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THE ABOLITION OF THE UNIVERSITY

Doing Pedagogy Publicly: Asserting the Right to the City to Rethink the University

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In recent times the Occupy! movements globally have asserted the right to the city as a learning space, with teach-outs and public speeches. In Occupy! London, in particular, alongside new social relations, occupiers experimented with new ways of publicly educating. This article argues that a popular, critical education, such as the one experimented with in Occupy!, can take up this mantel of doing pedagogy publicly. This way of enacting a radical public pedagogy would involve making connections between the civic agora, the 'right to the city' and a public and inclusive education, reconnecting people and places to form new learning spaces in the urban landscape, thus rendering the university a problematic space in need of rethinking. The article concludes that the project may be simultaneous – in terms of the development of new education agora alongside the reclamation of older forms of education agora – providing, of course, there is enough left to fight for.

> Revolutionary movements do not spread by contamination but by resonance. Something that is constituted here resonates with the shock wave emitted by something constituted over there. A body that resonates does so according to its own mode. An insurrection is not like a plague or a forest fire – a linear process that spreads from place to place after an initial spark. It rather takes the shape of a music, whose focal points, though dispersed in time and space, succeed in imposing the rhythm of their own vibrations, always taking on more density. To the point that any return to normal is no longer desirable or even imaginable.
>
> (The Invisible Committee, 2009: 12)

> When no alternatives are apparent or available, action becomes pointless. When privilege obstructs our vision, it acts as an anaesthetic, putting us to sleep; we must then call upon the aesthetic – the world of the imagination – to combat the numbing power of the sedative. We all live in our time and place, immersed in what is, and imagining a social scene different from what is immediately before us requires a combination of somethings: seeds, surely; desire, yes; necessity and desperation at times; and at other times a willingness to dance out on a limb without a safety net – no guarantees.
>
> (Ayers, 2014: xii)

There is a host of literature that has come out over the past twenty or so years on issues such as 'academic repression' (Nocella et al., 2010); 'academic capitalism' (Leslie & Slaughter, 1997); and the politics of the new neoliberalised ethos in higher education. An ethos in which academics' time is micromanaged to ensure maximum output for maximum income, and quantity rather than quality rules (Bailey & Freedman, 2011; Canaan & Shumar, 2008; Collini, 2012; Cowden & Singh, 2013; De Welde & Stepnick, 2015; Giroux, 2014; McGettigan, 2013; Molesworth et al., 2011; Williams, 2013). Many academics, it seems, would increasingly agree with Holloway (2010: 105) that nowadays 'the labour that we perform in the office, in the university, is not just drudgery: it is a web weaving activity, a process of self-entrapment'. However, it could possibly still be argued that *education*[1] itself is on the edge of this abstract labour – labour that is not of our doing, but is constituted by our bodily commodity, sold for its labour power – education, particularly higher education, could perhaps still be argued to be a 'vocation', something individuals do because it speaks to their human capacity for self- and collective-improvement. Higher educational institutions, as opposed to *schooling*, can perhaps still be understood in this way due to the creativity and relative autonomy of classroom practice; still not fully co-opted. As long as our pedagogy remains on the edge, it can still be counted

[1] The use of the word 'education' refers to the teaching and learning that occurs in every individual, all the time; this is opposed to the term 'schooling' which implies both formal institutions and the training of people for conformity and control.

as concrete doing (Holloway, 2010) (rather than abstract labour), and can be (re) appropriated, as such, from the university. In turn, education itself can be taken to the radical vestiges of the city streets. The streets where real, lived knowledge production – knowledge that is produced through the everyday interactions with capitalist cities, through the labour processes played out in the shops, bars, and cafes and other commercial activities that make up the city centres, and with, and through, each other – lurks. Pedagogy is the art of education for developing the person and the mind and therefore can, with a little effort and some creative thinking, be brought back from total abstraction. Only, however, if it is a *critical* development of the mind, an intellectual development based in the everyday struggles of ordinary people.

This is the point of departure from which this article will wend its way through notions such as the 'Right to the City'; popular forms of education performed as Public Pedagogy; and a proposal to deconstruct these relations from their capitalist spatial practices (Smith, 2010). The call, made here, for the 'Right to the City' may be better conceptualised as the 'Right to reclaim the Urban'. This call follows the arguments of Lefebvre (1996 [1968], 2003, 2006); Merrifield (2011, 2013, 2014); Mitchell (2003); Brenner et al. (2012); Harvey (1976, 2000, 2012); and many others, on the change from an agrarian-centred, to an industrial-centred, to an urban society. Merrifield (2013) further develops these ideas, in his writings on 'planetary urbanisation', where the rural and the urban are sewn up so tightly in capitalist relations that a division between the two becomes a pointless exercise in creating division. However, the cry for the 'Right to the City' is used here in order to connect the proposals to ongoing debates, as this is a call that spreads from Europe to North and Latin America (Mayer, 2012). Whilst recognising that 'the right to this and the right to that has become proclaimed so frequently by leftists, in so many different walks of life, in so many arenas, that the concept is now pretty much a political banality' (Merrifield, 2013: xiii), it must also be recognised that this 'right' to the city that is called for here is not the usual legalistic concept of a right (Day, 2005), but the right as espoused by so many critical urban theorists. As Peter Marcuse describes:

