CHAPTER 14

Academics as Workers: From Career Management to Class Analysis and Collective Action

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It is a well-known story: even before the sovereign debt crisis hit the European periphery and austerity was established as the dominant model of handling it, the conservative (fiscal) policies systematically applied across peripheral and core states had already begun treating large portions of state budgets as afflictions—they were there to be cut. With the financial crisis and its global spread, even the systems of tertiary education, despite being hailed earlier as fundamental pillars of development and driving motors of emerging 'knowledge economies', quickly became just another uncomfortable figure in state budget tables.[1] Encompassing a

[1] The European University Association report from January 2011 provides an overview of the severe budget cuts to public higher education across Europe, with peripheral countries hit the hardest: in Latvia, the higher education budget was first cut by 48 % in 2009, and then later in 2010 by another 18 % following recommendations by the IMF. In Greece, the government set cuts of 30 % as a target. Substantial budget cuts around or more than 10 % occurred in Romania, Estonia, and Lithuania, cuts of between 5 % and 10 % in Ireland, and

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S. Gupta et al. (eds.), *Academic Labour, Unemployment and Global Higher Education*, DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-49324-8_14

shift in public education towards 'market-based self-sustainability' (Žitko 2012, p. 19) and the internationalisation of tertiary education systems, the pre-crisis 'knowledge society bubble' burst, and a halt was put to (at least nominally) expansive policies prevalent earlier[2] in this sector.

This major halt has, however, not been a symptom of wider systemic failure and has not provoked a consistent re-evaluation of the dynamics and consequences of the dominant regime of capitalist accumulation globally. As we well know, the system established during the last several decades remains tenaciously in place despite its crises and the socio-economic model of the 'knowledge society' is still current, both as an ideological compulsion (as the political elites still invoke the well-worn clichés of 'innovation', 'entrepreneurial spirit', 'competitiveness', 'excellence' when referring to the university's role in helping to bridge the economic crisis) and as an institutional framework (as the entrepreneurial university proceeds with its organisational procedures-cum-disciplinary regimes of flexibility, mobility, and quantification of excellence—on top of maintaining its dedication to the production of intellectual property in place of what used to be conceived as 'knowledge'). In her contribution to this volume, Danijela Dolenec concisely describes the transformation.

It is, however, unclear how the university should fulfil its role, even functionally reduced, under drastic measures that characterise the age of austerity: slashing of funds, dropping or stagnating faculty salaries,[3] moratoria on further employment in public higher education, underfunded research

up to 5 % in the Central and South Eastern Europe—Czech Republic, Croatia, Serbia, and Macedonia. Additionally, in countries like Hungary governments have discarded previous commitments to increase funding (see EUA 2011).

[2] OECD reports indicate that public spending on tertiary education increased in most OECD countries between 1995 and 2008 (see, e.g., OECD 2011). Simultaneously, however, the increase in the number of students in tertiary education systems has been dramatic and the costs of tertiary education also rose steadily (see Altbach et al. 2009).

[3] This has been a long-term trend. The UNESCO report states: 'It is no longer possible to lure the best minds to academe. A significant part of the problem is financial. Even before the current world financial crisis, academic salaries did not keep up with remuneration for highly trained professionals everywhere. Now, with tremendous financial pressures on higher education generally, the situation will no doubt deteriorate further' (Altbach et al. 2009, p. 92). In the UK, for example, 'academic pay has fallen in relative terms. In 1981–2001 non-manual average earnings rose by 57.6 % after inflation. In the same period the salary of academics at the top of the Lecturer B scale in the old universities rose by 6.1 % above inflation, and that of academics on point 6 of the senior lecturer scale in the new universities by 7.6 % after inflation' (Callinicos 2006, p. 16). In the USA, 'a recent study by the American Association of University Professors shows that even full professors are underpaid in comparison to non-academic positions in similar fields' (CFHE 2015).

projects, and unavailability of secure employment create adverse structural conditions for any type of work, including the dynamic production of 'innovation' seen as the entrepreneurial university's raison d'être. In an attempt to resolve this contradiction and keep extracting value from public universities in accordance with the neoliberal ideological demands, the austerity governments are left only with the option to intensify the single-minded politics of 'new public management' put in place globally throughout the last couple of decades. Structurally short of alternatives, they resort to corporate strategies of 'streamlining', 'raising efficiency', and maintaining pressure to commodify services offered by the university and transfer costs to students and their families.

