Against Audited Education:
The Emergence of an Activist Pedagogy

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This study will analyse the restructuring of British higher education systems after the neoliberal reforms of the 1980's and 1990's and their impact on the experience of labour at university. It illustrates the gradual abandonment of a public education ideal in favour of a model that conceives of education as a commercial service and of universities as paid service providers in the context of New Labour's huge investment into the 'knowledge economy'. Today, British higher education institutions widely operate according to a market logic and have developed elaborate means to generate wealth in order to cater to various creative and intellectual industries. The liberal faith in education for the sake of intellectual nourishment was increasingly replaced by the neoliberal creed that academic excellence is best expressed through success on the market. Universities thus became small 'control societies', geared towards utilisable, packaged output in the form of docile graduates and productive staff.[1]

I will show how this transformation was achieved through a twofold process that externally marketised universities and internally changed the ethics of teaching and learning through the implementation of several performance audits. My study will evaluate the subjective consequences of working in higher education under neoliberalism while paying particular attention to the effects of the emerging 'audit culture'. I aim to show that with the complete subsumption of learning and teaching under capital, education loses its quality of in-depth immersion as it becomes tightly-measured and utilitarian. I further argue that the introduction of a profit-logic into the university has to be interpreted as the 'generalisation of the enterprise form to all forms of conduct'[2] or as an increasing colonisation of independent life-domains by capital that makes it difficult to occupy spaces that are free from instrumental calculation. I traced the changes in educa-

tion with the help of depth interviews conducted with four members of staff at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

INTRODUCING THE PROBLEM

There is a substantial body of work analysing recent neoliberal reforms at university. Many writers suggest that the application of a market model to education significantly changes the ethics of learning and creates an increase in competition, individualism and the standardised output that has become characteristic of the 'postmodern university'.[3] Most accounts of the neoliberal university criticise the growing inequality and competition between institutions, the lack of democratic decision-making and the demise of in-depth learning due to the introduction of market mechanisms into higher education. These critiques are usually couched in a general attack on neoliberal politics in general.[4] However, while accurately framing the external policy changes that affect education, they rarely analyse the subjective experience of working in newly marketised institutions.

In the spirit of Antonio Negri, David Harvey and Franco Berardi, I will argue that the commodification of education has to be interpreted as part of the increasing subsumption of heterogeneous, non-commercial aspects of life under the homogenising logic of capital. All three writers claim that the increasing colonisation of the state, the media, educational and cultural institutions by the market significantly affects our experience of space and time, making it difficult to occupy spaces that are outside of capital.[5] This has significant consequences on individual subjectivities, both private and public. My research confirmed that the phasing of heterogeneous life-possibilities is felt strongly at university, whose formerly semi-autonomous space of education becomes fully integrated into the profit-logic. The experience of timeless intellectual immersion is thus turned into a form of tightly-measured cognitive labour, foreclosing the universities' potential to instigate and foster critical thought.

Crucially, the classical, liberal academy drew its value precisely from operating at a clear distance to the measured time of capital as a kind of 'temporary autonomous zone'[6] where 'a college-educated middle class worked within market relations but did not exactly follow them'.[7] Since the introduction of a disciplinary regime of audits in the 1980's, the university was increasingly subsumed by the market, which made it difficult for a critical mind to survive. The following depth-interviews are a case in point, illustrating the changes imposed by the marketisation of the university. Their message is simultaneously depressing and encouraging as they shed light on the disciplinary apparatus that directs teaching and research through extensive audits and promote an academic struggle to resist the pressures of audited education.

GATHERING THE DATA

As I seek to shed light on the subjective experiences of labour at universities rather than quantitatively analyse the effects of certain reforms, my data gathering took the form of depth-interviews conducted with four senior lecturers and professors from the Sociology and Media Studies departments at Goldsmiths College, University of London. The interviewing process followed a phenomenological approach that acknowledges the importance of a subject's direct experience

in the constitution of their personal life world. I thus used depth-interviews as a form of oral history, interpreted by Alessandro Portelli as a 'verbal art generated by the cultural and personal encounter in the context of fieldwork'.[8] In this function, they can provide multi-dimensional, qualitative narratives of experience that connect the personal to the social in an engaging way, 'making politics and social conditions come alive through their impact on individual lives'.[9] In the interviews, my subjects thus framed their concrete experience of labour at university in relation to wider political trends and changes in a narrative format. My questions provided a rough thematic thread that granted the interviewees space for individual reflection. All interviewees were presented with the same guiding questions to ensure coherence.

