

EDITORIAL

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Although we have always been proud to have regular readers outside of the academy, *New Formations* is first and foremost a peer-reviewed scholarly journal. During the relatively short period of my own editorship, what this means has changed almost beyond recognition. International commercial publishers have established and deliberately engineered a highly-competitive system according to which such journals are classified and ranked, on the basis of largely self-justifying metrics that measure the promotional capacity of their owners more than the quality of the work that they publish. The shift to digital distribution has produced a situation whereby the vast majority of individual readers will now encounter an article published by a journal like *New Formations* not by physically handling a carefully-curated issue of the publication, but merely as an isolated PDF, the endpoint of some algorithmically-driven content-search. Published by one of the UK's few remaining independent progressive publishers – Lawrence Wishart – the journal's few hundred university library subscriptions generate income that is significant to us but remains miniscule compared to that earned by our more commercially-weighty contemporaries. At the same time, journals with no such historic responsibilities have chosen – for reasons we entirely endorse – to forego any possibility of commerciality, instead becoming entirely open-access. We muddle through this situation as best we can – making free what articles we can afford to, submitting to some formal 'indexing' while avoiding what we can of the algorithmic rat-race. For the most part we survive on our reputation; if a prospective contributor asks for our 'impact factor', I usually just delete the email.

The question of how 'knowledge' is made – and made public – is therefore a crucial one for us, whether we like it or not. From our perspective, the issues raised by this set of circumstances and dilemmas cannot be separated from the wider question of the social role of schools and universities, the crisis of education and of general knowledge legitimation in advanced capitalist societies, or the complex relationships between the academy and the wider public sphere. We discuss some of these issues in relation to the UK school system in our round-table interview with two leading educational sociologists: Sharon Gewirtz and Diane Reay, and we present here an extraordinary range of interventions from the UK, Canada, Australia, Hungary and the USA.

Closely related to the topic of our round-table on schooling, the focus of David Ridley's article interrogates the contemporary re-application of human capital theory to higher education, looking at how financialisation not only shapes students into 'entrepreneurs of the self' but also disciplines universities into advancing the marketisation of higher education. His critical

examination of human capital theory reveals contradictions between its ideological underpinnings and the reality of graduates' experiences, with the application of human capital theory in practice leading to an oversupply of graduates in the job market. However, as Ridley shows, by addressing environmental challenges through an effective 'net zero' strategy, the UK government could in fact create millions of green graduate jobs. As Ridley so persuasively argues, such an outcome should be a central ambition for progressive academics today.

In their article, so very relevant to the concerns of many contemporary academics, Janneke Adema and Samuel A. Moore evaluate recent debates on the place of (often unpaid) scholarly labour in the field of academic publishing, and on the ability of academic institutions to recognise such labour as scholarly work. They argue for the urgent need to reconfigure how universities view the labour behind academic publishing, to support more ethical engagements and relations with publishing, so as to bring knowledge production back under the control of academic communities, and to support greater academic autonomy within universities.

Also concerned with the politics of academic work, Howard Stevenson's article considers the role of unions and labour organisation in the UK higher education sector, arguing that industrial action since 2018 has shone a light on the multiple crises that impact the system. In by far the most substantial and rigorous analysis of this history yet published, Stevenson argues that this industrial action represented an important struggle over the material conditions of university workers, but it also represented a more fundamental, if often implicit, challenge to academic capitalism and the neoliberal university. However, Stevenson argues that despite an important victory in relation to pensions for workers in some universities, the outcome of the sector-wide dispute on pay and working conditions must be considered as a defeat; he offers an explanation for this setback, and asks whether, and in what ways, a trade union like University and College Union can contribute to a radical reclaiming, and reinvention, of the public university.

Julian Dobson, Julia Udall, Chris Baker and Amanda Crawley Jackson consider the interface between knowledge exchange and political agendas that position higher education as servicing the reinvention of the UK as a 'science superpower', and the implications for development of the concept and practice of the civic university. Their important and highly-nuanced article explores how ideas of commoning may help us frame civic 'impact' as a multi-directional process in which the university, as much as the city, is changed by encounters with new or differing constructions of knowledge. Also reflecting on the UK government's demand that academic research demonstrate its social 'impact', Jonathan Paylor's hopeful and inspiring contribution seeks to envision a mode of university governance that goes beyond a neoliberal audit culture and its affective organisation of academic life. Grounded in an ethnography of a UK university, and informed by a Spinozist ethics of joy,

the article draws attention to an alternative conception of subjectivity to that which the UK government's 'impact' agenda propagates, one that is conceived in terms of collective creativity and which breaks with the neoliberal notion of the competitive individual, proposing a move from a debilitating to an empowering mode of governance.

