

CHAPTER 7

Platform Discontent against the University

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Technology and the Capitalist University

The long depression of capitalism catalysed by the financial crash of 2007–08 witnessed an ideological repositioning that emphasizes the private good of notionally public services like healthcare, welfare, education and so on (Hall 2015a). These are explicitly treated as commodities with access that is privatized or privileged (Davies 2014), and which can be used to re-engineer the production, distribution or allocation, and consumption of those goods or commodified services. In terms of post-compulsory education, this has led to a number of modes of analysis, including: first, the mechanics of financialization, marketization and privatization (McMillan Cottom 2016; Newfield 2016); second, analyses of capitalist activist networks, including policymakers working in conjunction with finance capital, transnational service providers like educational publishers and technology corporations, transnational non-governmental organizations like the World Bank, and philanthro-capitalist entities like the Gates Foundation (Ball 2012); and third, understanding the processes of commodification underscored by discourses of entrepreneurialism, which

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underpin individual or familial investment in human capital (McGettigan 2015; see also Ampuja, Chapter 2, in this volume).

In English higher education (HE), ideological remoulding has been immanent to a policy context that highlights discourses of educational consumption or the purchase of educational goods, as a means to accrue value. These goods are broken down into skills, knowledge and capabilities, and repackaged—for instance, in terms of access to accreditation and awards, learning materials and content, and services that support the student experience and well-being. As technologically enriched services, these offer institutions and their supply chains the ability to demonstrate value-for-money. In this context, such re-engineering intersects with reduced public spending on HE, predicated upon tripled student fees backed by income-contingent loans and Access Agreements. However, it has been extended by a radicalized, political economic context set by Her Majesty's Treasury (McGettigan 2015) in its focus upon productivity.

This focus upon notionally public institutions being re-gearred as productive businesses or capitals has been amplified through the instantiation of competition among individual academics, disciplines and institutions, whose activities and impact are quantified. Quantification and flows of data are crucial in the ongoing re-purposing of the University as a productive domain, and in opening it out to other economic sectors which are able to make use of those data to commodify new services, and thereby extract value or rents. This has been discussed globally in terms of massive open online courses (MOOCs), in particular focused upon processes for creating commodities and data that can be curated for exchange-value (see Hall 2015b; Shanley, Swierstra & Wyatt, Chapter 11, in this volume).

In the English context, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS 2015) has enacted policy that links educational outcomes and HM Revenue & Customs tax data, in order to leverage data about populations of graduates and the value of their educational profiles. This connects to work commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) on graduate (longitudinal educational) outcomes, and new regulatory structures through the creation of the Office for Students (OfS) enshrined in the Higher Education and Research Act (DfE 2017), which have generated an infrastructure for managing competition within the sector, through a focus on value-for-money and the availability of performance data.

The availability of such data frames a technocratic discourse for continuous improvement through the management of risk in open markets, with effective competition defined as the primary enabler of student and institutional success. Such metrics are immanent to the generation of human capital and commodity-knowledge, and they shape a context for the ongoing valorization of the labour of both academics and students. This is increasingly important in a competitive HE environment, precisely because the value of a commodity, or of a commodified service like an accredited award, is not given by its price. Rather, it is given by the quantity of labour that is socially necessary for its

production at a given, global, average productivity. It is given by the amount of labour embedded in the product. Thus, commodities produced by labourers with more knowledge or skills, or richer technologies, either have higher value or can be produced more efficiently, and deliver competitive edge.

However, capital is always seeking to drive down the cost of labour, in order to extract a surplus from its investment. This search for surplus-value brings labourers into asymmetrical relationships in the market, as their labour is sorted and compared, based on its ability to deliver value for the employer. While an educator might be producing a book, marking scripts or undertaking knowledge transfer, in the market their work is abstracted from its concrete context, so that it can be equalized across a global terrain. It is the integration of this abstract form of labour inside a technology-rich, educational context that is designed to produce wealth in the form of surplus-value, which can be described in terms of valorization (Hall 2018). This process tends towards the proletarianization of academic labour by rationalizing its processes or modes of production, such that labour-value as a cost of production (use-value) is reduced. Here, having appropriate performance data, locked inside systems of production that can be finessed in almost real-time, with feedback that enables new modes of production, is crucial. There is potential here for new cybernetic modes of management for academic production, rooted in quantification and the internalization of algorithmic regulation (McQuillan 2015).