I want to emphasise that my study doesn't claim to provide an objective or positivist account of the nature of labour at universities today. It merely illustrates an experience of a particular from which one might reach out to the general without the guarantee of obtaining any accurate truth. The knowledge that emerged in my interviews was produced in the 'inter-view', as Kvale and Brinkmann characterise the instant between the interviewer and the interviewee.[10] It remains immanent to this situation and can make no transcendental claims beyond this setting. The following accounts therefore illustrate a set of disparate and localised experiences at a university that has been subject to the same considerable policy changes as many other institutions in the U.K. Without any ambition towards comprehensiveness, they stand as experiential narratives that turn the analytical lens on the ethics of learning and teaching under today's pressures of time and money. My analysis provides an interpretative hermeneutics of the interviews that were carefully recorded and subsequently transcribed. It will effectively cover the four areas of research, teaching, staff-student relationship and intellectual community although there is significant overlap between these fields. Finally, I should remark that all my interviews critically evaluate the university reforms. It should be clear that there undoubtedly exist more enthusiastic voices, in support of the recent changes in higher education.

RESEARCHING UNDER THE AUDIT

Without idealising the relatively free and unregulated research-environments of the 1960's and 70's, all interviewees described the strong shift in research that occurred with the introduction of the Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) and the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), recently re-named Research Excellence Framework (REF) that established standardised benchmarks of achievement for teaching and research. The Higher Education Funding Council carried out the first Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 1986. It invited universities in the UK to submit documented proof of staff research in 67 subjects and evaluated the research in relation to the number of researching staff, published output and general research environment. Since its inception, the RAE has taken place every four years and has significantly restructured not only the public image but also the internal administration of universities. Measuring research and teaching according to standardised benchmarks rendered intellectual labour commensurable and allowed for a hierarchical ranking of schools and colleges. Furthermore, the numerical index thus obtained served as an indicator of the academic 'performance' of a university and became the basis for state and third-party funding of the university sector. Marylin Strathern remarks how the 19th century biopolitical devices of testing and statistics were introduced in late 20th and 21st century universities to constitute a tight system of measurement:

With measurement there came a new morality of attainment. If human performance could be measured, then targets could be set and aimed for…this new morality was epitomised in the concept of improvement. Improvement is wonderfully open-ended for it at once describes effort and results.[11]

In a fundamental re-structuring of university budgets, the funding of a department became intimately tied to the research of its staff, which made research the central and most important activity of an academic department, significantly marginalising teaching. All interviewees confirmed that in the 1980's many members of staff who had thought of themselves primarily as teachers, had to re-think their activities in terms of research. Interviewee 1 outlines the way he experienced the reforms, instigated by the RAE.

I1:   Well it both came slowly and sharply. There was a lot of pressure then to value yourself as a researcher and not as a teacher. There was a moment when I woke up to the realisation that I was going to be judged exclusively on my research…and it felt bad in the department. A lot of people were pushed out. There were mental strains and nervous breakdowns. It was a horrible period when there was a restructuring of sociology. The RAE gradually took hold and your research became central and your teaching was paid lip service. The commitments that my generation had to teaching changed and a younger generation came in that knew that the name of the game was research and they knew that they were not going to be valued in relation to their teaching. In terms of the neoliberal rationality that emerged that wasn't surprising.

Apart from elevating the status of research, the way that research was conducted also changed dramatically through the RAE. Staff-research was assessed in relation to publications in the prestigious journals of a discipline, which meant that departments began directing research towards certain outlets. When asked about the influence of the RAE, Interviewee 2 explains how in his department, pressure is exercised in a more subtle way, which he describes as akin to a Foucauldian disciplinary process. Rather than directly commanding members of staff to publish in certain high-ranking journals and contractually binding them to this achievement, there is a mechanism that makes the research of all members of staff transparent. Colleagues will then positively encourage each other to produce certain kinds of research that are in demand. These conditions of permanent monitoring, increased research visibility and subtle coercion on behalf of staff, creates an environment that is likely to produce the academic output, appreciated by the RAE.

