15. Seeking the Necessary 'Resources of Hope' in the Neoliberal University

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> If academics cannot defend the university as a democratic public sphere, then who will? (Henry Giroux 2011)

> If you do not resist the apparently inevitable, you will never know how inevitable the inevitable was. (Terry Eagleton 2011)

Beyond dirges of despair: A biographical introduction

At the 2008 American Association for Geography conference in Boston, Jane and Rebecca gave papers at a symposium on global knowledge nodes and networks in higher education and research. Later, at dinner, they discussed the emergence, normalisation and changing inflections of the neoliberal university over the last two or three decades in Australia and the UK. Rebecca explained that writing about contemporary universities had a profound emotional impact on her and others she knew because it meant that they exposed themselves critically to the causes of personal discontent and distress. She proposed a multinational research project designed to explore systematically the affective aspects of neoliberal reforms in universities. Jane and Rebecca agreed they were tired of the constant descent into critique that characterises much progressive analysis of the contemporary university. They felt then, and even more in 2014, that even as such analyses and critiques multiply, and as their depth and sophistication increases, the situation just gets worse. There is no dialogue between such critiques and the universities, policies and practices that are the subject of them.

They pondered why, given the widespread problems of morale in our universities, academics remain in workplaces that often feel personally injurious and where teaching and research are increasingly colonised by simple-minded managerialist agendas and ruthless financial policies. Rebecca thought we might be a little like the victims of domestic violence who hope, often against hope, that things might get better: we remain, in part, because we often love aspects of our work and because some of us still hold onto the increasingly frayed fantasy of 'the ideal university' and the social good to which it might contribute.

It was not lost on us that we pondered these issues while enjoying conference leave overseas and that, as established professors, we have less reason to be miserable than academic colleagues on casual or short term contracts — 'academia's indentured servants' (Kendzior 2013), whose numbers are swelling in step with their unpaid workloads. In a National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) report to an Australian public parliamentary hearing on insecure employment, Grahame McCulloch (2013) observes: 'On conservative estimates, of the 200,000 employees of public universities, around 68,000 have continuing employment, around 45,000 are on fixed term contracts, and roughly 86,000 are "regular casuals". Around half of undergraduate teaching is undertaken by casuals.'

He calls such casualisation 'the dirty little secret' of university expansion. But we should not engage in misery competitions and perhaps secure, senior academics have different reasons to be miserable. Later-career academics have witnessed the type of university we value in freefall and have experienced the bitter pain of this (see, for instance, Kenway 2011). For many, the university has not only been our life's work, but also the vehicle through which we have sought to contribute to the betterment of the human condition in socially and environmentally just ways. We share a mounting concern that many academics seem so weighed down by mind-numbing performative and compliance pressures and the constantly changing demands for 'change', all under the imperative of urgency, that many of us are losing a sense of agency.

Jane and Rebecca pondered Raymond Williams' (1989, 118) incisive claim that 'to be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing' and feared that our constant critiques had helped make 'despair convincing' and, thus depressed and debilitated, we were barely capable of meeting Williams' demand to make 'hope possible'. We agreed on the need for a project that critically, imaginatively, positively and optimistically might help to provide 'resources of hope', to use another powerful Williams (1989) phrase.

We thought that the conference we were attending provided 'resources of hope'. It seemed relatively free of neoliberal nonsense and included inspiring people and presentations that provided fresh resources for thought, teaching and activism.

For example, Catherine Gibson and the late Julie Graham, collectively known as Gibson-Graham, talked about post-capitalist politics (2006). David Harvey, with a group of the early radical geographers, compared the conditions of possibility that they experienced as junior scholars with those of current graduate students and early-career academics. Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005) and *Spaces of Hope* (2000) were on display. And Noam Chomsky, arguably one of the most important social critics of our time, spoke to a packed auditorium and received a standing ovation.

We talked of building a project called 'Spaces of Hope in the Neoliberal University', where we would scamper around, full of youthful excitement again, working out what constitutes a space of hope, identifying and documenting those that exist and asking how more might more be created. As the evening wore on, and the wine depleted, our thinking was that, despite our customary gloom, it would be possible to identify particular research centres, research fields or sub-fields, teaching programs, conferences, even universities, that have either managed to maintain critical/creative/thought-full research and teaching agendas and that have managed to elude audit logics (or that have used them in clever insubordinate or mischievous ways). We also imagined that it might be possible to find small spaces within the academy where, despite the overall oppressive conditions, academics still manage to find various orders of 'old-fashioned' satisfaction, even pleasure, in their working worlds. And, most of all, we wanted to identify spaces of resistance to neoliberal agendas – spaces where academics have stood together against the powers and ideologies in the university sector and policy circles with positive outcomes. Our ultimate aim was to contribute to a new economy of hope, where these precious resources and their strategic utilisation combine so as to achieve a multiplier effect, spreading hope back through the university sector globally.

It is a fact of academic life that such exciting conference ruminations often evaporate once back in the boiler rooms of the neoliberal university. But, this conversation has stayed with us, and each has pursued these issues with others, including Johannah. We turn to these shortly when we begin to identify some 'resources of hope', but first a few harsh words about the neoliberal university, hope and hopelessness.

The cold embrace of the neoliberal university

It is worthwhile reminding ourselves of the brutal reality of neoliberalism, if only to recall that there are alternatives. Neoliberalism is a form of political economy that validates and valorises the so-called free market as the primary mechanism for all human exchange and interaction. Market exchange thus becomes:

> an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action, and substituting for all previously held ethical beliefs, it emphasizes the significance of contractual relations in the marketplace. It holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market (Harvey 2005, 3).

