

**Conference Proceedings**

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Social Change III  
2016**

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The pieces included here have not been edited by the conference organisers, and appear in the form submitted by the authors—excepting some minor formatting.

The conference organisers were Deborah Jones, Jonathan Oosterman, Leon Salter, Dylan Taylor and Amanda Thomas. For more background on this conference refer to the editorials of issue two and four of *Counterfutures*. This document was compiled by Jack Foster and Dylan Taylor.

Wellington, 2017

# **Has Protest Decreased Since the 1970s?**

## **What Fissures and Contradictions Exist**

### **Within Capital Today?**

Toby Boraman

**I**N THE FIRST issue of *Counterfutures*, I argued that a remarkable overall decline in mass street protest and social dissent generally has taken place in Aotearoa since the peaks achieved during the 1970s and 1980s, and the substantial anti-neoliberal resistance of the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>1</sup> Since then there have been only ephemeral, fleeting flares of resistance, such as the anti-Iraq war mobilisations of 2003, the foreshore and seabed hikoi in 2005, the anti-mining protest in Auckland in 2010, and the recent anti-TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership) protests, with no apparent long-term building of mass and successful social movements. Yet this was too negative an assessment. I risked coming across like some sort of traditional or orthodox leftist lamenting the all-powerful effects of capitalism. Such a gloomy view can make people feel powerless, and conversely those in power seem all-powerful and hegemonic. Instead, instability and

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<sup>1</sup> Toby Boraman, "The Independent Left Press and the Rise and Fall of Mass Dissent in Aotearoa Since the 1970s," *Counterfutures: Left Thought & Practice Aotearoa* 1 (2016): 31-70.

contradiction is endemic to capitalism and a society based on multiple, interconnected oppressions (by, for example, workers rebelling against their treatment as a commodity to be bought and sold on the labour market).

So in this paper I will attempt to be more balanced and revise that pessimism. I will briefly voyage back in history to the 1970s, sketchily offer an incomplete explanation of what has happened, and then try to identify, in a preliminary fashion, a few cracks and fissures in capitalism today that have potential for rebellion. I will draw upon theories that claim struggle occurs in long-term or short-term cycles or waves, a perspective that attempts to avoid the current giddy optimism or permanent despair (especially since the recent rise of the nationalist, populist right globally, exemplified by ‘Brexit’ and Trump) about the prospects for systematic change that is often found on the left today.<sup>2</sup> I shall also draw upon the ‘class composition’ current of unorthodox Marxism—which is influenced by ‘autonomist Marxism’ and a strand of world systems theory—to help explain cycles of

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<sup>2</sup> For an optimistic view, see Paul Mason, *Why it is Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions* (London, 2012) and *Post-Capitalism: A Guide to Our Future* (London, 2015). For a pessimistic view, see many articles on the Redline blog. For instance, see their 2012 article “Low Horizons and the Legacy of Defeats,” accessed Feb 2, 2017, <https://rdln.wordpress.com/2012/10/14/low-horizons-and-the-legacy-of-defeats/>

struggle. Then I will attempt to roughly apply this perspective to Aotearoa during the ‘long 1970s’ (the period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s), and argue that neoliberalism and the repression that accompanies it needs to be understood, in large part, as a reaction to the struggles of the long 1970s. Restructuring attempted to break up or ‘decompose’ the communities and workplaces on which dissent was based.

Then, finally, I will examine the present, noting a major global upsurge in class struggle and protest following 2008. It is important to (however briefly) place recent dissent in Aotearoa in a wider global context, given that ‘methodological nationalism’ leads to a narrow, isolated perspective that ignores the numerous interconnections and influences (and disparities) this country has with other parts of the globe. In terms of divergences, seemingly that global wave of protest only reached our shores in a faint way—movements here, apart from perhaps the anti-TPP movement, were a pale shadow of what occurred in many other countries. Overt dissent, as measured by strikes and mass protest, has overall declined steeply since the 1980s and 1990s, despite some flares in protest. On the whole, dissent seems to be at a low ebb if put in its historical context. We are still in a period of prolonged class retreat, defeat, and decomposition. In large part this is because of the difficulties

of resistance during an era of increasing precarity, inequality, insecurity, separation, and the everyday struggle to make ends meet. However, this is not a permanent state of affairs. Percolating beneath the surface is an undercurrent of discontent against neoliberal capital which gives much fuel for a wide-ranging protest in the community (over struggles such as housing and the environment) and the workplace, and struggles that link the two (such as the living wage campaign).

### Swinging between gloomy pessimism and giddy optimism

While substantial research has been undertaken into individual social movements (including the labour movement) in Aotearoa, few broad overviews of the state of extra-parliamentary protest and dissent *across* movements have been published. There is also a paucity of studies that place protest in its historical context.<sup>3</sup> Of the studies that do examine long-term historical trends, most note a long-term and sustained decline in movements—such as feminism,<sup>4</sup> student

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Toby Boraman, *Rabble Rousers and Merry Pranksters* (Christchurch, 2007); “The Independent Left Press,” (2016), and to an extent Brent Coutts and Nicholas Fitness *Protest in New Zealand* (Auckland, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Sandra Grey, “Women, Politics and Protest: Rethinking Women’s Liberation Activism in New Zealand,” in *Rethinking Women and*



protest,<sup>5</sup> the labour movement,<sup>6</sup> and Māori protest—with one author even asserting that the Treaty settlement process has led to the alleged pacification of Māori struggle.<sup>7</sup>

A similar pessimism exists globally. Some argue we live in ‘miserable times’.<sup>8</sup> The present dictatorship of capital has resulted in rising inequality, deprivation, social fragmentation, worsening conditions for most working class people, Māori, Pasifika, women, and migrants, poor health and housing, increased precarity, high and persistent unemployment, and an accelerated ecological crisis. This era seems marked not only by a tremendous material deprivation and insecurity, but also an extensive commodification of everyday life and widespread social alienation (to give a few titles of popular books: *Bowling Alone*, *The Age of Selfishness*, and *Selfish, Shallow, and Self-Absorbed*). Some note the great speed up of not only the pace of work, but also life in general:

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*Politics: New Zealand and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Kate McMillan et al. (Wellington, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Sylvia Nissen and Bronwyn Hayward, “Students’ Associations: The New Zealand Experience,” in *Student Politics and Protest: International Perspectives*, ed. Rachel Brooks (Abingdon, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Cybèle Locke, *Workers in the Margins: Union Radicals in Post-War New Zealand* (Wellington, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Russell, “The Pacification of Contemporary Maori Protest,” *Red & Green*, 5 (2005): 57-71.

<sup>8</sup> Werner Bonefeld, “Bringing Critical Theory Back in at a Time of Misery: Three Beginnings Without Conclusion,” *Capital and Class* 40 no. 2 (2016): 233–244.

in Benjamin Noys words, we face a ‘malign’ form of ‘social acceleration’ where we are compelled to work faster, consume faster, play faster, and live faster.<sup>9</sup>

Yet what really struck me was a comment made by Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi in 2013. Writing about the massive anti-austerity struggles in Europe following the financial crisis, he claims that on the left there is a:

theoretical impotence in the face of the de-humanizing process provoked by finance capitalism. [...] I can’t deny reality, which seems to me to be this: the last wave of the movement—say 2010 to 2011—was an attempt to revitalize a massive subjectivity. This attempt failed: we have been unable to stop the financial aggression. The movement has now disappeared, only emerging in the form of fragmentary explosions of despair. [...] In the last 15 years...activism has been totally unable to stop the systematic offensive of corporations and financial agencies. Look at the last wave of struggles against the financial dictatorship, from UK Uncut to the Spanish *acampada* to Occupy Wall Street. This wave of movements has produced an effect of widespread awareness among the majority of the population, but it hasn’t slowed the dismantling of social life.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Noys, *Malign Velocities: Accelerationism and Capitalism* (Winchester, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi, “Give me shelter,” 2013 interview, <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/give-me-shelter/>

Interestingly, this comment comes from a leading figure of ‘autonomist Marxism’, a tendency well noted for its excessive optimism if not celebration of working-class struggle, creativity, autonomy, and self-organisation.

However, bucking this pessimistic trend, many have argued that protest has not declined, but simply changed form in Aotearoa. For example, some claim protest has shifted into the ‘invisible’ realm of social media and the internet—and that there is a now digitally-fuelled ‘fourth wave of feminism’.<sup>11</sup> Others argue that, since the 1990s, a major undercurrent has gnawed away at neoliberal capitalism, an undercurrent which has blossomed since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008: Occupy in 2011, and the recent mobilisations against ‘free’ trade deals and attempted capitalist enclosures, especially in the form of the TPP.<sup>12</sup> Yet others note that, since the GFC, a surge in interest in radical ideas has occurred. For example, Bryce Edwards has found the use of the terms Marxism, capitalism, racism, feminism, working class and sexism have all increased in Aotearoa

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<sup>11</sup> Julia Schuster, “Invisible Feminists? Social Media and Young Women’s Political Participation,” *Political Science* 65, no. 1 (2013): 8–24.

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, “Beginnings,” *Counterfutures* 1 (2016): 9–14; Dylan Taylor, “Social Movements and Parties: Possibilities for Change in Aotearoa,” Paper delivered at the Sociology, Gender and Social Work Seminar Series, University of Otago, May 25, 2016.

since 2008.<sup>13</sup> The environmental movement has also seemingly grown since 2008, with many on-going protests against fracking and oil exploration.

Overseas, similar comments have been made, especially on the back of the global wave of dissent following the GFC (I will explore that wave below). For example, some optimists like Paul Mason seem to think a vast constellation of social movements (and not the working class, which he sees as outdated and outmoded) can easily overturn neoliberal capitalism.<sup>14</sup> Unlike Mason, other optimists point towards workers and movements in the low-income or peripheral countries as the growing epicentres of strike waves and protest today, dissent that is supposedly fashioning the beginnings of a truly global working class.<sup>15</sup> Such a view, perhaps shorn a little of its over-optimism (but not as much as Burawoy suggests), is worth considering.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Bryce Edwards, "Increase in Radicalism in New Zealand Political/Media Discourse" (2016), <http://liberation.typepad.com/liberation/2016/09/increase-in-radicalism-in-new-zealand-politicalmedia-discourse.html>

<sup>14</sup> Mason, *PostCapitalism*.

<sup>15</sup> Beverly Silver, "The Remaking of the Global Working Class," *Roar* 2 (Summer, 2016), <https://roarmag.org/magazine/the-remaking-of-the-global-working-class/> and Wildcat, "Global Working Class? Uprising or Class Struggle?" *Wildcat* 98 (Summer, 2015), [http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/wildcat/98/e\\_w98\\_wak.html](http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/wildcat/98/e_w98_wak.html)

<sup>16</sup> Michael Burawoy, "From Polanyi to Pollyanna: The False Optimism of Global Labor Studies," *Global Labour Journal* 1, no. 2 (2010): 301-313.

So what is the case in Aotearoa? This paper initially set out to be a very sketchy, preliminary attempt to begin to address these gaps (such as that of a lack of research across movements, rather than on individual movements), and to investigate which of these perspectives—a long-term decline, or recent surge in protest—is actually empirically true, as measured by overt dissent. But I found the task simply too humungous to complete—it would require considerable research. A further limitation of this paper is that I mostly focus on visible street protest and mass mobilisations, rather than the multitude of invisible, everyday acts of dissent in the home, community, and workplace. Yet overall, this paper is a broad, sweeping, historical commentary that focuses on comparing the 1970s with the minor protest wave that has occurred since 2008, and exploring some of the contradictions of neoliberalism.

This study briefly includes the fortunes of the labour movement. Unfortunately, class conflict in the workplace is mostly excluded from studies of social movements and protest. This is problematic for many reasons, one being that it paints a misleading picture of the level of protest in society. It can lead to excessive claims that protest is on the rise almost everywhere, while not taking into account the tremendous decline in strikes and other forms of overt workplace

resistance since the 1970s.<sup>17</sup> However, there is some evidence that informal resistance in the workplace in high-income countries overseas is still widespread, and the decline of strikes has not meant it is ‘all quiet on the workplace front’, though I am unaware of any such research in Aotearoa.<sup>18</sup>

### Concrete brutalism: Cycles and waves of struggle

Let’s go back to the 1970s. It is not well-known, but the National Library in Wellington is an intensely political building in the sense that it was built as a response to class struggle. The building was originally delayed in construction from about 1976 to 1981 due to disputes between the government and the Wellington Boilermakers’ Union, who were by and large steelworkers. To put things simply, the Boilermaker’s had fashioned a strong sense of on-the-job solidarity in response to a dangerous and difficult job, and attempted to enforce a safe working environment on numerous building sites, among numerous other demands. Capitalists and the state, of course, disliked them intensely. To circumvent the

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<sup>17</sup> See Michael Biggs, “Has Protest Increased Since the 1970s?” *British Journal of Sociology* 66, no. 1 (2015): 141-162.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, David Collinson and Stephen Ackroyd, “Resistance, Misbehaviour, and Dissent,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Work and Organization*, ed. Stephen Ackroyd, Rosemary Batt, Paul Thompson, and Pamela Tolbert (Oxford, 2006).

steelworkers' monopoly on building in steel, the government instead decided to redesign the library in reinforced concrete, which was then unusual for large buildings (which mostly had steel frames). As a result, the National Library was eventually built in 1987 in a 'concrete brutalist' style, and afterwards many similar buildings followed. The heavy engineering industry also by-passed the Boilermakers by building in bolted joint steel structures rather than in ones that needed to be welded. In this way, circumventing struggle had created new innovations for capital and the state—in other words, capital and the state harnessed struggle to fuel innovation, and to a certain extent, as a motor for capital accumulation.

Another example of this trend was the savage, comprehensive restructuring of the meat industry from about the late 1970s to the 1990s. Again this is a simplistic account, but by the 1970s the meat industry was Aotearoa's most strike-prone industry—despite being precarious and seasonal, meat workers had built up over time, in many plants or 'sheds', a tremendously creative culture of solidarity, resistance, and autonomy.<sup>19</sup> This shopfloor counter-culture was often influenced by Māori, as many multi-cultural

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<sup>19</sup> See Ross Webb, "Your Livelihood is on the Line": Freezing Workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand 1973-1994," (M. A. thesis, University of Auckland, 2015).

‘workplace whanau’ or extended family-like groupings were established in numerous sheds and departments.

To give some indication of the powerful level of opposition in the meat works, wildcat strikes were commonplace. The Meat Industry Employers’ Association claimed that about 2,500 stoppages of brief duration (often only lasting an hour or two) occurred across the meat industry during 1970-1972 for a government Commission of Inquiry. These stoppages involved nearly 470,000 workers, a huge number given the total number working in the meat industry was then about 30,000. These stoppages, which were unrecorded in the State’s official tally of strike statistics, far exceeded the official national totals for all industries during the same period. The official national tally was of about 1,000 stoppages involving around 300,000 workers.<sup>20</sup> According to another government inquiry, at just one plant—Longburn near Palmerston North—362 unauthorised stoppages occurred from 1969-1974 resulting in 250,000 hours left unworked. This was in a shed where there was an alleged atmosphere

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<sup>20</sup> Toby Boraman, “Merging Politics with Economics: Non-industrial and Political Work Stoppage Statistics in New Zealand During the Long 1970s,” *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations* 41, no. 1 (2016): 66.



of ‘continual confrontation’ between militant workers and management.<sup>21</sup>

The reaction was multi-pronged: state de-regulation of the industry; the establishment of new, smaller, highly automated plants in the countryside; the closure of the older and larger plants (especially the more militant sheds near large urban areas); the imposition of more precarious working conditions such as shift work and the use of temporary agencies to hire labour; the breaking up of unions and the shopfloor culture of solidarity and workplace whanau; and the re-establishment of strong managerial control on the shopfloor. The aim, of course, was to increase profits and production, efficiency, ‘international competitiveness’, and to minimise resistance. To some extent, from capital’s perspective, it was successful: by the 1990s the workforce had been cut in half, production had rapidly increased (through automation, a generalised speed up, longer working hours, and the breeding of larger sheep), and wages had been slashed. For workers and communities reliant on the meat works it was a galling loss. However, even given a depleted

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<sup>21</sup> “Findings of Committee of Inquiry, Industrial Relations at Longburn Freezing Works,” July 30, 1974, West Coast Trade Union History Folder, Aotearoa Branch (Palmerston North) files of the New Zealand Meat Workers’ Union courtesy Roger Middlemass. My thanks to Roger for allowing me to research those files.

and weakened workforce in the meat industry today, recent lengthy lockouts in 2012 and 2015-2016 show that the traditions of solidarity and workplace whanau still exist in many meat works, albeit in a more muted and sometimes fractured form.

What these examples illustrate is that, to make a large generalisation, struggle occurs in long-term waves or cycles—upturns in struggle occur in specific periods, such as in the 1970s. They blossom, then are suppressed, channelled, co-opted, or harnessed for new innovations by capital. It is a dynamic and uneven process of pendulum-like cycles—new developments in capital (such as Fordist assembly-line work) eventually produce a counter-reaction, which then builds, and then explodes, and then a new counter-reaction occurs. But given the complexity of society and capitalism this does not mean history moves in strict, rigid stages; nor does it mean that resistance automatically follows new developments.<sup>22</sup> It is also essential to note, following Marx, that ‘there are crisis tendencies immanent to capital that lead to crises completely independent of the state of class struggle’.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For outlines of this cyclical theory see Beverly Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870* (Cambridge, 2003), and to a lesser extent Mason, *Postcapitalism*.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital* (New York, 2012), 194-195.

The strike wave and the so-called ‘refusal of work’ during the 1970s was accompanied by, and intertwined with, refusals in the community.<sup>24</sup> This included a large-scale anti-Vietnam War movement in which over 100,000 people participated in national mobilisations during the early 1970s;<sup>25</sup> a very influential Women’s Liberation movement; the blossoming and renewal of Māori protest (especially from the land march of 1975 onwards, and the land occupations at Raglan and Takaparawha or Bastion Point); the anti-nuclear movement (which peaked later in the 1980s as a popular mass movement); and multiple other movements, such as environmentalism, queer or gay liberation, and a general cultural revolt against social conservatism. The peak in terms of social struggle, self-organisation, and direct action was undoubtedly the anti-tour movement of 1981, in which it is estimated at least 150,000 took part.<sup>26</sup> As such, the long 1970s was really Aotearoa’s 1960s, a decade of dissent. Yet this dissent was not omnipresent; social conservatism was the predominant ideology of the times. Nor were these movements always mutually reinforcing, especially

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<sup>24</sup> See Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically* (Edinburgh, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> See Elsie Locke, *Peace People: A History of Peace Activities in New Zealand* (Christchurch, 1992).

<sup>26</sup> Aroha Harris, *Hikoi* (Wellington, 2004), 108.

given the dismissive reactions, for example, from many trade unionists to women's liberation and Māori sovereignty.

What were some of the bases of this dissent of the long 1970s? It is necessary to briefly outline some of these bases so as to compare and contrast them with conditions today. The Keynesian class compromise generally offered most families security, permanent and full employment, rising real wages, wide-ranging social security and so on. This enabled the establishment of stable working-class communities, a culture of dissent in many workplaces, and a high level of associational (or organisational) power in many worksites. Yet the contradictions in this compromise broke down in the 1970s under the strain of mass dissent (for example, against boredom in the workplace and community), economic crises, the energy crises and so on. The Keynesian class compromise did not extend to all people. For example, the male breadwinner wage upon which it was based was itself founded upon unpaid domestic labour (or reproductive labour) carried out almost exclusively by women. And Keynesianism was also based on systemic racism, as evident on the exploitation of Māori and Pasifika migrant labour for low-paid jobs, and the on-going alienation of Maori land.

When people began to act against these contradictions, combined with the economic recession hitting hard, Keynesianism eventually became unsustainable for capital.<sup>27</sup>

## Neoliberalism: The response

In general, most accounts of neoliberalism in Aotearoa portray it as an idea or policy regime that was foisted upon us by a few rogue politicians. What is almost completely missing from these narrow state-centric accounts is that neoliberalism was a joint response by the capitalist class and the state to not only economic crises and competitive pressures, but also to struggle which had restricted profitability and productive efficiency. Simply put neoliberalism was a brutal response to struggle. Neoliberalism was far more broad-ranging than just restructuring the state. It involved a restructuring of society, including the workplace in order to restore the long-term profitability of capital accumulation and to attempt to minimise, suppress and co-opt resistance.

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<sup>27</sup> I have left out the economic contradictions of Keynesianism. For explanations of these, see (among others) Simon Clarke, *Keynesianism, Monetarism and the Crisis of the State* (Aldershot, 1988) and John Holloway, "The Abyss Opens: The Rise and Fall of Keynesianism," in *Global Capital, National State and the Politics of Money*, ed. Werner Bonefeld and John Holloway (New York, 1995).

