



# Public Sociology and Social Movements: Incorporation or a War of Position?

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## Introduction

Neoliberalism provides a framework for understanding the stage of capitalist development throughout the world, although both the means by which neoliberalism is mediated, and its impact, are diverse (Harvey 2006). This applies to the forms of capital accumulation, the types of social movement resistance, and the ways in which the state is diverted from social welfare and employed for surveillance and repression. It also applies in the university sector through processes of privatisation, commodification of knowledge, competitive individualism, exploitation of new areas of social life and governmentality of both students and employees.

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Whilst university governance has largely colluded in—if not embraced—these neoliberal developments, there have been sites of resistance within the higher education sector from the perspectives of liberalism (Collini 2012), critical education (Crowther et al. 2005), feminism (Thwaites and Pressland 2017) and Autonomist (Hall and Winn 2017) as well as more orthodox Marxism (Perselli 2011). Much critique of the neoliberal university locates the problematic within the boundaries of the university itself—its academics, staff, students, pedagogy, management, governance or political economy. However, one of the ways in which academics have sought to resist this process is through engaging with social movements outwith the university: movements ‘from below’; movements opposing neoliberalism and its impacts. Examples of such academic-movement engagement exist throughout the world (see for example the Popular Education Network [Crowther 2013], *Interface* journal). Social movements are understood in the sense used by Cox and Nilsen (2014) as collective participants in historical processes of social movement over the contestation of human needs and aspirations: ‘we define social movements as a process in which a specific social group develops a collective project of skilled activities centred on a rationality – a particular way of making sense of and relating to the social world – that tries to change or maintain a dominant structure of entrenched needs and capacities, in part or whole’ (Cox and Nilsen 2014: 57).

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse several examples of academics working within the neoliberal university engaging with social movements, to assess the extent to which such activities constitute resistance to the neoliberal attack on universities. The context of these examples is in Scotland, with its ‘uneven and tension-loaded balance between the enduring legacies of Scottish social democracy and the influences of neoliberal economics’ (Scott and Mooney 2009: 379) and in which nationalist imaginaries form contested spaces for masking class inequalities (Law and Mooney 2012; Mooney and Scott 2016). Whilst the particularities will vary between contexts, the underlying pressures of neoliberal mediation and resistance to it are global and so it is hoped that general insights can be drawn from a theoretical analysis of these

concrete examples. Three examples will be explored, of collaboration with social movements by academics at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, most of which are documented elsewhere (see for example Scandrett 2017). The movements involved include feminist, environmental justice and mental health service user/psychiatric survivors' movements. The analysis of these will draw on theoretical concepts derived from Gramsci, and in particular the work on lifelong education as categorised by Ettore Gelpi at UNESCO in the 1970s and 1980s, when neoliberalism was in the ascendancy (Gelpi 1979, 1985).

Gelpi's understanding of lifelong education is useful here since he locates pedagogical opportunities in social conflicts which expose structural rifts in societies and also motivate learning amongst those collectively struggling for human dignity and political emancipation. Moreover, Gelpi's analysis transcends debates about institutional location and pedagogical practice so, in contrast to some others who emphasise the political nature of educational practice (Illich 1971; Freire 1972). Gelpi provides a means of addressing the question of emancipatory education even in the context of neoliberal universities despite all the pressures towards commodified curriculum, productivity-driven pedagogy and managerial exploitation. Gelpi argued that educational practice is always political and always has a potential to be a liberating practice through political engagement (Griffin 1983; Scandrett et al. 2010).

The final part of the essay will draw on Antonio Gramsci's concept of the 'war of position' to analyse the nature of resistance to neoliberalism of public sociology practice with social movements. In particular this final section critically examines the counter-argument that, contrary to the wishful thinking of radical academics, academic engagement with social movements constitutes the incorporation of movements into the university and thus to the discipline of neoliberalism, rather than practices of resistance. Gramsci's analysis allows us better to understand the role of lifelong education as defensive resilience, as well as an opportunity to challenge neoliberalism, providing opportunities to 'dig in' and protect hard won positions under attack, whilst providing occasional spaces to progress the agendas of subaltern movements.