If the free market is the warp and the weft of our life, then social institutions and organisations must also play their part. Thus, the neoliberal university is marketised, privatised, commercialised, franchised corporatised, managerialised, vocationalised, technologised, surveilled and securitised, and increasingly individualised, infantilised and casualised. It is anti union (both staff and student), free speech and activism (Epstein et al. 2007). While the fine detail of these practices varies between universities, countries, faculties and disciplines, to a significant extent they have become almost ubiquitous. All aspects of institutional life are 'badged' or 'branded' in their terms: teaching and research, governance, institutional ethics, academic freedom, academic and student work and identities, even social inclusion, and much more. As Collini (2012) documents so well, few traces remain of Newman's 'idea of a university', even with its associated problems. But notions of public good – where universities are resources that cannot be charged for, where use cannot be restricted and does not diminish their value (and indeed, enhances society) – are anathema to the neoliberal, free-market economy.

 The guiding ideologies of the neoliberal university, including its epistemological hegemony, have become so normalised that many can't think beyond them. That the neoliberal project in universities continues unabated despite the global financial crisis bears testament to the normalisation of this ideology. As scholars, we have startlingly little to offer to replace that which has been so resoundingly found wanting. Rather, the austerity engendered by the crisis has been embraced by universities, which are now intent on downsizing 'unprofitable' disciplines or fields, shedding tenured staff and casualising an even larger percentage of the academic labour force.

Those fields and disciplines most dissonant with the neoliberal project have suffered the most – for instance, the humanities and social sciences, where a degree is less able to be converted into the personal quality of 'employability' in

the commercial economy (Boden and Nedeva 2010). In the UK, the withdrawal of virtually all state funding for undergraduate provision means that students have to pay around £9,000 a year in fees, plus living expenses, out of money usually borrowed from the state and to be repaid from subsequent earnings. The clear disciplinary focus being encouraged (but not necessarily being achieved) is that the 'wrong' choice might result in lower earnings and 30 years of debt. Because teaching earns the dollar that pays for research in such areas, a decline in student numbers leads inexorably to a decline in staffing and other research resources. Problematically, these are the very intellectual areas where, most often, critical agendas find a space and which help give voice to subaltern knowledges and people; fields from which 'dangerous knowledges' can emanate.

Giroux (2008, 1) advises that '[n]eoliberalism is not just a system of economic power relations but also a political project of governing and persuasion intent on producing new forms of subjectivity and particular modes of conduct'. As Jane, Johannah and others argue in 'Haunting the Knowledge Economy' (Kenway et al. 2006), the 'subjectivity and particular modes of conduct' it seeks to produce in universities is that of the 'techno-preneur'. Specifically, the primary and interrelated research imperatives of the globalising neoliberal university are a techno-scientific orientation to knowledge, an emphasis on 'knowledge networks' for the explicit purpose of 'knowledge transfer', and the commercialisation and commodification of knowledge. The ideal researchers implied (but probably never realised) are the techno-scientist, the instrumental and strategic knowledge networker transferring applicable knowledge to 'end users' and the knowledge entrepreneur, skilled at branding and making profit from knowledge.

Harvey (2008, 3) observes that neoliberalism involves:

> a shift away from the historic ideal of government as responsible to the people (in this case, for educating a national populace), towards a model in which *the people owe it to the nation* as well as to their own well-being to strive by any means necessary to educate themselves within a ruthlessly competitive struggle for which government provides the settings and the benchmarks of success [our italics].

This resonates within universities. Techno-preneurial academics' deepest loyalties are to 'their' university and they are expected to be ruthlessly competitive in advancing its, usually defensive, often absurd and sometimes paranoid agendas within the homogenised policies and benchmarks of nation-states and supra-national agencies such as the OECD. As we have argued (Kenway et al. 2006; Boden and Epstein 2006), the present conditions of knowledge production, with their reductionist notions of the knowledge economy and national innovation, have contributed to a crisis not only of the research but also of the moral imagination.

The stronghold of power and privilege that exists at the top of universities exemplifies this problem of the moral imagination and of the structural factors that allow the managerial classes to extract personal rent from 'their' organisations. A list of vice-chancellors' salaries was published in *The Australian* (6 June 2012): those with annual salaries over a million dollars were the VCs from Macquarie ($1,185,000), Monash ($1,105,000) and the University of Western Australia (UWA) ($1,005,000). And as Paul Frijters from *Core Economics* (15 May 2013) explains, in addition there are various bonuses and perquisites such as chauffeur-driven cars and business-class travel. The situation is similar in the UK, where governance issues allow vice-chancellors to enjoy significant personal financial benefits – even in 'underperforming' universities (Boden et al. 2012). In 2012–13 (the academic year when full tuition fees were introduced), the leaders of the 27 Russell Group universities – which regard themselves as the élite – enjoyed an average 8.1 per cent pay increase, bringing their average remuneration packages to £318,500 (Grove 2013). While direct comparisons are hard to make, this story of the pecuniary greed of many senior university managers is replicated in many other countries. The justification is clear: the neoliberal university has clear rationales and performance targets and these individuals are successful within those. In a free market (and, certainly in the UK, emphasis is placed on market factors when justifying these salaries), those who are organisationally entrepreneurial, which means doing as bidden, are rewarded handsomely.

In her Open Letter to the Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University, Raewyn Connell says:

> It's not encouraging to see university managers across the country increasingly resembling the executives of big corporations – in pay and conditions, in language, in techniques of running an organization, and in hard-handed approaches to the workforce. Corporate managers are an increasingly powerful, rich and selfish group in Australian society. The more that university managers integrate with them, the bigger the gulf that will open with the staff of the universities (Connell 2013).[1]

And as Libby Page (2014) points out in *The Guardian*, anger is mounting in the UK against VCs' salary hikes at the very moment when they are cutting universities to the bone.