Having this continuum in mind, we should remember not to conceive the age of austerity as an anomaly or a short-term adjustment. It is simply a contingent recent development—an intensification, as it happens—of an ongoing process. Symptomatically, the 2009 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report prepared for the World Conference on Higher Education examining global trends in higher education since 1998 does acknowledge the still fresh financial crisis, but the austerity it mentions after examining pre-crisis 'trends in the financing of higher education' is older: 'The immediate effect of these trends on the financing of higher education (again, varying by country) is a state of austerity in universities, postsecondary education institutions, and national higher education systems' (Altbach et al. 2009, p. 70). There is also nothing geographically or geopolitically specific to austerity, as the UNESCO report states that these higher education conditions are 'nearly universal' and occur throughout the world-system (despite the fact that they occur at their most crippling in sub-Saharan Africa, developing countries, and countries 'in transition') (Altbach et al. 2009, pp. 69–70). Among their consequences, which is key to our topic here, the report mentions the problem of 'restive and otherwise unhappy faculty', as well as 'faculty "brain drain" as the most talented faculty move to countries with fewer financial troubles' (Altbach et al. 2009, p. 70).

It is on these two problems and the way they are conceptualised when they appear as problems of academic labour that I would like to focus here. UNESCO's vaguely conceived 'restiveness' is a result of a combination of well-known factors: the flexibilisation of academic employment,[4]

[4] It is often said that such developments affect young academic workers the hardest, but there are many casually employed academic workers who perform low-paid fixed-term contract or even free work well into their thirties, forties, and later, which also suggests that this is not a new development (see Courtois and O'Keefe 2015; Auriol 2010).

undercompensation, as well as a new regime of institutional discipline within the academic field that brings about a framework of practical limitations on research and teaching that appears as costs are cut and institutional procedures and technologies 'streamlined' under the watchful eye of expanding university administration (see Callinicos 2006; Martin 1998; Nelson 2011). The 'restiveness' under intensified austerity can then easily, if other conditions are met, turn into increased 'brain drain' (see Theodoropoulos et al. 2014), that old problem of structural asymmetry between the periphery and the core of the world-system. Comprehensive statistics on the movements of academic workers in the post-crisis period are hard to find, but if some of the most radical austerity projects in the EU periphery are anything to go by, it can be empirically confirmed that austerity politics significantly contributes to the intensification of emigration of academic workers from the periphery. In Greece, for example, the already high rates of émigré scientists rose catastrophically during the crisis, by 70 % according to some estimates (see Tzanos 2013), and the Baltic countries record similarly unprecedented emigration spikes and brain drain migration patterns: 'At the peak of the crisis (2009–2010), emigration reduced the size of Latvia's population by 3.6 per cent and Lithuania's population by 3.3 per cent.' (Juska and Woolfson 2015, p. 236) This, of course, further compounds the situation in which, according to a 2010 Ohio State University study by Bruce Weinberg referred to in *Nature* magazine's report on global mobility of scientists, one in eight of the world's most highly cited scientists from 1981 to 2003 'were born in developing countries, but 80 % of those had since moved to developed countries (mostly the United States)' (Van Noorden 2012, p. 327).

