantly, what is lost in the development of student-citizen identities when critical educators are labelled by management as surplus to requirements. Stef’s positionality as mother, casual employee, feminist, and early childhood educator also highlights the additional ‘costs’ of higher education for students whose identities ‘exceed’ the strictures of the ‘good’ neoliberal higher education consumer.

The collection of papers and provocations contained in this edition of Social Alternatives are framed by an important question: What is the possibility of progressive social change in current neoliberal times? The authors focus on the contemporary university as a particular site of ‘activist scholar’ making and struggle, explicating the activist scholar acting in and for the world. As Harré and colleagues remind us:

... activism in the academy springs from and serves the infinite game: it is action beyond the rules that calls us to take our intuitions, lived experience and observations of injustice and exclusion seriously. Academic activism aims to document, subvert and ultimately rewrite the rules of the finite games we currently live by, so that they make more sense to us as people seeking to give of our best to an endeavour (‘the university’) that we cannot help but believe in (Harré et al. 2017: 5).

References


Authors
Dr Samantha Schulz is a lecturer in the sociology of education at Flinders University. She has worked in various roles in higher education for 15 years, and
taught and researched in a range of global contact zones, including rural Kenya, India, China and Australia’s Anangu Pitjanjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. Sam is a strong advocate of critical pedagogy, she believes deeply in public education for public good, and takes a central focus on questions of race and whiteness in research, writing and practice.

Dr Shani Sniedze-Gregory has worked in education for over 20 years as a classroom teacher, teacher educator and curriculum developer in Australian and international contexts. She recently completed her PhD, which focused on the development of an interdisciplinary teaching, learning and assessment resource for the middle and high school classroom. Shani is passionate about ensuring students are kept at the centre of pedagogical conversations and decisions, and that neoliberal structures do not undermine the joy of learning.

Dr Grant Banfield has worked as an educator in schools and universities since the 1980s. He recently ‘retired’ as an academic at Flinders University and now holds adjunct status at the University of South Australia where he continues his work in the philosophy of science, political economy and sociology of education. His book *Critical Realism for Marxist Sociology of Education* (Routledge 2016) brings this work together for activists, academics and educators interested in social transformation towards a humane society. He is inspired by the selflessly brave who struggle against injustice and know that it is not enough to simply ponder the world: the point is to change it.

---

**MOVEMENT’S A POUltICE**

Earth’s a numbing to hide in. Each night
by the side
of the road, you let silence
transfuse you, knuckle your body
down small.
A moth in the leaves of the dark, you merge
into dirt, pray satellites can’t see you. Ants
don’t care where
asphalt ends and you begin. You wait for sunrise
to scrape you wide open, make you start moving again.
Flat, this road,
(no matter how steep), keeps country unravelling
its lost balls of string. Travelling the tangle
of city and town,
you work at the knots. *Why they need loosening?*

(So many voices). All your past selves, walking inside of you
talking outside—
none you want as a proxy. Here’s one who won’t
wait, marches ahead, hustles a smoke,
replays your life,
its dead-ends and detours. But movement’s
a poultice. Been walking so long, your skin’s
split wide open:
body’s forgotten the feeling of hurting.

---

**What is the point**

What is the point of studying a language,
its grammar and its verse-forms, of immersing
one-self in its literary traditions, when the
cultural identity it represents is being
constantly undermined by elements opposed
to its existence? If a culture is the collective
ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular
people or society, what is the point of trying
to perpetuate a tradition when the shared values
it represents are deliberately being eroded?
The point is that cultures are continuing constructions,
requiring constant nurturing to survive and,
if they don’t receive it, they fall. Knowing this,
I metaphorically scratch this graffito on Time’s wall.

*JEREMY GADD, ARNCLIFFE, NSW*

---

**Mags Webster, Salter Point, WA**
What makes an activist scholar?: Reflexivity and the internal conversation of academic activists

Celina Valente

Against the backdrop of neoliberalism, which constantly diminishes human agency, this article offers a restorative engagement with the concept of activism in general, and scholar activism in particular. Underpinned by critical realism, a philosophy that holds an understanding of reality as multi-layered and emergent, it proposes that the meaning of activism should be broadened to include the multiple levels and dimensions of reality. It will make the point that activism, in the neoliberal university, starts by positioning ourselves reflexively in the world and consciously resisting the neoliberal impulse to commodify our personhood.

By exploring the internal conversations of activists, this article will address reflexivity as a sine qua non for the possibility of activism. Part of the data obtained through in-depth interviews to activist scholars will be discussed to show that our inner lives, values, reasons and emotions – even though unobservable – have real impacts in the ‘outer’ world. In this way, activism should include actions at deeper levels of reality in the same way it includes actions at the level of social structures.

...It’s not about competitive individualism, it’s actually about creating beneficial networks and retaining, you know… love and care (Emma) ¹

In the middle of winter, I at last discovered that there was in me an invincible summer (Camus 2005: 121)

In times of rapid structural and cultural changes, when neoliberal policies target agency at every possible level, reflexivity becomes imperative. Against this context, this article offers a deep and restorative engagement with the notion of academic activism. Underpinned by a critical realist philosophy, this article advances a humanism that it is underpinned by a realist ontology. It will make the point that the meaning of activism needs to incorporate reflexivity as its prerequisite. At the same time, activism should be broadened to include the many levels of social reality.

As a sociologist, I have a profound interest in the internal capacities of people to make changes in the social structures they participate in. In the past two years, as part of my doctoral research project, I have interviewed activist scholars in order to delve into the internal conversations they hold with themselves about their own activism. In this article I will discuss some of the data obtained through an in-depth interview with one activist scholar. I will show how, by using critical realism, it is possible to sociologically explore the inner lives of social agents. This exploration will, at the same time, illuminate the fact that what happens in the inner worlds of human agents has real effects in the social world.

Reflexivity as Resistance in the Neoliberal University

As a result of the ‘neoliberal turn’ in universities, higher education today is commodified, with its research, teaching and learning capacities shaped as products available for purchase and market consumption (Wadham et al. 2007; Davies and Bendix Petersen 2005; Connell 2013). This process has received different names: ‘neoliberal university’ (Ball 2015; Canaan 2013; Davies et al. 2006; Giroux 2014), ‘academic capitalism’ (Slaughter and Leslie 1997), ‘enterprise university’ (Marginson and Considine 2000).

The mechanisms implemented to shape the cultural life of universities have been well researched and documented: the ‘audit technologies’ (Davies and Bansel 2010: 7), the ever increasing standards of productivity (Lynch 2010), the soaring workloads, the increasing casualisation of teaching (Brown et al. 2010), the adoption of managerial practices imported from the corporate world (Marginson...
and Considine 2000), are just a few examples of the changes that have happened in universities over the last decades. All these changes aim to nullify human agency:

Students are reduced to test scores, future slots in the labor market, prison numbers, and possible cannon fodder in military conquests. Teachers are reduced to technicians and supervisors in the education assembly line – ‘objects’ rather than ‘subjects’ of history. This system is fundamentally about the negation of human agency, despite the good intentions of individuals at all levels (Lipman 2004: 179).

As a result, a ‘toxic’ work environment (Smyth 2017) has been created, where the collective voice of academics become hushed and they are ‘reduced to workers instructed from above’ (Ryan 2012: 5). So damaging had been the effects of neoliberalism in universities, that some authors have suggested that it is turning academic workers into zombies due to the submissive behaviour of academics in face of the neoliberal attack on universities (Ryan 2012). According to Davies and Bendix Petersen (2005: 77), neoliberalism hinders resistance in universities ‘by persuading each individual academic to treat the effects of neoliberalism as personal successes, responsibilities and failings rather than as a form of institutional practice in need of critique and transformation’. The failure to plan and implement strategies for resistance is, thus, an unequivocal indication of the effects of the neoliberal turn in universities.

In this adverse neoliberal context, Heath and Burdon (2013: 389) ask: ‘what is the source of the capacity to resist?’ Finding answers to this question is crucial if we want to stand against neoliberalism. As it will show, critical realism allows social scientists to look for the underlying sources of activism by contesting interpretivism and positivism and offering an alternative conception of reality.

While doing this research, I had the possibility to interview scholars who were actively looking for ways to subvert the current state of universities. Significantly, all of them were aware that activism starts at deeper levels of reality – well before observable actions are perceived. It begins in the inner world of agency, in the space of reflexivity, in that space where we can cross the bridge between the outer and inner worlds and tap into what makes us human.

During the interviews, it became evident that the ontological needs of mutual love, care and trust are irreplaceable in all human interactions, from romantic love and educational encounters to economic transactions. In that way, those ontological necessities represent ‘irreducible barriers to the expansion of competitive individualism’ (Connell 2010: 35-36).

We have been educated, however, to believe that those needs belong solely to the ‘personal’ realm. In the ‘public’ sphere, especially in our professional fields, we should hide them if we want to ‘succeed’. In other words, under neoliberal regimes, we are allowed to be ‘humans’ when it comes to personal relationships, but we need to act as if we were robots in professional settings. Those kinds of fabricated divisions are something that we need to stand against. The artificial oppositions between theory and practice, reasons and emotions, or academia and activism, are conceptual illusions that separate us from our human essence. Human beings are not zombies or robots. Self-inquiry, emotions, feelings and values are all ontological mechanisms of our being. Denying that fact, in any circumstance, implies the denial of our humanity.

The critical realist notion of reflexivity encompasses all those mechanisms and the way in which each person ponders them regarding the context in which she is immersed. It is due to reflexivity that sociologists can explain the social fact that different people act in different ways in similar circumstances (Archer 2013). In the same university, for instance, some people choose to resist the pernicious effects of neoliberalism and they do it in different ways. Some ways are more visible than others, but all of them are reflexively chosen. And that conscious choice is precisely what make us ‘human persons’. According to Smith (2011: 61) a human person is:

In the current neoliberal context, where agentic capacities are constantly undermined, embodying the characteristics that Smith mentions (e.g. reflexivity, moral commitment, love) is a subversive act. Activism, in the neoliberal university, starts by resisting the neoliberal impulse to commodify and diminish personhood (McLaren and Rikowski 2001). Aspiring to connect with that which makes us humans, inside us and in others, and deciding to act upon that recognition is the first step in that direction. This implies that the definition of activism should be reviewed to include action at the level of personhood as a sine qua non of action at the level of social structures.
Reflexive Activism

The notion of activism is discursively produced (Maxey 1999). Therefore, it is contested. I will argue here that an alternative definition to activism is needed, one that considers the complexity and depth of the world we live in.

Widespread representations of activism promote ‘dramatic, physical, “macho” forms of activism with short-term public impacts’ (Maxey 1999: 200). According to the 2018 edition of *The English Oxford Dictionary*, for example, activism is defined as ‘the policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change’. Activism is, in this way, reduced only to actions that can be seen and, somehow, measured. These representations assume that what needs to be changed belongs solely to the ‘empirical world’, to the world that we perceive with our senses, the world of actions, facts and events. Seeing activism as limited to what happens in street demonstrations or in political bunkers is assuming a shallow understanding of reality. Social reality, to the contrary, is complex and multidimensional. The notion of activism should incorporate this fact. Firstly, though, it is necessary to reformulate our understanding of reality.

To take on that challenge, I will rely on a particular kind of realism. The kind of realism I am advocating here is the realism captured in the work of Roy Bhaskar who outlines a path between interpretivist and positivist understandings of the social world and advances a resolution of the thorny problem of structure and agency (objectivity and subjectivity).

Bhaskar asserts that the world presents depth and structure. He makes an ontological distinction between different levels or domains of reality. This distinction implies *emergence*, that is, a process by which the deepest domains of reality generate the necessary conditions for the more superficial levels to exist. In that sense, higher levels depend upon lower levels to exist but are not totally conditioned by them. They have *sui generis* properties and powers. Furthermore, what exists at deeper levels of reality may not be the same as what is manifested at the more superficial levels. The most commonly used example to represent emergence is the case of water. The constituent elements of water — oxygen and hydrogen — are, in themselves, inflammables. Water, however, has the emergent property of extinguishing fire.

In the case of social realities, things become more complicated. Not only do we have to pay attention to the different levels, but it is necessary to consider as well that every social event involves four planes, namely: material transactions with nature; social interactions between people; social structures; and the stratification of the embodied personality (Bhaskar 2016). In this way, critical realism offers a solid foundation on which to look for the deep, underlying mechanisms that cause the events that we perceive with our senses.

With the social world being so complex, activism should not be reduced to what happens on the surface of things. When it comes to social change, Roy Bhaskar was, indeed, concerned with the fact that the attention of the social sciences has been overwhelmingly located in solving problems at the level of the structures, underestimating other levels. In his words:

Most projects of trying to build a better society have been oriented to action only on the plane of social structures … Transformation on the plane of social structure and in particular the abolition of master-slave-type relations is of course essential, but it needs to be complemented by equal attention to the other three planes (Bhaskar 2016: 164).

Resonating with the necessity for a more balanced approach to action for social change, Ian Maxey reminds us that reality is constantly produced and reproduced through each social agent and, therefore, proposes a different approach to activism:

Everything we do, every thought we have, contributes to the production of the social world. I understand activism to be the process of reflecting and acting upon this condition. We are in a sense all activists, as we are all engaged in producing the world. Reflexivity enables us to place ourselves actively within this process (Maxey 1999: 201).

Under this definition, the production and reproduction of the social world is made through people. In that sense, we are all ‘potential’ activists. However, activism also involves the conscious choice to reflect and act upon that capacity. Thus, it is safe to say that not all of us enact that capacity. It is the choice to position ourselves reflexively in the world that activates the causal mechanisms for social change that are present in every human being.

In a later work, Maxey (2004) coins the term ‘reflexive activism’ to refer to a constant, contingent and conscious activity within a broader process of ‘seeking spiritual, political and moral unity’ (Maxey 1999: 200). Maxey elaborates this definition based, in part, on Gandhi’s tradition of Satyagraha, which refers to an ongoing process of reflection and practice. Here, I will use this understanding of ‘reflexive activism’ because of the several advantages it offers. Firstly, it strategically allows for a commitment to embrace all people as potential activists (Maxey 1999). Secondly, it transcends the
artificial boundaries upon which modern life is built, i.e. those separating academia, politics, activism and spirituality (Maxey 2004). Finally, it acknowledges that it is the human capacity of reflexivity that allows us to position ourselves actively in the world. As explained below, reflexivity is also crucial for critical realism.

**Reflexivity and its Sociological Relevance**

Reflexivity is the dominant mechanism through which individuals effect agency (Wimalasena 2017). Critical realism is ‘critical’ precisely because it incorporates human reflexivity as a key element in the study of the interplay between structures and agents. Critical realism considers that structures and agents are two different kinds of things, with very different kinds of powers: ‘For example, structures can be centralised, whilst people cannot, and people can exercise reflexivity, which structures cannot do’ (Archer 2013: 18). Reflexivity is the mechanism that mediates between those two very different kinds of things existing in societies, namely, structures and agents.

Taking Bhaskar’s critical realist lead, Margaret Archer maintained that social structures and human agents were to be conceived as existing in an ‘analytical dualism’, suggesting that the relation between structure and agents can be separable only in thought. In that relationship, social structures have temporal priority, relative autonomy, and causal efficacy over people. However, people ‘mediate’ the power of social forms through their agency. Archer refers to the agential capacities of people as Personal Emergent Properties (PEPs). Being the exclusive capacities of people vis-à-vis structures, Archer identifies PEPs as ‘thinking, deliberating, believing, intending, loving’ (Archer 2003: 2). These are the deep real properties sustaining the capacity of human beings to mediate and transform their social conditionings. That capacity is known as reflexivity.

From this critical realist perspective, it is clear why reflexivity is sociologically relevant and why it is vital to incorporate this mechanism into the study of activism. In the social sciences, however, the tendency has been to theorise about the overwhelming weight of structures on human agency (Archer 2013), neglecting the transformative powers of agency. This research intends to counter-balance that state of things, by focusing on the resistance that agency can offer to social structures, specially to those, like neoliberalism, that represent a threat to agency and reflexivity.

**The Sources of Activism**

Reflexivity is an inner mechanism and, as such, it is difficult to research. To operationalise this concept, Archer relies on the notion of internal conversation. The internal conversation refers to the talks we have with ourselves. During those discussions, we ponder what we care about in relation to our social environment and take decisions about possible courses of action, in a process that Archer calls ‘reflexive deliberation’ (Archer 2007: 3). How and under which circumstances a person goes from ‘reflexive deliberation’ to ‘reflexive activism’ is something worthy of investigation, as this article aims to show.

By incorporating the notion of internal conversation to sociological analyses of the relationship between agents and structures, it is possible, as Archer shows, to understand that our inner lives, our values, feelings, reasons and emotions – even though unobservable – have real causal impacts in the ‘outer’ world. They do not create reality but do affect it. In this way, activism should include actions at this level of reality in the same way it includes actions in the domain of social structures.

Internal conversation is not conceptualised only in ‘linguistic terms’ (Chalari 2013: 69). It is better described as an inner process where reasons, emotions, feelings and values are juggled before deciding a course of action. The apparent dualism between reason and emotion is transcended here and transformed into an ‘interactive dialectic’ (Alderson 2016: 203).

As discussed, traditional literature focuses mostly on the superficial or externalised aspects of activism. This research, however, aims to highlight the inner aspects of activism. To do so, it asks the question: What kinds of reflexive capacities do academic activists possess and draw upon in their activist work?

From the data collected in my research, some provisional answers can be offered. These reflexive capacities include the enacted capacity to: (i) consciously choose courses of actions based on kindness and care and take responsibility for the outcome; (ii) connect emotions with critical thinking and act accordingly; (iii) commit to a cause greater than oneself; (iv) search for meaning in their lives.

**Emma**

Emma is a middle-aged teacher in a public university in South Australia. She is a ‘reflexive activist’ at every possible level. From the readings she includes in her classes to the brands she buys in the shops, she questions everything and acts accordingly.

When I ask Emma about a moment or person in her life that she relates to her activist dispositions, she clearly remembers her working class background as something that left deep imprints in her psyche:
Emma: … I think for me it is that sense of feeling … having some small sense of feeling marginalised and feeling … it’s almost like ashamed to say (where I come from) …

In this adverse context, her mother’s support and commitment to her education are memories that she evokes as significant for her inclination towards activism:

Emma: Mum was really supportive of education … and I think if she wasn’t … if she didn’t have, you know … hadn’t provided that context and that belief in education well … perhaps I might have seen it as pointless, a waste of time, and I might not have been engaged and that … that would have been a critical turning point … it wouldn’t have led to, you know … the future that I’m pursuing …

It is worth noticing how Emma’s internal dialogues function as a bridge between her sense of agency – fostered by her mother while she was growing up – and the structural conditionings she encountered later in life:

Emma: … I begged my parents at the time ‘could I please go into a private girls’ school?’ Like the other girls at dancing were going to, you know … Places that have hats and uniforms and … ‘X’ school is really considered to be, you know … the pits. But they said: ‘no, you can go there … your older brothers and sister went there’. And Mum actually said to me … bless her … she said: ‘if you make it there, you can make it anywhere!’. Which now I realise is not entirely accurate, because it’s not down to the individual necessarily … But anyway, I went to ‘X’ and I’ve got to say I had some wonderful teachers!

From the experience in ‘X’ school Emma does, indeed, recall a particular teacher as a relevant figure for her activist’s dispositions. He arises in the narrative as someone who left lasting seeds in her identity. She remembers him as someone who was especially kind, committed and compassionate. Also, as a figure who cared enough about his students to take the time to engage with them in significant learning experiences:

Emma: Everything he had on the reading list really led us to recognise and start to seriously question a range of social inequalities … And he … was just a quiet … a very committed man and I remember the rest of the students in the class didn’t get it, didn’t care, you know … and didn’t respect him. But I thought … I knew from a young age that what he was doing was so important and I would stay back after school and work on my essays and talk about things and … He gave me a copy of Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance … I’ve got it around here somewhere… He was really supportive.

The data from Emma’s interview show how interpersonal interactions shape the internal conversation and the constellation of values that agents adopt in their life-course. Meaningfully, from the infinite interactions that a person can have in the course of their life, only a few become significant for reshaping the person’s sense of self. The encounter with a caring and loving human being is one of those.

In the case of a parental figure, the grounding in love and care set the basis for what Axel Honneth (2008) calls ‘recognition’. According to Honneth, from a developmental perspective, a child is only able to gather knowledge from the world once she has first emotionally identified herself with a figure of attachment. This emotional identification is called ‘recognition’. For Honneth, recognition is prior and essential for a later cognitive relation with the social world. Honneth understands that in social interactions ‘recognition and empathetic engagement necessarily enjoy a simultaneously genetic and categorial priority over cognition and the detached understanding of social facts’ (Honneth 2008: 124).

In a similar way, Roy Bhaskar (in philosophical developments subsequent to critical realism) adopted the notion of ground-state as underpinning all human practices at the level of the social structures:

The ground-state qualities of human beings consist inter alia in their energy, intelligence, creativity, love, capacity for right action and the fulfilment of their intentionality or will in their objectifications in the natural and social world. It is the energy, intentionality and qualities of the ground-state which are everywhere used and abused in the world of the emergent orders which constitute the hidden or dominated basis or ground of all our alienation, suffering and ills (Bhaskar 2013: xiii-xiv).

We can safely assume, looking at Emma’s life experiences, that she has been able to tap into that ground-state through, for instance, her mother’s love during a rather marginalised childhood. Her high school teacher, through his kindness and commitment, also connected Emma with her inner sense of intelligence and capacity for right action. The seeds of that connection grew strong roots in Emma’s sense of identity and today Emma actively looks for ways to tap into that inner space:
In spite of the coercion her workplace impinges upon her, she consciously decides to adopt care as a way of being in the world and translate it into the academic life as kindness:

Emma: I think the reason that I’m not ready just to walk away from the university and say ‘well, universities have lost any capacity for love and critical intellectual work’ … is because … I see these things in students all the time, you know … and these are still human encounters that we’re engaging with, despite these frameworks that oppress us and within those frameworks and when we’re talking about them and what … how the university is changing … in those human interactions … there’s care. It’s evident and, you know … it hasn’t managed to kill that. We still have some agency there. I still say … I have some agency in terms of how I relate with people …

Even though care and kindness are interrelated values, I will follow Clegg and Rowland’s (2010) suggestion about the suitability of kindness as a useful concept for thinking about teaching and academic practices. In contrast to the notion of care, which involves physical care, kindness is a more versatile concept able to go across public and private concerns: ‘kindness, built upon a commitment to social justice, embraces critique’ (Clegg and Rowland 2010: 723). Not surprisingly, kindness has been downgraded and reduced to the domestic realm since the time of the Industrial Revolution (Rowland 2009).

The example of Emma demonstrates how some activists choose to consciously draw on care and kindness in daily interactions within the oppressive structures of the neoliberal university. This somehow ‘small’ decision may be the first step towards achieving the bigger goal of changing society. Drawing on their own personal experience, they are aware of the subversive and long-lasting effects of those values and how they have the potential to change people’s mindsets:

Emma: And some students here, you plant those seeds and immediately they get it, they see it, they start to roll with it and they take action! They actually … they change the course of their lives … self-transformation. But for others I think we’re still planting seeds, you know … maybe the conditions aren’t ripe yet but maybe there will be a time and they, you know … I had a student who email me today, a student from years ago who’s working in a remote indigenous community now and he said: ‘I’ve been thinking about some of the things that we were talking about and I could see it now’.

Conclusion: The Ripple Effect

This article presents a reflexive lens to look at how activists consciously shape their life journeys, guided by a process of reflexivity that is influenced — but not determined — by material and cultural constraints. In that sense, Camus’s opening words are suggestive: ‘In the middle of winter I at last discovered that there was in me an invincible summer’. But what is it inside agents that is invincible and, thus, signifies a solid limit to the constraints that social structures impinge upon them?

The analysis of the internal conversations of scholar activists reveal potential agentic powers that remain under-explored. Those powers are rooted in the ontological causal properties that are constituents of our humanity. In a context that pushes to impose the logic of the market upon every social interaction, reflexive activism starts by connecting with what makes us human. What is being human? What capacities distinguish persons from social structures and institutions? A critical realist analysis of the inner conversations of scholar activists shows that foundational values, like care and kindness, are part of the answer. Activists reflexively draw upon those ground-state qualities to spread certain values in the structures around them. That is a conscious decision, it is not innocently made, and it has real impact in the world.

‘Reflexive activism’ is enacted and directed towards what Archer calls ‘morphogenesis’. The process of morphogenesis — that is, the way in which societies change — may take various forms. Some may be quick, but most of them are slow and mostly unrecognisable at superficial levels of reality. Scholar activism, when reflexively embodied and practised, acts through a ripple effect. It expands its impacts slowly but widely. It should
not be dismissed or underestimated. As the saying goes: ‘Though you can easily count the seeds in an apple it is impossible to count the apples in a seed’. Let’s then work for a University where seeds of kindness, compassion and love are planted every day, everywhere, in every way we can.

References
Davies, B. and Bansel, P. 2010 ‘Governmentality and academic work: Shaping the hearts and minds of academic workers’, JCT (Online), 26: 5.
Smith, C. 2011 What is a Person?: Rethinking humanity, social life, and the moral good from the person up, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
Smith, J. 2013 The Toxic University: Zombie Leadership, academic rock stars and neoliberal ideology, Palgrave McMillan, UK.

End Note
1. Emma is the pseudonym given to one of the research participants of my study. The analysis of data from her interview is presented in this article.

Author
Celina Valente is currently a PhD candidate at Flinders University in South Australia. Her research gravitates around critical realism, activism and reflexivity. Celina was born in Argentina but now lives in Adelaide with her husband and two children. She has a background in sociology, research and teaching. After her PhD she will be looking to begin an academic career.
Academic Freedom: Defending democracy in the corporate university

Andrew Miller

Academic freedom is under threat in the Australian university system. The contemporary managerialist university uses numerous tactics to undermine industrial democracy and to subjugate staff. Only fully democratic universities can pursue their missions of free and open enquiry and passionate social debate. Negate academic freedom and you effectively kill the university; and this collapses one of the central pillars of a robust democratic society. The very act of restructuring the university into a ‘corporate monolith’ while diminishing its links with its social and historical values and obligations is a deliberate and calculated act of institutional sabotage.

The only remedy to this anti-democratic assault is to reclaim the full gamut of academic and intellectual freedom rights, and to enact and deploy these rights throughout the workplace and throughout the sector. Unless staff, students, unions, and community stakeholders wrest back universities from the clutches of corporate interests, universities as we know them will vanish forever.

Introduction

Academic freedom is under threat in the Australian university system. The contemporary managerialist university, run by a council-management governance (CMG) alliance (Brennan and Zipin 2018; Zipin 2010), uses numerous tactics to undermine industrial democracy and to subjugate staff (Miller 2018a, 2018b, 2018c).

What CMG hegemony forgets is that academic freedom is the cornerstone of a robust and healthy university system. Only fully democratic universities can pursue their missions of free and open enquiry and passionate social debate. Negate academic freedom and you effectively kill the university; and this, in turn, collapses one of the central pillars of a vigorous and participatory democratic society. The very act of restructuring (physically and psychologically) the university into a ‘corporate monolith’ while diminishing its links with its social and historical values and obligations is a deliberate and calculated act of institutional sabotage. It is designed to diminish the university from the inside out, starting with the hearts and minds of its people – its biggest resource and font of knowledge. Make no mistake: this is a violent corporate takeover (Mitchell 2018).

Unless staff, students, unions, and community stakeholders wrest back universities from the clutches of corporate interests, universities as we know them will vanish forever. We must, therefore, protect our universities from the incessant attacks on academic freedom by corporate managements before it is too late.

What is Academic Freedom?

All Australian universities have academic freedom enshrined in their enterprise agreements (to greater or lesser degrees) to protect campus democracy and promote debate. The Flinders University Enterprise Agreement (2014-2017), for instance, says all staff members have a right to:

1. pursue critical and open inquiry;

pursue critical and open inquiry;
1. participate in public debates and express opinions about issues and ideas related to their academic and professional areas;
2. participate in public debates about higher education issues as they affect their institution and higher education issues generally;
3. participate in collegial processes within the University; [and]
4. participate in professional and representative bodies [i.e. such as unions].

Importantly, it goes on to say that ‘Staff members have the right to express unpopular or controversial views without fear of harassment, intimidation or unfair treatment’ [italics added], both within and beyond the institution and free from internal and external censorship. This does not mean staff can harass, vilify, or intimidate (keeping in mind that staff cannot simply say they feel ‘intimidated’ by a word or deed to overthrow or veto that word or deed, otherwise intellectual freedom could not exist. The ‘resilience’ of a recipient is irrelevant.) But it does mean staff can speak ‘truth to power’ without fear of reprisal or attack. In fact, staff have an ethical obligation to do this for the public good.