Capital did so by many means, as outlined by Beverly Silver in her magisterial book *Forces of Labor* (2003). Four are outlined here:

- *Financial fix* – this strategy involved a flight away from production and trade, and a flight into investing and speculating in the financial sector, or, in other words, financialisation. To some extent, this was an attempt to avoid resistance by creating fictitious capital.
- *Spatial fix* – this strategy involved relocating industry elsewhere. In Aotearoa this involved not only moving industry overseas, where labour costs were lower, but also moving industry within Aotearoa—a great example was the relocation of meat works to rural areas.
- *Technological fix* – this strategy involved cutting the labour force through automation and mechanisation (and, in the language of the 1970s and 1980s ‘computerisation’) and imposing new methods of production and management techniques.
- *Product fix* – this strategy involved developing new products and markets, or developing new indus-

tries. Examples include the development of concrete brutalism to get around steelworkers' resistance.<sup>28</sup>

As explored by many authors, the aim was to create a global, flexible, mobile, networked system of production and consumption. By these 'fixes', capital and the state attempted to break up the old nodes of resistance, and to increase divisions within the working-class (for example, between the unwaged wing of the working class and wage-workers, between permanent workers and casual workers, and between highly-paid workers and low-paid workers and so on). Neoliberalism was and is highly disciplinarian: it is associated with new management techniques of control and especially with a leaner, meaner state.

### The decline of protest?

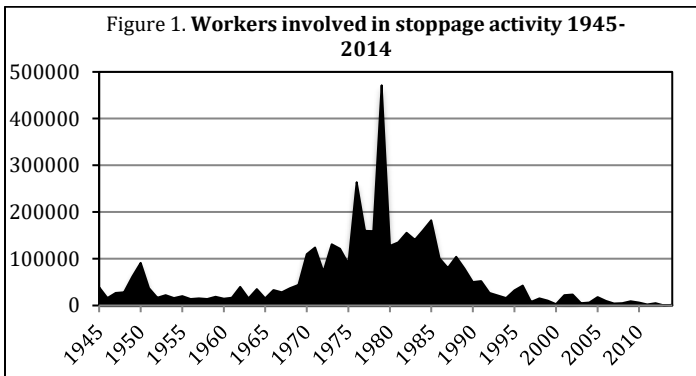
To cut a long story short, despite extensive (if fractured) initial resistance to neoliberal restructuring up to about the mid-1990s or so, the overall trend has been one of a decline in mass struggle (apart from a few minor upswings, especially in recent years).<sup>29</sup> This is no more evident than in

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<sup>28</sup> See Silver, *Forces of Labor*, 39-40 for a brief summary of these 'fixes'.

<sup>29</sup> Toby Boraman, "The Myth of Passivity: Class Struggles Against Neoliberalism in the 1990s," *Red & Green* 5 (2005): 25-48.

strikes. According to official figures—which tend to underestimate the level of conflict—we can see a steep decline in the numbers participating in strikes since the highs of the 1970s and 1980s (see figure 1 below). To suggest a general strike today seems absurd; but in 1979, at least 300,000 people took part in one across the country.



Survey data gives some indication of the deterioration of the level of protest. Interestingly though, Jack Vowles notes data from various national values surveys from 1985 to 2002 that illustrate the proportion of the population reporting having attended a demonstration remained steady at about 20 percent throughout this period.<sup>30</sup> Yet because it was not

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<sup>30</sup> Jack Vowles, “Civic Engagement in New Zealand: Decline or Demise?” Inaugural Professorial Address delivered at the Conference Centre, University of Auckland, October 13, 2004.



asked if people had attended a protest in the last few years it is somewhat inaccurate in terms of plotting historical trends. More recent surveys from the New Zealand Study of Values indicate a gradual decline in participation in demonstrations and strikes amongst youth. For example, in 2005 17 percent of those aged 18-24 had attended a demonstration, while for those aged 45-54, 24 percent had.<sup>31</sup> In 2011, only 6.8 percent of people aged 18-24 had taken part in a 'lawful' demonstration, while 25 percent of those aged 35-44 had; an almost identical gap existed for those who had participated in all strikes (not just unofficial ones). The overall average for both variables was 18.8 percent; yet a marked decline occurs when respondents were asked if they attended a protest or joined a strike in the last year, that is, in 2010-2011. Over this period, only nine percent reported having attended a protest, and four percent reported joining a strike.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Paul Perry et al., *Public Life Values: A Report from the New Zealand Values Study 2005* (Auckland, 2005), 38.

<sup>32</sup> New Zealand Study of Values 2011, unpublished data provided courtesy Paul Perry. My thanks to Paul for allowing me to use this data.

## A new cycle of struggle?

I now jump forward to the significant global upturn in protest following the global financial crisis. Indeed, some have called it one of the largest groundswells of protest in human history.<sup>33</sup> The German group called Wildcat has noted ‘the years 2006 to 2013 were characterised by a wave of mass protests on the streets, strikes and uprisings on an unprecedented scale. According to Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York the wave is only comparable to the revolutionary upheavals of 1848, 1917, or 1968’.<sup>34</sup> Wildcat characterise protest as centring around three main aspects:

- *Food riots* due to hikes in food prices after the crisis (and, one might add, the growing ecological crisis). While Wildcat do mention other forms of riots, they don’t discuss the assertion made by some commentators that riots have become a major form of protest in high-income countries (food riots tend to be concentrated in low-income countries).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg, “Communication in Movements,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*, ed. Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani (Oxford, 2015), 367-368.

<sup>34</sup> Wildcat, “Global Working Class.”

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Joshua Clover, *Riot Strike Riot: The New Era of Uprisings* (London, 2016). Alain Bertho has called our era ‘the time of the riots’ in his *Le Temps des Émeutes* (Paris, 2009), while Alain Badiou has called

- *Movement of the squares* as characterised by the Arab Spring, anti-austerity protest in Europe (including the Indignados), Occupy, Gezi Park and so on. This has mainly taken the form of occupations of public squares, by women and men alike, often but not always by unemployed or precariously employed youth. Wildcat characterise these protests as being largely against the government, corruption, and the narrowing of democracy. Associated with this is a preference for the assembly-form of direct democracy prevalent in the ‘movement of the squares’ and Occupy, although some have flirted with electoralism on the back of the movement.
- *A Global strike wave* has taken place, centred in the newly industrialised countries where rapid proletarianisation has been and is occurring—China, India, South Africa, Turkey, Iran and so on. These strikes are taking place across the very industries that capital exported from the ‘global north’ to the ‘global south’ from the 1970s onwards.<sup>36</sup>

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it ‘times of riots and uprisings’ in his *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings* (London, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Wildcat, “Global Working Class.”

Did this global wave reach our shores? Riots and a strike wave have not occurred here; the Movement of the Squares did, but in a much more muted form. Occupy in Aotearoa, while involving hundreds of people was far smaller than it was in North America, and did not attempt to occupy or disrupt financial centres.<sup>37</sup> A substantial anti-austerity or ‘pro-democracy’ protest movement did not emerge here comparable to that in Europe, despite the government making some cuts, and the housing bubble did not burst.<sup>38</sup>

Overall, however, undoubtedly a minor flare in protest has occurred, probably peaking (so far) in 2015-2016 with the anti-TPP movement. The anti-TPP movement has perhaps been the largest sustained mass movement in recent years. For example, in 2015 the nationwide mobilisation, organisers claim, attracted about 25,000 participants, which is somewhat similar in number to various national ‘mobilisations’ against the Vietnam War during the early

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Dylan Taylor’s claim that Occupy was a somewhat of a ‘significant event’ in Aotearoa leading to the radicalisation of many people and the emergence of a number of activist projects, although he does recognize many limitations to Occupy. Dylan Taylor, “The Coming of the Communist Party: Reflections on Jodi Dean’s *Crowds and Party* and its relevance for Aotearoa,” *New Zealand Sociology* 31, no. 6 (2016): 96-119.

<sup>38</sup> Perhaps this absence was because the cuts were not as severe as those in the 1980s and 1990s when neoliberalism was first imposed, and because the economy here did not fall into as deep a recession as elsewhere.

1970s; and in Auckland during early 2016 thousands of people marched and undertook direct action when the TPP was signed.<sup>39</sup> Yet in comparison to the anti-Vietnam War movement, the anti-TPP movement has not been as sustained, long-term, or created a major wave of radicalisation, nor been as successful and influential. However, it might be argued the anti-TPP movement itself is the product of a longer series of alter-globalisation protests since the 1990s in Aotearoa, and those earlier protests laid the groundwork for anti-TPP protest. Yet if the anti-TPP movement is the latest manifestation of the alter-globalisation movement here, it has largely lost the anti-capitalist and internationalist critique of the early years of the alter-globalisation movement, and often succumbed to a crude left-nationalism.

Nevertheless, it does seem under today's conditions, when compared to the 1970s, that protest reflects our more precarious, mobile, and sped-up era. As such, movements seem to erupt and then fade away quickly, rather than build slowly over time. Reflecting the class composition of today, it tends to be based on mobile, decentralised, networked, horizontal protest. Perhaps part of the reason for the lack of long-term 'movement building' is that much protest is based

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<sup>39</sup> "Thousands March against TPP Trade Agreement," August 15, 2015, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/71152277/Thousands-march-against-TPP-trade-agreement>

on the spectacle—disrupting the image of corporate capitalism, and creating public pressure, rather than actual grass-roots organisation, struggle, or direct action. Examples include Unite Union’s campaign against precarity, low wages, and zero-hour contracts, Greenpeace protests and various website-based petitions. The Living Wage Aotearoa campaign, while an innovative alliance between workers and those in the community, and also being ‘flax-roots’ based, has mostly used the tactic of placing public pressure on capital and local city councils to lift wages, rather than the pickets, strikes, and demonstrations that similar campaigns overseas have employed to complement public pressure. Of the few strikes that occur today, most are ineffective one or two hour stoppages designed to secure media attention rather than disrupt production. Also evident in many campaigns is a top-down reliance on professional organisers rather than building organisation from the bottom up. Nevertheless, in recent years these campaigns have produced some limited success, such as the recent abolition of zero-hour contracts and the raising of benefits.

### **Neoliberal tensions**

Material conditions seem ripe for revolt: most people (who are lucky enough to have jobs) have to work faster and longer hours for less real pay. Ironically, at the same time as

people are overworked, others experience systematic mass unemployment and underemployment. Precarity and insecurity is the new norm. There is also worsening inequality, a housing crisis, accelerated climate change and pollution; the list goes on. Yet, paradoxically, despite these worsening conditions, dissent has not become widespread over time. As argued above, neoliberalism was opposed in a much more extensive way when it was first imposed in the 1980s and 1990s.

How do we explain this paradox? Do we need to go back to a Gramscian understanding of hegemony, or a Situationist understanding of the power of the spectacle? Those type of theories, at their worst, claim people have been duped. They do not recognise most do not see dissent as feasible or effective. Reasons for this include how people have been ground down by the daily struggle to get by, the lack of spare time people have, precarity, and the how protest and strikes seem ineffective. However, I think to better understand the effectiveness of neoliberalism—and to be able to oppose it more effectively—is to grasp that it offers people a bad sort of compromise, an unequal compromise to be sure, but a compromise nonetheless. It does offer some limited benefits to many working class people.<sup>40</sup> It offers relatively

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<sup>40</sup> The “With Sober Senses” blog explores, from an autonomist Marxist perspective, the neoliberal ‘class deal’ that most people experience of ‘high

cheap consumer commodities, an easy flow of credit, greater diversity in the marketplace and society, relatively high wages for some ‘highly-skilled’ jobs, and what Jodi Dean calls ‘communicative capitalism’, a capitalism that feeds on the proliferation of ‘communicative access and opportunity’ through the internet and social media.<sup>41</sup>

Yet on the other hand, neoliberalism throws up new tensions: financialisation leads to a housing crisis, and the beginnings of a movement against high rents, evictions and poor quality housing; globalisation and neoliberalism leads to the extreme enrichment of a few at the expense of the many, and thus a movement against this enrichment and the so-called ‘one percent’; the easy flow of credit produces increasing indebtedness, and thus demands to reduce or cancel debt; attempts to further enclose or privatise the commons for the profit of a few leads to demands to re-establish the commons; and the acceleration of the environmental crisis leads to greater ecological protest. It is not an automatic

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credit, high work, high consumption’ which he asserts compensates for the termination of social democracy to some degree and also facilitates capital accumulation. See “Notes for an understanding of class deals be they social democratic or otherwise,” March 2013, <https://withsobersenses.wordpress.com/2013/03/04/notes-for-an-understanding-of-class-deals-be-they-social-democratic-or-otherwise/>

<sup>41</sup> Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (Durham USA, 2009).



process, however, as resistance develops unevenly, and is dependent on a complex array of variables. And unfortunately neoliberalism and imperialist wars in the Middle East have also led to the blossoming of a nationalist right.

### **Subversion today: Prospects**

So while protest has declined overall since the long 1970s under the pressure of neoliberal capital, that pressure has intensified the cracks and fissures within the system, and potentially offers up new possibilities and spaces for autonomy and self-organisation from below. Yet the rise of the nationalist and religious right seems a scary prospect that could nullify any prospects for social change. For example, in an even more sombre tone, Berardi has commented more recently on prospects for change in Europe:

In the present condition of perpetual economic stagnation, emerging markets are crumbling, the European Union is paralyzed, the promised economic recovery is elusive, and it is hard to foresee an awakening from this nightmare. The only imaginable way out of this hell is to end financial capitalism, but this does not seem to be at hand. [...] A fragmented front of nationalist parties is gaining the upper hand [...] The icy wind of financial abstraction is instilling in the European soul a sense of desolation that Michel Houellebecq has described in his books. *La Soumission*

(Submission) is a novel about the sadness that emerges from the vanishing of collective desire.<sup>42</sup>

Yet this new round of repression and enclosure may also fuel widespread protest. Indeed, the recent women's marches against Trump have been called the largest day of protest in American history.<sup>43</sup>

However, I do not have a crystal ball or the answers by any stretch. It is very hard to oppose the abstraction of finance capital. It is very hard to overturn the long-term legacy of defeats since the 1980s. And the rise of the nationalist right may lead to society lurching further to the right. I do think it is essential to listen to people, however. Answers are often thrown up through collective struggle, and not through academic theories. They need to be based on people's everyday experiences and situations. For example, if many people are suffering from the chronic intensification of work, it seems foolish for unions to sign productivity deals in return for minimal increases in wages – or even accept the 'work

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<sup>42</sup> Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, "The Coming Global Civil War: Is There Any Way Out?" *E-Flux Journal* 69, January, 2016, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/69/60582/the-coming-global-civil-war-is-there-any-way-out/>

<sup>43</sup> Matt Broomfield, "Women's March Against Donald Trump is the Largest Day of Protests in US History, say Political Scientists," *The Independent*, January 24, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/womens-march-anti-donald-trump-womens-rights-largest-protest-demonstration-us-history-political-a7541081.html>

hard, play hard' ethic. It seems a thorough questioning of the work ethic is overdue, and there is a need for a general go-slow.<sup>44</sup> Self-organisation and rank and file grassroots struggle were crucial to the revolts of the 1970s, and this sadly seems to have been lost today. Another aspect of struggle that seems to have almost vanished today is that of strikes. While they are very difficult to undertake today given repressive laws, and most workers lack bargaining and associational power, they are not a thing of the past. Indeed, they are essential for increasing wages and bettering working conditions. Globalisation and neoliberalism has created many weak spots, such as a global reliance on just-in-time production and distribution. This places distribution or logistics workers (in airports, ports, ships, transport, warehouses, and distribution hubs) in an arguably more strategic position than they were in the past, and able to take effective direct action to disrupt supply chains.<sup>45</sup> And perhaps a re-discovery of anti-capitalism, 'common-ism', and internationalism is due. Given globalisation, global links between those in struggle need to be made from below. Struggle also needs

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<sup>44</sup> For an introduction to critiques of the work ethic and productivism, see Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Post-Work Imaginaries* (Durham USA, 2011).

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Kim Moody, *In Solidarity: Essays on Working-Class Organization and Strategy in the United States* (Chicago, 2014).

to be based on the changing composition of the working class—a more mobile, precarious, networked, and increasingly multi-cultural class. This requires innovative and relevant strategies (involving both formal and informal resistance), some of which are being attempted today, such as with Unite Union, the Logistics Workers Network and FIRST Union's UNEMIG (Union Network of Migrants). So, rather than a permanent despair or giddy optimism, prospects today are mixed as we enter into a more volatile period.

# Putting the Brakes on the Edufactory and Reclaiming the Campus as a Site of Resistance

Marcelle C. Dawson

**T**HIS TALK CONSIDERS some of the ways in which neoliberalism has perverted the goal of education. It is part of a bigger project on the neoliberal university. In this talk I draw mainly on international literature to paint a context for work that is to follow. However, I also touch briefly on some New Zealand specifics. I consider themes such as the student-as-consumer, academic entrepreneurship, the academic precariat, and performance management. I raise some questions regarding how campuses can be reinvigorated as a seedbed of critical pedagogy and a site of contentious politics. I begin with a quote from Henry Giroux; it sums up quite succinctly the challenge that lies ahead: '[U]nder the material and affective assaults of neoliberalism, higher education across the globe is experiencing an unprecedented attack on its role as a democratic public sphere'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Giroux, "The New Brutalism in Higher Education," *Alternate Routes: A Journal of Critical Social Research* 26, no. 15 (2015): 312.

## Higher education in the 'age of austerity'

In the wake of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, governments the world over either introduced or ramped up existing austerity measures. While higher education (HE) has been somewhat protected in comparison to other sectors such as construction and manufacturing, spending cuts have undoubtedly left their mark on campuses around the world. The changes to HE that we are witnessing now must be understood within the broader context of three key shifts that have shaped universities since the 1960s. 'Massification', 'marketisation' and 'internationalisation' have substantially changed the nature of the academy.<sup>2</sup> Some of the outcomes of these shifts have, of course, been positive. For instance, massification meant that university education became more accessible to a wider pool of more diverse people, rather than being seen as the preserve of the elite. We should, however, be cautious in our celebrations of this apparent inclusivity, because the massification of HE was ultimately tied to the needs of capital for a skilled workforce. Moreover, the number of students has been growing disproportionately to the number of staff. As such, universities around the world that

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<sup>2</sup> Ruth Barcan, *Academic Life and Labour in the New University: Hope and Other Choices* (Ashgate, 2013), 6; Angel Calderon, "Massification Continues to Transform Higher Education," *University World News* 237 (September, 2012).

are heavily reliant on public funding are stretched to capacity in terms of their student to staff ratios. This has implications for perceived quality of education and, therefore, for university rankings, which represent an important criterion for measurement and comparison in a neoliberal era.

Some of changes in the last 30 years have eroded our relationship with knowledge, ideas, and education. They have altered the relationship that academics have with their work, with students, and with each other; they have also altered the relationship that students have with the university, their teachers, their qualifications and so on. Teaching staff produce graduates and other outputs in the form of 'knowledge products'. They are also service providers vis-à-vis students who are paying customers.

### **The student-as-consumer**

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw significant changes to tertiary education funding in New Zealand. Under a Labour-led government, the Education Act of 1989 saw the introduction of domestic tuition fees and the cutting of public subsidies. Government bursaries that covered the nominal administration fees and living costs gave way to means tested

student allowances.<sup>3</sup> Between 1989 and 1990 tuition fees went up a startling tenfold from about \$120 to \$1,250 and have kept going up under subsequent governments. By 1992, the National Party was in power and, under the guise of open education for all, the student loan scheme (SLS) was introduced.

In 2007, NZ participation rates in tertiary education exceeded the OECD average by about 10 per cent.<sup>4</sup> Currently, tertiary participation rates in New Zealand are marginally lower than the OECD average,<sup>5</sup> suggesting that overall participation rates have declined over time.<sup>6</sup> While there have been some improvements in the participation rates among Māori and Pacific Islanders, one group that has largely been excluded from HE by new policy amendments is mature learners, or ‘second-chance learners’ as they are called in some contexts.<sup>7</sup> Restricting the duration of allowances for students over the age of 40 from 200 to 120 weeks,

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<sup>3</sup> Ivan Snook, “Policy Change in Higher Education: The New Zealand Experience,” *Higher Education* 21, no. 4 (1991): 621–634.

<sup>4</sup> Patrick Healy, “The impact of economic crisis on higher education,” UNESCO (2012): 93.

