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**DOING PEDAGOGY PUBLICLY  
ASSERTING THE RIGHT TO THE LEARNING CITY BY  
CREATING MOVEMENT AND ENCOUNTER**

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Revolutionary movements do not spread by contamination but by resonance. Something that is constituted here resonates with the shock wave emitted by something constituted over there.... An insurrection is not like a plague or a forest fire – a linear process that spreads from place to place after an initial spark. It rather takes the shape of a music, whose focal points, though dispersed in time and space, succeed in imposing the rhythm of their own vibrations, always taking on more density. To the point that any return to normal is no longer desirable or even imaginable.

(The Invisible Committee, 2009: 12)

This paper takes as its starting point the now dysfunctional state of the ‘university’ as a site of knowledge production for public good (for example see Bailey & Freedman, 2011; Canaan & Shumar, 2008; Collini, 2012; Cowden & Singh, 2013; De Welde & Stepnick, 2015; Giroux, 2014; Leslie & Slaughter, 1997; McGettigan, 2013; Molesworth et al., 2011; Nocella et al., 2010; Williams, 2013, to name merely a few). Many academics, it seems, now agree with Holloway (2010: 105) that nowadays ‘the labour that we perform in the office, in the university, is not just drudgery: it is a web weaving activity, a process of self-entrapment’. However, I argue that *education* itself is on the edge of abstract labour, the labour that is constituted by our bodily commodity sold for its labour power – education could perhaps still be argued to be concrete labour that speaks to the human capacity for self- and collective-improvement. This is due to its creativity and the relative autonomy of classroom practice; still not fully co-opted into the capitalist labour process, in many ways. As such, the educative act could be (re)appropriated from the university to the radical vestiges of the city streets where real, lived knowledge production lurks. Education, at its core, is a developing of the mind and therefore can, with a little effort and some creative thinking, be saved from total abstraction but only if it is a *critical* development of the mind, an intellectual development based in the everyday struggles of ordinary people.

Education could be brought to bear as a major site of slippage, a space to be engaged; to create the productive disjuncture between our in-university selves, colonised by capitalist social relations, and the learning that can potentially occur outside the institution walls and out on the streets: appropriating what is termed ‘Public Pedagogy’ (Sandlin, et al., 2010b). Then, individuals may take up the call for the ‘Right to the City’ (Lefebvre, 1996 [1968]) in an attempt to emancipate academics and learners alike, in a fully co-operative and collaborative effort, and capture a way of socially knowing, that makes education concomitant with the struggle for a just and equitable world.

Higher education and schooling have lost their connection with the struggle for the equitable development of the human condition. This loss is exemplified with the ‘student as consumer’ ethos, the drive to merely get students through their degrees in order to secure some mythical job to pay off the debt incurred in getting there. These institutions of

learning are increasingly no longer, as hooks (1994) once suggested, spaces of radical possibility. Therefore, there is the potential necessity to explore other avenues of learning, other spaces and sites, here thought of as public pedagogies; as Sandlin, et al. (2010: 1a) explain: ‘public pedagogies – spaces, sites, and languages of education that exist outside the walls of the institutions of school’. Public pedagogy engages with the notion that ‘we don’t just exist within the physical spaces of our world, we actively interact with them; we shape them, invest them with meaning and are influenced by them’ (Hickey, 2010: 162)

According to Giroux (2014) many academics in the new neoliberalised climate of higher education are ‘completely untroubled by the burden of complicated thought and the fight for ethical and political responsibilities....and remain openly hostile to any form of post 1968 criticality’ (p. 79). This, he says, is because ‘the gated mentality of market fundamentalism has walled off, if not disappeared, those spaces where dialogue, critical reason, and the values and practices of social responsibility can be engaged’ (p. 90). Giroux (p. 97) goes on to say that in higher education, ‘any thought that seeks to affirm alternative ways of thinking or service to the world is treated as either some immature posturing or the surest indication of a pathological dysfunction’. He asks then, ‘how may we reclaim the terms of radical criticality without succumbing to violent reasoning that propels us to mimic dominant ways of thinking?’