These principles are consistent with the 1997 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) recommendations for higher education. According to UNESCO (1997):

Members of the academic community, individually or collectively, are free to pursue, develop and transmit knowledge and ideas, through research, teaching, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation or writing. **Academic freedom includes the liberty of individuals to express freely opinions about the institution or system in which they work, to fulfill their functions without discrimination or fear of repression by the State or any other actor, to participate in professional or representative academic bodies, and to enjoy all the internationally recognized human rights applicable to other individuals in the same jurisdiction [italics added].**

This highlights the tensions and contradictions between (a) the UNESCO logic of ‘rights to be critical within and about one’s institution’ and (b) the CMG logic of institutional ‘rights to protect market position’ by adding clauses to contracts and institutional policies whereby staff can be punished for harming the institution’s market position by enacting their intellectual freedom rights to reveal such problems (Lew Zipin, pers. com. 2018). The right to ‘speak’ is thus countered by the right to ‘silence speech’. This flatly contradicts the UNESCO recommendations.

UNESCO goes on to advocate that, to function for the common good, universities must protect and defend all five core values of higher education, which are: (1) academic freedom, (2) equitable access, (3) [public] accountability, (4) institutional autonomy, and (5) social responsibility. Staff thus play a vital role in ensuring these values are upheld and protected by freely and actively contributing to the governing processes of their institutions. UNESCO (1997) further states:

31. Higher-education teaching personnel should have the right and opportunity, without discrimination of any kind … to take part in the governing bodies and to criticize the functioning of higher education institutions, including their own … and they should also have the right to elect a majority of representatives to academic bodies within the higher education institution [italics added].

Again, this highlights how the CMG mode of governance has appropriated the concept of ‘right’ away from the right of those who do the work of the university to be critical in/of the institution, including participation in governance, as instead the ‘right’ of the institution to protect its market interests and to advance its dogma. And, by this logic, CMG appropriates the ‘it’ – i.e. ‘the university institution’ – to mean its own caste of CMG actors, not all who participate in the university’s workings (Lew Zipin pers.com.2018). The neoliberal university is actively challenging and dissolving the rights advocated by UNESCO (i.e. individual and collective rights) and replacing them with something akin to market rights (i.e. CMG rights). In this case, the rights of the machine trump the rights of the individual (despite enterprise agreements).

The UNESCO recommendations should mean that university staff elect a majority of members to their respective university councils and academic senates and be free to critique management without fear or favour. It should also mean staff actively participate in all aspects of decision-making to ensure our universities live up to their public obligations. The UNESCO recommendations make it abundantly clear that academic freedom is not just an individual right but a collective responsibility and a public good.

Universities, therefore, have a social and ethical obligation to preserve academic freedom against their own authoritarian and managerialist impulses lest they destroy the very cultures and values they are entrusted to preserve and enrich. And yet, sadly, university managements and councils are often so far removed from these obligations that they instead see it as their role to pursue corporate objectives over staff rights, public interests, and what they clearly perceive to be archaic and inconvenient traditions. Or worse, they actively strategise to thwart and overthrow these rights and traditions in favour of economic and
corporate dogmas (Mitchell 2018; Rea 2016; Zipin and Brennan 2003; Brennan and Zipin 2018), CMG actors are literally the snake eating its own tail.

It is no coincidence that university councils are predominantly run by, and stacked, with councillors from corporate and financial backgrounds and that staff and student representation is being actively cut. The lenses and perspectives through which university decisions are filtered are corporate rather than scholarly and the resulting entity has more affinity with a shopping complex than a research community.

As Judith Butler (2017: 857) notes, ‘…academic freedom implies a right to free inquiry within the academic institution, but also an obligation to preserving the institution as a site where freedom of inquiry can and does take place, free of intervention, and censorship…’

Why Protecting Academic Freedom Matters

Academic freedom is the bedrock upon which a healthy university rests, and from which a vibrant educational community grows. Without academic freedom staff are defenceless, students are starved of critical consciousness and the university lacks the critical capacity and intellectual rigour to fearlessly scrutinise itself. Academic freedom is thus a necessary check and balance in the system; without it the university undermines its own integrity, legitimacy, and central mission. The neoliberal university is an un-reflexive and un-conscious entity that refuses to see itself unmasked.

To provide anything less than full academic freedom is to provide an unsafe and unjust workplace, one scarcely fit for purpose given a university’s mission. Management must always be kept in check by the very protections it affords its staff to fearlessly speak truth to power, no matter how unsettling and damning these commentaries. And yet CMG hegemony is completely incapable of allowing this necessary reflexivity – this consciousness – to happen or flourish.

As the American Association of University Professors (AAUP 2018) notes:

Academic freedom is the indispensable requisite for unfettered teaching and research in institutions of higher education. As the academic community’s core policy document states, ‘institutions of higher education are conducted for the common good and not to further the interest of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition’.

How is Academic Freedom Threatened?

Attacks on academic freedom are happening in universities across Australia (McNally 2018; Miller 2018a, 2018b) and across the globe (Scholars at Risk 2018). At Flinders University, for instance, management has undermined academic freedom by:

1. Reducing staff and student representation on University Council
2. Subjugating staff and student input to the logic of the market (benchmarks and metrics)
3. Hollowing out consultation processes
4. Sidelining staff input to the fringes of decision-making
5. Restricting research opportunities to those who attract profit or prestige
6. Weaponising confidentiality requirements
7. Promoting authoritarian leadership and punitive cultures
8. Perpetuating change and uncertainty to keep staff silent and fearful
9. Cultivating job insecurity
10. Fostering managerialist groupthink
11. Eroding collegiality
12. Punishing, demeaning, ostracising, and silencing dissenting staff
13. Intimidating staff out of the university
14. Not renewing contracts for casual staff who question management, and
15. Thwarting collective actions and public displays of unity and dissent.

Sadly, these tactics and atrocities are happening in a twenty-first century university which, ironically, prides itself on researching and exposing the very forms of violence and oppression it commits. This is where the gulf between management and (most) staff appears blatant and absurd.

Job Insecurity

Academic freedom is indelibly linked to job security (AAUP 2018; UNESCO 1997). You cannot have one without the other. At a senate inquiry into ‘academic freedom and university bias’ in Australia in 2008, Professor Peter Drummond noted the centrality of job security (and tenure) to academic freedom:

The fundamental protection of diversity and academic freedom in all universities is tenure:
the guarantee of continued employment. Since tenure was removed in Australia in the early 1990s, academic freedom has been under threat here more than in any other country in the democratic world. The unpleasant truth is that academic freedom is almost non-existent in modern Australian universities.

The threat of sacking that hangs over every academic’s head in Australia has a subtle yet chilling effect. It leads to silence: an unwillingness to become involved or to speak publicly. … This devalues the democratic rights central to our form of government. How can the public make informed decisions, if academics are gagged? (Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2008).

Only when staff feel genuinely secure and protected can they truly exercise their academic freedom and speak up in defence of themselves and others, and the ideas they wish to advance or offend (AAUP 2018). According to the NTEU’s ‘State of the Uni’ survey, conducted in 2017 and involving 51% union members and 49% non-union members from across Australia, ‘84% of the sample agreed that “job security is important if intellectual freedom is to be protected” ’ (NTEU 2018). Staff who have job security (or tenure) can speak out with confidence against opposing views, other scholars, media outlets, politicians, governments, corporations, university governments, and direct supervisors. They are shielded from dismissal. This protects democracy in the workplace and in society at large.

The prolific casualisation (and contractualisation) of academic and professional labour in universities over recent years, coupled with the relentless and seemingly unceasing rounds of restructures and job losses of permanent staff, is thus a concerted attack on the stability and safety of staff to fearlessly speak truth to power and/or take active control of their intellectual, emotional, and physical labours.

Job insecurity causes fear and complicity: a veritable race to the bottom for casual, fixed-term, and permanent staff who feel compelled to showcase their docility and subservience, rather than their critical acumen, to ensure ongoing employment. Staff thus often win jobs and favour through subservience and compliance rather than merit – the very antithesis of a critically-astute and democratically-engaged university culture and meritocracy.

So, while academic freedom protects staff from reprisals and sacking, it most importantly protects the very fabric and mission of the university itself (to fearlessly produce and disseminate knowledge and research regardless of vested interests and/or internal or external pressures). This ensures our universities operate in the public interest (rather than private corporate interests) to deliver diverse research outcomes, engaging teaching programs, and probing social commentary (of any political persuasion). It is in this world that our students learn to think and act as critically conscious social beings, not just well-credentialed cogs in the economic machine.

The Scourge of Managerialism

As Marc Spooner (2017: 899-900) suggests:

Indeed, the university is increasingly conceived as an entrepreneurial training scheme for knowledge workers while setting its scholarly ambitions no higher than impact factors, university rankings, branding, market share of students, and the wishes and dictates of corporate-styled and directed research and development.

On cue, the Vice-Chancellor and ‘CEO’ of Flinders University (2018) informs staff in virtually every email of CMG’s ambition to join the world’s top 1% of universities (staff email, 20 June 2018), further to previously focusing on ‘entrepreneurship,’ ‘start-ups’, ‘business’, and ‘innovation’ (staff email, 18 May 2016), while fully embracing the centrality of performance indicators in the University’s strategic plan to ‘manage’ and ‘monitor’ staff:

Implementing our vision [whose vision?] requires a set of specific metrics against which to monitor progress. These will be applied throughout our organisational structures so that all staff can see how their own efforts contribute towards our vision [or not]. These metrics will be complemented by a Planning and Accountability cycle that will enable us to recognise achievement and modulate plans to promote continuous improvement (Making a Difference: The 2025 Agenda 2017: 2).

This is the ‘all-administrative’ university (Srigley 2018). Everyone and everything is surveilled and measured, including the Vice-Chancellor as ‘President’ and ‘CEO’, and there is no ‘outside’ the corporate gaze. Staff will be prodded, prodded, and harassed to perform (Mitchell 2018). Hence, the very mechanisms of management and managerialism are counter to everything the university supposedly stands for.

Crushing Collegiality

CMG attacks on academic freedom at Flinders University have also focused on disputing (and perverting) the definitions of ‘collegiality’ and ‘participation’. CMG has
used several internal investigations to suggest that ‘collegial processes’ and ‘participation’ in fact mean staff should engage *enthusiastically and harmoniously* with others in the workplace rather than make robust criticisms about that workplace. This is ‘Newspeak’ in Orwelian terms. Collegial now means *deference*, and participation now means *passive reception* and *subservience*.

A sub-clause of A43 of the *Flinders University Enterprise Agreement 2014-2017* states that staff have a right to:

- Participate in collegial processes within the University

This clause seems simple and unproblematic. According to the *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (2005), the words mean:

- *participate*: take part in an activity or event
- *collegial*: involving shared responsibility
- *process*: series of actions or steps taken towards achieving a particular end

These words have a clear ordinary meaning (Buchecker pers. com. 2018). Staff have the right to *participate* in activities in a manner of *shared responsibility* to achieve *particular ends* (such as in their everyday workplaces or in staff meetings). The sub-clause is not susceptible to more than one meaning. It is entirely consistent with the UNESCO recommendations. And yet for management these words now mean the opposite. They are applying a neoliberal interpretation to the enterprise agreement to subjugate staff and conflate ‘collegial’ with ‘deferential’.

The idea and importance of collegial processes in universities is internationally understood as central to academic culture and sound governance (AAUP 2018). For example, it is embedded in UNESCO’s 1997 statement on higher education under the section ‘Self-governance and collegiality’:

> The principles of collegiality include academic freedom, shared responsibility, the policy of participation of all concerned in internal decision-making structures and practices, and the development of consultative mechanisms. Collegial decision-making should encompass decisions regarding the administration and determination of policies of higher education, curricula, research, extension work, the allocation of resources and other related activities, in order to improve academic excellence and quality for the benefit of society at large ...

Going further, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) explicitly warns against conflating collegiality with deference and subservience, and instead draws attention to the importance of counter-commentary and dissent to collegial processes. It says:

> In the heat of important decisions regarding promotion or tenure, as well as other matters involving such traditional areas of faculty responsibility as curriculum or academic hiring, collegiality may be confused with the expectation that a faculty member display ‘enthusiasm’ or ‘dedication,’ evince ‘a constructive attitude’ that will ‘foster harmony,’ or display an excessive deference to administrative or faculty decisions where these may require reasoned discussion. *Such expectations are flatly contrary to elementary principles of academic freedom, which protect a faculty member’s right to dissent from the judgments of colleagues and administrations (AAUP 2016).*

This distinction matters. Clearly, collegial processes, as commonly and internationally understood in higher education, involve staff having a protected right to provide *dissenting commentary* and *critical perspectives* for the overall benefit of the sector and the community at large. It is not for CMG, ‘Big Brother’, to conveniently give up this meaning and intention because it gets in the way of its authoritarian and corporate ambitions (Steinbuch and Silverstein 2017). Their job is to protect staff from precisely this type of interference and oppression! They are supposed to be the defenders of intellectual freedom not its chief threat.

Ultimately, if the University breaks the reflexive habit of staff to ask probing questions and provide insightful feedback in one sphere of the University, they are fast on their way to lobotomising this reflex in *all spheres*. They are destroying the reflex tooth and nail.

**The Consequences of Fear**

Many staff no longer feel safe standing up for themselves or others in the punitive neoliberal university. If staff cannot contribute to the functioning of the very institutions in which their work occurs, as according to the UNESCO recommendations, then the critical dispositions that underpin their contributions to research, teaching, public service, and wider public life are radically undermined. And this is contrary to the social responsibility and public accountability obligations of universities as trusted and esteemed civic institutions entrusted to serve the common good. The inaction to save our universities from this corporate / authoritarian takeover is staggering. Silence and complicity are anathema to a healthy and just university.
Reclaiming Freedom

The only remedy to this anti-democratic assault is to reclaim and reawaken the full gamut of academic and intellectual freedom rights, and to enact and deploy these rights in political and industrial ways throughout the workplace and throughout the sector, while publicising the battle and its ramifications to the numerous communities beyond. Fighting this oppression through industrial mechanisms alone in the Fair Work Commission will not win this battle. Strong political actions from staff and students – and their unions – is the only way we can truly publicise this battle and turn it in our favour. We need to shame CMG actors into behaving in the public interest. To repeat the words of Lew Zipin (2010: 161), we need to cultivate our ‘ethical courage’ to re-create universities as non-violent sites where we can do the work of imagining new and better ways to contribute to ethical modes of local and global social life, including new forms of governance.

Unless staff, students, unions, and community stakeholders wrest back universities from the clutches of corporate interests, universities as we know them will vanish forever. We must, therefore, protect our universities from the incessant attacks on academic freedom by corporate managements (and complicit governments) before it is too late. The question is whether this historical moment represents the retreat or renaissance of academic freedom. Both possibilities exist in a kind of superposition.

As Judith Butler (2017: 858) notes, ‘... higher education grounded in academic freedom opens up the possibility of free and critical thought, including intellectual positions that call into question the status quo ...' And if there were ever a time to question the status quo, it would be now.

Defend academic freedom before it is too late.

References


Social Alternatives  Vol. 38 No 3, 2019  19

Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2008 ‘Allegations of academic bias in universities and schools’, Report prepared for Australian Senate, Senate Printing Unit, Canberra.


The Kitchen Garden

Why hose me down with spit from your mouth that stinks like well-intentioned manure that you shovel onto what might have been a humble plot overgrown with mixed produce?

ANUM SATTAR,
WooSTER, OHIO, USA

Women that never were No. 5812

To save time she cut the heads off all her boyfriends so, when they broke up, she wouldn’t need to ruin her photographs. She pressed the faces thin, between tissue-meanings in her fattest dictionary. The ironing board arched, waiting to dance. Of her two cars, one was for parking only. She left it in the airport loading zone. The other car, driving, was never ticketed. Life was not as difficult as her mother led her to believe; that minor quake in the hand not the apocalypse she had expected. She lit her cigar and looked up Tantalus, just for kicks.

MONICA CARROLL,
CANBERRA, ACT

things a man may never think about (i)

He told me that he worked with (almost) lost languages, and as his hands gestured and rolled, he told of the Berber, and of the indigo-veiled Tuareg, wrapped against Saharan winds, and of their caravans of slaves and cigarettes now caught and confounded by borders they couldn’t accept;

then he said he was glad that I knew, when he mentioned Algeria, it wasn’t Nigeria, as so many had thought, here on the Adelaide Plains, where once Kuarna was the language; and though he knew how to revive words and structures and sense, here he found boundaries; old ones he couldn’t translate, or transcend.

I wondered at the backward tilt of his close-shaved head and imagined an inter-uterine storm had once oppressed his prenatal brow, until the hour that his bent skull was urged through his mother, all the while resisting her curves, and her guttural squeeze, and the insensible tug of the earth;

and I pictured him, his jutted chin juddering in her tight canal, his dark eyes leading, as his dreams curved back into her womb, like he was destined to seek forward and back, and always to reach for both at the same time; right from the very beginning I saw him, blindly; swimming against the tides.

HELEN THURLOE,
AVALON BEACH, NSW
Teaching the Goose that Layeth: Education at the crux of capital’s accumulatory imperative and its implications for scholar-activists

John Rice

The Marxian Law of Value is here presented as a useful lens with which to interpret the present educational crisis. Capital needs labour-power more than any other element, and in exponentially increasing amounts, as it alone is the foundation of capitalist profit. To deal with this challenge, it has moved the costs of education – the process of creation of labour-power – on to the consumer and pressured the state to privatise the field. The resultant foregrounding of STEM and neglect of the humanities is leading to the destruction of the 100-year-old basis of the original universities, thus constituting a new key phase in their historical evolution. To effect these changes, the corporatised university and VET sector have supressed many academic liberties and liberal discussion, as these challenge much of the required restructuring. The implications for scholar-activists are immediate and urgent: for example, who continues to teach the humanities, and in what civil society context? The Law of Value can thus provide a useful array of conceptual tools and insights that allow scholar-activists to perspicaciously grasp systemic causes, and hence assists us in developing an effective metalanguage of analysis and strategising as campaigners for a fully human form of education.

Introduction

Increasing staff anxiety and insecurity about job tenure, less and less talk of teaching and learning, harder struggles to maintain working hours and conditions, more and more dictatorial management, less and less sense of control, decreasing student voice, moves away from student-centred learning to atomised, criteria-based curricula, and an increasing focus on detailed accountability, auditing, and assessment rather than pedagogy. Sound familiar? If you’re an educational worker in either the school or university sectors, or in the vocational education and training (VET) field, like me, I suspect so. Of course, as scholar-activists – those who consciously take on the forces imposing such conditions – we are doing what we can to resist these trends.

But why should quite different sectors be experiencing similar trends, and why should workers from these sectors have such a palpable sense of déjà vu when their counterparts in other areas describe their current crises? I argue here that Marx’s Law of Value, although seemingly abstract and unrelated to our everyday experiences, can play an important role in elucidating the primary causes of such trends and tendencies. Global Capital requires labour-power more than any other commodity: this alone is the source of profit, and it needs it in exponentially expanding amounts. In order to achieve this formidable task, it has increasingly shifted the costs of education – the means of creating labour-power – to the consumer and forced the state to increasingly privatise this sector. In this cost-cutting race, the emphasis on STEM and the steady elimination of the humanities means the actual destruction of the intellectual bases on which the original universities were founded. And in order to achieve this, the now-corporatised university and VET sectors have restricted academic freedoms and liberal discourse that pose a threat to necessary deep restructuring. These consequences raise practical and fundamental questions for us as scholar-activists: if the humanities are displaced from universities, who keeps them alive, in what form of institutions in civil society, and how?

Marx’s Law of Value offers an explanation as to why different education sectors are suffering similar plagues and sore boils. It gives those who wish to do something about their, and their students’, plight some understanding of the broad, structural landscape in which the struggle occurs. It offers the chance to grasp deep causal roots and creates an effective toolbox of insights in determining strategies and pursuing solutions, as well as an effective metalanguage in campaigning as activists in our professional field.
The Law of Value Explained

To the degree that education has been dragged into the capitalist business framework, it becomes increasingly subject to the Law of Value, so it behoves us to explore exactly what this is.

The primary claim of the theory is that the economic value of a commodity is determined by, what Marx (1976) referred to as, the socially necessary labour-time to produce it. The ‘socially necessary’ component is critical. A slow worker making toasters taking ten hours to produce what an industrious worker produces in five can’t charge twice as much. They can try, but clearly the market will soon return an answer: at that price, it is unsellable. In other words, the price can be seen to reflect the amount of labour-time – working hours – embodied in the toaster. Money, for Marx, is the ‘universal equivalent’, the unique commodity exchangeable with all other commodities in a market economy. Thus, money might be seen as the clearest index of the length of labour-time; all other things being equal, a $60 toaster generally means the product took twice as long as one that costs $30.

However, we can all think of examples where money price does not equate with the labour time taken to produce a commodity, where the mere fixing of a brand to a jacket, say ‘Boss’, violently increases the price that is charged. Price can thus often depart from value. They are only equal when supply is equivalent to demand: when the object is sold and bought in equilibrium conditions. In the Boss scenario, an artificial monopoly has been created, skewing the market. But an entire economy can’t operate this way; if price departs from value in a pervasive and systemic form, then instability is unsustainably rife. The system will experience serious crisis and re-jig, prices falling into closer alignment with value once again.

Capital, as Marx conceives it, is the process by which value is accumulated. This often looks like the accumulation of money – what we normally think of as profit, but it’s in fact a lengthy circuit of:

1) initial investment – say $10m in toaster-making machines and tools, raw materials, factory space, office infrastructure (what Marx (1976) terms the means of production or MP), and importantly, labour;

2) the act of production, in which old value inherent in the raw materials and machinery is passed over into the newly-made toaster, and new value is added through the extra labour-time involved in the making of it;

3) the positing for sale of the new commodity, with the added value;

4) the act of ‘realisation’ of value into the money form of value if and when the toaster is sold. In the final step, and;

5) the reinvestment of much of this money into the process of production again occurs; faced with competition from other toaster-makers, our initial toaster-producer must expand, improve, or die in the cut-throat free market.

Hence the second run of the circuit, importantly, will, on average, embody more value, and so on, in a process of indefinite ‘accumulation’ unless taken over or rendered defunct by a rival firm. Capital, as David Harvey (2014: 70) claims, is thus more a process than a thing; essentially, it is value dedicated to the process of accumulation, whether in the money form or the form of ‘things’.

The Necessity for Continual Expansion

Hence ‘accumulate, accumulate – that is Moses and the prophets!’ as Marx famously thundered in Capital Vol. 1 (Marx 1976: 742). Indeed, Capital that does not accumulate over time dies, out-competed. Hence the need for all businesses to expand quantitatively and/or qualitatively, and thus a capitalist economy as a totality must also expand. David Harvey argues that there is ‘a generally accepted consensus figure in the financial press and elsewhere of 3% as a minimum acceptable rate of growth’ (2014: 226).

Figure: Global GDP growth (Tverberg 2012)

The above graph suggests similar values historically, indicating that GDP growth has remained consistently above that 3% for the last 70 years. We are only now realising the profound and disastrous environmental implications of a system that has inexorable expansion built into its DNA. At a rate of three %, it doubles just under every 25 years, growing over 19-fold in a century, and over 369-fold in two! Can we imagine a global GDP, having grown far faster than any runaway population
growth, over 350 times what we currently have, being somehow environmentally sustainable, when at the current size of 1 we have eliminated 60% of large animal populations (Carrington 2018), induced catastrophic climate change, accelerated desertification, pump-primed particle pollution, and almost destroyed the ozone layer?

The basis of this accumulation lies in businesses making profit and reinvesting at an ever-greater scale. This is what Marx termed 'expanded reproduction' where the source of this profit is understood to rest in businesses producing more value, on average, in each circuit of capital than they invest. The physical materials and instruments of production simply transfer their value from say, in our example, what is embodied in the raw material, steel, to now being embodied in the toaster; there is no change or increase. So whence the source of the augmentation of value? The labour power of the worker, being a commodity for sale on the market, is bought by our toaster-making bourgeois entrepreneur and set to work. Labour-power, like any other commodity, is worth the labour-time necessary to produce it i.e. the time taken to earn sufficient money to buy items (housing, food and clothing for example) so as to reproduce the worker’s existence and their capacity to labour.

If the capitalist only sold the toasters at a price that reflected their costs – of the means of production and the labour – there would be no profit. But profit – extra value – cannot be made from the means of production, as explored above. It must thus come from labour-power – which has the (unique!) capacity to add value to other commodities in the production process. Hence the labourer must produce more value in the form of saleable commodities than they are paid for. Given that value is labour-time, it must take the form of working longer than the hours taken to produce the value necessary to reproduce their own labour-power: free, unpaid labour-time. It is this unpaid surplus that the capitalist pockets as ‘surplus value’. The capitalist is driven by a constant and unremitting search for surplus value out of fear of their own extinction. This determines capitalist behaviour, from the general organisation of production down to the pettiest of matters like pressing a worker to be quick to the toilets.

Implications of the Law for Educators?

What does all this abstraction mean for us educational workers? Drawn as we are more and more into the neoliberal world of ‘let the market decide’, our education systems are becoming more and more subject to this capitalist law of value. Why are we drawn into this Law of Value in the first place? Can the Law of Value itself answer the question why we are becoming increasingly shackled by its caprices in the first place?

A concomitant expansion of labour power

One corollary of the Law of Value is that, for the capitalist, labour-power is the commodity prized above all commodities. It is the goose that layeth the golden egg. Labour power is the sole commodity capable of adding value during production. In reality, economies do grow each year, as capital thus far, most years, successfully finds more and more labour that it engages in the value-making process. The average three % GDP expansion rate of capitalist economies necessarily implies that three % more money has been created, this money in fact representing an equivalent increased labour-time. Thus, historically, capital has found more and more labour-hours that it has harnessed to the transformation of commodities, then realised in the money form. This can logically only come from either more people working as wage labourers in the economy annually, or from the same number of workers working more hours, or some form of combination of the two. This implies that capitalism is responsible for not only the inexorably-expanded consumption and tragic destruction of the physical environment, but the much more hidden expanded consumption of greater and greater quantities of human labour-time; more and more of us are further and further drawn into the wage-labour process, like it or not. It’s an exponential process, an 86-fold increase of the number of labour-hours engaged in wage-labour in an economy over the last 200 years, based on a historic growth rate of two and one quarter % since 1820 (Maddison, in Harvey 2014: 227). Clearly, such a large-scale transformation of societies has been possible in the past; through the capitalist-led assault on peasant and indigenous populations, more and more people have been dispossessed of the earth on which they live, and the means of production that they have inherited from their ancestors, and have been forced, desperate, into urban labour markets. This has transformed humanity in the last two centuries from a primarily agricultural species to one where the majority are urbanised proletarians.

We should not forget, however, that Moses and the prophets do not pause in their exhortations. Over the next 200 years, to maintain a modest profit rate and similar expansion of three %, there must be a further 369-fold increase in the number of human labour-hours embodied as value in the sum of commodities produced annually. It’s sadly easy to transform an agricultural or hunter gatherer society in the way described above; there’s plenty of human capacity to shift over into the wage-slave relationship, after one has decimated the old ways of being and doing, but what about from here on in? Assuming there is another half to a full century in which capital can incorporate those in the outer periphery of the global economy within its aegis, once this has been accomplished, where will it look to double its total sum of labour-hours every 25 years? This represents a huge, life and death, but unconsidered problem for global capital
I was responsible for filling in 25,000 boxes.

Exponentially-increased training and education

As capital faces an ever-growing crisis of finding more and more human labour to feed into its ever-expanding juggernaut, it is likely to demand of non-capitalist institutions in civil society that they think of and enact ways of preparing human labour-power on a greater and greater scale, to an ever-higher skill level (in response to the increasing technology produced by ineluctable capitalist competition). Those in the capitalist state are tasked with the role of producing more and more available proletarian labour-hours for capital, so the production of each labour-hour must be achieved at an ever-cheaper rate. If states have to produce proletarians with the capacity to expend double the number of labour-hours in capitalist production every 25 years, unit cost must come down! States, aided and abetted by capital, have thus handballed the costs into user-pays systems; capitalists abhor the increased taxes that government-sponsored education and training implies. Individual students must pay, often via crippling loan schemes.

