

STIR

WINTER 2011



Mat Callahan

Nina Power

Guppi Bola

Mark Everard

Wu Ming 1

Michael Newman

Marianne Maeckelbergh

Gabriel Kuhn

Bethan Graham

Stephen Duncombe

Maxwell Tremblay

Katherine Selby

Dan Glass

John Stewart

CONTENTS

- Common Ground **5** *Dr Mark Everard*
- White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race: An Interview **12** *Jonny Gordon-Farleigh interviews Maxwell Tremblay & Stephen Duncombe*
- Grassroots Football **21** *Gabriel Kuhn*
- The Assault on Universities: A Review **29** *Nina Power*
- Occupy Blog: Crossroads at Cairo **34** *Marianne Maeckelbergh*
- Making Music a Racket **38** *Mat Callahan*
- An Education System **48** *Michael Newman*
- I'm With The Bears: Short Stories from a Damaged Planet **55** *Jonny Gordon-Farleigh interviews Wu-Ming 1*
- Aviation Justice Tour **59** *Abby McFlynn & Jonny Gordon-Farleigh*
- A Competitive Cooperative **64** *Katherine Selby*
- Bring it to the Table: Food Justice **69** *Guppi Bola & Bethan Graham*
- The Assault on Universities: A Conversation **77** *Nina Power, Michael Bailey & Andrew McGettigan*

CONTRIBUTORS

Mat Callahan is a musician and author from San Francisco, now residing in Bern, Switzerland. He is the author of three books: *Sex, Death and the Angry Young Man*, *Testimony*, and *The Trouble With Music*. <http://www.matcallahan.com>.

Dr Mark Everard's new book *Common Ground: The Sharing of Land and Landscapes for Sustainability* is published by Zed Books, London. You can find out more about Mark's other books and work at <http://www.markeverard.co.uk>.

Michael Newman works at Summerhill School. He has also been a school project worker for active global citizenship in Tower Hamlets and London, working on children's and human rights, local democracy, sustainability, ICT, community cohesion, and co-operative enterprise.

Nina Power is a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at Roehampton University. Her book *One Dimensional Woman* is published by O-Books.

Wu Ming 1 is a contributor to the short story collection *I'm With the Bears*, a member of the Wu Ming Foundation and blogs at www.wumingfoundation.com. *I'm With the Bears* is published by Verso.

Gabriel Kuhn is an Austrian-born writer and translator, currently living in Stockholm, Sweden. *Soccer vs. the State: Tackling Football and Radical Politics* is published by PM Press.

Stephen Duncombe is Associate Professor at the Gallatin School and the Department of Media, Culture and Communications of New York University. He co-edited *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* published by Verso.

STIR

Founder & Editor: Jonny Gordon-Farleigh
Producer: Abby McFlynn

Online: www.stirtoaction.com
Contact: stirtoaction@gmail.com



Stir Magazine is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License. For licensing information on the photographs and illustrations, contact the creator.

CONTRIBUTORS

Maxwell Tremblay writes for Maximumrocknroll and plays drums in the band SLEEPiES. He co-edited *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* published by Verso.

Guppi Bola helped run the Create Justice Through Food programme earlier this summer. Guppi's academic background is in public health, her "spare time" is spent on activism.

Bethan Graham has been involved in community kitchen and food growing projects in Leeds and Swansea.

Marianne Maeckelbergh is a lecturer in Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University, Netherlands. Her book *The Will of Many* is published by Pluto Press.

Michael Bailey is a lecturer in Sociology at Essex University. He co-edited *The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance* published by Pluto Press.

Andrew McGettigan is an independent researcher and blogs at <http://www.andrewmcgettigan.com>. He will be publishing a book on what is happening in higher education with Pluto Press next year.

Katherine Selby works for PR workshop, which promotes sustainable, environmental and cooperative ventures.



Cover Art: *Taste The Future*

Roger Peet is an artist and a printmaker. His work tends to focus on the contemporary crisis of biodiversity and what can and can't be done about it. He is a member of the Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, a group of North American artists producing socially and environmentally engaged artwork. You can see his work at <http://toosphexy.com>.

EDITOR'S NOTE

At the beginning of *The Take*, a documentary about the Argentinean Recovered Factories Movement, Naomi Klein shows an interview she had done a few years earlier. After presenting a list of the gruesome acts and horrors of capitalism, the interviewer challenges her by saying, “But you’re not giving us any alternatives?” To this, she later admits, “He had a good point...at a certain point you have to talk about what you’re fighting for”.

The absence of demands from the Occupy Movement has been a conundrum for conventional political commentators. What they have failed to understand is that those who make demands expect an agency, authority or expert to implement them. Today’s protestors are appealing to themselves, not governments, for social change. This point was nicely made by Nathan Schneider in a recent article in the *The Nation*, “Thank You, Anarchists”. He says the occupiers have “reminded us that politics is not a matter of choosing among what we’re offered but of fighting for what we and others actually need, not to mention what we hope for.”

This is not to ignore or downplay the crucial role that commentary plays in our understanding of the political and social terrain, but the disproportionate fixation on Washington and London produces mere spectators who can only rely on financial and political elites to save them and who can only be disappointed and failed by them. This read-only political culture dominates our experience of our options and choices, and the German comedian Klaus Hansen expresses this reversible point in terms of commercial sport — “Football is like democracy: twenty-two people playing and millions watching.”

As Stephen Duncombe says in his interview, “It’s not enough to change people’s minds. You have to change the social, political and economic structures in which they live.” Convincing people that we are in a mess is the easy part, if they need to be convinced at all. Showing people that there are successful and viable ways of producing food, providing education, playing sports, managing resources, and sharing creative content in ways that are not subordinated to profit is what is really at stake.

This is exactly what the successful community-led campaign against the third runway at Heathrow demonstrates, the employee-owned Essential food cooperative promotes, democracy schools such as A.S. Neill’s Summerhill practice, and the numerous other examples in this issue: that, as the slogan at last year’s US Social Forum read, not only is ‘Another world possible... Another world is Happening’.

Jonny Gordon-Farleigh

COMMON GROUND: SECURING A FUTURE FOR ALL WHO SHARE OUR PLANET'S RESOURCES

Dr Mark Everard

We live in a fragmented landscape. This would matter a lot less if human populations were sparse and ecosystems across the globe were in a healthy state. However, the exact converse is the case today: human numbers have exceeded seven billion with the fastest rates of growth in developing and often already environmentally-stressed countries, and the UN's authoritative Millennium Ecosystem Assessment provides solid evidence that virtually all major habitat types across the planet are substantially degraded with alarming implications for their continued capacity to support human wellbeing into the long-term future.

The causes of this fragmentation of landscapes, watersheds and seas are multiple. However, many, if not all, stem from the parochial way in which we have made decisions in the past. This parochialism extends beyond mere geographical localism, blind to wider-scale ramifications including for example localised flood defences exacerbating flooding elsewhere in inherently connected catchments or changing uses of land affecting water resources downstream. We have also been decidedly parochial in terms of our limited consideration of timescales, of cross-disciplinary implications and, criti-

cally, the equity issues that arise from decisions founded on hegemony. As we know, decisions across many parts of the world have generally been taken favouring the interests of a few politically- and economically-influential stakeholders. The consequences of such privilege-based landscape management and development decisions, whether they wilfully discount or else are merely blind to the interests of broader constituencies of stakeholders, has implications for excluded communities that are at best uncertain and more often profoundly adverse.

“We can change and indeed...have a long tradition of societal transformation once challenges become clear.”

Practical examples range from the national level where policies favouring an imperial power or other ruling elite can result in hardships for other people living more directly natural resource-dependent lifestyles, where subsidies favour landowners but marginalise those dependent upon land over which they have no title,

or in development schemes such as major dams and water diversion projects that tend to favour richer industrial sectors and urban centres often to the substantial detriment of those reliant on the diversity of natural processes performed by river systems. As a general rule, it is the powerless majority that loses out under such arrangements, running against fundamental democratic principles.



The pre-twentieth century history of many European countries and the nations that fell under their imperial control repeatedly played out this story of governance primarily serving the interests of governing classes. It is also interesting that many of the uprisings that led to the independence former overseas colonies, quieter revolutions, regime changes and major restitution cases elsewhere, arose from a direct revolt against the annexation of vital resources. Examples range from salt protests in India to the redistribution of land and other rights in Zimbabwe and South Africa and to First Nations claims over land and for historic damages in the USA and Canada. The saga is also played out at a global as well as national scale.