So, if the university (and formal schooling before it) is hostile to the project of critical thought and has therefore become an anti-intellectual establishment, then it becomes imperative that ways are found to (re)educate young adults and others in order to protect social ideals such as democracy, social justice, and equity. The question becomes, then, how is this to be done? A possible answer may lie in turning to literature on Popular Education as a starting point for this emancipation of learning and knowledge production project.

I am utilising the definition provided by Crowther *et al.* (2005: 2), as this definition was developed by the Popular Education Network (PEN) democratically:

Popular education:

- Rooted in the real interests and struggles of ordinary people
- Overtly political and critical of the status quo
- Committed to progressive and social change

Popular education is based on a clear analysis of the nature of inequality, exploitation and oppression, and is informed by an equally clear political purpose.

The process of popular education:

- The curriculum comes out of the concrete experience and material interests of people in communities of resistance and struggle
- Its pedagogy is collective, focussed primarily on group as distinct from individual learning and development
- It attempts, wherever possible, to forge a direct link between education and social action

Cavanagh adds to this ‘the processes of popular education are extremely effective for increasing people’s capacities to function democratically and with critical mindedness’ (Cavanagh in Borg & Mayo, 2007: 43).

With this definition in mind, where is this form of socially rooted, popular pedagogy to be practiced? If it is not possible in the university, due to its neoliberalised anti-intellectual project, then what or where becomes the classroom for this popular curriculum? I argue here that the ‘city’ itself is the appropriate backdrop for this (re)education in the current moment. This is based on the notions that firstly; it is not just the university that is in the current state described above, but that the changes to the university are symptoms of a wider social malaise (Blyth, 2013; Brown, 2015; Dorling, 2014; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Secondly; the city is already an educative agora, there is a need to recognise that formal institutions ‘are not the sole sites of teaching, learning, or curricula, and that perhaps they are not even the most influential’ (Sandlin, et al., 2010: 2a). There are other forms of pedagogy surrounding us; corporate public pedagogy: ‘an all-encompassing cultural horizon for producing market identities, values, and practices’(Giroux, 2010: 486) for example. According to Hickey (2010: 161), city streets function as ‘spaces that are actively inculcated in the production of culture’. Therefore, it seems logical that as long as, as Brenner et al. (2012); Harvey (1976); Lefebvre (1996 [1968]); and Logan and Molotch (1987) suggest, urban space under capitalism is continually shaped and reshaped through a continuous clash of opposed social forces, the pedagogical nature of the street can be co-opted for interests other than commercial. Co-opted for theatre, for gatherings of organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971) and natural philosophers, for street tours and public lectures on the steps of the institutions they address. The idea, as Holloway (2010: 45) suggests, is ‘gaining ground that the only way to change the world is to do it ourselves and do it here and now’. Therefore, this a call, to anyone and everyone to take up the mantle of teaching and learning, particularly those whose current work is locked behind the walls of academe, to come blinking into the light of situated learning and in-place politics. If as Sandlin, et al. (2010: 1a) insist, ‘we are constantly being taught, constantly learn and unlearn’, then this (re/counter)co-option seems a logical step to address what is currently happening in the world today.

Sandlin, et al. (2010a: 1) add to this notion that ‘education is... a dimension of culture that maintains dominant practices while also offering spaces for their critique and reimagination. The pedagogies that are immanent in the city streets are full of complexity, contradictions, and diversity’. These are important and often overlooked ideas, as Giroux (2010: 487) attests: ‘theorists have largely underestimated the symbolic and pedagogical dimensions of the struggle that neoliberal corporate power has put into place’. However, Brenner et al. (2012: 1-2) prompt that

capitalist cities are not only sites for strategies of capital accumulation; they are also arenas in which the conflicts and contradictions associated with historically and geographically specific accumulation strategies are expressed and fought out. As such, capitalist cities have long served as spaces for envisioning, and indeed mobilising towards, alternatives to capitalism itself, ... its relentless commodification and re-commodification of urban spaces.