I2:   There are no departmental discussions where they straightforwardly say, look we need to publish in journal X or we need to publish on topic Y, so that doesn't happen quite in that brutal and overt way. At the same time in these personal development reviews that are part of the whole process now, you do get told often in very non-authoritarian ways: Have you thought of publishing in other types of journals? So there is a broader and more generic departmental discussion where people look at where other people in the department publish […] I think it's the nature of a system that works in a kind of governmental, Foucauldian way that it's not about telling you what you should do. It's setting out the conditions whereby you will engage in some

proper form of self-monitoring. They say, look, unless the department does well in the next REF, money will go down, you will have to do more teaching, you know, the financial climate will be such that the financial benefits that you may have may be lost etc. So there is an enticement rather than a command.

All interviewees confirm that their research thus becomes implicitly directed to certain outlets, and that this process is difficult to escape. However, the audits not only affect the content but also the temporal structure of research. Because the RAE is carried out every four years, long-term research becomes hampered and the time for a proper in-depth engagement with a topic becomes scarce. This works against the development of a solid research trajectory and turns researchers into writing-machines that are flexible and able to change direction according to every change of fashion in an academic environment. Interviewee 1 describes this increase in time-pressure and the loss of the time, necessary to think critically. Being educated in the 1960's in a less production-driven environment, he felt very strongly about the changes.

> **I1:**   I was lucky because I emerged out of a generation where I had time to develop an intellectual project and I always had a strong sense of my own intellectual work. When I had to shift into research there was an agenda that I had and I had time. The generation that followed me had to basically transform their PhDs into research projects and that made it very difficult once the research project was published as a book to then know what your research trajectory might mean. So in terms of the quality of research the time that I had in the 70's to ground my intellectual concerns and the depth of the philosophical background that I had, I think, made a real difference to my research. So I felt enormously under pressure. I needed to be able to be productive and publish and so I changed my strategy. It was pressured and you had to think in terms of short-term productivity as opposed to a project that might take you four or five years to do.

Many experience this emphasis on quickly published, short-term research as not only putting academics under superfluous mental strains but also as creating an overabundance of writing that simply floods the academic scene. Interviewee 3 comments on the effects of the RAE on his own writing:

> **I3:**   Now, I have always thought that the RAE has a profoundly corrosive effect on the life of the mind. And I wrote an article about this in the guardian and the by-line of the piece was that I think the RAE is making us write to fast and think to quickly. Not spending enough time to let the ideas we're working through reach some point of maturation. And because we have to meet these audits, we're constantly firing out things. I look at my own CV and I think, that one should have taken longer, that one I was proud of, that one was too early.

The interviews all illustrate how the market subsumes formerly free research and turns it into a profit-generating activity. While research became market-directed and output-oriented, teaching experienced an even more radical change as the core occupation in the university that had to suffer most extremely under the introduction of the audit culture.

TEACHING UNDER THE AUDIT

When asked about the academic task of teaching, many interviewees fondly remembered their own days at university. They confirmed that before the 1980's, UK universities saw themselves mainly as teaching institutions, dedicated the cultivation of open debate and the fostering of student interests. Tuition fees didn't exist and most students were successful in obtaining a grant. In many places, an Oxbridge-style tutoring system allowed for an intimate teacher-student contact and provided in-depth student supervision. There was the belief that a proper education could only be obtained by immersing oneself in an exchange of ideas that was not time-limited and not constrained by fees. However many interviewees point out that one has to resist the temptation to nostalgically idealise the universities of the 1960' and 70's that had significant class, sex and race reservations with the majority of students being middle-class, male and white. Interviewee 3 nonetheless remains enthusiastic about the past freedoms of teaching.

I3: It was a completely different kind of environment of very small groups, very intense, small sessions. I developed very strong relationships with my teachers. It felt like there was more time for engagement and thought. And I was really lucky because I encountered many wonderful people who were committed to the life of the mind but also committed to the practices and crafts of teaching. So when I think about it, there were like 10 people on my course, really. And if you were interested in ideas and interested in reading and thinking, you got an awful lot of contact with staff.

Then in the mid-1980's, the performance audits were introduced and under the RAE, university staff had to re-think their activities in terms of research. Because of this immense mobilisation of research capacities, teaching became secondary. The aim was to allow top-academics in the department as much time for research as possible. Thus, the tutorial system was abolished and replaced with classes and office hours, significantly limiting the time that teachers took to supervise students. As research became the primary academic activity, teaching became an instrumental chore that was increasingly relayed to contracted part-time staff and PhD students, working in precarious non-tenured positions. When asked about the impact of the RAE on teaching, Interviewee 3 describes the neglect of pedagogy as one of the major flaws of contemporary universities.