It is not too controversial to reflect that political and industrial decision-making frameworks, and the instincts of many who ascend the 'greasy pole' to such strata of decision-making, operate at far remove from fully democratic ideals even in the more developed economies of the modern world. And it is also clear that the unintended consequences of developed-world resource exploitation has substantial, often devastating, implications for the vitality

of natural resources at a global scale and for the livelihoods of the many people who share and depend upon them. Our historic path of development has been largely blind to, or perhaps wilfully myopic about, its 'footprint' on the biosphere, those who share it and the longer-term implications for all. The problem arises from too narrow a world view about technologies and demographics with world-wide reach.

Hardin's well-known parable of 'The Tragedy of the Commons' is often cited as an inevitable outcome of the exploitation of common resources wherein, without private or corporate ownership and centralised governance, the rewards from private overexploitation but the sharing of 'costs' by all tend to result in the progressive destruction of commonly-owned resources. And there are certainly many instances of aggressive and competitive exploitation leading to the degradation or even collapse of marine and fresh water fisheries, grazing lands, water resources and other important 'commons'. At a macro scale, we are even overloading the 'global common' of the atmosphere with waste gases, discharged without cost into this massive shared natural resource, with serious implications for the stability of both climate and the protective ozone layer as well as local health issues. However, countervailing this trend of degrading commons are very many examples of effective and largely sustainable management of common resources from across the world and throughout history. These range from contemporary statutory agreements such as the (far from perfect) EU Common Fisheries Policy which at least nods towards gearing fishing efforts to the sustainable limits of fish stocks, through to tribal and local community proto-

cols governing rights and seasons for grazing of common land that can be witnessed from equatorial savannahs to long-established commoners' rights in some parts of Great Britain. The concept of governance framed by equitable sharing of finite common resources, be that at scales from international Government through to less formal village level codes and practices and even some religious protocols, is therefore long-established in human resource exploitation. Indeed, most of the many definitions of the word 'government' relate to the manner in which resources are allocated across society.

We live today in an era when a burgeoning global human population is colliding with seriously degraded and degrading ecosystem quality, making increasingly evident and urgent the need for the moderation of human activities towards the achievement of a sustainable balance. This necessarily includes ensuring equitable access to resources, essential for social stability at everything from local to global scales but also reflecting the inherently connected nature of today's pressing problems and their solutions. For example, carbon-rich emissions from anywhere in the world affect all who share this planet's climate system, and equally carbon sequestered in any one locality represents a potential benefit to everyone on Earth including future generations.

So, how do we go about recognising and adapting our behaviours to manage in a sustainable way the many 'environmental commons' upon which we rely but have consistently overlooked in decision-making at the very least since the outset of the Industrial Revolution?

Lessons from recent history can help us. An interesting trend played out in Great Britain throughout the course of the twentieth century, replicated in part or full from the USA to Australia and across much of Europe and with ripples spreading to less developed and developing nations. This takes the form of a transition from the familiar saying that 'an Englishman's home is his castle', exemplifying the uncontested rights of (almost exclusively male) land-owning classes at the outset of that century, towards a progressively more egalitarian model secured incrementally by legal controls on development, protection of sites of wildlife and heritage interest, constraints on activities likely to contaminate water and air resources, as well as sanctions on noise, nuisance and a range of other impositions on civil society. This trend is well documented through additions to the statute book, but also within the development of common law as well as in subsidies and changing societal norms of acceptability. Viewed through the lens of hindsight, the cumulative effects of all these small steps amount to a radical and rapid societal transformation. So what lies behind this trend, replicated across much of the developed world?

The major transition lies in the distinction between, on the one hand, the ownership of land and other key natural resources and, on the other, the many benefits that these ecosystems provide to people regardless of ownership. In essence, the enjoyment of these benefits from nature, ranging from rights to clean water, visually-pleasant landscapes, flood management and the continued existence of socially-valued species, has progressively supplanted an absolute right of landowners to do whatever they

please with assets under their ownership. This revolution is brought about by a shift in focus from natural resources as possessions towards the functions that they perform and the many benefits that flow from this to all in society.

Today, we describe these many societal benefits from the natural world as 'ecosystem services'. Furthermore, through major international studies such as the UN's Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (reporting in 2004/5) and also The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB reporting in 2010), we are

“This Revolution is brought about by a shift in focus from natural resources as possessions towards the functions that they perform and the many benefits that flow from this to all society.”

increasingly aware of the irreplaceable value of these services to humanity, and also the parlous prognosis of allowing their continued degradation. Science and the global reach of the media and monitoring of the environment have illuminated how ecosystems provide us with a wide range of often unappreciated services that support all facets of our wellbeing from basic biophysical survival and health through to economic resources and broader opportunities to enjoy a decent quality of life.

Our new awareness extends also to a deeper and rapidly-developing understanding of the true

value of the natural world. Far from being a net expense and constraint incurred for largely altruistic reasons, and therefore an unwelcome drag on a narrowly-framed misrepresentation of 'development', the many services provided by nature have real and substantial economic importance. Some, such as the storage and cleansing of water or the production of food and fibre from fertile soils and marine waters, have values that are (albeit imperfectly) captured in market prices. Others, such as climate stability and the regulation of air quality and flood peaks, we tend to value only in terms of health and property damage and civil disruption when they are lost or overridden. Other services, such as pollination, the recycling of nutrients and recruitment of stocks of fish of commercial and/or recreational value, remain external to current markets yet are vital for the production of other services and the future resilience of both ecosystems and the economy that it ultimately supports. And how are the diverse yet elusive values of aesthetic, inspiring, educational and spiritually-uplifting places adequately captured in purely monetary terms? This full breadth of services from the natural world contributes to the wellbeing of humanity, and the omission of any one necessarily impoverishes us all. It is therefore essential that we find out how to capture them in economic terms, which may be expressed as monetary values but are not necessarily restricted to that narrow metric, to ensure that they become progressively and completely included and safeguarded in far-seeing governance and business decisions.

This reawakening to our interdependence with the ecosystems with which we evolved is long overdue. However, it is now progressively

beginning to influence the policy landscape as well as some leading business practices. The publication of the UK Government's White Paper *The Natural Choice* in June 2011 is a very welcome example of national leadership recognising the importance of what is known as the 'ecosystem approach', or in other words re-thinking how we go about future development with ecosystems and their many services as core considerations. Other countries are following suit in one way or another. Some business sectors most affected by resource scarcity or volatility of costs have also taken a leadership role. One example is the forest products sector, spanning everything from timber to paper and printed products, players within which have instituted a range of certification schemes including the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to drive sustainable forestry practices securing both dependable supplies into the future but also greater equity, environmental responsibility and market differentiation. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is achieving similar outcomes for marine and some freshwater fisheries. Both the FSC and the MSC were instigated by partnerships including major businesses aware of their impact on these ecosystems and alert to the need for more sustainable practices as a matter of corporate responsibility but also the security of future supplies. Further examples of business-led natural resource stewardship include Organic and other food chain certification schemes, as well as source protection actions of some bottled spring water providers.

There are also many instances of water service companies from the UK to France, the USA, Australia and South Africa actively working on



catchment management and providing incentives for farmers and other land users to withhold practices that degrade the quantity and/or quality of water draining from landscapes beyond water company ownership. Indeed, many markets have been created, known as 'paying for ecosystem services' (or PES), recirculating a proportion of charges to water service customers into cash incentives for upstream land managers to maintain or revert to more sustainable practices which, in turn deliver real economic benefit to downstream water-users. The PES principle is gaining traction across the world to tackle other ecosystem services too, including the sequestration of carbon in forests and other land to address the increasing climate change concerns of governments and businesses. There are also PES markets developing for the safeguarding of biodiversity and a range of other socially-valued ecosystem services.

We are living in a time of profound change, with science providing the insights to help us understand today's pressing problems and to determine progressive adaptations of policy, economic incentives, business practices, land uses and other customs reflecting the deep interconnections between people and ecosys-

tems. We are witnessing some exemplars of the rebalancing of the historic rights of private land-owners progressively towards the beneficiaries (or victims) of the services provided by those ecosystems. However, this progress has been patchy to date, often localised and addressing one of just a few services. Opportunities for more true 'joining up' are available to us; the UK's White Paper *The Natural Choice* is an emphatic statement, the international Convention on Biological Diversity's championing of 'the ecosystem approach' since 1992 is another. We are learning more about how an improved environment has benefits for both physical and mental health, contributing also to 'hard' real estate values and so regional regenerations. However, converting these bold intentions into practical reality in a troubled, economically-challenged world laced with vested interests and established rights and expectations is no mean feat. We are talking, in reality, about a revolution of heroic scale that supplants an industrial model of liquidation of natural resources for short-term private profit, replacing it with measured development that serves the best interests of all in society in the long term. Yet the consequences for failing to bridge this gap are as clear as they are precarious.