But, of course, if we insist on the common underpinnings and the universal spread of recent transformations in tertiary education systems around the globe, it must be said that the flight of academic workers from the periphery to the core is far from a flight to safety. Along with the already mentioned changes in the institutional conditions of academic work, there is not only the problem of casualisation of labour but also structural unemployment: according to an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study, OECD countries have seen a 40 % increase in the number of doctorate holders in 2006 compared to 1998 (see Auriol 2010). At the same time, the number of available positions in higher education and research either declined or stagnated. According to the same study, the general unemployment rates of 1990–2006 doctoral graduates are low and 'do not exceed 2 % or 3 %', but 'a non-negligible share of

doctorate holders also seem to be employed in non-related or lower qualified occupations' (Auriol 2010, pp. 11, 14). For some fields, especially the humanities, the unemployment rates are much higher, and many doctorate holders find themselves without permanent jobs well after they obtain their degrees: 'In 2006, five years after the receipt of their doctoral degree, more than 60 % in the Slovak Republic and more than 45 % in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Spain were still on temporary contracts. Yet permanent engagements accounted for over 80 % of all jobs in almost all countries' (Auriol 2010, p. 13). Having this in mind, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the influx of young researchers from the periphery, as states brutally cut their budgets in compliance with the demands of the age of austerity, might exacerbate these already existing issues in the countries of the centre. 'Knowledge economies', it would seem, structurally limit production of knowledge.

These issues are, however, rarely discussed in their systemic dimension. The movement of academic labour is most often conceived as a consequence of the logic of meritocracy and professional ambition,[5] which it often is, but identifying academic labour mobility solely with advancement of individual careers can be used cynically to justify structural asymmetries in the world-system, workforce flexibilisation in the systems of tertiary education, as well as to hide the precarious and often highly undesirable side of contemporary academic worker's potentially forced mobility. Because, as it is well known, a respectable academic career strives towards excellence, and excellence is from a peripheral perspective predominately found abroad. So it follows that mobility is nothing but a measure of quality. This manoeuvre not only sidesteps the discussion of adverse effects of brain drain, but also represents flexibilisation in the new academia as a form of liberation, an enticement to pursue seemingly delocalised excellence more vigorously.

Similarly to the discourse of mobility, when viewed in their structural dimension, the supplementary discourses of career management and excellence that are often used in the new academia can be observed as mechanisms of translation of social (structural) problems into the language of (work) ethics and personal responsibility. If Barbara and John Ehrenreich are right

[5] The above-mentioned *Nature* report features a graph showing that foreign postdocs outnumber foreign professors in almost all countries included in the GlobSci survey 'Restless Youth', thus completely disregarding the changing structural conditions of academic work between generations and naturalising a historical trend (see Van Noorden 2012).

in their thesis that significant portions of the twentieth century professional-managerial class—which academic workers belong to—are undergoing disintegration under pressure of the new regime of accumulation, technological changes, and shifted balance of power between labour and capital (see Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich 2013), learning and utilising these languages by members of the transforming professional-managerial class can help with an effective socialisation into the new paradigm of capitalism, though at the price of lost (relative) autonomy which was once their class reward.

If, however, a more critical position is to be assumed, real subsumption of the 'temple of the spirit' (Krašovec 2011) and 'life of the mind' under capital has brought about conditions of precarity where affected academic workers face labour problems without available strategies or clearly visible organisational means to address those problems in their systemic dimension. Certainly, the professional-managerial class 'needs to start from an awareness that what has happened to the professional middle class has long since happened to the blue collar working class' (Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich 2013, p. 11), as the academic professions have been affected by gradual proletarianisation. But if this is so, it is also important to develop means of addressing the residual ideological conception whereby the academic profession is conceived as a 'gentlemanly calling' (Halsey 1992), romanticised as 'vocation', and naively accepted as a self-regulating meritocracy. Academic workers have no other options if they are to resist the adverse conditions they face in the workplace but to start acting as workers: to develop consciousness of the structural position they occupy within the mode of production, and to act collectively in order to gain control over the workplaces, professions, and social spheres that belong to them.

