"Neoliberal Education and Neoliberal Education Policy": Are we all neoliberals now?

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Neoliberalism is

- The extension of the economic form of the market 'to the entire social body and to generalise it inside the whole social system that, normally, does not pass through or is not authorized by the market' (Foucault, Birth of Biopolitics p. 248).

- The marketisation of our lives, our values, sensibilities, desires, our relation to oursleves

Out there (N) – in here (n)

- NEOLIBERALISM WITH A BIG N, INVOLVES CHANGING RELATIONS BETWEEN STATE AND ECONOMY AND NEW ECONOMIC FREEDOMS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

- NEOLIBERALISM WITH A SMALL n, involves the construction of a new kind of subjectivity - Not only a sense of how to be but also a sensibility – the requisite morals and feelings. Within which Enterprise is posited as a principle of the 'good life' (Edwards 2002)

'what are we today?'

- the problem of government cannot be dissociated from a reflection on the relation of individuals to themselves. (Dean 1994)

- Each of my works is a part of my own biography. For one or other reason I had occasion to feel and live those things' 'Truth, power, self: an interview' (MF p. 11).

Out there/in here

- I am trying to think about the complex relations among truth, power and subjectivity in the contemporary university.

- Both relations 'out there' as we, we neoliberal academics, contribute to the work of government and to economic productivity

- and relations 'in here', as the forms and modalities of our academic work change and concomitantly we are re-made as neoliberal subjects doing neoliberal research.

Foucault, Dean and Lazarrato

- I draw on Foucault's conceptualisations of neoliberal government as a particular configuration of the relationship between *truth and power and the self* (and thus ethics)

- What Dean terms 'the rapport between reflexivity and government' (p. 211) and

- And on Lazarrato's typology of neoliberalism as a 'state of being'.

A new means of governing

- Foucault claims: 'one never governs a state, a territory, or a political structure. Those whom one governs are people, individuals, or groups' (ibid: 122).
- Liberalism governs with respect to the market and is judged through the truths revealed by the market (ibid: 45-46; 53). Liberal governmentality must, then, *know* the market and its truths in order that it can respect them. To satisfy this epistemological demand, the state needs economic evidence and statistics.
- Crucially, through this knowledge, liberal governmentality knows how much freedom to 'produce': 'this new art of government therefore appears as the management of freedom […] Liberalism formulates simply the following: I am going to produce what you need to be free' (for example, establishing regulations and laws for the foundation of 'free trade') (ibid: 63; also see Polanyi, 1944: 141).

'we are constrained or condemned to confess or to discover the truth' (Foucault, 1977 p.93)

the ways in which the contemporary university is inserted into economies of truth and the ways in which we academics are incited, **first, to tell truths about ourselves and**, **second, to tell truths about others** – in other words, in very specific ways we are made both 'biddable' and productive.

Our relations to government and to the economy are reformulated. I am suggesting a particular conjunction here, a contact point, where discipline and regulation come together with technologies of the self to produce various 'doubles', both objects (ranks, rating) and subjectivities, both productive and docile, both governed and governing, competitive and collaborating.

1. Confessing truths

- We confront daily the force and brute logic and stunning triviality of truth – render into performance, both 'modest and omniscient' (Rose 1996 p. 54). This entails as Roger Burrows (2012) terms it "Living with the H-Index".

- There is profit to be made in these literal technologies of striation and regulation, both retail sales (software) and wholesale sales (PISA and other tests rankings); in other words there is a market in regulation, another double, another conjunction of government with economy, of regulation and financialisation.
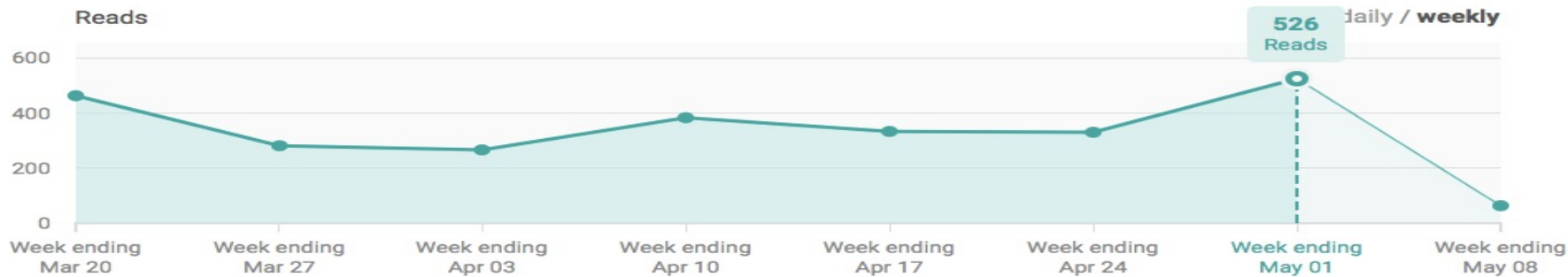
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Big Data and Society

- The biggest on line generators of big data – like Twitter, Google, Facebook, Mircosoft – not only mediate and configure their platforms and the data, but also monopolise and monetise our access.