> the demand for the right to the city is a demand for a broad and sweeping right, a right not only in the legal sense of a right to specific benefits, but a right in a political sense, a claim not only to a right or set of rights to justice within the existing legal system, but a right on a higher moral plane that demands a better system in which the potential benefits of an urban life can be fully realised … Lefebvre is quite clear on this: it is not the right to the existing city that is demanded, but the right to a future city, indeed not necessarily a city in the conventional sense at all, but a place in urban society in which the hierarchical distinction between the city and the country has disappeared. (Marcuse, 2012: 34–5)

This conceptualisation of 'rights' speaks to the prefiguration of a new political pedagogy: a pedagogy which allows us to dream in public and enact an intellectual life that, in turn, prefigures the new urban, the new city and new, emergent social relations. The city is taken as the central point in what Lefebvre (2003) and Merrifield (2013, 2014), among others, refer to as the 'urban fabric'. This is because, as Wirth saw:

> The influence which cities exert upon social life are greater than the ratio of the urban population would indicate, for the city is not only in ever larger degrees the dwelling place and workshop of modern man [sic], but it is the initiating and controlling centre of economic, political, and cultural life that has drawn the most remote parts of the world into its orbit and woven diverse areas, peoples, and activities into a cosmos. (Wirth, 1938: 2)

The urban, then, is apparently shapeless and seemingly boundless and formless, riven with new contradictions and tensions in which it is hard to tell where borders reside and what is inside or outside (Merrifield, 2013: 4). This conceptualisation allows new possibilities. Brenner et al. (2012: 1) add to this that 'capitalist cities are not only sites for strategies of capital accumulation; they are also arenas in which the conflicts and contradictions associated with historically and geographically specific accumulation strategies are expressed and fought out'. A fight worthy of continuation, an exposé is needed to unveil these contradictions and confront, head on, these

accumulation strategies. Therefore, it is not that this article seeks to privilege the city as a site of struggle, on the contrary, there are many different sites and forms of opposition to capitalism (see Firth [2012, 2013], for example). This article wishes to situate a specific form of anti-capitalist and anti-hegemonic activity where it might work best. However, there is no reason to assume that the activities proposed here could not translate in some way to the countryside. What the city additionally does, however, that autonomous spaces in the countryside are often unable to achieve (Firth, 2012), is allow anyone to join in with whatever activity is occurring, creating a diversity of people and forms of encounter that would be difficult to achieve elsewhere. The argument here proposes no closed doors, no specific membership and no fear of joining in.

It is from this ground that I argue that pedagogy could, and possibly must, be brought to bear as a major site of slippage (Merrifield, 2011) in the space of the city. A space to be engaged, to create the productive disjuncture between our in-university selves, colonised by capitalist social relations, and the learning that can potentially occur outside the institution walls and out on the streets. This perhaps means appropriating for our own goals what is increasingly being termed 'Public Pedagogy' (Sandlin, et al., 2010b). Then, individuals may take up the call for the 'Right to the City' (Lefebvre, 1996 [1968]) in an attempt to emancipate academics and learners alike, in a fully co-operative and collaborative effort, and capture a way of socially knowing, that makes education publically and explicitly concomitant with the struggle for a just and equitable world.

My argument is that this is necessary because, as Giroux (2010: 486) and many others insist, '[Neoliberalism] thrives on a culture of cynicism, insecurity and despair' and, as a result of this culture, the world has seen a tumultuous, and often dangerous, few years since the beginning of the twenty-first century. We have seen many protests in the UK in the last 15 years, yet, Holloway (2010: 3) maintains that 'we protest and we do more. We do and we must. If we only protest, we allow the powerful to set the agenda'. It is time for a new agenda setting, a DIY revolution that begins with a reclaiming of self and space through new forms of pedagogy. The protests we have seen take many forms; from complaining in the lunchroom to riots on the streets.

Therefore, it is from these notions – specifically, academic capitalism, the neoliberalisation of the university, and the loss of the position of higher education in the struggle for social justice – that I wish to argue that this is the basis of the potential desire to 'abolish the university'. Higher education, and perhaps schooling more generally, has largely lost its connection with those lived struggles for the development of an equitable and just society. This loss is exemplified with the 'student as consumer' ethos (Molesworth, et al., 2011); the drive merely to process students through their degrees in order to secure some mythical job to pay off the debt they incur in arriving there. These so-called institutions of learning may no longer, as hooks (1994) once suggested, be the spaces of radical possibility they were once thought to be. Therefore, there is the potential necessity to explore other avenues of learning, other spaces and sites, here thought of as public pedagogies. This is because public pedagogy engages with the notion that 'we don't just exist within the physical spaces of our world, we actively interact with them; we shape them, invest them with meaning and are influenced by them' (Hickey, 2010: 162). As Sandlin, et al. (2010: 1a) explain: 'public pedagogies – spaces, sites, and languages of *education* that exist *outside the walls of the institutions of school*' (my italics). School is thought of here in the widest terms, with 'schooling' denoting institutional and controlled learning, where individuals learn to conform and become good consumers and interchangeable workers: what might alternatively be termed the mass dulling of our collective radical imaginations and the closing down of forms of radical openness. I argue that this form of schooling increasingly takes place in many parts of academia: education studies courses often being a central example.