Today, we are better armed with science, economic analyses, statements of political commitment to social equity, a never more active voluntary sector and some progressive businesses leading the way. And, as we have seen in the transition throughout twentieth century Great Britain, we are capable of progressive change that cumulatively leads to profound social transformation without bloodshed. But what we do lack, profoundly so, is the luxury of time.

Political timidity now, or the retrenchment of policy towards protectionism and anachronistic models of 'growth' that continue to ignore serious ramifications for our planetary life support systems, is no longer morally nor even economically acceptable. Given the transparency of the consequences were we to step back from courageous action to secure a decent future for all, future generations would have solid grounds from which to condemn us for the continued maximisation of self-benefit whilst leaving them and their inevitably impoverished lives to pay the bill.

But let us finish on a positive note. We can change and indeed, as evidenced by past mass mobilisation to confront wars and diseases, have a long tradition of societal transformation once challenges become clear. Our scientific understanding will never be perfect, for such is the nature of science and the quest for ever deeper knowledge, but we certainly know enough to define the magnitude of today's urgent challenges, their causes and the kinds of remedies that might best secure or restore the vitality of ecosystems essential for our continued wellbeing. We have seen political will expressed and hope to see it now put into action across all policy areas. We are beginning to articulate many formerly overlooked services in economic terms, including both monetised and non-monetised quanta, which is focussing the attentions of businesses and governments at local and national scales. And we have a wide range of global conventions and international institutions, from the UN to the EU and the IPCC (the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), to make the connections that are essential for grappling in an integrated manner

with the global scale of the grave issues now confronting our species.

Commitment to practical action to secure a better future for all, supported by the ecosystems that we now know to be vital in providing for our continuing needs, is currently the only generation-defining 'big decision' of any import. We must not fail in this audacious endeavour.

Dr Mark Everard's new book Common Ground: The Sharing of Land and Landscapes for Sustainability is published by Zed Books, London. You can find out more about Mark's other books and work at <http://www.markeverard.co.uk>.

WHITE RIOT: PUNK ROCK AND THE POLITICS OF RACE

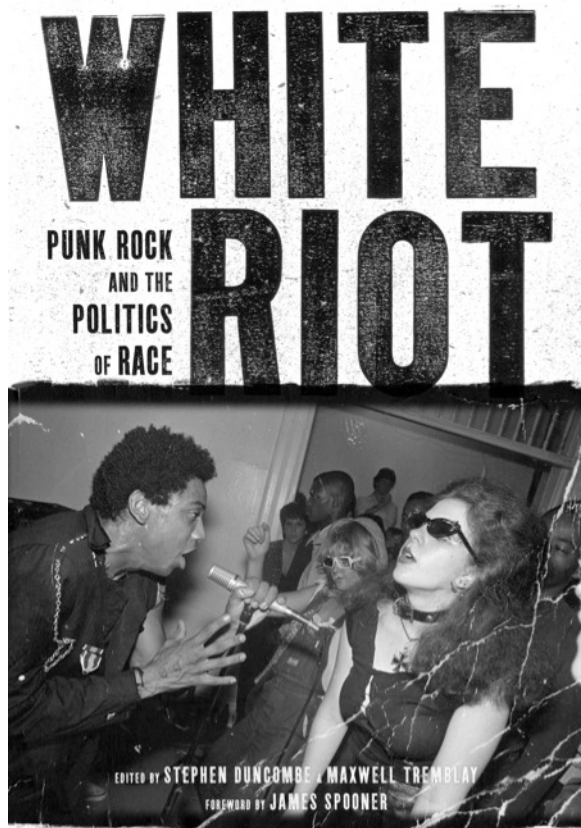
Jonny Gordon-Farleigh interviews

Stephen Duncombe & Maxwell Tremblay

On the anniversary of the Brixton Riots and almost 40 years after its inception, Stephen Duncombe and Maxwell Tremblay publish an edited collection of essays from Punk's history and present that tries to answer some of the conundrums of this counterculture.

STIR: Your new book *White Riot* looks at a particular response to another period of enforced austerity: Punk Rock. It seems a good time to look back at the failures of this resistance and to the resources that can be used for effective opposition today. Why did you decide to put this critical collection of essays and interviews together now and how did you come to choose the contributors?

STEPHEN DUNCOMBE: Almost 40 years after its inception, it seemed to us like good time to look back and see what impact Punk Rock may have had in rethinking (and reinforcing) our notions of race. It's our basic premise that race is deeply embedded in Punk Rock, not just musically - the obvious cross-overs between reggae and punk -- but integral to its very formations. Punk Rock, in the mid 70s, was one of the first cultural forms that, from a white perspective, acknowledged that we (in the UK and US) were now all living in a multicultural society. Because we were. "whiteness" could no longer be assumed as the universal, instead it was problem-



atized, contested and re-defined -- sometimes in progressive ways and other times in virulety racist and reactionary ways. Additionally, in *White Riot* we wanted to underscore the contributions of non-white punks who were part of the scene from the very beginning yet tend to be marginalized or white-washed entirely out of standard punk histories.

However, when I say "look back" on punk it carries with it the assumption that punk is dead,

that it died on '79, '84, '92 (pick a date and it seems that punk has just died a year earlier). But punk continues on. And because of changing demographics and global spread, issues of race within punk are now more important than ever.

MAXWELL TREMBLAY: My enthusiasm for and fascination with this project originated from a conundrum that became more and more apparent to me as I got into punk in the late '90s and early 2000s: i.) Punk is, one might say, constitutively anti-racist. ii.) Punk is, both demographically and rhetorically, mostly white. The impetus for the project, then, came less out of a desire to investigate punk as a response to forced austerity than a bewilderment at one subculture's attempt to think through race in a way that would be different from the dominant culture.

Starting from this puzzle, Steve and I really cast as wide a net as we possibly could for readings on the topic of punk and race, trying to let the pieces speak for themselves until a kind of trajectory or argument began to take shape: to first give a genealogy of the historical reasons that punk saw itself as a primarily white phenomenon and the various paths that would take, but also to unearth the limitations and exclusions implied by that kind of rhetorical framing – a gesture very much inspired by Mimi Nguyen's

call for white punks to “do the white on white,” or destabilize whiteness as the punk neutral or norm. Then, the task became looking at the ways in which punks of color have either taken on punk rock's own rhetoric for themselves, or submitted punk to rigorous, structural critique for its own assumptions of whiteness.

In making our actual selections, there were some pieces or phenomena we knew were essential, some that ingratiated themselves to us through great writing or uniqueness of voice, and a few that so surprised us with their strangeness that we couldn't NOT include them – one of the true joys of archival research!

I would approach the book's sudden timeliness with a bit of hesitation; while punk rock in its first iterations most certainly responded to a kind of 'new normal' of economic despair, it also managed to survive through almost four more decades of ups and downs, with its own attendant successes and failures both related and unrelated to issues of economics and class. What does strike me about our particular moment in relation to the conflicts played out in the text, however, is that, with renewed xenophobia and terror of immigration on the part of the white power structure, young radicals will inevitably try to respond with new cultures and subcultures of their own to counter that racist surge. The lesson of punk rock's attempt to

“It’s not enough to change people’s minds, you also have to change the social, political and economic structures in which they live.”

do this, however, is to be mindful of the ways in which subcultures can, in fact, replicate that white power structure within their own limits.

S: One recent response to this renewed racist surge was the emergence of Love Music Hate Racism in 2002 – following in the tradition of Rock Against Racism. In David Widgery’s piece he says that “our experience had taught us a golden rule: how people find their pleasure, entertainment and celebration is also how they find their sexual identity, their political courage and their strength to change”. How important a role do you think, in this case - punk rock, and music in general, play in affecting social change?