Holloway (2010: 169) adds to this that ‘all social relations are active battlegrounds, live antagonisms’, including, I argue, education. This is the premise upon which this paper asserts that there is a need within education to join the call for the ‘right to the city’ (Lefebvre, 1996 [1968]). This call for the right to the city is more than a simple call for a legal right, as Marcuse (2012: 34, emphasis in original) explains: the call is for ‘*The* right to the city, not *rights* to the city. It is a right to social justice, which includes but far exceeds individual justice’. Marcuse (p. 35) goes onto say that ‘Lefebvre (1996 [1968]) is quite clear on this: it is not the right to the existing city that is demanded, but the right to a future city,

indeed not necessarily a city in the conventional sense at all, but a place in an urban society?

If the confrontation within the pedagogies of the urban space is to be discussed, then perhaps an example of where confrontation has already taken place would be helpful.

The London Occupy movement, I argue, was intensely pedagogical and interacted with the city in ways that created a living, learning cityscape (Earl, 2015a; Earl, 2015b). This study brought up questions about the nature of public pedagogy and how the two notions, 'popular' and 'public' pedagogy could be mixed and create a form of higher learning that is popular in ethos and public in practice that might change our individual relationships; to each other, to places and spaces, and to the political/politicized landscape itself.

The legacy of Occupy is included here as a prototype of popular, public pedagogy. Although the global movement was incredibly complex, what Occupy could have been argued to be, was a unifying symbol, a signifier of change to come, a stream of conscious to which anyone can add their voice: a giant human hashtag (Hall, 2012) and importantly, was played out in *public*.

The global Occupy actions of 2010-2012 created a massive amount of excitement, of hope, and a glimpse of collective action on a global scale, unprecedented in its use of space. Chomsky (2012) termed Occupy 'the greatest public response to class war in thirty years', an interesting descriptor, evoking a 'public' that was conscious of the notion of 'class war' and a response that was 'public', or at least *in* public, but, I argue, it was more than this vague 'response', people, both involved and observers, learnt from it. They learnt that collective action could take many different forms and that social movements were becoming sites of dissenting *pedagogy*. Research showed that Occupiers understood that a (re)education was imperative to social change. At first, many activists and academics (Chomsky, 2012; Giroux, 2012; Gitlin, 2013; Graeber, 2011) thought that this was a global movement that could change the way politics was conducted, bring the hidden, countervailing discourses out into the public consciousness and maybe even see the end of capitalism as we knew it. A grand ambition indeed. Nevertheless, as grand as it seems in retrospect, there was something about Occupy that was undeniably different, undeniably exciting and undeniably grand.

The highest hopes for the movement were reasonably short lived, Occupy was plagued with problems: distrust, internal disagreements, and in Occupy London, the repression of internal dissent against the consensus democracy model (For more information see Anonymous, 2012; Campbell, 2011; Earl, 2015a; Ward, 2013 for example). These issues, coupled with the sometimes violent repression from the state seen in various sites around the world, meant that, certainly in the UK, a new politic was being learnt by observers of the actions (Sandlin, et al., 2010b).

What potential remains then, and where might we go with it? The argument that I present here is that one cannot unlearn what one has learnt. Experiences cannot merely 'go away'. There is left an energy, a new learning, that was often translated into imaginative hope. MacKenzie (2011) said in an article that what Occupy was good at, and had sincerely and effectively begun, was 'hacking the public imagination', or what Haiven and Khasnabish (2014) might call awakening the radical imagination. This incited a form of public pedagogy; a learning from public spaces and events, and, continued after the camps had gone. This form of public pedagogy is still a useful notion for thinking about radical social change and how we move forward as learning peoples and educators into the next stage of

a currently still formulating kind of neoliberalism that is more oppressive and repressive than ever before.

Most Occupy actions had this in common – anyone was said to be welcome, whatever their political leaning. As long as their unhappiness was aimed at corruption, greed, was essentially anti-capitalist and cried out against the alienation of themselves from their human senses. Putatively, there was no blueprint for the future, other than prefiguring how to move forward, publically there was no specific ideology, no dogma to divide - apparently. Whether they achieved these aims has been written about by others (Brown, 2012; Federici & Halven, 2011; Gitlin, 2013; Pickerill & Krinsky, 2012) however, what this ethos did was create a kind of inclusivity that nurtured radical imaginings of off shoots from the movement. A slogan on the wall of the Bank of Ideas in London read ‘you can’t evict an idea’ and, I would argue, it seems they were onto something big with this one notion. This is the nature of public pedagogy, ideas expressed in public, learning from what is around, whether consciously or not and what people usually see is from corporate advertising and other vestiges of corporate or governmental activity (Hickey, 2010). Maybe it is time for a change?