This dulling of our radical imaginations is evidenced by the notion that, as Giroux states, many academics in the new neoliberalised climate of higher education are 'completely untroubled by the burden of complicated thought and the fight for ethical and political responsibilities ... and remain openly hostile to any form of post 1968 criticality' (Giroux, 2014: 79). This, he says, is because 'the gated mentality of market fundamentalism has walled off, if not disappeared, those spaces where dialogue, critical reason, and the values and practices of social responsibility can be engaged' (Giroux, 2014: 90), thus closing down radical openness. Whilst I acknowledge that

this notion of many academics being 'completely untroubled by the burden of complicated thought' is a sweeping generalisation, my own experience in HE and that of many of my colleagues, is that this can occasionally seem, or possibly be, more true than anyone would like to imagine. We have somehow sleepwalked into a situation where many comply with the neoliberalisation of the university, abandoning critical hope, or any such critical project that might risk their livelihoods. We now often collude with what we critique (Choudry, 2015). Some universities have even seen a purge of critical scholars,[2] indicating a widespread problem the solution to which is, for some, to abandon the notion of complicated thought.

This change in attitude can often seem justifiable as since the mid-nineteenth-century, it has been generally accepted that the university's function has been liberal education, for a liberal society (Williams, 2013), which one could uncritically say is still the case. In particular, this can be justified by recent and current recruitment and widening participation agendas which presume a social meritocracy (Burke, 2012), however naïvely. Nevertheless, the commodification of our knowledge work and the notion that society has often been seen as substance rather than subject of study (Welsh, 2007), has led to the knowledge work produced in universities being locked behind paywalls, and students are accruing huge debts affecting their futures. This rejects the liberal ideal of learning for all by restricting access to knowledge to those who can afford it or are willing to risk the debt. The commodification of knowledge similarly creates the 'publish or perish' ethos (Roland, 2007) within academic labour, frequently necessitating a high volume of article publication on the part of academics; articles that do little more than reproduce mainstream thinking in a variety of ways. Giroux (2014: 97) confirms this by adding that in contemporary higher education 'any thought that seeks to affirm alternative ways of thinking or service to the world is treated as either some immature posturing (the unreason of youth) or the surest indication of a pathological dysfunction (reasoned hostility)'. He then asks,

[2] This assertion is based on research I have recently undertaken and is left as an unsupported statement here as it has huge implications for those courageous enough to speak to me if details were to come to light.

'how may we reclaim the terms of radical criticality without succumbing to violent reasoning that propels us to mimic dominant ways of thinking?' (Giroux, 2014: 97).

Hence, if the university (and schooling before it) is hostile to the project of critical thought and has therefore evolved into an anti-intellectual establishment, it then becomes imperative that ways are found to (re)educate young adults and those others who look for forms of higher learning in order to protect social ideals such as democracy, social justice, and equality. The question becomes, then, how is this to be done? I suggest here that a possible answer may lie in turning to literature on popular education as a starting point for this emancipation of learning and knowledge production through a public pedagogy project.

Popular education

The term 'Popular Education' needs a working definition in order for it to be understood as a possible form of public pedagogy for the sake of the argument here. I am therefore utilising the definition provided by Crowther et al. (2005: 2), as this definition is succinct, was developed by the Popular Education Network (PEN), and was decided upon by all members democratically. Popular education is understood to be popular, as distinct from merely populist, in the sense that it is:

- Rooted in the real interests and struggles of ordinary people;
- Overtly political and critical of the status quo;
- Committed to progressive and social change.

Popular education is based on a clear analysis of the nature of inequality, exploitation and oppression, and is informed by an equally clear political purpose. This has nothing to do with helping the 'disadvantaged' or the management of poverty; it has everything to do with the struggle for a more just and egalitarian social order. The process of popular education has the following characteristics:

- The curriculum comes out of the concrete experience and material interests of people in communities of resistance and struggle;
- Its pedagogy is collective, focussed primarily on group as distinct from individual learning and development;

- It attempts, wherever possible, to forge a direct link between education and social action.

Cavanagh adds to this, asserting that 'popular education is fundamentally anti-authoritarian and challenges dominant power relations. ... The processes of popular education are extremely effective for increasing people's capacities to function democratically and with critical mindedness' (Cavanagh in Borg & Mayo, 2007: 43).

I argue that popular education should be included alongside notions of public pedagogy to ensure that the public pedagogy proposed follows this ethos of socially rooted struggles. It is all too easy to leave the university with good intentions but to practise forms of colonial 'schooling' outside too. Theories and practices of popular education ground the public pedagogy proposed here within those struggles, and dalliance with these theories ensures that educators see, recognise, and confront their own socially conditioned behaviours, absorbed through the shifting sands of higher education and schooling, and eroding the sense of self and self-awareness critical to the performance of emancipatory pedagogies (see Freire, [1993], Macrine [2009] and Shor [1992], for example). In addition, if scholars (both teachers and learners) are to 'address the challenge of recognising and exploring the very pedagogies that undergird our own private and public lives' as Sandlin, Schultz, et al. (2010: 1) suggest they should, then a popular ethos and a self-critical practice needs to be deployed. The addition of theories of popular education also ensures that the proposals made here are differentiated from the corporate and capitalist forms of public pedagogy that, according to Giroux (2010: 489) are 'driven largely by commercial interests that ... often miseducate the public', and avoiding the notion that 'the street space according to [some] visions isn't something to be engaged; rather it is something to be mistrusted, avoided or traversed as quickly as possible' (Hickey, 2010: 162). Such an approach also creates the real possibility of avoiding reifying the capitalist logic of the city further through being, as the Popular Education Network insist, overtly political and critical of the status quo and committed to progressive and social change. This can readily be achieved by ensuring that the curriculum comes out of the concrete experience and material interests of people in communities of

resistance and struggle and that the pedagogy seeks to forge a direct link between education and social action.

