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This book has a somewhat awkward title, with ‘The Entrepreneurial University’ perhaps presenting as a buzzword, cure, claim and condemnation. I have been working on this introduction in the middle of (and as relief from) the Research Excellence Framework (REF2014), as publications are conveyed as outputs, and impacts are counted, to be rated, ranked and publicly profiled: I make these counts, as my job description requires. I feel hesitant relief that I am ‘almost there’ with the (self)auditing – but know this will continue on as the next REF2020 is spoken of, planned and already upon us... The Entrepreneurial University, like the ‘entrepreneurial researcher’, often by necessity complies with the very processes structuring our (dis)engagement. This collection attempts to make sense of such processes, striving for a more ‘intersectional’ conceptualisation of ‘impact’ and ‘publics’, as on-going, often uneasy and certainly differentially distributed and realised.

Recently, I was invited to be a presenter and participate in a British Sociological Association (BSA) workshop organised by the Early Career Researchers (ECRs) Study Group conveners, Katherine Twamley and Mark Doidge. The title of the workshop, ‘What is a Winning Funding Application?’, posed an urgent, anxious question, felt as I planned my delivery and attempted to answer a loaded query, literally worth a lot. I wondered how I would, with colleagues, ‘workshop’ my way out of funding crises and the obliteration of UK Higher Education: how to keep things constructive and positive in a harsh new climate? To enable rather than dissuade, even as ‘early career’ is ever extended across the career trajectory, which means some never ‘arrive’?

At stake are issues of (im)permanence as early career researchers attempt to secure their own posts by virtue of bringing in their own and others’
Yvette Taylor

salaries; they attempt to progress up and permeate through academic hierarchies, negotiated *internally* via appraisals and promotions and *externally* in circulations of valued academics, institutions, REF rankings and incomes. I also wondered if the workshop could possibly strike a balance between enterprise, endurance and effort and apathy, defeat and exhaustion – as an ‘early career’ introduction to academic ‘success’. Heightened hurdles should not just compel athletic-academics to competitively keep pace, where only certain stars in certain spaces compete and complete (with their award being more stars and more space) (Taylor and Allen, 2011).

Rather guiltily I paused on passing my own bullet-pointed CV to the organisers in advance, aware that this displayed only success and disguised ‘failure’ and longevity (second and third attempts; the peer review process; laboured responses to reviewers; end of award reports, etc.). ‘Enterprising’ and ‘winning’ become seductive when neatly mapped on our successful CVs (again, guiltily, I felt somewhat captured by my own CV, re-reading its contents as evidence of ‘making it’). But there are broader efforts and endurance between the bullet points which, if efforts and endurance are to mean anything, must travel beyond our own self-credentialism and collegial–institutional competitiveness as reductive measures of ‘winning’ and ‘losing’. Oppositional academics fosters a reduced bullet-point state of ‘what we are worth’ at intellectual in-fighting. While I warily anticipated some of these same valuations and reductions, I was genuinely refreshed by the collegiality and enduring efforts expressed and put to work. There was a huge effort and care as participants commented on others’ in-progress applications as positive peers.

It was clear that many aspiring, creative and remarkable ECRs were all too aware of the spaces they inhabit – with several speaking passionately, and with pain, about the continued sticky distinction between ‘elite’ and ‘post-92’ institutions (Taylor and Allen, 2011). While a Con–Lib UK government shake-up advocates a benign starry ‘rise to the top’ and a sinking ‘fall to the bottom’ of good/bad institutions, it is clear that these academic strokes are more arbitrary and unjust than a self-satisfied, congratulatory ‘win’. I found myself encouraged and sustained by ECRs’ passion in painful times and their efforts in unequal circumstances as they considered the subjects (disciplinary, institutional, professional and personal) that are important to sustain, rather than short-circuiting value as income. We reassured each other that the income is not the end point or *outcome* of research; rather, income can *facilitate* research, and its ‘use’ is likely to confound numerical value.