<sup>5</sup> “Population With Tertiary Education,” OECD, accessed February 1, 2017, <https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/population-with-tertiary-education.htm#indicator-chart>

<sup>6</sup> “Participation Rates in Tertiary Education,” Education Counts, accessed February 1, 2017, <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/student-engagement-participation/1963>

<sup>7</sup> “Participation Rates in Tertiary Education.”



and scrapping allowances for students over 55 has severely limited the opportunities for older students to engage in higher learning.<sup>8</sup> So, despite the rhetoric of opening up access to higher education to all, the lived reality is that if you are unlikely to be able to pay off your debt in a reasonable time frame; you are seen as a high-risk investment. In other words, the subtext of the SLS is that if you are not a disciplined consumer then the university is not the place for you.

For those who are able to afford the cost of a university education campus life is quite different from what many of their professors would have experienced when they were students. Henry Giroux, one of the most prominent and prolific authors on this highly charged issue of the neoliberal university paints a vivid picture of twenty-first century campus life:

Everywhere students turn outside of the university classroom, they are confronted with vendors and commercial sponsors who are hawking credit cards, athletic goods, soft drinks, and other commodities that one associates with the local shopping mall. Universities and colleges compound this marriage of commercial and educational values by sign-

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<sup>8</sup> "The 2014 Budget: Government Locks in Cuts and Continues to Lock Out Students," The New Zealand Union of Students' Associations, accessed August 23, 2016, [http://www.students.org.nz/2014\\_budget](http://www.students.org.nz/2014_budget)

ing exclusive contracts with Pepsi, Nike, and other contractors, further blurring the distinction between student and consumer. The message to students is clear: customer satisfaction is offered as a surrogate for learning; ‘to be a citizen is to be a consumer and nothing more. Freedom means freedom to purchase’.<sup>9</sup>

While Giroux was describing campuses across the USA, these features are apparent at universities elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> On the specific point of students as consumers, Molesworth, Nixon, and Scullion borrowed the language of Erich Fromm’s humanist philosophy to suggest that ‘the current higher education market discourse promotes a mode of existence, where students seek to “have a degree” rather than “be learners”’.<sup>11</sup> But, it is not only the students who reinforce the neoliberal agenda of the government and university ad-

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<sup>9</sup> Henry Giroux, *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex* (Routledge, 2007), 105-6.

<sup>10</sup> Rachel Brooks, Kate Byford and Katherine Sela, “Students’ Unions, Consumerism and the Neo-liberal University,” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 37, no. 8 (2016); Jamie Brownlee, *Academia, Inc. How Corporatization Is Transforming Canadian Universities* (Fernwood, 2015); Mike Molesworth, Richard Scullion and Elizabeth Nixon, *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer* (Routledge, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Mike Molesworth, Elizabeth Nixon and Richard Scullion, “Having, Being and Higher Education: The Marketisation of the University and the Transformation of the Student into Consumer,” *Teaching in Higher Education* 14, no. 3 (2009): 277.

ministrators. Academic staff also engage in certain behaviours that reproduce the very neoliberal structures that may, in the end, be their undoing.

### **Scholar, entrepreneur, or academic precariat?**

For many academics, the job entails teaching, research, and administration in varying combinations, depending on contractual obligations, employment status, and seniority among other things. On the surface, these components seem to be in sync with the quest for knowledge and with the desire to be the ‘critic and conscience of society’. In reality, however, it seems that assisting in the development of a critical, thinking, active citizenry, is distinctly at odds with the goals of ‘Academia Inc.’ For instance, the New Zealand Ministry of Education’s Tertiary Education Strategy for 2014-2019 reveals the desire to ‘[develop] relevant skills and research and improve outcomes for all’ by ‘build[ing] international relationships that contribute to improved competitiveness, support business and innovation’. The six goals that have been prioritised in an attempt to achieve this long-term strategy include: ‘delivering skills for industry’; ‘getting at-risk young people into a career’; ‘boosting achievement of Māori and Pasifika’; ‘improving adult literacy and numeracy’; ‘strengthening research-based institutions’; and

‘growing international linages’.<sup>12</sup> These priorities are perhaps well-intentioned, but they are aligned with a particular ideology that seeks to promote the idea that the role of education is to meet the needs of capital. However, if one believes—as Giroux does—that higher education should serve as ‘a democratic public sphere and counterinstitution, one that enables teachers and students to engage in a culture of questioning, a pedagogy of critical engagements, and a democratic politics of civic responsibility’, then New Zealand’s current priorities for tertiary education could not be more incongruous.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps I am hopelessly idealistic—woefully out of touch with reality even—and perhaps I should embrace all the wonderful things that a corporatised university can bring, such as opportunities for external funding, technological advancement and so on, but what ‘Academia Inc.’ has also done is that it has ‘reduced researchers’ ability to pursue independent lines of scholarship, compromised the values and practices that have historically defined [...] academic research, and tarnished the university as a site of unbiased inquiry’, which, in my view, will result in far more damage than good.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> “Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019,” Ministry of Education, accessed August 25, 2016, <http://www.education.govt.nz/further-education/policies-and-strategies/tertiary-education-strategy/>

<sup>13</sup> Giroux, *The University in Chains*, 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> Brownlee, *Academia, Inc.*, 24.

At an orientation workshop that I attended for staff on confirmation path (tenure track), the key take home message was about the career rewards that could be obtained through publication, commercialisation, and raising external research funds. Not once at this workshop did I hear anything about ‘civic responsibility, public service, and community life’.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps these things are implicit or assumed, who knows? But when one begins to look at the composition of university councils, for example, one sees a consolidation of power by business owners and the increasing marginalisation of academic and student representatives. When one casts one’s gaze beyond the centuries-old stone buildings and wooden desks to the steel-and-glass ‘centres of excellence’ or other gleaming commercialisation entities that are springing up on campuses the world over, one wonders if there is any room left to develop an engaged and active citizenry who feel that it is their civic duty to question why entrepreneurialism has become the goal of education. In the New Zealand context, ‘all of the universities have established commercialisation entities to capitalise on the fast-growing research outputs of the universities. These activities are worth around \$500 million per annum’.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Giroux, *The University in Chains*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> “The NZ University System,” Universities New Zealand, accessed February 2, 2017, <http://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/nz-university-system>

So what we are witnessing with the increasing corporatisation of HE is diminishing spaces where we—as staff and students—can be the ‘critic and conscience of society’.

It is beyond the scope of this discussion to address all the ways in which HE is measured and quantified, but I want to touch briefly on the issue of performance management. All universities have some kind of system by which they measure the outputs—and supposedly the worth or value—of their academic staff. New Zealand’s version of this crude measurement system is the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF), designed to ‘ensure that excellent research in the tertiary education sector is encouraged and rewarded. This means assessing the research performance of tertiary education organisations (TEOs) and then funding them on the basis of their performance’.<sup>17</sup> Every six years, academic staff in New Zealand have to provide an inventory of their performance by completing an evidence portfolio (EP), which is a self-reporting exercise on one’s productivity in terms of (i) research outputs, (ii) peer esteem, and (iii) contribution to the research environment. The EP is essentially the ‘Quality Evaluation’ (QE) component of the fund and, when PBRF was first set up in 2002, QE accounted for

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<sup>17</sup> “Performance-Based Research Fund,” Tertiary Education Commission, accessed August 24, 2016, <http://www.tec.govt.nz/funding/funding-and-performance/funding/fund-finder/performance-based-research-fund/>

60 percent of the fund. The other two components are Research Degree Completions (RDC)—the number of postgraduate research-based degrees completed in the TEO—which accounts for 25 percent of the fund, and External Research Income (ERI), which initially accounted for 15 percent of the fund. In 2014, the Government proposed a change to the weighting, suggesting that the proportion of PBRF income allocated for ERI be increased from 15 percent to 20 percent. The five percent difference was to come off QE. Various stakeholders were asked to send in their submissions about this proposed change, and the outcome was as follows:

Overall, there were mixed views on the change among submitters, with many noting both potential benefits and drawbacks. Feedback on this proposed change did not raise any significant issues that were not previously considered when developing the package of changes to the PBRF. Most submitters did not express strong views, suggesting that, in general, the change is perceived as being relatively minor.<sup>18</sup>

The University of Otago raised the concern that ‘this change will accelerate funding flows from research that requires

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<sup>18</sup> “Increasing the Size of the External Research Income Component”, Ministry of Education, accessed August 24, 2016, <http://www.education.govt.nz/further-education/policies-and-strategies/increasing-the-size-of-the-external-research-income-component/>

minimal funding (such as that undertaken in the Humanities and some Social Science research) to that which requires substantial funding (Health Science and Sciences).<sup>19</sup> Perhaps Otago should be applauded for highlighting this risk in the first place, but, personally, I feel that a less feeble message could have been sent when there was an opportunity to make a submission on the proposed change, not only to protect the interests of Humanities and Social Science disciplines, but also as an ideological challenge to the implications of the adjusted PBRF weightings.

One final thing that I want to discuss here is the rise of the academic precariat. This draws on Guy Standing's notion of the precariat more generally. Standing refers to a class of workers who are expected to be 'flexible' and 'employable' to work wherever and wherever needed.<sup>20</sup> In the context of academia, such workers are a 'class of perma-temps who work on short-term contracts for subsistence wages and typically no healthcare or other benefits; all of which puts downward pressure on salaries and, even more

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<sup>19</sup> "University of Otago Feedback on Proposal to Change External Research Income Component of PBRF," Ministry of Education, accessed August 24, 2016, <http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Further-education/Policies-and-strategies/UniOtago-Submission.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (Bloomsbury, 2011).



dramatically, on job security, which is manifested in the increasing disappearance of tenure-track positions'.<sup>21</sup> Another aspect of academic precarity is the 'doctoral glut,' and, related to this, the increasing reliance on, and exploitation of, casual staff—many of whom are postgraduate students or newly graduated PhDs—to do the routine functions of academic work, while tenured academics hunt down grants and churn out publications and graduates.<sup>22</sup> Fischer notes that '[t]his twin-track approach to employment is not only intellectually demoralizing and materially impoverishing for those in insecure situations but it also raises a number of moral questions concerning the treatment of exploited academics by colleagues, employers, and would-be employers'.<sup>23</sup> She goes on to ask: 'Is there an onus on tenured academics to act toward casual teaching or research staff in particular ways? Who is responsible for improving the working conditions for exploited academics and how could such conditions

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<sup>21</sup> Wilhelm Peekhaus, "Digital Content Delivery in Higher Education: Expanded Mechanisms for Subordinating the Professoriate and Academic Precariat," *International Review of Information Ethics* 21 (2014): 61.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 62; Rowan Cahill and Terry Irving, "Radical Academia: Beyond the Audit Culture Treadmill," *University of Wollongong Research Online* (2015), accessed August 25, 2016, <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3157&context=lhapapers>

<sup>23</sup> Clara Fischer, "Moral Musings on Philosophy, Gender and the Academic Precariat," *APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* 12, no. 2 (2013): 15.

be changed?’<sup>24</sup> I recognise, of course, that academics are in a relatively privileged position in relation to other university workers. Nonetheless, these questions raised by Fischer are important if we want to rise to the challenge of making another university possible.

None of the things that I have addressed here are new. We have seen the steady and stealthy creep of corporatism across campuses for decades. There is a wealth of literature out there that outlines in a lot more detail some of the things that I have touched on here. But the fact that corporate universities are so commonplace, so ordinary, so expected even, suggests that we might begin to stop seeing it or stop recognising it as a problem in society. In the same way that millions of people believe that race is a real category of human categorisation, or how gender or class inequality are dismissed as ‘just the way things are’, we might begin to believe and accept that there is no reality other than the corporate university. Indeed, the average undergraduate student has known no other life than the one that exists under neoliberalism. How can we expect these students to want anything other than the bit of paper that they have paid for, if we as academic staff do not rise up against the neoliberal

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

university? This question leads me into the final section of the discussion.

## Reclaiming the university as a site of resistance

I'll begin with a quote from a report on the implications of changes to government funding of higher education in the US in the wake of the recession:

[H]igher education [must] remain a public good – with all of us relying and depending on the system not just for the education of doctors, nurses, teachers, accountants, and other professionals—but to provide the critical thinking that is the lifeblood of our democracy.<sup>25</sup>

The authors of the report seem to be urging us to defend the spaces that still exist for collective engagement and critical pedagogy (e.g. face-to-face lectures and contact time with students), retain our hold on the things that university managers are trying to wrench from our grasp (e.g. academic freedom), and open up even more spaces where we can preserve the link between education and democracy. Doing so would perhaps make us less complicit in the reproduction of

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Hiltonsmith and Tamara Draut, “The Great Cost Shift Continues: State Higher Education Funding After the Recession,” *Dēmos: An Equal Say and an Equal Chance for All* (March, 2014): 7.

capitalist relations and in the creation of the knowledge-factory.

Free Universities around the world continue to take up this challenge in their attempt to subvert the neoliberal agenda, but I feel that we should not give up on the idea that our existing universities can be radically transformed. Of course, this is easier said than done, but perhaps one step in this direction is recognising and tackling attempts to fragment collective action. The neoliberal agenda is designed to individualise and pathologise those who complain of being ‘resistant to change’, leaving many people feeling isolated and concerned that they will be simply be discarded and replaced if they don’t toe the neoliberal line.<sup>26</sup> In addition to recognising that we (university staff and students) are the many and they (university management) are the few, a further step in making another university possible is joining the dots between seemingly disparate struggles.<sup>27</sup> The problem of student indebtedness is linked to the plight of general staff whose jobs are continually being eroded and erased, and also to the predicament of tenured academic staff (notably in the Humanities) who face retrenchment or are encouraged to enter early retirement in order to help with cost recovery, and to the dilemmas of precarious academic staff

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<sup>26</sup> Barcan, *Academic Life and Labour*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> In reference to Shelley’s poem, *The Masque of Anarchy* (1819).

who run themselves ragged in the hope that the time and money spent on their education has not been for nought. All of these struggles are connected to the corporatisation of the university. By recognising this, we may begin to see common ground.

## Conclusion

I'll end where I began, with a quote from Henry Giroux:

One place to begin is with a new sense of politics driven by a notion of educated hope. Hope turns radical when it exposes the violence of neoliberalism. [...] But hope does more than critique, dismantle, and expose the ideologies, values, institutions, and social relations that are pushing so many countries today into authoritarianism, austerity, violence, and war. Hope can energize and mobilize groups, neighbourhoods, communities, campuses, and networks of people to articulate and advance insurgent discourses in the movement toward developing higher education as part of a broader insurrectional democracy. Hope is an important political and subjective register that can not only enable people to think beyond the neoliberal austerity machine...but also to advance forms of egalitarian community that celebrate the voice, well-being, inherent dignity, and participation of

each person as an integral thread in the ever-evolving fabric of living democracy.<sup>28</sup>

This note of hope helps to counter the ‘military-industrial-academic complex’ that Giroux fleshes out in his work. While the trend on campuses in the United States, and increasingly the United Kingdom, is perhaps less apparent at New Zealand universities, it is nonetheless useful to be able to recognise the signs of this complex in our midst and to keep asking critical questions about the implications of the neoliberal agenda for knowledge, education, democracy, and other values that we hold dear.

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<sup>28</sup> Henry Giroux, “Austerity and the Poison of Neoliberal Miseducation,” *Symploke* 22, no. 1-2 (2014): 18-19.

# **Social Model Mothers: Disability, Advocacy and Activism**

Gretchen A. Good and Awhina Hollis-English

There is no bitch on earth like a mother frightened for her kids.

Stephen King

**T**HE FUSION OF parenting and disability calls for reflection on the ways in which mothers of disabled children embrace and sometimes resist the roles of advocate and activist. This paper reflects on the experiences of disabled and non-disabled mothers of disabled children, exploring the impact of childhood disability upon families, and in particular, on mothers, who take on family and social responsibilities of working for children's rights.

The purpose of this article is to illuminate the labour of advocate mothers and to provide recommendations to mothers, fathers, families, schools, and those invested in social justice, to assist in planning for future positive action on behalf of disabled children.

Mothers of disabled children who are disabled themselves, or not, experience discrimination and disablism. These women are often propelled into contentious worlds of

disability rights, complex medical and educational systems, and social justice conundrums. They often develop competence, skills, and abilities in their roles as advocates and activists, yet their contributions are often undervalued and unrecognised.<sup>1</sup>

The motivation for this paper is that we, mothers of disabled children, wish to explore experiences of activism, advocacy, and academia. We are dismayed at the omission of disability from social justice agendas. Even the recent global Women's March (January 2017) failed to include disability as a women's issue, and omitted disabled women as a minority group in need of protection. Recent proposed changes to New Zealand and United States education systems have omitted provisions for disabled children and failed to consult appropriately with families. We had to speak out. And we have recognised that our work is difficult and mostly invisible. We aim to clarify the role of mothers of disabled children, addressing misperception and lending credibility to our roles.

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<sup>1</sup> Sara Ryan and Katherine Runswick-Cole, "Repositioning Mothers: Mothers, Disabled Children and Disability Studies," *Disability & Society* 23, no. 3 (2008): 199-210.



## The language of disability

First, a word about disability language: according to social models of disability, disability is socially imposed and created by society through attitudes, policies, and environments.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the language of disability within social models rejects person-first language, such as the term ‘people with disabilities’ (people have impairments) and utilises the term ‘disabled people’ as people are disabled by the environment, attitudes, and stereotypes.<sup>3</sup>

## Academia, advocacy and activism, parenting

The experience of being academic mums of disabled children creates an interesting fusion of scholarship and activism with parenting. We have discovered that because we are professionals, others perceive our families as being ‘high functioning’. This has created barriers to accessing support that other families seem to access without the struggles we have encountered. For example, personal care, teacher aide hours, support and respite have been difficult or impossible and have involved the need for official complaints and numerous

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<sup>2</sup> Justin Anthony Haegele and Samuel Hodge, “Disability Discourse: Overview and Critiques of the Medical and Social Models,” *Quest* 68, no. 2 (2016): 193-206.

<sup>3</sup> Barking and Dagenham Centre for Independent, Integrated, Inclusive Living Consortium & Barking and Dagenham Council, *Disability Language and Etiquette* (2001): 5.

meetings. And it still can result in no support being made available to the family. Our families can be fragile and on the verge of breakdown, like every family steeped in struggles related to disability.

## The literature

The literature tells us that ‘for many mothers, advocacy and activism are a major part of the experience of mothering a disabled child yet this remains a largely unrecognized role’.<sup>4</sup> Studies show us that mothers of children with disabilities often have to leave the workforce to care for their disabled child and therefore can lose a title, status, economic security, and credibility when working with medical or educational professionals. And it is not just in working with professionals that mothers of disabled children face difficulty. These mothers ‘have occupied a complex, contradictory, and marginal position within both disability studies and the disabled people’s movement’.<sup>5</sup> Non-disabled mums can be left in a position of doubt as to whether they can have a voice within the community of disabled people. As described by a mum of a child with Down Syndrome: ‘As a parent of a child with DS,

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<sup>4</sup> Ryan and Runswick-Cole, “Repositioning Mothers,” 199-210.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 199.

I do NOT have the right to speak as if I represent the disability community. I'm not disabled. But I listen to writers and advocates who are disabled to hear what they are saying, what they are asking for, how they wish to be spoken about. I'm an ally'.<sup>6</sup> And as a disabled mum, one of the authors of this paper says 'When advocating for myself or adult peers I feel like I can take a breather, pick my battles and let some things go. This cannot happen or cannot happen easily when advocating for children'. Advocates have been describe by Nespor and Hicks (2010): 'Advocates, we suggest, act as bridging agents in generating networks, connecting parents with others, articulating their knowledge with other parents knowledge, and bringing additional communicative resources to encounters'.<sup>7</sup>

## Roles as advocates for our children

As mothers of disabled children we are busy: trying to maintain our roles as academics and mothers with the added tasks of caring for disabled children and all of the medical appointments, therapies, and work involved in ensuring our

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<sup>6</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Nespor and David Hicks, "Wizards and Witches: Parent Advocates and Contention in Special Education in the USA," *Journal of Education Policy* 25, no. 3 (2010): 309.

children have great lives with friends, an inclusive education, music lessons, swimming lessons, birthday parties that include everyone and so on. We also are often obligated to fundraise, attend consultation meetings, collaborate with other parents, support other families, connect with other mums, create a media presence, create a political presence, and work with schools—all of this while often being ignored. We teach our children, create and administer therapies—endless therapies—while trying to be parents and not therapists. And we often end up in leadership roles.