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1 The university management's response to Connell can be found at http://images.smh.com.au/file/2013/03/26/4142308/Open%2520Response.pdf?rand=1364286577433.

Hope and 'structures of feeling'[2] in the hope-less university

The concept of hope gained enormous popular currency during Barack Obama's rousing first presidential campaign and through his book *The Audacity of Hope* (2006). But, as Chomsky predicted in his Boston address in 2008, it was ultimately devoid of political content. In contrast, we offer a sociological, cultural and political reading of hope, drawing on the work of Ghassan Hage, Harvey and Giroux, which casts hope as that which provides an alternative to the hegemonic present.

Hage (2003) argues that societies distribute hope and that the type of 'affective attachment' produced by particular societies is closely linked to their 'capacity to distribute hope':

> The caring society is essentially an embracing society that generates hope among its citizens and induces them to care for it. The defensive society, such as the one we have in Australia today as a consequence of neoliberal ideologies, suffers from a scarcity of hope and creates citizens who see threats everywhere. It generates worrying citizens and paranoid nationalism (2003, 3).

Commenting on Gramsci's use of the aphorism 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will' Harvey (2000, 17) asserts:

> we are not in prison cells. Why, then, might we willingly choose a metaphor drawn from incarceration as a guiding light for our own thinking … Do we not also owe it to him, out of respect for the kind of fortitude and political passion he exhibited, to transform that phrase in such a way as to seek an optimism of the intellect that, properly coupled with an optimism of the will, might produce a better future? … and if I parallel Raymond Williams's title *Resources of Hope* with the title *Spaces of Hope*, then it is because I believe that in this moment in our history we have something of great import to accomplish in exercising an optimism of the intellect in order to open up ways of thinking that have for too long remained foreclosed.

For Giroux (2012, 38), as for Harvey, hope is potentially 'a subversive force'. He talks of 'educated hope' which is:

> more than a politics, it is also a pedagogical and performative practice that provides the foundation for enabling human beings to learn about their potential as moral and civic agents. Hope is the outcome of those educational practices and struggles that tap into memory and lived experiences while at the same time linking individual responsibility with a progressive sense of social change. As a form of utopian longing, educated hope opens up horizons of comparison

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2   This concept is from Raymond Williams (1977, Chapter 3).

by evoking not just different histories but different futures. Educated hope is a subversive force when it pluralizes politics by opening up a space for dissent, making authority accountable, and becoming an activating presence in promoting social transformation.

We see the neoliberal university as, in many ways, a paranoid, defensive institution that has lost 'the capacity to distribute hope' to many of its staff and students. In so doing, it may have fatally undermined our capacity to contribute to the redistribution of hope more broadly – to fulfil the broader social function of the university. It does not seem to care about staff opinions and values and certainly shows us little respect. The neoliberal university fosters both the techno-preneur, who knows the rules of the game and plays ruthlessly to win and also harbours academics who don't necessarily like the rules of the game but are compliant politically, fulfilling the fantasies of the 'science of compliance' (Creed 2013). Audacity is in short supply, but cynicism, fear and even hostility and despair are not.

Our view is that some academics feel a sense of shame about their quiet compliance, particularly those who have seniority and relative security, those who have more room to manoeuvre and who have an implicit responsibility to be altruistically active to try to protect some of the values of the university as a 'democratic public sphere' in which:

> critique, dialogue, critical theory and informed judgement constituted a pedagogical necessity through which the institution could develop a public awareness of itself and empower administrators, researchers, teachers, and students to act in socially responsible ways that made such an awareness to those both inside and outside the institution meaningful (Giroux 2012, 113).

True, many on the Left in academe have written critical pieces about the fates and futures of the university; pieces that speak about 'the ruins', 'the end of', 'the future of', 'the purposes of', 'repositioning', 'beyond' and so forth. But too few accept the responsibility that Giroux speaks of to develop a wider public awareness. Maybe they are just too tired or too alienated, or both.

Academic staff do not necessarily have confidence in or trust those further up the management chain, those who are separated by their well-remunerated privilege and who are nonetheless busily engaged in merciless practices of 'cutting' and 'tightening'. Such negative affectivity is exacerbated by the ever-increasing, time-consuming, mind-numbing, energy- and morale-sapping audit demands of the job. The cold embrace of the neoliberal university has smothering effects. As a friend said recently 'I feel I can't breathe'.

All of this points to the importance of recognising that universities have become highly emotional spaces. They are greedy and needy, as Susan Franzway (2001) makes clear, but also they can be toxic, and such toxicity is often contagious, not just among staff but also graduate students. Speaking of the situation for anthropology PhD students in the USA, Sarah Kendzior (2013) says:

> Graduate students live in constant fear. Some of this fear is justified, like the fear of not finding a job. But the fear of unemployment leads to a host of other fears, and you end up with a climate of conformity, timidity, and sycophantic emulation. Intellectual inquiry is suppressed as 'unmarketable', interdisciplinary research is marked as disloyal, public engagement is decried as 'unserious', and critical views are written anonymously lest a search committee find them. I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by the Academic Jobs Wiki. The cult mentality of academia not only curtails intellectual freedom, but hurts graduate students in a personal way. They internalize systemic failure as individual failure, in part because they have sacrificed their own beliefs and ideas to placate market values.

