KRYSTIAN SZADKOWSKI (ORCID: 0000-0002-7260-0457)
RICHARD HALL

Has the University Become Surplus to Requirements? Or Is Another University Possible?

This article contends that the University has become a place that has no socially-useful role beyond the reproduction of capital, such that it has become an anti-human project. The argument pivots around the bureaucratic university's desire for surplus, and its relationship to the everyday, academic reality of feeling surplus to requirements. In defining the contours of this contradiction, inside the normalisation of political economic crisis, we question whether there still exists space for an academic method or mode of subjectivation. We also critique the ability of the University in the global North to bring itself into relation with the epistemological sensibilities of the South and the East, which can treat other ways of seeing and praxis with dignity and respect. In grappling with the idea of surplus, and the everyday and structural ways in which its production is made manifest, we seek to ask whether another university is possible?

Keywords: university, crisis, Global East, hegemony, imagination

Introduction: The University at the End of *The End of History*

It is difficult to find a phrase that is used more frequently in discussions about the intersection of financial and epidemiological crises than the statement attributed to Jameson (1994, xii) that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism." This phrase was originally meant to expose the weakness of our imagination, within which the "future seems to be nothing but a monotonous repetition of what is already here." As a result, this can be read against the grain, as a call for the reintroduction of "historical time, and a history made by human beings" (Jameson 2003, 76). However, there has been a sense that rather than yearning for the *always-already* (Bloch 1995) or the *not-yet* (Amsler 2015; Gunn 1987) latent within the forms of capitalist reproduction, Jameson's invocation must focus upon the cynicism and fatalism of a *capitalist realist* position (Fisher 2003).

Moreover, fatalism is replicated inside the structures of the University that are morphed through the pressures of finance capital. These create pathological cultures of performivity, competition and managerialism, which are maintained by methodological practices that can be identified, sorted and ranked in relation to risk-management. These pathologies and methodologies catalyse overwork, self-harm and self-sacrifice that are habitual and compulsive (Hall and Bowles 2016). These are responses to hegemonic pressures that question whether the University is too fragile to cope with the future impacts of financial crisis and pandemic, and needs accelerated and agile re-engineering.

Thus, the World Bank report on *Global Waves of Debt* (Kose et al. 2019) and International Monetary Fund report *Debt Is Not Free* (Badia et al. 2020) highlight the vulnerability of sectors and economies that are over-leveraged, and in which profitability and investment is assumed under low interest rates with precarious or surplus employment. A separate World Bank Group report (2020, 7) on the pandemic shock and policy responses highlight the need to generalise "innovations and emergency processes, [so that] systems can adapt and scale up the more effective solutions." Regardless of economic or psychological scarring, turning "recovery into real growth" becomes yet another opportunity for capital to impose its shock doctrine of structural adjustment (Munevar 2020).

In these ways, the University is locked into colonial and patriarchal matrices of power (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Jewkes et al. 2015), whatever the claims for its inherent liberalism. It appears indelibly locked into the impossibilities of capitalist reproduction rather than

an egalitarian, communal reordering of the possibilities for life. These matrices, situated through the hegemony of knowledge production from the global North, ensure that the metabolic relations between humans and nature is degrading, exploitative and extractive, and maintain "ecological rifts" (Bellamy Foster, Clark and York 2009). As Saito (2017) argues, the forms and associations of capitalist reproduction dominate the concrete, material world in ways that are unregulated and deregulated through the valorisation of capital's material conditions and the negation of its limits.

Amplified by the immanence of viral and financial pandemics, and their connection to environmental degradation, such fatalism has thrown the closed imaginaries upon which we base our understandings of the world into confusion. The symbolic power of capitalism appears to deny humans any horizon of possibility beyond Capital's continued accumulation and organisation of social life. That humans are more able to imagine the end of the world reveals what has been termed *The End of History*. Our collective, material capacity to make history has ended because capitalism and its institutions appear natural and transhistorical, and human imaginations cannot process alternatives (Fukuyama 1992). Moreover, there is a tendency to see solutions in the finessing of the system as it currently exists rather than in the realm of real human agency. As a result, there is a focus on accelerating existing structures, cultures and practices, and a liberal scream against the apparent threats of authoritarian populism and nationalism, punitive or vindictive neoliberalism, or the realisation of capitalism with Chinese characteristics (Davies 2017; Haiven 2020).

