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Critical Pedagogy in, against and beyond the neoliberalised university,

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> The amiable passivity of the academic life must be abruptly shaken off. The philistines are upon us, they are in the Senate House itself, and it is well past the time for rewriting the ludicrous research excellence framework (the very phrase an affront to our vocation). What is needed is a vehement call to scholarship of a more cutting, angry and indomitable style (Fred Inglis, THE, 6 October 2011).

Introductory remarks

I start this presentation from the recognition that the continued existence of state funded public higher education in England, as in many other nations north and south, is threatened as it being debased in ways that Inglis bitingly notes above. In this context, I ask, what obligations do we, academics with a moral and additionally, for some of us, a politically left framework, have to resist this threat within and outside the university in its current neoliberalised form? Mindful of Inglis's point that the time for niceties is past, I will make my case as clearly and forcefully as possible.

The paper has four sections. I first start by framing the current state of public higher education within: a. processes of neoliberalisation that take particular forms in distinct nations and b. the present neoliberalised state of English higher education. Second I discuss how critical pedagogy has played and can play a role in developing an alternative strategy of and for teaching. This discussion mentions the work that a small and growing minority of left academics have produced on critical pedagogy over at least the past decade as a means of fighting in and against the current order.

That discussion also considers critical pedagogy's similarities with the worldly pedagogy that informs global citizenship and how critical pedagogy adds activist and critical dimensions to it. Third I explore two case studies in which I am involved that, informed by critical pedagogy, are being mobilised to undo current perilous condition—one in and against and the other beyond and against the neoliberalised university. I conclude by suggesting that although I continue to work in both locations, at present the second, regretfully, seems the more promising.

1a. The concept of neoliberalisation

As a number of authors have suggested, neoliberalism has had many meanings. Consequently, as John Clarke noted in his review of the literature (2008:136), the concept could be said to be 'omnipresent', 'promiscuous' and 'omnipotent'—that is, it seems to be found in multiple 'sites, institutions, processes, and practices', given diverse, sometimes contradictory, meanings and appears to be a seemingly unstoppable, all powerful, force (2008:138). Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2010a:3) speak of neoliberalism as 'a *rascal concept*--promiscuously pervasive, yet inconsistently defined, empirically imprecise and frequently contested'. Yet Clarke and Brenner et al continue to use the concept—although the latter redefine it as a process that is currently being realised and, importantly, can be undone.

Brenner et al suggest first that neoliberalisation entails a gradual *intensification* of market rule and commodification—not a once and for all process but one that has *deepened* over time (2010a:184). The regulatory restructuring of institutions, structures and processes according to marketisation and commodification principles is thus phased. Second, this deepening entails a "*'variegated'* rather than a homogenous process that produces geoinstitutional differentiation" (2010a:184). That is, it is introduced in nations with differing histories and degrees of economic, political and military power and development. Therefore it grows in distinct ways over time in different nations as they respond to its imposition and development from their particular circumstances. Third, those institutions introducing these processes (i.e., cross national organisations like the IMF, WTO and World Bank) build on insights gained from earlier experiments with the aim of realise these processes more effectively in later efforts. Fourth, neoliberalisation co-exists with other regulatory possibilities; it may be dominant (and currently is increasingly so), but it is not necessary as monolithic as it pretends to be. Fifth, if neoliberalisation can be said to have been deepening as it has been imposed on nations across the world over the past 30 to 40 years, so is it possible—although hardly certain—that it can be

disarticulated, contained and ultimately overcome as part of a process of 'counter-neoliberalisation' (Brenner et al 2010b:12). Brenner et al assert that in the post 2008 economic crash climate, and I would add at the current moment of an emergent, global 'Occupy Wall Street' movement, following the Spanish 'indignados' movement and the Greek 'squares' movement, that followed the Arab spring, it might be possible for this counter-movement to grow into a process of 'orchestrated counter-neoliberalization' (2010b:13). Brenner et al's aim, then, is to understand this variegated deepening of neoliberalisation in order to provide a heuristic model with which more effective bottom up, collectively organised bodies with emancipatory ends that could potentially begin to be realised.

This concept of counter-neoliberalisation allows us, as Ferguson (2009) noted, to not just express 'indignation or denounce[e] . . . the powerful' but to also imagine and develop viable progressive alternatives. Negating that which we live and know offers a forward momentum towards creating alternatives, as the London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group (1979) pointed out in their classic text 'In and against the state'.

The idea of neoliberalisation as a deepening process help us understand the significance of the current Coalition government's reconfiguration of HE in the past year. The following section highlights some key moments of neoliberalisation during the past 40 years in order to then contextualise the past year.

1b. The neoliberalisation of English Higher Education
In England, since the late 1960s/early 1970s, government and universities have gradually marketised and commodified HE structures and processes. By marketisation I mean the processes by which the state uses market principles and disciplinary apparatuses to create supposedly greater 'efficiencies' in previously non-market institutions (ie.g., restructuring universities so that they compete against one another for students and use this competition to further regulate and discipline universities). Commodification refers to the processes of turning social goods and processes into commodities (e.g., making the social process of teaching a measurable and deliverable entity—and then using this reconfigured entity as the basis for further commodification—as well as for disciplining).

A key early moment in the process of marketisation in English was the publication of E P Thompson's *Warwick University Ltd: Industry, Management and the Universities* (1971), written in response to Warwick University's business/industry orientation

since its creation in 1965. Warwick had been run as a business rather than as an institution democratically run by lecturers (as was the case in the earlier established 'redbrick' universities). Thatcher realised this 'business-ification' (Hatcher 2001) process more fully; within three days of coming to power (1979), her government cut £100 million from the higher education budget Over the next four years a further 17% was cut from government block grants to universities (Shattock in Slaughter and Leslie 1997:41). Universities consequently had to more 'efficiently' use the government grants they received. Commodification was introduced by the 1980 Thatcher government decision to charge tuition fees (£1000 per year) for international students.