Governments have then also sought to have the increasingly high level of knowledge and skills required for production to be ‘delivered’ at the lowest cost possible even after they have attempted to divest themselves of the expense, a process that is necessarily incomplete and leaves them with the remaining burden of educational expenditure. Thus, they still subsidise many courses; in order to reduce the tax burden, previously-public systems are privatised and marketised, competitive-tendering systems becoming commonplace, the government becoming the ‘customer’ ‘buying’ ‘units’ of competency – packages of operationally defined, commodified knowledge – at the lowest possible price. Certainly, in the VET sector, private capitalist providers picking up this ‘delivery’ of the educational ‘product’ attempt to ‘produce’ a graduate using the shortest possible labour-time of its workers, pocketing a standard fee from government coffers – surplus value par excellence. Corners are cut, the resultant ‘tick and flick’ phenomenon of ticking off competencies that are half-heartedly tested to quickly ‘realise’ the value in the final ‘product’ creating a climate of distrust between the government as ‘customer’ and the ‘provider’. This then creates armies of ‘police’ and inquisitors – auditors and ‘quality assurance’ pundits – and labyrinthine processes of evidence-gathering that overwhelm teachers, turning them predominantly into administrators. I calculated that last year, with 20 students, I was responsible for filling in 25,000 boxes.

In my informal professional observation, making these transformations of educational institutions fall in line with the Law of Value – their restructuring, cost-cutting, and corporatisation – is directly proportional to their proximity to the capitalist production process. The VET sector, for example, tasked with the production of labour-power for its direct and immediate use by Capital, has corporatised earlier and more deeply than universities, who stand at a somewhat greater distance from the labour market, with secondary and primary schools coming in a much more distant third and fourth position. Yet in all these institutions we can see the inexorable and growing penetration of corporate forms of organisation, and certainly ideology and language. It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide statistics on this phenomenon, but if correct, the fact that such corporatisation is inversely correlated to distance from the point of capitalist surplus value production gives support to the present argument that the Law of Value is operational here and is profoundly shaping educational institutions and practices.

Our strategic status as producers of labour-power

The fundamental, systemic centrality of educational workers therefore cannot be underestimated. Capital seeks, in its implacable and vicious circuitry, one commodity above all else. Paradoxically, it ferrets out more and more labour-power to exploit, at the same time needing to reduce the socially necessary labour-time per product via improved management and technological improvement. How does it resolve this contradiction? Faced with a decreasing amount of labour embodied in the product due to ever-increasing productivities, and its necessity to find more and more available labour-power due to the exigencies of expanded reproduction, it increases the scale of production. While capital does this across all areas of production, education is a special case in that its final product is that unique commodity that itself alone produces value: skilled labour-power.

We tend to think of Capital as rapaciously devouring material on a greater and greater scale in its process of expanded reproduction – annihilating rainforests, burning coal, depleting fisheries – but it in fact doesn’t need to do this; it could in fact use less material per product – steel for example, in its toaster – and be quite ‘content’. We could theoretically see a scenario in which, despite its constantly expanding markets and scale of production, due to efficiencies and technological developments, less and less materials were being consumed in production. However, and this it seems is a conceptual contribution to the thinking on the Law of Value: the one thing Capital cannot abide systemically is the lack of expansion of the quantity of labour-power, and therefore value, in each successive circuit of capital, as outlined above, even though the quantity of the means of production might be...
falling. The implications for us, as producers of this utterly unique, now-recently-commodified human capacity, are legion. Like no other industry, Capital looks to us, the knowledge producers, to feed its Satanic mills with ever more souls for the taking. We must train them, and then some. We are compelled to teach them that upon entering those dark portals they are to abandon all hope of any alternative. We are to direct them to report for work duty with their dearly-purchased TAFE certificates or university degrees in hand at the appropriate Circle of the Inferno.

What the average teacher lost in the Amazonian vegetation of reporting procedures probably finds obscure is the historic construction and the crucial importance of his or her role. We find ourselves at the nub of nubs of a fundamental and global and centuries-long crisis of labour-power, the life-blood of capitalism, which has not been exposed or articulated, but is nevertheless scorchingly real in its consequences.

Structural Implications

Two important further corollaries of this urgent downward pressure on educational and training costs imposed by governments on the relevant institutions follow: 1) the revolutionising of universities such that they are currently undergoing the third fundamental transformation in their roughly thousand-year-old history, and 2) in order to effect these changes, powerful forces, internal and external, are purging these higher learning institutions of the liberalism entertained and enjoyed during the last two centuries.

Radical demolition of the university’s original foundations

When the first European universities were established in the 11th and 12th centuries in Bologna, Oxford and elsewhere, they were primarily concerned with arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music theory, grammar, logic, and rhetoric, as well as theology, law, medicine, Aristotelian metaphysics and moral philosophy. The liberal arts thus constituted the majority of the subject offerings; science in its modern sense was unknown. Two great transformations have occurred within universities since their inception, the first being the steady rise of humanism displacing the theologically-focused traditions. The other is the much more rapid and revolutionary introduction of the sciences in the nineteenth century, after a long period of tension between many universities and scientific practice. During this phase, much research was sponsored by private sources – Galileo Galilei being a prime case-in-point (The Galileo Project 1995).

Currently, with the enormous pressures placed on civil society by the importunities of Capital for labour at historically ever-lower costs, due to the supply crisis described above, universities around the world have responded by emphasising STEM while sacrificing the humanities and arts subjects. Why should governments pay for ‘unnecessary’ learning, given more and more is demanded of them?

The parsimony engendered by Capital’s crisis in generating expanded scales of labour-power is thus responsible for the third, current, great historical transformation of the universities: tragically, involving the deracination of the very subjects, the intellectual bases on which the original universities were founded – the liberal arts. We thus see a 1000-year-old global institution commandeered by Capital to the degree it is eviscerating its fundamental nature as a place of committed enquiry into multiple aspects of the human condition, transforming itself into a bureaucratised but productive conveyor belt, depositing highly-STEM-skilled proletarians at the glass-walled company doorstep. The realisation of the radicalism of this transformation should give us pause, and we should resist the passing of the last remnants of the original forms of such an august institution. How do we then struggle for the preservation, and reinstitution, of such elements? This leads to the subsequent consideration of the level of relative freedom with which academics can voice such misgivings and fight for their ideas and ideals.

The death of liberalism inside and outside the university and VET

Universities and technical colleges have been the epitome of free intellectual enquiry. Tenure was the material basis for the intellectual security from which academic workers could, without fear or favour, express their honest responses to thousands of hours of investigation, thought, and consultation. With the loss of such security, and the constant revolutionising of the means of production of knowledge in the radical direction imposed by the exigencies of Capital, which is the current organisational turmoil of the current university or VET sector college, the material basis for its opposite – fear and anxiety of repercussions due to disfavour – has been established in its stead. Driven by Capital’s structural need to produce exponentially greater but ever-cheaper units of labour-power, corporate and even military interests have sometimes stacked the boards and councils of universities and TAFEs to the point that staff representation is minimised and even removed entirely. Pressure is placed on academics and VET lecturers not to oppose the corporate restructuring of their institutions: the spilling of positions, effective banning of resistant staff-student campaigns, the creation of a climate of intimidation, selection of politically loyal staff over ‘recalcitrants’, and so on. Lecturers are dissuaded via such means from speaking publicly on issues proving sensitive to corporate concerns or to the universities or TAFEs that are increasingly aligned with such interests. Andrew Miller at
and discourse by the oligarchic corporate media – five evident in the erosion of human rights, the growth of the is then writ large across civil society as a whole. This is broader loss parallels the loss of similar agency of other workers in their workplaces over the last 40 years. This broader loss, after all, simply and wither to the cell-like dimensions it assumes today. Once they were eroded, so too did such space shrink the principal means and platform for such liberal space. To Capital that was operational in the mid-century – were relatively favourable balance towards Labour as opposed to hindsight, that the material conditions of the time – the withering of the humanities and arts. All of this adds up to the death, or at least palliatively cared-for, oxygen-supported, and opioid-alleviated state, of liberalist discourse across civil society more generally. Our higher education sector is simply part of this overall trend.

A New Landscape for Scholar-Activists

As capitalism mutates into an increasingly oligarchic form that experiences a series of progressively desperate crises, the material conditions of liberalism, from which it emerged in the nineteenth century as a revolutionising intellectual force, are being swept away. The preconditions for optimal liberal discourse and interchange are those in which most capitals are relatively small, diverse quantitatively and qualitatively, and relatively freely competing. These, together with a fully developed, vibrant union movement – which, given its strength vis-à-vis smaller capitals, guarantees the material protection of the working class and its various civil mass movements – are now long gone.

As scholar activists, we should face facts and learn an important historical lesson. The liberal tradition is not a-historically given as perhaps some liberals might assume. Rather, it has emerged from and rests on material circumstances in which the working class are physically most secure. Liberalism in all its cornucopian glory will thus only be truly possible and permanently established when the working class are hegemonic in their political and economic control of civil society and the state. It will only be under – gulp! – democratic socialism that genuine academic freedoms will be fully enacted and practised. We cannot therefore hope for liberalism to somehow emerge in new, pristine, form in contradiction to the current nationalistic ugliness sweeping the planet. The glowing white image of Liberty will only feel fully herself in the Workers Republic. However, her space is currently circumscribed and narrowing.

Could any of these insights be instructive for our infelicitous higher education worker and actual or potential activist, lost amongst the red scrawls of marking and prep for tomorrow’s tutorials or workshops? As Glenn Rikowski (2018) argues, Marxism is a theory of capital’s weakness and vulnerabilities. It is a roadmap indicating its flaws and Achilles heels, not a portrait revealing its omnipotence, however overwhelming and gargantuan the inexorable centralisation and concentration of capital, so accurately and presciently mapped by the good Dr Karl, might be.

Some immediate consequent questions for us as scholar-activists are: if such a radical restructuring is taking place,
who will preserve the humanities? Might it require scholar-activists to not only battle within the institutions, but consider establishing, or augmenting, other civil society institutions through which such subjects are taught? The establishment of the Workers Education Association out of the Chartist movement in the mid-nineteenth century, the forerunner of the TAFE system in Australia, comes to mind as an associated precedent. Or should scholar-activists reinterpret their role even more fundamentally, and teach within certain social movements? The 1960s ‘teach-ins’ are instructive here. As the loss of the humanities accelerates, the question becomes increasingly crucial; discussions and experiments must be had. Some of us here in Adelaide, for example, have discussed offering ‘teach-ins’ to the newly-born student-strike-for-climate-change movement.

Indeed, such a challenge can bring enormous opportunities: to fundamentally redefine educational processes and create seamless continuities with civil society in a way that has not been seen for some time. There is the opportunity here to fuse the educator and educated together quite deeply in a profoundly dialectical and Freirean context – potentially leading to a highly unalienated form of educational labour and the creation of authentic Gramscian ‘organic intellectuals’ (Hoare 1971).

We are faced with a legion of enormities: a global system increasingly desperate for the blood of labour-power which feeds its inevitable, expansive, and destructive drive into the very ecosystem upon which we and it depend; an apparatus lurched by multiple crises, responding with a malicious shutdown of the limited freedoms we have briefly won against it; and a razing of the original, ancient foundations upon which initial academic enquiry and liberty was built. But the dragon, the behemoth, has an underbelly, where not all of its scales grow. If we ever-larger degrees, threatens to burn down the gorgeous Eden of our global ecosystem, upon which we all stand. We have no time to waste.

References

Author
John Rice has been an activist scholar throughout his career, starting in secondary schools in the 1980s, then working in TAFE until recently, lecturing in English as a Second Language, Cultural Adaptation and Transition, and Critical Thinking. He has become increasingly interested in Marxian paradigms as potential generators of creative and critical insights into current and historical crises in education, culture, economics, and environmental areas. These paradigms were utilised during his TAFE work in developing migrant students’ capacities to interpret their new culture and develop a detailed understanding of present issues and debates in contemporary Australia. Having recently left TAFE and now working part-time, John is focussing on examinations of neoliberal changes in education systems, and how capitalist markets erode high-context cultures into low-context cultural formations, as well as class analyses of the recent rise of the global alt-right.

**jellyfish and sea-snail**

as milk-pale moon jellies
curve tissue-paper thin
to hold blue sea

inside the strong plate glass
of the aquarium,

out in the evening air
opposite the sunset’s gold excess
cool drifts of aqua sky

lift

with infinite slow care
the faded empty sea-snail shell
of waxing moon

**JENNY BLACKFORD,**
**NEWCASTLE, NSW**
How Council-Management Governance Troubles Australian University Labours and Futures: Simplistic assumptions and complex consequences

LEW ZIPIN

This paper diagnoses how Australian universities are troubled by a mode of institutional governance that debilitates academic labours and harms university sector capacities to contribute to social futures. This mode, which I call Council-Management Governance (CMG), comprises: an executive level of Council and Senior Management; a line-management chain that extends between executive level and academic labour grounds; and a range of auxiliary offices and actors. I consider CMG actors not as personalities but as epistemic enactors of positions in a governance system, focusing on how they ‘see things’ from these positions. As well, I situate CMG activities and logics in broader contextual forces acting on universities from outside. A key theme is that CMG runs on power-invested simplifications that generate damaging consequences in the complex grounds of academic labour. I further consider how/why CMG resists hearing grounded academic wisdom about consequences, instead exerting power to restructure academic work in ways that weaken academic agency. This relational dynamic between CMG power and academic disturbance features emotive and ethical dimensions as well as epistemic. I conclude with a gesture to possibilities that academics might mobilise ethico-emotive energies proactively, to re-purpose university labours, and their governance, towards renewed affective care for social futures.

Diagnosing Council-Management Governance

This paper diagnoses how Australian universities are troubled by a mode of institutional governance that debilitates academic labours and careers and harms university sector capacities to contribute to social futures. I call this mode Council-Management Governance (CMG). While the term denotes two elements – Council, and Senior Management – constituting a ‘topmost’ executive level, CMG also includes: a line-management chain extending from ‘above’ into academic labour grounds ‘below’; and a range of auxiliary offices, consultants and more. All of these elements comprise the governance syndrome analysed in this paper.

A backdrop to my diagnoses is my academic career in education programs and as a union activist across three Australian universities. From this combination of standpoints, I have engaged with people in various CMG locations. In this paper I consider CMG participants not as ‘personalities’ but as epistemic enactors of positions in a governance system. Indeed, my focus is epistemological: I seek to understand how CMG actors ‘see things’ from their positions. In the process, I consider broader contexts and forces from outside universities that instigate and sustain the CMG mode and its logics. A core theme of my analyses is that CMG runs on power-invested simplifications that accumulate damaging consequences as they impose their way into complex grounds of academic labour.

I consider further how/why CMG resists hearing grounded academic wisdom about consequences, instead mobilising intensified power – including workforce restructures – to break academic agency. A relational dynamic between CMG power and academic disturbance comes to the fore featuring emotive and ethical dimensions as well as epistemic. I conclude with a gesture to possibilities that academics might mobilise ethico-emotive energies in pro-active efforts to re-purpose university labours, and their governance, towards new affective care for social futures. This concluding provocation stops very short; but it is taken up in Marie Brennan’s paper in this issue. (I suggest that readers see this paper as ‘part 1’ of a two-paper development.)

‘This is how shit happens!’: A simplification syndrome

In late 2016, at a meeting of the Australian Council of Deans of Education, a Dean presented a brief skit which
she called ‘The Plan’, The ACDE, in posting the skit as a podcast on its website (7/11/2016), observed that the Dean ‘shared her “wisdom” in ‘a humurous [sic] take on how ideas may grow in higher education’. (I note that similar versions of ‘The Plan’ can be found on a number of humour websites; but the Dean’s specific version addresses problems with university governance structures.) I transcribe the Dean’s skit below:

In the beginning was The Plan.
And then came The Assumptions.
And The Assumptions were without form. And darkness was upon the face of the workers. And they spoke among themselves, saying: ‘It is a crock of shit; and it stinketh!’
And the workers went unto their supervisors and said: ‘It is a pile of dung; and none may abide the odour thereof’. And the supervisors went unto their managers and said: ‘It is a container of excrement; and it is very strong, such that none may abide it’.
And the managers went unto their Directors, saying: ‘It is a vessel of fertiliser; and none may abide its strength’. And the Directors spoke amongst themselves, saying one to another: “It contains that which aids plant growth; and it is very strong!”
And the Directors then went to the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, saying unto them: ‘It promotes growth; and it’s very powerful’
And the Deputy Vice-Chancellors went to the Vice-Chancellor, saying unto him [sic]: ‘This new plan will actively promote the growth and vigour of the University, with powerful effects!’
And the VC looked upon The Plan, and saw that it was good; and The Plan became Policy.
This is how shit happens!

I first heard the Dean’s skit when members of a Branch of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) circulated a link to it. I did find humour in the wordplay on St John’s Gospel; and, as myself a NTEU activist, within the humour I indeed found wisdom about how remote ‘leadership above’ avoids grounded knowledge that it ought to attend to in processes for strategic planning of university directions. I apprehended the wisdom with emotions of both appreciation and dismay. Let me first interpret the wisdom, after which I address my dismay.

I hear the Dean suggest that university strategic plans initiated at ‘upper-level’ remove – among Senior Managers and inner-circle Council Members – inevitably proceed from assumptions that are ‘formless’ in the sense of simplistic. That is, they are not informed about complexities on ‘the grounds’ where core university work is done. Those who do the work can anticipate likely effects, including multiplications of negative unintended consequences when plans based on uninformed simplifications enter the matrix of grounded complexities. Yet, for their wisdom to apply correctly to strategic plans, a process of ground-up voice and hearing is necessary. However, the upward-bound communicative process that the Dean details – from workers to supervisors who dwell among them, to managers (Deans and Heads of School) a rank ‘above’, on to Directors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors and the Vice Chancellor at ‘high’ remove – is one of euphemistic translation. An implication is that, across the line-management chain inheres tacit understanding that powers ‘above’ do not want their assumptions challenged; hence the ‘job’ of those in positions along the chain is not to channel grounded wisdom upwards, but to translate it in ways that reinforce formless simplifications from ‘on high’. And that’s how shit happens ‘down below’.

To my mind, the Dean’s analysis of lost wisdom suggests need for democratic processes to inform strategic directions, whereby CMG ‘leaders’ put ears to the ground, listen, and learn. Yet, across the CMG chain, incentives are to align with power ‘above’, not wisdom ‘below’. I note here that, throughout the Dean’s presentation of the skit, the assembled Deans laughed knowingly, including, robustly, at the concluding punch line: ‘This is how shit happens!’

My dismay, was in hearing Deans knowingly show critical awareness that, in my experience, is kept mum, and contradicted, when enacting the position of Dean. In my career across three Australian universities (I retired in 2016) where I worked as both an education academic and a NTEU activist, my activism focused on pursuing workload justice for academic staff. In the process, I consulted extensively with colleagues on what, realistically, it takes to do the work that their institutions rely on them to accomplish. There were a number of experiences in which I, with other colleagues, sought to communicate to Deans: (a) what was invisible, rather than recognised and measured fairly, in existing workload models; and (b) how those models should change in order to take due account of staff labours needed to sustain quality teaching – let alone scholarship and research, too often forsaken – along with staff health by keeping workloads honestly within the total hours sanctioned in institutional Enterprise Agreements and national industrial laws. Staff sought to explain complex working conditions that required time not recognised in instituted workload models. Yet Deans generally evaded responsive hearing of complex grounded testimony – let alone promised to
convey staff accounts upward. Typically, Deans referred, simplistically, to ‘advice’ from senior finance officers about the ‘necessity of keeping workload models budget-viable’.

So: An assembly of Deans communicating among themselves – *within their level of university governance* – show knowingness about the perils of (mis)translation, up a managerial chain, that converts complex grounded wisdoms to accord with simplistic ‘on high’ assumptions. Yet they participate in this suppression of grounded knowledge. How shall we understand this?

**An Assemblage of Minions: Epistemic actors who compartmentalise ethics**

I suggest we see Deans and others along the chain as *epistemic* actors, more than *agentic* actors. They perform *governmentalities* (Foucault 1991) – dispositions associated with institutional positions – wherein they become habituated to compartmentalising ethical conscience about what they do, even if conscious of consequences. In thus bracketing duties of care for academics to do work of *substantive* quality (not performative pretences of ‘quality’, as discussed in the next section), they abandon ethics-driven agency to contribute to university future capacities to serve students, communities and broader social purposes.

But how do actors in the chain settle for epistemic bypass of ethical response-ability? I suggest that systemic distance from the grounds of academic labour is a crucial dynamic. Notably, the Dean, in her skit, names a ‘supervisor’ position between ‘worker’ and ‘manager’. Increasingly, Australian Deans and Heads of School no longer function as *middle*-managers who dwell among, and empathise with, academics’ labour-pains. Across universities, line-managements are being restructured in ways that reduce agentic ‘middle’ positions (Brennan 2010). As Deans/HoSs move up to ‘senior’ level, they designate low-level supervisors from within the academic workforce who, while dwelling among colleagues, all the more lack agency to shape or act outside CMG’s ‘line’. As I observe, those selected often embody dispositional qualities towards complying with authority, and/or careerism, and/or bullying – all functioning, in day-to-day relations, to insist that colleagues ‘know their place’ in relation to CMG agendas.

I do not mean to say that, in *living* their epi(sys)temic positions, actors along the chain embody no cognitive or ethical dissonances. In my interactions with people in the chain, I see what appear to me as complex, often tense mixes and balances of practised poise, angry venting, authoritarian self-righteousness, and other symptoms of what it takes to do self-surgery on conscience. I have indeed seen crises of conscience that lead to exiting the chain. Yet, however actors may ‘manage’ psycho-emotive stress, I find it *ethically* concerning that many ‘adjust’.

Moreover, many find ways to sublimate analytic and creative capacities that, like many academics, they bring to universities. If they forsake agency to practise such capacities in the ethics-driven pursuit of democratic universities that collect wisdom towards contributing to worthy social futures, they may instead apply capacities in career-building contributions to CMG’s reductive and power-driven narratives that Pignarre and Stengers call ‘infernal alternatives’ (2011: 31):

*[T]he labour of many ... hard-working minions produces ... [what] imposes itself with the self-evidence of unavoidable alternatives.... [T]hey work on a very small scale, whilst *infernal alternatives* are an overall result ... It is a discourse that drives one to despair ... [but] is well policed ... even ‘scientific’ ... a science that ratifies these alternatives by adopting the categories that they have put in place. And it is perhaps all these ‘minions’ who put us on the [so-called] right path.* [italics added].

Infernal alternatives are discursive products (with effects on practice) of a *complex process of simplifying complexities*, including invocations of ‘science’ – of ‘evidence-basis’ – to police ‘truths’. Thus, workload models that, in the wisdom of staff, honestly assess time to do quality work, are declared ‘not budget-viable’; and simpler models, leaving much real work invisible, are then declared ‘honest’ by Finance Officers, Deans, and ‘on down’. Moreover, minion minds that combine to produce such complex simplifications – and seek ways to believe them, so as to elude cognitive-ethical dissonances – require a larger mass of actors than those in CMG’s line-managerial chain. Ever-expanding offices of auxiliary service to CMG agendas – Marketing, HR, Finance, etc.; and temporary ‘Project Officers’ and ‘Consultants’ – add thicker assemblages of minion roles. Spending working days among a minion ‘collegial’ mass is crucial for sustaining epistemic remove from empathy with a despair-driven mass of academics who struggle with conditions increasingly unviable for quality in doing what, at least for now, is still called the ‘core work’ of universities.

Another device supporting epistemic avoidance of empathetic ethics is Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set from ‘above’. These powerfully reductive expectations of ‘output’, to which minions must work to keep positions and advance in careers, typically link to overarching infernal narratives, such that ‘saving on budget’ is the *uber alles* purpose of institutional governance. Even the most ‘Senior’ Manager – the Vice Chancellor – answers...
to this KPI, set by inner-circle Council members who typically come from a ‘business’ mindset. I suggest that the discourse of ‘budget above all’ exerts an implicit disciplinary regime that exceeds the ‘fiscal’ priority to which it overtly speaks. It both mutes, and normatively substitutes for, care about ethically substantive social purposes for universities, while perhaps allowing minions to feel they work for the ‘noble’ purpose of the university’s institutional survival.

My analyses of mentalities in management-chain and auxiliary positions may help explain how these epistemic actors come to function as minions promoting ‘strategic plans’ that, tacitly or consciously, they may well sense ‘stinketh!’ Yet enacting of plans carrying uninformed assumptions from ‘above’, unchecked by corrective wisdom from ‘below’, pile up unintended consequences that debilitate and demoralise academics doing grounded work. How, then, does a CMG mode of governance remain entrenched past any sensible use-by date? This question leads me to look ‘above’ the minion assemblage, to dynamics at CMG’s ‘Senior Executive’ level. To begin, I next consider how governing political-economic-ideological contexts outside universities shape governance inside universities.

Meta-simplistic Impositions on Universities from Governing Forces Outside

The discourse of ‘budget above all’ can hold normative sway only if it has some basis in experience: a simplification, but not simply fictitious. Australian universities do struggle with inadequate funds. As John Ralston Saul, an analyst of global trends, noted in a speech at the University of New South Wales (1999):

[I]f you analyse the tax base of your country, you’ll find that the corporations ... about 50 years ago [paid] somewhere around 45 per cent ... [but] now probably somewhere around six or seven per cent. That's why you can't afford the public education.

That is, fiscal crises for nation-states, under neoliberal compulsion to ‘free corporations from tax burdens’, reduce government revenues to fund public sectors. Nor do Australian universities raise much funding from alumni contributions, industry investment, etc. They thus rely on higher student fees than in most OECD nations (OECD 2018): all the more so since, while among most OECD governments ‘[s]pending per [tertiary] student increased between 1995 and 2011’, exceptions were ‘Australia, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Israel and Switzerland, where expenditure did not keep up with expanding enrolments’ (OECD 2014: 213).

Despite this funding lag, Australian federal governments have, since the mid-1970s, steered university enrolment expansion. We might wish this were driven by social-justice impulses; and there have been ‘equity’ strands within policies and reports (e.g. the 2008 ‘Bradley Review’) calling for greater ‘diversity’ as well as numbers in student intake. However, such strands fold into a predominant economic rationalist frame – ‘diversity expands the nation’s human capital’ – that responds to another global effect of neoliberal policy climates: legitimisation crises for nation-states. That is, fears among voters about downward mobility in living standards prompt governments to bolster political-economic credibility through policy that ‘promises’ ways to secure futures of decent work and wages. Universities are then political footballs of this promise, touted as spaces for ‘lifelong accumulation of human capital for knowledge-economy futures’.

To Brown et al. (2011), such rhetoric about higher education – as the space of ‘opportunity’ to build human capital and secure good life-chances – is, increasingly, an ‘opportunity trap’. Like other critical political-economic analysts (e.g. Harvey 2011; Wallerstein 1983), they see career precariousness and downward mobility as inevitable in ‘advanced capitalist’ nations for growing portions of populations – professional as well as working-class – as secure while gainful jobs are displaced by global redistribution of capital investment to cheap-labour regions. This includes high-tech jobs; and technologies also replace much human labour everywhere. People lured by the ‘value-added’ promise of universities may thus invest in costly degrees, building debt into their futures, without reward for the investment.

I lack space to detail further the complex material-historical problems for futures faced by populations which governments – wrestling with fiscal and legitimacy crises – translate to discursively simplistic education ‘problems’ and ‘solutions’ (Bacchi 2000). My focus is on how governance external to universities becomes a source of powerful meta-simplifications that transfer to governance internal to universities. Indeed, and perversely, federal government’s weak allocations to the university sector become a force of leverage to shape university governance. That is, government tosses bits of funds into the cash-starved sector, for which universities compete with each other based on performance criteria based in what the Dean called ‘formless assumptions’.

While stakes of sectoral competition include funds attached to performance in teaching, research, etc., more significant are how measured indicators of performance signify institutional reputation that draws student tuition revenues. In stressing competition for reputation, I note that universities are fiscal break-even institutions more
so than economic capital-accumulating institutions. The 'coin' they struggle to accumulate is what Brown (2003: 144) calls 'reputational capital', driven by 'positional imperatives [that] refer to relative performance'. But 'good performance' takes on questionable meanings when the criteria are based on assumptions too simplistic for substantive achievement. Rather:

Images of 'achieved quality' gain precedence over substantive achievement. VCs, PVCs/Deans, and down the managerial chain, learn to respond to impossible-to-meet 'quality performance' criteria by producing performative fabrications (Zipin 2006; see also Ball 2000).