However, reinforcing crises have led some to point towards an eruption of struggles at *the end of* The End of History (Aufhebunga Bunga 2019). This points to a refusal of global calls for the return of business-as-usual and a renewed tension over whether it is easier to imagine the end of the world (and of our humane values) than it is the end of capitalism and its institutions (and their drive for economic value) (Jameson 1994, following Franklin 1979). This demonstrates a yearning to invert this tension and to prioritise the ending of capitalism as the start of a new world or new worlds. Žižek (2020, 99) insists that "our situation is profoundly political: we are facing radical choices" between barbarism and "disaster communism" (ibid.) as a counterbalance to "disaster capitalism." This identifies a crisis management system based on the strong, interventionist role of the state and its institutions for prioritising human lives over private profit. In turn, Malm (2020) points towards "ecological war communism" focused upon an authoritarian state organising for

transition. Finally, Dardot and Laval (2020) analyse the coronavirus crisis against the need for *both* institutions of the common capable of producing living human solidarity *and* a global and shared infrastructure for knowledge management and welfare activities on a planetary scale.

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At this apparent end of *The End of History*, what is the role of the University-as-is? As we witness communities yearning and working to create their own material histories, is another university possible? Here, intellectual workers might instead look to the connections between communism and the common. These two components, witnessed at the intersection of struggles against business-as-usual at the confluence of crises, feel important in a movement of abolishing the present state of things. The voices of those made marginal are louder and louder, and describe clear echoes of an alternative system alongside elements of our present-day reality that may lead us beyond our current predicament. In the rest of this article, we invite readers to go beyond *capitalist realism* in thinking about universities at the end of *The End of History*. This connects with a yearning for a non-capitalist future of higher education (HE), which is a necessity for survival beyond the expanding space-time of turmoil and crisis. Our yearning erupts from a communist imaginary as a perspective of political and economic organisation of the present that enables us to go beyond the limitations that capital imposes on the common (Hardt and Negri 2009; Dardot and Laval 2019).

The University and the End of Imagination

The University appears emblematic of the collapse of the power and potential for humans to reimagine the world in spite of its enrichment of the general intellect of society or our collective wealth in skills, knowledge, capacities and capabilities (Marx [1857] 1993). Certainly, in what is described as the global North, universities are governed and regulated in relation to the market, finance capital and processes of commodification. These appear to reinforce an impregnable realm or kingdom (de Sousa Santos 2020), which increasingly defines social life and reproduction technocratically and in economistic terms. HE's obsession with prestige, privilege and status, manufactured through separations enacted between individuals, subjects and institutions, which are then reinforced through competitive metrics and rankings, is reproduced at great cost to those who labour inside it and their communities.

Against emergent ruptures and flows of struggle, in remaining anchored to *The End of History*, the University is still painted as a liberal insti-

tution that simply needs reform (Connell 2019) rather than one needing transformation or abolition (Hall 2020; Meyerhoff 2019). This maintains the reified symbolic power of the University and laments the bastardisation of the public university (Holmwood 2011) and the depreciation of academic freedom (Furedi 2017) alongside inefficient performative managerialism that responds to market signals (Frank, Gowar and Naef 2019). Such lamentations cannot trace the links between institutions under capitalism, which collectively reproduce a terrain of intersectional and liminal injustices (Motta 2018). The determination of this terrain against values and modes of performance represented by material histories that are white, colonial, and patriarchal, shape the grounds upon which the institution, its disciplines and individuals are judged and performance is managed (Amsler and Motta 2017). Thus, University work symbolises the separation of the political economy and humanist potential of intellectual activity. At *The End of History*, that labour is governed by policy obsessed with productivity, efficiency and value-for-money (Ansell 2020), which has such power and such inertia that resistance tends to be diffused or dissipated.

Other counter-narratives tend to describe organising principles that desire a better University, framed by hope, love, care, solidarity, and so on, or they consider the social and ecological futures of the University and its publics (Facer 2019). Here, the University is an anchor point for social re-imagination, that needs to be re-centred away from dominant, neoliberal discourse. These form a terrain of outrage, but they tend to lack a deeper, categorical analysis of either the forces or relations of production that discipline, and give texture and meaning to the University. There is a limited possibility for a critique that situates University work against its basis in alienated labour (Hall 2018), through which the "vampire" of capital reproduces itself by feeding upon living labour (Marx [1867] 2004). Moreover, they risk preserving hegemonic imaginaries that are not mindful of intersectional and indigenous experiences and ways of knowing the world. This limits our collective engagement with radical imaginaries (Andreotti 2016; Elwood, Andreotti and Stein 2019), subaltern struggles (Harney and Moten 2013), or structural disadvantage (Darder 2018); instead, it reinforces how the University has become a failed or impossible redeemer (Allen 2017).