Marketisation and commodification respectively developed further through the 1985 Jarrett Report, produced by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (not the government) that first mooted the idea of students as customers and second suggested that universities be assessed using the kinds of performance indicators that monitored factory floor work. The changing discourse was indicative of and promoted changing practices and also showed that Vice Chancellors and Principals shared the government's shifting agenda.

The 1992 Conservative government's elimination of the explicit 'binary divide' that had separated universities from polytechnics ostensibly made all HE institutions 'universities'. Student numbers across the sector also were doubled from 1990 to 1996 alone—while funding per student fell by 30% and staff numbers remained unchanged (CVCP, in Barr and Crawford 1998). Unsurprisingly in a context of growing marketisation, Vice Chancellors of the top 20 universities (receiving 2/3 of all UK research grants and contract funding as well as students with highest of all A level marks) organised themselves into the 'Russell Group' (1994). Their aim was to defend and lobby government for their universities' interests and to attract students with the highest academic achievements. They therefore re-stratified the seemingly levelled field the government had created in 1992. Two other groups of universities followed suit. First 'the 1994 group' (formed during that year) separated themselves from those they deemed to be at the bottom of the heap (as well as from those at the top whose initial creation of a top tier undoubtedly shaped their own formation). Shortly thereafter the 'Million+' group branded themselves so as to highlight their own distinctive 'openness' to the now growing working class presence in HE (Ainley and Weyers 2008).

However, given growing student numbers with no increased government funding, how could universities meet rising costs? Notice how the question construes universities as marketised structures needing external funds that government was no longer presumed to provide. In response to this question, the government established a bilateral committee (The National Committee Inquiry into Higher Education) in 1996 that took for granted such diminished government funding. The Dearing Report (1997) that resulted from this Inquiry suggested—and the government then implemented this suggestion (with some modification) in 1998— that all students should pay £1,000 per year upfront[1]. Thus individual students were now, in part, made into the kind of customers first mooted in the Jarrett Report who, according to the government, could invest in their own futures[2]. Unsurprisingly, this process of pushing some of the funding burden from the state to the individual grew still further thereafter: eight years later (2006) students' upfront tuition fee contributions were 'topped up' to £3,000 in 2006 (reaching £3,375 in autumn 2011, the last year they will exist). Students' financial investments in their own futures was therefore well established before recent Coalition government still further deepening of this process.

If, as I am suggesting, HE has been gradually and increasingly marketised and commodified over the past 40 years, these processes were considerably intensified during the past year by the Browne Report on Higher Education, the Comprehensive Spending Review and the more recent White Paper on Higher Education. Like Dearing, Browne and his team were asked to devise 'a funding scheme that would open up more undergraduate degree places without placing additional burden on central public finances' (McGettigan 2011). Given that for more than a decade students had been supplementing an under-resourced university system with personal contributions, it is hardly surprising that Browne and his team decided to virtually replace government funding with student contributions of between 80 and 100% of tuition costs. These fees will, from autumn 2012, nearly double or treble to a minimum of £6000 and maximum of £9.000 per year[4] (Browne Report, 2010: 47).

In this brave new world of HE, students will supposedly be located 'at the heart of the

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[1] Whilst Dearing also recommended that the government should retain the gradually reducing maintenance grant given to support students' living costs, the government decided instead to replace it with means-tested loans for students from poorer backgrounds alone.
[2] Then Secretary of Education David Blunkett rationalised the introduction of fees in 1998 by suggesting that those who went to universities were likely to gain greater incomes as graduates than they would otherwise do. Of course this process is one that further marketises HE.

system', apparently best placed to make 'the judgement about what they want to get from participating in higher education' (Browne Report, 2010: 25)[3]. Learning so articulated will serve narrowly consumerist ends. As Long (2011) put it, students will be offered a key role in a system aimed singularly at encouraging learning that helps them gain more 'income'; university's sole purpose 'to life and society . . . [will now be to earn] more income'. Private providers will offer students loans—at commercial interest rates that will seriously indebt graduates for life (McGettigan 2011) Students thus will be asked to invest in their futures—at a time when jobs are being cut, unemployment is rising and an average 83 people apply for each available job (Vasagar and Shepherd 2011)[4]. Thus English HE is being privatised, carrying neoliberalisation much further than before. More private providers, primarily concerned to satisfy the bottom line of profit, not learning, teaching or research, are encouraged to enter the increasingly competitive fray[5]. The consequence will likely be, as Finlayson (2010) has noted, that such universities:

> will likely pack classrooms, hire cheaper teachers (demanding that government put pressure on outdated trade unions and professional associations), and put on shorter degrees in the cheapest subjects[6].

McGettigan (2011) further notes that perhaps the most 'chilling' prospect is that 'global higher education providers that operate in many countries from India to Spain to the USA' will face no barriers in 'operating as universities here as part of our system'—although how they could offer less than the proposed Coventry University College mentioned in footnote 7 is seems unimaginable. Private providers will be still further encouraged by not being subjected to the kind of pervasive regulations that the rest of the system has to endure (Collini 2011, McGettigan 2011). Finally, the recent White Paper proposes that from autumn 2012, 20.000 of the currently fixed

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[3] This is contradictory of course; as Inglis (2011) asks, 'What would happen f the choices made by half a million 16-year-olds for their preferred A levels led to the evisceration of, say, all engineering departments'.