What I would like to concentrate on next, however, are examples that go in the opposite direction. The institutional protocols of the labour market and the ideology of neoliberal capitalism, as mentioned, demand learning the language of career management and mobility. Under the regime of often quite extreme precarity, modes of adaptation develop that steer academic workers towards an effective transition into a new contingent class form, and away from workplace organisation and development of antisystemic political potential.[6]

[6] I am using 'antisystemic' here in Immanuel Wallerstein's sense of 'antisystemic movements': 'These movements were all antisystemic in one simple sense: They were struggling against the established power structures in an effort to bring into existence a more democratic, more egalitarian historical system than the existing one' (Wallerstein 2014, p. 160).

A recent example from the EU periphery can be useful to demonstrate and exemplify one local institutional process by which a structural problem is ideologically translated into a problem of management, and a properly political effort necessary to address it is supplanted by a technical policy recommendation: in 2013/2014, the Croatian government Agency for Science and Higher Education initiated a reaccreditation procedure for some of the public institutions in the country and consequently tasked an expert panel of mostly international academics with reviewing them. One of the evaluated institutions was the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, the largest faculty at the University of Zagreb, both by the number of students and employed academic workers. As a part of the evaluation procedure, the expert panel held a large meeting with the institution's junior staff, the majority of them early- to mid-career academics on fixed-term contracts responsible for both teaching and research. Many of them had been first employed in the expansionary pre-recession 'knowledge society' boom, signed 6-plus-4-year contracts which are now close to completion, and spent a considerable amount of time working and building careers in an academic job with reasonable security, at least in comparison to the trends which have become the norm elsewhere. However, in 2014 a freeze on hiring was imposed by the government in an attempt to reduce budget deficits. Thus for the junior academic workers whose contracts were near completion—hundreds of them—the prospect of unemployment suddenly turned very real, and this in a peripheral EU country plodding through its sixth year of recession, with registered unemployment rate of around 17 %. In the review meeting, the young academic workers explained the situation to the international expert panel in an openly emotional and quite typical discussion where a number of distressed comments mostly blamed the state or successive governments for negligence towards their public institutions and blindness to the key role that higher education plays in society. The expert panel members, in turn, tried to assess the adaptability of the public university staff to the new situation. The questions they posed—'have you considered alternative career paths', 'how do you feel about academic opportunities abroad', and 'are you familiar with external funding sources that would make your position sustainable'—impose the strategy of adaptation as primary. No one asked, 'Do you have a strong union?'

The later official report by the expert panel does indeed show an awareness of repercussions this problem might have for the functioning of the public institution. But it is framed, among the seven disadvantages of the

institution, not as a universal labour problem, but as that particular institution's management and 'staffing crisis':

1. The current institutional framework makes the Faculty unable to make staffing decisions or plan staffing going forward. The Faculty faces a definite staffing crisis in the next few years which will inevitably impact upon the quality of both teaching and research.
2. There is no research office to support the capture and administration of grants.
3. There is no careers office to support students (including doctoral students) in their future careers and to enable them to maximise their employability. (Agencija za znanost i visoko obrazovanje 2014, p. 11)

Thus, an ideological proposition is again implicitly made—employment and career prospects are a function of individual effort and the institution's readiness to foster and hone the individual 'employability profile' of the worker so that he or she can later be compatibly allocated into a 'future career' by the job market. But interestingly, the first 'disadvantage' identified by the expert panel vaguely draws attention to the role the institutional, systemic arrangement plays for the 'staffing crisis', whereby that term is inadvertently revealed as misleading: the phrase 'current institutional framework' points to the state as the ultimate address for and the unavoidable locus of resolution of public university problems. Of course, the 'current institutional framework' is a specific historical alignment of wider political and socio-economic forces crystallised in state institutions which remains hidden so long as it is treated as a technical abstraction. Observed in the historical dynamics that was outlined above, there can hardly be a better example of a systemic consequence of policies implemented in the name of 'knowledge economy' than the precarious position of the academic workers at this university. Consequently, this is not simply a problem of 'staffing' but of boom and bust cycles of capital, the structural integration of a peripheral post-socialist economy into the world-system, labour legislature favouring capital, and the neoliberal governance mechanisms making it difficult to solve this problem locally and democratically prior to passing it onto the job market for judgement.