Giving close and crucial attention to the hardware of academic neoliberalisation, Mark Hayward's article explores the history of information technology and information systems in higher education. Hayward argued that the adoption of information systems has supported new technology in a manner that evades formalised collective deliberation and decision-making on campus. The article concludes that the history of collegial IT governance – now mostly forgotten – should be recovered with the aim of developing an effective mechanism for the sharing of information about, and development of an effective strategy for responding to, how new technologies affect the varied constituencies present on campus.

Eszter Pál's fascinating article interprets recent changes in the structure of the scientific field, focusing on the legitimacy of expertise and the division between lay and expert knowledge, comparing the professionalisation of the scientific field in Victorian England to developments of the past few decades. Pál argues that nineteenth-century transformations resulted in the restructuring and decolonisation of the scientific field, while today we witness the blurring of these demarcations and the deconstruction of earlier constructs. Her essay points out both similarities and differences between the two eras of transition, and discusses the recolonisation of the scientific field observed in twenty-first-century autocracies, concluding that the conceptual framework of science studies needs to be adjusted to interpret this development.

Gary Hall's timely intervention discusses the implications of the overwhelming bias towards privately-educated, elite-university graduates within the English arts funding system, arguing that the resultant cultural homogeneity amongst the creative class had a deadening effect on English culture as a whole. Hall argues further that it is not enough to change who is contributing to culture and the production of knowledge; we should challenge how they are doing so as well. Ultimately Hall suggests some intriguing ways in which new media and radical open access publishing might be used to reinvent (Euro-Western, modernist, middle-class, white, male) liberal humanist modes of writing and researching.

Maureen Ryan and Leigh Goldstein's important contribution identifies a form of cultural production they call '(academic) feminist lifestyle media': a subset of media produced by and for an academically literate non-academic readership. They read Anne Helen Petersen's *Can't Even: How Millennials Became the Burnout Generation* as an exemplar of (academic) feminist lifestyle media. This genre, they argue, offers feelings of intimacy and belonging to its public, often by effacing privilege. The final part of their essay examines Sara

Ahmed's *Living a Feminist Life* as a form of 'minor (academic) feminist lifestyle media', which models the possibility of identification without homogenisation – of doing feminist work on a smaller scale, to a more specific public and, most importantly, without resolving the conflicts and tensions of positionality, access and difference.

In her engrossing and enlightening essay, Karen Charman brings to the fore the work of the Public Pedagogies Institute, an Australian not-for-profit organisation in a long tradition of educational institutions that either challenge or depart entirely from the norms of elite intellectual culture. In her analysis of the Institute as a site for knowledge formation, Charman makes innovative and enlightening use of the ideas of Hannah Arendt: specifically, her concept of the public realm. Finally, in a usefully complementary study, Hannah Yelin and Laura Clancy look at what happens when 'the public' becomes a less positive space of engagement. As they show, public engagement through 'traditional' and social media is an increasingly important way for scholars to communicate research with wider audiences, with academics encouraged to maintain a public profile to disseminate work. However, drawing on data from eighty-five survey responses and thirteen in-depth interviews with UK academics across disciplines, their article argues that the risks of visibility are unevenly distributed in ways that exacerbate harm to already marginalised groups. Persuasively and rigorously, Yelin and Clancy explore how visibility exposes academics to the kinds of online misogyny, racism, ableism, classism, xenophobia, homophobia, fatphobia and transphobia that characterise cultures of online hate, arguing that there cannot be meaningful, radical potential in public knowledge-sharing if we cannot protect those most at risk of harm in the process.

I'd like to thank Peter Buse, Cora Kaplan and Rebecca Bramall for their help in the co-ordination and editing of this issue, and all of our contributors for such a stimulating and timely collection of interventions. We can only hope that some of their analyses, proposals and critiques will have the impact on the wider field of knowledge-production that they deserve.