I3: There was this profound shift in priorities partly because the way the auditing of the universities took place. The priority was what you wrote. The assessment was on research and on variety and I think without being too crude about it that this meant people had to put all their energies into the process of writing for publications and anything that detracted from that task was secondary, including students, including teaching. And I think there's a fundamental and profound tension between the commitments to writing and researching and a kind of ethic or a commitment of teaching and learning. I think that's still the thing that's breaking the back of the university.

The new paradigm of academic knowledge-production thus came as a shock for people who were committed to pedagogy. Many academics could not balance both tasks and put all their

energies into research.

However it would be erroneous to think that because it was marginalised, teaching was simply forgotten by the audit culture. To the contrary, it underwent a re-structuring quite similar to the changes affecting research; teaching outcomes too became measurable through programme reviews, standardised course outlines, and student surveys. Simultaneously, student 'employ-ability' became one of the key factors in the yearly university rankings, making university akin to a professional training school. This caused a strong instrumentalisation of courses that became skill-based and lost much of their intrinsic value. Interviewee 4 describes the new, heavy auditing of teaching.

I4: The audit culture has saturated the teaching [...] You know the kind of docu-ments we have to create, evaluation documents, performance reviews, the way that you write your course outlines is standardised. Some of us don't even understand what aims and objectives and outcomes are, you know. Normally you would say I teach these texts so that the students can understand these thinkers and these issues and we can't say that anymore. It's another managerial language, audit language that you have to take on. That's so big in teaching that it's hard to escape it.

Because it proved difficult to measure something as abstract as knowledge conveyed through open lectures and engaged debate, the entire nature of taught courses had to be changed. Loose curricula, that allowed the teacher creative freedom in shaping its content were therefore remod-elled and modularised in order to convey packaged information, whose absorption by students could be measured more easily. Teaching gradually shifted from a relatively free environment for debate and the shaping of knowledge to a standardised transmittance of information directed at exams. Interviewee 2 illustrates how the direction of teaching towards output foreclosed alterna-tive models of pedagogy that follow a non-utilitarian logic.

I2: "I mean the courses are very short the hours are very few [...] If you have to teach 12 hours a week on two courses where you can patiently go through a book, that might be more relaxing or more conducive to one's general intellect than teach-ing 8 hours but on 8 different things. So I think there is a way where in order to fulfil these assessments and targets, you're pushed away from other pedagogical practices that would be both more empowering and more knowledge-generating than others. So what if, instead of spending 10 weeks doing these astronomical surveys on every theory from contemporary power theory to historical sociology or whatever you just said, ok, how about we all actually get a deep and rich and multi-dimensional grasp of just feudalism [...] Much of what is emancipatory about education is to give people access to capacities they otherwise wouldn't be able to exercise. This is often mediated by the experience of immersing yourself in an intellectual universe that you are not pre-viously familiar with. And that possibility is something, which is curtailed or limited very much by modularised, pre-targeted, therefore prejudiced ways of thinking educa-tion in terms of outcomes.

Teaching thus looses its mission of opening minds and fostering intellectual curiosity and be-

comes replaced by a purely instrumental form of skill training. This instrumentalisation of teaching emerged within a complex process that sought to commodify the teacher-student relationship.

THE EMPLOYABILITY PARADIGM

One of the characteristic new figures of today's universities seems to be the apathetic student with no interest or commitment to neither the course content nor his fellow students. Many interviewees expressed shock and dismay at the significant levels of de-motivation, pervading their classes. They see this newfound boredom as a result of the hyper-instrumentalisation of the university space. In order to understand this, it is again important to go back to the academic spirit of the 1960's and 70's. Interviewee 1 has been a teacher since the early 1970's and confirms, "he has seen things change a lot". When probing deeper, he recounts that students formerly saw a fundamental connection between what they learnt at university and their own lives. They followed courses with the twofold aim of firstly, critiquing established knowledge and framing positions of political and existential counter-knowledge and secondly, critiquing their university as an institution of capitalist society and proposing a new ethics for education. There was a strong spirit of solidarity among the student body and students organised to collectively voice grievances. Today, Interviewee 1 discerns a widespread loss of student commitment to both the course and their peers.