So, the beginning of an answer to labour problems at a public university in such a situation should be to consider the logic and structure of this historical alignment, and to develop a relation between labour and state in which privately antagonistic relations to the state apparatus can be replaced by an institutionally effective formalisation and collectivisation.

As almost everywhere, however, the general weakness of existing traditional organs of labour organisation, such as unions turned into 'social partners', cosily sitting on a 'three-seater sofa' (Kostanić 2013) with capital and the state, as well as the peculiar social position and ideologies of the professional-managerial class in capitalist society make this a difficult project among academic workers. The default answers to this and similar systemic crises, regrettably, remain wedded to strategies of navigating the 'job market', through which individuals move accomplishing more or less clever or more or less successful balancing acts between their own intrinsic motivations and the 'needs of the market'. The disciplining paradigm of 'compulsory individuality' (Cronin 2000) is an essential component of such conceptions of academic work.

However, even sensible career management, prudent choices, and a willingness to conform to the demands of the moment are no guarantee of escaping unemployment and casualisation in the new academia. Recent research shows that precarious employment might for many academic workers truly be 'a hamster wheel' (Courtois and O'Keefe 2015, p. 56). In other words, it is long-term, not a temporary stepping stone to a more secure position and a tenured professional life and very often no hard-earned security awaits after the initial trials and tribulations of early career. Academic workers, especially younger ones, in both the core countries and the periphery would be well-advised to realise that precarity is the only game in town.

In a 2002 article, at a time when this subject had still not been broached quite as extensively as it is today, Marc Bousquet advocated a shift from thinking about systems of higher education in terms of job markets and supply-side control of supposed overproduction of doctoral degrees. He suggested that the system[7] is, in fact, doing exactly what it is supposed to, extracting surplus labour and externalising costs, at the (apparently negligible) price of creating 'waste product' in the form of the doctoral degree:

> Thinking about casualization means abandoning the vividly counterfactual job market premise, that doctoral education functions primarily to create a 'supply' of teachers with the Ph.D., and asking instead: What does it mean that the primary function of the vast web of doctoral education is to provide the university with teachers who don't hold the doctorate? Any real examination of graduate education and casualization leads inescapably to the conclusion that the real 'labor market' in the academy is a market in

[7] Bousquet writes about the USA, but the same structural logic can be observed across the world-system.

> the labor of persons without the terminal degree. And if this is true, the creation of persons holding the doctorate may be more properly named a 'by-product' of the graduate employee system: persons who don't hold the degree are inherently more 'marketable' than persons who do. That is, this is a system that creates holders of the Ph.D. but doesn't have much use for them. Indeed, the buildup of degree holders in the system represents a potentially toxic blockage. (Bousquet 2002, p. 89)

Bousquet goes on to explain that the system produces actual degree holders only 'out of a tiny fraction of the employees it takes in'. In the US humanities programmes of the time, doctoral programmes 'typically award the PhD to between 20 and 40 Per cent of their entrants. And the system employs only perhaps a third of the degree holders it makes' (Bousquet 2002, p. 90). The rest, the technological waste produced by the new system, is of course difficult to bury underground, flush into seas and rivers, or launch into space. So some sort of a recycling mechanism needs to be established, preferably at little or no cost to institutions, universities, who produce it. Thus we can observe, most notably in the USA, recent organisational attempts by academic workers themselves to help patch up the messy reality that is created systemically. Most often described by the two semi-related terms 'alt-ac' and 'post-ac', the purpose of such organisational attempts is both to help the unemployed academic workers transition to fields outside academia and to find jobs within the academic system that are not considered academic jobs proper, as well as to establish support and cooperation networks similar to occupational networks of 'knowledge workers' in other occupations, such as 'freelance unions'. Post-ac and alt-ac do not refer to specific organisations or groups, but are conceptions of 'alternative career tracks' for doctoral degree holders who are structurally unable to find academic jobs. What distinguishes these academic initiatives from regular networks of freelance workers in the 'knowledge economy' is the somewhat idiosyncratic position of the precarious academic workers within the professional-managerial class. As in the peripheral example described above, so in the core country such as the USA, exiting the university, a relatively hermetic system with somewhat autonomous mechanisms of organisation and production, becomes a necessity for many only after they have already invested years of work and gone through the effort of highly specialised training, socialisation, and career development under protocols specific to the academic field. In practice, this means that a more radical adaptation and a rougher 'transition'