Dedicating increased portions of scarce university resources to fabrications of 'quality performance' – in pursuit of institutional reputation to be marketed to government, students and communities – thus vacates substantive purposes for university labours. Says Marginson (2002: 113), about what he and Considine (2000) call the 'Enterprise' form of Australian universities:

The hallmark of the Enterprise University is a reactive ... business-like style of engagement, where the overriding objective is not knowledge, community service, national development ... but the prestige and competitiveness of the university as an end in itself.

Add teaching to this list of substantive objectives for academic labour that lose resources to market-fabrications of university 'glory' in pursuing 'prestige'. I note further that such 'business-like' focus on competitive reputation as an end in itself is not a prime motivator of academic staff who labour, with reduced resources, to teach, develop knowledge and serve communities. Rather, it motivates a small-but-powerful Executive fraction of CMG: (a) inner-circle Council members; and (b) Senior Managers – VC, DVCs, PVCs, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and foot-soldier Deans. I henceforth call this Executive fraction CSM.

'Reputation' and 'Budget': A CSM combo that makes 'shit' happen

For Senior Managers, CSM is a space to build career mobility by showing they can 'lead' an institutional entity – 'The University' – to greater 'prestige'. At the same time, CSM is a locus of institutional accountability to government outside universities, with non-debt budget seen as a supreme responsibility, especially by 'business'-minded members of Council. These two impulses – to create institutional reputation at all costs; and to balance budget as a supreme norm – can combine in stressful ways. On the one hand is an impulse of relentless effort to fabricate and market institutional 'glories'. But, on the other hand, fabricating and marketing 'prestige' are not academic labours: they occupy an expanding number of minions in Marketing, HR, Finance, consultancies, etc. – all of which must be budget-resourced.

Fattening the minion workforce thus impels reduced budget allocation to employ and resource academics. Consequent restructuring of academic workforces, through various devices, has lately been steered by CSMs across the Australian university sector. A hallmark of such restructures is replacement of teaching-and-research (TR) positions with teaching-only (TO): a mix of 'casual', 'contract' and 'permanent' employments. TR academics who have long carried teaching and administrative workloads that take away time for research/scholarship are then 'performance-evaluated' as insufficiently research-productive to justify TR status. They can then apply for the reduced numbers of 'permanent' TO positions – at lower salary and/or more intensive teaching/admin workload – which they may or may not gain based on 'past teaching-performance' evaluations. Or they can 'choose' redundancy packages that, in many cases, terminate careers.

In 'justifying' exploitative restructures of academic workforces, CSMs pose as spaces of 'hard budget decisions for The Good of The University'. Such rhetoric of necessary sacrifice required of academics masks transfer of budget from good quality academic work, to non-academic work of making The University look 'good'. Yet such masking is sometimes exposed in public arenas, inciting CSMs to further rhetorical contriving of 'virtues' in their acts of budget 'necessity'. Thus, Flinders University VC Colin Sterling, when overseeing conversion of most TR positions to TO, responded to sceptical questions from a radio interviewer (who had previously hosted Flinders NTEU voices of critique):

Teaching specialists are a marvellous new opportunity for the very best educators to be in front of our students in our classrooms ensuring our students get the very best education possible (Flinders NTEU blog 2018).

Through unrestrained hyperbole, this VC, like many others, masks exploited teaching-only staff as 'marvellous specialists'. It is not explained how they are 'very best' relative to staff whose teaching is informed by research. For that, CSMs draw on expensive consultancy firms (e.g. KPMG and The Nous Group; see Zipin and Brennan 2019 for citation and critique of these 'explanations').

CSMs do worry about losing 'research-productive' reputations that governments measure and rank.
than provide time and other resources for TRs who can grow in research, however, they try focusing restricted research funds on ‘good deals’ to bring in small numbers of research-only (RO) high-flyers in a few targeted disciplinary areas, competing with other universities from dwindling pools across the sector. ROs are mostly housed in centres removed from the rest of the academic body, even in their same disciplines. Such isolation of ROs, along with purging TRs, further debilitates research culture that needs both mass and interaction. It also undoes a core pedagogic rationale for what distinguishes universities as spaces of contribution to knowledge-able publics: i.e. a teaching-research nexus, embodied in teaching-and-research academics. Rhetorical glorification of TOs as ‘marvellous specialists’ thus masks how restructures are jeopardising the university sector’s capacities to contribute to social futures. This includes renewals embodied in early-career academics who are discouraged from entering a field where too many are ‘called’ but so few ‘chosen’.

As well as long-term consequences from restructures framed within simplistic short-term thinking, immediate consequences feed into academic work grounds. For example, purging TRs reduces the number of academics who can supervise doctoral students, including students already in process. NTEU Branches have called out CSM ‘leaders’ on their duty of care for these students. They get replies to the effect that the students can land on their feet at other universities. Yet students relying on scholarships at given universities do not retain them when transferring; and such flippant sidestepping of ethical responsibility travels word-of-mouth across the sector, damaging institutional reputation.

I lack space for further examples of ‘strategic’ CSM steering that generates long- and short-term damage. The point is that substantive prestige within tight budgets is a complex, long-term challenge; and the problems encountered are compounded, not ‘solved’, by simplistic on-the-run acts that shift resources to marketing ‘prestige’ and masking damages. In the next section I consider how, as CSM persists in isolation from the academic grounds it imposes upon, compounding rather than learning from its mistakes, it incites itself to intensified substitution of power for wisdom, involving emotive energies that further hinder academic workforces and harm university futures.

**CSM Will-to-Power and Academic Disturbance: A vicious emotive cycle**

In interviews with executive-level actors from Australian universities of diverse status and situation, Marginson and Considine (2000: 75) note a commonality of:

> … strikingly similar deployments of executive authority across the sector. All the VCs we interviewed, and most of the other senior staff who described the imperatives of the senior role for us, pointed towards a certain will to power, expressed as a singularity … and a relative detachment.

As do I, Marginson and Considine see executive will to rule academic grounds from a detached distance as incited by accountability to governing forces outside universities. But ‘will to power’ suggests a more animated dynamic of CSM rule inside universities. In later reflection, Marginson (2002: 128):

> [A]s the executive leader sees it, to secure institutional flexibility and responsiveness he/she must break the power of the disciplines in university governance. And because … the power of the disciplines in governance was tied to the traditional academic structures derived from their constitution as fields of knowledge, the executive leader feels impelled to weaken or break the power of the disciplines in teaching and research.

I want to give context to the executive epistemology (how they ‘see it’) that Marginson suggests. CSM invokes ‘flexible institutional response’, controlled from their locus, as crucial to meet government and market-competition forces acting upon the institution from outside. While academics labour in specific domains of teaching, research and service, CSM feels urgency to bring all activity into holistic alignment with its central strategies, for ‘the Good of the University’, by re-structuring ‘traditional academic structures’. Academic Boards are stacked with line-managers who outweigh elected academics in deciding academic priorities (Rowlands 2015). Faculty meetings – where academics formerly made collective decisions about the conduct of their work – are newly framed and steered, by Deans, around agendas from ‘above’. Staff (and students) elected to Council are reduced in numbers and told that their obligation – under penalty of removal from Council – is a to represent ‘the Whole of The University, not the constituencies that elected you’. And so on.

Yet, would not academics’ knowledge of their work domains, in mutual listen-and-learn dialogue with managers and leaders, contribute better to strategic flexibility – if it is the substantive university capacity that all care for? Yes, meta-simplistic forces from outside pose ‘performance’ challenges. But inside it is CSM’s embrace of simplistic assumptions, I suggest, that: (a) blocks meaningful whole-of-institution participation in strategies to work-with-and-around those forces; and (b) creates epistemological strain between CSM and academics. After all, much academic knowledge work entails analysis of complexities, and critique of simplifications, including
I also observe, over time, academic voices of complexity and critique as threats. Voices that reinforce strategic simplifications, and treats CSM increasingly looks to outside consultancy. It is not in a position to say. But from my academic career across three Australian universities – including, as a union activist, engaging CSM’s periphery – I observe that CSM increasingly looks to outside consultancy voices that reinforce strategic simplifications, and treats academic voices of complexity and critique as threats. I also observe, over time, intensified animus in CSM exercises of will to break critical academic agency, not just in governance domains but also, punitively, in academic work spaces.

Reprisals against critics are often indirect: e.g. poor performance reviews from Supervisors, non-support for promotion from Deans; and so on. Sometimes there is more direct targeting: e.g. HR ‘complaint’ cases – supposedly ‘in confidence’; but colleagues know – against those who, by CSM-ordained institutional policy, ‘endanger staff wellbeing’ through what they say in emails or meetings. (More punitive devices could be chronicled.) However, power and agency are always relational; i.e. CMG exertions of power do not simply suppress, but also rouse, challenge. Many witnessing staff do keep heads silently down in fear; but there are always those with courage to speak up for colleagues, even knowing they will be targeted. And NTEU Branch leaders and delegates – increasingly targeted these days (see Miller, this issue) – call out ‘leaders’ directly: in internal disputes; in Fair Work Commission cases; in protests outside Council meetings; in media, and more, drawing publicity to actions against staff and posing long-run harm to universities. CSM, and the fuller CMG apparatus, respond with further will to break academic voice in ‘defence of University Reputation’. A vicious cycle thus impels CMG to a punitive pitch.

Worsham (2001) analyses late-capitalist workplace trends toward symbolically violent governance practices, including ‘a pedagogy of emotion in which violence always finds its “appropriate” object in any audacious and insubordinate refusal … [that] threatens position and rule’ (249-250). Setting such examples ‘instructs’ the wider workforce to embody an emotive ‘crisis of abjection’ (244), including ‘grief, bitterness, terror, apathy as well as emotions of self assessment such as pride, guilt, and shame’ (233). Self-assessing emotions then offer managers a substrate upon which ‘demoralized subjects’ can be ‘remoralized … [via] crisis intervention and management’ (255). In this vein, I see university managerial interventions targeting demoralised ‘academic culture’ as ‘the problem’, ignoring how power-wilful and emotively violent CMG culture induces workforce abjection. In this vein, I suggest that, beyond fiscal reasons, recent academic workforce restructures are (e) motivated by CSM will to break and replace long-standing staff, who feel embittered at how academic working life is taking bad turns, with uberised academics who might more readily ‘learn’ docility.

Yet workplace emotions are not simply controlled by governors. Work life also cultures connectivity in which, says Worsham (236), ‘[w]hat the working day produces as its … most valuable product is an affective relation to the world, to oneself and to others’ (236). I suggest that academic labours do draw emotive vitality in being affected by, and affecting, worthy needs and purposes for social relation in and beyond universities. Might academics pro-act to strengthen such vital connections despite – and with potential to shift – CMG governance?

**Conclusion: Ethico-emotive pro-action to redress CMG wrongs?**

This paper highlights how academics fare under CMG governance that debilitates potentials for their labours. I have attended to contextual forces that entrench CMG despite accumulating negative consequences, and to epistemologies of simplification by which CMG troubles *wisdom, ethics and emotive* life in academic (and in governing) workspaces. Epistemic, ethical and emotive dimensions are inextricably linked in working life, and all three are vital to pro-action by which academics might shift university governance.

Is there no hope that senses of need for a governance shift could mobilise in sites of political-economic reckoning outside universities, and/or ‘leadership’ spaces within? The weight of my diagnoses of contextual forces, and associated govern-mentalities that entrench in universities, suggest not. We live a historic juncture of governance crisis that cuts more deeply and extensively than university sectors, running across institutional, state, federal and global infrastructures.

Can we hope, then, that mobilised pro-action towards governance shift can emerge among more populated but – in terms of systemic power – far weaker spaces of academic embodiment (including the NTEU, which has degrees of infrastructure and media access)? I do not see impetus arising from elsewhere; so I suggest we (I speak here from my body-invested, political-academic identity) must try. Our diverse wisdoms and *ethico-emotive* energies (Zipin 2010; Zipin and Nuttall 2016) need to collect and rise to occasions, fuelling pragmatic strategies that orient dialogue and action around re-purposed (not ‘traditional’) senses of contributions that academic labours can and should make to local communities and wider social life (Brennan and Zipin 2019; Zipin and Brennan 2019).
On this gestural and hortatory note, I must conclude. However, as said in my introduction, readers can see this paper as ‘part 1’, exploring contexts and conditions that both block, and spur the need for, an academic politics of pro-action — taken further by Brennan in her paper, this issue.

References
Harvey, D. 2011 The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism, Verso, London.

Author
Lew Zipin is Adjunct Senior Research Fellow in the School of Education at the University of South Australia, and Extraordinary Professor in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. His school-based research focuses on developing curricula and pedagogies that ‘do justice’ by engaging the funds of knowledge, intelligence, and future-oriented aspiration among students and families from power-marginalised communities. Lew is also a critical socio-analyst of university governance in relation to democratic ethics, including as co-editor (with Jill Blackmore and Marie Brennan) of – and author in – the book Re-positioning University Governance and Academic Work (2010). Across three Australian universities, Lew has been a union activist with focus on academic workload models that measure work honestly, sustain work–life balance and extend research opportunity to more staff.

Yours truly
You prayed as if there was so much god news, a test run before the judas kiss.
Don’t mess with the light at the end of all that matters, the day you said I must leave to people in the know.
Time on your hands and turning away from what remains is not so easy.
You were what I’ve become, you, the last paesano.

UGO ROTTELLINI, ADELAIDE, SA
Strengthening of the Case for Teacher Judgement: A critique of the rationalities and technologies underpinning Gonski 2.0’s renewed call for evidence-based practice

Bev Rogers

The idea that teaching practices should be informed by evidence continues to capture the imagination of politicians and policy makers throughout Western democracies. In Australia, for example, the recently released 2018 Federal Government report — Through Growth to Achievement (Gonski et al. 2018) — recommends evidence-based practice and the formation of a National Evidence and Research Institute. In the paper, I critique the idea of ‘evidence-based practice’ in education and offer a reimagining of teacher professionalism as a scholarly, activist stance (Sachs 2000, 2003). This identifies the teacher’s role as contributing to social change and preparing students to contribute to change in society, rather than just transmitting knowledge and preparing students for work in an existing world. What is proposed is a strengthening of the case for teacher judgement and the role that research can play for professional (read intellectual and scholarly) action in the ambiguous circumstances of teaching. Research can only indicate what has worked, not what will work, which means that the outcomes of research cannot be translated instrumentally into rules for action. The re-imagining of a scholarly stance for teaching has an important bearing on teacher and leader education in neo-liberal universities.

Introduction

The nature of teacher professionalism ‘has been a central area of concern for successive governments’ in the UK, USA and Australia (Furlong 2005: 120). During the 1970s, the prevailing image of teacher professionalism was of teachers possessing a high degree of autonomy justified by their expertise. Policies developed in the last twenty years have reconstructed what it means to be a teacher and the nature of teacher professionalism. The overall result has been a diminishment of the value of teacher professional judgement in the dominant discourses concerning teacher quality. In the current age of compliance, ‘being good’ as a teacher is evidenced by a ‘willingness to adopt and interact with’ dominant conceptions of ‘good teacher’ described through standards and ‘evidence-based practice’ (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler 2010: 12). The push towards compliance, rather than autonomy and judgement, has practical implications for teachers and how their role is conceived as well as educational research, teaching practice, and teacher education.

The advocacy for teaching as a research-based profession has been one important element of initiatives by governments and bureaucracies in Australia, the UK, the US and elsewhere with the aim to improve educational performance through the logic of improving the practice of teachers in classrooms. The idea of evidence-based practice for the teaching profession has been a part of education policy discourses and debates since the 1990s; however, in the last decade, in Australia, there has been a tightening policy convergence of government policy, Teacher Standards (AITSL 2011) and government reports focused on improving teacher quality through ‘evidence-based practice’. The claimed urgency of policy convergence, at this time, provides a decontextualising and narrowing discourse for teacher professionalism. This has the effect of closing down alternatives to dominant narratives enabling the construction of a crisis in education where Australian students and schools are ‘not improving at the same rate and are falling short of achieving the full learning potential of which they are capable’ [emphasis added] (Gonski et al. 2018: viii).

In July 2017, the Australian Government established the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools (the Gonski Review). The final report, Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to
Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools, was released in March 2018. It recommends evidence-based practice in schools and a National Research Institute to bring about a 'return to being one of the top education systems in the world' (Gonski et al. 2018: viii). The Review argues that the current decline in student outcomes in international tests is 'compounded by a lack of research-based evidence on what works best in education, [and] the absence of classroom applications readily available for use by teachers' [emphasis added] (Gonski et al. 2018: ix.).

This paper critiques the limited view of evidence-based practice outlined in the Gonski 2.0 Report, and through doing this, attempts to reconstruct an idea of teacher professionalism which includes autonomy, relationship and judgement alongside practices which are both research-informed and informing.

The Gonski Review

The final report of the Gonski Review (referred to as Gonski 2.0) was released in March 2018 (Gonski et al. 2018) and includes in its recommendations the need for evidence-based practice in schools and a National Research Institute. On 1 September 2018, the Australian Labor Party announced that it would fund such an Institute with $280 million if it was elected in 2019, claiming a need for an Evidence Institute for Schools, which would increase education research and be independent of government (Rowe and Gale 2018). In response, Rowe and Gale (2018: 4) argue that Australia is 'already producing world-class independent educational research', but they agreed with the Review that the real problem is how to 'encourage the uptake of educational research in our schools and universities [through ensuring that research] ... is readily translatable to classroom practice for time-poor teachers'. As I argue below, this limited view of teacher professionalism as requiring translatable ‘scripts’ for practice, is dominant. Gonski et al. (2018) argue that currently, ‘no national body is expressly charged by governments with the task of delivering into teachers’ hands the practical results of this evidence and research’ [emphasis added] (104). A report commissioned by the Gonski Review called Promoting evidence uptake in schools: A review of the key features of research and evidence institutions (Clinton et al. 2018) was charged with recommending a range of actions in relation to an independent National Research Institute.

Rapid Synthesis – to justify the National Research Institute

The authors of the resulting commissioned report described it as a rapid synthesis of existing evidence which drew upon findings from Australia, the US, the UK and the EU in the areas of education, health promotion, public health, mental health and tourism to make claims about evidence-informed practice in education. About a quarter of included studies were based in education with 15% based in Australia [emphasis added] (Clinton et al. 2018: 4-5). The commissioned report undermines its own claims for the applicability to educational research in Australia and of the broad range of research they cite (seventy-five per cent of studies focusing on public health in sanitation and hygiene, preventive health interventions and disease prevalence monitoring with fifteen per cent based in Australia). Clinton et al. (2018: 6, 1-2) suggest a model for making research accessible as Evidence into Action which is based on the idea that ‘if high quality and relevant evidence informed the work of practitioners and policymakers, then this will lead to improved outcomes’. The authors acknowledge that evidence of this assertion in education is limited and that the ‘evidence that exists has stemmed from improved outcomes in clinical medicine’ (1-2). Despite Clinton et al. (2018) arguing that evidence-based practice may be better described in education settings as evidence-informed practice, the inclusion of professional judgement is limited to the initial discussion and does not feature in any significant way as a key aspect of the Evidence into Action model. The technical nature of the assumed changes in teacher practices, as a result, devalues teacher judgement by emphasising that ‘best’ practice is largely scripted, without question and without a notion of context, which requires judgement. There is a history to the call for evidence-based practice, which is revisited here to highlight the similarities and differences with what is currently being recommended.

History of the Call for Evidence-based Practice 1995-2010 in the UK

Educational research has been criticised by both governments and practitioners alike for not providing an unequivocal “answer” to pressing practical concerns (Rogers 2003: 65). In the UK, a position about evidence-based practice for a research-based teaching profession was promulgated in a lecture to the Teacher Training Agency by David Hargreaves (1996, 1) who complained that teaching had no ‘research base’. When Hargreaves (1996) first used evidence-based practice in relation to ‘education’ (Hargreaves 2002: 14) there was significant advocacy in Britain (Blunkett 2000; Davies 1999; Hargreaves 1996, 1997, 1999, 2001a, 2001b) for more research to be focused on the classroom and a simplistic view of how educational research might influence teaching. The argument was that quality educational research would provide the best available evidence for teachers to ‘change their practice from x to y’ (Hargreaves 1996: 5) by modelling the research process on that of medicine. A range of debates followed (Davies 1999; Edwards 2000; Hammersley 2000, 2002;
Hargreaves 1997; Marston and Watts, 2008; Rogers 2003; Slavin 2008). Hargreaves (1996: 5) argued that if there was a substantial body of research which was ‘disseminated and acted on by teachers, [it] would yield huge benefits in the quality of teaching and learning’. For the engineering model (Hammersley 2002: 22), the purpose of research ‘is to tell us what works and why and what is likely to be most effective’ (Rogers 2003: 72). As Hodgkinson (2000: 3) points out, what is demanded here is unmistakably a positivist conception of research which claims to enable prediction and control, increase certainty and avoid risk.

Teacher professionalism and the dominance of the ‘effective teacher’

During the 1970s, the prevailing image of teacher professionalism was of teachers possessing a high degree of autonomy justified by their expertise. Policies developed in the last two decades have reconstructed what it means to be a teacher and the nature of teacher professionalism. The overall outcomes have been interventions in the detailed processes of how to teach, as a form of ‘managed’ professionalism (Furlong 2005: 130). There is a diminishment of the value of teacher professional judgement in the dominant discourses concerning teacher quality (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler 2010: 9) and the call for ‘evidence-based’ practice is ‘predicated on a positivistic understanding of ‘evidence’ as leading to scientific certainty in relation to ‘what works’ (27). The discourse of ‘what works’ has been criticised (Atkinson 2000; Edwards 2000; Hammersley 1997) for limiting possibilities in understanding education and for failing to capture the complexity of the educational field.

In 2010, a literature review of teacher education in the twenty-first century was commissioned by the Scottish Government (Menter et al. 2010). What emerged from the review, were differing conceptions of teacher professionalism underlying policy and research literature. These were summarised in four influential ‘paradigms’ of teacher professionalism: the effective teacher, the reflective teacher, the enquiring teacher and the transformative teacher (Menter et al. 2010: 21-24).

The paradigm of the effective teacher has emerged as dominant in official government discourses across the developed world over the last thirty years. ‘It stresses the need for teachers to prepare pupils to take their part in making their respective nations’ economies a success (e.g. DfEE 1998)’ (Menter et al. 2010: 21). The paradigm of the reflective teacher underpins the development of action research/practitioner research or inquiry linked with professional development through practice. The paradigm of the enquiring teacher encourages teachers to undertake ‘systematic enquiry in their own classrooms, develop their practice and share their insights with other professionals’ (Menter et al. 2010: 23). The paradigm of transformative teacher builds on the reflective teacher and the enquiring teacher, bringing an ‘activist’ dimension (Sachs 2000, 2003). The activist dimension identifies the teacher’s role as contributing to social change and preparing students to contribute to change in society, rather than just transmitting knowledge and preparing students for work in an existing world. The paradigm of the effective teacher has come to dominate in the last decade, where teachers need to:

- produce students who perform highly on international rankings in PISA (and TIMSS, PIRLS, etc.) in a context of increased neo-liberal governance led by ‘big data’ and policy as numbers (Grek 2009). When students perform at levels below national aspirations, it is their teachers who are deemed to be at fault (Gale and Parker 2017: 521).

Gale and Parker (2017) argue that there is an underpinning logic, driven by assumptions about underperforming students, a cause-effect relationship between student and teacher ‘performance’, and a sense of crisis about the quality of teachers. ‘This logic is particularly evident in nations such as Australia and the UK, with increasing emphasis on professional standards, measures of competency and teacher effectiveness’ (Gale and Parker 2017: 521). The presumed linear, causal link between teacher and student ‘performance’ draws ‘a “straight line” between teacher practice and student outcomes, “controlling” for, and ultimately dismissive of, other possible influences’ (Skourdoumbis and Gale 2013: 892). A reductive element of the narrative is implied by evidence-based practice – that good teaching in one school is also good teaching in another, which strips teaching of its social context. Context is forgotten in ‘the rush to attribute student achievement solely to what teachers do’ (Mills and Gale 2010: 30).

Formation of the ‘effective teacher’ subject

The dominant discourses of evidence-based practice and effective teaching discount deliberation on practice and reward and value impression, fabrication and the appearance of performance. Within the framework of performativity (Ball 2000), teachers are represented and encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who must improve their productivity, through ‘evidence-based pedagogical approaches’ (TEMAG 2014: xiv, 10), and ‘up-to-date, evidence-based teaching practices’ (TEMAG, 2014: 15). The effective paradigm (Menter et al. 2010) ‘privileged performativity and ‘practical’ knowledge over theoretical, pedagogical and subject knowledge’ (McNamara and Murray 2013: 22). Australia may be moving in similar directions to the UK, with a shift...
away from teaching as an 'intellectual activity' towards a technicist craft-based occupation (McNamara and Murray 2013).

Critique of Evidence-based Practice

Biesta (2014) argues that the idea of evidence-based practice favours a technocratic model which is primarily interested in questions about the effectiveness of educational means and techniques. As a result, it limits the conception of teacher professionalism and judgement, decontextualising practice. The spread of evidence-based practice from medicine to most other health fields has also been advocated and adopted in fields such as social work, probation, human resource management and education. There is a question about whether evidence-based practice can be applied to education because it brings the view of professional practice (Elliott 2001; Hammersley 2001) as intervention, and asks from research that it provides evidence about the effectiveness of interventions. Evidence-based practice relies upon a causal model of professional action (Sanderson 2003) – the idea that professionals do something, that they administer a treatment or intervene in a particular situation – in order to bring about certain effects. Biesta (2014) argues that the priority for educational professionals might be, instead, the potential educational value of what they do. As Sanderson (2003: 341) concludes: ‘[t]he question for teachers is not simply “what is effective” but rather, more broadly it is, “what is appropriate for these children in these circumstances”’ which is a judgement about what is educationally desirable and only possible by taking into account a range of contextual factors.

Concluding that the nature of professional judgment in educational practice is moral rather than technical does not imply that professional judgment in education might not be informed by the outcomes of educational research. The question is about how the informing process works. For Dewey (1922: 132), what informs ‘intelligent action’ is not knowledge gained about the world but about the relationships between our actions and their consequences in a particular situation. Research provides us with information about possible relationships between actions and consequences. Research can also inform practice ‘by providing different interpretations, different ways of understanding and imagining social reality’ (Biesta 2014: 396). Understanding the nature of teaching as a practical, ethical and relational activity dependent on judgement, rather than as just a technical activity, is important in re-imagining another view of teacher professionalism.

Possibilities for the Activist Scholarly Teacher

Research undertaken beyond school settings can facilitate informed discussions between teachers and researchers which ‘become both “research-informed” and “research informing” ’ (Hardy 2010: 716). Lingard and Renshaw (2010: 27) argue for teachers having a ‘researchly’ disposition. Diezmann (2005: 181-184) takes this further to ‘growing scholarly teachers’ oriented towards professionalism in teaching and research through being reflective about teaching and contributing to professional thinking through publication. This leads us to consider what Sachs (2016: 413) refers to as a ‘call to action’ in relation to supporting research literacy (BERA-RSA 2014) as a capability.

Rather than imagining the research-informing process in isolation for individual teachers, we can imagine the process as joint work (Little 1990). A research-informing space is a human space of people’s intersecting and interrelated practices which makes individual ‘performance’ impossible to separate. This shows a separation to be a mis-understanding of the relational nature of teaching. The situated nature of the teacher’s ethical responsibility cannot be resolved in terms of rational analysis (Sellar 2009b: vi) since ‘if ethical decisions could be reasoned through and the right response calculated, then there would be no need for a decision or for us to take responsibility’ (84). In understanding this, we can see that the combination of knowledge and ethical responsibility is one of affect and cognition which is contextual rather than causative (Green 1998). Such an understanding draws attention to the emergence of pedagogy as ‘a dynamic event that takes shape as it unfolds’ (Sellar 2009a: 351) making it antithetical to a ‘reduction of pedagogy to technique or method’ (348). Such a reduction is precisely what is being offered by Gonski 2.0. The ‘evidence-based’ discourse presents itself as all there is to know – ‘a discourse which seeks to reduce teaching to an itemization process, a disaggregation or fragmentation of pedagogy’ (Clarke and Moore 2013: 497).