Our views about the structure of feeling in contemporary universities have been reached not through the sort of systematic research that Rebecca originally proposed, but through observations and conversations in many different university circumstances over many years, complemented by Zipin's (2010) powerful chapter on the 'ethico-emotive ground tone' of the contemporary university. It is instructive to put our views alongside those expressed in the powerful, poignant open letters written by Sydney University staff to senior management explaining why they supported the NTEU's enterprise bargaining campaign and industrial action and about their hopes for the future of the university.[3] In telling the university of her intention to strike and to resign, Sue Woolf (2013) of the Department of English, in which she taught Creative Writing, wrote:

> I looked up from my research and teaching, and realized that the educational institution I'd joined so joyfully had become a severely hierarchical corporation that I hadn't a hope of approaching in a democratic way. The style of management of our university – management defined, it seems to me, solely as the managing of systems, structures, finances and building, never people – has robbed the colleagues I've been proud to be amongst, colleagues chosen for their brilliant scholarship and eagerness to share it, of any hope of democratic governance, even of the courage to speak out. I mourn almost as in a romantic dream the old days when our then Head of School asked us creators of literature – I work closely with a major poet and a celebrated screenwriter – what was required in our Creative Writing unit – which is why, I believe, we flourished, for as in all units, the people who know what's most needed surely are the people who've been employed for knowing. That seems a truism too obvious to be contestable.

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3   More such letters can be retrieved from http://www.nteu.org.au/sydney/article/Open-Letters-14308.

> Now, in this corporation, what we teach and the way in which we are to research and teach seems imposed on us, and continually under surveillance, as if we're infants and don't know what we're doing. For a terrible contagion has gripped all levels of management, where management seems considered only efficient if it's remote, suspicious and authoritarian.

Other letters speak of love of the job, the institution and of enabling learning. Raewyn Connell draws these themes together in her lecture *Love, Fear and Learning in the Market University* (2013).

In the UK, academics are less willing to speak loudly. But research has shown that academic staff in UK universities are unhappy in their jobs, have little perceived control over their environment and feel very stressed (Edwards et al. 2009). Likewise, the University and College Union (UCU), the academics' trade union, found similar issues in 2012.[4] But there is a relative public silence from individual academics – and perhaps the muffling of their voices aids the sense of stress and toxicity.

Hage (2003) points out that, along with 'the end of society' associated with the neoliberal project, has come the end of the notion that any social collective might distribute hope. Commenting on Bourdieu, Hage (p. 18) maintains that:

> what characterised neo-liberal economic policy in his eyes was not that it was shaped by a society marred by inequality, but that the very idea of society, of commitment to some form of distribution of hope, was disappearing … the greatest casualty, and the one that has most bearing on the quality of our lives, is neither the decline of sovereignty nor of identity as such, but the decline of society.

We argue that the neoliberalisation of universities and the attendant onslaught on academic autonomy, freedoms and imagination have destroyed the society of the academy. The techno-preneur is the ideal neoliberal subject, trained and honed to the task. Nose to the grindstone, s/he is the antithesis of the academic flâneur, purposively wandering the streets of the academy to explore, imagine and hope.

Resources of hope

We feel obliged, at this point, to disembark from the descent to critique and to take our own advice to be hope-full. But hopefulness requires resources with which to think, imagine and act. We therefore offer some possible, but very real, 'resources of hope'.

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4   See www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=6344, retrieved 28 September 2014.

Spaces of hope

Documenting and suggesting alternative types of organisations and practices that speak to different and preferable ethics, and making them visible, is a well-established activity amongst progressives and radicals. This is one direction in which Rebecca has taken her work. She works at the University of Roehampton, which she feels is becoming a space of hope as the result of the determined efforts of a senior management team dedicated to fostering a collegial university and an ethic of social justice and responsibility. She has been locating and documenting the practices of other universities around the world that she describes as 'alternatives to current reforms'. In a field report on Mondragón University, an integral part of the massive Mondragón Co-operative Corporation in Spain, she and her colleagues say (Greenwood et al. 2011, 41):

> Gibson–Graham (2006) argue cogently for such a postcapitalist future (as they name it). They do not deny the need for capital, or business activities, but posit a different sort of capitalism – new ways of combining money and people to produce the tangible and intangible goods that society needs. They also advocate exploring current practices to find spaces of hope for reordering the world, and breaking the hegemonic paradigm of private market supremacy. Although the Mondragón co-operatives are avowedly capitalist, they have combined capital and work in quite a different way to the current neoliberal trend and have worked consistently for sixty years to generate a solidary economic and social order.

Mondragón University is a self-managed organisation, where elaborate governance structures allow its owner academics, staff and administrators to participate effectively in decision-making. The university sees itself in the service of the local community – which itself is largely organised on a cooperative basis.

Some spaces of hope might also be aspirational. For example, Rebecca's paper *Trust Universities? Governance for Post-Capitalist Futures* (Boden et al. 2012), proposes the creation of 'trust universities' as non-revocable trusts under which the beneficial use of university assets would only be allowed to students and staff on condition they pursued socially, culturally and economically useful goals, explicitly negotiated with surrounding society.

Intergenerational hope

'The draining of many bright young people into purely market-oriented activities' is something that concerns Connell. She sees this as fuelled partly by their 'difficulty in seeing worthwhile careers following on from the research higher degree' and by the 'squeeze on public sector funding generally and on higher education specifically'. All of this, she argues (2008, 70–2), is having

a deleterious effect on the production of 'future generations of intellectual workers'; those with 'the skills, the interest and the institutional capacity' to undertake the sorts of socially engaged work that she herself undertakes.

Like Connell, Jane and Johannah have addressed the manner in which the research imagination is being stifled and how to construct a 'defiant global research imagination'. In the opening chapter to *Globalising the Research Imagination* (2008), they explain the ways in which the research imagination is being globalised from 'on high' and ask what possibilities exist for defiant research theories, practices and identities, how such alternatives might be conceptualised in the globalising circumstances of current universities and what this might mean for the next generation of researchers.