SD: It depends. By itself, punk music, any music, changes nothing. But it can. What popular music can do is change the way people think about things: our ideas about power and race, about what’s “natural” and inevitable and what’s possible and can be changed. These ways of thinking are the result of our socialization. Music is part of that socialization, and it can be a powerful component -- particularly a subcultural music like punk that young people can relate to as their own and in position to the norms and values of the mainstream of society. Therefore, if you have punks challenging racism (or in the

case of White Power bands: encouraging racism) in their songs and in their scene, this has a huge impact on the hearts and minds of people who listen to the music and join the scene...

AND...even this is not enough. It’s not enough to change people’s minds, you also have to change the social, political and economic structures in which they live. A song can’t do this. But what it can do is bring people together, lend them a vocabulary to talk about ideas like race and power, and give them a sense of possibility; all of which can then be mobilized into a larger political movement. But you need that movement. In social science cant: cultural change is a necessary but not sufficient condition for social change.

MT: I’m going to muddle the exact quote, but I think Billy Bragg gives the best overarching answer to this kind of question when he says that music in and of it self won’t change the world, but it can provide a space for those who are concerned with its general fucked-upedness to at least reenergize themselves for future projects – a sentiment which echoes Widgery’s own. That, to me, is the importance of Widgery’s remark about ‘pleasure’ and ‘celebration’: that punk rock isn’t necessarily analogous to the nuts and bolts work of political organizing, but it can, to be a bit cheeky, help get the party started.

More specifically, though, I think punk rock’s most important political contribution – and it’s not necessarily unique in this – is in its ability to create a whole alternative cultural infrastructure. On their own, these bands, labels, show

spaces and zines aren't necessarily politically efficacious, but they at least create channels that can be marshaled for more explicitly political, punk-inspired work by organizations like, for example, Food Not Bombs and the Icarus Project.

S: On this very point, Billy Bragg said in a recent interview with Amy Goodman: "I don't think it was The Clash that actually changed my perspective of the world. It was actually being in that audience (at Rock Against Racism, Victoria Park, 1978). It was being with all those other kids and realizing I wasn't alone, because when I felt—in the office, I was alone. You know, I was the only person who felt that way. But when I was with all those other people, I felt inspired, invigorated. And I think that's what music can do. It can bring a community together for one night in a town. We talk about these issues. People, you know, make affirmative noises and applaud. But, you know, the next day you're gone. They still there to deal with what's going on, to—you know, and that's what, as a musician, you should be trying to inspire that—not you personally trying to change the world, but trying to inspire others to at least engage in the world".

In Daniel Traber's piece "White Minority" he claims (speaking of the L.A punk scene) that "instead of tearing down the boundaries, they [punks] use them to sustain a false sense of autonomy". This is to say that even though this version of Punk rejected the values of White America, it still depended on this 'square' bourgeois culture to establish its difference, its 'alternative' identity - this is a clear critique of counterculture that is not interested in wide-

spread social change. If the expression of Punk in L.A. proved to be static, did you find different expressions of this culture in other parts of the world that contained a potential for transformation beyond "personal anarchy"?

SD: Traber is writing about a particular time and place: LA in the 1980s. I knew that scene well, and LA punk at that time, like a lot of punk elsewhere in the US and the UK, was stuck in its "Sex Pistols" moment: angry at everything and anything; "I wanna destroy the passerby." The problem, politically speaking, was that this sort of anger -- an anger without analysis, or even a real target -- was just the mirror image of the individualist ethos of the greater society. Punks just shortened the capitalist mantra of "fuck you jack, I got mine" to "fuck you!" I think this is Traber's point. There was a certain politics in "performing the decline," that is: showing the brutality behind the normalcy of society, but this politics really lead nowhere.

But at the same time this was happening another tendency is forming in punk. Staying in LA for a moment: X wrote plenty of songs where they took on the persona of an alienated and sometimes bigoted rebel; but they also started writing songs about the US military presence in Latin America and the bankruptcy of American politics. Up north in the Bay Area you had the Dead Kennedys articulating a decidedly Left critique of Liberalism. And of course across the ocean you had the Clash and Stiff Little Fingers who were singing overtly political songs (the Clash even going as far as to name their fourth album Sandanista). As I note above, one always needs to be skeptical about the political impact

of even explicit political songs, yet in these tendencies – which have become the dominant tendencies of punk, at least in the US, in the years since – you can see an expansion of the ideal of politics from personal rebellion to social and political transformation.

MT: The “false sense of autonomy” trope continues, sadly, throughout much of punk’s history, to the point where Mimi Nguyen, in her piece in *White Riot*, can still assail punk in the early 2000s for a kind of ‘rugged individualism’ quite similar to the mainstream American conception – a kind of ‘punk Manifest Destiny’, if you will.

But that kind of nihilistic individualism in punk has always coincided with its flipside: sincere kids working against the dominant culture to ‘fix shit up’ as opposed to ‘fuck shit up’, as a popular anarcho t-shirt would have it. To be a bit reductive (and partisan, since I’m from there), I think one of the prototype cases of this opposite side of the dialectic would be punk in the San Francisco Bay Area. Something in the water there – perhaps the collision between punk culture and the hippie legacy? – produced the conditions for punks to begin to, for instance, see venues as possible ‘community spaces’, and not merely squats ready to be littered with empty beer cans. I say this is reductive because there is/was definitely a fair bit of that going on, but it is hard to underestimate the influence of Bay Area punk – particularly Tim Yohannan’s MaximumRocknRoll and 924 Gilman street – to give political content to punk’s oppositional form.

To take another, kind of counterintuitive example which gets brought up in the book, one can



look at the origins of Anti-Racist Action out of the Midwestern skinhead scene. Here, some very promising anti-racist organizing arose somewhat organically out of a concern seemingly internal to that particular punk scene: how to eliminate that scene’s Nazi element?

And further, Los Crudos out of Chicago and bands like them were able to hook up networks of Latino/Chicano punks in the United States with punk kids throughout Central and South America with the emphasis on resisting, at the international level, US imperialism and free-trade organizations, and, at the local level, issues of gentrification, immigration, and racism. I could talk about this quite a bit, it seems, so I suppose I’ll leave it at that, saying only that:

whether or not the political outcomes are necessarily visible, the potential remains (particularly in reference to those alternative infrastructures referenced in my previous answer).

S: In your introduction to Paul Gilroy's "Two Sides of Anti-Racism" you say that his critique poses this crucial question: "To what extent does the focus on bogeymen like "fascism", "the state", and "cops" get in the way of understanding and transforming the far more complex racial (and class and sex) dynamics of punk rock itself?" This reductive political shorthand is still popular in oppositional politics and can certainly obscure any meaningful understanding of the problems faced. How does Gilroy answer this and how much of a problem do you think this is for contemporary punk and oppositional politics in general?

SD: I think Gilroy brings up an important point: it's far easier for white, straight, middle-class male punks (who make up the majority of the punk scene) to attack an enemy who's wearing a swastika rather than a power wrapped in the same race, gender, sex and class position as they have. To do the first means attacking The Other; to do the second means acknowledging that the enemy is within yourself. This, of course, is far more difficult and much more uncomfortable.

I think this offers an important lesson for the larger oppositional movement. The lesson is NOT that we need to feel guilty about who we are, or spend endless hours in self-criticism sessions (this is merely another form of narcissistic individualism, not to mention a colossal waste of political effort and valuable time), but instead

become adept at fighting an enemy who is not always clear, concise and identifiable; an enemy that is not explicitly The Other. Wouldn't it be nice to spot the "bad guys" over there, on the hill in the distance? A quick surgical strike is all that would be necessary. But this, of course, is a fantasy (one which the powerless share with the powerful). Racism isn't just about racists, sexism isn't about sexists, capitalism about capitalists. These are systems and structures with which we are intertwined; we need to learn how to fight these things while acknowledging we are a product of them. We need to destroy these systems of oppression without destroying ourselves.

MT: I've actually been thinking about this exact question quite a bit lately. In the first place, we should be clear that reductive political shorthand is one of the primary reasons punk rock is so appealing – and, on occasion, politically effective: it provides, in its more-or-less ambiguous "Fuck You!", a formal representation of rage that is easily tapped into, and one that can be further filled out with more explicit political content. If it doesn't get filled out, it tends to get a little tiresome and perhaps irresponsible, but the potential is at least there. I think the problem with "the cops" and "the state" is not necessarily their vagueness as concepts, but the distance it places between punk/punks and the societal ills it claims to oppose, leaving less room to talk about forms of oppression that do arise within the scene. Gilroy, I think, is making the point that the shift of priorities from Rock Against Racism to the Anti-Nazi League was both politically ineffective insofar as it unduly limited the goals of anti-racist organizing, but was also perhaps symptomatic of RAR's over-

arching concern with 'anti-racism', rather than black liberation.