With this understanding of popular education and its necessary inclusion in the proposals for a new kind of pedagogy put forward in this article in mind, the next question, already partially addressed, is that if this form of socially rooted, popular pedagogy is to be practised, but is not possible in the university due to the neoliberalised anti-intellectual project of contemporary higher education institutions, then what, or more precisely where, is the classroom for this popular curriculum to be situated? I argue here that the 'city' itself is the appropriate backdrop for this (re) education *in the current moment*. This argument is based on the premises that: firstly, it is not just the university that is in the current state described above, but that the changes to the university are symptoms of a wider malaise including the politics of austerity (Blyth, 2013), growing inequality (Dorling, 2014; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009), and the general erosion of democracy and attacks on the poor (Brown, 2015); and, secondly, the city is already an educative space, and the seat of power within the urban fabric (Lefebvre, 2003). Therefore, there is a need to recognise that formal institutions 'are not the sole sites of teaching, learning, or curricula, and that perhaps they are not even the most influential' (Sandlin, et al., 2010: 2a) and that critique of inequality and oppression should take place with the best 'visual aids' available: the places in which power resides. This is an essential aspect of these proposals as there are, of course, other forms of pedagogy afoot. Corporate public pedagogy, for example, has become what Giroux (2010: 486) calls 'an all-encompassing cultural horizon for producing market identities, values, and practices'. This 'all-encompassing' nature needs to be part of the restitution of the rallying cry demanding 'the right to the city', and thus confronted by the active public pedagogy proposed here.

From the classroom to the streets

The city streets are already pedagogical spaces in many ways. According to Hickey (2010), for example, city streets, by their very nature, 'function as intermediaries; spaces between places that operate as the connection apparatus of our urban networks. Proximal "outside" zones that we know but don't often connect with'. He goes

on to express their pedagogical function by suggesting that 'while we might rarely stop to acknowledge the formative influence streets express, they are spaces that are actively inculcated in the production of culture. For this reason, the street fulfils an important role as pedagogue' (Hickey, 2010: 161). Therefore, it seems logical that – as Brenner et al. (2012), Harvey (1976), Lefebvre (1996 [1968]), and Logan and Molotch (1987) suggest – as long as urban space under capitalism is constantly shaped and reshaped through a continuous clash of opposed social forces orientated, respectively, toward the 'exchange-value (profit-orientated) and use-value (everyday life) dimensions of urban sociospatial configurations' (Brenner et al., 2012: 7), the pedagogical nature of the street can, and indeed should, be co-opted for interests other than commercial. Co-opted for theatre, for gatherings of organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971) and natural philosophers, for street tours and public lectures on the steps of the institutions they address. The idea, as Holloway (2010: 45) suggests, 'that the only way to change the world is to do it ourselves and do it here and now' is gaining ground, a call once again for that DIY revolution mentioned earlier. Therefore, this is a call to anyone and everyone, to take up the mantle of teaching and learning, particularly those whose current work is locked behind the walls of academe, to come blinking into the light of situated learning and in-place politics. It stands to reason then, if as Sandlin et al. (2010: 1a) insist, 'we are constantly being taught, constantly learn[ing] and unlearn[ing]', that this co-option seems a logical step to counteract what is currently happening in the world today by bringing into public view countervailing discourses and an alternative narrative to the one being 'sold' to us today: that there is just no alternative.

Instead of learning merely one narrative from the streets, the pedagogy of the public sphere can become more complex, more critical, and more thought provoking. Sandlin et al. (2010a: 1) add to this notion, stating that 'education is an enveloping concept, a dimension of culture that maintains dominant practices while also offering spaces for their critique and reimagination. The pedagogies that are immanent in the city streets are full of complexity, contradictions, and diversity'. These are important and often overlooked ideas, as Giroux (2010: 487) attests: 'theorists have largely underestimated the symbolic and pedagogical dimensions of the struggle that neoliberal corporate power has put into place for the last thirty years', and

the time is now to address this underestimation as it creeps into the classroom of the university, encompassing all the domains of pedagogy. It should not be forgotten of course, that as Brenner et al. (2012: 1–2) remind us, 'capitalist cities have long served as spaces for envisioning, and indeed mobilising towards, alternatives to capitalism itself'. Indeed, Holloway (2010: 169) adds to this that '*all social relations* are active battlegrounds, live antagonisms' (my italics), including, I argue, education. This is the premise upon which this article asserts that there is a need within education to join the call for the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1996 [1968]). As expressed earlier, this call for the right to the city is more than a simple call for a legal right, as Marcuse (2012: 34, emphasis in original) explains: the call is for '*The* right to the city, not *rights* to the city. It is a right to social justice, which includes but far exceeds individual justice'. As stated earlier, Marcuse (2012: 35) takes this notion further by asserting that 'Lefebvre (1996 [1968]) is quite clear on this: it is not the right to the existing city that is demanded, but *the right to a future city, indeed not necessarily a city in the conventional sense at all, but a place in an urban society'* (my italics). The Invisible Committee (2009: 58) usefully state that 'urban space is more than just the theatre of confrontation; it is also the means'.

The Occupy! movement as Pedagogy

If the confrontation within the pedagogy/pedagogies of the urban space is to be discussed, then perhaps an example of where this confrontation has already taken place would be helpful.