In so doing, they offer some pedagogical principles designed to help doctoral supervisors/advisers support students in developing a defiant global research imagination. These principles include seeking and provoking 'uncomfortable thought', examining 'unexamined habits of looking', trying 'to see from elsewhere' and 'striving for complexity'. These ideas are drawn from Greek-French thinker Cornelius Castoriadis, a philosopher, economist, social critic and psychoanalyst. In translating his ideas about the imagination, Jane and Johannah develop an argument for a research imagination that is rich with critical, creative and ethical, individual and collective possibilities and responsibilities. They contend that such an imagination should seek to unsettle the global hegemonic research imagination associated with neoliberalism.

Rebecca, as part of a team of like-minded scholars, has recently received substantial funding (€4.3 million) to do precisely what Jane and Johannah discussed in terms of the next generation of researchers. Rebecca is part of a team of researchers from six universities representing five European countries that won funding for an EU Marie Curie *Initial Training Network* program called UNIKE (*Universities in the Knowledge Economy*), which addresses the changing roles and scope of universities in emerging global knowledge economies and regions. The team will train a networked group of critical researchers, consisting of 12 doctoral and three postdoctoral positions. Although the proposal was cloaked in a knowledge economy discourse, the project will concentrate on the identification and canvassing of new alternatives, to be carried forward by the early career researchers. One of the doctoral students works on alternative forms of university ownership, finance and organisation – specifically cooperatives. One of the postdocs is exploring new landscapes in publishing and knowledge dissemination, and another is looking at academic entrepreneurialism, civil society and democracy. Overall, the objective is to produce new and imaginative thinking that proposes how universities might be reconstituted away from the neoliberal model.

Figures of hope

Social activists often share stories of other like-minded activists in different times and places to both pay tribute and to provide inspirational resources for present times. The neoliberal university needs such figures of hope. They might be characterised, using Harvey (2000, 234), as the 'insurgent architect' who has certain emotions and desires, including hope, 'all of which play out through social activities and actions' and who is 'endowed with certain powers and skills that can be used to [offer alternatives and] change the world'.

> The architect can (indeed must) desire, think and dream of difference. And in addition to the speculative imagination which he or she necessarily deploys, she or he has available some special resources for critique, resources from which to generate alternative visions as to what might be possible (Harvey 2000, 238).

Jane and Johannah are currently writing a book, *Moving Ideas and Mobile Intellectuals*, where they invoke the figure of the insurgent intellectual, drawing on the ideas of some of the feminists involved in the study,[5] who seek to create spaces of hope in their universities, in classrooms and in thought. Here are some 'tasters', in their own words, of their practical theories that arise, in part, from their own mobility and the hope-full lessons it has taught them.

Meaghan Morris, now living in Australia, was Head of Cultural Studies at a Hong Kong university when interviewed. She explains the frame of mind that informed her work there, including developing new cultural studies courses, in her keynote address for *Moving Ideas and Research Policies: Australian intellectuals in the Global Context* (2008), the conference arising from the ARC project:

> At this point of uncertainty in advance of any reform, we have two ways to go. One is the way of cynicism: we can go through the motions, adding new tasks to the 'compliance' pile of chores while changing nothing fundamental to the work we do as teachers. The other, more adventurous, way is that of creativity: taking these tasks as an opportunity to further what my colleagues call 'a project of hope', we can use them to realize dreams and goals of our own.

With her colleagues, Morris has avoided the politics of pessimism and nostalgia and sought to identify the possibilities for progressive educational practice in the nooks and crannies of neoliberal higher education reform in Hong Kong. This is seen as a move from 'cultural critique to critical pragmatics' (Hui Po-keung 2006) in which the insights of cultural studies are put to work politically (see further, Chan and Hui 2007).

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5 This arises from the ARC project, 'Moving Ideas: Mobile Policies, Researchers and Connections in the Social Sciences and Humanities   Australia in the global context, 2006–2010'.

As an example of a travel story in which 'floating notions' provide 'creative occasions' for her, Morris talks about 'difference', which she points out is a 'new humanities keyword that often signifies 'the West' in Asia' (2008), hence it is a story 'of difference about difference' (2008). *Traces* is a 'multilingual journal of cultural theory and translation', published in Chinese, English, Japanese and Korean editions, that was founded by Naoki Sakai and of which Morris was the senior editor for five years. Each issue appears in all four languages and the journal as a whole is collectively edited by scholars, who work in these and other languages. *Traces* is distinctive as there is no 'base' language of enquiry — every issue is multilingual in composition from the very beginning. *Traces* therefore takes today's management talk of process metaphors of circulation and flow seriously, in the sense that the approach is seriously creative. The journal is representative of a hope-full 'experiment in a collaborative mode beyond the simple version of "travelling theory" understood as thought originating in the Euro-American academy and then circulating elsewhere' (Morris 2008). And, it points to work practices that are very different from those valorised by the neoliberal university.

Sneja Gunew, now working in Canada, grew up in Australia from the age of four. Although all of her schooling was in Australia, she still felt like a migrant on the margins. This led to her idea of 'stammering pedagogy' – using a major language in a revolutionary minor mode, following Deleuze's minoritarian status within majority. She said to us, 'I have always been very aware of habitual ways of thinking which can be very paralysing without you realising it. You can fall into certain habits of thought, certain assumptions, and I invariably try to test this constantly (as much as one can)' (2008). Gunew's teaching and research have always challenged the heartlands of the dominant.