Re-imagining a scholarly stance for teaching has an important bearing on teacher and leader education in neo-liberal universities in Australia. The notion of ‘evidence-based’ research that is separate from teaching practice in schools is currently playing out in Australian universities through the intensification of workloads of newly identified ‘teaching specialists’ at the expense of research (Zipin and Brennan 2019). Along with freezing funding to universities (McCowan 2018) and increasing measures to rank universities on scholarly outputs (Zardo 2017), an environment of hyper-competition induces strategising by universities, which elects to spend more on HR, marketing, legal and other managerial processes and ‘employ fewer but “higher-producing” researchers’ (Zipin and Brennan 2019). Dominant rationales for this move argue that not all universities in Australia need to or are able to excel in teaching and research and therefore ‘some should focus more on ‘teaching excellence’ at the
expense of research (Griew et al. 2018; Parker et al. 2018). In a mutually informing dialogue with students and communities through approaches that connect research, teaching and community issues, we expand the possibilities for social action (Zipin and Brennan 2019). Smyth stresses universities are one of the last bastions where ‘social critique and criticism is incubated, nurtured, fostered, encouraged, and supported’ (2017: 3). Yet universities are becoming more adept at extinguishing the will to critique (Schulz and Rogers 2019: 1) substituting thinking, judgement and dialogue with technocratic decisions provided by a managerial focus on increasing student numbers.

The responsibility to nurture critical thinking is a question for teacher professionalism and for those in institutions who graduate teachers and leaders in education. To what extent is their commitment to ‘the fundamental notion that higher education be about generating social good?’ (Schulz and Rogers 2019: 2). To what extent is the commitment to an activist stance as a scholarly teacher about working towards a genuine politics and a discussion, and exploration, of genuinely alternative principles and policies (Azmanova and Mihai 2015) rather than ‘delivering’ a pre-designed expertly presented curriculum? An activist scholarly stance comes from ‘educators understanding their practice, but also from understanding themselves in relation to the society in which they live’ (Sachs 2000: 93). Such work and collaborative dialogue provide ways for research to be in the same space as practice ‘to develop a common language and multiple conceptual frameworks for exploring and reflecting upon what happens’ (Sachs 2000: 90).

Conclusion

The idea that teaching practices should at least be informed by evidence, continues to capture the imagination of many politicians and policy makers. The call for evidence-based practice in teaching is not new. What has been proposed in this paper, is a strengthening of the case for teacher judgement and the role that research can play for professional (also read intellectual and scholarly) action in the ambiguous circumstances of teaching. The re-imagining of a scholarly stance for teaching has an important bearing on teacher and leader education in neo-liberal universities. Teachers in schools and universities can build an investigative and scholarly stance to teaching because it involves transformative action, which includes both judgement and context and enables research to be in the same space as practice. A scholarly stance for teaching through communities of teaching informed by research/scholarship builds the capacity of teachers to work with students and communities to contribute to social change.

References

BERA. 2014 Research and the teaching profession: Building the capacity for a self-improving education system, British Education Research Association (BERA), London.
DfEE 1998 Teachers: Meeting the challenge of change, DfEE, London.
Griew, R., Borthwick, J., Barnes, C. and Murali, A. 2018 Diversity in Australian tertiary education: turning words into action https://www.nousgroup.com/wp-


Sachs, J. 2016 ‘Teacher professionalism: why are we still talking about it?’, Teachers and Teaching, 22, 4: 413-425.


—— 2009b Visceral pedagogies and other ways of knowing: Exploring ethical responsibility in relationships at the periphery of institutional schooling, Ph D. Thesis, University of South Australia, Adelaide.


Zardas, P. 2017 ‘Starting next year, universities have to prove their research has real-world impact’ The Conversation https://theconversation.com/starting-next-year-universities-have-to-prove-their-research-has-real-world-impact-87252 (accessed 04/04/2019).


Author

Bev Rogers is a Lecturer in Leadership and Management at Flinders University in South Australia. Bev was previously a secondary principal in both country and disadvantaged areas of Adelaide, and Director of Teaching and Learning within the Department of Education and Child Development, prior to joining Flinders University in 2014. Her current research examines and challenges current dominant and culturally limited Western models of educational leadership, exploring culturally sensitive leadership interactions in diverse contexts. It also seeks to understand the impacts of professional learning on leaders’ practice and the struggle, within the current policy context, to resist total compliance in finding agency for responding to contextual realities.
‘Being Restructured’: A student’s perspective

Writing about a university restructure that was traumatic for both staff and the students who experienced it, I use a ‘critical incident’ (Tripp 1994) to identify the contradictions between what we are told and what we experience. A member of management has said that staff whose research areas are broadly concerned with social justice have ‘shown no leadership, done nothing worthwhile and are not bringing in money’. I use this as a focus as I ‘speak back’ in defence of education that does not fit the neoliberal mould. I seek to uncover interests in the way leadership and worth are defined with a focus on what sort of leadership and worth has nurtured my own academic journey. Underlining my work is an assertion that higher education belongs to students, academics and the public.

A Critical Incident in the Thick of a University Restructure

I first heard, sporadically about the university’s planned restructure, including a shift to mainly ‘teaching specialist’ (i.e. teaching only) positions. For me, from a student’s perspective, it unfolded like a horror story as I realised that staff designated as ‘affected’ might lose their jobs or at best have to reapply for positions which were either research only or teaching only. There were fewer new positions offered than there were ‘affected’ staff and the pressure was such that even if people were not made redundant, there was a danger they would take a package since the workloads were intensifying and the roles narrowing. These were academics who had inspired me and nurtured my own interest in higher learning, and I wanted to keep learning from them. Informal online networks emerged connecting staff and students – anyone who felt that the restructure devalued their labour and learning. I avidly read every new update, wanting to know what was going on, desperate to work out what I could do to support demoralised academics from whom I had gained so much knowledge and confidence. I felt the injustice of their situation as if it were my career on the line.

One of the affected academics had questioned a management representative about the restructure, asking how to plan for collaborations when everyone with a social justice slant in their research was scrambling to keep their jobs. There seemed to be no guarantee that going forward anyone would be available to do this work – work that explores questions of poverty, racism, gender equity, masculinities, history, and class. Management answered something along the lines of: ‘no one in social justice has shown any leadership, they have not done anything worthwhile, they have not been bringing in money’.

I was stung by the injustice of this statement. The first two assertions were the exact opposite of my experience of these academics and the last one struck me as irrelevant to identifying ‘good’ research. I craved an opportunity to ‘speak back’ to this from a student’s perspective. I wanted to question what ‘leadership’ should look like, who should define it and how it might serve the interests of students and the broader society instead of just pandering to management. I wanted to assert my right as a student, a teacher, and citizen to have a voice in defining what is ‘worthwhile’ to society. I felt it was also very important to resist allowing university work to ever be reduced to profitability or market values.

This incident seems to me to be a critical incident (Tripp 1994) within a broader context – a global movement to redefine education by stealth. Processes of change that limit the possibility of questioning and dissent are unlikely to be that way by chance. It is not a coincidence when some of the loudest critical voices calling for democracy are labelled ‘surplus to requirements’. This silencing and ‘redundancy’ of critical voices is a pattern played out across multiple locations and is characteristic of neoliberalism. It also plays into this redefinition by stealth to try to keep students ill-informed and make consultation shallow. My desire to interrogate and speak back to the assumptions made in the statement by the representative of management can be part of keeping open the conversation we should all be having about who ‘owns’ public education. This is also a response to Zipin and Brennan’s still relevant call for ‘further telling of illustrative stories’ (2003: 368). It may be called ‘gossip’ in the sense of being brief and informal talk with some degree of veracity (Mills 2010: 216), on the surface being about a trivial event, or microaggression and being talk that is
I defined myself as a 'student' which is an oversimplification of my role/s at the university over two decades. As well as being a student, I am also a casual tutor, a parent of a student, a member of the public and an alumna. I am a worker within and outside the university because I can’t afford my education. I feel resistant about limiting my identity to one of these categories. This reluctance is not about being grandiose but is linked to my unease at a shrinking university which seems to want to weigh down staff and students alike with clear categories that reduce interactions to algorithms and produce something more or less predictable. I share Mary Leach’s ‘urge to escape, to think differently’ (Leach 2000: 224) as well as Zipin and Brennan’s (2003) concern with the ethical stakes in the academic ‘game’. We need to be working according to our values, not just rehearsing predetermined tasks. The meanings, and at times limits, we attach to people’s roles and contributions matter. In the following three sections I examine and deconstruct the claims levied at social justice-oriented academics aforementioned: no leadership, no worth, no money.

‘Showing no Leadership’

The use of the word ‘leadership’ by management strikes me as ironic, as the staff who are accused of not showing it are the very ones who are not doing what they are told. There seems to be a clear agenda to cut costs, to make the sort of market-based efficiency and predictability that has been called ‘academic capitalism’ (see for example Thornton 2013). This is achieved by in most cases splitting academic roles into either teaching or research, with research more ‘institutionally valued’, but in fact being exploitable, a super-producer of research outputs, funding and ‘industry partnerships’. The other management-accepted way of performing leadership is to become a ‘minion’ (Brennan and Zipin 2019), ready to ‘smooth transitions’ to management-inspired discourses of what academic work will now mean. These sorts of leaders have been described as trapped in ‘identity cages’ (Morley 2013: 118) collaborating with a project to colonise what was a privileged space of academic freedom. As a result, education becomes unhitched from ethical-political groundings, hence collaboration, collegiality, critique and dissent are lost in favour of a competitive field of winners and losers according to market metrics. As someone who was initially challenged and then empowered to be critical, autonomous and ethical as a pre-service teacher, I am troubled by this reduction to the instrumental.

It is my contention that the interests of staff and students are more aligned than is generally acknowledged, and that by losing sight of the ethical and human dimensions of working with one, management is also dispossessing the other of what is their due. I have seen staff showing an ethically responsible approach toward their roles, a balance that I believe at times must have been quite precarious. Despite the pressure to ‘perform’ I’ve experienced academics determined to think pedagogically, not just identifying worthwhile knowledge but seeking a process that can liberate teachers and learners alike. Staff have collaborated with each other, forming communities of research and practice that they at times draw students into, showing that knowledge production is an organic,

Stating my Bias without Apology

‘[A]ll signs fall apart when scrutinized … Language is after all, an important clue that indicates the failure of boundaries and the possibility of resistance and freedom’ (St. Pierre 2000: 479). My need to ponder what I had heard and pull apart accepted meanings is motivated by the yearning to resist and remain free from an inhibiting discursive shift. As a student I resist being the raw product of a process, or as a customer. I bring critical discourse analysis to bear on terms which are deliberately used in ambiguous or nebulous ways to manufacture consent (Herman and Chomsky 1988) and confusion around changes that do not serve our collective interests. While I cannot escape the slipperiness of language, I can show that its inscrption by neoliberalism is not total or inevitable.

My relationship with higher education, and with this particular university has been long and troubled. I constantly experience myself as a glitch in the system – a bug crawling across an otherwise clear lens. I don’t intend to be difficult, nor am I ‘special’ in any way. I just have not learned how to fit the categories I am supposed to fit, how to avoid bringing my inconvenient embodied self with my cycles of euphoria, fatigue, bleeding, bringing up children, starving, being forced to ‘work’ and being gendered against my will, into the university where I come not as a pure mind but as a glitchfully contradictory series of performances. Despite the headache around how and whether I ‘fit’, I have experienced university as a place of liberation – a place where I have begun to look for ‘a different space in which to undertake other performances, other thinking, power, and pleasures. What would it mean to create new lines of flight, fragments of other possibilities, to experiment differently with meanings, practices, and our own confoundings?’ (Leach 2000: 223).

serious (Leach 2000) even if it is easily marginalised. Rather than ‘truth’ in an empirical sense, this might be called ‘sensemaking’ (Mills 2010: 218) about a specific, subjective experience. This is representative of a whole series of other, similar conversations and encounters and it is significant only in the way it reveals ideas that are circulating more generally and that bear unpacking. What we do and do not, can and cannot, say within a university has implications for the wider society.
mutual process rather than just a matter of intellectual property. I believed I was at university to obtain a qualification, but instead I was allowed to become more than I had been before. In the current climate, we are instead encouraged to view learning as the transmission of packages of knowledge, although it is reassuring to see many academics resist this and continue to seek meaning with students against all odds.

Management’s discipline-and-punish (Foucault 1977) approach to leadership goes against students’ needs to be noticed, fostered and allowed to find their own voices rather than a predetermined path. Quite understandably in a short, hurried course with casual teachers whose availability is limited by needing to work in more than one place, students become fixated on rubrics and assignments rather than deep learning. It is hard to shift this culture without more time to offer, and without the interplay between teaching and research that makes university education something more than just job training.

On the other hand, when management use the term ‘leadership’, they do so with such a degree of variation and even vagueness that it is hard to pinpoint just what it ought, ethically, to mean: ‘both in its definition and practice, [it] is seductively elusive’ (Fitzgerald and Savage 2014: 48) and ‘discursively overworked and theoretically underdone’ (Blackmore 2013: 140). While meanings slide to accommodate management’s shifting agenda, there is a tendency to build leadership into a celebrity persona with individual acts which are differentiated from the mundane and the everyday (Fitzgerald and Savage 2014). Leadership becomes an individual performance that disregards, for example, feminist calls for a transformative position that promotes social justice and democratic practices. Leadership as a collective social practice is possible when there is trust, respect, appropriate acknowledgement of differences, and ‘requires a re-distribution of power and resources and not just a delegation down the line from management’ (Blackmore 2013: 151). Conversely, leadership as defined by those caught up in management’s hierarchy is disjointed from the needs and aspirations of students and junior colleagues and tends to be blind to the real workloads of stretched academics. Dialogue and democracy are abandoned, while genuine insights become risky as individuals strive for recognition in a narrowing field of possibility.

‘What is needed ... is leadership that is pedagogical, collaborative and communal’ argue Fitzgerald and Savage (2014: 48). This sort of leadership requires roles to remain broad, and the human beings that make up a college to have time and opportunity to foster mutual connections. It can only be democratic in so far as leaders are free to be responsive to colleagues and students, not just serve to management who are increasingly siloed from the daily learning and research life of the university. Leadership for liberation that serves the interests of staff, students and the public cannot escape being always a set of questions rather than a checklist of qualities. Staff who in this critical incident have been dismissed as ‘not leaders’, are the same staff students such as myself have experienced as ethical, future oriented, open to complexity and courageous in facing up to power. Rather than narrow conceptions of ‘productivity’ or ‘profitability’ they construct the ‘good university’ (Connell 2016). A future orientation includes nurturing potential in others, allowing people to try out roles and making space for some failure as part of growth. This opens the possibility for increased diversity of voices in the university, rather than shoring it up as a bastion of privilege. Without this space for growth, the pressure exists for people to fabricate success and hide problems. Instead we need a social justice-focused, democratic approach that promotes substantive rather than market-fabricated success (Jean-Marie et al. 2009).

Leadership then arises from people who enable these potentials in staff and students and is recognised by those it serves rather than management exigencies. Being social justice-focused and democratic, this style of leadership recognises that the student brings valuable knowledge into the dialogue with institutionalised knowledge for the transformation of both. Within a managerial, leaderist (see for example Morley 2013: 116) model of the university, the student-as-customer is alienated before class even starts. Teachers are reduced to assessors or providers of customer service at the possible cost of integrity in knowledge co-production. Research academics are siloed from the business of teaching and seen perhaps as superior in status, but not connected to the student-focused side of university life.

Thus, everyone is alienated and kept too busy to think deeply, too fearful to critique, and too atomised to make connections; the institution acts as a prison for the mind and everyone is doomed to ritualistically reproduce increasingly meaningless processes. Students are paying customers and understandably want a predictable product. Staff who fail to deliver this can be periodically thinned out. This is justified on budget grounds yet serves also to bring in norms of ‘performance’ that infuse fear into the equation, making performativity increasingly frenetic (Ball 2003). Performativity can take over until it becomes the end in itself; conformity at this point is assured with the all-seeing-and-judging panopticon (Foucault 1977) fully in operation.

Surveillance and standardisation give rise to gaps rather than deeds, to judgements without adequate thought or consultation, and to a hollow version of ‘leadership’
with aspiring leaders forced to relinquish their affective and ethical identities. The pressure continues to make teaching devoid of politics, to indoctrinate students (who, in university education programs, are mostly aspiring teachers whose tertiary education carries with it a multiplying effect: it colours the communities to which these teachers will one day contribute) to adapt to coded rules of self-suppression that reinforce structural oppression (Freire 2007: 59). Zombified husks of teachers can do nothing but produce more zombies.

Having rejected this empty version of leadership, I now examine what may have worth within the university.

‘No One is Doing Anything Worthwhile’

As research and teaching roles are split from each other, it becomes increasingly clear that management’s conception of worth means increasing the university’s rankings through producing research as quickly as possible. Teaching has a lesser but also exploitable worth being cheaper, with the ideal worker casualised: she has an increasing though largely unacknowledged workload, little institutional power, and is left in unpaid limbo between semesters. These workers are encouraged to see themselves as having little worth, and not to expect much from the university while research academics exist in shrinking and precarious oases needing to super-produce or face further attrition. Performativity measures are used as a means of controlling what people do, the nature of their work and relationships, de-socialising learning and redefining content (Blackmore and Sachs 2007). Academics whose area of research is social justice, do not provide ‘worth’ within this narrow vision; in fact, in their tendency to build solidarity, they can be a problem to management.

In seeking a broader conception of worth, I return to my own experience of having my ideas challenged and my capacity to critique extended. Universities are supposed to have this role of challenging, not just students but the broader society, and is sometimes called the ‘gadfly’ role (see for example Thornton 2015: 9) where research can destabilise power or cause discomfort. This desire to retain complexity and critique demands academic freedom – not compliance. As Judith Butler points out, ‘[t]he point is not that academics have the right or prerogative to pursue their ideas as they wish, as if academic freedom were a personal right of expression, but that the academy is a privileged and protected site for critical practice’ (Butler and Weed 2011: 25). The way we choose to research human experience has ethical and political implications (Said 1995) and for democracy to function, social and political realities that become common sense need to be kept open to interrogation.

At the same time, research and knowledge production need to remain strongly connected to teaching, and need to be seen equally at the heart of the university. Teaching needs to be more than training or qualification. What the pre-service teacher learns will have implications for the lives of their own students. Any sense of what is ‘worthwhile’ in the academy should reference the needs and interests of students and be decided in consultation with them. It would be a mistake to privilege student desires and seek nothing more than to please the ‘customers’ but nor is it fair to treat students as little more than a raw product or inconvenience in the institutional machine – they must be positioned as co-constructors of knowledge. Students as tomorrow’s teachers also need an opportunity to become conscious of their own role as social agents building potential in their future students, rather than falling into Pink Floyd’s cynical assertion that ‘you’re just another brick in the wall’ (Pink Floyd 1979). Otherwise, patterns of trivialising, infantilising, distracting, dominating or pampering risk being reproduced in schools and early learning centres, diluting education to a set of transactions. The project of liberation is something more than a wellbeing package or a pill to pop. It is located, not merely in each individual, but in the interactions and intentions between them. It is neither an achievement by the individual nor a gift from their teacher or friend, but a mutual journey (Freire 2007).

A focus on efficiency and compliance is likely to narrow the institutional vision eliminating creativity. What we value in research inscribes particular researcher identities and sets what values and objectives these identities must hold (Yates 2004: 207-208). Joan Scott cautions that, ‘conflicts of values and ethics, as well as interpretation, are part of the process of knowledge production; they inform it, drive it, trouble it’ (Scott 2010, cited in Butler and Weed 2011: 25). In other words, research and education agendas should not be set from above or by the market. The ‘worthwhile’ cited in my critical incident seems inverted – it erases the things that my classmates and I discovered, that had worth to us. Having experienced university as a place where we struggle to produce knowledge together in a process that has ethical implications, the question of ‘bringing in money’ is alienating.

‘Bringing in the Money’: Academics as cash cows

Far from being neutral, educational markets ‘are a set of practices and relationships that reflect particular ideologies about the purposes of education, curriculum and social relations’ (Whitehead 2006: 4; see also Reid 2000). These ideologies are able to permeate the way we use language, the way we formulate what constitutes ‘problems’, what problems require our thought, and even the way we construct ourselves as workers or consumers within that market. The ‘money’ in education is partly (but
increasingly) from student-fees, which implicates the split role of the restructured academic.

Research academics are supposed to produce prolific amounts of publications to boost rankings, while the majority of academics, restyled as ‘teaching specialists’ are freed from having their own interests and seen as having an endless capacity to give their time and attention to increasingly larger groups of students. This (cheaper) workforce does the work of producing graduates with an intensified workload that can make it very challenging to keep depth within teaching that is increasingly constrained by budgets. In this context, the less democratic structure of the university begins to make sense; democracies are inefficient and slow allowing time for people to make collaborative decisions interrupts production.

In this way, the choice of which people are ‘redundant’ becomes logical, as anyone who demands the inefficiency of democracy becomes a problem to the university restructured into a factory-farm. Furthermore, if students are customers, their desire for a predictable product and a yield on their ‘investment’ is understandable; they need to come out of university qualified to compete for a shrinking pool of ‘jobs’. With a purely vocational view of higher education, employers become stakeholders also demanding predictability in their product, in this case the ‘raw product’ which is the student, transformed into the standardised, qualified graduate. The employer does not contribute money to the process but gets to delineate what ‘graduate qualities’ will be valued by virtue of being able to withhold jobs from those who do not fit their mould. Academics are expected to foster ‘industry partnerships’ which will take on some of the labour and costs of producing graduates in return for (relatively) free labour from students on placement.

The teaching time that the university pays for is also reduced by models of teaching where students use technology and work as independently as possible. When students do not manage to behave as independently as expected, or when technology fails, the university depends on the goodwill of casual staff, who are expected to remediate the flaws in the system in their own time. There is institutional denial over the extent to which this happens, and denial over the bloated workloads of both permanent and casual academic staff. The invisible additions to workload (pastoral care and admin tasks) are overwhelmingly done by female academics, reducing their ability to publish as prolifically as desired by management (Aiston and Jung 2015; Blackmore, in Thornton 2015; Savigny 2014; Thornton 2013; Brabazon and Schulz 2018). Here there is more evidence that what has worth to students may be invisible to management. Meanwhile, market logic and market discipline are used to erode the power of unions and snatch back workers’ entitlements and security (Connell 2014).

‘Ps Get Degrees’

In common with many others, when I returned to university as a mature age student, I did it to ‘get a job’. I was not seeking anything more complicated or profound than a qualification to teach. If my teachers had simply churned me through the system I would not have complained and I would not have been aware of missing out on anything. A degree (usually 2-4 years) is too short for students to do more than react to the constraints of the institution. Deeper questioning requires a longer view and so those who want to erode academic freedom get away with much by defining terms like ‘leadership’, ‘worth’, ‘wellbeing’ and even ‘progressive’ in ways that serve their purposes. St. Pierre and Pillow assert that you cannot reduce the white noise ‘for those who cannot hear for the din of common sense’ (St. Pierre and Pillow 2002: 252).

I walked into university full of ideals about the teaching profession, but with an inability to articulate gut-feelings about things that happened in schools that made me feel uneasy. It was extremely worthwhile to me, to be challenged and given the time to think more deeply about the purposes education serves for children, young people, and for society. I experienced social justice-oriented academics as leaders who wanted to bring out my potential to question, lead or work in a more reflexive way. My lack of fitting the cookie-cutter moulds of the system were encouraged, enabling me to become less apologetic about the ways I did not ‘fit’ and more determined to speak back to the ‘common sense’ in a teacher-voice that is courageous, at times inconvenient, and visionary.

Despite being grateful, I am not writing this for the academics who allowed me to grow my vision and balance my non-compliance with common sense. I am questioning a restructure that goes deeper than losing some familiar faces, but seeks to restructure how we think and talk about tertiary education. I do this from a strong sense that what we say about education either liberates or constrains us as critical citizens, writing for myself and for my students, for my children and for the children any of us will teach. I stand within a long tradition of people who view teaching as more than training, who view education as the key to what society might become. I fear that we might lose not just great academics, but necessary questions that reconnect us again and again to the ethics at the heart of education.

References
Ball, S. J. 2003 ‘The teacher’s soul and the terrors of


Pink Floyd 1979 *The Wall*, Harvest Records.


**Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge the help of Lew Zipin who took a lot of trouble to advise me on a few of my drafts and helped me structure my thinking as well as gain context for what I was observing. I’m also grateful to the Social Inquiry group formerly of Flinders University, especially Grant Banfield without whom there would be no group. Finally, thanks to Sam Schulz who reviewed with so much insight and patience.

**Author**

Stef Rozitis’ research interests lie in social justice in education, especially feminist perspectives and analysing discourses around education and their political and philosophical implications. She is strongly committed to teaching/learning as active democracy in her work teaching both at Flinders University and in Early Childcare centres.

---

**The Child is the Father**

I find myself alone in a breezy attic
maybe some sort of open plan, split-level affair
the details are frayed by the knife edge of morning
but I recall great timber boards groaning under the sun's weight
and bare stone walls that I pressed with my flat palms
drawing warmth from the stone and the memory of stone
I recall the backs of my hands flecked like the stone
and my dreaming eye peering out through the soft kindly
sagging flesh of an old man, arms of bird bone
I don’t think there is anyone else in the room
but I can feel that I am old in comparison to the world
come to the end of myself
more curious than sad, a little wistful perhaps
the way we get when we plump down in a chair soft as mist
and gaze out a high window at the sky
the scudding clouds, the dark birds trying to knot
the silk thread of their beginning and their end

---

**Justin Lowe, Katoomba, NSW**
I am a bogan academic activist. Amongst other things in my life, I have been and still am an activist film maker. What follows draws on my film making experience to deconstruct, via my ‘bogan-ness’, what it means to be scholarly or to be an ‘academic’. I present, therefore, my paper in the form of a scene by scene script where I play the central character. I use this role, not to navel gaze, but to shed light on who activists are more broadly and how bogan activism plays an important part in social change. In this paper, I start and always return to an afternoon conversation with my honorary bogan academic mentor, and brother in solidarity, Grant Banfield. He acts as a provocateur, pushing me to reflect on how it is that I came to call myself a bogan academic activist. Why am I happiest being what Grant calls a ‘worldly scholar’ who lives for the doing rather than the incessant thinking about how to make the world a better place? The conversation connects the past and present. I have never spent much time thinking about this but now I find myself flicking back through the files in my mind to remember what got me to this very point in time. Why a bogan academic activist rather than simply an academic or a scholar? Can I be all of these things together? And, probably most important of all, why has activism played such a powerful role in my life?

‘If you tremble with indignation at every injustice, then you are a comrade of mine’ (Guevara and Guevara 2009)

Dear Che, I tremble with indignation at every injustice. I am your comrade.

Introduction

In 2018, I decided to go back to university with the intent of learning how to be a better activist. I have been an activist for most of my life (see photo 1) but yearn to be a much stronger social justice advocate in voice and action. I am a practical bogan activist looking to see what the bookish world of academia can teach me. Bringing my film making background to the fore, I structure this paper as part film script and part commentary. The scenes and action are brought to life via a reflective conversation between my academic mentor, Dr Grant Banfield, and myself. As the conversation flows, I am prodded to explore why I perceive myself as a ‘bogan activist’ and what this might mean in the context of being an ‘academic activist’ or, more particularly, a ‘scholar activist’. The scene is set:

Photo 1: (Right) Speaking at an Aboriginal rights rally (2014)
Scene 1. INT. Afternoon. Grant’s living room. 2019

Grant

Tell me what you saw. Can you paint a word picture of what you were thinking as you stood there in University Council that day?

CUT TO: Scene 2. INT. 2pm. Flinders University Council Chambers, 2019

Me

It’s Thursday 14th March 2019, and I am standing in the cold and dark wooden panelled Council Room of Flinders University. My legs are literally trembling like jelly and I don’t know how much longer I can keep up this front of courage. There is an enormous dark wooden rectangular table in the middle of the room. On the walls behind the Chancellor et al., are enormous paintings of previous Chancellors dressed in dark academic robes and academic hats. The paintings are set high above people’s heads and the painted faces look down at me and my comrades as if mocking our presence. I can almost hear them say ‘You don’t belong here Nadine (inevitably pronounced incorrectly with an Australian accent Nardeen). You are not one of us and you never will be.’ ‘Thank God’ is what I think. I never ever want to be like you wanky academics who have never stepped foot outside of their ivory towers or walked with the grass roots of social justice activism. You are arrogant, up your own arses, privileged and mostly white males with an unbelievable sense of superiority oozing out the wazoo. Pure status. As if we are not vital. At the far end of the massively big rectangular table, sits the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor and the council members. They seem to be a kilometre away and I am grateful I have multifocal glasses. They all look very small in the distance, either uncomfortably looking at me or avoiding my gaze. At the other end is me, a kilometre in the other direction, probably looking small to them. My comrades are appropriately sitting on seats to my left but only 20 of them were allowed into the chambers, another form of intimidation, oppression and powerplay by management in a completely invented rule. Everyone had to show their student ID cards. It was a complete power-trip and a sort of resistance to the arrogance and flatulence of academics as they sit there and look down at the rest of us less educated and scholarly people?