S: One theme in *White Riot* traces Punk's transition from subversion (identified with Johnny Rotten) to "pure nihilism" (identified with Sid Vicious). How do the contributors explain this change and what reasons can you give for it?

SD: I think punk history is too complicated to trace a clear line from subversion to nihilism (though our contributors might disagree), or from politicization to de-politicization. These tendencies seem to co-exist simultaneously at any time in punk's history as, indeed, they existed at one and the same time in the Sex Pistols. But if I was forced to plot some sort of line of political progression over punk I'd have to argue that it is gotten more political over time; it's de rigour for any punk band today, be it in New Jersey or New Delhi, to sing about issues like capitalism and imperialism, and that certainly was not the case in the late 70s when you were more likely to hear pure negation like that expressed in the Ramones' song "I'm Against It." Whether singing about overthrowing capitalism and doing anything about it are connected is another matter entirely, and a topic I take up in one of my other responses.

MT: On some level, I think it is constitutive of punk as an oppositional subculture that its subversive elements sometimes tend towards nihilism. It's loud, confrontational music whose explicit politics aren't always legible; as such, it is actually quite easy for less-than-attentive fans to mishear, say, "Fuck you capitalism for these rigorous reasons!" as merely "Fuck you!"

Further, that's part of punk's appeal in the first place: young folks, whom punk rock primarily attracts, often feel like there's something wrong with the world but don't necessarily have the focused political rage of seasoned veterans, and abstract expressions of misunderstood anger are exactly what they need to initially develop a sense of place and belonging.

"Kids working against the dominant culture to 'fix shit up' as opposed to 'fuck shit up'."

Now, if one's thinking STOPS there, then that's obviously a problem and one has somehow missed the point of the last 20-odd years of committed anarchist punk politics. Some scenes calcify around the nihilistic tendency more readily than others, but that thread was perhaps most attractive at a moment in time in the early 1980s (say, Black Flag era Los Angeles), prior to punk's political coming-of-age. I'm not sure there's any exhaustive way of accounting for why this is the case, but it may have something to do with interpreting what was a primarily urban musical phenomenon in a suburban environment, in which punk's more explicit political concerns (such as police violence against communities of color) were less immediately present.

S: *White Riot* is, as you say, a genealogy of Punk's understanding of itself as a "white phenomenon". Could you retell, briefly, how Punk's relationship to race is rethought and

redefined in the years since its inception?

SD: *White Riot* really traces two family trees, or maybe it's three. The first is punk's understanding of itself as a "white phenomenon." There's a demographic truth to this: the punk scene was, and still is, primarily peopled by whites. What we found interesting, however, was the self-consciousness of this whiteness. Born at a time (mid 70s) when white supremacy is being challenged, and in locations that are overwhelmingly multi-racial (New York, London, Washington DC, Los Angeles), the white kids who take up punks do not understand their ethnicity as whites often do in the West: as "universal," the default setting which needs no explanation. Instead whiteness, within punk, becomes something to define and articulate. For punks on the Left, including bands like the Clash or Stiff Little Fingers, or those who played at and attended the Rock Against Racism concerts, whiteness could be re-defined in solidarity with those of other races; what rock critic Jeff Chang, writing about Joe Strummer, calls a "radical whiteness." But such a moment of definition could easily move the other way too: into the virulent racism of White Power bands like Skrewdriver.

But this is only half the story, because half of *White Riot* is questioning the idea that punk is really just a White Riot. Punk's family was multi-racial from the very start. Not only in the fact that white punks borrowed styles and riffs from black reggae, but that non-white punk bands and fans were an integral part of punk history. The predominant image of hardcore punk, for instance, is of some beefy white guy like Black Flag's Henry Rollins grimacing as he

screams into a microphone. But Henry Rollins learned about hardcore as a DC teenager from the pioneering all-black hardcore band Bad Brains. And long before Rollins joined Black Flag, the band was fronted by Puerto Rico-born Ron Reyes (with another Latino band member on drums, and a black producer for their classic song "White Minority.") Punk might like to think of itself as white, but in reality it never has been...and is becoming increasingly less so.

The most vibrant punk scenes today are no longer in London or New York but in cities like Mexico City or Jakarta, Indonesia. This globalization of punk decenters the assumed whiteness of punk; it also problematizes the racial dichotomies at the heart of punk. Black/white, Asian/white, Latino/white -- the racial axes around which punk has revolved for decades have little meaning in a place like Jakarta, so punks there do there what they've always done: adapt and adopt the culture so that it speaks to the concerns that are relevant to them. And in the process the riot that is punk becomes, racially and ideologically, a lot more multi-hued.

MT: I think it takes us – and all of our fabulous contributors – the length of our book to really answer this question adequately, but one thing I can say is that, for all punk's own exclusions and presumptions, it does at least provide the cultural infrastructure to address these questions in a frank and quasi-democratic manner. Punk's relationship to race – whether it is an assumption of necessary radical whiteness, white power, a Latino appropriation of punk rock in Spanish or a structural critique of punk's racism – is more or less rigorously argued and negotiated over numerous different cultural platforms

where, and this is the crucial part, response and contribution is not just welcomed but actively encouraged. Yes, there are limits to DIY culture (who has access to it, how far the conversation can carry with limited distribution and tiny runs of records and zines), but at its best it can cut through the bullshit veneer of modern discourse on race and allow for truly strange and exciting developments to take place.

Stephen Duncombe is Associate Professor at the Gallatin School and the Department of Media, Culture and Communications of New York University where he teaches the history and politics of media. He is author of Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy and the editor of the Cultural Resistance Reader.

Maxwell Tremblay writes for Maximumrocknroll, plays drums in the band SLEEPiES, and is a doctoral student in Philosophy at the New School for Social Research.

White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race has just been published on Verso.

GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL: VALUES, EXAMPLES, POTENTIALS

Gabriel Kuhn

Modern football is often criticized for bringing the history of football as the “people’s game” to an end. Authors like Matthew Bazell (*Theatre of Silence*, 2008) speak of the game’s “lost soul.” With respect to professional soccer and its ever increasing commercialization, such views are hardly surprising. Earlier this year, the 24-year old Sporting Gijon defender Javi Poves quit his job in protest. He was quoted by the Spanish daily ABC as saying, “The more you know about football the more you realise it is all about money, that it is rotten and this takes away your enthusiasm.”

However, the professional game is only the surface of a global football culture that, on the grassroots level, remains as much a people’s game as it has always been. In the alleys and backyards, on the meadows and beaches, the traditional “soul” of football is still alive. The 2010 documentary film *Pelada*, which follows Luke Boughen and Gwendolyn Oxenham, two U.S. soccer enthusiasts, on their journey playing pick-up games in twenty-five countries, is but one example to demonstrate this.

At its core, grassroots football shares many principles with grassroots organizing, championed in many alternative and progressive circles: self-management, horizontal organizing, anti-commercialism, a strong community

base, etc. Grassroots football can take on many forms. This article attempts to present some of them.



The classic: the pick-up game

On the most basic level, grassroots football consists of kickabouts and pick-up games. Whether it is on college playing fields, city parks, or neighbourhood playgrounds – in many places, people simply gather at more or less regular times and in more or less organized fashion to play casual games of football. The rules – usually very loose – are established locally. Very often, the fun and the community aspects are at the centre, sides change constantly with a flow of arriving and departing players, scores are hardly kept, and referees unnecessary – it is an entirely self-managed affair,

very much the opposite to the strictly regulated and contested professional game. While we ought not romanticize and forget that occasional arguments, and even fights, can erupt on such occasions, that certain social groups – especially women – often remain excluded, and that (micro) power structures and territorial claims can be part of the experience, many kickabouts and pick-up games are conducted in an open, welcoming, and peaceful spirit. People enjoy the company of others, making new friends, and, of course, playing football.

The events also provide a setting, in which football proves its reputation as an “international language”: visitors, travellers, and migrants can often connect to local populations ways that are impossible otherwise, be it because of language barriers or because of prejudice. On the football field, class or educational backgrounds do not matter – if anything, middle-class college kids have to prove that they can be “part of the people.” The improvised football ground is a place that challenges many of society’s barriers.