[4] A colleague told me that his Dean had, at a recent presentation to the Faculty, claimed that 'employability' remained a key goal that academics should encourage in their students. My colleague told me that he had asked the Dean, given such high competitiveness in the job market, if employability meant either providing students with the skills they needed to enter this competition or the ability to obtain such a job. The Dean's response was that both goals were essential; my colleague presumed that if his students were not the lucky ones in an incredibly stacked deck, his own job could be on the line in future.

[5] The CEO of BPP, the first such provider granted university status (July 2010) under t the Coalition government came to power, aims to cut running costs by 25% and increase marketing costs by an estimated 25%--which will deplete running costs still further (Shepherd 2011, Hotson 2011).

[6] The confirmation of this process is indicated by the recent announcement of recruitment (from the week commencing 24 October 2011) for what Vasagar (2011) calls the "no frills" Coventry University College which will charge no more than £4,800 per year. CUC, which will open in autumn 2012, will be running professional programmes classes seven days a week , 42 weeks a year from 7am to 10pm weekdays and to 4pm weekends. Despite its association with Coventry University, students will have no 'access to the university's library, IT or sporting facilities' (Vasagar 2011).

number of student places that the government previously allocated across universities will be opened for competition between programmes in universities costing a maximum £7,500 per student per year. Private providers will likely participate—with some institutions that are currently struggling financially going bankrupt. The government is also holding back 65,000 places to students with top A level results of two As and a B or higher. These universities, likely to be amongst those charging £9,000 (undoubtedly impelled partly by students and universities' growing consumerist assumption that 'the best' costs most), will gain more income from students than they do at present—and certainly considerably more per student than those charging £7,500 or less. Thus a race to the top (of more than three times as many places to institutions charging no more than £7,500) accompanies the race to the bottom, polarising the entire system still further[7]. Such polarisation will only increase in future as the 2012 figure of 85,000 such places in total—roughly one-quarter of all student places—is promised to grow annually thereafter.

Thus the current Coalition government is intensifying the existing processes of the neoliberalisation of HE institutions. The social goods and processes of the formerly public HE system are now being more fully privatised; what was once 'one of the world's most successful higher education system' (Collni 2011) is being subjected to harsh market realities for all but the elite. As Inglis (2011) notes, what is being produced is 'a new order' that 'will create a rigged market in higher education, one that will confer and confirm privilege among the privileged, riches upon the [already] rich, and ensure the complete control of demand and supply'. Similar processes are happening elsewhere. What kind of a response can be made by those of us firmly committed to an education system for a socially just, ecologically sustainable and equitable world? Thankfully, alternatives are emerging—here and elsewhere. Critical pedagogy is central to these efforts.

2a. Critical Pedagogy: What is it?

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[7]The race to the top is also indicated by the recently created and privately backed New College of the Humanities, led by a group of internationally renowned academics with A C Grayling as its first master. This university will charge double top capped tuition fee (£18,000) with lecturers paid 25% more than those at public universities. Terry Eagleton recently called these academics 'a bunch of *prima donnas* jumping ship and creaming off the bright', and claimed that they were:

> taking advantage of a crumbling university system to rake off money from the rich. As such, they are betraying all those academics who have been fighting the cuts for the sake of their students (Eagleton 2011).

If this institution succeeds, others of its ilk it could follow, leading to fuller 'educational apartheid', with the elite being educated at such institutions. Interestingly, the government will not offer such institutions the opportunity for their students to apply for loans which might limit their further development (Collini 2011).

Let me start by differentiating critical pedagogy from popular education, which is one of the former's key informing forces, with both being powerfully underpinned by the work of the popular educator Paulo Freire. As Crowther notes, popular education is:

- rooted in the real interests and struggles of ordinary people
- overtly political and critical of the status quo
- committed to progressive social and political change (p.16).

Popular education is committed to and often located in 'communities of resistance and struggle' that share a collectively produced pedagogy' that aims 'to link education with social action' (Crowther 2010:16). Critical pedagogy shares the second and third premises bulleted above of popular education. However, it starts not from ordinary people actively engaging in struggle, but, to date, from the student-teacher relationship in the formal education system. Is critical pedagogy by itself enough for academics in HE to do at present in a climate where the public university is being dismantled, where, as Inglis unflinchingly notes, academics are presently largely 'a docile and nerveless workforce'? Darder et al note that there is an urgency for criticality as a practice that aims to fight for 'emancipatory and progressive' ends for HE (2002:10). In the third section below I suggest how far critical pedagogy may be able to go in the university at present, considering, along the way, its commonalities with and differences from the worldly pedagogy that informs the teaching of global citizenship. I first turn to four key characteristics of critical pedagogy.

2b Critical pedagogy (like popular education) presumes that education is not and can never be a neutral process. In fact, education normally largely serves elite interests.

As Ira Shor noted, 'the whole activity of education is political in nature [. . .] All forms of education are political, whether or not teachers and students acknowledge the politics in their work' (Shor 1993: 27).Certainly the above analysis of the ideological transformations now restructuring English HE system are indicative of how education is a highly politicised endeavour. Shor's insight, which he shared with and developed from his collaboration with Freire, is informed by Marx and Engels' observation that the powerful shape society in their image to ensure their continued material, social and political dominance; 'The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas'. Freire himself argued that whilst the education system claims that it 'serves everyone', in fact it 'function[s] in the interests of the dominant class'

(Freire in Freire and Macedo 1997) who have 'the power to define what it means to be an intellectual' (Ibid)—that is, what it means to be a successfully educated person given their control of the ruling ideas. Freire further suggests that dominant interests also define failure: '[o]nce you accept the political dimension of education, it becomes difficult to accept the . . . [the dominant class's conclusion: that the dropouts [and failures] are to blame'. There are resonances here with the Bourdieuan concept of 'giftedness' somehow being located amongst those students from already privileged backgrounds. These shared observations suggest that an alternative pedagogy would start by contesting the current order, offering more opportunities to the less advantaged. Given current worsening conditions, does it not seem to be a kind of 'good sense', as Gramsci put it, to be utilising critical pedagogy wherever we can in the formal education system?