One result of this refocusing of HE for productivity and profitability, by increasing the realm of valuable work (in that it generates new forms of capital), has been to subsume the politics of HE under economic dictates. Thus, governance and regulation tend to reinforce a normative, technology-neutral narrative of HE, immanent to progressive ideas of entrepreneurship, excellence and impact, and reliant upon educational outcomes as exchangeable commodities that demonstrate accrued human capital. Technocratic governance conditions academic work through mediations like private property, the division of labour and commodity exchange (Hall 2018).

It is important to recognize the inhuman impacts of techniques of re-engineering, and technologies that have been used to discipline labour both at work and across society more generally. This has been witnessed in increased reporting by academic labourers of ill-health, overwork and precarity (Hall & Bowles 2016). However, these moments of reporting point towards categories of experience that are analytically generalizable in the concrete experiences of individuals, but which also enable their source to be revealed in alienated labour (Hall 2018). The horizontal sharing of such narratives also enables a surfacing of experience that might coalesce as a shared operating system, architecture or platform from which struggle can emerge. The point of such revelations is to highlight the possibilities for deliberation, association and solidarity.

For academic labourers, struggle is immanent to, and cuts through, a range of intersecting narratives, and these intersections reveal commonalities of experience grounded in alienating and commodified work. This offers the potential

for reimagining that experience for a different social purpose. It is important to recognize that such reimaginings are situated historically and materially, with deep connections to the ability of communities to re-purpose technology for socially useful outcomes that point beyond value production (Haiven 2014). These include established transnational commons and peer-to-peer networks (P2P Foundation n.d.), alongside state-based interventions, like Ecuador's Free-Libre, Open Knowledge Society project (FLOK n.d.) or the Cybersyn project in Chile under Allende (Miller Medina 2005). However, they also include: first, a multitude of workers in the digital, platform economy struggling against precarity (Lorey 2017), including non-tenured academics and teachers; and second, social movements with educational intent, for instance, Rhodes Must Fall and work on decolonization emerging from Black Lives Matter. These use technologies to describe associational practices and values as pedagogical projects at the level of society.

Such descriptions can be enriched through engagement with the idea of digital platforms (Kornberger, Pflueger & Mouritsen 2017; Srnicek 2017), in describing knowledge production that reimagines social reproduction beyond institutions like the University. Is it possible for knowledge production, capitalized and valorized inside the University, to be liberated across the social terrain against capital's cybernetic control mechanisms, for more humane ends? Is it possible to bear witness to those humane ends as a movement beyond discontent, to describe new forms of autonomous activity that constitute 'self-government for the producers', and which point towards forms of education beyond 'the fetters placed upon it by class and government' (Marx 2008: 47)?

Following Marx's engagement with machines and technology (1991), it is important to critique platform technology as it reproduces new forces of production, which then enable new social relations and forms of organization, including precarious labour, insecurity and entrepreneurship of the self. Such forms of organization are a means of rationalizing necessary social labour and creating anew the sphere of heteronomy, which organizes the production of necessities (Gorz 1982; Marx 1991). This demands that academics reproduce new skills, knowledge and capabilities to be exchanged, and thereby annihilates the time for free activity or the sphere of autonomy. A critique of these processes asks: How do we liberate digital tools from inside organizations like universities, in order to create non-commodified spaces for direct, cooperative reproduction (Roggero 2011)? This needs to be an intersectional critique of institutionalized technologies and techniques, precisely because those bodies marginalized by class, race, gender, (dis)ability and sexuality have lacked power to widen their spheres of autonomy (Ahmed 2017; Ciccariello-Maher 2017). There is a clear need to describe the modes by which capitalized platform technologies enable social relations that are exploitative for those in the core of institutions, while it further expropriates those on the margins (Fraser & Jaeggi 2018).