## Pedagogical Practice

Feminist knowledge in many ways provides a model of university-movement relations as feminist academics have played a significant role in the praxis of the women's movement and the theorisation of its epistemological production. Women's studies, gender studies and sexual politics courses have been important spaces of struggle since the 1970s and have made important contributions both academically and in advancements in the movements for gender equality (Delamont 2003; Thwaites and Pressland 2017). However, aspects of the women's movement have been criticised for a 'dangerous liaison with neoliberalism' (Fraser 2013: 14), somewhat to the neglect of radical demands for gender equality, especially with feminism's 'cultural turn' (Jackson 2001; Fraser 2008, 2013). Meanwhile, subject to the pressures of neoliberalism, many universities have also abandoned women's studies programmes. At the same time, feminists have provided a significant critique of the gendered nature of neoliberal programmes of austerity, surveillance and dispossession (Connell 2011; Smith 2008), and incorporation of the demands of the women's movement into state governance has made improvements to the lives of women despite the damage of neoliberalism (Scottish Government 2010).

*Gender Justice and Violence* involves a university-movement alliance through a partnership between Queen Margaret University (QMU) and Scottish Women's Aid (SWA). SWA is a social movement organisation which operates as a policy, campaigning and training organisation on behalf of local women's aid groups who provide direct support and refuge for women escaping domestic abuse. The course is taught by feminist activists under the auspices of SWA alongside QMU academics. It is offered at undergraduate honours level and the students on the course are a mixture of students of public sociology as well as activists and professionals working in the field of gender-based violence (Orr et al. 2013). The use of dialogical pedagogy seeks to maximise mutual learning between participants. The curriculum is therefore generated through dialogue between activists and academics, feminist practitioners and full time students, both in the curriculum development and in the pedagogical approach.

Our second example is *Environmental Justice*, which started with social movement activists tackling environmental injustices in their local communities or workplaces, and attempted to make university education relevant to their concerns. Environmental justice struggles have been a significantly accelerating aspect of neoliberalism in many parts of the world, due to processes such as commodification of nature, biopiracy, accumulation by dispossession, contradictions in the conditions of production and ecological distribution conflicts (Gadgil and Guha 1992; O'Connor 1998; Harvey 1996; Bullard 2000, 2005; Martinez-Alier 2002; Agyeman et al. 2003; Magdoff and Bellamy Foster 2011), although the incorporation of elements of the movement into the neoliberal project has also been recognised (Carter 2016). There have also been multiple examples throughout the world of university academics engaging with such struggles through research, scholarship, solidarity activism and, on occasion, educational provision (see Harley and Scandrett 2019).

From 2000 to 2006, QMU partnered with the environmental NGO Friends of the Earth Scotland (FoES) to deliver education and support to several communities engaged in struggles against local environmentally damaging activities or neglect and for environmental improvement. The project, Agents for Environmental Justice, has been documented elsewhere (Agents for Environmental Justice and Scandrett 2003; Wilkinson and Scandrett 2003; Scandrett et al. 2005; Scandrett 2007, 2014, 2017). The course was validated by QMU as a Higher Education Certificate delivered primarily by FoES employees with some input from QMU academics, during a series of residential weekend sessions. The participants on the course were activists taking a significant role in their own communities' campaigns against some form of environmental injustice in different parts of Scotland, ranging from opposition to open cast coal mining, waste landfills, industrial pollution and fish farming, through occupational exposure to toxic chemicals, to campaigns for community waste recycling, public sector housing. The course modules focused on themes designed to be relevant to a range of contexts, including the political economy of development; planning and democracy; community development; science for campaigners and media and publicity. Demonstrations of (and critical reflection

on) community engagement were incorporated into the assessments in order to collectivise the learning as much as possible.