Like critical pedagogy, some of the recent global citizenship literature acknowledges some of the political challenges of the impending near privatisation of HE, where students will be construed as seeking 'a return on their investment in higher education' (2011). Rosalind Duhs suggests that already advantaged students at elite institutions might seek to use their appreciation of global citizenship to further enhance their cvs and negotiate to increase their advantage when dealing with the Other. Students at the less advantaged institutions, given their less privileged social and economic locations, might be likely to take on board 'not only the privileges and rights inherent in the notion of citizenship, but also the responsibilities' (Duhs 2011). But will this ethos continue in such institutions if they are more poorly resourced than their elite counterparts as fuller privatisation occurs? Will programmes that offer such alternatives still be present in the near future in such universities?

> **2c. If education is inherently political, then an alternative perspective starts from different political assumptions and utilises different pedagogical practices.**

For Freire, the formal educational system organised by and for the elite rests on 'the banking concept of education'. Here students are positioned as passively 'receiving, filing and storing the deposits entrusted to them' (Freire 1996:53) by the teacher at the front of the classroom acting as 'perfect sage' (Freire 1995:71), trained largely in and for the perpetuation of elite educational purposes. Freire's concept of problem-posing pedagogy, like Dewey's child-centred curriculum, starts from and gives primacy to 'the participation of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct his [sic] activities in the learning process' (Dewey in Shor 1998). Teachers and

students are thus 'co-investigators in dialogue' (Freire 1996:62) that requires 'the active cooperation of the pupil in construction of the purposes involved in his [sic] studying' (Dewey in Shor 1998).   Teachers thus seek to facilitate student recognition of limits they place on their understandings of themselves and the world; the teacher explores with students what Freire called the contradictory, 'dialectically constituted' themes and Dewey called the 'generative themes' forged from the 'ideas, hopes, doubts, challenges' (Freire 1996:83) of their era. These themes contain partial truths (similar to those that Gramsci introduced with his concept of 'common sense'). Teachers work with students' partial truths, locating them in a wider perspective that expands students' previously more limited understandings, posing questions so that students might consider how dominant perspectives tended to 'mythicize' their perspectives, draining them of 'deeper significance' (Freire 1996: 83).

Helping students expand limited frameworks has some resonance with the widening of students' experiences that the process of developing students' global citizenship attributes entails. For example, Fanghanel and Cousin talk of a 'worldly pedagogy' concerned with what Hill (2010:14) considers the 'dialectics of distantiation and participation'. Such a pedagogy encourages students to question and expand current understandings by exploring "their situatedness . . . but then 'forget[ting]' this for a posture of 'critical distancing' from origins and formative experiences" (Fanghanel and Cousin 2010). Fanghanel and Cousin examine how this pedagogy could be said to have been developing amongst Israeli and Palestinian students studying in the UK. Fanghanel and Cousin found that students' understandings of their own and the Other's stance grew by having had the opportunity to move outside, partly forgetting their prior situated stance and situation. Doing so enabled them to have experienced what Hill has characterised as 'a radical moral transformation'. For Hill (2010:15), '[t]o forget is an act of moral defiance [that] paves the way for the individual to invest personal meaning in her actions and her newly forged cosmopolitan identity'. Certainly this experience powerfully changed these students' perspectives: some were unable afterwards to live in their homelands.

The shared interrogation of one's prior perspective in both global citizenship and critical pedagogy has different ends, however. Developing students' global citizenship attributes—as I understand them—through using worldly pedagogies focuses on students as individuals capable of developing broader moral orientations. The Marxist perspective of critical pedagogy that others and I take seeks to facilitate students widening their initially limited appreciation of their situatedness—and to see

which groups in society benefit from such a limited appreciation. Is such a stance not particularly appropriate in the present dire circumstances of HE? We can further appreciate the similarities and differences between these pedagogies, and their relevance for the present, by considering the trajectories they offer.

2d. Critical pedagogy moves beyond the classroom to praxis

Freire's articulation of popular education recognised Fanon's insight that the oppressed are '"hosts" of the oppressor' (Freire 1996:30). Critical pedagogy similarly aims to encourage students to realise the presence and power of this host and to dislodge its primacy by exploring how it could be seen as fitting into a wider double consciousness. Freire argued that this dislodging was most fully realised in and through a process of 'conscientisation' that:

> does not stop at the level of mere subjective perceptions of a situation, but through [joint] action prepares men [sic] for the struggles against the obstacles to their humanization' (Freire 1996:100).

As the Trapese Collective noted (2007), learning through struggling collectively to do things differently enhances the learning process. Like Freire, their work is:

> rooted in defiance ('we are not going to take this anymore'), and struggle ('we want to change things'), and geared towards change ('how do we get out of this mess'), while promoting solidarity ('your struggle is our struggle') (2007:108-109).

Pedagogy rooted in defiance, struggle and change arguably makes learning a more engaging and grounded process. I can imagine some readers thinking that such a pedagogy would be too 'political' for HE, even today.   If, as I argued in 2b above, all learning in and outside the university is politically charged, and if, as section 1 above argued, the public university is currently being dismantled through processes of neoliberalisation, why should one not counter pedagogy informed by hegemonic politics with those informed by counterhegemonic politics? Of course we must be careful not to impose our views on students, but to show them the breadth they provide.   Readers might then ask, 'But aren't you thereby imposing your views on students?' My response would be, firstly, don't we all do so, implicitly and/or explicitly and, second, somewhat contradictorily, neither I nor critical pedagogy colleagues seek to impose our views on students; our aim is to offer them, to juxtapose such alternatives to conventional perspectives, so that students can then take what they

want from a broader range of perspectives. One way to do this, as the discussion of Public Sociology below suggests, is to encourage students to develop their understandings in and through projects of their own, which, for some, becomes praxis, whilst for others remains practice, depending on how far they take on board the political understandings we offer.