This chapter describes the potential for the intersection of social movements of struggle with digital technologies, to uncover alternative imaginings for HE

beyond the quantified University. This is enabled in the production of socially useful knowledge specifically designed to refuse hegemonic power over the world. Here, discontent with the world as it is becomes a moment to re-purpose and transform technologies and techniques by embedding them inside solidarity economies. Such processes facilitate platforms for dissent. This explicitly challenges the transhistorical, positivist idea of the University as a space for knowledge production that co-opts technology in order to reinforce monopoly capitalism. It asks if discontent at the level of the platform might disrupt the University such that we can reimagine that a different higher education is possible.

Technology and Academic Labour

For Marx (2004: 493), technology is pivotal to the material, historical production of the world. The reinvention of forces of production generates productive capability, which is immanent to changes in social relations, individual and social conceptualizations of work and life, and relationships to nature and the environment. This is an active relationship between humans and their environment, as an ongoing, material work-in-progress that shapes time and space. As a result, our communal activity informs and is informed by the forces that enable us to reproduce ourselves socially.

However, inside the University, technology is used to re-engineer academic work, in terms of teaching, research, scholarship and administration, through processes that Marx (2004) referred to as formal and real subsumption. These processes enable capital to take control of previously unproductive sectors of the economy, to focus upon value-production. This occurs in two ways: first, as sectors or organizations are re-purposed so that the conditions of work generate value, in absolute terms—for instance, by lengthening the working day; and second, as sectors or organizations are transformed through organizational development or technological deployment, in order to generate value in relative terms. As sectors become more competitive and the terrain for accruing surplus value becomes more difficult, mechanisms like increasing the hours of work cannot generate enough value. As a result, capitalist businesses look for increases in productivity, in order to drive surplus. One issue here is that capitalists are competing for relative amounts of the total social capital realized as profit. If the global economy slows, surpluses stagnate and profitability reduces, the competition becomes more intense. This is one potential mode for analysing the MOOC agenda and the focus of universities in working in joint ventures with educational technology firms, hedge funds, publishers and so on (see Shanley, Swierstra & Wyatt, Chapter 11, in this volume).

Thus, the idea that academic work might be infused with humanism is framed by the recalibration of universities in the sector as a whole, through competition that includes: the generation of knowledge as a commodity for exchange; research outputs as private property; capturing and retaining student numbers,

grounded in new forms of student finance; and the deployment of new technologies to drive teaching and administration efficiencies. Technology-driven recalibration enables labour-time to be reduced in principle. In practice, it becomes the most unfailing means for turning the whole lifetime of a worker and [her] family into labour-time'; enforces the metronomic control of the 'motion of the whole factory'; separates 'the intellectual faculties of the production process from manual labour'; and, is 'continually transforming not only the technical basis of production but also the functions of the worker and the social combinations of the labour process.' (Marx 2004: 531–532, 546, 548, 617)

Crucially, even for academics notionally working in a privileged profession, under capitalist social relations, technology totalizes proletarianization as a form of ongoing immiseration. This forces the individual academic onto a treadmill of constantly needing to upgrade their human capital, in order to generate commodity skills that can be valorized inside competing departments or institutions (Newfield 2010). Whether they can generate these skills or not, they are partially developed individuals, precisely because they become subordinated to the production of 'objective wealth, in the form of capital, an alien power that dominates and exploits' (Marx 2004: 716). Processes of proletarianization include the routinized nature of teaching and research, the imposition of technology-mediated, menial tasks and the reduction of intellectual work to standardized processes. This creates a field of exploitation, inside which the academic is continually alienated from their labour-power and the conditions under which they work (Hall 2018). On an everyday basis, an expanding global circuit of alienation reproduces exploitation, in order to generate relative surplus value.