A final example comes from the interface between research and pedagogy with the mental health user/survivors' movement. Mad studies is a relatively new area of movement–university partnership, originating in Canada and tentatively spreading in other parts of the world, and *Mad People's History and Identity (MPHI)* is the first Mad Studies course within a University in the UK designed, delivered and evaluated by mental health service users and psychiatric survivors (LeFrançois et al. 2013; Ballantyne and Maclean 2019). The project constitutes a short, six-week course, co-created and delivered in a partnership between Mad identified activists from the mental health service users and anti-psychiatry movement and Mad-positive academics at Queen Margaret University. A collaboration between the University, CAPS Advocacy and NHS Lothian's Health and Well Being Programme, the first fifteen Mad identified students completed the course in May 2014. The course has since been held annually and has become a centre for the development of Mad studies, which offers a learning community and space in which Mad identifying people's experiences are privileged within the curriculum and the students can make sense of, and deconstruct, discourses of madness and challenge the dominant and historical hegemonic discourses of madness. Drawing on the experience of the disabled people's and psychiatry survivor movements, of generating knowledge through a combination of collective experience, political struggle and intellectual analysis, Mad activists and scholars challenge the sources of their exclusion which is both structural and epistemological.

Drawing on these three examples, the analytical resources of Gelpi's concept of lifelong education will be expanded to assess opportunities for challenging neoliberal hegemony.

## Lifelong Education in Theory

Ettore Gelpi's work on lifelong education, developed whilst he was director of UNESCO between 1972 and 1993, constitutes a significant insight into the nature of education for resistance in diverse settings.

Gelpi's writings do not so much define lifelong education as provide insights into practice in such a wide range of international contexts of educational provision, academic freedom, democratic space and economic intervention.

...the path from the concept of lifelong education to its realisation is characterised by struggles in social life and educational institutions in such areas as: the type of relationship between formal and non-formal education i.e. dialectical or dependent; the contribution of such non-teaching educators as cultural, social and political movements to education activities; the criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the educational system both internally and externally; the extent to which self-directed learning is encouraged, especially that of a collective nature. (Gelpi 1985: 8–9)

Gelpi's approach is paradigmatically dialectical as this quotation demonstrates. It is focused on the path from the concept of lifelong education to its realisation: it is not defined but rather understood through several indicative characterisations of practice. Rather than issue instructions as to how to develop lifelong education, we are invited to reflect back on 'struggles in social life and educational institutions' in which the characterisations of lifelong education may be discerned: thus, the dialectical relationship between social movement struggles against oppression and exploitation (gender-based violence; environmental injustice; psychiatric exclusion) and the struggles of academics 'in and against' the neoliberal university. Gelpi highlights four 'areas' where lifelong education might be realised in these struggles, and these are also of a dialectical nature and need to be understood in relation to one another.

The first 'area'—the type of relationship between formal and non-formal education—i.e. dialectical or dependent—is posed as a question but implies a preference for the dialectical. Non-formal education, in this context, refers to activities which are structured or deliberative but which do not convey credit or any other formal benefit (or sanction for non-participation). This is differentiated from formal (credit carrying) and informal education (unstructured, incidental, passive learning) (Coombs et al. 1973). In the university, non-formal

education could range from structured educational activities which carry no formal assessment component, through to more deliberative forms of learning which are not incidental, including such activities as extra-curricular training delivered by university or student societies; student union political debates and campaigning workshops; self-directed study circles, reading groups or film discussions; public lectures; rallies and teach-ins by staff unions; assemblies and seminars during student occupations.

In the university, formal education (for credit) is given privilege and priority above non-formal education. Non-formal education however can be more self-directed, collective and democratic. A dialectical relationship between formal and non-formal education is a dynamic struggle in which both forms of education are valued and critically interrogate one another. In the context of the university educator, the default is formal education so effort is required by professional educators intending to implement lifelong education to seek the non-formal and value it. But non-formal education is not restricted to the professional educator and it is as likely to be found outside the classroom as within it—in the socially situated lives of students, as students, but also as workers, parents, artists, activists, religious believers etc.; through support staff as well as academics; and the wider community and political context.