Critical pedagogy, then, arguably seeks to develop pedagogies of engagement that combine "academic and activist knowledge, and 'classroom learning' with social action" (Amsler et al 2010:12). It assumes that critical thinking in universities is not superior to, but different from, that developed by progressive practitioners elsewhere, and therefore that 'critical learning for progressive action happens everywhere in society' (Amsler et al 2010: 11). Especially in the present context of the government dismantling of public HE, there is an urgency for critical pedagogues to 'join strengths [with others] to create new types of knowledge that can inform, motivate and enable more critical and progressive social, cultural and political agency' (Amsler et al 2010:11).

This agency aims to help people realise their fuller humanisation. Here critical pedagogy resonates with what Hill called 'political cosmopolitanism' seeking to achieve 'ideal and just social structures' (2010:6). Similarly, Cousin's articulation of cosmopolitanism overlaps somewhat with critical pedagogy:

> [c]osmopolitanism does not imply a submergence of differences, rather it concerns an emphasis on the values we can share or generate together as global citizens; thus it is about exploring common ground (Cousin 2010).

Critical pedagogy, like cosmopolitanism, is also concerned with commonalities and differences as part of the process of encouraging peoples' humanisation. However, Freirean based critical pedagogy locates this process in a wider political framework; it argues that '[i]njustice, exploitation the violence of oppressors—and their denial and dissimulation in euphemisms and ideologies—generate dehumanization' (Feagin and Vera 2008:17). Its aim is for the oppressed 'to liberate themselves as well as their oppressors' (Freire in Feagin and Vera 2008:170. Critical pedagogy would say to cosmopolitanism that our humanisation can only be fully realised if those who currently hold power are made to give it up.

2e. Critical pedagogy is becoming more difficult to realise in the increasingly neoliberalised university.

Critical pedagogy now faces greater challenges than before given intensifying neoliberalisation in and outside the university. Freire recognised nearly 15 years ago (shortly before he died) that neoliberalisation was 'the demon of the world today' (Torres 2009). A year earlier he spoke of 'the immobilizing discourse of the neoliberal ideology' (in Rossatto 2005:16). Freire recognised that the elite encouraged others to believe that they lived in 'a closed world from which there is no exit', a world that had to be accepted in its own terms, with all the conditions/limitations that this entailed. For Freire such fatalism could be countered, even at the present time of such profound immobilisation, by humanity utilising its capacity to hope.

For Freire '[h]ope is an ontological need… an existential concrete imperative' (2006:2); human incompleteness provides the basis for such an imperative. Neoliberalisation makes it more difficult to fulfil this need given the deep embedding of fatalism in peoples' consciousness. In education, for example, Freire pointed to the growing focus on 'training' students to acquire 'technical and vocational skills' so that they might adapt to a globally organised competitive struggle for survival (in Rossatto 2005:16). The message underpinning this focus on training is that '[t]he dream is dead, the utopia is finished, and history has ended' (2005:16). There is little hope when such a singularly instrumental orientation asserts that a dog eat dog survival of the fittest attitude is essential in such a narrowly competitive and ruthless world. What will happen to HE from next year when students will be more fully positioned as customers receiving a service? Duhs' concerns about the ways that privileged students at elite institutions could use insights from global citizenship training to their own advantage echo this question.

And yet, the idea of hope being an ontological need to overcome incompleteness resonates with colleagues and my own work with students to date. We find that students largely embrace critical pedagogy because it offers them hope, agency and the chance to work with others to make a difference to the world. Its capacity to juxtapose their current assumptions with those wider assumptions of a left perspective can potentially encourage students to widen their perspectives. Perhaps this is why a small and growing minority of academics are using it, especially at this time of crisis, of seeming immobilty.

I now explore two such projects I am involved in, one of with my colleague Matt Badcock at BCU and another with colleagues who have begun to create the Social Science Centre (SSC), Lincoln. The former offers an example of the possibilities and

limits of and for an alternative pedagogy and practice within and against the neoliberalised university whilst the latter offers an example of possibilities and limits for an alternative outside and against the neoliberal university.

3a. Public Sociology in and against the neoliberal university

In autumn 2009, my colleague Matt Badcock and I set up what was, and still is, the first and only undergraduate UK programme on Public Sociology. Matt introduced the programme after having been inspired by Michael Burawoy's efforts to re-introduce a politically informed sociology in his Presidential address to the 2004 American Sociological Association meeting. For Burawoy, this vision of Public Sociology sought to enable students and academics to intervene in today's very troubled world as earlier sociologists had done when the discipline emerged. Burawoy spoke of how:

> Today, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, . . . unfettered capitalism fuels market tyrannies and untold inequities on a global scale, while resurgent democracy too often becomes a thin veil for powerful interests, disenfranchisement, mendacity, and even violence . . . In its beginning sociology aspired to be . . . an angel of history, searching for order in the broken fragments of modernity, seeking to salvage the promise of progress . . . The original passion for social justice, economic equality, human rights, sustainable environment, political freedom or simply a better world, that drew so many of us to sociology, is [now] channeled into the pursuit of academic credentials.. . . We have spent a century building professional knowledge, . . . [N]ow, we are more than ready to embark on a systematic back-translation, taking knowledge back to those from whom it came, making public issues out of private troubles, and thus regenerating sociology's moral fiber. Herein lies the promise and challenge of public sociology . . . (Burawoy 2004: 4,5).