Some of our roles also include:

- Fighting for inclusion and learning to do this diplomatically
- Negotiating with the health system
- Trying to prove we are competent, while having to prove we need support
- Working as a committee member
- Presiding over the work of disability groups
- Welcoming new parents
- Working as trust and school board members
- Research, reading, and writing

This type of advocacy is not for everybody. As one mother said about facing the prospect of parenting a disabled child:

'I think I was generally feeling overwhelmed and not ever want to be the "pushy mom". One of the most pervasive negative thoughts that I had when I was adjusting to my son's diagnosis was "Ugh, I don't want to have to be an aaaaaaaaadvocate" (like, "Mom, don't make me eat spiiiiiiiiiiiiinach").<sup>8</sup>

## Radical acceptance

Parenting disabled children creates a dilemma for mothers. We wish to accept our children completely for who they are yet we work tirelessly for them to change, to grow and to meet their potential. Many of us reach a point where we truly embrace the Social Model of Disability and recognise that our fight is to advocate for changes to society and our environments. We wish to knock down barriers and change attitudes. We want our children accepted and included. According to Paula Jessup, an adult who lives with autism:

Radical acceptance begins with truly accepting that we are on the spectrum and not trying to 'cure' us and/or turn us into 'normal' people. It means basing therapies or interventions on what might help us to thrive in the world, not what

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<sup>8</sup> Personal communication.

will help others find us easier to be around by forcing us to behave in less autistic ways.<sup>9</sup>

## Advocacy vs. activism

Social justice work ‘uses social advocacy and activism as a means to address inequitable social, political, and economic conditions that impede the academic, career, and personal/social development of individuals, families, and communities’.<sup>10</sup> But is there a difference between advocacy and activism? Some say disability activism means going beyond advocacy for your own family and working on behalf of others, even when you or your family will not benefit directly. Activism could be viewed as working collectively with others. We mothers of disabled children may not like the idea of public protests or confrontational meetings, but we cannot escape that we have to advocate for our children. We work hard to find the balance between being devoted parents, our children’s most important teachers, therapists, media experts, political activists, employees, advocates, compassionate supporters of other mothers and families, fundraisers, diplomats and so on. And all of this must be done without

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<sup>9</sup> Paula Jessop, “Radical Acceptance of Autism,” *Altogether Autism Journal* (2014): 2.

<sup>10</sup> Manivong Ratts, “Social Justice Counselling: Toward the Development of a ‘Fifth Force’ Among Counselling Paradigms,” *Journal of Humanistic Counselling, Education, and Development* 48 (2009): 160.

burning out—whilst maintaining our own quality of life and that of our families.

## Recommendations

Our first recommendations are to mothers of disabled children. We think a good place to start is to recognise yourself that advocacy and activism on behalf of your disabled child is time consuming, difficult, requires tremendous skill, time and patience, and that your work is likely to be unacknowledged. So take care of yourself. And know that you are not alone. Find communities of support from other mothers of disabled children. You will need support so that your work can have valuable impact for not only your child and your family, but for others who enter the same confusing education, medical, and social systems. These systems need to be changed. Value your skills and your contributions and that of other advocate and activist mothers, because society may not acknowledge your contribution. But you can find your work rewarding nonetheless.

We want others to know that the skills of advocacy and activism among mothers of disabled children need to be recognised and supported. We want those educators, medical professionals and others who work with families to help create space for our voices. We want the world to know that mums can make an impact and change systems in a way

that benefits many. We dream of having the time, space, and resources to enjoy our families, and we dream of having the skills to help our children and others too.



# Academic Freedom and Political Activism: What We Are Being When We Are Doing

Oliver Hailes

I AM NO ACADEMIC. Nor could I call myself an activist. But I have dipped my callow toes into both pools. Through this tentative intervention, I hope to pitch a few fresh ideas into the mix from the vantage of a sympathetic sideliners.

My interest in the interface of activism and academic work was triggered by my honours project on the constitutional implications of investment treaties, which focused on the anticipated influence of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).<sup>1</sup> What began as a topic of scholarly curiosity slipped quickly to a preoccupation that gripped every minute: I found myself speaking at campus rallies and academic conferences, writing letters to the student magazine, appearing before select committee, and getting to know stalwart activists I had been quick to dismiss as rent-a-mob radicals in the not-too-distant past. The academic experience activated hidden commitments.

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<sup>1</sup> See Oliver Hailes and Andrew Geddis, "The Trans-Pacific Partnership in New Zealand's Constitution," *New Zealand Universities Law Review* 27, no. 2 (2016): 226–262.

When the TPP was finally signed in Auckland, I watched from Wellington as an unprecedented multitude effectively shut down the metropolis by blockading motorways.<sup>2</sup> But media focussed on those protestors least likely to articulate their grievances in the heat of the moment. And the intellectual figurehead of resistance—the saintly Jane Kelsey—was not immune from *ad hominem* attacks that ignored her exceptional credentials. Perhaps the high-water mark was Rodney Hide’s opinion piece in which he asked why Professor Kelsey is so opposed to the TPP and, of course, proceeded to answer his own question:

[S]he was taught her political views by left-thinking Marxist scholars at Cambridge. [...] The Marxist view of the world is twisted and false. It persists only in Western countries that have never experienced Marxist dogma in action and even then only in the universities where there is no consequence in being wrong and where political activism is propped up by the economic system Kelsey so despises.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Here I invoke the description of the Argentinean *piqueteros* in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, 2011), 259.

<sup>3</sup> Rodney Hide, “Rodney Hide: TPP Deal Done, Sun Still Shines,” *New Zealand Herald*, October 11, 2015.

Mr Hide's contempt for critique was echoed by the Honourable Gerry Brownlee MP in his response to a blog post exposing the impotence of the proposed Airport Authorities (Publicising Lost Property Sales) Amendment Bill, better known as the 'lost luggage bill':

Professor Andrew Geddis is demonstrating a degree of arrogance that can only come from academics. [...] [I]t's an attack on democracy. For him to pontificate this is a bill unworthy of Parliament is just completely inappropriate.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly the Leader of the House feels a little threatened by a gentle scholarly nudge.<sup>5</sup> But many academics feel it is their territory that is under siege. Professor Kelsey laments the structural squeeze of state policies that attempt to subordinate the enterprise to external demands through measures such as the Performance-Based Research Fund and promotion criteria.<sup>6</sup> As a self-styled 'public intellectual', she fights to preserve her ordained terrain and praises the

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<sup>4</sup> Jason Walls, "Brownlee Slams 'Arrogant' Academic for Criticising Lost Luggage Bill," *National Business Review*, August 16, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps this fear is well founded in light of the UK Supreme Court's nod to the influence of academic bloggers in its Brexit decision. See *Miller & Anor, R (on the application of) v Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Rev 2)*, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> "Professor Jane Kelsey—Critic and Conscience," Auckland Law School, accessed September 1, 2016, <http://www.law.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/news/news-stories/news-2015/12/kelsey.html>

Education Act 1989 as a unique safeguard of quasi-constitutional significance, which purports to preserve and enhance academic freedom and prescribes a role for universities as ‘critic and conscience of society’.<sup>7</sup> Professor Kelsey believes this unique responsibility ‘must be defended and exercised in the face of commercial imperatives and creeping political influence’.<sup>8</sup>

Stanley Fish, however, would say this legislative mandate equally distorts the role of the academic.<sup>9</sup> For Fish, the academic job involves the pursuit of truth and the advancement of knowledge regarding matters identified by disciplinary traditions.<sup>10</sup> He acknowledges that, in many courses, the materials taught are fraught with political implications.<sup>11</sup> Yet he insists on a duty to ‘academicise’ these problems such that the teacher does not slip into advocacy—or, god forbid, activism. This imperative requires the professional transplantation of a contested topic from its concrete context to ‘an academic context where inquiries into its structure, history, significance and value are conducted by

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<sup>7</sup> Education Act 1989, ss 161 and 162(4)(v).

<sup>8</sup> Jane Kelsey, *The FIRE Economy: New Zealand’s Reckoning* (Wellington, 2015), 247–248.

<sup>9</sup> See Stanley Fish, *Versions of Academic Freedom: From Professionalism to Revolution* (Chicago, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Michael Robertson, “Book Review: Versions of Academic Freedom,” *Journal of Legal Education* 65, no. 3 (2016): 673–674.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 677.

means of the traditional methods (textual, archival, statistical, experimental) of humanities, social science, and physical science scholarship'.<sup>12</sup> It follows that 'academic freedom' is nothing more than the freedom necessary to complete a set of professional tasks.<sup>13</sup> In research, academics must be allowed to follow evidence and arguments wherever they lead without concern as to whether administrators, politicians, unionists, activists, business, or the public at large might be delighted, dismayed, or disadvantaged by the ultimate conclusions.<sup>14</sup> But Fish believes academics should save the world on their own time.<sup>15</sup>

Fish's apparent conservatism has riled many of his lefty pals. But the conceptual clarity of his narrow account allows us to separate the academic task from other worthy pursuits. The details to Fish's position are explored comprehensively in a recent review by Michael Robertson.<sup>16</sup> For present purposes I would highlight three interwoven aspects: the first is *phenomenological*, the second *epistemological* and the third *political*.

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<sup>12</sup> Fish, *Versions of Academic Freedom*, 31.

<sup>13</sup> Robertson, "Book Review," 687.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 687–688.

<sup>15</sup> Stanley Fish, *Save the World On Your Own Time* (Oxford, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Robertson, "Book Review," 672–703.

Following a definition offered by Chris Higgins, by ‘phenomenology’ I mean ‘an account of the common conditions and recurring structures of experience’:

Certainly, we do not want to say that all rock climbers, for example, have the same experience of climbing, even if they follow the same route up the same formation. However, it is equally false to say that all rock climbers have a completely distinct experience of climbing. There is something that it is like to be a rock climber. And this is what [Hannah] Arendt wanted to understand in [her book] *The Human Condition*: what we are being when we are doing this or that activity.<sup>17</sup>

In this sense, I think Fish’s exposition ought to be read as an exercise in ‘professional phenomenology’—he attempts to get to the heart of what it is that academics do. This project seems to stem from his epistemological commitments.<sup>18</sup> As socially embedded creatures, our experience of reality is enabled and structured by background beliefs inherited from ‘interpretive communities’.<sup>19</sup> For Fish, an interpretive community is not so much a group of individuals who share a

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<sup>17</sup> Chris Higgins, ‘Labour, Work, and Action: Arendt’s Phenomenology of Practical Life,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 44, no. 3 (2010): 277.

<sup>18</sup> See Robertson, *Stanley Fish on Philosophy, Politics and Law: How Fish Works* (Cambridge, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> This concept was first introduced in Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, 1980).

point of view, but a point of view or way of organising experience that shares individuals in the sense that its assumed distinctions, categories of understanding, and stipulations of relevance and irrelevance are the content of the consciousness of community members.<sup>20</sup> Fellow neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty emphasised the fragile, contingent, evolutionary achievement of describing the world in novel ways that might prove useful to some earthly purpose.<sup>21</sup> In light of this lesson, Fish insists on disentangling the academic task to ensure that certain modes of cognitive experience are not corrupted or lost.<sup>22</sup>

We can discern a rough legal proxy to this vision in the Education Act, which not only declares Parliament's intention for academic freedom to be preserved and enhanced but also highlights the importance of the 'autonomy of institutions'.<sup>23</sup> Fish would no doubt say that academic freedom and institutional autonomy are broadly synonymous, and that these statutory guarantees merely reinforce rights that are logically prior to the very existence of the academic job.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Stanley Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Oxford, 1989), 141.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London, 1999), xxx–xxxii.

<sup>22</sup> Fish, *Versions of Academic Freedom*, 63 and 127.

<sup>23</sup> Education Act 1989, s 161(1).

<sup>24</sup> Robertson, "Book Review," 688.

However, New Zealand's legislature has prescribed an additional role: that of 'critic and conscience of society'.<sup>25</sup> It is curious to note that this task is allocated to the university at large, not to individual agents within the institution; this further highlights the collective nature of intellectual inquiry. But it does seem to hint at a conception of academic freedom that requires members to move beyond internal projects to the broader goal of benefiting society as a whole. This brings us to the political implications of Fish's position for the idea of academic freedom.

Fish believes academic freedom is a concept that is overinflated and under-theorised. Too often it is transformed from a doctrine insulating the academy from politics into a doctrine that demands of academics blatantly political actions:

What you do is diminish the limiting force of the adjective 'academic' and at the same time put all the emphasis on freedom (which should be re-written FREEDOM) until the academy loses its distinctive status and becomes just one more location of a universal moral/political struggle.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Education Act 1989, s 162(4)(v).

<sup>26</sup> Stanley Fish, "Academic Freedom Against Itself: Boycotting Israeli Universities," *The New York Times*, October 28, 2013.



As noted above, Fish's preferred account is minimalist and deflationary, identifying the disciplinary nature of scholarly inquiry as the regulative criterion for an academic's freedom. The fact that this work can provide contingent benefits to society should not be mistaken for its operative function. In the face of public criticism of the academy, it may be tempting to defend the job by pointing to these collateral fruits, but Fish warns against playing that game:

[T]he demand for justification should be resisted because it is always the demand that you account for what you do in someone else's terms, be they the terms of the state, or of the economy, or of the project of democracy.<sup>27</sup>

The failure to maintain a strong sense of the academic job can distort the enterprise and invite outside interests to capture the authority of the university to advance alien projects.<sup>28</sup> I do not imagine many of us would like the course catalogue to be governed by its contribution to gross domestic product with the next electoral cycle—there would be a lot less cash for critique of political economy and a lot more funding funnelled to the cause of bovine protein production. Some might even say that this is the present predicament.

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<sup>27</sup> Stanley Fish, *Think Again: Contrarian Reflections on Life, Culture, Politics, Religion, Law, and Education* (Princeton, 2015), 366.

<sup>28</sup> Robertson, "Book Review," 673.

Fish's emphasis on institutional autonomy should not imply an ivory-tower detachment. He notes that each of us is a member of not one but innumerable interpretive communities in relation to which many beliefs operate with different weight and force:

One may be constrained, for example, both by one's understanding of what it means to be an academic and one's understanding of what it means to be a feminist. [...] Being a feminist is a state no less complex than being an academic, and when they come together, they do so not as sovereign and separate obligations, but as obligations that have already been defined by their relationship to one another.<sup>29</sup>

When surveying the academic landscape for possible lines of inquiry, such a person will no doubt pursue projects that align with their holistic commitments. But their professional performance will be answerable to internal communal standards, not an external political goal. This vexing dialogue between one's political and scholarly praxis is implicit in David Graeber's curt instruction in his Twitter bio: 'I see anarchism as something you do not an identity, so don't call me the anarchist anthropologist'.<sup>30</sup> I would add that being

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<sup>29</sup> Fish, *Doing What Comes Naturally*, 31–32.

<sup>30</sup> @davidgraeber, Twitter, accessed February 6, 2017, <https://twitter.com/davidgraeber>

an anthropologist is no less performative and contextual than being an anarchist. But the question remains, could any creature possibility perform the feat of psychological separation that Fish seems to demand?

Oddly, Fish points to another renowned anarchist as his exemplary academic performer: Noam Chomsky. Even when he turns to explicitly political issues, Fish observes, his mode of interrogation is more analytic than polemical. After attending a series of Chomsky's lectures on the philosophy of mind, language, and politics, Fish reported: 'It was a master class taught by a master.'<sup>31</sup>

I like this notion of being a master, and I think it offers a bridge from Fish to the concrete concerns that animate the Social Movements, Resistance, and Social Change Conference. The turn of phrase fits nicely with Slavoj Žižek's recent emphasis on the Master figure as an essential ingredient in contemporary politics. A Master is needed to pull individuals out of their inertia and motivate them towards the struggle for freedom.<sup>32</sup> After listening to the vision of a

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<sup>31</sup> Stanley Fish, "Scholarship and Politics: The Case of Noam Chomsky," *The New York Times*, December 9, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Slavoj Žižek, "The Simple Courage of Decision: A Leftist Tribute to Thatcher," *New Statesman*, April 17, 2013.

true Master, Žižek says, people all of a sudden realise what they always-already knew they wanted.<sup>33</sup>

This does not imply a cult of personality. Indeed, Žižek says an authentic Master need not be a leader at all. Marek Edelman was a Jewish activist who throughout the twentieth century knew when to act against the Germans, when to make public statements in support of Palestinians, when to get involved with Poland's Solidarity movement, and when to just be there; the awareness of his presence—the bare fact of his *being there*—was enough to inspire.<sup>34</sup> It is in this totemic fashion that the activist can play the part of Žižek's Master. And I think that Chomsky, Fish's model master, performs a similar role in progressive politics when his scholarly rigour is referenced routinely by activists in real-world debate. We might render this as a neat epigram: the Master-activist is *sighted* whereas the Master-academic is *cited*. In both instances, as Žižek explains, the power of the Master stems from fidelity to the task at hand and a refusal to compromise.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism* (London, 2015), 190.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 189–190.

Through an unlikely marriage of Fish and Žižek, we can map a taxonomy of Master figures: the *activist* (Edelman), the *academic* (Chomsky), and the third I would call *archon*—a Greek word meaning ‘ruler’, used as a title for public officials—to denote leadership within the formal organs of the liberal democratic state (or, if you prefer to adopt Alain Badiou’s pejorative, the ‘capitalo-parliamentarian’ apparatus). Žižek’s example of the latter species of Master is former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, whose true triumph was that even her political enemies ended up adopting her basic economic policies in the form of Tony Blair’s New Labour.<sup>36</sup> It is for this reason that Žižek calls for ‘a Thatcher of the left’.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps Bernie Sanders or Jeremy Corbyn offer a glimpse of what that might look like. Certainly no home-grown example springs to mind.

The designation of ‘Master’ cannot be elected by oneself. Following Hannah Arendt, the power of the Master figure must be produced by and belong to communities.<sup>38</sup> So, in light of the contingent nature of popular empowerment, the modest goal must be to become a mere expert in one’s field while maintaining connection to the broader network of al-

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 179–180.

<sup>37</sup> Žižek, “The simple courage of decision.”

<sup>38</sup> See Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (San Diego, 1970), 43–44.

lies toiling in their distinct vineyards. Of course, an individual can jump from one role to the next: Yanis Varoufakis earned his stripes in economics (academic) before his appointment to Greek finance minister (archon), and has since launched the Democracy in Europe Movement (activist). The danger arises when a single actor attempts to wear too many hats at once. Former Prime Minister John Key, for example, always took care to wear the appropriate constitutional hat. But let us return to Professor Kelsey. Who can forget the masterful way in which she skewered Mike Hosking on live television?<sup>39</sup> However, the conflation of her academic and activist roles has led some sectors to dismiss her world-class scholarship as the mere opinion of a partisan agenda.

It is this problem that motivated a meeting at the Royal Society in September 2016, hosted by Bridget Williams Books, entitled *The Expert—An Endangered Species*?<sup>40</sup> In her closing remarks, Professor Kelsey expressed her desire for the emergence of a community of diverse expertise to influence public debate. She spoke of *strategy* and *solidarity*, and, curiously, *deference* to the expertise of other

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<sup>39</sup> Seven Sharp, “How Does the TPP Affect Little Old Me at Home?” TVNZ, accessed February 6, 2017, <http://tvnz.co.nz/seven-sharp/does-tpp-affect-little-old-me-home-video-6364031>

<sup>40</sup> Panellists included Professor Kelsey, Professor Shaun Hendy, Dr Mike Joy, and chair Megan Whelan.

disciplines.<sup>41</sup> Fish sums up this academic attitude in his three-part mantra: ‘do your job, don’t try to do someone else’s job, and don’t let anyone else do your job’.<sup>42</sup> I think we can extend this principle to social movements at large, as well as to individual agency across the ‘ecology of organisations’ endorsed by Nick Srnicek at the launch of Economic and Social Research Aotearoa (ESRA).<sup>43</sup> A meaningful academic/activist interface must require mutual recognition of the latent talent waiting to be unleashed. Each can be an expert and, to indulge an old *Seinfeld* joke, a potential Master of their domain.

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<sup>41</sup> Elsewhere, however, Professor Kelsey endorses Thomas Piketty’s criticism of social scientists that have steadily abandoned contestable terrain over which economists now claim exclusive authority: Kelsey, *The FIRE Economy*, 247.

<sup>42</sup> Fish, *Save The World On Your Own Time*, 16.

<sup>43</sup> Economic and Social Research Aotearoa, “What comes after neoliberalism?” Nick Srnicek at the Launch of ESRA,” YouTube, accessed February 6, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wB2aYh0xOw>

# The Next System

Deirdre Kent

‘IF YOU DON’T like capitalism or state socialism what do you want?’ This provocative question is from Gar Alperovitz, the co-founder of both *The Democracy Collaborative* and *The Next System*. He is a political economist and a historian, a great mix. Professor Alperovitz observes the birth of a new, almost invisible economy. He says the groundwork is now being laid for an unstoppable movement that will eventually come to full media attention.