Thus, the University has become a place that has no socially-useful role beyond the reproduction of capital. In the context of globalisation and unifying sublation processes that are driven by transnational capital, it has become an anti-human project, grounded in narratives of human capital, productivity and value-for-money. It has become a place of

suspended time, grappling to make sense of and align with a landscape of unrealised and unrealisable promises, which are amplified by growing economic inequality and precarity. It is a space that sits uneasily against a terrain that demands entrepreneurial engagement with flexibility, risk-taking, efficiency and human capital, whilst at the same time working to annihilate the value of labour-power that cannot drive innovation in commodity production. As a result, the HE sector in the global North faces structural issues that are realised in stagnating wages, a huge increase in the reserve army of labour, growing precarity and diminishing security, the unbundling and outsourcing of functions like teaching and research, an acceleration in proposed delivery times for degrees, and so on. In the everyday existence of intellectual workers, ill-being and mental distress are allied with recurrent and overwork.

Moreover, people who identify or who are identified as black, female, disabled, queer, indigenous are likely to be differentially impacted. Hence, our universal analyses may usefully be situated against a range of extant, singular movements for Black and indigenous Lives, in support of refugees and asylum seekers, in support of abortion rights and women's right to choose, for environmental justice, and so on. In the University, they might be connected to: student rent strikes; graduate student wildcat strikes for a living wage; struggles for employment rights by precariously employed estates' staff; movements against sexual violence on campuses; campaigns for prison and fossil fuel divestment; and struggles for decolonisation. These singular eruptions form fragments of a movement from inside capitalist social relations, and which challenge capitalist realism. They question whether the *always-already*, for the potential for alternative social relations present within the toxic realities of capitalism, might realise different, material histories. They question whether new, universal conceptions of life might be possible.

Yet such conceptions are placed in asymmetrical relation to the University's place in the systemic maintenance of business-as-usual. In response to crises, it remains shaped as a tactical response to contradictions erupting from within capitalist reproduction. As a result, it is emblematic of the crisis and precarization in the lifeworld of contemporary society, precisely because the University's subsumption for value production has been made visible. This changes the very idea of the University and what it means to work inside the Academy, such that it is reorganised around surplus: surplus wealth; surplus labour; surplus time; and people surplus to requirements. In this, there is no space for collective politics or democracy, and, in fact, the University has become a key site for reproducing the separation of polity and economy as a mode of control.

The bureaucratic University's desire for surplus and its relationship to the everyday academic reality of feeling surplus to requirements questions whether there still exists space for an academic method or mode of subjectivation. This is an important moment in testing the possibilities for a horizon of hope against what feels like the inevitability of hopelessness (Hall 2020). However, here it is important to recognise global differentials in prestige and status across and within institutions, and how they contribute to hegemonic flows of power and value. The competitive norms implemented in the University in the North are further imposed on the South and the East, and prevent non-Northern modes of knowing and doing to circulate. In engaging with political economic and socio-environmental crises, it is important to question whether the University is able to go beyond such blockages. This then critiques the ability of the University in the global North to bring itself into relations with the epistemological sensibilities of the South and the East, which can treat other ways of seeing and praxis with dignity and respect.

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Hegemony in Higher Education

One of the primary modes of analysing HE has been in terms of geographical distinctions between institutions in the global North and South. Of course, these terms occlude distinctions in material history, cultures, practices, narratives between individuals and their communities. Moreover, they tend to amplify a focus upon the nation state, in particular in relation to economic development, shaped by narratives of core and periphery, dependency theory, or relations of privilege and marginalization (Love 1980; Prebisch 1980). Gramsci's opening-out of the North/South question in relation to Italy further questions the authenticity and usefulness of such binaries alongside the potential for nuance to enrich our understanding (Conelli 2019). It does this by bringing questions of core and periphery, and economic, political, cultural and social dependency, into relation with capital production, circulation and accumulation.

This also reflects upon the idea of closed world systems of production (Wallerstein 1974), which tend to act for the systemic recalibration, operationalisation and determination of performance. Here, the system is treated deterministically in order to engage with issues of global circuits of dynamic inefficiency and the control of uncertainty, in particular, through market-based structural adjustment. Using critical race,

indigenous and intersectional analyses as heuristics, it is possible to struggle against the imposition of binaries that reinforce closed systems and to situate them against the ongoing alienation of labour (Leong and Huang 2010). This utilises a range of decolonial and subaltern positions to shine a light upon material and historical developments in free markets, monopoly finance capital and the virtualisation of wealth, by focusing upon intergenerational, intersectional and intercommunal alternatives (Aman and Ireland 2015; Dinerstein 2015).

This focuses upon practices of liberation as material, epistemological and ontological, and situated against the realities of settler-colonialism embedded inside capitalist structures (Tuck and Yang 2012). For Carola (2017), this moves beyond the idea of knowledge being produced inside intellectual institutions of the North and seeks to enact the decolonising of Eurocentric, epistemological knowledge geographies as a process of re-humanisation. It demands "an ethical attitude acknowledging the various original people's right to live, to exist, and keep their history" (ibid.). Witnessed in what is called Latin America by the term *Abya Yala*, this is a referent made by the indigenous movement in the Americas to encapsulate the American continent as "an epistemological beacon of light that was not born in academia" (ibid.).