is required than simply switching jobs, or even industries, as would be the case elsewhere throughout the knowledge economy.[8] But despite even the willingness to remain casually employed over a long period of time, take on debt, and withstand the 'hidden injuries' of precarious employment in the neoliberal academia (see Gill 2009), for many academic workers the 'transition' to other sectors in search of employment becomes a necessity. Thus the role of the mentioned networks also becomes a pedagogic or even a therapeutic one: not simply to exchange and distribute business contacts within a single profession, but to help unemployed academics cope with the 'outside world' and help their integration and orientation in a market where the skills they gained and identities they invested in are often seen as undesirable, 'theoretical', or outright useless. Miriam Posner, an outspoken alt-ac academic worker confirms this in an article for *Inside Higher Ed* where she writes that 'many Ph.D.s have seized on the alt-ac movement as a beacon of hope in an otherwise fairly depressing situation' (Posner 2013). And a 2015 report by the US non-profit Council on Library and Information Resources suggests the growing importance of such developments, even when advocating a conception of academic work beyond such 'tracks': '[O]ver the last five years, the chatter about alternative career paths for PhDs has grown into a full-scale conversation' (Beck Sayre et al. 2015, p. 103).

As far as I am aware, there are currently no similarly formalised equivalents either in the periphery or in the European core countries in many of which the problem of 'academic waste' is relatively invisible or relegated to career management and grant application offices at particular universities. The difference might be the result of the size and further evolution of a similar structural dynamics in the US context, as well as the fact that the shape of the problem is different for those working in academic fields where European-style welfare state public universities are absent or do not represent a dominant model. The Croatian example elaborated above shows, among other things, the convolutions of peripheral public institutions that have still not completely given up on some form of public institutional role in organising even potentially superfluous academic labour—thus the state financing policy recommendations by external experts in order to

[8] Available research shows that 74 % of young academic workers in the US humanities expect to remain working in the academic field, while '43 % of humanities PhD recipients have no commitment for either employment or postdoctoral study at the time of degree completion' (Rogers 2015, p. 2).

manage or rectify institutional problems created by series of its own prior political decisions and 'structural adjustments' suggested by equivalent types of earlier experts. Alt-ac and post-ac 'movements', as opposed to that, are autonomous (in relation to the state) attempts of parts of the professional-managerial class to self-regulate by adapting to the needs of the regime they are superfluous to, savvily avoiding to add to the costs of their maintenance: 'For us, alt-ac is ultimately proof that there is a third way—that one can remain within the academy outside of a tenure-track position; teaching, publishing, and living the "life of the mind", are all possible if one is willing to consider the myriad number of staff and administrative positions available in the academy' (Posner 2013). Such language of possibility suggests a positive ideological charge of the term is necessary: alt-ac is beyond simple career advice, it is meant as an empowerment resource, and the conversation about alternative career paths for academic workers unsuccessful in finding tenure-track jobs is also meant to fight the entrenched and outdated occupational ideologies, to 'combat the notion that anything short of a tenure-track job means failure' (Beck Sayre et al. 2015, p. 106).