> **I1:**   The students were very committed to their learning and very interested in framing what their own ideas were so the university was a space for exploration […] There was a lot more reflection on teaching and learning within the university. So there were still the echoes of the student movement and critiques of the university's relationship to knowledge and the importance of knowledge to be relevant and relevant to the kinds of lives that people wanted to live but also about the transformation of institutions in capitalist society. So students tended to be much more politicised, committed and engaged then with positions that they might have.

This attitude was possible in a university that operated as a semi-autonomous space, less determined by the pressures of time and money. Interviewee 1 explains that this meant immense freedom concerning the format of a taught course, which could take the form of a reading group, a seminar or a workshop focusing on open discussion or in-depth reading. From the 1980's onwards, these learning environments increasingly vanished as the conservative government made universities cater increasingly to the market. The cuts in university funding and the audit culture produced what Interviewee 2 refers to as a consumer-client relationship where, under the new financial pressures, students began to see the primary aim of a university education in form of a quickly achieved degree and not in the immersive experience of education. Furthermore New Labour's plan to significantly increase the number of university graduates in Britain led to a situation where many secondary school graduates without a pronounced academic interest felt under pressure to continue into higher education. This caused not only high levels of anxiety but also significant debt due to the rising costs of education. The development of this 'banking concept of education', as Paolo Freire puts it had significant consequences inside the classroom.[12] Today, debate in seminars is rare and many students only mechanically fulfil the course demands. Many see no real relation between their university degree and their lives or future job environments.

However, Interviewee 2 points out that in an expensive, hyper-competitive environment where a university degree is seen as the pre-requisite for any well-paying job, students cannot help but adopt a consumer-attitude towards education.

> **I2:**   I think a lot of it is lost in part because of a broader institutional framework in which students themselves are led to, by the way the institutional framework is organised, by the pressures of time and of money on them to actually have a much more instrumental relationship to the teaching itself. So you have a lot of students that are anxious and therefore are interested in their output. And understandably so, I mean, if you give someone a third, you know you've screwed their job chances for a number of things. So the moment that a student is put at least partly into a client-consumer position, then the pedagogical relationship is obviously inflected by that to a considerable extent. Now when you see league tables of universities the employability is a key criterion but as a pedagogue, especially when you're teaching critical social theory, is your aim really to create good, employable workers? On the other hand, students might demand that you further their employability. And this can lead to a kind of hyper-instrumentalisation. That's why I find things like the National Student Survey deeply depressing because it does vitiate the pedagogical and political relationship between students and lecturers into a kind of market research. Like are you happy with your product? So once you have these kinds of metrics, then they generate very different power dynamics between students and teachers.

This shows how difficult it is to de-instrumentalise education once a client-consumer relationship is in place that is legitimised by the statistical measurement of various utilitarian elements. The logic of this statistical system is diabolic since once students are made to pay for their education, it seems only natural that there should be ways to measure the quality of the educational service provided. Under these circumstances, other types of teaching indeed seem increasingly difficult to imagine. However, when asked about a possible better future of higher education, many interviewees offered a compelling vision of learning, completely freed from measurable outcome and points towards attempts to resist the drudgery of spoon-fed lecturing through a kind of activist pedagogy.

RESISTING THE AUDIT

All academics interviewed foresaw a bleak future for the university system. Adding to the redirection of research and teaching towards utilitarian aims, the financial crisis was seen to produce strong cuts in funding and a consequent rise in tuition fees. The neoliberal restructuring of the education sector widely replaced many tenured jobs with precarious short-term and part-time positions. My interviewees all had experience with working on part-time, fixed-term contracts until they eventually won tenure sometimes years later. Furthermore, under the cuts in funding, universities were urged to save money by restructuring their weaker and less popular departments through budget cuts and redundancies. (The recent closure of the philosophy department at Middlesex being just the most striking example of this trend). Interviewee 4 gives a detailed account of the real pressures within 'marketised' universities.

I4:   Well, it's a problem. They are evacuating the public space, basically. I think the future could be what is in the States now. The horrible perforation of the intellectual mind by the audit culture and we are very fearful of the reductions in funding. We've seen some of the consequences in Sussex, sudden sackings. King's College, certain disciplines that do not recruit, that don't have an exchange-value in terms of use-value are being shrunk. This happens with philosophy. There are very few philosophy departments left. So thinking about impact in a wider sense, thinking about social impact, political impact, that's not the impact they want us to talk about, really. So I hate to think what we're going to become in 10 years time.