Thus, academic labour is subsumed under a global production machine, and is further conditioned by policy-discourses. This machinery disassembles existing flows of labour, finance and technology, and reassembles them for profit (Deleuze & Guattari 1983). In this way, capital enforces human-machine interaction as a means to parasitize labour (Wendling 2009: 100). The conditioning of this machinery is important for the widening circuit of alienation that reproduces exploitation. As technologies are reconceptualized as platforms, this circuit is widened out beyond institutions and sectors. Platforms enable users or audiences to be exploited in the production of services that can be commodified, such as the production of educational content or the grading of assessments, or from which rents can be taken in the consumption of those services. In these modes of production, there is a clear division of labour and hierarchy of control, rooted in precarious employment and the need to have ready access to commodities. Moreover, the platform enables controlled access to those services through mediations of commodity-exchange and private property.

These approaches are legitimized at the level of society, through the normalization of platforms that drive cost-efficiencies in transport, hospitality and accommodation. Thus, determinist narratives of technological progress elide

with liberal ideas of equality of opportunity and freedom of access, underpinned by free markets and performance data (Feenberg 1999). Any political refusal of these economic narratives (for instance, in support of academic freedom) tend to be met by cries to reform the sector, based on discourses of efficiency and productivity. Moreover, these narratives amplify intersectional and inter-generational injustices because they reinforce hegemonic norms of excellence, entrepreneurialism and impact that are white, male, ableist and heterosexual, and which enable specific aggregations of human capital (Boyd 2017).

Technology optimizes this across the terrain of academic labour because it structures governable spaces—for instance, through performance data that enables the comparison of individuals, subjects and institutions against imposed norms that are disciplinary. Technologies and techniques of governance optimize performance management and encourage certain behaviours, and this is given regulatory power over individual agency through institutional governance. Optimization is further amplified through new technological compositions, rooted in the idea of the platform, operating as a controlling, distribution infrastructure that mediates between contracting parties. This has been reified as freeing labour from capitalists, so that they can commission work directly (Pasquale 2016). There is a value-based ecosystem that surrounds the platform, emerging from the commissioning of work and the extraction of data about that work, in terms of the fluidity of activities. Drawing individuals to the platform, in order to monopolize data about suppliers and consumers is pivotal, in particular in generating predictive data about future behaviours.

This is important in the context of the University, because the generation of a controlled ecosystem for collecting rent based on the distribution of commodities and for the concomitant accumulation of data about those commodities, enables innovation in knowledge production, circulation and accumulation. In particular, generating analytics or large datasets enables dominant protocols and algorithms to affect learning and teaching, knowledge production and transfer, research impact and so on through cybernetic control (Lazzarato 2014). This offers the opportunity for HE providers to impose flex-ploitation through the creation of micro-activities or micro-commodities in relation to the production of curriculum content, research outputs, assessments and so on (Morgan & Wood 2017). This transforms academic work because new relations of production are realized in precarious, flexible and part-time contracts that enforce entrepreneurial work in multiple contexts upon individual academics.

A crucial, spill-over issue is that platforms tend to have an embedded epistemic privilege that is reproduced as data based on a specific political economic model, inside which specific users behaving in particular ways constantly provide optimizing performance data (Huws 2014; Srnicek 2017; see Barry, Chapter 5, in this volume). In this process of optimization, individuals have to enrich their knowledge, skills and capacities, and also their attitude and commitment to enrichment and their job, which becomes an alienating labour of

love (Hall 2018). Thus, not only is work proletarianized inside the University, but proletarianization infects the academic's soul. Thus, as Hall (2016) points out, in HE this tends towards the *Uberification* of the University, because knowledge becomes a commodity that is privatized rather than being a social good.

Thus, taking the HE sector as a platform, and individual institutions as ecosystems on that platform, enables us to understand processes of subsumption and proletarianization. The idea that education is for the joy of learning is subsumed under the need to drive value, surplus and profit. As a result, the labour process of education, situated inside disciplinary ecosystems, acts as a mode of domination. Even worse, this mode of domination is reinforced through an evaluative infrastructure, internalized at the level of the individual and aggregated at the level of the platform, in order to provide learning analytics or profiles that relate educational outcomes to tax/income data. At the level of society, platform data collection serves as a mechanism for the control of knowledge production in relation to performance and the expansion of the system of capital. At issue is what this means for the structure and governance of organizations, as a system of capital re-purposes the social relations of work through new forces of production operating as productive and distributive platforms. Is it possible to invert these new formations, in order to re-purpose and reimagine the University?