As opposed to such insistence on institutional (self-)preservation and the readiness to adapt to the new institutional limitations that arose in the socio-economic context characterised by casualisation and redefinition of the role of the university, post-ac perspectives seem to be characterised by a more confrontational, sometimes rhetorically militant, position. The militancy, however, is a resentful one, limited to criticism of new academia's effects on its precarious labour, but avoiding an organisational or analytical engagement from within the system. The manifesto entitled 'What Does It Mean to Be Postacademic? A #Post-Ac Manifesto' published on the website entitled 'How to Leave Academia: Peer to Peer Postacademic Support' and offering resources, experiences, and advice on transitioning from an academic career to the broader 'free market' states:

> [P]ost-ac is more than just being outside of academia or past one's academic career: it's a set of values about, and way of relating to, academia. […] If alt-ac is the good daughter of academe, post-ac is the family's black sheep—ready to air the dirty laundry in the hopes of shaking up the (damaging and corrupt) status quo. […] Post-ac is at heart a state of disillusionment. […] an identity or way of identifying in relation to the institution of academia, and a belief that the current system is flawed, cruel, unsustainable, and therefore impossible to directly engage with […] It is an identity characterized

> by completely divorcing oneself and one's identity as an adult away from academia, as a thinker/writer/worker, away from the academy. […] Post-ac is interested in survival […] has no shame about corporate employment, welfare, 'selling out,' or the need to talk about dollars and cents when it comes to jobs and debt. […] Post-ac is a critique of the academy, its mythology, and its structure. Post-ac discourages people from pursuing graduate work. (Bell and Whitehead 2013)

This is certainly an outline of a strong politics of disillusionment. But disillusionment implies that there had to be a prior emotional investment in an illusion. Conceiving academic work in the manner of the twentieth century professional-managerial class, as a vocation and calling, is certainly a large part of that illusion. But it is, however, not enough to observe that the illusion is not real, a productive politics can only be built on an understanding why the illusion was put up in the first place. Abandoning one's occupational 'identity' and finding other markets to sell your labour to might be a temporary solution for many, but in class terms, post-ac as it is conceived here simply means a lateral transition to a currently more stable position within the same system whose injuries one is trying to escape. One does not get to choose to 'sell out', as it is suggested here, by going corporate and leaving behind the ivory tower and dirtying one's beautiful soul. It is a choice that is made for all of us long before we are even aware of it. In a system that depends on wage labour and extraction of surplus value for its reproduction, everybody cannot but sell out.

Distributing occupational advice and setting up support networks and hubs where people can read about the experiences of others, as well as exchange ideas, contacts, and often emotional support, should certainly be done everywhere where there is need. But without the baseline intention to organise a collective means of resisting the system that produces such effects in this and other sectors of society, it can only be observed as a purely pragmatic career advice and a localised attempt of parts of a 'disenfranchised' class to reconstitute lost privilege and autonomy. The focus on individualised navigation through the system, adaptability, conformity to disciplinary regimes of the new institution, as well as dreams of 'professional fulfilment' and 'making it out there', though sometimes empowering, also represent an excellent adaptation to a neoliberal dynamics and division of labour.

Despite their differences, the above perspectives share a reluctance to consider options academic workers might have that go beyond conformist

adaptation, that is, properly transformational options that require observing labour problems in their systemic dynamics and imagine autonomous, antisystemic answers and collective resistance. That can only happen if we realise that unemployment or precarity are neither mistakes or anomalies, nor betrayals of past entitlement, nor are they simply results of poor policies. They are also neither limited to particular countries nor badly managed national academic fields. Nor to particular people and badly managed individual careers. They are structural consequences with systemic functions of their own and can properly be fought only if they are addressed as such and faced collectively.

Recent activity on the part of academic workers' unions such as Graduate Student Organizing Committee/United Auto Wvorkers (GSOC-UAW) in the USA, Academic Solidarity in Croatia, or wide participation of academic workers in anti-austerity protests in France, Greece, Chile, Spain, and elsewhere shows that this is becoming more and more current as the awareness dawns that the 'debt-ridden unemployed and underemployed college graduates, the revenue-starved teachers, the overworked and underpaid service professionals, even the occasional whistle-blowing scientist or engineer—all face the same kind of situation that confronted skilled craft-workers in the early 20th century and all industrial workers in the late 20th century' (Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich 2013, p. 11).

To finish even more directly: the struggle of academic workers for control over their workplaces and autonomous regulation of their job, the production of knowledge, must be fought as an internationalised struggle of organised labour.

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