Now, as it happens, this country has two organisations working for this purpose. The New Zealand Living Economies Educational Trust has been working quietly over 15 years to nurture new initiatives in that very field. For a decade or more the indefatigable Helen Dew has lugged her cartons of books from conference to conference promoting resources that describe ideas like savings pools, time-banks and other complementary currencies, worker-owned cooperatives, social enterprises, land trusts, public banking, basic income, and new organisational structures. And four years ago I co-founded the New Economics Party, now the New Economics Movement, so that we could think up the Next System. We have done a lot of thinking and I commend our



site <http://neweconomics.net.nz>. Naomi Klein, author of *This Changes Everything*, gets it: ‘We need an entirely new economic model and a new way of sharing this planet’, and ‘The economy is at war with the climate. Right now capitalism is winning hands down’. So let’s think about this Next System.

If we are to ask all the hard questions about a political economy, what are the general headings under which we would discuss this? The first is money. We need a means of exchange. Who would issue it? A publicly elected body or a private business? At what level of government will it be issued? How much? How will it be designed? How will we keep it stable? Who will do this? How do we ensure it is always trusted? How will we design it for optimum velocity? How will investment occur? Second, how do we ensure that everyone has access to land and resources? How do we ensure the values of land and resources are shared? Is this sharing done through government policies on tax and welfare? Third, how will we organize our governance, national and local? Will we have a centralised system? What should our new form of decentralisation look like? I will be mentioning a very important book on reinventing organisations later in this speech. Fourth, how will we adapt to change? We are living in a constantly changing environment so we need to change in response. The economy is a living system. Finally, how do we fix things if something goes wrong? Do we do one

thing at a time and then do another? Or, if we think of it in terms of a system, does everything affect everything else? Can we really change things? There is so much wrong with the current model that it is best to start again with a new currency while leaving the current system in place.

Today I will pick out just a few of these. I will show you why two old books are important and draw your attention to one exciting new book. I am going to restrict this talk to just two of these topics, money and land, and then look at one of the partial solutions to our dilemma: savings pools.

## Money

Banker Mayer Rothschild once made a very chilling remark: ‘Give me control of a nation’s money and I care not who makes the laws’.

‘Change money, change the world’ says Positive Money.

I am inspired by the writings of a far thinking businessman Silvio Gesell. His 1906 book *The Natural Economic Order* has been translated and is free online,<sup>1</sup> but I really wish everyone had a copy. It is very rare in libraries. Who was he? And why did prominent economists say such nice things about him? Economist John Maynard Keynes

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.geokey.de/literatur/doc/neo.pdf>.

called Gesell ‘a strange, unduly neglected prophet’, and ‘I believe that the future will learn more from the spirit of Gesell than from Marx’. Irving Fisher said he was the ‘humble servant of the merchant Gesell’.

What is his message? He was a German manufacturer and exporter of dental equipment in Argentina during the depression that started in the 1893. He noted that businessmen like him, with unsold goods, were at a disadvantage to those who held money. The goods sitting in warehouses deteriorated as money circulated painfully slowly in the depression. But those in possession of money, able to increase it through interest, held their money back. He said:

Only money that goes out of date like a newspaper, rots like potatoes, rusts like iron, evaporates like ether, is capable of standing the test as an instrument for the exchange of potatoes, newspapers, iron and ether. [...] Money is an instrument of exchange and nothing else. Its function is to facilitate the exchange of goods, to eliminate the difficulties of barter.

So it is natural that money should rot. Gesell’s idea was that that anyone who holds money should be on the same footing as anyone who holds goods. So Gesell advocated a charge for hoarding money; money is designed to be a spending currency only.

Decades later, 1930s depression, Europe is the scene. Here is a guy with a long name—Michael Unterguggenberger. He was a train driver who had read Proudhon, Marx, and Gesell and he persuaded his council to pay their employees partly in work certificates. He designed them to decay. Or actually, there was a charge for hoarding. Every month they had to be validated with a stamp worth one percent of its value. So you had to go to the Post Office to buy a stamp. So at the end of the month you would rather spend it than pay for another stamp. So it circulated really fast. That was effectively a -12 percent interest rate. They built bridges, they built roads, upgraded the water system and the sewerage system. There was a building boom and unemployment dropped dramatically. It was called the Miracle of Wörgl, and people came from all over Austria and Europe to see it. Fifteen months later, after pressure from the banks, the government made it illegal. Same old tactic.

Author Bernard Lietaer said that for 200 years in the late middle-ages there was a similar decaying currency, a natural money system. So rather than accumulating money, people spent it on projects that would bring income for years to come. Cathedrals take centuries to build but bring pilgrims, and income. There was one cathedral for every 200 people. So paradoxically, when people spend this decaying money, they effectively invest in their future

wealth. Contrary to expectations *they spend it on productive assets for the long term*. Lietaer also says this was a period of relative prosperity where peasants wore silver buckles and people were very well nourished.

For over 2000 years Egypt had a decaying currency. Farmers brought 10 bags of corn or wheat to the warehouse and received a pottery shard that circulated as money. The token was engraved with the date and the amount they left; so there was a charge for storing it. At the end of the year the farmer would only get nine bags back to pay for the guards and the losses due to vermin and decay. Lietaer claims the dual currency (gold and silver were also used for trading) was the reason for the relative prosperity and egalitarianism. Astronomy, mathematics, and science flourished. During that time taxes were also land rent. Lietaer argues the experiences of Egypt and Europe prove that with an incentive in the form of a tax on hoarding money people are far more likely to use their money to build something worthwhile. Though the accumulation of financial capital is impossible, the accumulation of real capital is very possible.

## Land

*The Corruption of Economics* (1994) by Mason Gaffney and Fred Harrison, while available online, is a barely known book. Yet in it is a very important story; in it, they describe

the birth of neoclassical economics. We learn of Henry George, the San Francisco journalist who took the world by storm with his book *Progress and Poverty* in 1879. He argues that since the value of land is created by the community around that land, we should tax land and not income. His message that poverty can be beaten was welcomed. His Single Tax idea was understood by semi-literate workers from Birmingham, Alabama to Liverpool, England and by peasants in the remotest crofts of Scotland and Ireland. There were 100,000 at his funeral. He said the factors of production are land, capital, and labour. Three very different genres. Land and resources are what nature provided.

As history goes, certain rich land barons, industrialists, and bankers determined he must be stopped. And here you see the most skilful of social engineering: they sought to influence the discipline of economics through the universities. So they funded influential universities in America and proceeded to change the direction of economics. They paid scholars to bend the truth. John D Rockefeller funded Chicago University in 1892, picked the first president who, in turn, chose the first economist; from there on it has been an apostolic succession. Banker JP Morgan funnelled his wealth through Columbia University and big landowner Ezra Cornell founded Cornell University. Ezra Cornell was a land speculator and monopolist who became governor of

California. Obliging, the tame economists countered Henry George's ideas. Over many decades, economics has changed from classical to neoclassical. Bought economists obliged; they shoved land in the capital category; it is now a commodity to be bought and sold. And to please the bankers who also profit from land ownership, mention of the words 'money', 'credit', and 'banking' was also omitted from textbooks, especially after the threatening influence of Major CH Douglas from the 1920s and Silvio Gesell before him.

So that is land. There are huge political challenges as to how we get the equivalent of a land tax; in my view it is politically impossible to introduce it at central government level. Nor is it politically possible to have centralised monetary reform. We live in an era where corporate capitalism is at its most powerful. We have never had such an enemy in our history. Money buys lobbying power. So neither the money system nor the tax system can be reformed at central government level. Lots of thinking is required. We believe a whole new system has to be created parallel to the existing one, which we leave alone to rot.

I wanted to alert you briefly to the book *Reinventing Organisations* by Frederic Laloux. It is an important book and already New Zealand has two organisations devoted to his teachings. If we don't want hierarchies and find consen-

sus too paralysing, then read this exciting book. It has implications not just for corporates and organizations, but for central and local government too.

### **Savings pools: Where reciprocity replaces interest**

Now I want to touch on one of the possible partial solutions, one that can be put into practice right now. A few years ago, permaculture teachers Bryan Innes and Jo Pearsall went to Sweden to study the JAK bank. The JAK bank had been giving interest free loans for 60 years, but with a special formula for reciprocity. When they came back they found they couldn't start something similar in New Zealand because we had different laws and you needed \$30 million to get started. So Bryan invented Savings Pools. They are groups of people who pool their savings together for each other to use. Members can contribute any amount. When members borrow from the pool the loan is interest-free, but the other members also benefit because the lender pays back the loan plus an equal amount in savings. During the repayment term, those savings are available for others to borrow. When the loan term is finished the member has money in the pool to either take out or leave in as savings. The result is that the member has money in the bank, not empty pockets from paying interest to the bank. Everyone wins.

What is reciprocity? Say a member has a credit card



debt of \$1000. The pool lends the member \$1000 to pay it off without having to pay any ongoing fees or interest. In return for using the pool's money the members arrange with the pool a payment plan to repay the \$1000 borrowed, plus an extra \$1000 of savings that will stay in the pool for the same length of time that the member is using the pool's money. By borrowing \$1000 interest-free, the member creates in return the opportunity for others to borrow \$1000 interest free. This is reciprocity. If a member builds up pool savings before borrowing from the pool, then the member's reciprocal savings requirement will be less over the term of the loan.

There are now successful savings pools all around New Zealand. Over the last seven years people have paid off cars, credit cards, funded travel, made essential house modifications, and even paid off mortgages. The pool operates its own bank account and provides its members with monthly statements of each member's savings and loan balances. A pool will usually do its own accounting and administration, and software is available to make this straightforward. Pools operate transparently and all decisions are made jointly by the pool members, with everyone having an equal say. Everyone helps each other to get member's needs met. Savings pools are legal provided you obey certain rules.

## Conclusion

So we get back to the same question. If we abhor corporate capitalism and don't want state socialism, what do we want? And if we don't know what we want, why should anyone listen to us?

I challenge you to do what Gar Alperovitz has suggested: to help lay the foundation to an irreversible transformation of corporate capitalism. *It is the most important developmental task of our times.* Start a study group at home, get involved with a local scheme; initiate something, do your research. There are plenty of websites. What does a democratized, decentralized system look like? What will the new eco-socialism look like? Welcome to the next system dialogue. We haven't got much time to design a political economy that works. It's all hands on deck and our best brains on the topic.

## ‘Outwit, Outlast, Outplay?’

Katarina Gray-Sharp

**T**IU TE TUI mai nga waiariki ki nga hau o Te Onetapu. No te mahau o te whare toka, hou atu a Rupe ki Tuhi-rangi maunga ki Opou awa. Ko Te Karere whare e noho atu ra. Ko te Tiwaiwaka e titaka mai te Manawatu ki nga wai e tarere atu ki Hokio. E rere te Kahu he tere te Huia hei hoki mai ki a au. Tenei matau ko aku manu he uri o te rangi he uri o te whenua e mihi kau ana ki a kautau ko nga uri whakatipu. Tena kautau tatau katoa.

This paper will investigate some of the philosophical and political grounds that allow acceptance of mass extinction’s inevitability. The work uses a critical approach, seeking to expose contradictions and conflicts in order to respond to a state of oppression.<sup>1</sup> My focus is on why there is tolerance for actions and inactions that endanger all known life. I undertake this work because I am a ‘hostage’ to the other from which it derives.<sup>2</sup> That other is ‘death’, ‘future’, and Papatuanuku who claims me.<sup>3</sup>

I am formally disciplined in neither the natural sciences nor Western philosophy. However, incarnate and assigned in

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<sup>1</sup> Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *The Levinas Reader* (Oxford, 1989) 113.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 44.

‘proximity’,<sup>4</sup> I understand that ‘to be oneself [...] is always to have one degree of responsibility more, the responsibility for the responsibility of the other’.<sup>5</sup> I respond to you, the audience, as Patuanuku’s responsibility, a kaikaranga in front of your house, your histories and mysteries flowing invisibly around us. It is your tikanga and my duty to learn and uphold it. Thus, the arguments follow expected norms of statement and justification, while expressing my otherness within language’s limits.

## The acceptance of mass extinction

### *Prophecy*

There is a prophecy made before the Europeans arrived. It speaks of a great monster with teeth of gold that swallows the land. Some of our tohunga named this monster colonisation. They cite the massive land loss and the resulting poverties as evidence. Unfortunately, I believe the monster has yet to finish its work. There is something far, far worse on the horizon.

### *The scientific consensus*

Mass extinctions (or what I sometimes refer to as global depopulations) are ‘generalized, deep and large-scale events, triggered

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 107.

(perhaps in already critical periods) by sudden upheavals'.<sup>6</sup> They are characterised by a three-quarter species loss in a short geological interval, usually under two million years<sup>7</sup> but as quick as a few thousand.<sup>8</sup> There have been three previous mass extinctions and two 'mass depletions [...] near the end of the Ordovician, Devonian, Permian, Triassic and Cretaceous Periods'.<sup>9</sup>

A mass extinction is more likely to occur when certain parameters meet in a 'perfect storm' providing positive feedback to one another. These are: (i) 'accelerated climate changes'; (ii) 'alterations of atmosphere composition'; and (iii) 'ecological stresses with abnormal intensity'.<sup>10</sup> Causes of specific species extinction can be 'summarized in the acronym HIPPO: habitat destruction, invasive species, pollution, human over-population, [and] overharvesting'.<sup>11</sup> Proof of mass extinction requires extinction rates 'higher than the highest empirically derived background rates', evidence which has already been provided.<sup>12</sup> It is

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<sup>6</sup> Telmo Pievani, "The Sixth Mass Extinction: Anthropocene and the Human Impact on Biodiversity," *Rendiconti Lincei* 25, no. 1 (2014): 88.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony Barnosky et al., "Has the Earth's Sixth Mass Extinction Already Arrived?" *Nature* 471, no. 7336 (2011): 51-57.

<sup>8</sup> Pievani, "The Sixth Mass Extinction."

<sup>9</sup> Barnosky et al., "Earth's Sixth Mass Extinction," 51.

<sup>10</sup> Pievani, "The Sixth Mass Extinction," 91.

<sup>11</sup> Edward Wilson, *The Loss of Biodiversity is a Tragedy*, UNESCO, September 2010, [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/Edward\\_o\\_wilson\\_the\\_loss\\_of\\_biodiversity\\_is\\_a\\_tragedy/#.V8Fg3JN95AY](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/Edward_o_wilson_the_loss_of_biodiversity_is_a_tragedy/#.V8Fg3JN95AY).

<sup>12</sup> Gerardo Ceballos et al., "Accelerated Modern Human-Induced Species Losses: Entering the Sixth Mass Extinction," *Science Advances* 1, no. 5 (2015): 1.

why George Monbiot claims the sixth mass extinction as the likely ‘hallmark of our era’.<sup>13</sup>

### *Acceptance*

I contend that New Zealand has accepted this sixth mass extinction as inevitable. The verb ‘accept’ means ‘to receive with consent’, a performative utterance affirming receipt.<sup>14</sup> However, acceptance may also be more implicit (like a shrug of resignation) or less conscious (like a fatalistic mood). Situations are inevitable when there is no method of prevention, or they are deemed necessary. While I believe neither true in this case, there is little evidence to support my claim.

The possibility of mass extinction has been recognised by the New Zealand state, but no actions to prevent its occurrence are evident. For example, in 1996 Bill Mansfield, then Director-General of the Department of Conservation (DOC), acknowledged the ‘global “biodiversity crisis”’ as a ‘wave of extinctions’.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> George Monbiot, “Grand Promises of Paris Climate Deal Undermined by Squalid Retrenchments,” *The Guardian*, December 12, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/georgemonbiot/2015/dec/12/paris-climate-deal-governments-fossil-fuels>.

<sup>14</sup> Linguistics Research Centre, “Kap- ‘To Cop, Grab, Grasp; Have?’” *Indo-European Lexicon: PIE Etymon and IE reflexes*, accessed September 1, 2016, <https://lrc.la.utexas.edu/lex/master/0839>.

<sup>15</sup> Bill Mansfield, “Introduction,” *Ecosystem Restoration on Mainland New Zealand*, Department of Conservation, October 1996, <http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/science-publications/conservation-publications/land-and-freshwater/land/ecosystem-restoration-on-mainland-nz/introduction/>.

In 2005, pest control was still a problem and biodiversity continued to fall.<sup>16</sup> In 2006, during Parliament's debate on the Climate Change Response Amendment Bill, Te Ururoa Flavell emphasised 'the perilous state of the Earth, as [...] evidenced in [...] species extinction, and massive loss of lives and homes'.<sup>17</sup> The following year, 'while New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions represent[ed] much less than one percent of global emissions, we rank[ed] 12<sup>th</sup> per head of population'.<sup>18</sup> In April 2009, during Parliamentary General Debate, Kennedy Graham asserted that 'we are on the way to a human-induced mass extinction of Earth's species'.<sup>19</sup> In June, whilst discussing legislation for emissions trading in the forestry sector, David Parker noted the possibility of 'mass extinction of plants, of animals, and of aquatic communities as a consequence of the changing acidification of oceans'.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Department of Conservation, *Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2012*, 2012, <http://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/about-doc/annual-report-2012/doc-annual-report-year-ended-30-june-2012.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Te Ururoa Flavell, "Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Forestry Sector) Amendment Bill," *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 635, 2006, [https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/hansard-debates/rhr/document/48HansS\\_20061109\\_00000921/flavell-te-ururoa-climate-change-response-amendment-bill](https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/hansard-debates/rhr/document/48HansS_20061109_00000921/flavell-te-ururoa-climate-change-response-amendment-bill).

<sup>18</sup> Ministry for the Environment, *Environment New Zealand 2007* (2007), 183, <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/sites/default/files/environment-nz07-dec07.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Kennedy Graham, "General debate," *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 653 (2009), 2552, [https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/hansard-debates/rhr/document/49HansS\\_20090408\\_00001198/graham-kennedy-general-debate](https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/hansard-debates/rhr/document/49HansS_20090408_00001198/graham-kennedy-general-debate).

<sup>20</sup> David Parker, "Climate Change Response (Emissions Trading Forestry Sector) Amendment Bill," *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 655 (2009), 4553,

However, in December, against the recommendation of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (2009),<sup>21</sup> modifications to the Emissions Trading Scheme allowing industry subsidies became law.<sup>22</sup> In 2010, another Director-General of DOC, Alastair Morrison, argued vigorously for consideration of humanity's environmental debt in the face of anthropogenic climate change and the possibility of our own extinction.<sup>23</sup> By 2014, the department had a new Director-General, were down over 200 staff after heavy budget cuts, and was reporting that kiwi would be lost to the mainland within 50 years.<sup>24</sup>

I acknowledge the efforts of the various social movements that have combined to raise awareness of the problem; this paper holds the same aim. However, interventions have seen little

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[https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/hansard-debates/rhr/document/49HansS\\_20090623\\_00001114/parker-david-climate-change-response-emissions-trading](https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/hansard-debates/rhr/document/49HansS_20090623_00001114/parker-david-climate-change-response-emissions-trading).

<sup>21</sup> Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, *ETS Amendment Bill 'Won't Help Environment', says Environment Commissioner*, November 2009, <http://www.pce.parliament.nz/our-work/news-insights/ets-amendments-bill-wont-help-environment-says-environment-commissioner>.

<sup>22</sup> Climate Change Response (Moderated Emissions Trading) Amendment Act, No. 57, 2009, <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2009/0057/latest/DLM2381636.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Alastair Morrison, *On the Origin of the Species*, Department of Conservation, February 2010, <http://www.doc.govt.nz/news/speeches-and-opinion-pieces/al-morrison-at-university-of-auckland/>.

<sup>24</sup> "DOC claims it now has 'resources to do its job'," Radio New Zealand, November 21, 2014, <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/259919/doc-claims-it-now-has-resources-to-do-its-job>.



change at the political level in the democratic bodies that represent us. Reports by the New Zealand Youth Delegation to the 2015 UN Climate Change Conference indicate an outcome ‘heavy with the illusion of ambition without the reality of action’.<sup>25</sup> The acceptance of global depopulation appears less an affirmation and more a shrug, a necessary consequence of actions not taken.

## Philosophical and political grounds

### *Achieved truth*

The acceptance of mass extinction’s inevitability has philosophical and political grounds. Where truth is understood as ‘an expressible content’ presented ‘as an achieved result’, a ‘theory of the absolute’, ‘explicit systems of classification’, and ‘regimes of truth’ appear. Further, where the ‘original function of truth’ is recognised as the means for illuminating reality, ‘said’ words follow non-conscious feeling.<sup>26</sup>

In Levinas, language is the location within which we relate to one another. However, in ‘the saying and the said, the act of expression and the thing expressed are never correlative [...]

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<sup>25</sup> Veronika Meduna, “NZ youth delegates report from COP21,” *The Wireless*, December 12, 2015, <http://thewireless.co.nz/articles/nz-youth-delegates-report-from-cop21>.