Being reminded of such alternative modes of knowing the world is important in refusing the methodological, structuring reality of market activities that have come to define intellectual work at *The End of History*. One risk in the North/South divide is that it furthers the idea that human agency in making history has ended, because the purpose of life becomes our ability to enable different activities to be compared across a global terrain in a determinate, closed system. Instead, engaging with intellectual work in a world that is stochastic, random and open-ended points towards pluralistic opportunities (Patomäki 2017; Shaikh 2016). University imaginaries are important here because they tend to operate based upon probabilities and risk in closed environments. They struggle to rationalise exogenous shocks like Covid-19 or the productive/unproductive disconnection noted above, other than through claims to business-as-usual. Thus, questioning the purpose of University activities that reinforce endogenous, deterministic and transhistorical assumptions might enable fatalism to be refused, because it might suddenly be possible to imagine life in places beyond capitalism.

However, to do so requires dissolving the common sense of North/South as a way of knowing or reading the world, including in its maintenance of disciplinary separations between philosophy and the natural sciences. Such separations reinforce the divorce between politics

and economics, individuals and communities, and the University and society. These common sense separations are reinforced and exposed during crises, and reveal how geographical and temporal divisions have reinforced how capitalist reproduction maintains its hegemony.

We understand hegemony as a certain *compromise balance* (Gramsci 1971) which is constantly emerging and agitating to overcome a

> state of unstable balance (within the limits of the law) between the interests of the given group and its dependent groups, a state of equilibrium in which the interests of the ruling group prevail, but only to a certain extent degree, and not to the absolute exclusivity of economic and corporate interests. (ibid., 182)

Domination materialises in the functioning of norms, values or languages as well as in the institutional forms in which these norms are implemented. In HE and science, this type of balance is maintained, for example, in discourse about the University as the engine of knowledge-based economies. Yet the sum of benefits derived from the dynamic development of science and HE taking place in all countries is not shared transparently or equitably on a global scale. Instead, claims are made based upon equality of access to marketised provision, meritocracy and equality of opportunity. As a result, dominant systems and countries not only attract the most outstanding researchers and the most talented students, but are also more efficiently able to use, commercialise or privatise knowledge produced by chance (and socially) in dependent systems.

Hegemonic power relations in global HE are shaped in three main domains distinguished by Lukes (2005). The first is the institutional area of centrality, strength and prestige. As Marginson and Ordorika (2011) write, certain privileged institutions and geographical systems dominate others through easier access to monetary resources, accumulated financial and human resources, and contacts with global power centers. The second domain of hegemony is the communicative power exercised in dominant discussions about global politics or shaping political strategies. The third domain emerges culturally through the very processes that shape the field of HE by: constructing its dominant values; defining what it means to be a leader; and designing its reform and performative templates (Marginson and Ordorika 2011). Through these three domains, ontological and epistemological control is maintained through knowledge production that works to standardise language and communication and centralise knowledge circulation and accumulation. Moreover, the obsession with competitive, global rankings of universi-

ties creates a unified and common space for abstract comparisons of institutions or entire systems on a global scale.

This returns us to the view of institutions operating as if they exist within a world system that is closed and can be risk-managed through more appropriate sharing of performance information that can be interpreted in the market. However, this is contingent upon a more punitive and disciplinary approach to the management of labour and the circulation of intellectual commodity capital across a global terrain. The smooth running of the privileged academic world, predicated upon ideas of the North/South, might usefully be framed against ideas of Western intellectual hegemony. This benefits intellectually through the normalisation of enlightenment rationality, which appears deterministic, evidenced-based and focused upon economic development rather than uncertainty, complexity and randomness. Emerging primarily from institutions in North America and Europe, such privilege is enabled: historically, by being able to draw down upon legacies of social, intellectual and financial capital; materially, by being able to shape discourses that act as fulcrums of domination, in relation to impact and excellence; and financially, in relation to international student flows and intellectual commodity-dumping.

This focus upon Western intellectual hegemony has recently been revisited in relation to the missing Second World, in particular, in relation to Eastern Europe and post-colonialism (Grzechnik 2019; Ignatiev 2008; Müller 2018). Developing Gramsci's focus upon the Southern Question, this recognises the nuances of national stories in relation to the reproduction of systems of global colonialism, including their intellectual validation. Pointing to semi-peripheral positionality, this highlights differential mechanisms of othering alongside ongoing complicity in the reproduction of Western, intellectual settler-colonialism, for instance, in the prioritisation of particular disciplinary methodologies and knowledges. Here, there is a possibility to rethink the material histories of different epistemological and ontological experiences, and to question those which have been threatened with erasure.