Hang on, Grant’s voice breaks through my thoughts.

CUT BACK TO: Scene 1. INT. Afternoon. Grant’s living room. 2019

Grant

Nads, how did you get to that point, standing there in the Council Room? Why do you call yourself a bogan academic? What makes you the person you are? What impels you to be an activist? What is an activist and what is a bogan academic activist?

Me

I am all three of these things. A bogan academic activist. For almost 20 years I have called myself a bogan academic and I have not really stopped to think about that too much. Why do I call myself that? What does that actually mean? Is it a reflection of how I really feel about academia, a sort of resistance to the arrogance and flatulence of academics as they sit there and look down at the rest of us less educated and scholarly people?

I sit back and close my eyes to think about this. Let’s go back to the beginning. I’ll come back to my speech in council in a minute.

My very brief biography

I was born in London in 1969, lived in Berlin for 5 years, went back to England, moved to Malaysia for 2 years (1984-1986) and have experienced many different cultures. I’m half Argentinean, half German, Russian Jewish origin. A combo burger of different influences. I’ve been exposed to a multitude of cultures, foods and attitudes. At 15, I raced horses in Malaysia and Singapore, and fell. I have permanent spinal injuries. I taught aerobics, worked in restaurants, studied film making and went back to England, moved to Malaysia for 2 years (1984-1986) and have experienced many different cultures. I’m half Argentinean, half German, Russian Jewish origin. A combo burger of different influences. I’ve been exposed to a multitude of cultures, foods and attitudes. At 15, I raced horses in Malaysia and Singapore, and fell. I have permanent spinal injuries. I taught aerobics, worked in restaurants, studied film making and worked in films for 15 years. One day I looked at the grey skies of London, the drizzle of the cold rain and said I’m leaving for Australia. So, I did. At the age of 25, I moved to Australia. Alone. I have two Airedale Terriers and rent. I have experienced uncountable sexual traumas and deeply painful relationships. But I didn’t only learn from trauma. I learnt from travel around the world. I went to
university at 35 and have taught English as a second language ever since. And here I am. I am not the kind of academic who lives in a library, surrounded by untold numbers of books and words but the worldly scholarly type of academic who is an activist and wants to remain grounded and true to myself. I am an unpolished rough diamond or rather a moonstone and I have never been a mother to a little human. This is my deepest sadness of all, so instead of being a mother to my own, I try to be a mother of a different sort, protective and embracing of others and hopefully make the world a little bit better. We humans must try to find our way back to each other. And hug a lot.

What is a bogan academic activist?

My version of bogan is not about being an unintelligent, red-necked animal hunter, ill-spoken, inarticulate and rough-as-guts human being. No. When I say I’m a bogan academic activist, I'm not looking for accolades or comments of support or sympathy. I am the opposite of what many would identify as being a bogan. I am articulate, well spoken, plummy almost, intelligent and creative. The fundamental difference between me and an ‘academic’ is that I am from the streets of hard knocks, not the books of big words. Like almost every seasoned activist I have ever met, we are all broken by the same kind of streets. This is not to say that academics have not experienced trauma or are unbroken but perhaps they have lost their sense of reality a little amongst all the literature and having to ‘play’ the institutional game.

Mum and Dad

Both of my parents were and still are activists in their own way. My father, a German Austrian scientist in the field of agricultural technology, marine biology and veterinarian science, worked tirelessly in developing countries alongside poor farmers and workers. His entire life was dedicated to teaching organic farming and self-sufficiency so that villages could produce for need, share their fruit and vegetables and be rid of greedy middle men trying to extort produce for very little recompense. Of course, I had no idea that that’s what he was doing in Africa, Brazil, Malaysia, Uzbekistan, Tanzania and all the other places he lived and worked in. I only came to understand the depth and breadth of his work and passion for social justice in the last 20 years or so.

My mother, an Argentinean Russian Jewish artist, ballet and flamenco dancer, an actress, a singer, and even piano player before her hands became crippled with arthritis, came from stern Russian communist parents. They were strict and very oppressive but in the context of the Argentine colours of music, dance, art and cinema, my mother escaped the clutches of her family and ran to London to live her life as an actress, a news presenter for BBC World News, a radio host and whatever else the world would allow her to do. She discovered discrimination at every corner. She had an accent and looked a bit too Latin American. Then she met Dad, and everything came to something of a screeching halt. As was the norm in those days. She gave up her dreams for dad and us, her kids, and the rest of her life was spent struggling to come to terms, often not accepting the reality that she would never be everything she had dreamed about for so long. Through her suffering, came the most incredible strength I have ever known in a person. She is a survivor. Her passion and determination to show the world she was and is vital, and was born out of her resistance to conformity. She started her own antique business, taught acting and singing and wrote scripts for films. At 65 she went to university for the first time and studied French and Media Arts. She got Honours. I’ve always been so proud of her. Today, at 88, mum is studying writing – of course.

Mum taught me how to be an activist. She is a bogan academic like me.

Photo 2: Me and my mum getting ready for the anti-Trump Rally. London 2018.

My parent’s house has a bay window at the front. It still has the ‘Trump Get Out’ poster that I put there last year after marching with my mother in solidarity with tens of thousands of others in protest against Trump’s visit to London. In the 1980s, Mum, Dad, our Airedale Terrier, Pandy and I walked across Greenham Common in solidarity with the women who camped on the grass in protest against nuclear weapons. We went on rallies in support of the IRA (very anti-establishment), free Nelson Mandela, against wars, and against Margaret Thatcher. I never read about these issues, I walked alongside those who knew about them and told me as we walked along. I could see the posters, heard the chants and instinctively knew that I was in the right place. Mum never sat me down
and explained activism to me, or how to be an activist, or what to be an activist about but I came to understand that it encompasses all social issues and that being part of activism meant having a voice to say, ‘I don’t agree with this’ or ‘I want this to change’. I learnt that everything is political no matter what. From government politics to waking up in the morning.

**SCENE 3. EXT. DAY. HYDE PARK. LONDON. 1981**

‘Whatever it is, I’m against it’ (Kalmar and Ruby 1932)

Dear Che, I was your comrade before I knew I was. I have a little memory that refuses to go away. It is 1981. I am 12. I am with Mum at a protest in Hyde Park, in solidarity with Black People’s Day of Action. I remember what happened as if it were yesterday. I see a policeman carrying a truncheon. It looks really scary and I’m a bit frightened of him and it, but I have this incredible need to know what he uses it for. He has his back to me as I step up behind him and pull at his sleeve. He looks down at me and smiles.

**Me**

*Excuse me*

I say to this huge man in a black uniform and helmet staring down at me.

**Nasty policeman with a truncheon**

Yes, he says. What can I do for you? Are you lost?

**Me**

No. I was just wondering what you use that for and why it has so many funny marks on it?

**Nasty policeman with a truncheon**

His face lights up as he holds his truncheon like a trophy of some sort. He lovingly caresses the length of the wood and says …

Well, I use this to keep black people in line with the law.

**Me**

I am now feeling a bit sick but don’t quite know why.

What does that mean, in line? And who needs to be in line?

**Nasty policeman with a truncheon**

He laughs and says… Ah, well, every notch that you see on my truncheon, was caused by the head of a black man who was not in line with the law in a little suburb called Brixton. They were bad, so I had to make them good.

I feel a rush of blood to my head and start shaking with fear. I don’t come to understand a bloody word of this until many years later when I read about the Brixton riots and the inhumane beatings that the police and many white racist agitators inflicted on the Afro-Caribbean community. High unemployment, disenfranchisement, economic poverty and racial segregation were dismissed as causes of tensions in Brixton, South London, by the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher (Bowman 2011; Littleboy 2006).

**Back to Mum and Dad**
My father is 90. He’s not a bogan academic. He is the ‘other’ sort of academic with oceans of scholarly reading in his head and an immense seriousness that perhaps comes from his German background but with an incredible sense of social justice.

My mother knows no less than him about the world. Where they differ, is in how they feel about the world. Mum feels the world unbelievably deeply, like me, and understands from such sensitivity, the humaneness of it or perhaps I should say, the inhumaneness of it. My father is much more scientific about the world. Political debates with him are always charged with non-experienced but broadly well-read evidence-based arguments and even through his own lived experiences of working and living in many developing countries around the world, somehow, he manages to describe them a bit emotionally removed. I recall living in Malaysia and writing a scientific paper on the life of a seahorse. I wrote ‘the seahorses seem to love it when I play certain music. They are particularly fond of classical music and start to waltz their way around the tank …’ ‘What?’ screams my father. ‘You can’t write a science paper like this. Where are your references, where’s the academic rigour?’ My teacher liked it. I gave the best show and tell ever with the sadly deceased bodies of my two Hippocampus Kudas.

Mum is all about emotions and comes at politics from her own lived experiences, seeing the world as a Jewish, Russian, Argentinean woman suffering the eternal injustice of sexism and racial persecution. She has survived everything that life has thrown at her and continues to rise in the face of it. When Dad talks about the world, he is considered and academic especially if you ask him about something scientific and looks at you as if to say, ‘do you understand anything I am saying to you?’ Sadly, no dad, I don’t understand the chemical equations of equine food sources or how worms divide into many different pieces. When mum talks, I understand everything. She uses emotive language, words that connect her to people and tragedies, suffering and social injustices. Lots of swearing too which I like – very unacademic apparently. But that’s bullshit really because I’ve heard plenty of academics swearing albeit with a soft sense of guilt whenever they do so. That’s something to think about for a minute. Swearing. Is that what makes me a bogan academic rather than an academic? Is it what an academic would argue is a lack of vocabulary that makes me a bogan? Screw that thought. I can be as pompous and un-swearing as them, I just don’t want to be. I want to say it like it is. Why fluff it up when it can just be said with a fuck, bollocks or wanker?

My Auntie Nina, the greatest bogan academic of us all

She smoked like a paratrooper and swore like a street market trader. Her favourite words were shit, bollocks and wanker. I adopted them. She was a film director, painter, sculpture, writer of several screenplays, one of which was about the first Aboriginal jockey, and author of a book titled The Barbarians about the massacre of Chinese gold diggers in Australia. She was a staunch communist, activist for Aboriginal rights and outspoken critic of neoliberal capitalism. She suffered untold trauma.
throughout her life and lived in poverty. Nina survived with financial support from her son and the smell of an oily rag. I loved her. We were close in the last few years of her life and I saw so much of myself in her. Now I see so much of her in me. I swear all the time.

CUT BACK TO: Scene 2, INT. 2pm. Flinders University Council Chambers, 2019
This might be an opportune moment to reflect on who it is I am actually speaking to. The council members are a combo burger of a bit of academia and a lot of business. Grant’s voice breaks my thoughts.

CUT BACK TO: SCENE 1, INT. Afternoon. Grant’s Living Room, 2019
Grant
So, in some regard, they are actually imposters because they’ve colonised the university to get the university to be something that they want it to be (a business). The Chancellor doesn’t have a single scholarly bone in his body. He is a business man, first and foremost and runs the university like a business, a corporation.

Me
Yeah, they are imposters.

Back to the Council Chambers and I start my speech...

CUT TO: SCENE 2, INT. 2pm. Flinders University Council Chambers, 2019
Speech to council March 14th, 2019
Co-written by Nadine Schoen, Grant Banfield and Aidan Cornelius-Bell

I would like to acknowledge the Kaurna people who are the traditional custodians of this land. I would also like to pay respect to the elders both past and present of the Kaurna nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginal peoples present. We also acknowledge the Kaurna peoples as the custodians of the Adelaide region and that their cultural and heritage beliefs remain important to the living Kaurna peoples today.

I represent a group of deeply concerned students about the impact that this restructure has had and continues to have on them across the university campuses. Students (like staff) have been treated without care or concern. Collectively, more than 2,828 students, staff and members of the Flinders community have signed petitions indicating their lack of confidence in the direction that this council is taking for the students and staff of this university.

At this point, I turn to a comrade who is standing behind me holding an AO-sized poster of 1500 signatories to a Vote of No Confidence in the university council. I gesture towards it. It’s impressive and we were so proud to have had it put together by one of our graphic artist comrades and then glued to a corflute board. There it is, glaring back at the council members as if to say, ‘F**k you, here is the evidence that you are so not doing the right thing by us’. I turn back to the council, reading from a little iPad but looking up between sentences to see if I am getting any sense of connection or warmth back. There is none. Some of the council members are looking at me but without any expressions on their faces – neutral, flat faces.

Me
We’ve seen the insurmountable stress the restructure has caused. There has been zero meaningful consultation with students. Meaningful for us means a two-way street where student and staff voices are not only heard but actually play a role in decision making around education and governance. Students from all across this university have told us that they are confused, disillusioned, stressed, heart-broken, angry, frustrated and many are now considering leaving to go elsewhere. We cannot blame them if they do.

I look up. The room is a vacuum-packed frozen 5-minute meal and only my voice booms inside my head.

I continue
We have personally experienced not knowing if we would still have our own chosen supervisors and lecturers this year. This has created enormous stress and concern; academic staff and lecturers for their students and students for their supervisors and lecturers. The restructure has meant that staff are being replaced with cheaper, less experienced and casual staff. It follows then that we will be getting a very different quality and level of education. This process has been autocratic and paternalistic and this kind of governance is the antithesis of an open and democratic university.

I look up again. No responses …

I continue
We are making a very clear ‘Vote of No Confidence’ in this university council and we wish to tell you that without us, there is no university. Without academic and professional staff, there is no university. We demand a democratic university.

A side note:
If the university does not take seriously and rigorously its role as a guardian of wider civic freedoms, as interrogator
of more and more complex ethical problems, as servant and preserver of deeper democratic practices, then some other regime or ménage of regimes will do it for us, in spite of us, and without us (Morrison cited in Giroux 2014: 19).

I continue.

In the last Council meeting in 2018, it was stated by the Chancellor that only one side of the story had been heard. Now you have heard the other side and so I refer to the Flinders University Act 2017 and ask the members of this council, can you in good conscience say that you have to the fullest extent possible discharged your responsibilities in accordance with Section 5 Sub Section 3A (A and B) i.e. to show, in your practice and decision making ‘a commitment to education and, in particular, to higher education’ together with ‘a commitment to, the principles of equal opportunity and social justice and, in particular, to access and equity in education? Thank you.

Another side note:

In addition to amassing ever-expanding amounts of material wealth, the rich now control the means of schooling and other cultural apparatus ... they have disinvested in critical education while reproducing notions of ‘common sense’ that incessantly replicate the basic values, ideas and relations necessary to sustain the institutions of economic Darwinism (Giroux 2014: 5).

I’m still standing at the other end of the kilometre-long table. The VC, who has amassed ‘ever expanding amounts of material wealth’ in his role as Vice Chancellor, has been responding to my speech for the last 10 mins (so much for five minutes of speaking time). It’s all rhetorical bullshit and I am almost in a coma but not so far disassociated that I can’t interject with some responses of my own. Now I am off the grid. No speech, just bogan me again. The VC rambles on about measurements of success:

The Vice Chancellor continues

... I believe, we measure graduate employability as a measure of success; this is a paradigm focus in this plan.

I’m thinking, what the fuck? So, the only reason anyone goes to university is to find a job? Well that’s not why I’m here. I’m here to be a better activist so that I can fight the system with strength of knowledge and arguments and get rid of wankers like you!

The Vice Chancellor continues

... I don’t care about university rankings per se.

I’m thinking, liar!

The Vice Chancellor continues

... If you are good at teaching, if you are good at research, you will do well in rankings.

More rhetorical rubbish about how brilliant the new teaching specialists are and how the academic staff who took voluntary (I think he means sham) redundancies, were looked after and fully respected. More stuff around Asian Pacific rankings going up in the last two years. What about domestic students?

I get the final word

2,828 students and staff disagree, I know that we can happily (not) disagree and I wanted, just on my last note, to remind you that the process of consultation is not where you tell us what’s happening and give us 2 minutes to ask questions. It is truly about allowing us to have a voice, in a democratic university, that’s what we are demanding, to have this as a democratic university.

After the Council Room speech and having proven that I could be calm and considered, I felt I had betrayed myself. The speech wasn’t going to make any difference to the university. Management were not really listening nor were they concerned with the 2,828 signatures of no confidence in them. I may as well have just sworn loudly at them for five minutes. At least I would have walked away with a sense of having been real. But now, I ask myself, what now? What place do I have in the world of activism? What role does activism play in social change and how can academics and bogan academics work alongside each other?

Bogan academics do think and feel very deeply about things but don’t label everything they think about or how they think about it. When thinking deeply, a bogan academic might try to understand what a particular issue is but won’t say that they’re ‘problematising’ it. That just gives me the shits. Who the hell says ‘problematisate’? Academics. They say lots of things that we bogans wouldn’t. For example: reflexivity, scholarly, pedagogy, ontology, and intellectuality, are but a few of the kinds of words ‘they’ use. And because ‘they’ have read so many books and come to love or hate certain writers, they use their names in sentence structures so that we know they have read a lot. For example, ‘Marx or Freire or Foucault would say, or Giroux argues that …’ So, what’s my point here? It’s largely around language and how it is used to communicate where the differences are most felt. So, when I make an argument and don’t use a well-known academic scholar to support my position, I feel judged for being limited in my knowledge and experience and yet,
I’ve run many campaigns, been on hundreds of rallies, made activist films and fought for peoples’ rights.

Perhaps the biggest difference between us is in the doing versus the thinking. Bogan academic activists do, a lot, constantly. Academic activists think, a lot, constantly. It’s really irritating. I have sat in hundreds of campaign meetings with academics and they can go on for hours. Just stop bloody talking about it and get on with it. But here’s the rub, and it’s a really big one. Activism needs both kinds of people to run a good campaign. It needs the thinkers and the doers together. We bogans have much to teach you academics. We can teach you to be brave, step outside of the institutional walls of neoliberal managerial oppression, and step into the light of a larger social movement. You have much to teach us bogan academic activists too. You can teach us to be more reflexive and help us bring the immediate into focus with a larger vision of revolutionary change. Yep, there’s that word. Let me spell it out, r_e_f_l_e_x_i_v_e. We need to learn to be more reflexive and think through the plans, prepare for the rhetorical bullshit coming back at us and be armed with the knowledge to fight back with language that can be adapted for context such as a Council Room or a street protest. There are definitely tensions between us bogans and you academics but there need not be. This is the perfect foundation for praxis, the theory and the practice together. So, this is where we go from here. ‘Worldly’ bogan academic activists and academics have much to contribute to each other and we must do it with what Freire (1998; 2005) would call ‘revolutionary love’ of a relationship that is vital for social change. My mother and Auntie Nina, as courageous and self-sacrificing women, wooed me into the world of activism at different times in my life and I have learnt through them that it is not about Nads, but about the bigger picture, the movement to which I am impelled to contribute.

References

Author
Nadine Schoen was born in London and has lived in many places around the world including numerous locations in the UK, Berlin, Kuala Lumpur and now Adelaide. Half Argentinean and half German, Nadine’s family ancestry reveals a long history of activism that she has most definitely inherited. She is an English as a Second Language lecturer at TAFE in Adelaide, South Australia and has been teaching for more than 15 years. She is currently preparing to start a PhD in Education. Nadine worked in the film industry in the UK and in Adelaide for 15 years prior to becoming a teacher and incorporates a great amount of film and media in her teaching work. She is an activist, organiser and campaigner for human rights, work rights, gender equity, Indigenous rights and environmental protection. All of these socio-political aspects are strongly visible in her teaching work. Today, Nadine lives in Adelaide with her two Airedale Terriers, her only kids.

Domestic lepidoptery

Pin my life
with words, press sharp
and meet the marrow –
emboss my thumb with verbs.
So pins have slipped?
Crush antennae. Powder each
frail noun. Screw those
memories bound to fly away.

The cabinet lid draws dust.

On yellowed paper, under glass
(bills and coffee rings obscure)
they croon for spring; invocate
a dusting off. Serves me right
to serve them; they bite the hand
hard as tetanus. Beyond inoculation
celluloid unspools Utopia 101.
Who knew old rooms burn
on re-entry? No astronaut’s
honeycombed bones can re-calcify
for this − there goes
Nagymama’s brandied sauce;
fingernails thick with a dead dog’s fur;
a scalp-sniff of slippery babe.

Helen Thurloe,
Avalon Beach, NSW
Scholarly Activism In and For Renewed Australian Universities

Marie Brennan

All three main forms of scholarly activism are currently under threat in the contemporary university, viz: 1) contributions to the public sphere and its debates, 2) provision of expertise to activist and political organisations/movements, and 3) critique of the institution which houses them. Through a pragmatist approach drawing on the work of Isabelle Stengers, this article suggests that scholarly activism is central to revitalising the university through strengthening all three of its major forms in conjunction with community alliances. There are no guarantees of successful outcomes from any form of activism, yet there is no ethical option for academics other than engaging in ethically-driven collaboration with students, colleagues and communities. Universities, among other workplaces and civic institutions, necessarily have to reinvent themselves to address contemporary dysfunctions experienced daily, through their teaching, research and community engagement.

Scholarly activism has a long history in the modern university and its predecessors. Its most common form is taken to be the capacity to contribute and comment on public issues, seen as part of the function of the intellectual/scholar to be a critic, even a conscience for the society and its public functions. There are three main foci for scholarly activist work: 1) through contributions to the public sphere and its debates, for example in opening up a history of the issue under discussion; 2) in providing expertise to activist and political organisations/movements, for example in backing environmental activism with scientific evidence or working with local community groups to investigate problems; and 3) in critique of the institution which houses them, on such matters as policy, governance and fairness. Not surprisingly, there is a Janus face to this positioning of the scholar: a corresponding ‘tradition’ among authoritarian states of suppression of dissent, excluding and punishing journalists, teachers, academics and other intellectual workers. Just as unsurprisingly, ostensibly democratic states and their institutions have developed a panoply of means to manage, punish, exclude and deny critique and dissent. In this paper, I reflect on what might be the contemporary ways to pursue scholarly activism, since the university has been a key site for housing scholarly activists who provide critical commentary and expertise needed for the first and second domains of action. However, there is a necessary intersection and inter-dependence of all three domains of activism. To shore up internal capacity, I go on to argue, requires high levels of scholarly activism in all three domains through building careful external alliances to support research, community engagement, teaching, internal critique and university governance.

Underpinning university-based scholarly activism is the guarantee of academic freedom and freedom of speech, as Andrew Miller examines in his contribution to this special issue. However, as many have noted here and elsewhere (Biggs and Davis 2002; Bourdieu 1988), universities have long developed techniques to tame dissent and critique, particularly to protect their gatekeeper role and reputation. Indeed, in a recent case reported by the Campus Morning Mail, the Federal Court ruled against a university dismissal of a senior academic which had been achieved through his perceived non-compliance with its Code of Conduct. The judge ruled that the Intellectual Freedom clause in the university's Enterprise Agreement superseded the university's Code of Conduct (see Campus Morning Mail 17 and 18 April 2019, and 23 April for a longer article). The Judge (Federal Court of Australia circuit 2019) also noted that there needed to be stronger protections in place for intellectual freedom in universities, since they are the ‘cornerstone’ for the quest for knowledge. The judge argued that ‘without intellectual freedom, the world would have been denied the benefit of ground-breaking thought and intellectual risk taking of the sort that encourages innovation and other scholastic enquiries’, giving examples of the unpopularity of the work of both Darwin and Einstein in their time (Federal Circuit Court 2019).

With the growth of authoritarian managerialism as a key feature of contemporary Australian society and university governance (Blackmore et al. 2010), sadly there is plenty of opportunity that requires scholarly activist attention. Mark Bousquet argued, in his editorial for the first edition of Workplace: The Journal for Academic Labor, that:
Activism, which is after all nothing more than constructive engagement with power at the present time – is a necessary precondition for doing really good work (in Ross 2018: i).

However, he also noted the changed conditions in academia:

... Faculty in the mid C20th created the expectation of a just workplace for higher education teachers even at the instructor and tutor level. Everything we associate with the professoriate – the aforementioned living wage, academic freedom, support for research, democratic classrooms, faculty governance and so on – were first imagined and then achieved by a united activist faculty. We inherited those expectations, but not the habits of organisation and social action that made them a reality (in Ross 2018: i).

The casualisation of academic work has reduced expectations of a living wage for all academic teachers; and there is a growing trend towards dividing the teaching and research functions among staff. Democratic classrooms are more difficult to achieve when students are seen as customers receiving a ‘service’, while faculty governance has morphed into a caricature of itself in many sites (Brown 2015). Such changes have in turn undermined academic freedom. I concentrate here on how we might think about (and do something about) developing new ‘habits of organisation and social action’ for scholarly activism appropriate to the twenty-first century conditions of Australian universities and the urgencies facing not only our species but the planet and all its ecosystems.

Universities around Australia seem to have a common sheet from which to sing their neoliberal, internationally competitive hymns of self-praise. In this paper, questioning the lack of debate around university purposes, I suggest the inadequacies of current strategies. To address that, I propose a pragmatic-radical approach to scholarly activism, suggesting the need to foreground ethics and to work ‘horizontally’ through a range of alliances in teaching, research and service to address local glitches in the infrastructure of daily life (Berlant 2016). Domains for activism are noted, and issues of ethics and collaboration briefly delineated before concluding that scholarly activism is necessary although there are no guarantees of success, however scholarly, carefully strategised and partnered such activism may be. Yet for the future of the university to be repurposed and practices renewed, such activism is needed.

The Sector Fails To Read The World Proactively

It is extraordinary how universities in Australia have become similarly corporatised with their strategy to comply with governmental directives, poor funding, the economisation of everything, and international league tables. Despite massive ‘systemic global dysfunction’ (Lotz-Sisitka et al. 2015), most Australian universities are engaged in performing ‘business as usual’. Treating the institution as a corporation, they ignore the implications for changes required to respond to such dysfunctions. For most humans, the current times are indeed dark, characterised by shifts and instability in the institutions that make up our lives – beset by what Lauren Berlant (2016) calls ‘glitches’ in the infrastructure of our lives. People experience those glitches in their local lives, usually manifesting as crises. Increased ‘natural’ disasters and ecological changes, often referred to as the ‘anthropocene’ or the ‘capitalocene’ era, have consequences in increased insecurity of food, air, water, built infrastructure and whole ecosystems (Moore 2015).

There are intensified crises of global capitalism as a world system (Wallerstein et al. 2013), with changes in political stability, in the organisation of human labour and institutions, and the spread of economic logics across what Bourdieu (1998) calls the ‘left hand of the state’ (i.e. the human services), destroying what had arisen through many social struggles over time. Changes to capitalist priorities have led to greater inequality and stratification within and across countries (Harvey 2011), and massive flows of people around the world as refugees and migrants, with consequences for the future of nation states and institutions (Appadurai 2013). These changes are experienced unevenly, putting in place new forms of colonialism, extractivism and exploitation, especially via impoverishment, racism and patriarchy.

Yet too often university management and councils are more concerned to ‘invent’ new ways to work in ‘compliance’ with neoliberal management practice, economic valuation, and standardisation of all dimensions of work, as measured by performance data (Connell 2019). The mantra of ‘knowledge economy’, building public investment of knowledge production and transmission into short-term capitalist exchange, seems to obscure the lack of capacity to focus on knowledge practices needed for reconciliation with the planet if humans are to survive as a species, as David Attenborough (2019) recently reminded us. Instead, reliance on scientific-technological solutions to cultures and planetary problems has strong adherents in governments and universities. James (2013-14: 2) argues that the ‘constant deferral of fundamental action on basic questions has slipped between the modern dialectical struts of hope and despair’. He suggests that it takes ‘real effort’ to pretend that ‘life on our planet can go on much as before, so long as it is supported by a “digital revolution” and enhanced technological platforms’.
practising to seek shelter under their desks in case of nuclear bombs: adopting such ‘Duck and Cover’ responses to contemporary problems is just as irresponsible – and just as likely not to lead to survival. Zembylas (2017) calls such responses ‘wilful ignorance’. Inadequate responses to global crises require scholarly activism addressed both internally (to the university) and externally (to publics, governments and communities). Yet infrastructure for internal activism, such as time for staff meetings and participation in faculty and academic boards or teaching teams, is undermined through membership changes, the shift towards senior management executive power and steering through token ‘consultations’ (Rowlands 2013; Bottrell and Manathunga 2019). Staff and students have been actively excluded from participation in setting institutional directions, as Councils and Senior Management engage in policy-on-the-run for the short-term. Reinventing the university without those who do the core work (staff and students) guarantees particular choice restrictions, and is open to capitalist capture mediated by interlocking governance at institutional and government levels. Externally, communities are treated largely as ‘consumers’ – targeted as employers and families of potential students rather than as citizens with a stake in the kind of university needed in a present directed towards social futures. There is no venue for them to ask questions about the purpose of the university in complex times. Is its purpose, for example:

- to provide capitalism with capable workers so the nation is internationally competitive on the global stage?
- to expand the circle of knowledge?
- to pass on and extend the range of past knowledges?
- to keep young people out of the full-time workforce so there are more jobs for the rest of the population?
- to address key societal and planetary issues?
- to interrogate the effectiveness of social arrangements in making available worthwhile lives?
- and/or … ??