Writing during 2011–14 on the pedagogical nature of the London Occupy! movement, I argued that this protest movement was intensely pedagogical and interacted with the city in many ways that created a living, learning cityscape across parts of London, UK (Earl, 2015a; Earl, 2015b). Occupy!'s pedagogical nature existed not only in the explicitly pedagogical aspects, such as the people's university and library, Tent City University, and the Bank (later School) of Ideas, but in the mere presence of the city of tents itself. In this way, Occupy! reimagined the notion of education as social relation, as revolutionary praxis, and as an essential part of prefigurative politics (Ince, 2012; Van de Sande, 2015; Yates, 2015). This aspect of Occupy! gave

rise to a pedagogical and very 'public' form of critique and raised huge questions on two essential discussions for the work proposed here: what might the nature of public pedagogy be and how could the two notions, 'popular' and 'public' pedagogy, be mixed to create a form of higher learning that is popular in ethos and public in practice? A practice that might change individual relationships; to each other, to places and spaces, and to the political landscape itself. And, indeed, the question of who was the public that this form of public pedagogy might engage? A question I shall engage with shortly.

The legacy of Occupy! has important resonance to my argument and, as such, is included here as a 'prototype' of popular, public pedagogy. In a book chapter written at the height of the movement, Bud Hall (2012) called the global Occupy! movement a giant human 'hashtag'. Although the global movement was incredibly complex, what Occupy! could have been argued to be was a unifying symbol, a signifier of change to come, a stream of consciousness to which anyone can add their voice: a giant human hashtag, and importantly for my purposes here, it was played out in *public*.

The global Occupy! actions of 2010–12 – the encampments, the protests, the solidarity displays, the spring uprisings, etc. – created a massive amount of excitement, of hope, and a glimpse of collective action on a global scale, unprecedented in its use of space. Chomsky (2012) termed Occupy! 'the greatest public response to class war in thirty years', an interesting descriptor, evoking a 'public' that was conscious of the notion of 'class war' and a response that was 'public', or at least which took place *in* public. But, I argue, people, both those involved and observers, learned more from Occupy! than this vague 'response'. They learned that collective action could take many different forms and that the newest social movements were becoming sites of dissenting pedagogy. Research showed that the Occupiers understood that a (re)education was imperative to social change. At first, many activists and academics (such as Chomsky [2012], Giroux [2012], Gitlin [2013] and Graeber [2011], for example) thought that this was a global movement that could change the way politics was conducted, bringing hidden, countervailing discourses out into the collective consciousness and maybe even inaugurating the end of capitalism as we

knew it. A huge expectation and grand ambition indeed. Nevertheless, as grand as it seems in the cold light of day, there was something about Occupy! that was undeniably different and undeniably exciting.

As I have said, the hopes for Occupy! were high, but the highest hopes for the movement were reasonably short lived as Occupy! was plagued with problems: distrust, internal disagreements, even some abuse of its members. In Occupy! London, for instance, the repression of internal dissent against the consensus democracy model actually contributed to the London movement's downfall (for more information on Occupy!'s problems, see Anonymous, [2012], Campbell [2011], Earl [2015a] and Ward [2013], for example). These issues, coupled with the sometimes violent repression from the state seen in various sites around the world, meant that, certainly in the UK, what was solid about Occupy! has since melted into air as a new social movement and a new politics was subsequently learned by observers of the actions on both sides (Sandlin et al., 2010b).

What, then, can be gained from the events that unfolded? What potential remains and where might we go with it? The argument that I present here is that what has happened cannot merely disappear, one cannot unlearn what one has learned from observation of, and interaction with, the movement, as well as by other means. Stirred up by the activists' tents and physical presence, what occurred in the spaces that Occupy! produced disrupted the flow of business as usual in the City of London and gave new meaning to the notion of value – taking place immediately adjacent to one of the most commercialised spaces in the UK. It disquieted the familiar discourses on the right to the city as well as the assertion of the right to public assembly; ideas that have been systematically eroded in most countries around the world in the early decades of the twenty-first century. These happenings cannot merely 'go away', despite violent eviction, disillusionment and a spreading distrust. There is left in the wake of such events an energy, a new learning, that was frequently translated into imaginative hope at the time of Occupy!. MacKenzie (2011) said in an article that what Occupy! was good at, and had sincerely and effectively begun, was 'hacking the public imagination', or what Haiven and Khasnabish (2014) might call the awakening of the radical imagination. It is this that incited a form of public

pedagogy; a learning from public spaces and events, which, I argue, continued after the protestors' camps had gone from the paving surrounding St Paul's Cathedral. This form of public pedagogy could still be a useful notion for thinking about radical social change and how we move forward as learning peoples and educators into the next stage of a (currently still formulating) mode of neoliberalism that is more oppressive and repressive than possibly ever before.

Most of the demonstrations that happened under the name of Occupy! looked at democratic practice in some way: some wanting more democracy, some wanting different democracy, but all having one thing in common – anyone was welcome, whatever their political leaning. As long as their unhappiness was aimed at corruption and greed, was essentially anti-capitalist, and cried out against the alienation of themselves from their human senses, they were welcome. Putatively, there was no blueprint for the future, other than a prefigurative bent on how to move forward. It was stated in the movement's statements about its own identity that there was no specific ideology that needed to be subscribed to, no dogma to divide – apparently. Whether they achieved these aims or not has been written about in other places (Brown, 2012; Federici & Halven, 2011; Gitlin, 2013; Pickerill & Krinsky, 2012). However, what this ethos did was create a kind of inclusivity that allowed and encouraged the radical imaginings of offshoots from the movement. One of the slogans posted on the wall of the Bank of Ideas in London and in other Occupy! camps was that 'you can't evict an idea' (author's field notes) and, I would argue, with this one notion it seems that protestors had articulated something much larger than they had perhaps intended. The spirit of Occupy! has, of course, continued in many guises, from the 'Umbrella Revolution' in Hong Kong (Chan, 2014) and the *Nuit Debout* (Up All Night) movement (Flenady, 2016) that begun in France some time later. Like Occupy!, both of these movements involved explicitly public displays of countervailing discourse that were very difficult for the public and those in power to ignore. This is the nature of public pedagogy: ideas are expressed in public, people learn from what they see around them (whether consciously or not). Usually what people see hails from the worlds of corporate

advertising: billboards, shopping centres, and other vestiges of corporate or governmental activity (Hickey, 2010).