Stammering pedagogy is:

> an attempt to suggest a model for teaching that does not claim to have absolute answers, indeed, is sceptical of the discourse of answers, the position of 'those who know'. Such a pedagogy is attuned to the ghostly dimension of other meanings in any pursuit of a definitive meaning (2004, 132).

To Gunew this approach to teaching:

> is a matter not only of constantly crossing borders but of drawing attention to their presence – the ways in which their barbed-wire fences, their cells of solitary confinement, suddenly appear in the heart of the homeland, the metropolitan centre (2003, 53).

> It is tuned in to the stammering, the dislocations which seethe beneath the surfaces, whether these be of globalization or nationalisms. Within this framework, and

when used strategically and critically, those multi-multiculturalisms help to sustain such a stammering pedagogy, allowing it to disrupt the gathering menace, once again, of monolithic models of knowledge (2004, 132).

In Gunew's research work in Australia, she sought to reveal 'the foreign within Australian culture itself' (2003: 44) by rereading canonical Australian literature (a particular manifestation of the dominant culture) from an outsider position constructed in non-Anglo-Celtic Australian writings (Gunew 1994). She set up the first courses in non-Anglo-Celtic Australian writing and orature, immigrant histories, library collections and bibliographies and also framed the first (multi) cultural arts policies (Gunew and Rizvi 1994). In her teaching in Canada, she seeks 'to find ways of expressing the alertness to differences' (2004, 125). For her, the 'stammer' is a pedagogical model she uses in her classroom where she seeks to make her North American students aware of the 'foreignness' of another culture while at the same time 'destabilizes their own cultural assumptions and certainties in producing meaning' (2004, 126). This intervention challenges hegemonic practices of thought.

Rosi Braidotti, now working in the Netherlands, came to Australia aged 15 and her experiences of migration contributed to her idea of 'nomadic consciousness', most recently elaborated in *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (2011):

> It is an ethics based on the necessity of meeting the challenges of the contemporary transformations with creativity and courage … *The challenge is how to put the 'active' back into activism.* In so far as this position entails accountability for one's historical situation, it expresses not only a sense of social responsibility but also an affect. Hannah Arendt used to call it: love for the world (Braidotti 2005, 178 [our italics]).

Throughout her work, Braidotti insists on the importance of deploying philosophical debates in the interests of making practical social and political contributions, stressing what she calls 'positive ethics'. In terms of feminist thought, Braidotti recognises that feminism has opted for an 'optimism of the will' whereby 'feminist intellectual and political energies are converging on the ethical project of contributing to the construction of social horizons of hope' (2005, 178).

The Gender Studies Network that she set up in Italy in 1988 and which she ran until 2005 is part of this social horizon of hope. Today it has 130 universities in 27 countries and it is still the largest gathering of gender studies/feminist networks in Europe, and perhaps the world. By including Korea, China and South Africa it contributes to a particular construction of the European space. Braidotti says, 'our role is to keep it open, keep it tolerant, to keep the exchange of ideas in a non-commercial way, free universal education. If we can't stop the commercialisation of universities then at least we can try and contain it'.

For these three insurgent intellectuals optimism of the will, intellect and spirit with regard to teaching and research involves such things as refiguring difficulties as opportunities, constantly challenging 'monolithic models of knowledge' and generating theoretical innovations that reach towards alternative practices.

Hope-full student activism

University staff have some reasons to be optimistic when students conduct highly visible, energetic and clever campaigns. In 2013 alone, around the world but especially in various parts of South America, many campaigns have opposed the neoliberal agenda in universities. Specific issues have included fee hikes, the privatisation of student loans and services, the closure of student unions, the debt burden, the poor pay and conditions of university academic and non-academic staff, the diminution of the university curriculum particularly in the humanities and social sciences, VCs' excessive salaries, and university repression of student dissent (including the use of heavy-handed management, and security guards and police on campus). In the UK in 2013, there were student actions at the universities of Birmingham, Sussex, Edinburgh, Sheffield, Exeter, London and Warwick and a mass rally was held in London in late 2013 opposing 'cops on campus' (Grove 2013).

One such protest, and the path it took, points to some of the very real concerns of students about curriculum diminution and the discursive and punitive strategies of university management. The students' protests at La Trobe University in Australia in 2012 were against proposed budget cuts in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUSS) Faculty and against the proposed loss of up to 45 staff; a sorry story documented poignantly in this collection by Kirkby and Reiger, whose 'affective attachment' has been sorely tested. Art history, gender, sexuality and diversity studies, Indonesian, linguistics, and religion and spirituality were all to be axed (*The Age*, 20 June 2012). These fields potentially contribute to what Giroux (2012) calls the 'formative cultures necessary to a vital democracy'.

The students of the 'Stop the HUSS Cuts Collective' demands included that 'The VC, other members of University Council and senior management take cuts to their pay; the money saved to be spent on retaining staff and subjects in the HUSS Faculty' (@ndy, *Slackbastard*, 22 August 2012). According to *The Australian*'s list of salaries for 2012, the previous La Trobe VC's annual salary was $705,000. It is likely his successor, Professor John Dewar, receives similar remuneration. During a noisy, but non-violent, student action in a university foyer, when accidentally coming across the students, Dewar studiously avoided any contact with them. According to Kirsten Veness (2012) of ABC News, he later said he supported students' right to protest as 'it adds colour and movement to life on campus'. However, the university insisted that 'protests must be

officially approved' and that the university could suspend or expel students for protesting on campus without permission until after Open Day (Lee 2012). This indicated that the VC's predilections were more for beige and stasis than 'colour and movement'. And his later remarks on *The Conversation* (Dewar 2012) confirmed his keenness to take the active out of activism.