Of course, in each of these approaches and analyses, there is a risk of essentialising through the maintenance of difference and distinction, rather than bringing those differences into relation, in order to define multiple routes away from hegemony. Here, it is important to reflect upon Müller's (2018) demand that we move beyond the idea of the North/South divide as "a political and epistemological project," and instead define a multiplicity of epistemic spaces, beyond North and South or East and West. This is predicated upon unsettling the intellec-

tual "certainties of rich and poor, powerful and powerless, that we have perhaps grown too comfortable with." By recognising how North/South, coloniser/indigenous, or Eastern/Western make being in-between an uncomfortable experience, this cautions against making certain narratives, histories, cultures, ancestries and identities unknowable. Yet as the centres of liberal democracy struggled to contain the contagion of delegitimacy erupting up the confluence of crises, it is important to show how prestige, privilege and power can be called into question through different modes of intellectual work. Such modes work to show how associations and alignments can be opened up as new ecosystems that connect the alienation of *the missing second world* or *Global East* communities, with those of the global South, through an analysis of their entanglements and complicities in the system of coloniality. The idea of the University is too hopelessly wedded to the reproduction of an exclusionary epistemic space which denies hope as anything other than a liberal, utopian sop.

This is its role at *The End of History*. The predicament for those who work inside the University is how to overcome the ignorance of hope and thereby sublate it through a movement of indignity. In this way, the architecture of knowledge production as a mode of commodification might be ruptured, because it offers no way out of the suffocating conjuncture of crises. The flows of value that such an architecture enables have been interrupted in the intersection of financial and epidemiological crises. Overlapping with the long-standing Chinese ascent (Arrighi 2007), it appears clear that hegemonic structures, cultures and practices of intellectual work must be abolished and opened out as a process of deimperializing (Chen 2010).

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Covid-19 and the Idea of Western Higher Education

Nancy (2020) argues that Covid-19 is a communovirus, which has emerged communally, shining a light upon the exploitative and expropriative tendrils of global, social reproduction. In so doing, it also acts as a common referent on a global scale, and like the planetary climate and ecological catastrophes, it demonstrates our entanglements. Whilst it tends to enforce particular kinds of scientific collaboration and a planetary perspective for annihilating, ignoring or living with the virus, it also reflects the toxic nature of capitalism's mode of social metabolic control. However, the most valuable intellectual work has been predicated upon epidemiological science rather than venturing beyond the

close and fatalistic parameters of that scientific system. The acceptable boundaries of philosophical and social scientific endeavour seek to reimagine the reproduction of capitalism in the face of the epidemiological end of the world.

Different national HE systems have differential experiences of the virus, and intellectual activity has been re-geared around marketing, impact and research excellence in relation to national solutions and vaccine production. The reality of crisis is that it has an immanent relationship to value production that can be compared across a global terrain. However, the pandemic has impacted the intellectual hegemony exercised by those individuals, communities and institutions with privilege, labelled in terms of the Anglo-Saxon West, global North or settler-colonialism (Jayasuriya 2020). Marginson (2020a; 2020b) tries to point out significant cultural differences between national systems. In doing so, he emphasises the role of culturally-ingrained individualism and internalised modes of neoliberalism that ensure responses to the virus-induced crisis follow predictable paths. Such explanations are too focused on the internal problems of the North/West/settler-colonial institution to be sufficient.

It appears that Covid-19 marks a critical moment in this model of development, precisely because basing the reproduction of hegemony has become overleveraged. Its strategy has been based upon credit, the appearance of productivity and the sustainability of deficit planning, all the while bankrolled against a rentier political economy and an expectation of constant growth in student numbers.

Ultimately, such analyses locate the problem in the sphere of culture that is difficult to change and which stymies the development of human agency in the medium-term. While countries such as the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia may differ in terms of measures, they ultimately offer solutions to the symptoms of the crisis rather than addressing its causes. As a result, they tend to address superficial yet acute manifestations of deeper problems plaguing the sector with responses based upon institutional restructuring in relation to governance, regulation and funding in order to maintain global hegemony (UK Department for Education 2020). This reflects the severity of the situation inside those HE systems that are dependent for their existence upon their insertion inside the circuits of finance capital (McGettigan 2015; Szadkowski and Krzeski 2019), including those reliant upon bond markets and the need to maintain investment-grade credit ratings (Connelly 2020).

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capitalist core, which are increasingly forced to proletarianise labour conditions and increase the organic composition of capital (Marx 2004). Proletarianisation is revealed in the widening and normalising of precarious conditions, the intensification of workloads, work-based monitoring infecting the home, the unprecedented and a rise in reports of ill-being (Hall 2020; Workers Inquiry Network 2020). The backdrop to this is a context of unprecedented penetration of University learning, teaching, professional services and research by online infrastructure platforms for-profit providers (Williamson 2020), and the foreclosure of hopes for open science that were alive in the early stages of the pandemic (Xiu 2020).