However, as Holloway (2010: 12) reminds us, 'social change is not produced by activists, however important activism may (or may not) be in the process'. He insists, rather, that 'social change is ... the outcome of the barely visible transformation of the daily lives and activities of millions of people'. Holloway argues that 'we must look beyond activism, then, to the millions and millions of refusals and *other-doings*, the millions and millions of cracks that constitute the material base of possible radical change' (my italics). These other-doings, presented as radical possibility, can potentially be constituted as an urban public pedagogy, particularly when taking account of Holloway's insistence that 'an "other politics" must be based on the critique of the very separation of politics from the rest of our everyday activity, on the overcoming of the separation of politics from doing' (Holloway, 2010: 133). Harvey (2009: n. pag.) also suggests that we are possibly not in a position to define who the 'agents of change will be in the present conjuncture', which opens the field to anyone and everyone, but surely only if they are equipped with the tools of social change: a critical consciousness (Freire, 1993; Freire, 2008) and a willingness to create that change. Therefore, an urban public pedagogy, that is popular in ethos and engages the radical imagination, a pedagogy that is practised explicitly in order to critique the very separation of politics from the rest of everyday activity and overcome that separation, that is connected both physically and philosophically to the right to the city movement, seems precisely to fit the bill. It would appear that in the current political moment this form of learning would allow us to keep 'moving together in a discordant harmony' (Holloway, 2010: 78), imagining other ways to learn, to relate, and to develop our lives.

So who is the public that the forms of public pedagogy proposed here engages? As Harvey said, we may not be in a position to define who the agents of change will be in the present conjuncture, and this opens up an interesting opportunity to create what Savage (2014) calls a *popular public*. Savage insists that 'establishing clarity over what we mean by public is of utmost importance in public pedagogy scholarship', and goes on to say that 'if writers do not clarify the public they are evoking

when using the term public pedagogy, then they (and their readers) are lost in the wilderness from the outset' (Savage, 2014: 80). I sense that this is an important point, whilst at the same time not wanting to be overly prescriptive about who will be drawn to this radical type of teaching and learning. Nonetheless, Savage describes the 'popular public' as 'distinct from political publics (and concrete publics), popular publics are less likely to be spatially referenced, because they come into being through processes of cultural distribution and consumption that often transcend specific geographical or political fields' (Savage, 2014: 84). He adds to this, quoting Barnett (2008: 416) that:

> popular publics also differ from political publics insofar as they are self-organising and come into existence in ways that cannot be predetermined. The formulation of popular publics thus relies on complex processes of address and response. Publics of this nature are "called into existence, they are convened, which is to say that they are sustained by relations of attention whose geographical configurations are not given in advance" (Barnett qtd by Savage [2014: 85])

The notions of popular public pedagogy that I am evoking here are important for three reasons, in particular. Firstly, because they are located within the city and so reclaim urban space for popular critique and learning. Secondly, because they engage the attention of anyone who walks by: these pedagogies are not occurring behind closed doors, but very much *in public*, allowing for happenstance encounters. Thirdly, such popular public pedagogies are aimed at creating a public that may never have come into existence before – by expanding schooling beyond the closed doors of the university, or other (variously privatised) spaces, such pedagogies move out into the streets, creating new forms of agora. This is why I propose a public pedagogy as an engine for change, rather than autonomous spaces such as social centres (see Firth [2012]), although they too have their place. As Savage also says, 'the educative power of dominant cultural discourses … is never absolute, unidirectional, or contained, but is multidirectional, diffuse, and riddled with complexity' (Savage, 2014: 84). It is this complexity that creates an opportunity, through multiple means of public pedagogy,

to relocate theory and critique from the 'ivory tower' of academia towards the places that ordinary people transverse in their daily life. This pedagogical relocation thus enacts the capturing, nurturing and enlivening of a social imagination within anyone who encounters it.

This argument stems from the notion that, so far, most individuals have probably only been 'schooled' (both in schools and, increasingly, universities). If the mass schooling, and therefore enclosure and dulling of our creative imaginations, is to be challenged, then the assertion of the right to freely associate, to assemble, to imagine, and to produce our own knowledge, should be reclaimed. However, this is a transgression from the normative educational paradigm. Foust (2010: 3) states that 'transgressions that are permitted or escape the notice and discipline of boundary-policing authorities, push the boundaries further', therefore, what is acceptable tomorrow will be *different* to what is acceptable today. I would argue that if newly organised and constituted forms of education and public pedagogy were able to escape the 'notice of the boundary policing authorities' they could become accepted and normative practices, but only if they are celebrated for their reclamation of thought, imagination and a popular curriculum. Imagine, if you will, the streets filled with assemblies of people, understanding learning as a new autonomous and popular common. People creating street theatre about their individual and collective concerns; reciting political poetry on the high street; gathering in Canary Wharf, London, the heart of the financial city, to hear public lectures given about the current financial systems and heterodox economics. Reading groups in public parks, political graffiti adorning drab industrial units. The sky, and our imagination, is the only limit to this kind of embodied utopian politics.