There were many open, if difficult, questions posed in the workshop (and continued in this collection), and these should concern us all – no matter how entrenched our place in academia, no matter if we have accumulated some space or some stars. Questions from the workshop included: ‘Who do I need to make a difference to?’; ‘Who sees themselves as an ESRC ‘Future Leader?’; ‘How long is Early Career?’; ‘Can I write holiday time into a grant?’; ‘Where does maternity leave figure?’; ‘Are elite institutions more likely to get
grants?’ To ‘workshop’ something, in my mind, is to participate, to join in, to creatively contribute and collectively learn (rather than to disseminate, digest or ‘transfer’ knowledge from entering-to-exiting the room). A ‘workshop’ is richer than its component parts of ‘work’ (as research = income = working) and ‘shop’ (as an ‘enterprising’ servicing by the university-to-all). In ‘winning’ back academia it is important that we do not stall in a self-serving re-read of our own CVs (with ‘Income’ headlined).

As part of that effort, the present collection raises questions about who becomes the proper subject for (non)academic attention at a time when ‘publics’ might be positioned as democratising and open or, conversely, as curtailed and shaped through specific and pre-determined economies of value and use. Rhetorics of inclusion and measurable impact are echoed within ideas of a ‘public sociology’, which engaged researchers should practice as they re-engage differently located spaces and subjects (Ward, 2007; Back, 2007; Burawoy, 2005; Taylor and Addison, 2011). The entrepreneurial university – and indeed the ‘entrepreneurial’ funded researcher – has been tasked with making an impact in responsibilising citizens to come forward and make a difference as part of a ‘Big Society’ (as conveyed in shifting UK funding priorities). There is, however, a potential conflict between the classification of types of ‘publics’ and ‘use’ (e.g., applied policy versus organic public sociologic and the ‘hierarchies of credibility’ between these). Considering what a ‘public sociology’ looks and feels like leads to questions about: which publics, which communities, which ‘transfers’?

Authors engage with such complicated questions, asking how knowledge should and could be ‘transferred’, given that impact agendas in and beyond universities frequently demand outputs as tangible products rather than as relational, always ongoing, incomplete (even ‘failed’) learning processes. In (dis)locating questions of research practices, identities and experiences, authors variously consider what determines a ‘use’ or indeed a ‘subject’: Which subjects are in the foreground and which are rendered invisible? This collection presents professional and personal reflections on research experience as well as interpretative accounts of navigating fieldwork and broader publics, politics and practices of (dis)engagement. Such concerns are practically related to the (in)accessibility of research practices, audiences, users and communities in, and even beyond, varied international fieldwork sites.

New economies of access, use and engagement re-construct academic practices and even bolster claims to fostering diverse ‘publics’. Burawoy stated: ‘Public sociology brings sociology into a conversation with publics’ which must extend to the organic kind which often remains invisible, private, and is often considered to be apart from our professional lives. The project of such public sociologies is to make visible the invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life. (2005: 7–8)
There is, however, a potential conflict between the classification of types of ‘publics’ and ‘use’ and the ‘hierarchies of credibility’ between these (see Becker, 1967).

This collection addresses how academics, from across disciplines and different international locations, are implicated in the (re)making of publics. It reflects current waves of interdisciplinary work, offering new ways of conceptualising and researching impact, use and ‘publics’, probing at transnational encounters, commonalities and disconnections. Authors variously turn their attention to persistently marginalised practices, subjectivities, identities and ‘unequal voices’ as (dis)engaging labours and lives. In doing so, it is hoped that authors make distinctive contributions towards theorising ‘public sociology’, agency and constraint, the ethics of engagement, counter-publics and episodic politics, alongside issues of ownership and responsibility. An important challenge is to elaborate theoretical and methodological frameworks that allow more complex analyses of the relationship between ‘engaging publics’ and its intersections with particular methodological and theoretical traditions. This book hopes to bring renewed energy in bridging the gap dividing theory, research methods and practice, and lived experiences (of both the ‘researched’ and the ‘researcher’). Authors probe at and problematise who ‘we’ are speaking for and how to listen (to ‘others’ as well as ourselves), as well as the embodied aspects of this in taking up space inside and beyond the academy.