After intense lobbying from staff and students, the senior executive made some concessions on Indonesian, gender studies, linguistics and art history (Trounson 2012), but still punished student protesters on charges that were eventually dismissed. More recently, the VC still wants to restructure and cut jobs to 'make the university modern and agile to meet the needs of the community and industry' and to allow it to adapt to the changing tertiary environment (ABC News, 21 October 2013). Giroux (2012, 123) notes that universities once 'provided a space for the nurturing of democratic ideals and offered a shelter for radical intellectuals and mode of critique that vigorously defended higher education's public role and the formative culture and modes of literacy that were that were essential to its survival and promise'.

Student anger at what is happening to universities is on the rise and is exhibited on the streets sometimes in quite playful ways, such as the Victorian College of the Arts students, who, drawing on *Les Miserables*, waved the red flag in a 2013 protest and offered a stirring rendition of 'Hear the People Sing'.

Image 15.1: Hear the students sing, 14 May 2013

Source: Adam Howard, Colby College, Waterville, Maine, USA.

Close by was a provocative art installation by Van Rudd.

Image 15.2: Student cuts, 14 May 2013

Source: Artwork by visual artist and activist, Van Thanh Rudd. Courtesy of Adam Howard, Colby College, Waterville, Maine, USA.

One of the least remarked upon features of these 2013 rallies is that they attracted such comparatively good numbers despite the many factors militating against student activism (Pitman 2014). These factors include the fact that in Australia the nature of student guilds/unions has altered so significantly since the Liberal government introduced voluntary student unionism in 2005. Since then, most student unions have been subject to the same neoliberal pressures as universities; their 'hosts' now largely govern them and many have tailored their practices and philosophies accordingly. This has made it much harder for more progressive and radical students to gain a foothold and for them to organise on campus. Interestingly, due to student resistance, Western Australia did not follow down the same path. As a consequence, students still effectively control and have access to serious resources. A 700-strong on-campus crowd during these rallies was made possible at Curtin University because of this but also because a socialist and highly activist ticket won the student elections.

Hage (2003, 30) says: 'The caring society is essentially an embracing society that generates hope among its citizens and induces them to care for it.' It is clear that student campaigners have actively embraced such a notion. And, as these and many other campaign examples indicate, student activism is a resource for hope for the academy as a whole and for academics. But this begs the question of how often university staff consider this and work with student activists.

Hope as collective action and civic courage

Recent activities at Sydney University speak to the benefits of collective action as a resource for hope. In the recent enterprise bargaining round, the VC (on an annual salary of $905,000 in 2012) and his senior management team proposed an enterprise agreement that ruthlessly attacked the staff's working lives and conditions and also sought to cripple the NTEU (Connor 2013) The measures and their likely effects are revealed starkly in staff members' public letters to management. On the same day as the national student strikes against the cuts noted earlier, Sydney University staff also went on a 24-hour strike. Altogether, in 2013 there were seven staff strikes and there was an important overlap between the students and the staff. Bronwyn Winter, in her open letter, points out that 'many students have expressed their strong support for me and my colleagues' and that 'a number have also been attending pickets'. Such 'coalition building' is one of the many techniques currently being deployed in the revitalisation of the union movement worldwide as it faces the changes wrought by neoliberal globalisation (Burgmann 2009).

But spaces for hope are not always pretty, as the 'cops off campus' campaign with regard to the University of London demonstrates (Grove 2013). But the example that shocked the world was in the USA in 2011 when University of California, Davis student protesters were pepper-sprayed. The images of a security officer, wearing riot gear, spraying pepper directly in the faces of a line of protesters who were seated on the ground, went viral. Gabbat (2013) reports that '[t]he university had paid out $1m to settle a lawsuit filed by demonstrators who were pepper-sprayed during the protest. The sum represented $30,000 per demonstrator and an additional $250,000 in legal fees.' If nothing else, what a waste of money in times of austerity.

A shocking feature of the actions at Sydney University was the use of police and security guards. They roughly evicted activist students from lecture theatres during 'lecture bashes' and were very heavy handed in their response to students and staff on the picket lines. Students developed a petition that was sent to the VC demanding that he not use the police on campus.[6] They outlined the physical assaults students experienced and the dangerousness of the police tactics: 'One student had his leg broken and is currently awaiting surgery. Other students and staff seem to have cracked ribs and one has a broken nose. Several students and staff members were trampled. Many others were shoved, grabbed, bruised or struck.'

6   www.change.org/en-AU/petitions/to-the-vice-chancellor-of-the-university-of-sydney-refuse-to-allow-cops-on-campus. Retrieved 11 February 2014.

My Wonderful Day (Raue 2013) is a student's account of his own experiences of police brutality on 14 May 2013. He tells of being choked: 'I was frightened for my life. The grip around my neck never wavered, and I feared that I would pass out or even die, unnoticed …' He says he 'can't stop crying and shaking' and points out that his subsequent distress was made worse by those who blamed him for being there in the first place.

This, and other examples around the globe, led us to the view that the use of police and heavy-handed security staff is an underacknowledged feature of the corporate university. As Fitzclarence (2012–13) points out, modes of policing dissent are becoming increasingly militaristic around the world. The fact that people are still prepared to put their bodies courageously on the line under such circumstances is certainly a resource of hope.