However, according to many, due to the attempted full enclosure of all spheres of social life (Shantz, 2012) and the notion that 'the political will to imagine much beyond the present seems hardly to exist' (Peters & Freeman-Moir, 2006: 2), the first urgent reclamation required can be argued to be that of *ourselves*. I argue that it is true, as von Kotze (2012: 109) says, that 'creative collective experiences can help break through from seeing others as barriers rather than essential allies

and make conscious the potential of solidarity in action', and that this has to start somewhere – so why not with academics? This does, however, entail reclaiming sociality: reclaiming what is common to us all, creating, in other words, commons: the very streets of the urban landscape, the town squares, and the walls that surround them as learning tools. According to Dyer-Witheford (2010: 106), 'the notion of the commons presupposes collectivities – associations and assemblies – within which sharing is organised'. Shantz (2013: 19) adds to this 'in commonism we re-appropriate our own productive power, taking it back as our own'. Therefore, an educational philosophy that enhances the reclamation of sociality and creates public and intellectual commons seems essential for initiating the process of enacting a public pedagogy that reclaims, in robust ways, the right to the city.

In many activist experiences, as von Kotze observes, 'popular educators and activists in social movements would say radical interventions happen through the concerted, purposive building of critical consciousness, through analysing power relations, through fashioning a constantly vigilant attitude' (2012: 104). This is perhaps what should be concentrated on: analysing these relations in the place where they happen, in public, in the city, or wherever the space for this is opened up. This approach is developed by Ira Shor (Shor qtd in Macrine, 2009: 120), who suggests that 'the dialogic task of the teacher is to build an unfamiliar critical inquiry around familiar situations while also connecting daily life to larger issues of power in society'. What better place for building unfamiliar critique, thus purposively building a critical consciousness, than the very spaces within which we live out our lives? Through public lectures, history tours, and discussions in coffee shops and parks? Understanding and engaging with these cityscapes could allow the knowledge work to 'position the local into the global' (Shor qtd in Macrine, 2009: 120) by making the connections through discussions on trade, corporate power, and so on. As Ollis (2012: 4) notes, 'progressive activism and community development are inextricably connected. Resistance occurs in many ways through the mobilisation of mass movements and in the work of small community campaigns of resistance towards the

state'; both of which could be formed through this enactment of radical, anti-hegemonic, public pedagogy.

What then, is the future of the University?

Where, then, does this proposal leave the existing institution of the university? A note of caution comes from Giroux (2010: 492), who warns that 'left-leaning intellectuals who are dismissive of formal education sites have no doubt made it easier for the more corporate and entrepreneurial interests to dominate colleges and universities', so perhaps the university is still worth saving if we just pay it more critical attention? Holloway (2010: 77) adds to this that 'certainly we need forms of organisation, but it is important that the organisational forms should be as open and receptive as possible'. So where does that leave any argument against the university, for its abolition? If, indeed, these formal forms of organisation are needed, and I would agree that some form of mass education – rather than schooling – has its place at every level, how do we reconcile this with the notion that 'the principle of free higher education is under assault as never before, so too is the idea of the academic as a free-thinking intellectual, particularly in the UK' (Bailey, 2011: 95)?

Perhaps there is a middle ground, as Freedman (2011: 10) suggests: 'we also have another responsibility, to defend the idea of university education as a public good that is reducible neither to market values nor to instrumental reasoning'. Perhaps this is a secondary, or equal, task; perhaps the two go hand-in-hand: (re)connecting with the urban landscape through a radical public pedagogy *and* defending the idea of the university as a public good. We need, however, to understand the university as an institution and set of social relations and practices still worth fighting for to create this dual responsibility. On this, Toscano (2011: 81) rightly asks 'is it possible to democratise the university?' and states that 'this question, which has elicited divergent answers and numerous practical experiments over the past four or five decades, is once again on the agenda. But its parameters have changed'. I tend to agree that in the past few years, the parameters of Toscano's question have changed due to such developments as students being 'saddled with huge fees to give them "choice" which has meant that thousands are priced out of university altogether, subjects without

self-evident "market value" face extinction' (Fenton, 2011: 107). This is a huge problem as Fenton further argues: 'the range of degrees on offer will narrow, the types of subjects available within degree programmes will diminish and real choice will be increasingly limited', a worrying trend. What will be left, according to some (see Andrew McGettigan's work [2013], for example) are the courses that are most likely to allow individual students to pay off their student' debts upon leaving: courses leading to jobs with high entry salaries, such as business, law, etc. Those that do not have such profitable career paths, for example students graduating from the social sciences and the humanities – the traditionally critical disciplines – will fall by the market wayside. Is there a way forward? Marcuse offers one possible answer from a critical urban theory perspective:

> our common task, those privileged (to be honest about it) to work in the realm of theory, and those differently privileged to be able to lead in the realm of practice, is to make that link between theory and practice and to make it productive. In other words, how do we go from critical urban theory to radical urban practice? (Marcuse, 2012: 36)