As a whole, the collection hopes to explore the significance of recent international cultural, social, and policy shifts that foreground ‘diverse publics’. This includes attention to varying framing context of academia, activism, media, family, leisure, arts, and community. Another key aim is to take stock of the ways in which public engagement and impact have been theorised and researched within the humanities and social sciences and to examine the contemporary relevance of different perspectives and methods attentive to, for example, affect, embodiment, reflexivity and ambiguity. Finally, the collection considers future directions for (dis)engaging publics, users and (non)academics within the humanities and social sciences. This is situated within detailed and varied methodological approaches, including in-depth interviews, visual methods, ethnography, autobiographical methods, oral histories, radical scholarship and arts-based community interventions.

Reflecting the key themes outlined above, the book is organised into three sections. The first section, (Non)Academic Subjects: Occupational Activism, examines links between theory and research, values and ethics and researcher/ed status. It probes at routes into academia and how these variously inflect continued occupation, impacting upon credibility, (in) equality and (dis)engagements: in other words, the ways that ‘publics’ are reconstituted as a matter within as well as outside the walls of academia. The second section, Mediated (Dis)Engagements and Creative Publics, highlights theoretical and methodological approaches in attempting to create
broader publics, as academics, users and audiences through, for example, visual methods and oral histories, which may place marginalised communities more on the map. The third section, *Enduring Intersections, Provoking Directions*, challenges a neat arrival or a simple expansion of ‘useful’ space as that which includes more people: instead the ‘unequal voices’ arriving in and re-circulated through research space is again foregrounded.

**References**


Part I

(Non)Academic Subject: Occupational Activism
1

Academia Without Walls? Multiple Belongings and the Implications of Feminist and LGBT/Queer Political Engagement

Ana Cristina Santos

Introduction

Feminist and LGBT/queer researchers have variously demonstrated the situated character of all knowledge, presenting a systematic and well-substantiated critique against positivist ambitions of neutrality. In the context of increasingly fluid boundaries, shifting identities and economic precariousness in general – and for scholars in LGBT/queer studies in particular – researchers’ multiple belongings necessarily impact on the topics and methodologies used in research (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010; Taylor et al., 2010). Despite the increasing concern with intersectionality and the myriad impacts stemming from feminist and LGBT/queer contributions, mainstream academic praxis exercises both subjective and direct constraints upon politicised epistemologies, thereby often influencing the course and the impact of politically engaged research. Moreover, positivist practices and analyses still endure in mainstream institutions, often influencing academic curricula and criteria for granting funding.

This chapter will offer a critical analysis of disengagement within and beyond academia, doing so by examining the risks and difficulties emerging from the double-agency status of scholar–activists, that is, academics who are also actively engaged in collective action. I argue that in the post-positivist era, new and resilient (albeit discrete) walls are daily re/built, particularly in relation to issues of gender and sexuality. In so doing, a ‘hierarchy of credibility’ and of worth is reinforced, whereby engaged feminist and LGBT/queer work is often labelled as too political to be academic enough. Therefore, under the dominant power dynamics within academia, scholar-activism is invested with a twofold responsibility: to develop cutting-edge academic scholarship, observing the principles of critical emancipatory research, and
Ana Cristina Santos

to contribute to a non-hierarchical reciprocal relationship within academia and between academia and civil society. ‘Reaching out, giving back’ – as the initial call for chapters in this book suggested – encapsulates such challenge and opportunity. The challenge consists of reaching out for wider audiences, using intelligible language and arguments that resonate with people’s experiences; the opportunity emerges from the possibility of making academia more inclusive, democratic and relevant, beyond the often-massive walls behind which academic knowledge tends to remain closeted.

Shattering old walls: public sociology and the role of scholar-activism

The pervasive legacy of positivism in academia is mirrored by the ways in which sociology, rather than being proactively engaged in tackling inequality, frequently operates according to dominant ways of thinking and doing. Despite the persistence of positivist tradition in academia, questioning, contesting and subverting have been at the core of sociological intervention since the outset, thus feeding regular opposition to positivistic research methods and analysis. One relatively recent, but consistent, approach designed to tackle well-established positivistic principles is ‘public sociology’, not as a functionalist, policy-driven compulsory approach, but as an epistemological and ontological position that advances the need for politically engaged academic work.