Discontent and the Re-imagination of the Institution

The proletarianization of the University is predicated upon atomized competition, which utilizes new forces of production to reshape relations between people, in order to extract value. A critical element of this is enforced separation between individuals, and the ability for individual agency to be repurposed by structural requirements. However, in order to extract maximum value, capital requires individuals to work in concert, or to collaborate as producers, distributors and consumers. This gives opportunities for cooperative re-imagination.

For Marx (1866), the cooperative movement was a transformational force where it understood its relationship to labour as the point of social production. Thus, he argued that producer cooperatives, as opposed to consumer cooperatives, are a manifestation of class antagonism that can point towards 'the republican and beneficent system of *the association of free and equal producers*' (ibid., emphasis in the original). This analysis of cooperation rests on forms of self-mediation by human beings of their material activities in society. In an idealized cooperative state, activities are no longer piecemeal or solitary, or governed by capital; rather, they are governed by alternative networks of solidarity and purpose: 'This is not possible without the community. Only within the community has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within the community' (Marx & Engels 1998: 86).

A focus on the communal and associational characteristics of cooperation is critical to Marx's praxis, because in them he sees the individual developing

the capabilities of their species (Marx 2004). As a result, a refocusing upon cooperative values and principles, grounded in the conceptual framework of the self-in-association, acts as a moment of refusal of alienated socialization, in which the producers of society are estranged from both the means and conditions of production of that society. However, discontent at the present state of things does not coalesce into a single, counter-hegemonic position, predicated upon a unified collection of alternative governing principles for life. It therefore becomes important to think about alternative forms of knowledge production and an integration with alternative conceptions of mutuality, solidarity and cooperation, such as those emerging from indigenous or marginalized communities.

Indigenous methodologies or modes of being help *both* to develop a fresh focus on knowledge *and* to reframe the idea of movement towards a more humane social production as a liminal process, engaging the body, emotions and cognition (Tuhawai Smith, Tuck & Yang 2018). In this sensuous, epistemic opening, knowledge is rooted in people, place, philosophy, values, communities, axiologies and cosmologies, which generate 'relational accountability' (Wilson 2008: 77). Such accountability is mutual, respectful and dignified, and acts as a beginning for refusing the domination of knowledge from the global North imposed as progressive and rooted in an ideological, evidence-based epistemological standard. Here, cooperative techniques for social reproduction might enable forms of relational accountability between peoples and places. Moreover, in this process, they offer the possibility of liberating material forces, including technology, and connecting them to alternative conceptions of the world, in order to widen autonomy and freedom.

For Marx (1866; 1970) a cooperative revolution in the governance of technology forms a crucial strand in changing the general conditions of social production, because it redefines the subjectivity of society towards humanity and away from the commodity and the valorization of capital. If we are to do this, then a shared, associational expression of individual lives is required, in order to realize the essence of what it means to be human. Marx's idea was that the expression of my life and those of my peers are immanent to each other, and should be mediated directly rather than through the market, private property, the division of labour and commodity exchange. This requires an alternative conception of how to integrate the forces of production into our communal being, and a liberatory conception of how those forces are subordinate to our essence and our social relations (Bookchin 2005). Beautifully, Marx (1844) argues that through such practices 'our products would be like so many mirrors, out of which our essence shone' as a 'free expression' of our lives.

At issue is how to find cracks in the system of capital, into which technologies for alternative, liberatory conceptions of society can be inserted. Dunayevskaya (1958) has argued that these need to be situated inside organizations that are beyond value-production, or they risk degenerating under competition. As a result, a re-imagination of the University has to engage with more than the cooperative possibilities of the collective ecosystems currently structured to reproduce value. A re-imagination of the potential for forces of production

to enable social connection and knowledge sharing, and to liberate time for autonomous activity rather than the imposition of commodity production, comes up against structural contradictions. Thus, a re-imagination of technology as a means for liberating knowledge for a new society demands a new material literacy as a radical, pedagogical project at the level of society.