All interviewees univocally agreed that the university system was in crisis. However, many saw the worsening of the conditions ahead as harbouring the possibility for a re-thinking of the tasks of education and a re-evaluation of their role within it. This re-thinking usually took the form of a search for a way to negotiate the audit culture in a liberating and emancipatory way and opened up two different lines of conduct among the academics. One works within the university and seeks to occupy the spaces within that remain relatively free from the intrusion of the market. The other extends its reach beyond the university and begins to look for external spaces to work in. Between these poles of re-appropriation and withdrawal, Interviewee 3 has adopted a pragmatic attitude towards the audits. He saw it as irresponsible to abandon the university altogether even if pragmatism ultimately means to subscribe to the rules of the audit game.

I3:   I have developed a pragmatic strategy with regard to the audit culture. So there's part of me that thinks, ok, I'm trying to read the ways in which the ways of the audit culture are shifting because I know that this college has been very successful. It's really important to sustain this success in these audits for an intellectual project in the broadest sense. So I will make all my investments this year to make sure that I have 4 journal articles that fit for the RAE in 2012. At the same time, I'm planning this little other project that I've been working on for 5 years that is this online book that no one in the audit culture will be interested in. And I think we need to dwell on more of the possibilities of that space […] I think it's important to be in those spaces and to change those spaces. There's an irresponsible high-mindedness that comes with refusing that thing altogether because who are you responsible to? I genuinely believe in the idea of a community of scholars. If the university is not that, then what is it? And to just abandon that and say, the forces of audit have become too powerful, that is a kind of abdication of any responsibility to act. And I see lots of fantastic people having to operate within this change situation but refusing to be made in its image and I think that's the only way I can think about positioning myself in that context.

Interviewee 3 points to the existence of other spaces of writing and teaching that are less subsumed by the measurement of the audit culture. It seems true that once the demands of the RAE and the formulation of aims and outcomes for a course is achieved, there still remains the possibility for innovative teaching and productive teacher-student contact that is neither measured nor assessed. The interviews show that many academics are committed to a kind of activist pedagogy that fulfils the demands of the RAE pragmatically but actively develops other areas to work with each other and with students.

However, not all academics remained optimistic about the potentialities of the university and some adopted a more depressed tone. They tended to see the future of education outside the institution and actively sought out other spaces. Interviewee 4 explained how she partook in the creation of such autonomous spaces that seek to escape the measured time of assessed education.

I4:   We also have a life that is beyond the single institution and most of us have networks and political contacts that run throughout the world and we will do talks in places to people who are not on the RAE radar. These places are the ones that keep me going. They're my life force really. It's that kind of energy connection where you can do some things outside of the strict formal domain of the academy that actually makes it worthwhile. You can be part of an academic environment that is outside the institution […] If it gets impossible, then we have to get out and go back to other ways. So in Europe they have what is called the Nomadic University, the Autonomous University, and it's run by people connected to, but outside the academy. And people have been developing alternative ways because there is still a need to come together and share and inspire and challenge each other so wherever that space is, I'm into fostering it in whatever capacity I can.

There was agreement on the current crisis of the university without a clear recipe on how to safely re-emerge from it. Most of my interviewees had hopes to establish locations that counter the spirit of the audit culture and have opened up spaces both within and outside the university for enriching forms of scholarship that become shaped through a commitment to the intellectual community and a certain activist approach to a radical pedagogy. However, maintaining certain past commitments to non-instrumental learning was seen to become increasingly difficult. Interviewee 4 thus ends with a bleak illustration of the current fetters to education.

I4:   I think there are a lot of people that are going to get lost in the machine as well. Everything is becoming individualised around promotion, recruitment, how you illustrate that you're good and worthy of promotion. And in the old time version we did it out of vocation. But even if people start out like that, the subjectivities that they are going to be part of in order to maintain their jobs will make that 'vocation' side of it much harder. And so we are all part of the same processes of neoliberalism and the rule of the entrepreneurial self."

THE UNIVERSITY IN RUINS?

In their accounts of everyday life in academia, all interviewees described a profound shift from a relatively free environment of engaging debate and in-depth research to a highly competitive and marketised university that replaces a commitment to the independent mind with utilitarian and commodified knowledge-production. All academics agreed that the two basic tasks of research and teaching changed significantly over the past 30 years in a process that was ascribed to the educational reforms under Thatcherism and New Labour. The clearly stated goal of these new university policies was to make the intellectual labour of academics that had remained undocumented for so long, measurable and accountable.