What Lies beyond the Crisis? (Or How the Flock Do We Get out of This Mess?)

The pandemic has inflected the political connection between crisis and the critique, to the point tuning what is at stake in this crisis of the core of capitalist HE. Fuller (2020) distinguishes four orders of discourse relevant in this historical moment when the pandemic has revealed the horizon of human agency. The first is the potential for a national victory over the pandemic, experienced differentially. The second order is defining what it means to solve the crisis at the global level, with implications for certain national responses. The third relates to the lessons learned from solving the crisis, in particular in relation to the validity of business-as-usual (a capitalist realist position). The fourth order is a victory in the fight for what the lessons of crisis resolution means for our sense of who we are as agents in the world, or potentially as agents with the world. In thinking about this, in terms of HE at the intersection of financial, epidemiological and environmental crises, there are options and the potential for moving beyond hegemonic thinking. However, being willing to realise this potential immediately implicates the capitalist University in the reproduction of crises.

The competitive realities of HE systems at the capitalist core of a perceived, closed world system of production centres the resolution of crises around commodification, marketisation and financialisation. In terms of Fuller's first two orders, it is highly unlikely that those institutions might move beyond expressing their agency as anything other than surplus, defined in relation to impact, excellence, public engagement, entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer, and measured in global rankings. This pushes towards a reaffirmation of tropes of value-for-money, pro-

ductivity and business-as-usual, as a fatalistic renewal of *The End of History*. To be other than this is a denial of prestige, privilege and power, and in Fuller's terms, this risks reaffirming our toxic engagement with nature and the environment and reproduces capitalism's social metabolic control. Not only is it easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism, but the University at the capitalist core ensures that our progress towards that ending is more efficiently unsustainable (Hall and Winn 2011).

One of the crucial issues raised in ranking procedures is the tendency to attempt the abstraction of intellectual work in the form of teaching, research, social impact, public engagement and so on, at the global level. This is the attempt to scrub the concrete activities of intellectual workers, be they students, academics or professional services' staff, of any useful and differential content, such that they can be compared. This occurs at events like the IREG Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence conference. However, it is increasingly unclear how such transnational practices have relevance: first, as faith in a world system collapses, and as life itself becomes increasingly precarious for many people and ecosystems; second, as many alternative pathways open up for knowing, doing and being in the world; and third, as doubts and divergent thinking emerge in relation to the purpose of the University and intellectual work.

Just as hegemonic national systems seek to re-invoke the sanctity of global measurements and evidence-based practice shaped through disciplinary separation and ideological reinforcement, and as more peripheral nations seek access to prestige, geopolitical responses to crises are weakening hegemony. The University-as-is, defined as the global North/Western or settler-colonial, increasingly operates in a new mode of historical time. It stands at the bifurcation between historical epochs of domination in the transition from the unilateral rule of post-war capitalist core to functioning within a bilateral system led by China. In this moment, intellectual workers must question their ability to intervene in this field of capitalist reproduction in order to distort its trajectory. This returns us to Malm's (2020) indication that we turn our attention away from the symptoms of the crisis of the pandemic towards the causes of the intersection of crises.

A crucial question here is whether we are able to move intellectual work beyond the University, either by dissolving or converting it, or by building new, mutual and associational institutions, at the level of society. Returning to Marx ([1857] 1993), this is the liberation of the general intellect of society, or our shared knowing, doing and being in the world.

It accepts that humans and human activity has made the world, including reproduction of capital and social metabolic control, and that its structures, cultures and practices do not have to be pathological and methodological. This demands that intellectual workers connect to the needs of society for good living or *buen vivir* (Ecuadorian National Secretariat of Planning and Development 2012), rather than working for the commodity form as the mode of social reproduction.

These connections actively take up the issues of the functioning of capital in the sector, and more broadly across society, and oppose it in structures, cultures and practices based on mutuality, co-operation, solidarity and expansion of the commons, operating communally across a global terrain. The focus upon communal responses reminds us to be mindful of indigenous, Eastern, colonised and Southern responses to the intersection of crises. Here there is much potentiality, for instance witnessed in the invocation of *preguntando caminamos*, or *asking, we walk* (Marcos 2004; Sitrin 2005). Inside capitalist social relations, Marx (1852) was clear that humans make their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing. Yet as crisis brings the transhistorical, naturalised realities of capitalism into question, *preguntando caminamos* acts as a beacon, reminding us that humans make their own history and our own paths through collective dialogue, based upon knowing where, how and why we find ourselves, and subsequently doing and being in the world.