Currently, the default setting of university policy is to treat the institution as an end in itself (Brennan and Zipin 2019) rather than as contributing to longer-term futures. If education institutions are to help humans and the planet to survive and thrive, universities need to cease ‘business as usual’ to reconsider the purposes and accountabilities to human and planetary futures. This implies that scholarly activism has to occur in relation to all domains of university work, including:

- governance
- democratic dialogue, amongst academic and professional staff, and students
- community engagement and service
- teaching
- research
- contributing to public debate; and
- the use of the full variety of sciences and technologies for contributing to diverse publics.

Furthermore, there is a loss of corrective politics within the institution, across the sector, with students and communities, and for engagement with governments and other agencies. The activist response needs to be to widen participation, to:

invigorate the social mission of the university and open it up to the broadest public debate. The community needs to become involved in this. I suggest that more democratically grounded external relations are the move beyond the Enterprise University (Marginson 2002: 113).

A Pragmatic-Radical Approach

More ‘democratically grounded external relations’ recommended by Marginson almost two decades ago seem today further away from achievement whilst more necessary in the current times. Part of the problem lies in trying to develop a politics of grand narratives of the role of the university, with anger, fear and paralysis underpinning a lack of action once the difficulties of organising emerge. Pragmatist approaches give ethical emphasis to the generation and use of knowledge in pro-action in the world. In that sense, pragmatism is a form of praxis which has been elaborated in a range of educational traditions. Philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers defines pragmatism as ‘the care of the possible’ (2011:12); it is ‘an art of consequences, an art of “paying attention” ’ (Pignarre and Stengers 2011: 17). Stengers suggests that real-world problems need to generate and draw together the expertise needed to address them without expecting that their complexities can be solved easily once and for all. ‘We are talking of a problem “that gathers together”, not of a problem to be resolved’ (Pignarre and Stengers, 2011: 112). Given the urgency of societal and planetary crises, a pragmatic-radical approach is practical: it refuses paralysis and despair, addresses real-life constraints and works to
undertake and change locally experienced ‘glitches’ in everyday life (Berlant 2016).

Pragmatism, with its attention to constructing knowledge through shared action, is particularly relevant to scholarly activism, particularly in the forms of contributing to political and community activism and of engaging in internal critique and development of the university. Pragmatism is not idealist; rather knowledge and action possibilities are co-constructed. Boomer’s (1999) concept of the pragmatic-radical – which Zipin and Brennan (2019: 56) define as ‘doing] what works to build the conditions for pursuing what is worth working towards’ – is also a helpful frame for pragmatist-activism. Such work does not start from a clear mega-vision but by seeking to generate insights and analyses through acting upon the issues as they emerge in the local community. The strength and urgency of emerging problems requires ‘slowed-down’ thinking, suggest Stengers and Bordeleau (2011), devoting time to mix the knowledges through dialogue to redefine the problem and its connection to other problems. Co-labouring on the problem then builds further knowledge-ability: building capacities to engage in dialogue that can hear, consider and interrogate alternative experiences and perspectives of the diversely situated actors gathered by the problem. This process works to capacitate knowledgeably informed, participatory-democratic and justice-oriented citizenry. Academics, students, other activist groups and community members all benefit from such co-labouring, particularly when knowledge work is linked to action.

Starting Places For Pragmatic-Radical Scholarly Activism?

There are two key elements on which scholarly activism can draw to support pragmatist enactment. The first foregrounds ethics while the second emphasises the importance of collaborative work on ‘problems that matter’ (Zipin 2017; Zipin and Brennan 2018). In putting ethical questions at the forefront of pragmatist activism, it is important to see them as guiding through action to understand and work towards redress of the unethical, the injustice through practical action. Iris Marion Young (1990) nominated five faces of oppression: violence, exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness and cultural imperialism. Three decades later, adding a sixth would seem imperative: living with the consequences of environmental degradation and crises. It helps an action-orientation to be able to name oppression as practices, at a conceptual level below the broad categories of racism, colonialism, sexism, poverty. These faces of oppression can be uncovered in daily life, especially when politically focused to identify the workings of Berlant’s (2016) ‘glitches’ in the infrastructure of daily life that will give rise to nomination of issues in local communities. These issues then form the focus for collaborative research on such glitches with communities.

Some starting points can be suggested for building key alliances through projects with local communities. One way is to gain community engagement by identifying with them key problem areas where action might have ripple effects in terms of both supporting future collaboration and other domains of action. Having some short-term, public success in naming and acting on issues may open up other sites where struggles can be supported, bringing multiple disciplines to bear on an issue. Projects of this kind may indeed generate and draw together diverse representations of activism as research, as can be seen for example in South African efforts to shift teaching and research. Pattman and Carolissen’s (2018) ‘Transforming Transformation’ collection is a case in point, as is the work of numerous universities to collaborate with communities to meet needs (e.g. Lotz-Sisitka et al. 2015). Scholarly activist collaborative projects can also produce highly topical teaching materials and placement opportunities valued by students. This can generate among community members a sense of what a re-purposed university might offer, thereby putting pressure on university governance to listen.

Project opportunities are not only to be found ‘outside’ the university; embedded practices need to be disinterred and identified internally. Initial action may involve naming key contradictions in the workplace, e.g. between policies or between policy intentions and their effects, as a way to identify spaces for action, impetus for change and possible allies. As academic teaching and research staff become more disenchanted with working conditions, and their consequences for others – students, community, colleagues, political organisations – it is more likely that the shared ethical and affective dimensions of those experiences will be more obvious. Sara Ahmed, who left her tenured position in reaction to university management failure to deal with sexual harassment cases, has argued that emotions are not just private and individual: they are circulated as part of an ‘affective economy’ (2004: 44); ‘affect economies are social and material, as well as psychic’ (2004: 46), she suggests.

Activists inside the university would be able to name and document the unethical, the unfair, the unjust construction of different aspects of university practices affecting different members (and excluded people) in diverse ways. The emotional and ethical responses to the experience of unethical practice can catalyse scholarly activism and help to galvanise collective development and safeguard the nurturing of alternative practices. Zemblys points to the potential to learn to unmake and trouble the self’s incorporation in an education institution’s ‘emotional
regime’ (2017: 499) if there are pedagogies that can build alternatives: pedagogies of critical hope, friendship, compassion, for example. His analysis is highly relevant to universities and the ways in which they constrain possibilities through establishing regularised patterns of emotional labour. Management relies on ‘ignorance of vulnerability’ (Zembylas 2017: 500), ignorance that has been institutionally constructed through the separation of senior management from the rest of staff and from students, so that predictable consequences of their decisions cannot be heard, nor the fallout as new forms of introduced practice (e.g. learning and teaching online) are experienced. This walling off of the senior cadre resonates with Worsham’s discussion of ‘going postal’ (2001 in Zipin 2010; see also Zipin this volume), in which particular pedagogies of violence are ‘taught’ by authoritarian workplace practices. The consequences of authoritarian, anti-democratic modes of governance are likely to undermine the institution of the university and its standing in society.

Those managerial ‘pedagogies’, however, may also generate resistance and incite scholarly activism. Such activism will be coded with affect and ethical responses which become more explicit about the need to unlearn the dominant affective economy of the university. Unlearning and building replacement relations that press for ethically-driven practices is not an easy challenge for activists, especially scholarly activists for whom objectivity and distance have tended to be the hallmark of scholarly work. This has implications for the domains of research (including setting the focal topic issues and methodologies) and teaching, as elements of scholarly activism. Harnessing the affective and its associated ethical dimensions – building ‘strategic affective alliances’, as Zembylas (2014) calls them – is necessary for collaborative work. Longer-term alliances are essential to underpin the development of teaching and research strategies that could trouble or unmake the dominant affective economies: changing ingrained practices takes time, and new practices often do not work well the first time they are tried.

Perhaps it is only through the formation of external alliances that there might emerge a level of protection for scholar-activists from universities anxious to protect their reputational investment in a competitive environment. If there is shared work on key community issues across staff, students and community members, the latter will be more likely to speak up in defence of staff or students if they are positioned as ‘troublemakers’. There is also a potential positive image as ‘troublemakers’. There is also a potential positive image as ‘troublemakers’. This is not to devalue university-based fields of knowledge work: these fields can be re-purposed and strengthened through contributions to knowledge for socially-just life. The ethical incentive puts priority on what/who—ethically—most matters, rather than on what power seems to ‘matter’, and involves a range of expertise to build collaboration that might make a difference. From this can develop the friendship of ‘democratic solidarity’ (Blatterer 2019).

**Activism Without Guarantees**

Scholarly activism has to pay attention to the conditions under which it can operate with some potential to make a difference: to be heard, to be actioned, that is, to be strategic. However, undertaking the best scholarship, marshalling the best evidence, having good alliances with investment to create new knowledge, and putting one’s body and one’s thinking ‘on the line’ in public does not guarantee successful outcomes. It does, I suggest, increase the chances of success. We need to understand that scholarly activism that opposes, offers resistance to and aims to replace the dominance of neoliberal ideologies and associated practices will need to develop detailed and careful, politically-informed analysis of the institution in context. Scholarly activism in these times needs its friends: it will best be co-produced, in dynamic and non-linear fashion. It must work with linked up locales in ways that recognise the imbalances of power and the exploitative, oppressive and marginalising processes that have undermined older forms of association and joint action. Nor can it be neatly planned ahead of time but operates more in small cycles of acting, learning from acting, reflecting on the implications of knowledge for further collaboration and next steps.

Scholarly activism has continued to operate, often under the radar, over recent decades. However, the control processes inside the corporate university are such that there is ever closer monitoring of staff activity and tight
reporting of actions that might be seen to ‘damage’ the reputation of the university. Scholarly activism can have many faces: the individual whistleblower, the workload activist, the union official, the teacher who spends too long with students, the researcher who partners with community, the person who asks public questions of management. Each needs support, collegiality and informed judgement about next steps, which will require careful co-analysis of the issues and options for action, combined with forecasting potential consequences. Enrichment by collective analysis, action and further reflection could make Australian universities not only better places to work but also better contributors to society and planetary futures.

References
Zipin, L. and Brennan, M. 2019 ‘Pursuing pragmatic-radical curriculum democracy: Students as co-

**Author**

Marie Brennan has worked in five Australian Universities after working as teacher, researcher and senior officer with the Victorian Education Department. She is currently Adjunct Professor at University of South Australia and Extraordinary Professor at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. She has led and participated in a number of ARC and other funded research projects, dealing with injustice in education, including on curriculum, policy, public administration and teacher education.

The poems and images presented here were composed as part of the Wastenowaste (2018) collaboration, which arose from a field trip to the Lismore Recycling & Recovery Centre. ‘Mulch’ and ‘Recycle’ are ekphrastic responses to the visual, olfactory and physical stimuli of this field trip, which introduced participants to the organised and thoughtful repurposing of waste at the facility. This eco-poetry and accompanying photography seek to demonstrate the organic beauty of this unique environment, and highlight the positive aspects endemic in regarding waste as a process of recovery and renewal.

Wastenowaste (2018) was a collaborative installation of sound, eco-poetry and photography created by researchers from the LABx Research group, Southern Cross University. It was exhibited at the 2018 Lismore Arts Vs Science Festival.

---

**Mulch**

A mordant crow sits atop
This steaming dark hill of organic refuse
Shredded to within an inch of its life

A flattened forest of green waste
Waiting to become a garden, a grove
The filler for a yard in the ‘burbs

A playground of composting by-product
Encouraging new growth
The continual use and reuse of leftovers
Organic forms getting their second chance at life

Coal fired fumes rise to the peak
Settle over the ridges and
Sprinkle fine ash on the mountain top
Like a dusting of snow on a clear winter day

Against a backdrop of a dew filled dawn
We watch the mulch mountain rise and fall
Echoing seasons, generations and layers of consumption.

**Lynda Hawryluk, Northern Rivers, NSW**
Recycle

Luminescent green layers of lichen
March up and down the trunk of a tall trees gum
In the Land of the Giants

Late morning mist rises
To meet eucalyptus oils
Seeping into the biosphere
The life cycle of the loftiest tree
Contained in a gathering of tessellated canopies

A crisp clear aroma of anticipation
Surrounds a prayer circle in a clearing
Carved out by careful humans
Honouring the slow and steady growth of these tribes of elders

This is recycling on a large scale
A process of renewal some 300 years in the making

Maria Callas could sing arias about this
Making music waft through the treetops
Over a production line worth singing about

Lynda Hawryluk,
Northern Rivers, NSW
26 February 1858

Mr Charles Darwin, Down House, c/o Orpington, UK

Dear Charles,

I am sorry to have to inform you that the Faculty Tenure Committee has after careful consideration been unable to support your application for tenure. While fully aware that your engaging style and efforts to struggle might, in the fullness of time, be deemed valuable research, your incapacity to publish even one A* journal publication over the past two years was telling. We realise you are using a large longitudinal data set to work on a book. Of course, the University lauds such work but, unfortunately, they do not really contribute to the nationally-approved KPIs by which we, like other universities, are evaluated/judged. Further, as one of the application’s independent-expert reviewers points out, another researcher Alfred Russel Wallace published a paper in 1856 covering what would appear to be key arguments you claim to be developing. The reviewer noted that Russel Wallace drew on evidence from Asia in developing his argument. As you know, Asia is the region the University is trying to increase its strategic engagements/alignments with, while your own research draws on somewhat obscure places like the Galapagos Islands.

The Tenure Committee was also obliged to consider two additional issues. First, as you will be aware, the government has mandated that research should have a demonstrable national benefit and this mandate affects both grant and infrastructure funding. The Committee had difficulty identifying how the theory of evolution (as you term it) could be deemed to benefit the economy or society of Britain, or indeed even the wider British Empire. Second, in order to maximise the university's research impact, the Committee must consider the cost effectiveness of the research undertaken by its academic staff. Again, the Committee was given cause for concern when considering this in the case of your research which has been spread out over many years, has entailed very substantial direct and indirect costs (including a long sea-voyage some might view as unnecessary globe-trotting), and has yielded all but nothing in terms of publications or citations in scholarly journals. When the Committee compared this to other academics, including those in other divisions of the University, its concerns were amplified. For example, in the Business School, researchers have been increasingly using 'student labs' to conduct behavioural research in areas like accounting, economics and management. They have used this to produce a steady stream of articles in leading journals while simultaneously avoiding the time, expense and uncertainties of collecting other types of empirical data. Others use focus group research to similar effect.

The question of journal publications has already been referred to, but the Committee had further concerns in this regard. You were counselled to move in the direction of A* journals and you did try. However, as the rejection letters you appended to your application indicate (and one is attached below) it was desk-rejected without option to revise and re-submit by several leading A* journals and three A journals. While spending 20 years working on a project – including an extended period of global data collection while on board HMS Beagle between 1831 and 1836 – shows dedication, we would have hoped for more output by now. Indeed, it was in this hope that we offered you a short-term extension when your second fixed-term contract position expired.
Over the past 12 months the University has had a large number of applications for several advertised positions, many of them with excellent CVs, including significant numbers of A* publications. A number of overseas applicants had valuable multi-lingual skills while others came from minority groups the University is committed to promoting as an equal opportunity employer, and one determined to promote diversity and equality. Unfortunately, due to a strategic realignment as part of the University’s 1865 Vision of being in the top 20 Science and Technology focused universities in the British Empire we had to suspend two of these selection procedures. To offer you tenure when a new position could be created and advertised to take advantages of such engagement opportunities the Committee deemed would be unfair, and worse lay the university open to complaints of bias/prejudice.

Further, your teaching has received some negative feedback from staff (insufficient attention to new teaching/assessment methods like group-interaction, challenges and quick-quizzes) and students (some found you engaging and interesting but many questioned the relevance of what you taught and this was especially worrying in the currently challenging funding/jobs climate). This unfortunately ruled out the possibility of converting your appointment to the ‘teaching only’ positions the university has recently developed as part of its leading edge in education goal.

Finally, what also told against the application was your reluctance to take part in typical university activities like Open Day or ‘Meet the Business Leader’ sessions with industry, or to serve on committees (most recently the Ethics Committee) or other essential administrative tasks. I know you were annoyed when the Ethics Committee deemed your research as potentially harming of humanity’s emotional health and self-esteem but it was performing its role of promoting ethical research and your comparisons between student labs and lab-rats was unhelpful and certainly no reason to refuse to join the committee’s activities. It is a key part of the university’s governance as are our financial controls. Your comments about our recently departed finance director in a letter to the press – he left amicably to undertake exciting opportunities elsewhere – were neither collegial nor respectful of the university’s image in the community. However, to return to the main point, other members of the School commit to these activities without qualm even though it means they have less time to research. It is also a prescribed KPI for tenure and promotion.

I need not point out that these are tough times and the university leadership group has been obliged to make some extremely difficult decisions to keep to our strategic vision including freezing salaries, reducing the number and size of faculty offices and increasing teaching loads. It has involved closing or downsizing a number of schools or departments that were deemed to be underperforming or not core to our strategic operational focus, including Arts, English Literature, History and Sociology. As a result, a number of other staff members (including younger scholars and several promising writers) were released from employment under the university’s redundancy/redeployment provisions, mandated where there is no ongoing demand for a position. In these circumstances I think you will agree the university has made strenuous efforts to give your case the most careful consideration.

I would have preferred to have conveyed the Committee’s decision personally but, unfortunately, I had to rush to catch the Trans-Atlantic Packet to attend an important meeting of senior university executives in New York on the role of entrepreneurial leadership in university innovation. The Tenure Committee’s deputy, Professor Thui is fully apprised of your case. If you want to clarify any aspects of the decision, please contact his secretary to make an appointment. I need to stress, however, that the decision is final and under university rules there are no avenues of appeal.

Charles, I wish you the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Richard Head PhD, BASS, QM Dean and Pro-Vice Chancellor
ATTACHMENT:

Journal of Global Science and Business

Impact Factor over past 5 years 0.95
Ranked 6th of 43 in Science of Business Journals and 3rd of 73 in Business of Science Journals in 1856

26 June 1857.

Dear Mr Darwin [insert name here]

Thank you for submitting your paper [insert title] On the Origins of Species: A Brief Account to the journal. Unfortunately, as Area Editor I am afraid we are unable to send it out to referees. The paper is interesting, but it does not fit within the journal’s current focus.

[insert any additional comments here] Further, I am a little concerned the paper would cause hurt and offence amongst much of the journal’s UK, US and colonial Christian readership for what is essentially an unproven theory.

Yours Sincerely

Professor Justin Larkin

Author
Michael Quinlan, B.Ec (Hons), PhD, is Emeritus Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of New South Wales, adjunct professor in the History Department University of Tasmania and visiting professor at Middlesex University. He has published extensively on the effects of neoliberalism on workers’ health, particularly addressing precarious work, outsourcing and subcontracting. His research has also examined repeat/pattern causes of death at work and the related impact on families. His most recent book examines the origins of worker mobilisation in Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head</th>
<th>Room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in your bedroom</td>
<td>someone else’s problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotions stretch</td>
<td>overtaking vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like adhesive bandages</td>
<td>crawling up the walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over thoughts</td>
<td>unravelling obedient dialogues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>your body ripens</td>
<td>fracturing the mirror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being sent and received</td>
<td>so the reflection makes sense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broken parts, the recycling</td>
<td>spilling over the edges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finding its way nowhere</td>
<td>into another jurisdiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to a towering pile</td>
<td>you feel your way around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of multi-coloured glass</td>
<td>the curves and contradictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swarming out of your eyes, ears, mouth</td>
<td>moving inside them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shipped to another jurisdiction</td>
<td>inside out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elsewhere, elsewhere</td>
<td>somewhere, somewhere</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fleur Beaupert
Surry Hills, NSW

---

66 Social Alternatives Vol. 38 No. 3, 2019
Towards a Good Anthropocene for North-West Tasmania: Transforming the role of a regional university campus

Caroline Smith and Robin Krabbé

This paper highlights the urgency of action on climate change, and on the role of paradigm change and systemic transformation towards this. It further considers how regional campuses are ideally placed to make a unique contribution to progressing an emerging new paradigm, focused on Sustainable Wellbeing. The concept of Sustainable Wellbeing towards a Good Anthropocene is suggested as the foundation of a new paradigm to provide meaning and purpose to individuals and institutions alike. The Cradle Coast campus of the University of Tasmania, whose recent leadership has outlined a new vision of the University as being 'place based and right sized' is ideally placed to deliver this mission, assisted by its small scale and closeness to local communities. It has the potential to impact on the transformation needed of understanding, education, vision, will and leadership to support a level of collective action for optimal flourishing.

Introduction

This paper asks what contribution regions can have to arguably the greatest challenge humanity has ever faced, that is of climate change (Lipietz 1998). Meadows (in Hirvilammi and Helne 2014) notes that the most effective leverage point for changing a system is to change its paradigm. The concept of paradigm is closely allied to that of a worldview or mental models, which all in essence refer to the unconsciously shared systems of beliefs that shape the way a society operates (Hirvilammi and Helne 2014). Denniss and Sanders (2009: 22) note that:

[a] culture’s principal tool of survival is its worldview, its conceptual map of reality. It is the consistent, comprehensive and interwoven explanation of everything that each language group has developed over time and transmitted from one generation to the next. It is the accumulated wisdom, passed down through the ages, of what works and what doesn’t.

We note that changing worldviews is at first glance a deeply educational issue, but we also contend that it is at the community level that the most leverage may be gained. Part of this view is based on the efficacy of collective action as the foundation of community. Shirky (2008) in his book Here comes everybody: How change happens when people come together notes that a game changer as far as collective action is concerned is both the development, and the low cost, of information and communication technologies which dramatically increase the ability of people to find each other and work together, as well as revolutionise education. We believe our opportunities are two fold – to mobilise the community, and revolutionise our education system. Both of these are important in changing paradigms, worldviews and mental models.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, we introduce the concept of the Anthropocene and outline the rise of the current unsustainable worldview and norms. Next, we introduce the concept of ‘sustainable wellbeing’ as the new norm that needs to underpin the idea of a good Anthropocene. Finally, we highlight how, in higher education, business-as-usual is a barrier to a flourishing future, and consider what transformations in higher education in general, and Tasmania’s regional campus in particular, are needed in order to move towards a good Anthropocene.

The Anthropocene: An existential crisis

The scientific community has now accepted that Earth has left the stable Holocene period and entered a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene, where the detrimental impacts of human activity on Earth’s biophysical systems are well established, particularly that of climate change (Climate Council 2016). As Lewis and Maslin (2018) put it, we have become a geological superpower where human activity steers the future of
Earth. The core of our predicament seems to be that we are stranded in the throes of a severe identity crisis, caught up in a cascading planetary phase shift in which we seem to be losing any clear, coherent sense of real human needs and potentialities, indeed what it is to be human (Morton 2013). The future of Earth is in our hands for the first time in human history, but we appear to be deeply unprepared for the responsibility (Stein 2016).

In modern societies, a major element in this disconnection is that our present worldview, derived from individualistic notions of success and progress enabled by fossil fuel powered economic growth, is clearly failing (Speth 2008). This worldview is based on material wealth building and an almost blind faith in the power of technology to overcome our many challenges (Schneider et al. 2010), instead of seeking the answers within ourselves (Mandala Schlitz et al. 2010). As this worldview seems to be coming to a ragged end, a sense of bewilderment prevails, and we feel rudderless in trying to find a clear new direction. We are wavering in our confidence in the future and seem to lack a framework of moral values to guide our conduct. In essence, the paradigm guiding humanity has become outdated, unsustainable and dispirited. Hirvilammi and Helne (2014) note that the concept of paradigm can be seen as the driving source of all systems, since it comprises of the deepest sets of beliefs about how the world works. Hence crises are driven by maladaptive paradigms, driven by unsustainability norms.

**The Rise of Unsustainability Norms**

Economist John Maynard Keynes (1933) contended that throughout human history, the struggle for material subsistence has been the most pressing problem for humanity; indeed all organisms share this compelling drive. For commentators such as Beckert and Streeck (2008), a focus on maximising economic growth to address the perceived need for ever increasing material security has become firmly established as the dominant target of political action. The corollary is that those who control decision-making will resist addressing the inequality that has resulted, which, as Keynes noted, has deeply influenced the human condition. Some of the recent work in neuroscience, including neuroeconomics (Smith 2009), attributes unsustainability norms to evolutionary mismatch. As Erhlich (in Boyer 2011) and Norman et al. (2018) note, evolutionary mismatch refers to the concept of a mismatch between what our hunter-gatherer brains evolved to deal with, and the hyper-modern environment we now live in. Evolutionary psychology is just one of the disciplines which studies the reactive way our brains tend to operate now, promoted by reactive political-economic institutions (King et al. 2018).

The success of fossil fuel-enabled economic growth has been mediated by extraordinary advancements in science and technology. This leads some economists to believe that the economic problem of resource supply should largely be solved by now (Daoud 2011). Jackson (2009), for example, argues that technology has already made possible levels of production to satisfy all material needs globally. The amount of waste produced in modern societies is one of many indicators that we have gone well beyond the point of material sufficiency, although it is clearly highly unevenly derived (Angus 2009).

A further irony is that, despite continued material growth, the West is increasingly failing to meet the basic existential needs that provide people with a sense of meaning and belonging through a sense of identity and security (Harvey 2018). There is some concern about decreasing wellbeing and an increase in stress levels (Eckersley 2008; 2016). We urgently need to redefine progress in terms of quality of life and ability to adapt rather than ever-increasing standards of living defined by consumption. For Eckersley, quality of life is ‘the opportunity to experience the social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions that are conducive to total wellbeing: physical, mental, social, spiritual’ (2016: 5).

**Towards a Good Anthropocene**

Fuchs (2002) identifies two main themes shaping the Anthropocene debate. The first, that human action has led to the threat of ecological and societal collapse, is tempered by a second, more optimistic view. This is that humans possess the collective capacity to establish a socio-ecologically sustainable society, that many are already working towards solutions, and that the signs of a new paradigm are emerging. It is within these spaces of turbulence that opportunities for a ‘good Anthropocene’1 abound, which we define as cultural change based on adaptive learning towards ‘sustainable wellbeing’. A Good Anthropocene exists in the tension between the belief that evolution is progressive, while acknowledging the severity of biophysical system decline and the urgent need to rapidly reduce human ecological footprints to within Earth’s carrying capacity.

Addressing these local, national and global challenges requires significant collective action. This in turn requires a level of optimal functioning of individuals, including the promotion of mental models to build new paradigms. Bruni (2008) and Johnson (2009) note the connection between positive social relationships and subjective wellbeing, and here, the concept of ‘sustainable wellbeing’ is key. This refers to the notion that the behaviours necessary to reduce ecological footprints are also the same behaviours research shows are necessary for human health and wellbeing (Costanza 2013). The terms ‘thriving’ and ‘flourishing’ cogently encapsulate this much more positive vision.

68 Social Alternatives Vol. 38 No. 3, 2019
We, along with others (for example Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986) contend that humanity possesses the capacity, knowledge and foresight to build a new worldview to guide our future towards a good Anthropocene. What is needed is a level of understanding, education, vision, will and leadership to support a level of collective action for optimal flourishing. In other words, action that enables a wellbeing worldview that can best support ecosystem functioning by reducing the impact of human activity on the environment (Krabbe 2016). Central to this is a transformation to a culture of adaptive learning towards regeneration of our socio-ecological life support systems (Thomsen et al. 2012) in which innovation and creativity are critical elements.

This perspective builds on the view of Heylighen (2007) and Cook-Greuter (2013), who see the evolution of human consciousness as progressive, where the accumulation of knowledge supports greater rationality, greater institutional capacity, and greater interest in wellbeing, replacing economic growth as the measure of human and societal progress. For Heylighen (2007), all systems tend to evolve towards better adaptation or fit for their survival (albeit with periods of regression), implying that greater information or knowledge about the environment is accumulated over time.