This leads to the second indicative area—‘the contribution of ... cultural, social and political movements to education activities’. Social movements—or in Gelpi’s wider formulation—‘cultural, social and political movements’ (Gelpi 1985: 9)—are significant contributors to deliberative non-formal education. Social movements constitute the deliberate shaping of beliefs, activities, practices, rationalities, cognitive praxis (Eyerman and Jamison 1991) with a view to tackling social concerns, redistributing resources, valuing identities etc. Gelpi’s challenge in the second characteristic of lifelong education is therefore linked to the first dialectically by requiring an assessment of the contribution of these drivers of non-formal education also to formal education. This also raises questions about, not just the quality of education (the pursuit



of which academics are familiar) but rather how effective education is for the purposes of social change which social movements demand.

The third indicative 'area'—'the criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the educational system both internally and externally' (ibid.: 9)—therefore invites a judgement of how well education meets the needs of social movements. Gelpi does not prescribe effectiveness criteria but rather poses the question. Measures of effectiveness in the neoliberal university are a significant source of conflict. In the UK, metrics are imposed which assess effectiveness of research (Research Excellence Framework, REF); teaching (Teaching Excellence Framework, TEF), student satisfaction (National Student Survey, NSS), employability, fair access etc., and other national contexts have comparable metrics and struggles. Gelpi's analysis subverts this tendency: he does not advocate abandoning attempts to assess effectiveness, but poses the question of how we may develop criteria in which effectiveness relates to the dialectic with non-formal education, the contribution of movements and the encouragement of collective self-directed learning. How is academic praxis, through university curricula, pedagogy and research programmes to be made qualitatively accountable to social movement action for historical change.

The fourth indicative 'area'—'the extent to which self-directed learning is encouraged, especially that of a collective nature' (ibid.: 9)—similarly relays a challenge to the professional educator in an academic context. University education is predicated on the delivery of a product—the degree—which bestows advantage to an individual owner (graduate) in the labour market. Learning therefore tends to follow the same model, as an individual pursuit of assessable learning knowledge. Concepts such as 'student centred learning' 'independent study', even when they incorporate collective elements such as group work, invariably privilege individual learning, rather than collective benefit. Moreover, these concepts focus on the learner as a classroom-based student who has successfully 'got into' university, rather than the role of the university in wider social change. Gelpi's challenge is to privilege collective self-directed learning in the praxis of social movements.

## Lifelong Education in Practice

Gelpi's conception of lifelong education therefore provides a set of tools with which to interrogate educational practice in Higher Education. The criteria are always dialectically related to movements from outwith the university and educational provision is judged by criteria in dialogue with movements in conflict with the forces of neoliberalism. Here we relate these analytical frames to our examples of university social movement engagement.

### Gender Justice

Feminist analyses have their roots as much in the informal education of consciousness raising and political praxis as in academic theory and research—indeed the interpretive strengths of this body of analysis lies in the dialectic between these. This is reflected in the module's curriculum and joint ownership in the university and SWA, an organisation that is part of the movement against violence against women (Dobash and Dobash 2003). Pedagogy and assessment seeks to facilitate self-directed learning, both individual and collective, although students requiring credit are assessed individually. The inclusion of the module within a credit bearing programme provides for greater sustainability, whilst associate students' fees are paid largely by their employer or sponsoring organisation—usually the CPD budgets of public service employers or publicly funded voluntary organisations and there is an option to take the module without credit for 25% of the total fee. This constitutes something of a compromise: non-formal education is somewhat dependent on formal education through the mechanism employed to maximise access. Lecturers from SWA, initially paid through the Scottish Government's strategy to tackle violence against women, are now paid as Visiting Lecturers (VL) through a service agreement between QMU and SWA, ensuring the sustainability of the course for ten years. The threat to this arrangement will come through austerity cuts in the teaching grant from the Scottish Funding Council and the impact on VL budgets and staffing levels overall.

This is a partnership between a university and a social movement organisation, in which the former contributes academic input, credit and access to sociology students, whilst the latter contribute input in the form of lecturers with knowledge and experience from feminist movement praxis, and recruitment of activists and professionals in the field. Within certain constraints of the neoliberal university—contractual vulnerability and individualised credit—the module provides a space in which aspects of that regime can be undermined through life-long education.