We can only move towards "our true heart" (Marcos 2004, 268) in the next moment by understanding our modes of knowing, doing and being in the present moment. This teaches "how the world was born and show where it is to be found" (ibid., 276), as a movement of dignity. The struggle for movement delineates life as pedagogic practice, and erupts from our present, hopeless situation as a demand for generalised, intellectual engagement with alternative ways of making the world and being in it. It is predicated upon abolishing separation, for instance, between teacher and student, and transcending roles, such that each individual articulates their intellectual capabilities as a social activity.

This matters for intellectual workers and intellectual work in society, because, as Holloway (2010, 235) argues, "[l]iving in capital means that we live in the midst of contradiction," and finding ways to rupture that contradiction is a critical, historical question. In acknowledging the return of history, we recognise the potential for developing paths based upon *preguntando caminamos* and anchored in concrete, lived experiences, as a movement of becoming. Such becoming is the material production of history, as a constant unfolding. It is useful to be reminded

here that in capital's historical development "*everything posited is also a presupposition*" (Marx [1857] 1993, 278, emphasis in original). Every step closes and opens, and brings the self into a truer relation with the world. Such a truer relation is crucial because at the end of *The End of History*, the horizons of intellectual work must be described in relation to "the only scientific question that remains to us (…): how the fuck do we get out of this mess?" (Holloway 2010, 919).

Conclusion: Building Higher Education in and for the Common

One of the most skilled contemporary novelists, Kim Stanley Robinson, in a recent interview on his book *The Ministry of the Future*, which appeared on the pages of the socialist journal *Jacobin*, referred to Jameson's increasingly, frequently quoted statement about endings and the duality of the world and capitalism. For Robinson (2020), what we are "missing is a bridge from here to there," or in other words, "it's hard to imagine how we get to a better system." The biggest problem facing our radical imaginations today is not so much yearning for the utopia of a new system. Rather, as noted by Barnett (2017), at issue is how to address the "feasible utopias" of the transition.

The task of our time is how to think through the transition from a system shocked to its core by Covid-19 in ways that have been almost unimaginable in the context of financial or environmental crises. As the impact of these latter two crises were more widely felt at the periphery of the global system of reproduction, they had less imminent impact on corporeal existences with prestige, privilege and power.

The task of our time is how to think through the transition from a system shocked to its core by Covid-19 in ways that have been almost unimaginable in the context of financial or environmental crises. As the impact of these latter two crises were more widely felt at the periphery of the global system of reproduction, they had less imminent impact on corporeal existences with prestige, privilege and power. Accepting its intersectional and positional differences in impact, there is potential in addressing how the generalised, epidemiological shock unleashed in 2020 might enable the realisation of our yearnings for alternative, desired states. This is our ability to realise the *not-yet* and to recognise what has been *always-already* possible, that is, to develop the actions reachable through the collective self-steering performed collectively in the present (Szadkowski and Krzeski 2021). Here, we must recognise that the problem for intellectual workers, and for redefining and instantiating meaningful, intellectual work, is the transition itself and its corresponding, socially-useful institutions.

The general framework of this process has *both* already been rethought within the specific historical and geographic configuration of real socialisms (Temkin 1968), and has also historically become the starting point for the development of *alternative* modernisation projects on a global

scale (Mark, Kalinovsky and Marung 2020). However, it seems that we really need something of altermodernisation (Hardt and Negri 2009) or modes of social reproduction that will exceed the limitations imposed by colonial capitalist reason. Here, it may be that the historical connection between the postcolonial, indigenous world and East European real socialism might teach us valuable lessons about the feasibility of hegemonic or counter-hegemonic transitions. This might enable a struggle against business-as-usual alongside a renewed reflexivity, defined against Fuller's (2020) fourth, post-pandemic order of freedom.

Such considerations have been analysed by philosophers *both* of the common (Dardot and Laval 2019; Hardt and Negri 2009), *and* in the context of HE (Roggero 2011; Szadkowski 2019). At the intersection of these analyses emerges the potentiality for institutions of the common, as the organisation of the autonomy and resistance of living labor/knowledge. Beyond this, it has been defined in terms of the power to define the collective governance and regulation of society, predicated upon mutuality and co-operation, through which the production of common norms breaks with capitalist realism (Roggero 2010). Here, we are reminded of actually-existing models of the communal organisation of HE, for instance, in the Salesian polytechnic in the capital of Ecuador, Quito (Carrera and Solorzano 2019). Erdem (2020) has highlighted other global examples, which was beyond co-option and re-incorporation inside the circuits of capitalist reproduction. Here, it is important to recognise the tension that exists between a Commons of the global North/West/secular-colonialism, and the communalism enacted in indigenous and decolonial contexts, which themselves push for modes of knowing, being and doing (Marcos 2004; Santos 2014; Elwood, Andreotti and Stein 2020) alongside radical tenderness towards the world (D'Emilia and Chávez 2015).