Clearly, collective action as a resource for hope requires courage and pride. About her decision to strike at Sydney University, Nour Dados, a Senior Research Associate on a short-term contract, said this:

> It is no easy decision for staff to commit to fourty(sic)-eight hour strike action. That decision is all the more difficult for those of us who cannot be sure that we will have work next semester, or next year. Yet it is a decision that I am proud to make. I know that those of us who will be on the picket lines on Tuesday and Wednesday are not fighting only for our own work rights today. We are honouring the struggle of those who were here before us, and creating pathways for those who will come after us.[7]

The pride people take in hopeful activism and civic courage extends beyond the self and the more restricted matter of working conditions. Dados is concerned about 'those who will come after us' and this sentiment was echoed in a YouTube video in 2013 called *A Message from Staff at the University of Sydney*,[8] where staff and students point to the implications for others (teachers and social workers, thinkers and inventors, for example) now and in the future, of the attacks on their working conditions. As this suggests, our teaching and research often involves those whose work has the potential to challenge the misdistribution of hope in a society marred by inequality.

In October 2013, university staff at Sydney University finally reached an acceptable enterprise agreement with management after what was nearly a year-long campaign,[9] one that was creative, not just defensive, in the techniques deployed. One of the oft-remarked-upon side-effects of this campaign has been the sense of university community it helped to build. This bridged many of the

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7   www.nteu.org.au/sydney/blog/University-of-Sydney-39/tag/open%20letters. Retrieved 11 February 2014.
8   www.youtube.com/watch?v=oP5CR_B4MhE, 12 May 2013. Retrieved 11 February 2014.
9   www.nteu.org.au/sydney/bargaining. Retrieved 19 November 2013.

so-called silos that university life often erects between faculties, administrative and academic staff, casual and tenured, senior and junior staff as well as between staff and students. As Hage (2003, 15) says:

> If hope is the way we construct a meaningful and dignified social life. If hope is the way we construct a meaningful future for ourselves … such futures are only possible within society, because society is the distributor of social opportunities for self-realisation. We can call this hope societal hope.

Hoping with others

These resources speak to the importance of academics developing extended connections and communities as resources for hope. Of course, this involves all manner of organisations challenging the widespread political inertia brought about by so many years of neoliberalism, mobilising staff and students alike. Rebecca and her colleagues (Boden et al. 2012) argue that an effect of neoliberalisation has been to negate the social relations of universities with surrounding society, instead turning them into a set of customer–contractor deals. Meaningful and hope-full relationships with the societies in which universities are situated need to be rebuilt. After all, as Connell (2008) observes, university academics:

> have a speaking position that allows you to … do hopefully more progressive things than simply reproduce that privilege. To use that privilege to advance consciousness and social justice in other spheres such as school education, gender politics. But it's an inherently contradictory position, and I feel emotionally in solidarity with movements that are contesting the whole system of global privilege that produces that intelligentsia. I'm now old enough and ugly enough to live with contradiction.

As she also says (2013), neoliberalism in education 'has its own contradictions and weaknesses; educators face the task of making these clear, and putting together new agendas for just and inclusive education, and pro-education, rather than pro-profit, coalitions'.

Giroux argues that the reduction of universities to contracted providers in a knowledge economy should provide special impetus to academics to be in the vanguard of hope, forging coalitions to build better alternatives – we have everything to fight for. For Giroux, the crisis in universities is part of the crisis in democracy.

There are so many alliances that we can forge by working in an engaged way with others, outside the university. We applaud the European continental notion of the public intellectual, speaking, writing and acting outside of the constraints imposed by neoliberal pseudo-scientific methodologies and performance criteria that demand and delimit modes of publication.

Images of hope

In 1974 the young French tightrope walker Phillippe Petit, with no safety net or harness, walked, and sometimes even danced, for an hour along a wire suspended between New York's Twin Towers. Despite the subsequent destruction of the buildings, Petit's glorious and audacious act cannot be erased and remains in the public imagination as a hopeful and courageous, but, of course, precarious, moment. But further, the documentary *Man on Wire* (2008) highlights the bureaucratic resistance Petit experienced and his and his team's ultimate manner of getting around it, which was, in the end, not to ask for permission and to evade security.

Some, of pessimistic inclination, might think that in neoliberal times hopeful optimism is outright foolish. But as the man on the wire indicates, apparently foolish acts can be beautiful, sublime and inspirational. They speak to what unifies hope 'optimism, fear, desire, wishing, wanting, dreaming, waiting and confidence'. These 'express in one way or another modes in which human beings relate to their future' (Hage 2003, 10).

Such symbolism might be seen as a resource of hope, reminding us that the seemingly impossible is possible, and of the importance of optimism of the will, intellect and spirit. The towers were signifiers of Western global capitalism. Their collapse now signifies the beginnings of current forms of paranoid nationalism in many nation-states. Certainly creating and sustaining spaces of hope in the neoliberal university is akin to tightrope-walking in the space between the twin towers of institutional and individual neoliberal sensibilities.

Concluding thoughts …

In our view, 'hope' in the neoliberal university will not be redistributed from above – positive change will not come from that direction. Hope requires identifications and imaginations that take us well beyond the techno-preneurial subjectivities so favoured and the acts of compliance that we have come to practise so reluctantly but nonetheless so expertly. It involves using our own

ideas and developing alternative mechanisms for the distribution of hope; it involves becoming insurgent and defiant and a changed 'structures of feeling'. We leave the last words to Giroux (2012, 38–9):

> The goal of educated hope is not to liberate the individual from the social – a central tenet of neoliberalism – but to take seriously the notion that the individual can only be liberated through the social. Educated hope as a subversive, defiant practice should provide a link, however transient, provisional, and contextual, between vision and critique on the one hand, and engagement and transformation on the other. That is, for hope to be consequential it has to be grounded in a project that has some hold on the present. Hope becomes meaningful to the degree that it identifies agencies and processes, offers alternatives to an age of profound pessimism, reclaims an ethic of compassion and justice, and struggles for those institutions in which equality, freedom, and justice flourish.