- The question is what kinds of subjects are big data practices and methods eliciting and producing?

Rankings

- Rankings are reconstituting the purpose of universities, the role of academics and the definition of what it means to be a student … the use of numbers creates a facade of certainty that make them relatively unassailable ... And ... Deflects attention from their arbitrariness and the political and moral objectives (K. Lynch p. 190 2015)

Academic oeconomicus

- Alex Rushworth* found in his research.

- *For instance, a performance indicator like the journal impact factor was routinely mobilized informally in researchers' decision-making as an ad hoc standard against which to evaluate the likely uses of information and resources, and in deciding whether time and resources should be spent pursuing them.* [Tales from the field: On the (not so) secret life of performance indicators](#) March 11, 2014 — Sarah de Rijcke * Guest blog post

NSS

- The NSS has clearly changed both what academics do, and how they describe what they do. It has also contributed to a considerable increase in workload in respect of preparing for and responding to the NSS.

- Requirements to focus on employability, in particular, have encouraged the proliferation of a discourse associated with skills which is more akin to training than to education. Course material that is challenging, and assignments which present students with a challenge, are clear foci for student expressions of dissatisfaction and concern.

- Given the public nature of NSS scores, the institutional emphasis on them, and academics' desires to respond to student feedback, these provide the focus for much extra help being given to students in order that they feel less uncomfortable with these elements of their courses. This may help to explain the massive increase in students achieving first class and upper-second class degrees (Bachan, 2015).

Affects of neoliberalism

- "the Bologna mode of governance is power through the follow-up mechanisms that work as a material affective infrastructure of the policy ontology. These monitoring techniques are affectly wired. They produce an affective politics of naming, shaming and faming that ignites a competitive, mimetic desire…"

- (Katja Brogger 2015 p. 72)

Macfarlane

- More than a third of all UK academics now work part-time, while fixed-term contracts are also the norm. The trend can be seen elsewhere in the world with a declining proportion of academics occupying permanent or tenured positions. Despite the benevolent image of universities, few employers, apart perhaps from the catering industry, have as many casual workers.

- The effect of job insecurity goes well beyond those on fixed-term and part-time contracts. It affects everyone's sense of security and puts subtle pressure on the extent to which academics feel they can afford to be independent. Sustaining a disinterested attitude to the results of your own research is tougher when the "successful" outcome of a research project, and publications confirming this, are essential to keeping your job. (B. Macfarlane 2012 http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/im-an-academic-and-i-want-to-be-proud-of-it/421337.article)

2. The Demand for Truth

'Power never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth: it institutionalises, professionalises and rewards its pursuit' (Foucault 1980).

The economy of truth

- Truth in this sense is diffused and consumed, and increasingly 'is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses' (Foucault 1980 p. 131-32) – we might name OECD, McKinsey, Microsoft and Pearson The Learning Curve

- Microsoft Academia http://academic.research.microsoft.com/Author/13126195/stephen-j-ball

Governing by numbers

- One could suggest that the OECD's greatest impact has been in relation to its Indicators agenda, including PISA, and its role in constructing a global educational policy field through *governance by comparison...* (Grek 2009)

Neoliberal research

- What is valued in research and scholarship is increasingly being shaped by market demands. Income generation, enterprise, impact, innovation for the market and the exchange value in the global prestige economy are dominant indicators of the value of research (L. Morely 2016 p, 40).

Research and population: the rewards and costs of truth.

- the reconversion of social scientific labour into a form of neoliberal expertise which has the management of the population as its aim.

- population as a political problem and as a technology of power, and as the 'subject-object' was fundamental to the emergence of economics, linguistics and biology – and pedagogy; *regulation* or biopower, the management of life itself, focused on the problem of population.

- "The emergence of social science cannot, as you see, be isolated from the rise of this new political rationality, and from this new political technology" (MF p. 162).

Contemporary social science is being re-invented in relation to population

- Universities are institutions systematically involved in the production and distribution of knowledge about diverse populations for the purpose of managing their behaviour from a distance (Foucault 1991). 'Population is a concept that can be elaborated only through statistical, therefore informational techniques' (Koopman. 102)

- Foucault suggests that 'a constant interplay between techniques of power and their object gradually carves out in reality, as a field of reality, population and its specific phenomena. A whole series of objects were made visible for possible forms of knowledge… ' (1970 p. 79).

Data work

- Increasing amounts of educational research is becoming part of 'data-work', the collection/production, management, analysis, interpretation and of maintaining the flows of data are now 'part of everyday life in modern "learning"/"knowing" organisations' (Kelly & Downey, 2011: 416). These data serve to organize, order and evaluate practices.