A popular, public pedagogy can surely be considered a 'radical urban practice' even if that is not quite what Marcuse had in mind. Doing this pedagogy in public further creates an intellectual public, as Ollis (2012: 9) adds: 'theory can help you find your voice; it can help you to understand inequality and hegemony. Theory can also provide insight into what needs to be challenged and changed'. Theory is often thought to be traditionally developed within the institutional space of the university, so how does this institutionally developed theory and knowledge production become transferred? Theory helping those in need of it to find a voice may be particularly ubiquitous when that theory is espoused, critiqued and developed in the spaces between 'home' and 'there': the street, which is 'a location of both total involvement and immediate disconnection' (Hickey, 2010: 162); a space where potential new alliances and discoveries lurk. A space where theory can be developed in plain sight of those spaces it seeks to understand and/or critique, creating a form of living theory (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). Therefore, theory can assist in a move from the indi-

vidual public intellectual to the collective intellectual public. However, as Faulkner (2011: 35) insists, 'of course we need "vocational" knowledge and skills', which can be gained from both inside and outside the university. Inside, from the classroom or workshop, and outside, from a lived and situated praxis. Faulkner goes on to say that 'we also need to equip ourselves to ask critical questions, to engage in democratic debate and to make informed choices about social priorities', creating praxis (Freire, 1993): that conjoining of theory and practice in the lived moments in existing projects in the city and its environs. The social priorities that Faulkner talks about can be seen as evidence to theory in these spaces of vulnerability (Hickey, 2010), both personal and collective. Giroux similarly notes that:

> *culture* is the public space where the common matters, shared solidarities, and public engagements provide fundamental elements of democracy. Culture is also the pedagogical and political ground on which communities of struggle and a global public sphere can be imagined as a condition of democratic possibilities. Culture offers a common space in which to address the radical demands of a pedagogy that allows critical discourse to confront the inequalities of power and promote the possibilities of shared dialogue and democratic transformation. Culture affirms the social as a fundamentally political space just as free market ideologies attempt within the current historical moment to deny its relevance as its centrality as a political necessity. (Giroux, 2010: 490, emphasis in original)

Maybe, then, it is some form of developing culture that is sought on the streets, in the right to the city movement, in a radically different form of higher learning? The urban agora is where individuals can (re)acquaint themselves with notions of culture – or, more precisely perhaps, multiple cultures, de-colonising their minds from the monolithic notion of a really existing homogenous society.

However, this enactment of the pedagogical right to the city must not be pure rebellion, but an enduring praxis toward a better, more inclusive future. As Esteva (2010: 28) says 'rebellions are like volcanoes, mowing down everything before

them … like lava beds, but they die down as quickly as they catch fire. They go out'. Nonetheless, it could be argued that this public pedagogy should rise initially as a form of embryonic, explosive rebellion, since Estava goes on to observe that rebellions are 'also ephemeral; they may leave lasting marks'. It is these 'marks', these lasting effects of rebellion, that have the potential, as Apple et al. (2009: 5) suggest, to 'open the spaces at universities and elsewhere for those who are not there, for those who do not now have a voice in that space and in the professional sites to which, being in a privileged position, you have access'. This is a further point of the public pedagogy espoused here: 'participation also means using the privilege one has as a scholar/activist' (Apple et al., 2009: 5) to open the doors to, and create an audience for, these newly avowed voices both within, as well as outside of, higher education.

This kind of public pedagogy, then, can be considered a new and emergent form of social movement, one that foregrounds learning as a political activity and joins people together to prefigure a new way of doing things, together. Bailey seems to support this approach, when he asserts that:

> defending the university requires much more than academics representing truth through democratic criticism and moral indignation. Also needed is a much broader social movement compromising all UK university workers, students, other public sector employees and the trade unions. Only then might politicians start to rethink their present assault on higher education, indeed, on the welfare state at large. (Bailey, 2011: 100)

However, it cannot be as simple as 'defending the university', as Freedman (2011: 10) attests: 'we will also need a clear vision of what the university should be: a public service, a social entitlement, a space for critical thinking and a place of discovery', these visions do not necessarily need the institutional walls to enclose them. Therefore, for those who take this position, Holloway (2010: 83) is correct in asserting that: 'we rage against the machine, but we want more than that, we want to break it and we want to create something else'.

So, where does that leave us? The understanding that mass forms of education do have their place? Not everyone can be educated simultaneously on the city streets, although we can try. It seems that this form of public pedagogy is most suited to institutions of higher learning, at least in the first instance, in order to find our feet as scholars and activists. I argue then that it is the *form* of mass education that is important here. If mass education were reoriented toward fulfilling the desire, and indeed the need, for the development of the radical imagination, then is it possible that higher education could remain inside its institutional walls? Perhaps the 'inside'/'outside' dichotomy thus presented here, need not be so dichotomous after all? Is there a merged form, a constitution where the 'university', whatever that may mean at this point, reaches out into the urban: to those peoples and places previously ignored, and welcomes them in to learn from them equally? On the other hand, have we travelled too far already to the point, as the quotation from the Invisible Committee cited at the beginning of this article, where any return to normal is no longer desirable or even imaginable?

The conclusion of this article therefore becomes a question or, rather, a series of questions that ask the reader to engage their own radical imagination, to search their own experience, their own understandings, to actively notice what is there and what is immanently possible. It is a call to arms, a call that requires answers as well as the courage to try new things, so I ask, then, does the university not need to be abolished just yet? Perhaps instead what is required is a need to step outside our ivory towers, those highly commodified and 'suffering' spaces of academic capitalism, to reconnect, to the cities, peoples, and other, less colonised, ways of knowing? If this first step can be achieved, can such experiences be brought back inside the now toppling (commodified) walls of academe? Or, perhaps, when individuals step outside and (re) connect, they will find that, yes; the 'university' they still fight for is gone. The radical possibilities have been foreclosed, sealed in a nostalgic view of past possibilities, that may never have been anyway, and that there is a need, in fact, to abolish the university and bring into being other forms of social knowing.

Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

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