<sup>26</sup> Levinas, *The Levinas Reader*, 61; Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin, 1999), 32; Seán Hand in *The Levinas Reader*, 6.

since in saying there is always the trace of alterity that goes beyond anything that can be measured in terms of its thought content'.<sup>27</sup> Mass extinction as an achieved expression suffers from its reliance on the regimes of the said. Those regimes are founded in the histories of science and the property-rendering state.

### *Uniformitarianism*

After being acknowledged in the nineteenth century via catastrophism, mass extinction theories fell out of favour for 150 years. Scientific consensus, influenced by the uniformitarianism of Charles Lyell and others, defined change as 'gradual', 'foreseeable', and endogenic.<sup>28</sup> Extinctions, then, were cumulative 'in the order of millions of years'.<sup>29</sup> Geological and paleontological evidence to the contrary was explained, by Charles Darwin nonetheless, as an 'extreme imperfection of the geological record'.<sup>30</sup> It was only in 1980 that the possibility of 'exogenous [...] rapid and episodic' causes were rearticulated with final confirmation by the Chicxulub crater discovery in 1991.<sup>31</sup> Although uniformitarian change was not a predestined progression, its implications have helped maintain the Enlightenment's need for order.

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<sup>27</sup> Seán Hand in *The Levinas Reader*, 148.

<sup>28</sup> Pievani, "The Sixth Mass Extinction," 86.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> As cited by Telmo Pievani, "The World After Charles R Darwin: Continuity, Unity in Diversity, Contingency," *Rendiconti Lincei* 20 (2009), 358.

<sup>31</sup> Pievani, "The Sixth Mass Extinction," 88.

### *Order, chaos, and the Enlightenment*

‘Social order suggests continuity, even permanence’, and is indicated by ‘regular, stable and predictable forms of behaviour’, such as those shown in uniformity.<sup>32</sup> As Lovejoy notes:

The Enlightenment was manifestly dominated by the presumption of the desirability of uniformity. Its rationalism involved a demand for the ‘standardizing’ of all human institutions, activities, opinions. There was only one way of thinking, upon any question [...] and consequently, no divergence from this could be aught but pernicious error.<sup>33</sup>

This privileging of order, uniformity, and permanence was a response to fears of chaos. Chaos, from the Greek for ‘abyss’, refers to ‘the primeval emptiness of the Universe’.<sup>34</sup> If the West is understood as a movement (like speculation and reflection), it is one away from chaos. This is why the ‘fear of disorder and social instability has been one of the most fundamental and abiding concerns of Western political philosophy’.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Andrew Heywood, *Key Concepts in Politics* (Basingstoke, 2000), 30.

<sup>33</sup> Arthur Lovejoy, “On Some Conditions of Progress in Philosophical Inquiry,” *The Philosophical Review* 26, no. 2 (1917): 130, available at <https://archive.org/details/jstor-2178425>.

<sup>34</sup> Douglas Harper, “Chaos,” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, accessed September 1, 2016, [http://etymonline.com/index.php?allowed\\_in\\_frame=0&search=chaos](http://etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=chaos).

<sup>35</sup> Heywood, *Key Concepts in Politics*, 30.

The Enlightenment was a period of intense change, instability caused by the forces of imperialism, especially ‘economic expansion [...] the subjugation of “others”’, and the creation of the ideal European self.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the period since 1991 appears as a narrative of cultural shifts: the fall of the Soviet Union, globalisation, 9/11, climate change, mass surveillance, and (my favourite) the Internet. However, the concept of mass extinction exceeds both histories in its alterity as a narrative of future and death.

*The alterity of mass extinction*

The desire to claim the future is similar to the desire to control death. However, as Levinas points out, our ‘anticipation’ of, and ‘projection’ of ourselves into, the future is not the future itself.<sup>37</sup> It is but an idea of the mind, for the ‘future is what is not grasped, what befalls us and lays hold of us. The other is the future’.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, ‘our relationship with death [...] is a unique relationship with the future [...] The now is the fact that I am master, master of the possible, master of grasping the possible. Death is never now’.<sup>39</sup> While science may render mass extinction into an idea, the substance remains beyond grasp. It is not an act of chaos, but of anarchy.<sup>40</sup> This restricts movement, making the situation

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<sup>36</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 21.

<sup>37</sup> Levinas, *The Levinas Reader*, 43.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 91.

appear inescapable. As an alternative, I recommend ‘heteronomy’, a subjection of will to, and the ‘saying’ of, our responsibility for one another.<sup>41</sup> Music as a means for evoking the non-conscious may be helpful, but any response will contradict uniformity. And uniformity, alongside the ‘precepts of rationalism, individualism and capitalism’, are maintained as essential components of the ‘modern industrial state’.<sup>42</sup>

The state is ‘a political association that establishes sovereign jurisdiction within defined territorial borders and exercises authority through a set of permanent institutions’.<sup>43</sup> Following Blackstone,<sup>44</sup> sovereignty is ‘the making of laws; for wherever that power resides, all others must conform to, and be directed by it’.<sup>45</sup> As a ‘body politic’, the state is a person, ‘created and devised by human laws’ and ‘capable of having rights and of being charged with duties’.<sup>46</sup> However, its personhood is ‘artificial’,

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>42</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 32.

<sup>43</sup> Heywood, *Key Concepts in Politics*, 39.

<sup>44</sup> William Blackstone, “Introduction, Section II: Of the Nature of Law in General,” *Commentaries on the Laws of England, Book 1* (1765), accessed September 1, 2016, <http://droitpolitique.com/spip.php?article113>.

<sup>45</sup> As cited in Waitangi Tribunal, *He Whakaputanga me te Tiriti: The Declaration and the Treaty—The Report on Stage 1 of the Te Paparahi o Te Raki Inquiry* (2014), 9, [https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt\\_DOC\\_85648980/Te%20RakiW\\_1.pdf](https://forms.justice.govt.nz/search/Documents/WT/wt_DOC_85648980/Te%20RakiW_1.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> Henry Black, *Dictionary of Law Containing Definitions of the Terms and Phrases of American and English Jurisprudence, Ancient and Modern Including the Principal Terms of International, Constitutional, and Commercial Law; with a Collection of Legal Maxims and Numerous Select Titles from the Civil Law*

maintained by the right of succession. It is by this immortality that the state claims legitimacy, through its role as a symbol of the ‘permanent interests of society’.<sup>47</sup>

## Survivorship

### *Definitions*

The verb ‘survive’ means ‘to live on, remain alive [or] in existence’.<sup>48</sup> Of ‘survivorship’, the Merriam-Webster dictionary offers three definitions:

- (1) the legal right of the survivor of persons having joint interests in property to take the interest of the person who has died;
- (2) the state of being a survivor;
- (3) the probability of surviving to a particular age; also: the number or proportion of survivors (as of an age group or population).<sup>49</sup>

The third definition has particular relevance to the discussion of global depopulation. Those who survive are not necessarily more

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*and Other Foreign Systems* (Saint Paul, 1891), 1119 and 892, available at [https://archive.org/details/dictionaryof\\_blac\\_1891\\_00\\_20160211](https://archive.org/details/dictionaryof_blac_1891_00_20160211).

<sup>47</sup> Heywood, *Key Concepts in Politics*, 39.

<sup>48</sup> Linguistics Research Centre, “3. G<sup>uei</sup>-, and G<sup>uei</sup>ǝ- “To Live, Survive,” *Indo-European Lexicon: PIE Etymon and IE Reflexes*, accessed September 1, 2016, <https://lrc.la.utexas.edu/lex/master/0708>.

<sup>49</sup> “Survivorship,” *Merriam-Webster.com*, Merriam-Webster, accessed September 1, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/survivorship>.

appropriate as ‘mass extinctions show low levels of selectivity’.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, the state has an emphasis on the first definition, constructing survivorship as a property right in statute.

It is possible to follow the development of survivorship as a property right in law. In 1708, jurist John Cowell stated a survivor ‘signifies the longer liver of two Joynt-Tenants’.<sup>51</sup> In 1882, legal scholar Charles Sweet expanded on Cowell’s concept:

where a person becomes entitled to property by reason of his having survived another person who had an interest in it. The most familiar example is in the case of joint tenants, the rule being that on the death of one of two joint tenants the whole property passes to the survivor.<sup>52</sup>

### Property

Property is ‘a social institution, defined by custom, convention and, in most cases, by law’.<sup>53</sup> Heywood describes it as ‘an established and enforceable claim to an object or possession; it is a

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<sup>50</sup> Pievani, “The Sixth Mass Extinction,” 89.

<sup>51</sup> John Cowell, *A Law Dictionary: Or, the Interpreter of Words and Terms, Used Either in the Common or Statute Laws of That Part of Great Britain, Call’d England; and in Tenures and Jocular Customs* (London, 1708), 307, available at [https://archive.org/details/lawdictionary\\_cowe\\_1708\\_00](https://archive.org/details/lawdictionary_cowe_1708_00).

<sup>52</sup> Charles Sweet, *A Dictionary of English Law Containing Definitions of the Technical Terms in Modern Use, and a Concise Statement of the Rules of Law Affecting the Principal Subjects with Historical and Etymological Notes* (London, 1882), 801, available at <https://archive.org/details/cu31924017854104>; see also Black, *Dictionary of Law*, 1144.

<sup>53</sup> Heywood, *Key Concepts in Politics*, 141.

right not a “thing”.<sup>54</sup> Property is related to the Roman principle of *dominium*: ‘full legal power over a corporeal thing; the right of the owner to use it; to take proceeds therefrom; and to dispose of it freely’.<sup>55</sup> *Dominium* is traditionally distinguished from *imperium* meaning ‘command’,<sup>56</sup> sovereignty, or ‘territorial authority’. Thus, the separation of land into two categories: immovable property and ‘territory of the state’.<sup>57</sup> However, this distinction fails to recognise the tension between Roman and Teutonic laws. In feudal law exists ‘the inseparable connection between land tenure and personal homage’.<sup>58</sup> The emphasis on tenancy in survivorship over other forms of property may reflect this tension.

Because it does not hold ‘the sole right to make and enforce law’, the New Zealand state’s sovereignty is, at most, divided.<sup>59</sup> However, it does hold a monopoly over the use of legitimate violence. Consequently, its legal constructions have power. Although a common law system, I focus on statutes as a reflection

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Adolf Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law* (Philadelphia, 1953), 441, available at [https://archive.org/details/bub\\_gb\\_oR0LAAAAIAAJ](https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_oR0LAAAAIAAJ).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 493.

<sup>57</sup> *Code Napoleon; or, the French civil code*, 1827, available at [http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/government/c\\_code.html](http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/government/c_code.html). Henceforth CN; Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary*, 494.

<sup>58</sup> Morris Cohen, “Property and Sovereignty,” *Cornell Law Review* 13, no. 1 (1927), 9, available at <http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1260&context=clr>.

<sup>59</sup> Waitangi Tribunal, *He Whakaputanga me te Tiriti*, 9.



of Parliament's assertion of this power and the responsibilities it derives.

### *New Zealand statutes*

The use of 'survivorship' is limited in statute. No use is recorded in the Early New Zealand Statutes database, although it does appear in nine current statutory laws. To broaden the analysis and allow for alternate interpretations to appear, I expanded the search to include the term 'survivor'. 'Survivor' appears in 60 ordinances and statutory laws of the Early New Zealand Statutes database. Seven are still in force, adding to the appearance in 46 current statutes total. Subsequently, 55 current statutes were analysed and can be separated into two groups. The first group of 13 affirms survivorship as the state of being a survivor. I have categorised 12 as administrative or constitutional. Accordingly, 'survivor' first appears via the Bill of Rights 1688 and the Act of Settlement 1700 whereby the *imperium* of the monarch and their survivor is asserted. The Geneva Conventions Act 1958 was a domestic incorporation of treaty provisions and prohibits orders or threats to the effect 'that there shall be no survivors'.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, the Crimes Act 1961 (a non-administrative law) discourages survival of a suicide pact (or suicide more generally) for 'any survivor is guilty of being party to a death under a suicide pact

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<sup>60</sup> Geneva Conventions Act 1958, sch 5, art 40, available at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1958/0019/latest/whole.html#DLM318002>.

[...] and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years'.<sup>61</sup>

The second group of 42 statutes construct survivorship as a property right. Five statutes present statutory entitlements allowing enforceable claims against the state to benefits.<sup>62</sup> For example, I receive an 'entitlement' as a 'survivor's grant' per the Accident Compensation Act 2001. Fifteen statutes, including all nine direct references, apply survivorship to family property. Hence, section 61 of the Land Transfer Act 1952 directly refers to joint tenancy per the primary definition of 'survivorship'.<sup>63</sup> The remaining 22 employments focus on body politics, 21 of which discuss trusts. Thus, the earliest reference in current public acts regards a trust in section 10 of the Primitive Methodist Temporal Affairs Act 1879. This legislation adds to the 76 percent of current statutes which construct survivorship as a property right.

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<sup>61</sup> See Crimes Act 1961, s 72, available at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1961/0043/latest/whole.html#DLM327382>.

<sup>62</sup> Barry Barton, "The Nature of Resource Consents: Statutory Permits or Property Rights," in *RMLA Roadshow: Waikato: Planning Controls & Property Rights*, Resource Management Law Society of New Zealand (August 2010), 18, available at [http://www.rmla.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/barton\\_nature\\_of\\_resource\\_consents\\_2009\\_10.pdf](http://www.rmla.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/barton_nature_of_resource_consents_2009_10.pdf); "Statutory entitlement and the concept of property," *The Yale Law Journal* 86, no. 4 (1977), 695, available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/795641>.

<sup>63</sup> Of interest, the section begins 'Subject to any Act [...] for the time being in force relating to the tenure of land by persons of the Maori race'.

As an achievement of the state, Hobbesian and Humean property<sup>64</sup> cannot be unsaid, only acquired. As an achievement of labour (in both meanings of the term), Lockean property cannot be unsaid, only acquired.<sup>65</sup> As Waldron notes, ‘all property systems distribute freedoms and unfreedoms’.<sup>66</sup> A survivor to mass extinction will not be freed from its condition, because it did not achieve it.

When considering the acceptance of global depopulation, the statutory emphasis on survivorship as a property right is problematic. It limits the New Zealand State’s ability to speak of the ‘survivor’ in other ways, quietening any attempts to increase the quality or probability of survival. If we cannot speak of the matter, we cannot address it.

## Conclusion

McKenzie Wark suggests that ‘the role of the state is not to manage biopower but to manage thanopower’, to smooth the pillow of a dying citizenry.<sup>67</sup> I believe the New Zealand state to be less powerful, an incapable manager of an unspeakable situation.

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<sup>64</sup> Jeremy Waldron, “Property and Ownership,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Zalta, (2012), available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/property/>.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>67</sup> McKenzie Wark, “Birth of Thanaticism,” *Public Seminar*, April 3, 2014, <http://www.publicseminar.org/2014/04/birth-of-thanaticism/>.

Further, I see the problem and its solution as greater than what may happen after the ‘perfect storm’. To illustrate my desire, I offer an autoethnographic excerpt: On the day we took my husband’s body to Kuratahi, the marae where I was raised, my teina (cousins) made me eat. I remember looking at Nanny’s plate and not really understanding what the stuff on it was for.

The first was, ‘Cuz, you gotta’...

The second was, ‘Now Cousin, you have to... ‘

Later, when the crazy really started to fly, the third sat in the chapel with me and let me talk. My teina kept me alive, a lifesaver thrown around me when I would have chosen to drown.

Each project requires a purpose and mine is plain: I want to create a world full of cousins. Meadows, Randers, and Meadows believe the ‘global challenge can be simply stated: To reach sustainability, humanity must increase the consumption levels of the world’s poor, while at the same time reducing humanity’s total ecological footprint’.<sup>68</sup> For it is ‘not only whether the human species will survive’, but whether it can do so ‘without falling into a state of worthless existence’.<sup>69</sup>

In closing, I wish to acknowledge the organisers of the Social Movements, Resistance and Social Change III conference.

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<sup>68</sup> Donella Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and Dennis Meadows, *Limits to Growth: The 30-year Update*, (White River Junction, 2004), xv.

<sup>69</sup> Donella Meadows et al., *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club Of Rome’s Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York, 1972), 197.

There are few opportunities to productively explore the intersection of academia and activism, let alone in a space that attends to the concrete inequalities that may limit access to such exploration. For those of us who have restricted or no professional development funds, this is a sanity-saver. Thank you.

Kati i konei. Tena tatau katoa.

# **Asia Pacific Report: A radical non-profit journalism model for campus-based social justice media**

David Robie

ONE OF THE ironies of the digital revolution is that there is an illusion of growing freedom of expression and information in the world, when in fact often the reverse is true. These are bleak times with growing numbers of journalists being murdered with impunity, from the Philippines to Somalia and Syria. The world's worst mass killing of journalists was the so-called Maguindanao, or Ampatuan massacre (named after the town whose dynastic family ordered the killings), when 32 journalists were brutally murdered in the Philippines in November 2009.

But increasingly savage slayings in the name of terrorism are becoming the norm. In early August 2015, five masked jihadists armed with machetes entered the Dhaka home of a secularist blogger in Bangladesh and hacked off his head and hands while his wife was forced into a nearby room. According to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, 506 journalists were killed in the decade between 2002 and 2012, almost double the 390 slain in the

previous decade.<sup>1</sup> (Both Reporters Sans Frontières and Freedom House also reported escalating death tolls and declines in media freedom in 2016).

While there appear to be far more democracies in the world than ever before, the committee's executive director Joel Simon believes there is a sinister new threat.

This is in some respects more troublesome than the old style dictatorships. Simon has described this new scourge in *The New Censorship: Inside the Global Battle for Press Freedom* as the 'democratators', those leaders who profess to be democratic but are actually subverting their mirage of open governance.<sup>2</sup>

What are these differences between dictators and democratators? Dictators rule by force. Democratators rule by manipulation. Dictators impose their will. Democratators govern with the support of the majority. Dictators do not claim to be democrats—at least credibly. Democratators always do. Dictators control information. Democratators manage it.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in David Robie, (2015) "The Struggle for Media Freedom amid jihadists, gaggers and "democratators", *Pacific Journalism Review*, 21/2, pp. 197-199.

<sup>2</sup> Joel Simon, *The New Censorship: Inside the Global Battle for Press Freedom*, Columbia, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Simon, p. 33.

Simon points out that democrats win elections yet while they may be free, they are not really fair, meaning they are decided by fraud. He has a growing list of leaders that fit this label, including Latin American ‘populists’ like Rafael Correa of Ecuador and Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, ‘European backsliders’ like Viktor Orban of Hungary and Viktor Yanukovych, the deposed former president of Ukraine, and African leaders such as Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Jacob Zuma of South Africa. Undoubtedly, Fiji’s prime minister Voreqe Bainimarama should be on this list too since having been elected in September 2014, ending eight years of military backed dictatorship and providing a figleaf of legitimacy while continuing to manipulate public debate and information. Using the Committee to Protect Journalists’ criteria, the Trump administration is also being condemned for the alleged ‘fake news’ and ‘war on truth’ campaign and threats against a mainstream media already suffering from perceptions of declining credibility.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sonali Kolhatkar (2017) ‘Fake news and Donald Trump’s War on Truth’. *Common Dreams*, 10 February 2017, accessed at <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2017/02/10/fake-news-and-donald-trumps-war-truth>



Facts are the enemy of charlatans and con artists, hence Trump's adviser and campaign chair Kellyanne Conway's offer of 'alternative facts'<sup>5</sup> in the face of real ones on the size of Inauguration Day crowds in Washington, DC. In Trump's milieu, bona fide news reports are considered 'face news', while Conway's lies (and those of the president) are simply 'alternative facts'.<sup>6</sup>

The issues highlighted by Simon are to some degree reflected in the evolution of some journalism programmes in the Asia-Pacific region. For two decades, I have been an initiator of a series of independent newspapers based in prominent South Pacific journalism programmes hosted at three universities. All of the publications have played an 'activist' role in raising issues of social justice and campaigning for more critical and challenging assignments for student media in the context of coups, civil war, climate change, development and neo-colonialism. They have been bastions of free speech and public debate.

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European Federation of Journalists (2017) 'How media are fighting fake news and disinformation'. [Europeanjournalists.org](http://europeanjournalists.org), 29 March 2017, accessed at <http://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2017/03/29/how-media-are-fighting-fake-news-and-disinformation/>

<sup>5</sup> Eric Bradner (2017) 'Conway: Trump White House offered 'alternative facts' on crowd size', *CNN Politics*, 23 January 2017, accessed at <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/22/politics/kellyanne-conway-alternative-facts/>

<sup>6</sup> Kolhatkar (ibid.).