## Environmental Justice

At first sight this project meets Gelpi's criteria for the practice of life-long education, indeed Scandrett et al. (2010) have essentially argued that it does. There is an accountability to a social movement of environmental justice activists and indeed the course contributed to building that movement. The curriculum is derived from a dialectical relationship between non-formal and formal education, with students and their communities affirming the content in terms of their own struggles alongside the requirements for student accreditation. Most of the contribution to the design, curriculum and method of delivery was determined by social movement organisation Friends of the Earth (Doherty and Doyle 2014) and by the students who themselves are grassroots activists in environmental justice struggles. Effort went into helping the students and their communities understand themselves within the wider environmental justice movement—their historicity. Attention was paid to collective learning through pedagogy and assessment mechanisms, not only amongst the group of students but also amongst their communities affected by the environmental damage. Dialogical methods ensured that non-formal education informed and challenged formal input and vice versa—indeed at various times the students organised collectively, independently of the teaching staff, in order to challenge and shape methods, curriculum and organisation. Thus the effectiveness of the project to the local campaigns was constantly being assessed, in addition to criteria required by the university and funders.

There were compromises with the determinants of the neoliberal university. Learning outcomes, although determined in advance according to regulations, were focused on process rather than content thereby allowing for the curriculum to be negotiated with the activists and new content to emerge through that process of dialogue. Although students were individually assessed, much of the assessments incorporated collective elements, demonstrating community consultation and delivery. Thus, educational techniques designed to reproduce the conditions for neoliberal education—commodified curriculum, individual competitiveness—were somewhat undermined without jeopardising the programme's position within the university. However, the most significant conflict was with the business model which proved to be too much of a challenge to the political economy of the neoliberal university.

The programme was initially funded through a charitable grant from the National Lottery paid to FoES. Attempts to incorporate the course into the publicly funded university encountered QMU's reluctance to endorse social movement education and adopt such approaches within the capped student numbers of the Scottish Higher Education funding provision. Grassroots activists were not permitted to displace the mainstream intake of undergraduates for publicly funded places. Despite the opportunities provided by public funding, for shifting the university towards social movement relevance, the message was: activists are welcome as students so long as they do not displace the 'normal' students. The activist students are regarded as an additional source of income for the neoliberal university, not as a source of knowledge generation.

## Mad Studies

Applying Gelpi's analysis of lifelong education, there is a clearly dialectical relationship in *MPHI* between formal and non-formal education. The course is validated by the university but is co-constructed between Mad studies activists and academics for the purposes of studying the subjugated history of this community. Through an integration of pedagogy and research, knowledge is constructed. The course therefore contributes to the movement's own historicity—its self-understanding of

its role in social change—through education/research. The effectiveness of the course is assessed through multiple criteria—self assessment of the participants in the course, the reflexivity of the creators, accountability to the wider movement and to the funding body, peer interviews with the *MPHI* students conducted through participatory research by trained members of the group, the combined rigour of academic justification and political relevance, in addition to the requirements of a validated programme. *MPHI* provided an opportunity for self-directed collective and individual learning.

Whilst the course was dependent on small amounts of funding from NHS Lothian, it was largely resourced through the time allocated to research activity out with teaching responsibilities. The course raised some important questions about what constitutes a Mad positive university, one which honours and legitimates hitherto silenced voices and privileges criteria of inclusion and recognition over selection and competition. In its small way *MPHI* provides seeds of what might undermine the neoliberal university, especially through the public health recognition in the receipt of NHS funding. As such, however, it is also vulnerable to the progressive attack of neoliberalism in both universities and the health service, subject to severe austerity cuts and increasing marketisation.