If the interviews gave an experiential account of the recent changes in higher education; they also represent a search for the political causes that underlie these changes. In this regard, there are two discernable tendencies that turn the university into a tool for the market, one external and one internal. The external neoliberal restructuring of the university sector aimed to make universities enterprising through drastic cuts in funding, high tuition fees and the creation of a precarious labour market for part-time tutors and PhD students. In order to become financially viable, many schools had to downsize unpopular departments and make staff redundant. The internal 'marketisation' of the university operated in a subtler way through the introduction of an audit culture that significantly changed research, teaching, academic relationships and the wider intellectual community. In analysing the conducted interviews, it became possible to interpret the performance audits as Foucauldian 'technologies of the self' that install an intricate 'enterprise dispositif' at the heart of the university through a proliferation of discourses around profit and accountability.[13] The audit culture therefore sets out a framework that positively nourishes and fosters academic activities that are output-directed and marginalises non-market driven engagements.

In this context, universities create a research environment that values top-ranking publications and re-invents teaching as a measurable skill-training for jobs. No university is contractually bound to change its ethics in this way but it is clear that the negative consequences of not doing so would be considerable. Through tuition fees and the rising pressures of the job market, students are 'responsibilised' and enticed to see their education purely in career terms. Teachers are meanwhile made to neglect their key task and turn all their attention to lucrative research. All intellectual engagements that are not directly output-oriented become increasingly phased out because they become practically disadvantageous. In summary, the audits entice academics to become entrepreneurs, thereby framing education and knowledge in terms of investment and profit and subsuming them under the excessive logic of capital. The fruitful relationship between teachers and students consequently degenerates into a service provider-client contract that forecloses alternative kinds of pedagogy as the 'enterprise self' becomes the dominant subject at university.

For the 'enterprise self', profitable activity is the only sensible activity and therefore labour-time becomes the only imaginable timeframe. The profit-logic thus becomes totalising and begins to pervade all areas of life, forming a kind of metanarrative of the post-industrial West, as Michael Peters argues:

> The notion of enterprise culture, designed for a postindustrial, information economy of the 1990's can be seen in poststructuralist terms as the creation of a new metanarrative, a totalising and unifying story about the prospect of economic growth and development, based on the triumvirate of science, technology and education.[14]

In the face of this, the question becomes how to resist? How to deconstruct this narrative of unbounded capital? In answering this question, academics have increasingly started to develop tactics of resistance and counter-conducts that try to make time for alternative ways of teaching and learning in spaces that are less assessed and audited. This can happen both within the university and in novel spaces and requires a strong pedagogy combined with a pronounced will of

students. In my interviews, this activist pedagogy took the form of Negrian 'Negative Labour', as an activity that forces open independent spaces and opens temporalities that operate under a different logic to that of capital:

> Negative labour, that is the capacity to produce on the basis of co-operation and freed from command, begins to come about: mobility is constitutive, it is the constitutive condition of the free use of time.[15]

Negative Labour emphasises that the subsumption of all human activities by capital is never quite complete and can therefore be effectively subverted from the inside. In the midst of an instrumental university, there might be the possibility to re-assess and break the ideology of profit-driven education. If the critical spirit that has informed the academy since its inception is to be maintained, this seems to be the most important future task that academics and students in the U.K and worldwide have to engage in.

NOTES

[1] Deleuze, *Negotiations*.

[2] Burchell, *Technologies*, 275.

[3] Smith and Webster, *The Postmodern*; Evans, *Killing*; Waters, *Enemies*; Newfield, *Unmaking.*

[4] Evans, *Killing*; Waters, *Enemies*; Newfield, *Unmaking.*

[5] Negri, *Time*; Harvey, *The Condition*; Berardi, *The Soul*.

[6] Bey, *T.A.Z.*

[7] Newfield, *Unmaking*, 144.

[8] Portelli, *Oral History*, 24.

[9] Portelli, *Oral History*, 31.

[10] Kvale and Brinkmann (2009).

[11] Strathern, *Improving Ratings*, 307.

[12] Freire, *Pedagogy*.

[13] Foucault, *Technologies*.

[14] Peters, *Enterprise Culture*, 65.

[15] Negri, *Revolution*, 93.

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