Community Football: 17 SK

On the basis of the social values entailed in grassroots football, people around the world have established more sophisticated versions of the pick-up game variety, mainly in founding projects providing a more organized framework, with reserved playing fields, regular hours, and individuals taking on responsibility for basic equipment (balls, goals, jerseys). The casual character of the game does not change, however: scores are not necessarily kept, sides are switched around, rules are

“Grassroots football shares many principles with grassroots organizing... self-management, horizontal organizing, anti-commercialism, a strong community base.”

flexible and decided upon democratically, and referees are replaced by self-responsibility. Often, the motivation is to make use of football’s social values in the context of local community organizing and social work. One recent example is 17 SK, a community sports club founded in Stockholm in early 2011.

17 SK emerged from Nätverket Linje 17, a network of community projects along the southern end of Stockholm’s subway line 17. Nätverket Linje 17 describes itself as “an umbrella for different initiatives and activities of local groups focusing on a variety of issues, from organizing talks to involvement in local schools and collective gardening.”

In this context, the idea behind 17 SK was, in the words of the initiators, to “create an environment in which people can play sports with a sense of community and without competitive pressure. We also want to use sports’ potential to bring people together, to get to know one another, and to share joy, laughter, and exercise.” Flyers including this credo, and an enchanting artwork by Fiona Moyler, borrowed from an article about “Revolutionary Football”



Fiona Moyler/RAG: RAG: Anarcha-Feminist Magazine

in the Irish RAG: Anarcha-Feminist Magazine, were distributed in the neighbourhood to launch the project.

The results have exceeded all expectations. 17 SK started with one mixed game a week. Soon, a women's game and training session, open to transgender people, was organized on another evening, then a second mixed game on the weekend, and finally a football school for children, including kids at the tender age of two. All this happened within a few months, when a total of about one hundred people, ranging in age from twelve to sixty-five, had attended the games, the majority not tied to activist circles and hailing from a variety of countries rarely seen represented together at local political meetings: apart from Sweden, there were players from Argentina, Austria, England, Gambia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Russia, Somalia, the U.S., and other countries I now forget.

The level of competitiveness is kept at bay by the project's guiding principles. Switching sides

has proven to be a very easy manner of avoiding the winner-loser pattern. Rules are kept to a minimum and the standard points of contention (throw-ins, corner kicks, role of goalkeepers, etc.) are decided collectively on the spot depending on the number of players, the size of the field, and other factors. Most games have been played on a patch of grass next to the fields of the local football club where portable goals and water are available, allowing the players to make use of often undervalued public resources, which fits in nicely with the anti-privatization sentiments of the Linje 17 network.

The biggest challenge for the mixed games was avoiding the neighbourhood's "football lads" from taking over the event. Even in Sweden, where women's soccer enjoys a comparatively high status among the population, a strong gender imbalance is deeply embedded in the game and football tends to be an area in which masculine hierarchies are established and defended. Despite pledges of "inclusiveness"

and “non-competitiveness,” this can also spill into projects like 17 SK. However, very gentle countermeasures proved to make a big difference. After a couple of weeks, four “guidelines” were established that prevented some of the most problematic behaviour from recurring and thereby making the games much more welcoming for people with less football experience, which was one of the main goals of 17 SK from the very beginning. These guidelines, repeated at the beginning of every game, were:

1. No hard physical play: no tackles, no high kicks, etc.
2. No hard shots with the potential of injuring people
3. Encouragement between players rather than critique
4. Responsibility to include everyone in the game

Especially number four turned out to be of great importance. Even with the best intentions, it is easy to pass the ball to friends or players you consider most likely to score rather than to newcomers or less experienced players. However, the insistence on the guidelines together with a raised level of awareness proved effective in the long run, and while it would be foolish to claim that all problems were overcome at the end of the 2011 outdoor season, the 17 SK games had turned much more inclusive and enjoyable for everyone – at times, women outnumbered men even in the mixed games.

Establishing a women’s group, “17 Sisters,” was another means to counter the gender imbalance inherent in football and to provide more space for women to play. There is an overlap

between the mixed games and the women’s group, with some women participating in both. Others prefer to play only in the women’s games. Among other things, 17 Sisters has contributed to 30-year-olds playing football for the first time in an environment they actually enjoy. The success has been huge. Now, there is a 17 Sisters Facebook group with close to fifty members and indoor facilities have been organized to continue weekly games during the winter. This is a pioneering effort within 17 SK, which will hopefully inspire more indoor activities next winter – significant in a country like Sweden.

Meanwhile, “17 Kids,” the children’s football school, has been enjoyed both by the children and their parents who self-manage the school. Not only can children at the youngest age participate, there is also a conscious effort not to let gender determine early divisions (personally, I consider five-year old boys naming Sweden’s Lisa Dahlqvist as their favourite player a huge step forward), and not to exclude anyone for “lack of talent” or “lack of ambition,” making the common joy in playing the most important aspect instead.

“It is useful to break out of your Political community and enter the political Community, and ‘expanded’ sports clubs can be a short-cut to doing this.”

With the first outdoor season finished, there are, of course, plenty of discussions about how to proceed with 17 SK. So far, no 17 SK team has been formed to play in competitions. Shall one, in the future, participate in “Korpen,” a Swedish variety of Sunday Leagues, or at least in amateur tournaments around town? Or would this violate the non-competitive credo? Can the “community project” continue, while a Sunday League team might emerge from it? If so, can both projects carry the same name?

For 17 SK, these questions will be answered in the future. Other grassroots football projects already field teams in Sunday Leagues and amateur tournaments. Many of them prove that this does not necessarily mean to betray football’s social values – in fact, it can be a vehicle to promote them.

From Lunatics to Cowboys

There are many self-managed clubs in football, formed by colleagues at work, the patrons of a certain pub, or the sports nerds of a university lab. All of them are part of the wider world of grassroots football, at least as long as they aren’t run by power-hungry egocentrics and sponsored by local businessmen, which are the first steps towards football being controlled by political and economic interests rather than by the people playing it. Some teams avoid any such development consciously and make up the backbone of what is a constantly growing global network of grassroots football clubs based on principles of self-management, anti-commercialism, and community organizing.

The histories of these clubs differ, but they are

all, in one way or another, rooted in combining a passion for football with the desire to make the world a better place. The Lunatics from Antwerp, who want “to combine a great fighting spirit and an attacking mind with the necessary fair play” derived their name from a local reggae band and formed already in the 1980s, “when some young punks and other youths didn’t only want to hang around in the local



Easton Cowboys. © R S Grove.

park, but started kicking a ball as well.” The Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls Sports Club in Bristol developed from a Sunday League team formed in 1992 by “twenty punks, anarchists, hippies, asylum seekers and local kids” into a flagship of alternative sports organizing with twelve current league teams in four sports (apart from football, Cowboys and Cowgirls are to be reckoned with in cricket, basketball, and netball). The Republica Internationale FC, calling itself a “socialist football club,” has its roots in various amateur teams formed in Leeds in the 1980s, before taking its current name in 2001. The FC Vova was born from a football match advertised on a Lithuanian punk website in 2004 – today, the FC Vova Sunday League team draws up to two hundred fans and

has its own supporter clubs. The Autônomos & Autônomas FC of São Paulo, Brazil, was founded in May 2006 “by a bunch of punks who were tired of other punks questioning their passion for football and of football fans questioning their passion for punk”; recently, they acquired their own club house.

The constitution of the Republica Internazionale FC contains values that are, essentially, shared by all of the mentioned projects:

“The club will not tolerate racist, homophobic, sexist, prejudicial, or abusive behaviour by any of its members.

The game should be played in good sporting spirit.

Whilst committed to the rigour of hard physical, competitive sport, players will not behave in an unacceptably aggressive or violent way.

Players should play in a camaraderie spirit of a team, co-operatively advise each other in a positive manner and never offer purely negative criticism.

Players should recognise that the game is played, first and foremost for fun!”

The political potential that lies in playing football on this basis has been summarized in an excellent article written by Roger Wilson, founding member of the Easton Cowboys, for the book *Soccer vs. the State: Tackling Football and radical Politics*. Calling “soccer the lubricant, progressive ideas the engine,” Wilson elaborates thus:

“Football (and other sports) can go some way to breaking divisions of nation, race and culture whereas overtly Political interventions often fail.

Ideas such as autonomy, popular democracy, inclusivity, and internationalism can be practically explored outside of the confines of Political organizations.