Mad studies offers counter hegemonic interpretations of mental illness. Laundry and Church (2016) suggest that a Mad positive practice from an insider standpoint within a university would involve challenging sanist assumptions in policies and assuming that all students are Mad unless otherwise stated. The importance of a Mad-positive engaged academic (Cresswell and Spandler 2013) working with Mad-identified scholars in promoting Mad scholarship with the Mad movement is stressed (Church 2013). The role of the engaged academic is political and involves knowing when to be present or when to be absent. This has been apparent in the *MPHI* Participatory Action research project to overcome sanism (Laundry and Church 2016), evidence-based teaching, managerialism and the organisational separation of instructors and subjects that impede alliances with other social movement scholarship (Church 2015). Mad-identified scholars are frequently on insecure low paid part time sessional contracts (Reville 2013; Church 2013)

reflecting a neoliberal culture that values cost cutting and positivist discourses over experiential expertise.

The examples here demonstrate how Gelpi's analysis of lifelong education can be used to analyse pedagogical practice yet also to identify the limitations of—and compromise with—the neoliberal practice of the university. This is demonstrated through the business model, even where, in Scotland, fees are paid by the state from general taxation.

In these examples from within university pedagogy, the better the assessment from the perspective of lifelong education, the more difficult to maintain within the university business model. This is not inevitable, but rather suggests a lack of commitment to lifelong education within the university.

## Incorporation or War of Position?

Gelpi's analysis of lifelong education gives social movements a central pedagogical place which provides a form of educator accountability to progressive social change and as a defence against neoliberalisation. This is certainly valuable to committed educators attempting to use their position in the university to promote the agendas of social movements. In the cases outlined, it is clear that the quality of university education is enhanced by the connection to struggles against gender-based violence, for environmental justice and for recognition of Mad people's expertise and experience. However, just as Gelpi asserts that lifelong education 'is characterised by *struggles in social life* and educational institutions' (Gelpi 1985: 8, emphasis added), so the value to the social movements of engaging with education also needs to be demonstrated.

At least some from within these movements have questioned the value *to the movement* of the connection with the university. There is a risk that it diverts energy and focus away from the main concern of the campaigns, especially for activists whose attentions become absorbed in developing the skills and competencies required to meet academic criteria that have not been determined by the movement. Social movement contributions to university education provide useful content for course development, doctoral theses, quality validation, 'enhancement theme'

delivery, impact studies and academic papers, such as this one and others cited here. At the same time, universities continue their function of reproducing the skilled workforce and ideological justification for capital accumulation. This is an important concern, although can be overstated—many of the students and academics involved with this work are also movement activists and the university does provide a place of relative academic freedom to develop movement praxis (at least, compared with other areas of civil society or state).

More significantly however, there is the risk that elements of the movement become incorporated into the university as the latter becomes increasingly neoliberal. Thus, the movement becomes increasingly diverted not by academic criteria, but by the neoliberal criteria of the market and state surveillance. Movement–university relations become part of the marketing of universities fighting for market share, an external income stream, a means through which racialised surveillance and censor of ‘radicalisation’, absorbed into higher education can extend into the movements who have even more to lose (in the UK, at the time of writing, acceptance of students from outside of Europe on a ‘Tier 4’ visa requires increased levels of attendance monitoring by universities, whilst the ‘Prevent’ policy requires academics to report students believed to be susceptible to ‘radicalisation’ or holding views contrary to ‘British values’). Where such relationships between movements and universities end, it is rarely the universities that suffer. The movements who are in a position to participate in university projects may be (or become) only those for whom marketization and state surveillance can be weathered or even welcomed, so exacerbating the distinction between civil society and what some have called ‘uncivil society’—those movements who prevent a genuine challenge to the neoliberal order (see Glasius 2010).

Despite his famous motto ‘pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will’, Gramsci was a far more sophisticated thinker than to offer a simple division between ‘progressive’ or ‘reactionary’, or a ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ prognosis of social change. He embraced the eschatology of an orthodox Marxist, but was also, fundamentally, dialectical in his thinking. His analysis of the war of position provided a hint of how class struggle may be waged in a situation where there are always

contradictory forces at play and the experience is more akin to a long, intransigent siege.

For Gramsci 'The superstructures of civil society are like the trench-systems of modern warfare' (Hoare and Smith 1971: 235). Whilst warning against any over-simplification of the relationship, Gramsci goes on to use the warfare analogy to explain the nature of class struggle in modern, western societies with an advanced and complex civil society.