However, as Holloway (2010: 12) insists, ‘social change is ... the outcome of the barely visible transformation of the daily lives and activities of millions of people’. Holloway argues that ‘we must look beyond activism, then, to the millions and millions of refusals and *other-doings*, the millions and millions of cracks that constitute the material base of possible radical change’ (my Italics). These other doings, presented as radical possibility, can potentially be constituted as an urban public pedagogy, particularly when taking account of Holloway’s (p. 133) insistence that ‘an ‘other politics’ must be based on the critique of the very separation of politics from the rest of our everyday activity, on the overcoming of the separation of politics from doing’. Harvey (2009: online), suggests that we are not in a position to ‘define who the agents of change will be in the present conjuncture’, which opens the field, but surely only if they are equipped with the tools of social change: a critical consciousness (Freire, 1993; Freire, 2008) and a willingness to create that change. Therefore an urban public pedagogy, that is popular in ethos and engages the radical imagination in order to critique the very separation of politics from the rest of everyday activity and overcome that separation, connected both physically and philosophically to the Right to the City movement, seems to precisely fit the bill. It seems that this form of learning, in the current political moment would allow us to keep ‘moving together in a discordant harmony’ (Holloway, 2010: 78), imagining other ways to learn, to relate and to develop our lives.

So far, individuals have been schooled rather than educated, and if the mass schooling, and therefore enclosure and dulling of our creative imaginations, is to be challenged, then the assertion of the right to freely associate, to assemble, to imagine and to produce our own knowledge, should be reclaimed.

This entails reclaiming sociality: reclaiming what is common to us all, creating, in other words, commons: the very streets of the urban landscape, the town squares, and the walls that surround them as learning tools. Therefore, an educational philosophy that enhances the reclamation of sociality seems essential for initiating the process of enacting a public pedagogy that reclaims, in robust ways, the Right to the City.

According to von Kotze, ‘popular educators and activists in social movements would say radical interventions happen through the concerted, purposive building of critical consciousness, through analysing power relations’ (2012: 104). This is perhaps what should

be concentrated on, on analysing these relations in the place where they happen, in public, in the city, with the space opened up.

Shor (Shor in Macrine, 2009: 120) suggests that ‘the dialogic task of the teacher is to build an unfamiliar critical inquiry around familiar situations while also connecting daily life to larger issues of power in society’. What better place than the very spaces we live out our lives to do this, through public lectures, history tours, and discussions in coffee shops and parks? Understanding and engaging with these cityscapes could allow the knowledge work to ‘position the local into the global’ (Shor in Macrine, 2009: 120) by making the connections through discussions on trade, corporate power, and so on. As Ollis (2012: 4) says, ‘resistance occurs in many ways through the mobilization of mass movements and in the work of small community campaigns of resistance to wards the state’, both of which could be formed through this enactment of radical, counter-hegemonic, public pedagogy.

However, Giroux (2010: 492), warns that ‘left-leaning intellectuals who are dismissive of formal education sites have no doubt made it easier for the more corporate and entrepreneurial interests to dominate colleges and universities’. Holloway (2010: 77) adds that ‘certainly we need forms of organisation, but it is important that the organisational forms should be as open and receptive as possible’. If, indeed these formal forms of organisation are needed, and I would agree that *some form* of mass schooling has its place, at every level, how do we seat this with the notion that ‘the principle of free higher education is under assault as never before, so too is the idea of the academic as a free-thinking intellectual’ (Bailey, 2011: 95)?

Freedman (2011: 10) suggests: ‘we also have another responsibility, to defend the idea of university education as a public good that is reducible neither to market values nor to instrumental reasoning’. Perhaps this is a secondary, or equal, task; perhaps the two go hand-in-hand: (re)connecting with the urban landscape through a radical public pedagogy *and* defending the idea of the university as a public good?