This is a transitional project that critiques the place of technology as it is currently instantiated inside the University. It critiques the relationship of the digital University, and its techniques of governance, to knowledge production and the generation of social wealth. It also critiques these relationships and techniques in terms of their ability to enable humanity to engage with global economic and environmental crises. It critiques the limitations in our collective ability to produce knowledge inside the University to engage with these crises, in part through the separation of polity and economy, such that the latter dominates the former. It critiques these limitations as they are reproduced inside organizations conditioned by the State to generate value through exploitation and expropriation. In this way, it moves beyond the fetishization of technologies and techniques, including the ways in which these are reproduced and enclosed inside institutions like universities (see Ampuja, Chapter 2, in this volume). The potential for relational accountability and the recomposition of peoples, places and technologies offer an alternative set of possibilities for intellectual work beyond the capitalized University.

In moving beyond forms of fetishization and enclosure, this points towards a humanist reimagining of what it means to learn, teach and produce socially useful knowledge (Neary 2011). Here, we have examples of alternative conceptions of technological sovereignty, such as the Cybersyn Project of Allende's Chile, which sought to reimagine society through social networks that connected 'technologies to the function of the state and its management' (Miller Medina 2005: 22). Even as these projects are co-opted for value, they articulate the potential: to question hegemonic governance; to hear previously expropriated voices from the margins; to reveal the narratives of exploitation from the precariously employed; to question dominant narratives about socially useful knowledge and technologies and their co-option inside alienating institutions; and to share the full range of knowledge, skills and capabilities. What, then, is the role of technology in enabling cooperation as a pedagogical practice that first reimagines the University and then dissolves it into the fabric of society?

Platform Discontent as a Social Movement

Bookchin (2005) argued that a liberatory technology demands a liberatory praxis. Possibilities emerge from critiques of platform cooperativism, which point towards the possibility for cloning the technological heart of emergent, digital platforms. The point of cloning these is to break their extant focus upon value, and upon the technologically mediated commodity-exchange that

shapes social relations and distorts human essence. The onus is on redesigning the governing principles and ownership structures of these platforms, alongside the algorithms upon which decisions are made about the privatization of service-provision, performance information about individual sellers and consumers, and enabling access to services. This offers the potential to shift the discussion about the redistribution of social goods and services, and to discuss technological sovereignty for citizens rather than corporations (Platform Co-operativism Consortium (PCC) n.d.; Scholz 2016).

Cook (2013) highlights the intersection of cooperation, academic practices and technology as a critical point of discussion, in enabling cooperative capacities to be developed. The academic experience of platform technologies is uncovered in terms of both hard and soft technologies. While the former might include software and hardware in its traditional forms, the latter focuses upon the shape of governance processes, regulation, company organization, approaches to credit, the law and so on. The integration of hard and soft technologies enables a discussion of technological sovereignty designed to enable cooperative vision, practices and organizational models. In responding to critiques of actually existing alternative spaces for moving beyond the University, this would pivot around:

- ensuring governance through the democracy of member control;
- a refusal of the division of labour, which separates students and academics based on privilege and status;
- sharing narratives that challenge the fetishization or mythologizing of certain practices and relations that are painted as utopian; and
- the establishment of an explicitly politicized relation of individuals to their academic labour, knowledge production and broader communities.

In moving beyond the fetishized models, and in integrating technologies for alternative social imaginaries, reimagining intellectual work moves centre stage. For Marx (1993; 2004), this emerges from the constant need by capital to dominate labour, such that it can extract the creative powers (skills, knowledge and capabilities) of humans and instantiate them inside machinery or technology. It seeks to transform the intellectual power of people working cooperatively, so that it can control those powers, diffuse them across a social terrain of production and revolutionize the costs of intellectual production. In discussing this in terms of capital's control of the general intellect of society, Marx (1993; 2004) was clear that self- and cooperative development would be dominated by value and valorization, and that the need to produce solely for exchange-value would set individuals against each other because they had different political conceptions of life. Moreover, as capital seeks to generate new forces of production by enclosing socialized labour-power, and innovating both science and technology, this generates forms of privilege and power for those who can manage or create such innovation.