In war it would sometimes happen that a fierce artillery attack seemed to have destroyed the enemy's entire defensive system, whereas in fact it had only destroyed the outer perimeter; and at the moment of their advance and attack the assailants would find themselves confronted by a line of defence which was still effective. The same thing happens in politics, during the great economic crises. A crisis cannot give the attacking forces the ability to organise with lightning speed in time and in space; still less can it endow them with fighting spirit. Similarly, the defenders are not demoralised, nor do they abandon their positions, even among the ruins, nor do they lose faith in their own strength or their own future. Of course, things do not remain exactly as they were ... (Hoare and Smith 1971: 235)

Under the great economic crisis of late neoliberalism, civil society, including the universities and social movements, are experiencing something analogous to the fierce artillery attack of Gramsci's time. The question therefore is: can the compromised and fragile examples of academic engagements with social movements serve to defend the advances made—culturally and epistemologically, but also politically—by the movements? Is justice for women, for Mad people and for communities affected by pollution, when connected to university curricula, more resilient to the attacks of neoliberalism, less likely to abandon their positions even among the ruins, and less likely to lose faith in their own strength or their own future?

Moreover, Gramsci argues that the war of manoeuvre (the political-economic attack on movements of resistance) gives way to the war of position and ultimately to a kind of siege in which the trench-systems provide the basis for both defence and revolutionary change:



in politics the 'war of position', once won, is decisive definitively. In politics, in other words, the war of manoeuvre subsists so long as it is a question of winning positions which are not decisive ... But when, for one reason or another, these positions have lost their value and only the decisive positions are at stake, then one passes over to siege warfare; this is concentrated, difficult, and requires exceptional qualities of patience and inventiveness. In politics, the siege is a reciprocal one, despite all appearances... (Hoare and Smith 1971: 239)

Despite its crises, and especially the crisis of 2007–2008, neoliberalism continues to be on the offensive, prescribing more austerity, privatisation, individualism, competition and inequality, combined with state surveillance and proscription. However, these attacks are undermined by the war of position built up in civil society. Progressive social movements from below face the double threat of incorporation into the logic of neoliberalism or else state repression. In the face of this attack, a strong trench-system provides a defence against neoliberalism, and a position from which to advance. This is where lifelong education in universities can play a critical role. Where social movements are able to contribute to the curriculum of higher education, it is an opportunity for them to 'dig in', to establish, test and distribute the movement-knowledge it produces and develop challenges to neoliberalism in a partially protected space. Universities are not the only spaces for these 'trench-systems' to be established—nor should they be—but despite their role in reproducing the existing order, they remain distinctive spaces where education, scholarship, knowledge production and exchange are (at least ostensibly) still the widely agreed purpose. At the same time, lifelong education, and the accountability to social movements, help universities to protect that space for critical scholarship which can be of use to movements from below.

In 2010, when the Occupy movement erupted in the form of tent-dwelling activist communities in cities and towns throughout the world, its diffuse demands of radical participatory democracy, a public claim on space, and prefigurative politics were articulated as a direct challenge to the power of financial institutions and the richest and most powerful '1%' of the world's population (Hall 2012). Starting from the

initiative in Occupy Wall Street in the USA (but building on years of occupations and autonomous spaces across the world), many occupations squatted land in or close to financial centres of power as a direct confrontation with these symbols of high finance. In central London, land was occupied in front of St. Paul's Cathedral, beside the financial district of the City of London. In addition to the hundreds of tents in which people lived, there were a few communal tents for the essential services required for the community of a few hundred people—kitchens, toilets, medical support and, a tent university where people gathered for discussions and debates, workshops occurred and visiting academics were invited to give lectures. For this movement's confrontation with neoliberalism, a 'university' of sorts played an important role.

Those of us who work in universities, and are fighting the neoliberal takeover of our institutions, should be encouraged by this. Whilst this social movement at this juncture decided to invent a tent university, others have created different spaces for critical learning. Whilst we still have spaces to defend the knowledge production of social movements and seek opportunities for their advance in confrontation with neoliberalism, the university remains a place where that struggle must occur.

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