All of the publications have won awards for their brand of journalism. Starting with the University of Papua New Guinea's *Uni Tavar* in 1994 and the Sandline mercenary crisis when then Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan was forced out of office, the models have progressed through *Wansolwara* at the University of the South Pacific (award-winning coverage of the 2000 George Speight attempted coup), to *Pacific Scoop* for six years at Auckland University of Technology with extensive coverage of human rights violations in Fiji and West Papua. The *Pacific Scoop* venture has now morphed into a new and distinctive independent venture for the digital era, *Asia Pacific Report* (<http://asiapacificreport.nz/>) launched in January 2016. In this paper, a series of case studies examines how the collective experience of citizen journalism, digital engagement and an innovative public empowerment journalism course based at AUT's Pacific Media Centre has developed a unique publication. The paper traverses some of the region's thorny political and social issues—including the controversial police shootings of students in Papua New Guinea in June

2016, and engages with the evolving theory behind the publications<sup>7</sup> such as reflected in Deliberative Journalism (DJ), Human Rights Journalism (HRJ) and other models.<sup>8</sup>

## Journalism as campus-based independent publishing

One of the most innovative journalists and media academics in the Asia-Pacific region to successfully integrate investigative journalism, journalism-as-research and independent community journalism with an academic programme is Wendy Bacon, a now retired professor of journalism at the University of Technology Sydney and former director of the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism (ACIJ). She

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<sup>7</sup> See David Robie, (2004) 'Ross Stevens and Uni Tavar A Kiwi publishing legacy among wantoks.' *Pacific Journalism Review*, 10/2, 2004, pp. 153-170; Robie, *Mekim Nius: South Pacific media, politics and education*, University of the South Pacific Book Centre, 2004; Robie, (2006) 'An independent student press: Three case studies from Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Aotearoa/New Zealand', *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 17, pp. 21-40, 2006; Robie, (2012) 'Independent journalism in the South Pacific: Two campus-based media case studies in Fiji and New Zealand', *Global Media Journal*, 6 p. 1, 2012; Robie, *Don't Spoil My Beautiful Face: Media, Mayhem and Human Rights in the Pacific*, Little Island Press (2014).

<sup>8</sup> See Angela Romano, (2011), *International Journalism and Democracy: Civic Engagement Models from Around the World*, Routledge, 2011; Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, 'Human rights journalism': A critical conceptual framework of a complementary strand of peace journalism', in Shaw, Jake Lynch and Robert A. Hackett, eds., *Expanding Peace Journalism: Comparative and Critical Approaches*, Sydney University Press, 2011; Chris Nash, *What is Journalism? The Art and Politics of a Rupture*, Routledge, 2016; Robert A Hackett, Susan Forde, Shane Gunster and Kerrie Foxwell-Norton (editors), (2017), *Journalism and Climate Crisis: Public Engagement, Media Alternatives*, London, Routledge.

now writes for *New Matilda* and other independent media. In one of her earlier progressive papers critiquing 25 years of journalism education and research in the academy, Bacon articulated how journalism education and research had slowly won acceptance within the broader academic field but that many journalists had felt ‘undervalued’ within humanities or social science faculties.<sup>9</sup>

It is ironic—and a sad statement about the declining status of mainstream journalism in Australia and New Zealand—that UTS has just announced the closure of the centre after a ‘significant contribution to journalism and [as] a strong advocate for the public right to know and the role of journalism in strengthening democracy’.<sup>10</sup> An internal UTS memorandum to academic staff acknowledged:

In its over 25 year history, ACIJ collaborated in major investigations with a wide range of media outlets and was involved in both national and international research collaborations such as the Global Environmental Journalism

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<sup>9</sup> Wendy Bacon, (2006) ‘Journalism as research?’ *Australian Journalism Review*, 2/2, 2006, pp. 147-157.

<sup>10</sup> Spongberg, Mary, (2017) ‘Closure of the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism’. Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Intranet email, 28 March 2017.

Initiative (via the Erasmus Mundus program overseen by the European Commission).<sup>11</sup>

Other groundbreaking investigations and analysis involved the reporting of climate policy and climate science in the media by Bacon, and a celebrated study of the reporting of the 2011 *News of the World* phone hacking scandal in Australian newspapers. More recently, key inquiries included media reporting of the cases of forensic patients, with a *Background Briefing* exposé for ABC Radio National.

Bacon has led by example in examining and pioneering ways that journalism itself ‘might be regarded as research’ in academic context through establishing research-based journalism projects (see for example her ACIJ’s 2011 study auditing how 10 Australian mainstream newspapers reported on a tense political debate over carbon policy in the country. She found numerous examples of ‘hostile’ media campaigning *against* the policy rather than *reporting and analysing* it and also misrepresenting climate change in defiance of a global consensus.<sup>12</sup> Eventually, she and I established a ‘Frontline’ section in the New Zealand established

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Wendy Bacon, (2011) ‘Carbon pricing policy in the media’, *The Conversation*, December 1, 2011, accessed at <http://theconversation.com/carbon-pricing-policy-in-the-media-3746>

journal *Pacific Journalism Review* in 2012 to showcase examples of journalism-as-research. In the May edition that year, we published two investigative journalism articles with exegeses about nickel mining in New Caledonia and the Freeport gold and copper mine in West Papua.<sup>13</sup> Bacon followed this up in the next edition of *PJR* with a theoretical rationale for the new editorial section, explaining that the journal had always been concerned to link ‘robust and informed journalism’ with media research that contributed to social development in the broader community, the media industries and inside the academy.<sup>14</sup>

This provided an impetus for the publication of university based radical and independent media. A *Columbia Journalism Review* analysis of the ‘transformation’ of American journalism flagged an era where the dominance of established and legacy news media and networks was rapidly giving way to a ruptured and widely dispersed gathering and distribution of news through digital media and connective media networks. The fundamental question being asked by

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<sup>13</sup> Karen Abplanalp, (2012). “‘Blood Money’: A NZ investigative journalism case study’, *Pacific Journalism Review*, 18/1, 2012, pp. 128-147; Nicole Gooch, (2012) ‘Background to “Sulphate Sunrise” - investigating New Caledonia’, *Pacific Journalism Review*, 18/1, 2012, pp.148-170.

<sup>14</sup> Wendy Bacon, (2012) ‘An innovative direction in academic journalism’, *Pacific Journalism Review*, 18/2, 2012, pp. 153-165.

the authors, Downie and Schudson, was that of how to counter the threat to independent reporting that had been providing ‘information, investigation, analysis and community knowledge’ in both local and global affairs.<sup>15</sup> Such questions have been similarly addressed by, among others, political economist Geoff Kemp<sup>16</sup> and cultural studies theorist Graeme Turner in his 2016 book *Reinventing the Media*.<sup>17</sup>

Downie and Schudson acknowledged that many universities in the United States were publishing the reporting of student journalists ‘on the states, cities, and neighbourhoods’ where the campuses were located.<sup>18</sup> Frequently, the student work in journalism classes and news services was supervised by professional journalists employed by the faculties. Sometimes the student work is published by the universities’ own media, at other times it is published by industry media seeking to supplement their own coverage, occasionally for a publishing fee. Among the better known US

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<sup>15</sup> Leonard Downie, & Michael Schudson, (2009) ‘The reconstruction of American journalism’, *Columbia Journalism Review*, November/December, 2009. Accessed at [http://archives.cjr.org/reconstruction/the\\_reconstruction\\_of\\_american.php](http://archives.cjr.org/reconstruction/the_reconstruction_of_american.php)

<sup>16</sup> Geoff Kemp, The Fourth Estate – can journalism really deliver on its promises? *Pacific Media Centre Online*, 29 August 2013, accessed at [www.pmc.aut.ac.nz/articles/fourth-estate-can-journalism-really-deliver-its-promises](http://www.pmc.aut.ac.nz/articles/fourth-estate-can-journalism-really-deliver-its-promises)

<sup>17</sup> Graeme Turner, *Re-inventing the media.*, Routledge, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Downie & Schudson, 2009.

university daily newspapers is the *Columbia Missourian* ([www.columbiamissourian.com](http://www.columbiamissourian.com)), which has been publishing since the University of Missouri journalism school was opened in 1908. The Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley with local news outlets and the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State University in Phoenix and its high-profile Cronkite News Service ([cronkiteneww.jmc.asu.edu](http://cronkiteneww.jmc.asu.edu)) are among others. Downie and Schudson note:

Universities are also becoming homes for independent nonprofit investigative reporting projects started by former newspaper and television journalists. Some are run by journalists on their faculties, while others, such as The Watchdog Institute at San Diego State University, are independent nonprofits that use university facilities and work with faculty and students.<sup>19</sup>

While this may seem rather encouraging for independent campus-based media, and Downie and Schudson cite many successful examples and models, there is also a downside to this development. Jonathan Peters has cautioned in the *Columbia Journalism Review* that at the time of writing at least four university newspaper advisers had been stripped from their roles or faced their positions being curbed or axed

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<sup>19</sup> Downie & Schudson, 2009.



altogether.<sup>20</sup> He warned that this development was raising concerns among independent media advocates about the survival of some university-based publications.

Two of the cases have prompted lawsuits, and one of the former advisers has filed a grievance. At one school, the entire journalism program was canceled and funding to print the student newspaper was slashed.<sup>21</sup>

Peters cited Frank LoMonte, executive director of the Student Press Law Center, which provides legal and material support for student editors and journalists, as saying: 'It's a perfect storm of financial stress for colleges and universities ... And the local conditions are ripe for censorship and retaliation'.<sup>22</sup>

At the time of writing, the New Zealand media industry is in dire straits, anxiously awaiting the verdict from the Commerce Commission on the application from the two biggest newspaper chains in the country, NZ Media and Entertainment (NZME) and Fairfax Media, to merge.<sup>23</sup> If they

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<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Peters, (2015) 'Removal of faculty advisers sparks concern about independence of student publications', *Columbia Journalism Review*, June 22, 2015, accessed at [www.cjr.org/united\\_states\\_project/faculty\\_advisers\\_removed\\_concerns.php](http://www.cjr.org/united_states_project/faculty_advisers_removed_concerns.php)

<sup>21</sup> Peters, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Peters, 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Commerce Commission New Zealand, (2017), 'Commission proposes to decline NZME/Fairfax merger'. 8 November 2016, accessed at

succeed in their bid to put 90 percent ownership of print media under the umbrella of a single company, the plurality of media in the country will be destroyed with untold damage to representative democracy. The ruling is due on May 9.<sup>24</sup>

According to one of New Zealand's leading investigative journalists, Nicky Hager, who co-authored the recent book *Hit & Run* alleging a cover-up of an SAS atrocity in Afghanistan in 2010 that killed six civilians, including a three-year-old girl, and wounded 15, the past two years have been the media turning point.<sup>25</sup> These years, he says, may be remembered as the point at when New Zealand news media stopped being able to carry out their Fourth Estate function.<sup>26</sup>

2015 was the year when TV3 slashed serious current affairs and investigative journalism. The same happened at Māori Television: two out of three major TV channels at once,

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<http://comcom.govt.nz/the-commission/media-centre/media-releases/detail/2016/commission-proposes-to-decline-nzmefairfax-merger>

<sup>24</sup> Commerce Commission New Zealand, (2017), 'Further extension to NZME/Fairfax merger'. 29 March 2017, accessed at <http://www.comcom.govt.nz/the-commission/media-centre/media-releases/detail/2017/further-extension-to-nzmefairfax-merger>

<sup>25</sup> Nicky Hager and Jon Stephenson, (2017), *Hit & Run: The New Zealand SAS in Afghanistan and the meaning of honour*, Nelson, Pottom & Burton.

<sup>26</sup> Nicky Hager, (2017), 'The crisis is all around us, and so are the solutions', in Emma Johnson, Giovanni Tiso, Sarah Illingworth and Barnaby Bennett (editors), *Don't Dream It's Over: Reimagining Journalism in Aotearoa New Zealand*, Christchurch, Freerange Press.

both with a strong smell of political interference. *The New Zealand Herald*, which until recently, had the best array of columnists, merged its news with Newstalk ZB radio, cutting various critical commentators and replacing them on the *Herald* website with the opinions of talkback hosts. 2016 saw plans for the mega-merger of the two main private newspaper/media companies, a further great, panicked rationalisation. Government-friendly media celebrities increased in dominance. Clickbait was so ubiquitous that it was ceasing to be a pejorative term.<sup>27</sup>

This shrinking mainstream media plurality in New Zealand provides a context for examining publication of campus-based media based at AUT's Pacific Media Centre, where student and faculty editorial staff have successfully established an independent digital press over the past decade. I have been involved with four publications over two decades as key adviser/publisher in Papua New Guinea (*Uni Taur*, 1993-1998); Fiji (*Wansolwara*, 1998-2002); and Aotearoa/New Zealand (*Pacific Scoop*, 2009-2015; *Asia Pacific Report*, 2016 onwards) (Figure 1). I was also one of the two founding lecturers of *Te Waha Nui* and the associated News

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Production course at AUT in 2003-2007 and I have written extensively about this experience elsewhere.<sup>28</sup>



Figure 1: Papua New Guinea police blockading the entrance to the University of Papua New Guinea, where Uni Tavar was published and where Asia Pacific Report has a network of correspondents. Image: Uni Tavar

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<sup>28</sup> Jane Berney & David Robie, (2008). 'Don't publish and be damned: An advocacy media case study', *Global Media Journal*, 2/1, 2008, accessed from [www.hca.westernsydney.edu.au/gmjau/archive/iss1\\_2008/bernie\\_robie.html](http://www.hca.westernsydney.edu.au/gmjau/archive/iss1_2008/bernie_robie.html) ; David Robie, (2006) 'An independent student press: Three case studies from Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Aotearoa/New Zealand', *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 17, 2006, pp. 21-40.

## The *Asia Pacific Report* publishing ethos

In mid-2007, the *Pacific Media Centre Online* was established as the umbrella website for AUT's Pacific Media Centre in providing independent research tools, publications and resources for the region ([www.pmc.aut.ac.nz](http://www.pmc.aut.ac.nz)). It also initially became the publication outlet for students on my post-graduate Asia-Pacific Journalism Studies paper, established that year as the first course of its kind at any New Zealand university. The *PMC Online* website was closely associated with the *Pacific Journalism Review* research journal's website ([www.pjreview.info](http://www.pjreview.info)) and the *Pacific Media Watch* monitoring service and database ([www.pacmediawatch.aut.ac.nz](http://www.pacmediawatch.aut.ac.nz)).<sup>29</sup>

Both the PMC and Scoop Media Ltd, collaborated to launch *Pacific Scoop* as a specialist news and analysis coverage of the South Pacific region. It was also both an educational outlet and a publication open to contributing academics and journalists. Catering for this niche field was a collaborative effort of then Scoop co-editor Selwyn Manning and me. In August 2009, the partnership between the PMC and the Scoop Media group resulted in the launch of *Pacific*

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<sup>29</sup> David Robie, (2014) 'Pacific Media Watch: Beyond parochial news', *Media Asia*, 41/3, 2014, pp. 220-226, accessed at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01296612.2014.11690019>

*Scoop* as a joint collaborative publication at the AUT Māori Expo. This was a unique development between an industry media group and an academic institution.

By late 2015 the mediascape around *Pacific Scoop* had changed. Co-founder Selwyn Manning had resigned as co-editor in 2011 and concluded his role on Scoop Media's board in the same year. Through his new company, Multi-media Investments Ltd, Manning founded in 2012 security-intelligence analysis site 36th-Parallel.com, open-source intelligence sites [ForeignAffairs.co.nz](http://ForeignAffairs.co.nz), [LiveNews.co.nz](http://LiveNews.co.nz), NewsKitchen.eu and [de.Newskitchen.eu](http://de.Newskitchen.eu). In 2013, he co-founded the highly popular *Daily Blog*, which recruited an ever-growing stable of progressive columnists and commentators and collaborated with Radio Waatea to offer New Zealand's only daily current affairs programme, the half-hour *Fifth Estate*. In 2014, Manning founded and launched EveningReport.nz which combines reportage and analysis with public service webcasting.

The Pacific Media Centre had by then started to seek a new platform. An active digital collaboration with Little Island Press publisher Tony Murrow to produce the micro-

site ‘Eyes of Fire: 30 Years On’, an extension of the 30th anniversary edition of my book, *Eyes of Fire*<sup>30</sup> about the *Rainbow Warrior* bombing in July 1985, was a key factor in the pioneering new venture. We produced a series of oral histories by some forty AUT journalism and television students. A subsequent meeting with Selwyn Manning confirmed my our decision to press ahead with establishing *Asia Pacific Report*.

Reflecting on the 2009 launch of *Pacific Scoop*, Manning argues that ‘it was quite a successful effort at branding a niche service’, but he cautioned that perhaps it benefitted strongly from being attached to Scoop.<sup>31</sup>

Multimedia Investments Ltd, the parent company to EveningReport.nz, owns or part owns a network of complementary news outlets, each occupying a specific niche, and cumulatively exporting more than 30,000 published items per month to global aggregation companies, including Dow Jones, Factiva, Lexus Nexus, Moreover.com, and Acquire Media internationally, and Knowledge Basket’s Newztext based in New Zealand. The joint venture between Multime-

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<sup>30</sup> David Robie, *Eyes of Fire: The Last Voyage of the Rainbow Warrior*, Little Island Press, 2015. (Originally published in 1986 by Lindon Books.)

<sup>31</sup> Selwyn Manning, personal communication with the author, 6 July 2016.

dia Investments Ltd and the Pacific Media Centre’s Asia Pacific Report plugs the website’s ‘Asia-Pacific-rich’ content into this network and enables it to achieve considerable reach, adding value to the readership potential to each item published (Figure 2).

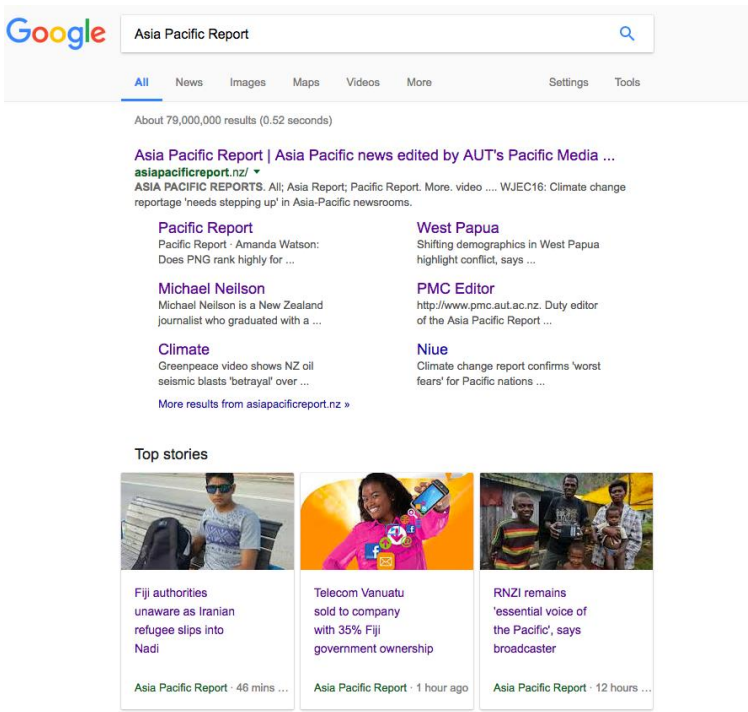


Figure 2. A Google aggregate search on Asia Pacific Report.





Figure 3. An Asia Pacific Report front page online featuring Waitangi Day; corruption in Papua New Guinea, the Catholic Church condemning Philippines President Duterte's 'reign of terror' which has already led to 7600 assassinations in seven months; and Australia and Indonesia discussing cyber-security but failing to address West Papua. APR 6 February 2017.

Establishing this opportunity of reach and the opportunity to create a contemporary online environment where the PMC and AUT Asia-Pacific students can apply and develop their talents was a key factor driving *Asia Pacific Report* within a rich learning environment. Our website policy declared that the focus was students reporting on 'a range of Asia-Pacific issues ranging from climate change and the environment to education and health to politics, media, law social justice and sustainable business'.<sup>32</sup> The New Zealand reportage is in partnership with students at the

<sup>32</sup> About Asiapacificreport.nz (n.d.) Asia Pacific Report, accessed at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/about/>

University of Santo Tomas, Philippines, and the University of the South Pacific, Fiji. The core objectives:

[Providing] an independent Asia-Pacific voice telling the untold stories

[Providing] an educational media resource boosting the quality on regional reporting

Addressing justice for the marginalised, and

Providing Asia-Pacific journalism internships

What does *Asia-Pacific Report* offer that had not already been part of *Pacific Scoop*? The new venture has a far stronger and more radical ‘Asia-Pacific’ mix with greater and more relevant Asia content, especially human rights, with the occasional piece, usually analysis, that is truly global (Figure 4). In one year the website has climbed to an audience of more than 26,000. Among the more successful audience reaches in the past six months of publishing was during the Philippines presidential election on May 9 when *Asia Pacific Report* ran a live feed from *Rappler* in Manila (with the anchor page having 1786 views that day).<sup>33</sup> Be-

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<sup>33</sup> ‘LIVE: #PHVote2016 elections coverage by Rappler today’, (2016, May 9). Asia Pacific Report, 9 May 2016, accessed on 9 July 2016 at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/05/09/live-phvote-2016-elections-coverage-today-may-9/>

tween the 2006 and 2012 national census, the Filipino diaspora community in New Zealand more than doubled from 15,285 to 37,302. In 2013, 40,350 people claimed Filipino ethnicity.<sup>34</sup> *Asia Pacific Report* has also run several insightful articles about the tough-talking and assassinations-encouraging president-elect Rodrigo Duterte before he was sworn in on June 30 (Figure 3).<sup>35</sup>

The largest audience for a single *Asia Pacific Report* story has been 7540 on 15 March 2017 about an attack outside a courtroom on a young woman reporter working for the state-run Fiji Broadcasting Corporation. Praneeta Prakash was ‘shooting footage of a man sentenced in a corruption related case in Suva when a remand prisoner being escorted by police to the cell block threw a stone at her which struck her stomach’.<sup>36</sup> The assault took place under the gaze of police officers who did nothing (Figure 4).