While the institutions of the common or potential forms of communalism might give form to the transition for which we yearn, the vectors that give them direction are also important. Points in the present are necessary to guide us into the future. They can be identified using pairs of oppositions that are entangled and which centre practices that oppose the capitalist hierarchy and its power of abstraction. These exacerbate the contradictions of this hierarchy and its demands for intellectual work that reproduce it toxic, social metabolic control. Thus, such practices include: cooperation against competition; real social utility against impact, excellence' and prestige; concrete, local embeddedness against abstract, global eradication; multilingualism versus monolingualism; a multitude of ways of knowing, being in doing against capitalist

standardisation; global co-operation in research and teaching, rather than the competition embedded within hegemonic circuits of privilege; mutual engagement in knowing the world, rather than the domination of the world by the knowledge production of a small number of centres; openness and social control over the conditions of life, rather than their conditioning by intellectual private property, the market, the division of labour and commodity-exchange; public governance, regulation and funding of science and education, through reintegrated disciplines that stand against the privatisation and debt-financed intellectual.

In our thinking about intellectual work, such entanglements are many-fold and offer the potential to overflow the University of surplus, such that intellectual knowledge, skills and capabilities might be liberated at the level of society. Bringing this general intellect into conversation with alternative modes of knowing the world, enacted through the global South, the East, indigenous and post-colonial communities, offers a moment of moving beyond a crisis-driven world that threatens our corporeal and temporal existences in order to enact new modes of doing and being. It is here that the pandemic offers an opportunity to look beyond the hegemonic University at *The End of History*, and to reconnect with intellectual work as meaningful and authentic social activity, which abolishes the present state of things. This absolutely denies the appeal of a set of ready-made solutions for re-imagining a future University as a public good or for a better, more inclusive capitalism. Instead, it is a call for intellectual workers to remember that they make history at the level of society and that if we are to break out of the tight grip of *capitalist realism*, and thereby commit to building a global system based on mutuality, solidarity, and co-operation, then intellectual work must be returned to society. It must become collectively-managed, common or communal knowing beyond the University (Hall 2020; Meyerhoff 2019). Everything seems to be forever until it is no more. Communist intervention in HE starts from organising the always-already right now in order to point beyond the rule of capital.

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KRYSTIAN SZADKOWSKI, Ph.D. – is a researcher at the Scholarly Communication Research Group of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. His interests cover political economy and transformations of higher education systems in Central Eastern Europe as well as the issues of the public and the common in higher education. He worked as a researcher for Education International (Brussels, Belgium) and as a consultant in policy projects funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education. He was a visiting researcher at the Centre for Global Higher Education, both at the Institute of Education, University College London (in 2018) and at the University of Oxford (in 2020). His interests cover political ontology, political economy of higher education, critical university studies, higher education research.

Address:
Adam Mickiewicz University
5 Międzychodzka St., room 404
Poznan – Poland
email: krysszad@amu.edu.pl

RICHARD HALL, Ph.D. – is Professor of Education and Technology at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK. He is a National Teaching Fellow and a Trustee of the Open Library of Humanities. His most recent books are *The Hopeless University: Intellectual Work at the end of The End of History* (MayFly Books) and *The Alienated Academic: The Struggle for Autonomy Inside the University* (Palgrave Macmillan). He writes about life in higher education at: richard-hall.org.

Address:
De Montfort University
Gateway House, LE1 9BH
Leicester – United Kingdom
email: RHall1@dmu.ac.uk

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Autorzy: Krystian Szadkowski i Richard Hall

Tytuł: Czy uniwersytet stał się naddatkiem względem wymagań? Albo: czy inny uniwersytet jest możliwy?

Abstrakt: W tym artykule dowodzimy, że Uniwersytet stał się miejscem, które nie ma społecznie użytecznej roli poza reprodukcją kapitału, i przemienia się wobec tego w projekt antyludzki. Wywód ten skoncentrowany jest na pragnieniu nadwyżki biurokratycznego uniwersytetu i jego związku z codzienną, akademicką rzeczywistością – odczuwania nadwyżki w stosunku do wymagań. Kreśląc kontury tej sprzeczności, w ramach normalizacji kryzysu polityczno-gospodarczego, kwestionujemy to, czy nadal istnieje miejsce na akademicką metodę lub sposób upodmiotowienia. Krytykujemy również zdolność Uniwersytetu z globalnej Północy do nawiązania relacji z epistemologiczną wrażliwością Południa i Wschodu, które traktują inne sposoby widzenia i *praxis* z godnością i szacunkiem. Zmagając się z ideą nadwyżki oraz z codziennymi i strukturalnymi sposobami manifestowania się jej produkcji, pytamy, czy możliwy jest inny uniwersytet.

Słowa kluczowe: Uniwersytet, kryzys, Globalny Wschód, hegemonia, wyobraźnia