Building on Burawoy, Matt recently argued that at the present 'critical juncture' Public Sociology offers an opportunity to write and engage "with the world outside the academy, one that is more interventionist and . . . aims to create mutually beneficial links with different 'publics'" (2010:27). Matt and I have sought, through this routeway, to expand sociology's commitment to, and engagement with, its publics in order to reconnect sociology with social issues today. Our usage of critical pedagogy, which I introduced, builds in part on Burawoy's idea that students are sociology's first public, taking insights they gain as university students with them outside, as

graduates. Like Burawoy we start 'from where they are, not from where we are' (2004:x).

However, as we read Burawoy and others, we began to see absences in/limits to his version of Public Sociology. Like Hays we were worried that merely adding Public Sociology to the already established mix of Professional, Policy and Critical Sociology limited its remit as it:

> allows the intellectual insularity of the discipline to remain intact, does little to affect the conflicts and status inequalities within it, and, most crucially in this context, opens up the potential for simply *compartmentalizing* public sociology within the discipline—thereby reproducing its second class status (2007:80, emphasis in original).

We also wondered how possible it would be to realise this more politicised form of sociology given that it did not mention creating a '"sociology for the oppressed" or one that aimed "to reduce that oppression" (Feagin and Vera 2008:33). Further, we felt uncomfortable with a Public Sociology that was less dialogical than it could be, in that its practitioners were said to 'engage directly in interactive dialogue with some public, though they do not necessarily accept that public's views' (Feagin and Vera 2008:33). For us, as for the Critical Pedagogy Collective (2010), academic knowledge production processes differ from, but are not superior to, those developed by progressive, grassroots and/or campaigning groups.

We found that we shared Feagin and Vera's view of the primacy of Freire's work for creating what they call 'liberation sociology'. For them liberation sociology was literally radical, seeking to get 'to the root of things', in a process of "ever greater engagement in the effort to transform concrete, objective reality"' (Feagn and Vera 2008:21). We did not rename our programme 'Liberation Sociology' after reading their book. We feared that such an overtly political agenda might face management obstructions (and here we were not assuming that our university was any more controlling than that of other universities in the Million+ rank). Nonetheless, the required textbook of our programme is *Liberation Sociology* and, like Feagin and Vera we seek to encourage students to critically and dialectically link insights from the university to those in the world outside.

We have had some success thus far with this programme which includes second and third year students. In the first semester of year 2 students take a weekly public sociology module that we co-teach in 'the beanbag room' that students and I

established a few years ago. Thus far small classes have allowed us to engage in increasingly participatory dialogues with students. During the second semester students complete either two or the full four modules respectively as a project orplacement usually outside the university, exploring issues of concern to them. In year three students can either continue with the same topic/location they worked on/in (in one module each semester) whilst documenting/researching/supporting an issue or a group of concern to them. Thus *students* choose the direction of their work—although the same is true of sociology students outside the routeway doing final year dissertations. But unlike dissertations, projects are more engaged with issues or groups in and outside the university and often involve more 'doing' with others than singularly writing about issues these others might face.

To provide a flavour of the most successful student projects, below are extracts from two third year students' blogs that provided the basis of their final year projects.

Student 1 (project working with asylum seekers):

- So why is it we only hear one side of the story [abut asylum seekers?] . . . Hearing . . . about their life directly from an asylum seeker is very different from hearing about [them] . . . from the media . . . [A]s people in society it is our job to be critical and dig deeper . . . Being critical is . . . very hard . . . , as i already know. I am now critical but I never was [before]. . .[A]fter studying public sociology i have become a new person who now challenges everything I read.

- Public sociology according to Burawoy (2005 cited in Jefferies 2009) involves [developing] sociological knowledge and understandings with those outside the academic community . . . As a public sociologist our aim is to go out into the community and . . . share our academic knowledge . . . Public sociology is therefore a dialogue, in which students and the community interact.

Student 2 (project on public sector cuts):

- I am a Public Sociology student . . . carrying out a project on how the cuts [to public sector organisations] are not necessary, but are about fulfilling the ideology of neo-liberalism, the same ideology which had caused the recession in the first place. I feel it is important to create awareness about how ideological these cuts really are, as it will have disastrous consequences

for the majority of us in Britain and for generations to come. We should not be fooled these cuts will only benefit the small minority of elitists.

- I am going to find out how young people who are . . . in school, sixth form, college, at university or looking for work believe how the cuts will affect them and their future decisions . . . since, they will be one of the worst hit groups from the cuts . . I am also interested in finding out whether young people think that the cuts are necessary or not, because this will indicate whether a further ideological change is already taking place or if a potential resistance is building up.

These students' reflective blogs indicate that they were digging more deeply into issues than previously. At least one of them claimed that this changed them— although many sociology lecturers have long found that students generally express a feeling of considerable change in their engagement with knowledge and the wider world from doing a 'normal' sociology degree. In both of these examples, nonetheless, students expressed a new found recognition of how powerful interests shaped the issue that they researched/the groups they worked with.

We believe that a number of factors contributed to this success. These include: teaching in the dialogically oriented beanbag room; teaching underpinned by critical pedagogy insights; having two tutors with a small number of students; the topics we covered (including some explicitly political such as student activism in May '68, and last autumn's student movement); bringing the political activism of one of us into classroom discussions to provide examples of possible strategies for collective, transformative work—and offering projects with activist organisations. The programme has won (2011) a university award for encouraging 'employability', an award we cynically applied for in order to obtain what we believed was due recognition of the programme as well as a small monetary award that we spent on video cameras and voice recorders for students' projects this year and into the future) The programme also achieved national recognition[8].