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<sup>34</sup> ‘Story: Filipinos (n.d.)’, *The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, accessed on 9 July 2016 at [www.teara.govt.nz/en/filipinos/page-1](http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/filipinos/page-1)

<sup>35</sup> David Robie, (2016) ‘Duterte’s tough stance, impunity big challenges for media in Philippines’, *Asia Pacific Report*, 9 July 2016, accessed on 9 July 2016 at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/06/28/dutertes-tough-stance-impunity-big-challenge-for-media-in-philippines/>

<sup>36</sup> Kelly Vacala, (2017) ‘Attack on FBC reporter outside court stirs Fiji media protests’. *Asia Pacific Report*, accessed on 4 April 2017 at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2017/03/15/attack-on-fbc-reporter-outside-court-stirs-fiji-media-protests/>



Figure 4. Presenter Amrita Sagar of the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation News narrates the attack on reporter Praneeta Prakash . Asia Pacific Report embedded news bulletin, 15 March 2017.

## Discussion of case studies

The following sections provide case studies of some of the issues during the start-up year:

*Case 1: February-March 2016: De Brum, Nuclear Zero lawyers and climate change*

Since the last week of January 2016 with the launch of *Asia Pacific Report* by Pacific Cooperation Foundation chairman

Laulu Mac Leauanae, the website has projected a strong climate change and environmental focus, with the first story to reach 2000 views being an exclusive report about Marshall Islands Foreign Minister Tony de Brum and the republic's legal team Nuclear Zero being nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for their 'courageous step' in filing lawsuits against the nine nuclear nations.<sup>37</sup> As highlighted in a new documentary by John Pilger, *The Coming War with China*, the United States tested 60 nuclear bombs in the Marshall Islands, 23 of them at Bikini Atoll, and 'vaporised' three islets.<sup>38</sup> They were nominated by the Oslo-based International Peace Bureau, which is dedicated to the vision of a world without war and is itself a Nobel Peace Laureate. Last year, Tony de Brum was one of the four winners of the 2015 Right Livelihood Award, also known as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize'. The people of the Marshall Islands were joint recipients.

Between February 15-17, *Asia Pacific Report* comprehensively covered the 'In the Eye of the Storm' climate change conference in Wellington, particularly through the

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<sup>37</sup> Colin Archer, (2016) 'De Brum, Nuclear Zero lawyers nominated for Nobel Peace Prize. *Asia Pacific Report*, 2 February 2016, accessed at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/02/02/de-brum-nuclear-zero-lawyers-nominated-for-nobel-peace-prize/>

<sup>38</sup> John Pilger, (2016), *The Coming War on China*, Dartmouth Films. Available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3hbtM\\_NJ0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3hbtM_NJ0s)

work of a freelance journalist, Thomas Leaycraft, in collaboration with Scoop Media.<sup>39</sup> In April, the Pacific Media Centre dispatched two journalists, TJ Aumua and Ami Dhabuwala, to Fiji in the mid-semester break to work with the University of the South Pacific's Centre for the Environment and Sustainable Development (PaCE-SD) to research and report on a 'bearing witness' climate change assignment. As part of this project, they visited a village, Daku, in the Rewa River delta and witnessed first-hand how the villagers have been empowered by adaptation strategies.<sup>40</sup>

*Case 2: Kilman government vs Vanuatu Daily Post on air safety*

After the *Vanuatu Daily Post* reported a front page story on 27 January 2016 exposing a Port Vila international airport safety issue, caretaker Prime Minister Sato Kilman accused the newspaper of bringing his 'name into disrepute', and of

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<sup>39</sup> Thomas Leaycraft, (2016) 'Paris climate summit "positive – but not enough for Pacific", says SPREP,' *Asia Pacific Report*, 18 February 2016, accessed at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/02/18/paris-climate-summit-positive-but-not-enough-for-pacific-says-sprep-chief/>

<sup>40</sup> 'Fiji Report – "Bearing Witness", 2016 (2016) *Pacific Media Centre on Storify*, accessed at <https://storify.com/pacmedcentre/fiji-report-bearing-witness-2016>

‘partisan bias’.<sup>41</sup> Editorial director Dan McGarry rejected this attack and penned a fresh editorial:

[T]he accusation that we have somehow politicised the issue is simply false. The entire piece is an argument *against* politicising this topic.

Yes, Mr Kilman’s government is hardly the only one guilty of playing political football with the lives of our travellers. We agree on that point. The key point in the editorial was: ‘Three different governments, three different plans. That’s no way to run a country.’<sup>42</sup>

Republishing this editorial with McGarry’s permission as a news story meant that this item was the first on *Asia Pacific Report* to nudge 1000 views. This indicated that this issue was important for the region and while New Zealand media only reported Air New Zealand pulling out its scheduled flights, *Asia Pacific Report* provided broader, more nuanced coverage about the politics and media freedom and freedom information behind the safety issues. Ten

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<sup>41</sup> ‘Caretaker PM slams Vanuatu Daily Post for outspoken airport editorial,’ (2016) *Pacific Media Watch 9564* in *Asia Pacific Report*, 30 January 2016, accessed at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/01/30/caretaker-pm-slams-vanuatu-daily-post-for-outspoken-airport-editorial/>

<sup>42</sup> Dan McGarry, (2016) ‘Vanuatu airport crisis: Daily Post hits back on-safety’, *Asia Pacific Report*, 30 January 2016., accessed at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/01/30/vanuatu-airport-crisis-the-price-of-politics-continued/>

well-informed articles on the issue over the next few weeks concluded with a report on May 8 declaring that the Bauerfield Airport had been ‘rehabilitated’ and a ‘new tourism era’ was being ushered in.<sup>43</sup> The *Asia Pacific Report* coverage was thanks to collaboration with the *Vanuatu Daily Post* and contributions by citizen journalists and social media through *Vanuatu Daily Digest*.

### *Case 3: May-June 2016: University unrest in Papua New Guinea*

For several weeks in May and June 2016, the hashtag #UPNG4PNG became a ‘hot’ item as universities mounted a series of peaceful protests and class boycotts seeking to force Prime Minister Peter O’Neill from office over persistent allegations of corruption. This climaxed on June 8 when PNG police opened fire on a peaceful demonstration when they failed to arrest the Student Representative Council president Kenneth Rapa, and later at Unitech on June 25 when off-campus ‘marauders’ killed a student with bush knives.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> ‘Vanuatu airport runway repairs usher in new tourism era’, (2016) *Asia Pacific Report*, 8 May 2016, accessed at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/05/08/vanuatu-airport-runway-repairs-usher-in-new-tourism-era/>

<sup>44</sup> Luke Kama, (2016) “‘They shot at us like we’re trying to rob a bank,” says UPNG student leader’, *Asia Pacific Report*, 9 June 2016, accessed at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/06/09/they-shot-at-us-like-were-trying-to->



Although initial reports of four deaths at UPNG were reported globally, this was later downgraded to at least 23 wounded, four of them critically who later recovered.<sup>45</sup> Students at the country's universities, particularly UPNG, were the latest in a 'long list of those in the firing line for denouncing the leadership of Papua New Guinea's seemingly impregnable Prime Minister Peter O'Neill'.<sup>46</sup> The students wanted O'Neill to resign and also for the police commissioner not to suppress investigations into corruption allegations implicating the prime minister. The students had been on strike since the end of April until finally the frustrated UPNG administration abandoned the academic year and disbanded the SRC, stripping it of its campus authority.<sup>47</sup>

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[rob-a-bank-says-upng-student-leader/](#) ; 'Unitech student dies after PNG attack, campus buildings set ablaze', (2016) *Asia Pacific Report*, 26 June 2016, accessed at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/06/26/unitech-student-dies-in-png-attack-campus-buildings-set-ablaze/>

<sup>45</sup> Helen Davidson, (2016) 'Papua New Guinea: Four students reported dead after police open fire on march', *The Guardian Australia*, 8 June 2016, accessed at [www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/08/papua-new-guinea-police-shoot-at-students-during-march](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/08/papua-new-guinea-police-shoot-at-students-during-march)

<sup>46</sup> Bal Kama, (2016) 'Standoff in PNG: Students take on Prime Minister Peter O'Neill', *Café Pacific* [Weblog], 23 May 2016, accessed at <http://cafepacific.blogspot.co.nz/2016/05/standoff-in-png-students-take-on-prime.html>

<sup>47</sup> Serah Aupong, (2016) 'UPNG abandons 2016 academic year, suspends student body', 5 July 2016, *Asia Pacific Report*, accessed at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/07/05/upng-abandons-2016-academic-year-suspends-student-body/>

But in spite of the students' persistent campaign, even mounting a lawsuit against the UPNG management, and their long track record of being political dissidents, there seemed little chance that O'Neill would step down. In an analysis of the struggle in the Lowy Institute's *The Interpreter* and *Café Pacific*, Australian National University legal studies doctoral candidate Bal Kama assessed their strength.

Tertiary student movement in [Papua New Guinea] has been a powerful tool [for political activism](#) on national issues since Independence. Back in 1991, students [were involved](#) in a violent protest against the government for increasing MPs' salary.

In 1997, students joined the PNG Defence Force to [protest against the use of Sandline mercenaries](#) in the Bougainville crisis, and demanded the resignation of the then Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan. Chan withdrew the mercenaries and resigned from office.

In 2001, students [protested against the privatisation of state assets](#) and the [land mobilisation programme](#) (LMP) administered by Sir Mekere Morauta's government. Eventually, Mekere withdrew the policies, including the LMP that sought to acquire customary land rights as surety for loans

provided to the government and was part of the World Bank's structural adjustment programme (SAP).<sup>48</sup>

However, the success of the protest came at a huge cost with four students [allegedly shot dead](#) by security forces. The [PNG Constitution](#) provides for the right to protest, to hold public assembly, and for freedom of expression. However, these are qualified rights, meaning they can be restricted if it appears that a protest would cause disharmony and instability. The laws were tightened up after the bloody outcome in the 2001 protest against Mekere's government when two young *Uni Tavar* student journalists gave testimony to the Commission of Inquiry.<sup>49</sup> The 2016 protests were essentially within university campuses because of the restrictions and the associated risks in taking to the streets (Figure 5). In the absence of reporting of the students versus O'Neill developments by New Zealand media (apart from Radio New Zealand International), *Asia Pacific Report* extensively covered the unrest in collaboration with digital me-

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<sup>48</sup> Bal Kama, (2016), 'Standoff in PNG'.

<sup>49</sup> Wanita Wakus, (2001) 'I couldn't stop crying', *Pacific Journalism Review*.

dia, such as *Loop PNG* and *PNG Today*, and citizen journalists, including one senior academic staff member at UPNG who supplied us with regular quality images.<sup>50</sup>



Figure 5: Helen Davidson's article in The Guardian wrongly headlined 'Papua New Guinea: four students reported dead after police open fire on march', 8 June 2016.

#### *Case 4: June 2016: Samoa Observer front-page suicide controversy*

Mounting anger over the reporting of the death of a Samoan transgender woman in Apia on the front page of the *Sunday Samoan* edition of the *Samoa Observer* on 19 June 2016

<sup>50</sup> 'Images: Students accused of setting cars on fire at UPNG security base', [Citizen journalist gallery], *Asia Pacific Report*, accessed at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/06/23/students-accused-of-setting-cars-on-fire-at-upng-security-base/>

spread to New Zealand with prominent transrights campaigner Phylesha Brown-Acton declaring the coverage had left her ‘absolutely disgusted’ (*Sunday Samoan* condemned, 2016).<sup>51</sup>

On the front page of its *Sunday Samoan* edition, the *Samoa Observer* showed a full-length image of 20-year-old Jeanine Tuivaiki’s lifeless body hanging from the rafters in a central Apia church hall. In the accompanying news story, the newspaper misgendered the tragic young woman. ‘I am absolutely disgusted by the *Samoa Observer* and their front page photo of a young *fa’afafine* woman,’ said Brown-Acton, who described the reporting as ‘completely inappropriate and disrespectful’.

Where is the respect for this young person and her family? The use of such an image to sell newspapers is the lowest form of sales tactics and the editor and the reporter should be held accountable for such degrading journalism.<sup>52</sup>

The word *fa’afafine* meaning includes the prefix ‘Fa’a’, meaning ‘in the manner of’, and *fafine* means

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<sup>51</sup> ‘*Sunday Samoan* condemned for “disgusting, degrading” reporting of death’ (2016) *Pacific Media Watch 9705* in *Asia Pacific Report*, 25 June 2016, accessed at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/06/20/sunday-samoa-condemned-for-disgusting-degrading-reporting-of-death/>

<sup>52</sup> ‘*Sunday Samoan* condemned’, (2016).

‘woman’.<sup>53</sup> This ‘third gender’<sup>54</sup> is well-accepted in Samoan culture and they are traditionally trained from a young age to do women’s daily work in an *Aiga* (Samoan family group).

The *Samoa Observer* followed up with an initial front page apology on July 20 headed ‘And if you’re offended by it still, we apologise’ that critics saw as closer to a self-justification, which in turn also faced widespread criticism on social media. Finally, editor-in-chief Gotoa’itele Savea Sano Malifa wrote a personal apology—he had not been involved in the editorial decision to publish the front page image and story—to *Samoa Observer* readers published in the July 21 edition.

Let me say this is not an easy letter for me to write. Still, I feel duty-bound to write these words, since it is our duty to tell the public we serve, the truth.

The truth is that last week, we made a sad mistake when we published a story on the late Jeanine Tuivaiki, on the front page of the Sunday Samoan.

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<sup>53</sup> George Milner, *Samoa-English dictionary*. Fa’afine entry, 1966, p. 52

<sup>54</sup> Bangt Danielsson, Marie-Therese Danielsson, and R. Pierson, (1978) ‘Polynesia’s third sex: The gay life starts in the kitchen’, *Pacific Islands Monthly*, 49, 1978, pp. 10-13.

We now accept that there has been an inexcusable lapse of judgment on our part, and for that we are sincerely regretful.

Yesterday, we met with members of Jeannie Tuivaiki's family at their home at Vaiusu, where we extended our sincere apologies, and we are now thankful that we have done so.

And so to Jeanine's family we are very sorry.

To the LGBT community in Samoa and abroad, we offer our humble apologies.<sup>55</sup>

However, this sincere apology, with Savea also pointing out that the newspaper had been a strong supporter of the rights of the fa'afafine over many years, did not stem the deluge of hostile letters and social media attacks. This prompted Kalafi Moala, chief executive of the *Taimi 'o Tonga* group and deputy chair of the Pasifika Media Association (PasiMA), to pen his own personal message trying to bring some perspective back into the debate:

A brother has made a terrible mistake. He has, however, taken responsibility for it and has apologised. Those of us

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<sup>55</sup> 'Apology to our readers', (2016) *Samoa Observer* Editorial by Gato'aitele Savea Sano Malifa, 21 July 2016, accessed at [www.sob-server.ws/en/21\\_06\\_2016/local/7674/Apology-to-our-readers.htm](http://www.sob-server.ws/en/21_06_2016/local/7674/Apology-to-our-readers.htm)

who are offended need to offer forgiveness in the spirit of Pacific compassion, and move on.

I have known Savea for almost 30 years, and he is one of the most professional and enduring journalists in our region. He has also been very successful in building a news organisation, and a daily publication that has made all of us Pacific people proud.

The *Samoa Observer* has a code of ethics, and Savea is one whom I know to advocate passionately for the need for media organisations to have a code of ethics. There is no excuse for mistakes so blatant as this suicide report, and I would be the last one to offer any justification for what the *Samoa Observer* did. Reaction to the *Sunday Samoan* report has been largely fair, and reasonable. Media is often the harshest critic of itself, but criticism is usually left with a close-ended condemnation without any solutions.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Kalafi Moala, (2016). 'Kalafi Moala: A word on the Samoa Observer suicide report', *Asia Pacific Report*, 27 June 2016, accessed at <http://asiapacificreport.nz/2016/06/27/kalafi-moala-a-word-on-the-samoa-observer-suicide-report/>





Figure 6: Le Va's Pasifika media guidelines 'whiteboard' video embedded in Asia Pacific Report's articles related to the Samoa Observer transgender suicide controversy, June 2016.

*Asia Pacific Report* had no solutions either, but rather than joining the 'blame game' that many media indulged in, stirring even greater offence, this news website and its sister project, Pacific Media Watch, attempted to treat the editorial blunder as a learning experience and to embed constructive video resources and links available to Pacific journalists (Figure 6). Pasifika media can play a key role in leading 'safe messaging' about reporting suicide to Pacific communities. In partnership with Pasifika media in

February,<sup>57</sup> launched the ‘Pasifika media guidelines for reporting suicide in New Zealand’, a whiteboard video providing an overview of the guidelines. The guideline can be downloaded from Le Va’s website ([www.leva.co.nz](http://www.leva.co.nz)). Pasifika journalist Sandra Kailahi and 23 Pasifika media organisations contributed to co-developing the guidelines.

## Conclusion

Few genuinely independent newspapers, especially progressive ones, exist in New Zealand. For journalism educators, this makes it difficult for course facilitators to point to successful alternative publishing models. But after the initial success of *Pacific Scoop* over six years, *Asia Pacific Report* has outstripped its predecessor in both audience reach, content and quality in just one year.

Many issues that impact on Polynesia often have parallels in Melanesia and Southeast Asia. *Asia Pacific Report* has been able to embrace, advocate, and report on the entire region, wherever the need for reportage and a radical perspective arises. Significant relationships have been established between the Pacific Media Centre and new media

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<sup>57</sup> Le Va, (2016). ‘FLO: Suicide prevention for Pacific communities’, multimedia resource at [www.leva.co.nz](http://www.leva.co.nz)

outlets in South East Asia. As Manning argues, ‘An impressive number of students have benefited from international internships in this sector. *Asia Pacific Report* reflects this in its digital DNA.’<sup>58</sup>

Unlike most media in New Zealand, *Asia Pacific Report* actually focuses on media coverage outside New Zealand while having an impact factor within New Zealand. The risk factor is also much greater, as addressed by Joel Simon while discussing the problem of ‘democratators’ and the illusion of democracy in the introduction to this paper. The AUT Asia Pacific Journalism Studies postgraduate paper is the only international studies course of its kind in New Zealand. In spite of the National-led government’s policy to invest in Southeast Asian political or social capital as well as business (hence funding being provided for the establishment of a NZ Institute of Pacific Research in early 2016 and a proposal to establish a Southeast Asian Studies centre of excellence in 2017), there is little interest in mainstream New Zealand media. Radio New Zealand International provides excellent coverage of the region, but Asia is not part of its brief. Even developing neighbor Timor-Leste, which has strong ties with the Pacific, is not part of RNZI’s coverage zone.

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<sup>58</sup> Selwyn Manning, personal communication with the author, 6 July 2016.

The *Asia Pacific Report* initiative sees itself as strategically positioning itself as a primary provider of content—both text and multimedia for the region, especially where human rights and peace journalism are concerned. Indonesia has frequently figured among the top five audiences on *Asia Pacific Report* (usually behind New Zealand, Australia and the United States), especially at times of strong West Papuan coverage. At other times, Fiji, Papua New Guinea or Vanuatu might rank in the top five. In one month (May 1916), Papua New Guinea was top.

The venture is quite unique in the New Zealand mediascape and over time it should contribute to raising issues of social justice and provide a broader, more progressive media education in the context of Pacific coups, civil war, climate change, development, human rights and neo-colonialism. It is a nonprofit model that can be replicated elsewhere. Increasingly, in the Trump era of ‘war on media’ it is vital to have publication brands that can be trusted. University media schools have a crucial role to play in this.