Nevertheless, Toscano (2011: 81) asks ‘is it possible to democratise the university?’ and states that ‘this question, which has elicited divergent answers and numerous practical experiments ... is once again on the agenda. But its parameters have changed’. I tend to agree, in the past few years, the parameters of this question have changed due to such developments as students being ‘saddled with huge fees to give them ‘choice’ and thousands are priced out of university altogether, subjects without self-evident ‘market value’ face extinction. The range of degrees on offer will narrow, the types of subjects available within degree programmes will diminish and real choice will be increasingly limited’ (Fenton, 2011: 107). Then, what to do? Marcuse (2012: 36) offers one possible answer:

our common task, those privileged (to be honest about it) to work in the realm of theory, and those differently privileged to be able to lead in the realm of practice, is to make that link between theory and practice and to make it productive.

Ollis (2012: 9) adds that ‘theory can help you find your voice; it can help you to understand inequality and hegemony. Theory can also provide insight into what needs to be challenged and changed’. Theory, of course is traditionally developed in the university, so how does theory and knowledge production transfer? If theory helps those in need of it to find a voice, when that theory is espoused, critiqued, and developed in the spaces between ‘home’ and ‘there’: the street, which is ‘a location of both total involvement and immediate disconnection’ (Hickey, 2010: 162) the efficacy is redoubled. The street: a space where

potential new alliances and discoveries lurk, a space where theory can be developed in plain sight of those spaces it seeks to understand and critique, creating a form of living theory (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). Faulkner (2011: 35) insists, ‘we need to equip ourselves to ask critical questions, to engage in democratic debate and to make informed choices about social priorities’, social priorities that can be seen as *evidence to theory* in these spaces of vulnerability (Hickey, 2010), both personal and collective.

Giroux (2010: 490) notes that

*culture* is the public space where... shared solidarities, and public engagements provide fundamental elements of democracy. Culture is also the pedagogical and political ground on which communities of struggle and a global public sphere can be imagined ... Culture offers a common space in which to address the radical demands of a pedagogy that allows critical discourse to confront the inequalities of power and promote the possibilities of shared dialogue and democratic transformation. Culture affirms the social as a fundamentally political space just as free market ideologies attempt ... to deny its relevance and its centrality as a political necessity.

Maybe then, it is ‘culture’ that is sought on the streets, in the Right to the City movement, through a radically different form of higher learning. Perhaps the urban agora is where individuals can (re)acquaint themselves with culture – or multiple cultures, de-colonising their minds from the monolithic notion of a really existing homogenous society?

However, this enactment of the pedagogical right to the city cannot be pure rebellion, as Esteva (2010: 28) says ‘rebellions are like volcanoes, mowing down everything before them... like lava beds, but they die down as quickly as they catch fire. They go out’. Nonetheless, initial rebellion is needed: ‘they’re also ephemeral; they may leave lasting marks’. It is these ‘marks’, these lasting effects of rebellion, that have the potential, as Apple et al. (2009: 5) say, to ‘open the spaces ... for those who are not there, for those who do not now have a voice in that space and in the professional sites to which, being in a privileged position, you have access’. Perhaps this is a further point of the public pedagogy espoused here: ‘participation also means using the privilege one has as a scholar/activist’ (Apple et al., 2009: 5) to open the doors of higher education to those who may not otherwise have walked through.

Perhaps then, the platform for this movement is the agora presented by the city, constituting an opening up of pedagogical boundaries, critical education as a social movement, no longer a solitary subversive act of individual educators, but a festival of in-place politics on a new scale? For those who might take up this call to arms, Holloway (2010: 83) is correct: ‘we rage against the machine, but we want more than that we want to break it and we want to create something else’.

There is a need, then, to step outside the ivory towers, end the ‘suffering’ from forms of academic capitalism, to reconnect to the cities, peoples and other decolonised ways of knowing. Then these experiences can be brought back inside the now toppling (commodified) academy? On the other hand, perhaps, when individuals step outside and (re)connect, they will find that, yes; the ‘university’ they fight for is gone. The radical possibilities have been foreclosed, sealed in a nostalgic view of past possibilities, that may never have been anyway, and that there is a need, indeed, to abolish the university and bring into being other forms of social knowing.

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