We have also faced some challenges. First, students engaged to varying degrees with the programme; a small minority seemingly opted for this routeway because

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[8] A conference presentation we gave on the programme was followed by a request to provide a case study for an HE funded project on creative third year projects that is now one of the few case studies being followed up (University of Gloucestershire).

they saw it as offering them a chance to do a degree without having to complete the normal diet of modules. This happens in all programmes and thus it is thus hardly surprising that it also occurred in ours. Second, we spent (and still spend) a significant amount of time helping second year students develop their reading, writing and analytical skills, a lack that has prevented their in-depth engagement with Public Sociology. Third, and probably connected to the second point, the first cohort of students seemed to find it difficult to understand what Public Sociology entailed despite us encouraging students to discuss this in their first semester 2nd year module. 3rd year students at the end of he course said that they had difficulty explaining how their projects exemplified Public Sociology. Our solution, as ever juggling work demands and students' concerns, has been, from 2011-2012, to introduce bi-weekly classes for third year students, with every other one offering them the opportunity to link projects with relevant literatures. Fourth, the programme is threatened with closure due to low student uptake to date (currently 14 2nd year and 8 3rd year students) and to the general uncertainty as to the survival of the routeway and the Sociology degree generally.

How far, then, does this example suggest we can critical pedagogy in the neoliberalised university? On the positive side, we have encouraged more students than ever to develop their agency, criticality and connectedness to the wider world and we have received local and national recognition for our efforts. However, we cannot know until next year if we will be able to continue the programme, the usage of critical pedagogy and the building of links between different sites and practices of critical, transformative knowledge production. We therefore do the sociology whose name we dare not speak whilst recognising that this sociology may not have much of a future—and so we do it with an even more explicitly radical agenda while we can. Such a project has had considerable effect on students to date even if it does not go anywhere near as far as could efforts outside and against the neoliberalised university. Unless and until Public Sociology informed by critical pedagogy has a bigger presence in the discipline and in other sociology departments across this country and in the US where it started (as well as elsewhere), we, like Hays (2007), fear that its radical capacities will not be realised and the possible reorientation it could offer students will not be tapped. If, as Brenner et al note, counter-neoliberalisation requires articulation between geographically distinct places, then this singular programme, in one country, disconnected from programmes in other countries, will not have much impact on the discipline or the wider world. Especially in the current context where Public Sociology is being dismantled, much more than

one programme, in one institution, is needed. Our efforts, whilst useful, are but drops in a bucket that is, to mix metaphors, presently having huge holes drilled into it that are destroying its primary function.

4b. The Social Science Centre, Lincoln: outside and against the neoliberalised university

The critiques enumerated above of the deepening of neoliberalisation generally and of the neoliberalisation of the university in particular indicate how damaging this process has thus far been and how much further this damage could go from as soon as autumn 2012. I have long been optimistic—in the Freirean sense of maintaining hope or the Gramscian sense of exercising pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will—about using critical pedagogy in and against the neoliberalised university. I have also experimented slightly with utilising critical pedagogy outside and against the neoliberalised university; in September 2010 Sarah Amsler, Gargi Bhattacharya (both from Aston University) and I held a day, 'The university in the park' in the local park of two of us with the intention of experimenting with the possibilities of and for critical pedagogy outside. Whilst the event had some success[9], it was shortly overtaken by the student movement and none of us have returned to it, partly because the latter movement took some of our time and energy and partly because the fuller privatisation of the university that the Browne Report, the Comprehensive Spending Review and the White Paper introduced have created some alternative collective responses.

My focus here is on one such effort, the Social Science Centre, Lincoln, with which I am involved. Interestingly, and positively, it is not the only such centre to emerge; another one now operating in England with a foundation degree this year and a BA programme starting in 2012-2013 in 'cultural activism' is being offered from 'the Free University of Liverpool'. Their mission statement starts with the phrase, 'THIS IS A PROTEST!' and indicates that their aim is to 'rise up and educate each other and ourselves to FIGHT BACK!'. As I don't have the time or energy to be involved with both (or with any others) and as I have colleagues/comrades working at the SSC, I have decided to work with them as part of the SSC, Lincoln. My intention, like some interested others from other cities, is to work with the SSC, Lincoln in its first year of operation (2012-2013) in order to then set up, with others, another hub in Birmingham hopefully the following year (2013-2014). This fits with the SSC, Lincoln's assumption that 'the model of small scale, self-funded higher education

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[9] We had one of two revolutionary speakers and a few local passerbys joined the discussion.

provision will be adapted for different subject areas and in different locations nationally and internationally' (Neary 2011). I would argue, as Brenner et al would, that this is potentially a real strength to the project: if it can link with other such projects elsewhere in the country and around the world, it stands a chance of contributing to the emergence of a possibly articulated counter-neoliberalised university[10].

A recent article on the SSC, Lincoln, (7 October) by Mike Neary, one of its initiators, on the openDemocracy website, provides some hints at what I believe are its crucial elements. First, the SSC emerged in response to the "act of vandalism against 'the idea of the University' as a progressive and political project" of the Browne Report, the Comprehensive Spending Review and the White Paper in Higher Education. Thus, its emergence stemmed from the wish of its initiators to contribute to a negation of this act of vandalism. Second, it rests on profoundly differing principles to those of the consumerist, privatised HE system now being more fully realised. It offers instead:

> A cooperative model of higher education managed by its members—academics, students, administrators, educators, activists—on the basis of democratic, non-hierarchical principles (2011).