Before plunging into the different meanings of public sociology and its related implications, it is important to note – given the thematic focus of this chapter – that despite the lively discussions and writing that public sociology has generated in recent years, what inspired this notion is not new. It can be traced to sociological literature in the 1960s, when understanding social conflict and collective action demanded more than desk-based research. More specifically, the influence of feminist and LGBT/queer writings and demands cannot be dismissed from the process through which public sociology became such an acclaimed notion. On the contrary, what could be considered an ethics of political engagement was clearly influenced by this sort of scholarship and activism, which have both been ground-breaking in advancing the notion that the personal is political and the private should be public (Harding and Norberg, 2005; Lister, 1997; Oakley, 1982; Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010). Therefore, feminist and LGBT/queer scholars were pioneers in the process of shattering the old positivist walls of academia, including the field of sociology (Seidman, 1996; Irvine, 2003; Santos, 2013).

In his book, The Unfinished Revolution, Engel offers an example of a politically engaged study situated at the junction between academia and activism. He states that his participation in Washington’s candlelight vigil for the murder of the young gay man Matthew Shepard in October 1998
made him ascribe a new meaning to his research, as he realised that ‘an emotionally emptied account of this movement fails to do justice to the individuals who work every day so that gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people can live safer and happier lives’ (2001: 3). This event impelled Engel to write a book with a pragmatic goal: that the evolution of social theory on social movements would allow for a deeper understanding of gay and lesbian movements. He believed that, ultimately, such a task could help LGBT movements learn how to benefit from political opportunities, so that homophobia and heterosexism would finally be overturned. Engel’s stated purpose of the usefulness of his research reveals the potential for engagement between academia and activism. Furthermore, the research highlights that, rather than seeking to erase ‘where one comes from’, positionings which locate and implicate, should be self-reflexively acknowledged. And embrace it.

Engel’s politicised take on scholarly analysis is shared with many scholars throughout the world. The importance of acknowledging one’s multiple belongings, and their significance in informing theoretical understandings of the world we inhabit, draw on earlier notions of public sociology. The notion of public sociology has acquired several meanings that have quite distinct implications, both theoretical and political. One understanding of it draws on the instrumentalisation of academic knowledge in light of previously established policy measures. According to this perspective, public sociology would focus on partial data and analysis to serve interest groups, namely those which are dominant in decision-making processes. In other words, sociology becomes an engaged applied science, and this engagement would represent legitimisation through the theoretical reinforcement of the (political) establishment. The question of publics – who gets to be heard and who is silenced, which issues are left unvoiced and unseen – is a significant part of the critique against this functionalist and policy-driven understanding of public sociology (Taylor and Addison, 2011; Sousa Santos, 2002, 2004). Importantly, however, such a functionalist take on public sociology distances itself from its original meaning and purpose.

Public sociology has been presented as a theoretical approach that acknowledged the highly contingent framework of scientific production as well as science’s responsibility in liaising with other actors in order to develop reciprocal and non-hierarchic learning processes. Herbert J. Gans formulated a definition of what being a public sociologist entailed:

A public sociologist is a public intellectual who applies sociological ideas and findings to social (defined broadly) issues about which sociology (also defined broadly) has something to say. Public intellectuals comment on whatever issues show up on the public agenda; public sociologists do so only on issues to which they can apply their sociological insights and findings. They are specialist public intellectuals. (2002: 2)
Therefore, according to Gans, public sociology would be an intrinsic attribute of sociological intervention: to have something to say, to generate insightful understandings, to share (publicly relevant) findings. Drawing on Gans’s work, Michael Burawoy took the definition further, suggesting specific ways in which public sociology can add original contributions to theoretical and methodological knowledge:

The bulk of public sociology is indeed of an organic kind – sociologists working with a labor movement, neighborhood associations, communities of faith, immigrant rights groups, human rights organisations. Between the organic public sociologist and a public is a dialogue, a process of mutual education. The recognition of public sociology must extend to the organic kind which often remains invisible, private, and is often considered to be apart from our professional lives. The project of such public sociologies is to make visible the invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life. (2005: 7–8)