This is important in our analysis of how technology enables human activity for a particular value-based conception of life, because human relations with each other and with nature are predicated upon particular forms of socialized production that disable humanity. Disabling processes are reinforced by the accumulation of the skills, capabilities and knowledge of the social individual inside machinery, where it becomes an alien power reinforced by hegemonic perceptions of technology, exacerbated in discussions of performance data, artificial intelligence, smart systems and so on. Value-driven, societal intelligence embedded in technology disables the individual from thinking critically about their experience in society. Instead, individuals are forced to consider how to survive as their labour is annihilated through capital's innovation in technology. Thus, education focuses on employability and entrepreneurship, in order to enable individual survival (including, as Ampuja notes in Chapter 2, in this volume, in the context of the positivism around digital innovations that serves as uncritical fetishism).

One of the possibilities that emerges from a more humanistic analysis, rooted in the idea of a renewed educational project that is cooperative and grounded in direct association, is that people might be able to use cooperative techniques and technologies to develop forms of mass intellectuality. This is the production of socially useful knowledge as new forms of collective wealth, open to all to draw down upon, and which demonstrate relational accountability between peoples, places and times. Thus, techniques need to be uncovered that liberate the general intellect from the law of value, and that recast technologies as a means of mass production of social necessities, which in turn widen the spheres of autonomy and freedom. This questions human richness in terms of the accumulation of commodities, and instead redefines that richness, or a rich life, as one that is free to work with and contribute to general, social knowledge, skills and capabilities, which are governed and distributed directly through association.

In this process of governance and distribution, socialized, cooperative technologies are crucial. However, socialized, cooperative pedagogies and educational techniques are equally important. Thus, the possibility for alternative, cooperative forms of HE, incubated both inside and outside the University, might act as a staging post in a transition away from the law of value and the enclosure of human capabilities. The characteristics of such a University depend upon overcoming alienated socialization, and instead working for technological sovereignty for all citizens—for instance, through: the development of global, intellectual commons; the deployment of cooperative, open architectures and data; and the facilitation of communal deliberations for socially useful service-production. Platform ecosystems, repurposed as joint associations, rather than joint ventures, move us culturally and materially towards an analysis of what is socially useful beyond the market. This is a pedagogical project, which might be incubated inside institutions, but can only have meaning at the level of society.

This demands social dialogue about the extent to which the general intellect has been expropriated from us and turned against us for exploitation. It forces us to question the spaces inside which this has happened, including the University, in order to discuss whether it can be liberated as a form of mass intellectuality (Hall & Winn 2017). This is a revolutionary moment that rests upon a ruthless, negative critique of the relationship between technology and the University, and their combination as a platform for exploitation and expropriation. Such negativity enables us to reimagine technology as it ‘lays bare the mode of formation of [our] social relations’ (Marx 2004: 493), in order to redefine those social relations. Only in this way might the example of technology and the University, as an exploitative platform, and of HE as an ecosystem of exploitation that enables further expropriation, be used as ‘a regenerative cultural force’ (Trocchi 1963). In a redefinition pointing beyond the University, mass intellectuality at the level of society might be revealed as a new form of associative intelligence (MacPherson 2007: 372).