Thus it is participatory and runs as a bottom up rather than top down process. All who participate are part of this cooperative (rather than being located as potential competitors to others). A cooperative ethos informs all aspects of Centre activities. At present a group, formed at our September 2011 meeting, will be presenting to the October 11 meeting its proposals on the principles and practices of recruitment of student-scholars (to start in December 2011) and teacher-scholars—names we agreed upon at the September 2011 meeting to capture our shared concern with our affirmation of ourselves as producers of knowledge (Neary 20080. The curriculum group, to which I belong, will be presenting to the October meeting the collaboratively produced principles and practices for negotiating teaching and learning processes. The assessment group will similarly, presenting its proposals at the October meeting. Following discussion of groups' work at the meeting, there will be a week for further debate virtually to agree upon principles and practices. These processes are clearly indicative of the collaborative and dialogical basis of the SSC, Lincoln's work. The SSC, Lincoln will also be cooperative in that employed student-scholars and teacher-

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[10] In fact there was an international meeting at the end of September in Tunisia organised by Edu-Factory whose logo is: conflicts and transformations of the university, http://www.edu-factory.org/wp/international-meeting-tunisia-september-29-october-2-/

scholars can contribute to its continuation monthly or on an ad hoc basis (Neary 2011). Funds received will be used 'for research projects and summer schools and setting up a journal' (Neary 2011). Students will therefore not face large debts and academics will have the space to 'create sites of intellectual activity which are not susceptible to the political whims of the current political and economic process' (Neary 2011).   Clearly some of the deep structural contradictions occurring in the university today will be addressed in order to create a more humane synthesis.

Whilst the SSC, Lincoln thus relies on volunteers, it is by no means an example of the government's proposed 'Big Society: the SSC is not:

> 'for the Big Society' but 'against the totalising society of Capital'. It seeks not to contribute to what is, but to a potentially vital alternative built from 'the ruins of what the university has become' (Neary 2011).

From the negation of what is, that is, it seeks to develop what could be. Further, the SSC, Lincoln is not located in a university but in a local county council building in the centre of Lincoln, literally outside and beyond the university and has no formal links to any university[11]. Choosing such a location was inspired by the Social Centre movement here and elsewhere that 'emerged as sites for the development of autonomous politics and resistance to the growing corporate take-over, enclosure and alienation of everyday life' (Neary 2011). Thus the space of the SSC, Lincoln is anti-corporate, open and collective.

There are two further dimensions of cooperation that inform the SSC, Lincoln practice. First, politically, it is assumed that all Centre members 'share progressive political values, based on the principles of social justice and democracy, but the key issue is what we do rather than what we say we believe in' (Neary 2011). Here I am mindful of Marx's 11th thesis on Feuerbach of the need to move from interpreting to changing the world. Doing, aiming to practice praxis, underpins all Centre activities and orientations. Second, students will not receive marks but written evaluations that summarise what they have accomplished on modules and work will be externally moderated by outside scholars. Third, teaching will occur on evenings and weekends so that student- and teacher-scholars who need/want to can engage in paid work. Concomitantly, the equivalent of undergraduate, MA and PhD students are to engage in scholarship over a longer period of time than that of current

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[11] The aim is that its members will be able to use some of the University of Lincoln's resources such as its library.

degrees: six, four and eight years respectively. The plan is to recruit 20 students at across all three levels for autumn 2012.

Challenges will undoubtedly arise and the proof of this pudding will be found as we continue to engage in its making and then its eating. A possible immediate downside, that will need to be continually addressed, is that students will not receive university degrees but the equivalent as the programme is being set up outside the university system. In a climate of impossibly difficult odds against securing employment, it might be argued that we are adding to the difficulties. But then we might reply that we would hope that the student-scholars we work with would not be those who would enter conventional employment. And, further, we wonder, is any employment conventional in these days of profound work insecurity and intensification as well as lowering wages?

What could such an anti-corporatised, re-publicised university offer? I envisage it will be a kind of parallel institution, informed by its practitioners who are also working in and against the current university system. I would hope that it could work not just with other hubs such as that which I hope to co-introduce with colleagues in Birmingham, but with other similar groups such as the Free University of Liverpool in this country and with alternatives in other countries. Only then could it contribute as fully as possible to a kind of deepening counter-neoliberalisation process of which Brenner et al speak.

4. Concluding thoughts

In the current HE system 'the official speech used for the discussion of what universities are for . . . [is] one in which it is impossible to tell the truth' (Inglis 2011). This makes it difficult for those of us working within it speak truth to power. Resistance against this system is getting harder given growing and now increasingly overwhelming work loads, job insecurity and lowering wages in our institutions and the wider system, As those of us active in the union know, our colleagues seem unable to act together, or to believe that acting together could make a difference— perhaps this is the kind of fatalism that neoliberalisation engenders at which Freire was hinting. There still remains, as the Public Sociology programme my colleague and are running, some possibilities for encouraging students critical thinking and action. But this space could close down and the next few years in the wider HE system do not at all seem promising for its continuation, especially in less elite institutions such as the one where I work. Interestingly, Neary is now operating in and against and beyond and against the neoliberalised university system. In addition

to being a key initiator of the SSC, Lincoln, he is the Dean of Teaching and Learning at Lincoln University and as such is enabling the university to fundamentally link research and teaching introducing across the university the idea that students are 'collaborators in the production of knowledge' produced in and through 'research engaged teaching' being 'placed at the core of the undergraduate curriculum' (http://studentasproducer.lincoln.ac.uk/). For my part, I aim to continue to work in, against the neoliberalised university until I decide I can no longer take the former or they sack me. I will also continue to work beyond and against the neoliberalised university as a teacher-scholar at the Social Science Centre, Lincoln.

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