Burawoy’s definition of public sociology seems to imply a bilateral (or even multifarious) process of exchange, ‘a dialogue’ that aims at enhancing reciprocal chances of learning. Such a process involves academia, but also the wider society (‘a public’) which is expected to be recognised by sociologists as an equally important interlocutor in this dialogue. Furthermore, Burawoy’s arguments contain an implicit call for politicised action: sociologists have the power, and the duty, to intervene in the social sphere in order to enhance visibility, participation and inclusion. As such, political engagement is not merely an unintended consequence of sociological work; it is rather a process of willing disclosure through which sociologists become engaged political actors. In other words, public sociology is not a mere ‘add-on’, something external to the sociological work itself, but a vital part of it. Accordingly, sociologists constitute an actor in civil society and as such have a right and an obligation to participate in politics. ... The ‘pure science’ position that research must be completely insulated from politics is untenable since antipolitics is no less political than public engagement. (2004b: 1605)

In line with the previous quotes, it can be argued that sociologists should interact politically with a world in which realities of exclusion and inequality demand a pro-active role from academics, and from sociologists in particular. In accordance with this rationale, knowledge production should be concerned with audiences beyond academia, investing in outreaching initiatives that disseminate research findings in an accessible language and engaging different types of social actors during the process of knowledge production (Ackerly and True, 2010).
Arguably, sociology benefits from disclosed political engagements, and does so to the extent that sociologists are, themselves, actors in processes and facts under sociological scrutiny. What seems artificial, then, is the alleged distinction between science and politics, as if a strict boundary, however false and precarious, could secure scientific accuracy. I suggest that what is wrong in this equation is the premise of neutrality, which disregards the fundamental fact that all actors, including sociologists, are situated subjects.

To the extent that context informs people’s standpoints – from which, then, sociology is produced – it is not possible to escape knowledge which is inextricably bounded and situated. Then, the next logical step, it seems, would be to recognise one’s political standpoint and to strive for a ‘strong objectivity’, defined by Harding as ‘a commitment to acknowledge the historical character of every belief or set of beliefs’ (1991: 156). Harding underlines the inescapability of ‘historical gravity’ by saying:

> Political and social interests are not ‘add-ons’ to an otherwise transcendental science that is inherently indifferent to human society; scientific beliefs, practices, institutions, histories, and problematics are constituted in and through contemporary political and social projects, and always have been. (1991: 145)

Speaking as a standpoint theorist and arguing against the ‘conventional view...[that] politics can only obstruct and damage the production of scientific knowledge’ (2004: 1), she correctly points out that

> the more value-neutral a conceptual framework appears, the more likely it is to advance the hegemonic interests of dominant groups, and the less likely it is to be able to detect important actualities of social relations... The ‘moment of critical insight’ is one that comes only through political struggle. (2004: 6, 9)

Therefore, according to Harding, not only is neutrality impossible to achieve but, in fact, alleged neutrality adds an extra layer of strength to already hegemonic thinking to the extent that it presents itself – and the knowledge it replicates – as non-biased, hence ‘true’. Importantly, however, Harding also concurs with the idea that a holistic and inclusive understanding can only happen through critical analytical thought which stems from political engagement. As such, the dominant notion of objectivity is nothing but ‘weak objectivity’ (Harding, 1991).1 Wylie takes the argument of the usefulness of political engagement a step further, writing that ‘considerable epistemic advantage may accrue to those who approach inquiry from an interested standpoint, even a standpoint of political engagement’ (2004: 345).
Though an extended debate about standpoint theory and its critiques is beyond the scope of this chapter, the importance of political engagement within academia should not be overlooked. As Harding eloquently put it, standpoints are ‘toolboxes enabling new perspectives and new ways of seeing the world to enlarge the horizons of our explanations, understandings and yearnings for a better life’ (2004: 5). In this context, the role of those who can be described as ‘scholar–activists’ (Santos, 2012) – that is, people who are simultaneously academics and activists – becomes not only legitimate, but desirable. The possibility of a desirable role for scholar–activists within academia is clearly informed by the notion of public sociology.