Beyond the University

Is it possible to imagine that another University is possible, as a staging post in imagining that another world is possible? Is it possible to reimagine the University as a node in a transnational network of cooperatives seeking to create a solidarity economy that can enable autonomy in the production, distribution and consumption of life? Is it possible to do this work while it is conditioned by the economic imperatives of the State, which continue to deform governance and management in a highly marketized, commodified and competitive educational system? Is it possible to aggregate this work inside and beyond the classroom and curriculum? Is it possible to connect: our concrete, historical examples of the alternative social uses for technology; our existing, open knowledge commons; revolutionary pedagogies with the potential for self-mediation or *Bildung* (see Shanley, Swierstra & Wyatt, Chapter 11, in this volume); narratives of indigenous and marginalized voices that enable new conceptions of life to emerge or be shared; and socially useful knowledge, explicitly designed to work for solutions to global crises? The integration of these moments of technology, knowledge, history, material production, cultural innovation and institutional renewal reminds us of the need to centre living, historical subjects. This humane subjectivity pivots around the democratic production of knowledge as a means for generating new principles for living and livelihood as a function of mutualism and solidarity (Neary & Winn 2017).

The generation of new principles for living can be reimaged as techniques for developing an alternative set of relations, which give full access to both the means of subsistence or the realm of necessity, and the realm of freedom (Marx & Engels 1998). Such techniques, amplified through the liberation of technologies for cooperation as opposed to value-production, in which sovereignty in

hardware, software and soft technologies lies in communal deliberation and in citizenship, enable us to redefine our experiences as social workers. Our ability to move beyond the University, to enable learning and sharing across a distributed, autonomous federation, can only be enabled technologically.

Here, there is a need to accept the limitations of the ideas of the platform, as currently conceived. Platform-based learning tools, or distributed learning networks acting as ecosystems, are governed by specific algorithms and the extraction of data for commercial ends that are *both* funded by finance capital *and* regulated by corporate forms. Where these approaches are deployed inside educational institutions, those organizations are implicated in the dismantling of established social relations, because the commodification of information, content, data and services estranges our knowledge, skills and capabilities from us. Moreover, this estrangement or separation occurs as an ongoing process. The issue then becomes whether the platform, funded and governed as a joint venture, can be repurposed for associational ends against and beyond the law of value. Can pedagogical counter-projects liberate *both* knowledge *and* the technological platforms upon which that knowledge is created and shared in the name of an alternative conception of life?

A radical, negative critique of the platform picks up on Marcuse's (1998) argument that technics and modern technology have the ability to shatter and then recompose the specific historical form in which they are deployed, in the name of liberation. There are already failed examples from which we can learn. For instance, the Ecuadorian Plan for Good Living (NSPD 2013) was attempting to blueprint the ways in which education might be transformed through participative practice, in order to generate socially useful forms of knowledge in science, technology and innovation that would reinforce and diversify both individual and social capabilities. This echoes previous reimaginations of the role of really useful knowledge produced communally, collectively and cooperatively, which emphasized the work of radical, working-class organizations like the Plebs' League and the Oxford Central Labour College, and labour movement plans like the Lucas Workers' Plan for socially useful production. Such moments of production, rooted in knowledge at the level of society, begin from a democratic analysis of the conditions of social production, and a focus upon militant research undertaken in public. Socially useful production stands against the inhumanity of value, and is grounded in the general, productive knowledge, skills and capacities of society, or its mass intellectuality as a platform for intellectual work.

The intersection of technology, knowledge production as mass intellectuality and the reality of alternative, societal conceptions of HE offers academic labourers who are struggling under proletarianization, precarious employment, ill-health and overwork the potential for radical democracy in relation to education, knowledge and academic practice (Amsler 2015). It refuses the University-as-is, and imagines new associations for socially useful production. The platform reimaged for direct association between producers, grounded

in justice and equality, is essential here. It enables what Marx (2008) highlighted as self-government for the producers, predicated upon human liberation away from alienated labour. In this mode, communal sovereignty over technology and techniques for self-government is the real movement towards cooperative self-mediation:

If co-operative production is not to remain a sham and a snare; if it is to supersede the capitalist system; if united co-operative societies are to regulate national production upon common plan, thus taking it under their own control, and putting an end to the constant anarchy and periodic convulsions which are the fatality of capitalist production – what else, [], would it be but communism, ‘possible’ communism? (Marx 2008: 50)

This is the potential for intellectual work, realized as platform discontent against and beyond the University.

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