Big Data

- Seminario "BIG DATA, SOCIAL MEDIA & SOCIETY"

- El Grupo de Trabajo "Big Data, Social Media & Society" (BDSM&S) nació impulsado por el Grupo de Investigación "[Estudios Sociales E Intervención Social" y el grupo Simplelab, ambos de la Universidad de Huelva, con el fin de promover las investigaciones, formación y transferencia en este campo transdisciplinar.](#)

- El I Seminario sobre "Big Data, Social Media & Society", celebrado en marzo de 2015 fue muy productivo, posibilitando el intercambio y la discusión científica entre investigadores y profesionales de este campo. Lanzamos ahora el II Seminario, que tendrá lugar en la Facultad de Trabajo Social el 20 de abril de 2016, contando como Conferenciante Invitado con Modesto Escobar, Catedrático de Sociología del Departamento de Sociología y Comunicación de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad de Salamanca, que pronunciará la conferencia marco titulada: "Big Data y Ciencias Sociales".

Evidence of what?

- "Big data" and "evidence-based policy" are the dominant ideas of our moment. A [May 2014 White House report put it this way: "Big data will become an historic driver of progress, helping our nation perpetuate the civic and economic dynamism that has long been its hallmark."](#)

- The White House report presents big data as an analytically powerful set of techniques. It says the social and economic value created by big data should be balanced against "privacy and other core values of fairness, equity and autonomy."

'Cost' 'effective' interventions

- Research, of certain sorts, is now deployed to identify effective and cost-efficient programmes and initiatives (PRP, phonics, grouping by ability, home-school cooperation, positive parenting) which drive up student performance and reduce teaching costs – and which at the same time displace teachers' situated decision-making.

Why is research useful?

We know that the relationship between spending and pupil outcomes is not simple. Between 1997 and 2011 per pupil spending increased by 85% but over this period improvements in pupil outcomes were marginal on most measures. At school level, it is clear that different ways of spending school budgets can have very different impacts on pupil attainment, and choosing what to prioritise is not easy. Even once a decision to implement a particular strategy has been taken there are a wide variety of factors which determine its impact. We believe that educational research can help schools get the maximum "educational bang for their buck", both in terms of making an initial choice between strategies, and in implementing a strategy as effectively as possible.

Evidence of what (CNN)

- Sheri Lederman, a fourth grade teacher on Long Island, sued the New York State Education Department in October 2014 in what is perhaps the clearest legal test case of the dangers of big data. Lederman is highly regarded by her peers and superiors, an "exceptional educator" in the words of her school district's superintendent.

- Yet a statistical technique called "value-added modeling" that purports to evaluate teachers based on students' standardized test scores said Lederman was ineffective. The American Statistical Association has criticized value-added modeling as an ineffective measure. "Ranking teachers by their VAM scores can have unintended consequences that reduce quality," the statisticians said.

Meaninglessness??? (but effective)

- There is simply no useful way to assess the long-term economic impact of either the human genome project or of the Parthenon, and to do so is to miss the point. Pericles didn't build the Parthenon to draw tourists to downtown Athens 2,500 years later. The fact that it is now a tourist attraction does little to explain its value.

An intelligible world

- Research makes the world intelligible in specific ways and contributes to the foreclosure of other patterns of intelligibility' (Morely 2016 p. 40)
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depoliticisation

- Changing issues of value into technical issues
- Deliberation and debate displaced by choice
- Necessarian logics of international competition
- Rendering collective conditions of experience into personal problems
- A reconceptualisation of government (and other actions) in relation to cost and efficiency rather than rights or values
- To effectively debate public policy or corporate strategy, we will have to continue to have debates over principles. In such debates, disagreement among individuals with different ideological presuppositions will continue.

Techno-politics/depoliticisation

- "issues of standards and accountability, are typically presented by politicians and policymakers as matters of technical efficiency rather than normative choices. As a consequence, their political nature, including the deep implication of these discourses with issues of socio-political power, is effectively backgrounded" [Clarke, 2012 #2565] p. 298)

Governed and governing (double)

- As academic subjects we increasingly live a data based life, a life that is both enabled by and lived against measurement, algorithm and inferential statistics.

- Numbers come to represent us as performance and become part of the way in which we recognise and reflect on and manage ourselves and others and they make it necessary for us to do certain things and think certain things in order to 'improve' our performance.

- These numbers are truths told about us and work as *points of contact*, what Foucault calls a *versatile equilibrium*, at the interface between techniques of government and techniques of self-government.

The economy of truth

- 1. We earn income directly or indirectly for our university.

- 2. We improve our 'outputs' and impacts in ways that contribute to our evolving 'meta-self' our data-double.

- 3. We contribute to the efficiencies of business and *government* in 'making' or saving money or driving up performance or quality.

Truth-telling

- Truths told about us displace our concern for truth - the risks of 'truth-telling' stand over and against the costs of silence (see Tamboukou 2012). As [Tamboukou, 2012 #2524] p. 1) asks, in her timely discussion of Foucault's *parrhesia* (truth telling) and Arendt's *pariah*:

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- 'what is the role of the academic when going through "dark times", vis-à-vis questions of truth telling; what are the conditions of possibility for truth telling to be recognized as a question or a problem and how can we start mapping the effects of what we as academics do or refrain from doing?'