How then can we transition from the current worldview which prioritises economic growth and material wealth, to collective action based on a wellbeing worldview? There can be seen to be both push and pull factors towards an adaptive governance model (Plummer 2009) which involves a much greater role for bottom up change. There is a large diverse literature on the drivers and effectiveness of bottom up change. For example, according to Castells (2008), social movements can transform the values and institutions of society, and arise predominantly from a common interest among a specific group of people. Social movements are thus often ‘imagined communities’ of the oppressed, disadvantaged or threatened. Kriegman (2006) notes that while one of the main aims of social movements is to make possible the ‘previously unimaginable’, some are more focused on reformist measures (i.e. incremental or technical changes to norms, laws, etc.), while others aim for the transformative systemic change (i.e. fundamentally altering values, power structures, etc.) that we currently need. In both cases a major source of mobilisation occurs via the process of Polanyi’s so-called ‘double movement’ (in Fletcher 2010), whereby the market’s inevitable negative consequences generate resistance by and for those adversely affected. This also accords with Rousseau’s idea (in Purdey 2012) of the existence of a ‘general will’ – a unified expression of social concern about the common good, and a collective impulse to achieve the best interests of society as a whole. A final point about bottom up efforts as Gupta et al. (2003) note, is that a healthy democracy depends upon the co-existence of decentralised, dispersed, polycentric efforts of social, ecological and economic entrepreneurship and collection action. We place these ideas at the centre of our debate about addressing sustainability.

### Sustainable Wellbeing and Sustainable Happiness

Literature from ecological economics and the de-growth discourse provides a particularly fertile source of debate around the idea that sustainability is most usefully seen as relating to equitable and efficient wellbeing (Costanza et al. 2006; Schneider et al. 2010). The significance of sustainable wellbeing is in equating it to optimal functioning to support human flourishing and at the same time, maintaining lifestyles that can minimise ecological footprints. Costanza (2013) further maintains that a fair distribution (equity) and an efficient allocation of resources (efficiency) are required for a new world economy based on sustainable wellbeing.

In coining the related term ‘Sustainable Happiness’, O’Brien (2013: 294) asks, ‘does happiness have to cost the earth?’ In other words, how can we live long and happy lives within the resource capacity of the planet and work to mitigate and adapt to climate change to keep our ecosystems intact? O’Brien wonders that, given the seriousness of the environmental challenges we face, whether a focus on happiness is an unhelpful diversion. Certainly to date, we have pursued an unsustainable form of happiness, where our political-economic systems have promoted a view of happiness as hedonic, instead of being related to balancing a striving for material consumption with contributing towards social, economic and environmental sustainability via meaning (Sirgy and Wu 2009). O’Brien (2013: 296) argues that ‘our natural desire for happiness becomes the entry point for discovering that our well-being is inextricably associated with the well-being of others and the natural environment’. The emerging vision of sustainable wellbeing as the new norm provides a means of fostering the level of cooperation and collective action necessary for sustainable societies.

These perspectives provide a foundation for a vision of a good Anthropocene, where, rather than sustainability being seen as requiring material deprivation and decreasing living standards, they create a vision that points to embedding greater levels of life satisfaction and quality of life as the focus of collective action. If we are thriving, we have greater motivation to attend to the needs of others and of the environment, which a good Anthropocene requires.

How then, does this discourse relate to the situation in North-West Tasmania and its regional university?
The State of the State: Sustainability in North-West Tasmania

Tasmania is the smallest of the six states that make up Australia, and has the country’s lowest population of around 531,500. Like much of the twenty-first century world, Tasmania finds itself at a tipping point (West 2013), positioned politically, economically and environmentally in the turbulent space of social and economic transformation, as the old legacy industries of forestry and mining decline, while tourism and food production become more important.

North-West Tasmania has been identified as less vulnerable to climate change impacts than other Australian states, however climate change projections still point to emerging patterns of extreme rainfall patterns and windspeed variation (Department of Premier and Cabinet n.d.). Recently, the region has experienced drought, bushfires as well as extensive flooding, all contributing to a loss of rare and endangered biodiversity as well as rural livelihoods (Carlyon 2017). At the same time, the focus on growth through increased industrial agricultural production, particularly the dairy industry along with pressure to continue tree clearing for farming and logging, combine to deplete the region of its natural resources.

One outcome from the increased stress involved is that communities and families have become less able to teach their young the pro-social and pro-ecological norms needed for sustainability and planetary wellbeing. For many young people, the only option is to leave their communities (Corbett 2007; Smith et al. 2017). This contrasts with a fundamental element of sustainable wellbeing, that is, exchange based on goodwill, trust and a sense of belonging through positive social relationships. Indeed, as Smith et al. point out, our region is experiencing significant levels of sub-optimal wellbeing both at the micro or individual level, and the macro or societal level.

It need not be the case. With Bowman (2013), we believe that as a small, resource rich state, Tasmania can be a living laboratory for regional sustainability. The regional scale has a number of advantages particularly for increased opportunities for constructive interaction between government, communities and business to unite to provide the most effective environment for fostering sustainable norms. This collective capacity can then enable informal, formal and post-formal education towards sustainable norms and sustainable wellbeing. Hence, the regional campus plays a pivotal role.

Higher Education: Business-as-usual

With some notable exceptions, most current forms of education continue to operate as ‘business-as-usual’, still firmly located within the neo-liberal worldview of educating people for a world of liquid modernity (Smith et al. 2017). It is as if the Anthropocene with its existential threats does not exist as we continue in our faculty silos with their accountabilities, standards, surveillance measures, quality assurance, slow to evolve curricula, units, timetables, marking templates, grades, and graduate attributes that frame education as a mere commodity serving the global market place. Set against the backdrop of the Anthropocene, these increasingly seem to be the meaningless constructs of an outdated and irrelevant bureaucracy, reflecting nineteenth century industrial knowledge categories refracted through a neo-liberal managerialism. As David Orr put it 20 years ago, our Western education system continues to,

prepare students almost exclusively for an urban existence and dependence on fossil fuels and global trade. Children are taught from an early age how best to compete with each other rather than how best to work towards and live in a sustainable society (1999: 166).

Slaughter (2012: 123) provides a cogent summary of the current situation in universities:

As the world trembles on the edge of chaos, most universities remain caught up in business-as-usual thinking, their priorities very much bound up with inward looking purposes and goals such as funding, standards and position in the international pecking order. Paradoxically, many have within them some of the most talented and capable people in the world, many of whom work at the leading edge of research and innovation in a vast number of fields. Universities need to be taking the lead in gearing up for the transitions ahead. They need to take up their potentially catalytic role in creating and sustaining social foresight.

Rousell (2016) agrees, noting that the traditional humanist underpinnings of the university, where crucial and rich discussions of our futures could and should take place, have been eroded by the increasing ‘digitisation, massification, and decentralisation of higher education’ (2016: 137), and colourfully refers to the university as ‘the living dead of academia’ (2016: 144 [where] ... the ‘undead model of isolated disciplines in their invidious towers’ is long due for transformation and for re-imagining in response to the Anthropocene.

A Re-imagined University for the Anthropocene

As we have argued, living in the Anthropocene presents an urgent and critical challenge to education systems in general and to universities in particular, and that the
requirements, skills, needs, responses, mitigation and adaptation needed cannot be met by current models of education. A university responsive to the imperatives of the Anthropocene needs to be reconceptualised as a space, whether physical, decentralised or virtual, where transformational education takes place. As educators, the task before us is to recognise and look beyond the ossified institutional processes that served a past era and that have few sustainable solutions for the future, towards the emergence of educational configurations for a good Anthropocene. Further, the concept of the Anthropocene provides a creative space for a re-imagined ‘multiversity’, working between what Rousell (2016: 144) terms ‘the posthumanist positions of ‘benighted disaster and visionary hope’.

It is imperative then that the university plays a central role in forging a thriving future for the human species and the others with whom we share the Earth (Trencher et al. 2014). Higher education needs to be at the forefront of the development of high-level knowledge and skills across and between all disciplines. Since it is universities that train our future decision makers in whatever field, what is taught and how, is critical. We need to critique and bridge the disparity between the business-as-usual model and a re-imagined university as a creative and ecological multiversity – one that is highly networked, pro-active and responsive to its community and beyond. Fortunately, an increasing number of voices are now arguing for a fundamental reframing of the purpose and practices of the university. Trencher et al. (2014) and Rinaldi et al. (2017) see universities as having unique capacities to interpret social needs, behaviours and habits that are fundamental to transformation. In fact, universities are better placed than most institutions to engage in the transformation of their education system to adapt to the Anthropocene. Trencher et al. (2014) use the term ‘co-creation for sustainability’, contending that it represents an emerging new mission for universities as drivers of societal transformation. They point to a positive role for universities in addressing the Anthropocene, to progress towards place-based solutions to social, economic and environmental sustainability. They see this innovation as the fourth mission of universities, building on their current three roles in research, education, and industry engagement as critical to address the wicked problems of the Anthropocene. Rinaldi et al. (2017) mention the useful concepts of the ‘Quadruple Helix Model’, based on universities (academia), business, government and community working together, where ‘living labs’ are one form of innovation to experiment with pathways for transformation; and of ‘smart specialisation strategies’.

Supporting and informing these directions is a growing ‘post’ literature describing new forms of scholarship through which to consider a re-imagined university as a site of transformation for the Anthropocene. Sardar (2010) explains that the various ‘post’ positions refer to the transitional period we find ourselves in, where the old paradigms are dying, replacements are only just starting to emerge, and chaos, complexity and contradictions become our common experience. As part of this, Gidley (2016) calls us to question deeply the role and processes of education and articulates a postformal education philosophy as a foundation for educational futures.4

Critical to this will be the action and commitment of informed mid-level staff, in partnership with the wider community, driving change by challenging what is researched, what is taught and how. Slaughter (2012) points out that universities still have inherent sympathy with their earlier traditions of social responsibility and knowledges outside the current tyranny of neoliberalism. They also retain a degree of semi-autonomy, and academics are generally globally-oriented, critical and post-conventional thinkers. Pinchot (1995) agrees, highlighting that much of academia retains a ‘non-commercial’ mindset or ‘gift economy’ ethic where the tendency is to give information freely and contribute to society without seeking explicit rewards. As a foundation of large-scale cooperation, this is a vital aspect of sustainable wellbeing.

The Role of the Regional Campus in Forging a Good Anthropocene

Small, multidisciplinary and regional university campuses can and must play a vital role in promoting discussion, research and experimentation aimed at creating new and innovative models becoming foundational to living in the Anthropocene. They have the potential to form closer links with communities thus benefitting from increased participation and knowledge partnerships. Eversole (2015) notes that a key role of regional campuses is that they provide a unique opportunity for the substantial knowledge base and resources of the university to interact in a dialogical way with the knowledge and resources of a region.

A small, regional university can be much more easily re-positioned to re-imagine itself as a richly creative, flexible and responsive space than a larger, siloed and unwieldy institutional structure. It has the opportunity to explore and promote both the vision and the practices towards imagining and achieving a sustainable, flourishing future for its region and beyond through transdisciplinary pedagogies and practices. Informed by Krabbe’s (2016) conceptualisation of sustainable wellbeing, the challenge is to create networks to facilitate the emergence of capacities and mind-sets that are necessary for this critical moment in human history. We believe the Cradle Coast campus of the University of Tasmania (UTAS) is well placed to serve this purpose. It is to this campus that we now turn our attention.
Pedagogies for Transformation

Learning theories acknowledge that the deep learning needed to conceptualise our place in the Anthropocene are sustained through interpersonal relationships, emotional connection and embodiment, the building of trust and dynamically interactive hands-on experiences. This approach to learning draws from best practice in adult education to enable the development of an active and participatory community of learners (Rogoff et al. 1996; Smith 2000). Building a common language and an inspiring new narrative is likely to significantly advance this cause, while ‘happiness economics’ and the science of wellbeing and resilience offer concrete pathways towards these visions (Krabbe 2016).

Such approaches provide unique potential for experimental research and knowledge practices between education, the arts, humanities, technologies and the sciences. Drawing from ecological theories of autopoiesis, complexity and emergence (e.g. Varela and Maturana 1992), the creative university can establish itself as a learner-centred, open-innovation ecological model that engages in co-creation, co-production, collaboration, commons-based peer production and mass participation in conceptions of open development towards sustainable wellbeing norms. Leinfelder (2013: 24) suggests:

- Several key pedagogies for conducting transformative projects in higher education. These are:
- Learning by participation, where responses to the Anthropocene are integrated into participatory research projects and learning activities;
- Using experiential scenarios to bring the ecological conditions associated with the Anthropocene alive for people, such as museum exhibitions and fictional narratives;
- Creating new forms of reflection and speculation that address the fundamental entanglement of nature and culture; and
- Developing new modes and formats for communication, including innovative methods of ‘translating’ research findings and theory for the broader community.

To this we would add the valorising and harnessing of the potential of rural communities to share skills, strengths, knowledge and perhaps most importantly, survival skills that those in more urbanised communities may lack but are critical for building a localised, resilient culture. Education for the Anthropocene calls for rapid learning of adaptation skills (Pike et al. 2010). Local communities already hold abundant informal knowledge of sustainable practices such as permaculture design, child care, small-scale sustainable food systems, small business, farmers’ markets, food hubs, repair workshops, and local currencies as well as a learning from the plethora of voluntary work carried out in the community. Currently, compared with academic knowledge, these knowledges and skills are not highly regarded. But as Stewart and Abbott-Chapman (2011: 9) note, rural Tasmanian students:

> could turn their hand to anything practical and gain skills they would not have gained in the city. Most were capable with motors and machinery and [some] had experience of paid work – on farms shed handling, hay collecting, cattle work, fencing, hotel work, abalone lease work, gardening, waitressing, post-office assistant, supermarket shelf work and child minding.

We believe that rural communities should be re-framed as participatory, and collective impact projects involving coalitions between communities, government, business and education should be seen as part of the vision for a good Anthropocene. Practical aspects could be in the form of community forums, lectures, citizen science, field days and upskilling workshops through development of joint projects with stakeholders. To this end, academics at the Cradle Coast campus have established an interdisciplinary community of practice that works collaboratively to establish opportunities for creative engagement with the local community at both formal and informal levels, based around the notion of regional sustainability.

The University of Tasmania’s Cradle Coast Campus

Tasmania is home to a single university – the University of Tasmania (UTAS). UTAS has three campuses, the largest two are located in the state’s two urban centres, Hobart and Launceston, while the third, the Cradle Coast campus, is smaller and located on the North-West coast in Burnie. The mission of this campus is to engage with and serve the region, while the current leadership within the University of Tasmania also emphasises the university’s role in research contributing to global leadership, at the same time increasing the access to education of disadvantaged groups. A recent change to the leadership of the university has emphasised a place-based model that is globally connected, right sized and responsive. This adds to the argument that the Cradle Coast campus, being small and close to the community, is well-positioned to meet the needs of the people of the north-west in working to create a thriving future for all. Our motivation for contributing toward a good Anthropocene is to bring this to fruition and further extend this vision to include Gidley’s (2016) post-formal educational transformation.

Conclusion

There is clearly a sense of urgency required in our response to the crisis of the Anthropocene. The
most compelling requirement is the forging of a new worldview to guide progress towards social, economic and environmental sustainability. The breaking down of the old worldview of material progress provides a critical opportunity for a new worldview to emerge that aims for the wellbeing of all people and all flora and fauna not just the privileged few.

Sustainable wellbeing as the new norm provides a framework for the meeting of individual material and non-material needs and facilitates efficient and equitable systems for societies to function optimally to allow ecological footprints to be minimised. The crucial fostering of sustainable wellbeing is a whole-of-society responsibility, focusing on informal, formal and postformal education. Universities, while currently conflicted, must play a role in conceptualising and mobilising ways to address the Anthropocene, or they may lose their relevance. Small regional campuses such as the Cradle Coast campus of the University of Tasmania, have both a responsibility and the potential to become vibrant sites for developing and testing a radically different set of educational futures, knowledge practices and pedagogies that are responsive to the changing conditions of the Anthropocene.

References
Boyer P. 2011 ‘What is really needed to address climate change?’, Address to the 15th International Environmental Forum, Hobart, 10 and 11 December 2011, Conference theme: Ethical Responses to Climate Change.
Brunt L. 2008 Reciprocity, altruism and the civil society in praise of heterogeneity, Routledge, New York.
___2016 Is the west really the best? Modernisation and the psychosocial dynamics of human progress and development, Oxford Development Studies, Oxford.
Eversole, R. 2015 Knowledge partnering for community development, Routledge, USA.
Gupta A. K. et al. 2003 ‘Mobilizing grassroots’ technological innovations and traditional knowledge, values and institutions: articulating social and ethical capital’, Futures, 975-987.


Morton, T. 2013 Hyperobjects: Philosophy and ecology after the end of the world, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.


Speth J. G. 2008 The Bridge at the End of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from crisis to Sustainability, Pennsylvania, Yale University Press.


End Notes

1. The term ‘good Anthropocene’ was first used by the Ecomodernist Breakthrough Institute (Asafu-Adjaye et al. 2015), that proposes predominantly technological solutions to sustainable futures. This has been critiqued, e.g Hamilton (2015), and here we seek to extend the concept beyond mere technology.


3. There appears to be some convergence of worldviews whereby the ‘less liberal’ worldview is concerned about international competitiveness and hence innovation and creativity, adding to the need for new skills in our technological age.
4. Postformal education refers to an approach to education designed to prepare people for a world of global uncertainty and accelerating change, and to create a sustainable future in a world of unprecedented complexity (Gidley 2016).

Authors
Dr Caroline Smith is an Adjunct senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the Cradle Coast campus of the University of Tasmania. She has wide experience in both the tertiary and secondary education sectors in the areas of science, futures and sustainability education, research and postgraduate supervision. Caroline is currently involved in a University of Queensland project to develop training for agriculturists in the Pacific in Plant Health Clinic training. She has also been involved in providing training and writing of manuals for plant protection training in Solomon Islands as well as co-convened teachers conferences in Solomon Is.

Caroline’s research is in the areas of Education for Sustainability, Futures Education, sustainable food systems and STEM education as well as issues of retention and attainment in Tasmanian schools. Previously Caroline taught at Swinburne University’s National Centre for Sustainability and Australian Catholic University. She has also run an organically certified orchard and local food box scheme, and has been a high school science teacher and plant pathologist. She has published widely in the areas of Education for Sustainability, ecological literacy, ecospirituality and related areas, and co-edited a book on Permaculture Pioneers. Her PhD examined personal empowerment through learning permaculture.

Caroline is a committee member of the Tasmanian UN Regional Centre of Expertise for Education for Sustainability and on the editorial board of the Journal of Futures Studies. She is actively involved in her local community in sustainability, permaculture, local food systems and climate activism. In her spare time Caroline enjoys reading, art, cooking, horse riding, gardening and hanging out with her animals

Dr Robin Krabbe worked for the CSIRO in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia in a research support role for 12 years and for the Department of Primary Industries in Victoria for five years. She has completed a Masters Qualifying in Environmental Science and then recently completed a PhD which investigated the role of community driven initiatives to enhance social, economic and environmental sustainability. Robin has volunteered with environmental and social change organisations for the last ten years. She is currently the Coordinator of Live Well Tasmania, which aims to build strong communities by focussing on health and wellbeing to help tackle the challenges of the Anthropocene era. Robin is also currently working with the University of Tasmania, the Australian Prevention Partnership Centre and the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services to deliver a project working with four communities around Tasmania to improve Anticipatory Care. This aims to use systems thinking, and acknowledges psychosocial as well as physical risk factors for poor health to prevent chronic conditions across the population, but particularly for at-risk groups. Robin lives on a farm in North-West Tasmania with her farmer husband and 12-year-old son. In her spare time, she enjoys bush walking, gardening, meditation, yoga, cooking, music and Art.

---

The Coat is Too Poor

A woman in heels collects spoils from threadbare morality sifts through corporate plumage blinded by blinkered consumerism and her costly velour touch

I wouldn’t let my dog lie on that

A threadbare coat deemed too imperfect to clothe a woman who asks for shelter is discarded disregarded lies unprotected in a garbage truck mottled by mould in silt sodden sleeves

A dog sifts through garbage and eats before two cold children take their turn

The woman kneels in repentant pose asks for shelter something to eat and dignity for two cold children

She lies unprotected from the wind’s taffeta touch and shivers

Nod Ghosh, Christchurch, NZ
Ulrike Sturm currently lectures in the Bachelor of Visual Arts program at the Nambour campus of TAFE Queensland, in partnership with University of Canberra. She completed a BA, BVA and MFA at the University of Sydney, as well as a Diploma of Law (LPAB, NSW) and is now nearing completion of her PhD at CQU.

Born in Berlin, Ulrike’s family migrated to Australia when she was a small child. Her first home in Australia was at the migrant hostel at Bonegilla. After living in Sydney for a decade, her family then spent a few years in the highlands of Papua New Guinea where she and her brother were the only non-indigenous students at the local high school. These experiences led to an enduring interest in exploring the perspectives of ‘cultural outsiders’ in her visual arts practice, working mainly with printmaking, including black and white linocuts, etchings, and artist’s books. She also creates large-scale vinyl wall artworks, makes artist books and drawings and her work can frequently be seen in Meanjin literary journal.

Ulrike’s MFA thesis explored the themes of identity and cultural alienation at the juncture of truth and memory, examining the work of a number of contemporary artists who have worked with visual narratives and/or graphic novels as vehicles to relate their personal experiences which range from finding themselves in a country where they do not speak the language, through to travel and migration stories, as well as feelings of cultural isolation within one’s own culture as a result of being a member of a social or ethnic minority. A recurring theme was the sense of a loss for words: a ‘silencing’ in a certain sense, and a struggle to express one’s identity, which eventually found a voice through the narrative of visual language. Her own creative work contemplates the influence that her experience of migration from Germany to Australia as a young child has had on her perception of identity, leading to an exploration of the nexus between memory and truth. She suggests that a key element in the concept of identity is that ‘truth’ does not matter as much as our perception of it from a particular perspective.

The images in this issue of Social Alternatives are based on recent glimpses of Sunshine Beach, Queensland, Australia and Berlin, Germany.
Above: Ja Bar in Neukölln, Berlin, Germany, Lino-cut print. Weser Straße, Neukölln. If you find a parking spot, try to never move your car because it is unlikely that you’ll find a parking spot again. Most people walk or ride bikes or take the U Bahn.

Below: Weser Straße Neukölln, Berlin, Germany, Lino-cut print. When I was in Berlin a couple of years ago, I stayed in Neukölln and this bar was just down the street. It seemed to be entirely furnished with sofas, chairs and tables that had been dumped on the street. During the day, the roller shutters were down and these painted creatures, painted peered out.

Following Page 78, top: Aeroplane, ‘When I look out of the window of an aeroplane and see another plane flying not all that far away, I feel slightly anxious’. This image was in my self-published book of linocuts titled: A Cat goes Kayaking: 30 linoprints in 30 days.

bottom: Red Couch, Lino-cut print. Once, a friend and I opened an eclectic sort of shop that had handmade art and books and stuff. It was the perfect shop because it never had any customers. Every Wednesday evening, when all the other shops were closed, we went in and sat on the red sofa and talked and enjoyed a bottle of wine. We closed it after a year, from the book, titled: A Cat goes Kayaking.
SUBSCRIPTION FORM

☐ I would like to subscribe to
Social Alternatives Journal

☐ I would like to purchase a gift subscription

INDIVIDUALS
☐ 1 year - 4 issues      $50
☐ 2 years - 8 issues    $80

INSTITUTIONS AND LIBRARIES
☐ 1 year - 4 issues      $80
☐ 2 years - 8 issues    $150

CONCESSIONS
☐ 1 year - 4 issues      $35
☐ 2 years - 8 issues    $60

Plus overseas postage of $50 per annum if applicable

PAYMENT VIA THE WEBSITE
You can subscribe or purchase a gift subscription electronically via the Social Alternatives website – www.socialalternatives.com.

PAYMENT BY EFT
Email Lee-anne@socialalternatives.com for details on how to make payments in Australian dollars to our bank account. Please include your subscription request and address details.

PAYMENT BY CHEQUE OR POSTAL ORDER
Send a cheque or Postal Order in Australian dollars to:
Social Alternatives
University of Sunshine Coast
Maroochydore DC Queensland 4556
Australia

BACK ORDERS
☐ I would like to order the following back issues:

Vol............No........ Vol............No........
Vol............No........ Vol............No........
Vol............No........ Vol............No........
Vol............No........ Vol............No........

Or tick which issue(s) you would like from the list over page.

PER SINGLE COPY:

Including Australian postage ........... $14
Including Overseas postage .............$17

Subscription amount $..............................
Backorder amount $..............................
Postage amount (for overseas subscriptions) $..............................
Total amount $..............................

NAME ...........................................................................................
ADDRESS ...........................................................................................
COUNTRY ................................................................. POSTCODE .......................
PAYMENT AMOUNT $.................................................................

Please note that Social Alternatives is not obliged to charge or pay GST.
An extensive catalogue of back issues is available spanning over 30 years of publishing. BELOW is the list of issues.

- V21.1 Peace Education for a New Century
- V21.2 Nonviolence in Principle and Action
- V21.3 Unthemed edition
- V21.4 Control or Compassion? The Future of Asylum Seekers and Refugees
- V22.1 Bioethics: Cloning and Stem Cell Research
- V22.2 War, Gender & Sexuality
- V22.3 Indigenous Knowledge
- V22.4 Ideas at the Powerhouse
- V23.1 Is There a Left Left?
- V23.2 Terrorism
- V23.3 Big Lies
- V23.4 Globalisation, The Environment & Social Justice
- V24.1 Media, Mania & Government
- V24.2 Australian & International Feminisms
- V24.3 Humanitarian Intervention
- V24.4 Education for what?
- V25.1 Humiliation & History in Global Perspectives
- V25.2 Governance
- V25.3 Democracy in Danger
- V25.4 World Education
- V26.1 Counter Alternatives
- V26.2 The Nuclear Debate Revisited
- V26.3 Global Ethics
- V26.4 30th Anniversary Edition
- V27.1 Civil Society
- V27.2 Election ‘07
- V27.3 Justice & Governance in Water
- V27.4 Mental Health
- V28.1 The New Right Were Wrong
- V28.2 Global Governance
- V28.3 Australia and The Pacific
- V28.4 Utopias, Dystopias
- V29.1 Peacebuilding from below in Asia Pacific
- V29.2 Population Health in the 21st Century
- V29.3 Biodiversity in the 21st Century
- V29.4 The Visual Narrative: Alternative photographic exposures
- V30.1 The Value of Techniques
- V30.2 Shifting Cultures
- V30.3 Challenging Contemporary ‘Democracy’ and Identifying Problems
- V30.4 Pass Fail: Assessing contemporary educational reform
- V31.1 Community climate Action
- V31.2 Politics and Ethics in New Media
- V31.3 Disaster Dialogues: Representations of catastrophe in word and image
- V31.4 The Sustainability Prism: Explorations in Sustainability and Language
- V32.1 The Politics of Poverty
- V32.2 Beyond Y: The experience of youth in the 21st century
- V32.3 Refugee Policy: A highly charged issue
- V32.4 Animals, Fiction, Alternative
- V33.1 Music Politics and Environment
- V33.2 Social Alternatives Open Theme
- V33.3 The Wicked Problem of Violences in Mad Places/Spaces and People
- V33.4 A Year of Peace
- V34.1 Cosmopolitanism
- V34.2 Random Callings: Discerning the University Mission
- V34.3 Election and Aftermath
- V34.4 Youth and Precarious Work
- V35.1 Silence as a Power
- V35.2 Abbott’s War on Everything and its Casualties
- V35.3 Genders and Sexualities: Demilitarising the binary beachhead
- V35.4 The Renewal of Critical Social Work
- V36.1 Cross-Fertilising Roots and Routes
- V36.2 Performance, Community and Intervention
- V36.3 In Search of Leadership
- V36.4 Visability: Making disability visible through artistic discourses
- V37.1 Considering the Potential of the Sustainable Development Goals
- V37.2 Social Alternatives: 40th Anniversary Edition
- V37.3 The War That Didn’t End All Wars
- V37.4 The Old Order Is Dying, but a New One Cannot Be Born
- V38.1 Dirty Hands: Community engagement through practice as research
- V38.2 Basic Income and a New Universalism
- V38.3 The Activist Scholar In, and Against, the Neoliberal University