It can be easier to test ideas like these when there is no overt Political approach. The ideas themselves are more important than political stances or labels.

It is useful to break out of your Political community and enter the political Community, and ‘expanded’ sports clubs can be a short-cut to doing this.

Organizations such as sports clubs can provide social spaces for people to meet, which can overcome some facets of sub-cultural, race, class and gender divisions.

Clubs such as the Cowboys should not be judged on their ability to achieve Political objectives but in their capability to put radical ideas into practice and act as conduits for their spread both locally and globally.”

One of the strengths of this level of grassroots football is the international dimension that comes from being able to send teams

to “football festivals” abroad. Events like the Anti-Racism World Cup in Belfast, the Alternative World Cup in alternate locations, or the numerous Antifa Football Cups in Germany allow players and activists to meet regularly, to establish ties, and to exchange experiences and ideas. The best-known of these events is probably the Mondiali Antirazzisti in Italy, organized since 1997. Today, over two hundred teams participate and numerous social and political events are organized parallel to the football games. Soccer games are also organized at political protests. In 2008, for example, an Anti-G8 Football Cup was arranged by the incredibly energetic Rage & Football Collective from Tokyo during the anti-G8 protests in Japan.

A People’s Game to Stay

The politics of football aren’t set. Unfortunately, football can be tied to many political ideas and forces. As pointed out, grassroots football itself can reproduce highly problematic power structures on a micro level. However, grassroots football holds great political potential and keeps the best of football’s history as a “people’s game” alive. Calling football “one of the greatest concepts of humanity,” as the now defunct www.soccernova.com website did some years ago might overdo it a touch, but there is indeed much to be excited about. There are values inherent in football that can help us form and establish communities based on direct democracy, solidarity, and, not least, fun. Under ideal circumstances, football is a great environment in which to experience and to experiment with the juncture of individual freedom and social responsibility. People with

many different skills have to work together to make a successful team. Individual star players might dazzle, but their role must not be over-rated. For him or her to shine, others have to do plenty of work that they are not able to do: form a solid defence line, run down loose balls, tackle opponents, win headers, and so forth. There are many examples in football history of a team of “no names” beating a star-studded side simply because the players made the most of their abilities as a team. Football teaches people to combine their individual talents in the way most beneficial to the social good. When opposing players, spectators, and the social environment of a team are included in this ethos, football can become an important part of community organizing in general. The fun aspect might appear trivial, but it is a crucial moment in the grassroots soccer experience, both for players and spectators. It must not be belittled as “non-political.” The U.S. Anarchist Football Association’s variation on the famous Emma Goldman quote about not wanting a revolution in which she can’t dance, is telling: “If I can’t play soccer, I don’t want any part of your revolution.”

If these values are focused on, then grassroots football can be a unique combination of social learning, political education, community building, and sheer pleasure. Its future echoes that of one of its most prominent incarnations, the Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls Sports Club, as described by Roger Wilson:

“There’s a sense in which the club is one ever-unfolding social experiment. Most sports clubs or social organisations have a limited lifespan and often rise and fall pretty quickly, but nearly twenty years

into the Cowboys I have no idea what or where it might lead to next or what the shape of the club might be in five years' time. Which, after all, mirrors the excitement of playing the 'beautiful game.' You never quite know what might happen next..”

Gabriel Kuhn is an Austrian-born writer and translator, currently living in Stockholm, Sweden. He publishes on a variety of subjects, including anarchism, subculture, and sports. Among his most recent books are Sober Living for the Revolution: Hardcore Punk, Straight Edge, and Radical Politics (PM Press, 2010) and Soccer vs. the State: Tackling Football and Radical Politics (PM Press, 2011).

REVIEW OF *THE ASSAULT ON UNIVERSITIES:* *A MANIFESTO FOR RESISTANCE*

Nina Power

What will higher education in the UK look like in a few years' time? What can we do right now to save it?

If the coalition government's vision in the Browne Report and subsequent White Paper is to be implemented in full we can imagine several things, all highly undesirable: a two-tier university system in which rich and well-placed middle and upper-middle class students dominate the Russell Group even more than they do already; these institutions, now being able to set their own fees, can charge Ivy-League rates whilst ignoring the all least attempted meritocratic supplement of US college scholarships; students at these institutions will be able to study a wide range of subjects, including those in the arts and humanities – Philosophy, History and Classics will thus return to being the preserve of a cultured elite. In the second tier, private providers will take over those institutions unable to survive the loss of the block grant and who lack land and other resources to weather the sudden loss of income: degrees here will be shorter,

perhaps lasting two years rather than three or four, classes will run before and after people go to work, or at weekends, and much of the provision will appear online. Smaller subjects will have disappeared due to a supposed lack of demand and the awkwardness of fitting them into the timetable. Endless feedback forms will attempt to reassure the student that he or she is first and foremost a “client”, unless he or she is

“The students who took to the streets were not defending the education factories we so resent, but were fighting back against education becoming more of what it already is.”

—Ashok Kumar

involved in any political action on campus or elsewhere, in which case the new squatting laws will immediately be applied, turning the student from consumer to criminal faster than you can say “domestic extremist”.

Police will increasingly be brought in to work as security staff, while swipe-card points will

be installed and activated across campuses; any meeting that involves discussion of police or organising student protest will be heavily monitored, with applications having to be in to the student union for such events weeks in advance. Meanwhile, lecturers will be increasingly asked to spy on their students, to monitor their absences and report any

suspicious behaviour, all the while ensuring that the same student is nevertheless constantly satisfied with the course and the teaching. Students will “share” heavily securitised and policed campuses with large groups of business people from companies paying a lot to the university for use of rooms and catering; academic conferences will have been deemed unable to continue when those organising them have been asked to rent rooms at competitive prices, so these have been scrapped, unless outside funding for them has come from multinational corporations, the arms trade and government bodies.

Anyone involved in higher education in recent years will recognise some, if not most, of this depressing vision of university education where the opportunity for (above all) working class students to study subjects in serious depth has been significantly eroded, with debt putting increasing numbers off, and term-time employment, necessary to keep afloat, eating into the time students can put in to attending class and working on essays. And just as working class students are increasingly placed at a distance from the earlier widening participation agenda of the mid-20th century, those universities most committed to this agenda, the post-92 institutions, are suffering earlier and harder than their Russell group peers. As Des Freedman puts it in the introduction to this collection, these are the institutions that ‘do not have the international students, research contracts or established “brands” to help them withstand the removal of public funding’. It should be added that when these institutions, despite the odds, do have world-ranked research departments, that



*Around 50,000 students demonstrated in London against the proposed higher education cuts.
Andrew Moss Photography via Flickr, CC BY 2.0*

money is nevertheless not redirected from the older ‘research-oriented’ institutions as a whole: ‘Now is not the time!’ the government cry. “Pockets of excellence” do not mean pockets containing any cash....

The Assault on Universities is the correct title for this collection of several short, sharp essays on the past, present and future of the university. What we have seen, not just under the current government, but for many years now, is an assault, part of a long-wave of attacks on the integrity, economic status and relative independence of the university that has caused terror, acquiescence, revulsion, opposition and anger in fairly equal measures among staff, current students and future students alike. It would be impossible, of course, to cleanly extract an image of the damage being done to higher education from the broader swathe of cuts that are currently being inflicted on every part of the social body; but, as many of the contributors note, the student protests of late 2010 and early 2011, and the occupations that grew out of the Gaza protests several months earlier were hugely significant. The

current worldwide occupy movement, the August riots, the Arab Spring, the sluggish but potentially massive movement in the unions, the new waves of student protests on US campuses, not to mention the on-going struggles against education reform in Chile and elsewhere are all related – how exactly we may not have time to articulate before the next round of “austerity measures” and resistance to them, but very clearly things have changed, or are changing at high speed. We always think we live in interesting times, but sometimes we actually do.

The Assault on Universities thus covers a lot of ground quite quickly, analysing the history of the university in earlier sections, before looking at the current raft of reforms, analysing critical pedagogy and looking at student reaction and resistance both in the UK and elsewhere. Not surprisingly, there is some overlap, but this is no bad thing: the critical reiteration of facts and positions becomes increasingly necessary as the possibility of resisting the assaults becomes narrower and narrower. There are only a few months before fees in the region of £9,000 kick in next year – already the block grant for arts and humanities has been removed and many departments, despite fierce student and staff resistance, have closed or have stopped recruitment in a variety of subjects. What the next few months will bring in terms of resistance – More occupations? Larger protests? Students and workers out on the streets on November 30th? – isn’t yet clear. The recent student protest organised by NCAFC on November 9th provided little more than an opportunity for the Met police’s new chief, Hogan-Howe,

to flex his muscles by getting 4,000 police on the street (almost one for every two protesters) as part of his “total policing” strategy. The ongoing prosecution of student protesters from last year has been well-documented, and the police violence noted, although nowhere near as structurally and systematically as would be useful to those confronting police at occupy movements, for example.