By revaluing the notion of standpoint, rather than attempting to shield science from politics, scholar–activists are contributing to a significant sociological turn, one that reinvents sociology as a socially and politically relevant field of study. At least in principle, the practice of scholar-activism also highlights the importance and validity of, otherwise, rather void notions such as interdependence and intersectionality between academia and civil society. Scholar-activism opens up the possibility of rejecting the constraining ‘either, or’ rationale and, instead, reasserting the spaces ‘in-between’, embracing ambiguity and revaluing diversity from both within and outside academia. This necessarily leads up to a new ethics of research that is committed to the willing disclosure of researchers’ political engagement.

This turn presents opportunities, as well as challenges, stemming from the epistemological and ethical implications of political engagement. Before we return to these in detail, the next section examines academia’s attempt to shield itself behind what often remains unacknowledged: the resilience of disciplinary knowledge production and the competing status of different knowledge-producers.

Spotting subliminal walls in present times

In the aftermath of lively discussions around the notion of public sociology (Burawoy, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2005), the idea of mutually engaged scholarship and politics gathered more interest and legitimacy. Deconstructing the ‘ivory tower’, diluting the boundaries between academics and civil society, overcoming processes of othering and of top-down learning strategies – these became important tasks for politicised academics willing to contribute to social change. And this tendency towards bridging academia and civil society finds its roots in earlier processes of theoretical and political transformation. In the aftermath of the work advanced by T.H. Marshall in the 1950s, citizenship, at least in the Western world, became a keyword, and the knowledge advanced by social sciences seemed to be strongly connected to this pro-citizens turn within academia. Sociology in particular emerged out of the need to understand collective behaviour, especially the one advanced
by social movements and other forms of collective action struggling for civil rights in Europe and the United States.

Nevertheless, the thrill of full immersion in empirical research, often through long periods of ethnographic fieldwork, was traditionally a distinctive feature of anthropological work, something which sociology, wary of its original label as social physics, considered somewhat suspect. The positivist character of early-days sociology pushed sociological analysis into a place of ambivalence and contradiction, according to which one must not get ‘too close’ to the topic of research, quickly encapsulated in the label ‘object’. This leads to an array of both theoretical and political consequences, including the enshrinement of certain issues at the expense of making others hopelessly absent. The Portuguese sociologist, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, has suggested the need for a ‘sociology of absences’ designed to recognise and counter the dismissal of certain topics produced by hegemonic epistemologies:

The sociology of absences consists of an inquiry that aims to explain that what does not exist is, in fact, actively produced as non-existent, that is, as a non-credible alternative to what exists. The objective of the sociology of absences is to transform impossible into possible objects, absent into present objects. The logics and processes through which hegemonic criteria of rationality and efficiency produce non-existence are various. Nonexistence is produced whenever a certain entity is disqualified and rendered invisible, unintelligible, or irreversibly discardable. What unites the different logics of production of non-existence is that they are all manifestations of the same rational monoculture. (Sousa Santos, 2004: 14–15)

The positivistic obsession with ‘protecting’ the researcher against the perils of subjectivity can also be found in disciplines other than sociology. Other fields of knowledge share the legacy of positivism, which contributes to establishing a resilient wall designed to keep outsiders – that is, objects, non-academics, undervalued topics and methods – out of mainstream academia. It was the recognition of such walls that led dissatisfied psychologists to advance subfields such as political psychology and critical psychology (Parker, 1999), for instance.

And even on those (increasingly frequent) occasions when the object becomes impregnated with wilful subjects (Ahmed, 2010) who disobey the fictional boundaries artificially built by mainstream scholarship, social sciences tend to replicate processes of othering, starting from the rhetorical device of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. According to this process, an imagined collective – ‘we’ – conducts research, discusses findings amongst peers, presents papers in annual conferences and publishes in peer-reviewed academic journals, preferably with high impact. Disregarding our multiple belongings
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