In a way, the writers here – a mixture of academics, students and activists, or all at once – perform the very thing that is in danger of being lost in the destruction of universities. That is to say, thoughtful, critical, synthetic and historical reflection. Neil Faulkner asks ‘What is a University For?’ while Jon Nixon asks us to re-imagine the Public Good; Michael Bailey discusses the academic’s relation to truth (via Foucault) while Natalie Fenton in ‘Impoverished Pedagogy, Privatised Practice’ points out that despite the corporate nature of the current university, ‘universities are still public institutions and their arts, humanities and social science departments are some of the last places that can challenge the principle that our lives can and should be ordered primarily by economic utility.’ These are the kinds of academics we needed all along – those who would have told the National Student Survey where to go; those who would, and still do, fight alongside their students; those who resist the marketisation and instrumentalisation of campuses, research and themselves.

But this important collection doesn’t just contain thoughtful and important work on what has been and what will be for those who care about the future of the university. The

inclusion at the back of the 'Manifesto for Resistance,' which was circulated and signed by hundreds of academics and researchers at the end of 2010, gives focus to the implications that transpire from the sixteen essays and include concrete demands that UK public expenditure should at least match that of the EU average (Britain currently lags 0.7 to 1.1%), that fees be abolished, grants restored and funding for all subjects be reintroduced. But who will listen?

The section on 'Student Politics' outlines very acutely exactly what those who make up the university have done: Feyzi Ismail addresses the strengths and limitations of occupations at SOAS and elsewhere, pointing to deep divisions among staff in supporting these actions, while recognising the importance

of staff and students siding together against government plans as well as management. As Alberto Toscano points out in his piece 'The University as Political Space', this relation is crucial: 'Under its mild and innocent appearance, "We Support our Lecturers" [one of the early campaigns coming out of the occupations] is potentially quite a subversive slogan (if reciprocated, and translated into a different practice of the university'. The bounds of this 'different practice' are precisely the hardest thing to be able to articulate: If the government and management have a plan for higher education, we need one too, and faster than theirs: one that resists and refuses in equal measure to the destruction currently being waged. Where the government's financial plans are deliberately opaque, we need clarity; where their rhetoric is about clients,



By lewishamdreamer via Flickr, CC BY-NC 2.0

consumerism and choice, ours needs – with massive force – to be about access for all, no fees and academic integrity. Our defence, our method, our intuitive way of working – subtlety, ambiguity and careful reading – runs the risk of being our undoing. We are already on the back-foot. The trick, it seems to me, is not to be simply defending what little we have left, but to be actively campaigning for so much more. As Ashok Kumar puts it in his piece on the student movement: ‘The students who took to the streets were not defending the education factories we so resent, but were fighting back against education becoming more of what it already is’. We need to be both realistic and unrealistic in demanding the possible and the impossible at the same time: imagine a world without fees! With grants! With a government and management that supported academic work as such! What is now seen as impossible was once a reality. Let us demand our fantasy of the good old days in the name of the new.

The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto of Resistance *is available from Pluto Press for £13.*

Nina Power is a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at Roehampton University. She is the co-editor of Alain Badiou’s On Beckett and his Political Writings. Nina has published widely on topics including Iran, humanism, vintage pornography and Marxism. Her book One Dimensional Woman is published by O-Books.

OCCUPY BLOG

CROSSROADS AT CAIRO: THE ECONOMICS OF DEMOCRACY

Marianne Maeckelbergh

Cairo | December 2011

Cairo is a city engulfed in violent anticipation. Activists speak with pride about what they are accomplishing as they enter into their 11th month of struggle. And rightfully so. They “shed their fear” and came together to realise that despite continuous torture, repression, and military dictatorship, they are stronger than the authoritarian state. It’s a strangely powerful feeling that hangs in the air, that permeates conversations, that captures the imagination. The bravery, passion and camaraderie of the people I have met here in Cairo cannot be captured in words. It is a beauty that will inspire me for years to come. Nothing is certain, everything is frighteningly unpredictable, and yet, there is hope. Even those most critical of the current elections, those least satisfied with the authoritarian course the government is taking, have hope that things will get better. Why? Because they have seen, with their own eyes, the power of an enraged people fighting for dignity and a chance at social justice.

It sounds overdramatic when the words are written on the page, but here in Cairo it isn’t a poetic exaggeration, it is a simple everyday feeling. For all the hope people feel, however, they are also being confronted with the violent reality that the struggle is far from over. The

transition government is being run by the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) who continues to use excessive violence against protestors every time they demand their basic rights. People are still being shot at, beaten, arrested, and tortured for participating in sit-ins or for no reason at all. The SCAF do not need Mubarak to continue these practices of military rule, they are doing very well on their own.

Three important factors bring the political future in Egypt into question. The first, and the most frightening, is that the authoritarian and violent military rule has continued with vengeance. Second, the elections offer Egyptians little to no meaningful options. And last but not least, the underlying economic causes of the revolution remain unaddressed and no political force in Egypt seems to favour a transformation in economic policy.

Military Rule Continues

During the first wave of the Egyptian uprising, the protestors had two demands, the first was an end to the regime and the second was freedom, dignity and social justice. Mubarak may have been successfully forced out of power, but the Supreme Council of Armed Forces has stayed in power and has continued to use brutal force against the protestors. Since

November 19th, three days before the start of the elections, the army has repeatedly attacked protestors holding sit-ins: first in Tahrir square, which led to six days of non-stop street fighting and at least sixty dead, and now, at this very moment, near the cabinet building, where nine have been killed so far and many more wounded, arrested and tortured, as the fighting continues. The military junta that is currently running the country has no shame in attacking and killing those who are fighting for the very same demands that led to the fall of Mubarak.

Elections and Democracy

Perhaps the worst irony is that as the military attacks people in the streets, they are also standing guard at the election booths. Sometimes even on the same street. The protestors I met continuously pointed out the audacity of this contradiction, with remarks such as, “I don’t know what kind of elections they are interested in three days after the police and army opened fire on people in the streets. ... We have videos of the army personnel dragging people’s bodies and throwing them in trash piles. What kind of elections, what kind of democracy can you expect?” Or as another protestor put it, “We saw thousands of canisters of tear gas, live ammunition, coming from both the police and the army.



The Crowds in Tahrir Square, Egypt. By Gigi Ibrahim via Flickr, CC BY 2.0

It is absolutely obscene to consider elections in that climate. There is still blood in the streets – literally.” The blood keeps flowing as the army and police continue to beat and shoot people for defending their rights.

But this violence, shocking and traumatic as it is, is anything but surprising. Scholars have long argued that there is an intricate relationship between democracy and violence, though it can be hard at times to see it as clearly as it is in Cairo today. In a country that should be celebrating what has been (in retrospect mistakenly) referred to in the press as the country’s first free elections, there is little to be excited about. Rather than usher in a new era of freedom and social justice, the current elections are serving to legitimize the continued military



Graffiti from Muhammad Mahmoud Street, where many casualties had fallen amid the clashes with the security forces. By Muhammed Monehib CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

rule and the extreme violence that the army and the police are using against people in the streets. One of the greatest dangers of transitions to democracy, anywhere in the world, is that the word “democracy” brings with it certain assumptions about the existence of freedom, equality and rights. But in practice we often see the term applied in places where none of these exist. Thereby making it even harder for protestors to create political systems that could actually guarantee social justice. When there is officially “democracy”, it is assumed that there is also social justice, and struggles for social justice become, by definition, unnecessary. But the reality is that systems of representative democracy do not automatically result in social justice.

It’s the Economy

Finally, there is a certain irony in world politics at the moment, that is also visible in Egypt. When I was heading to Cairo, I wondered what a critique of democracy might look like in a country that has suffered over sixty years of military dictatorship. I wondered if there would even be a critique. But there was, and it was an insightful one. Many people mentioned the economics behind the uprisings and how they were not only about Mubarak, but also about the economic system that he violently defended. The liberalization of the Egyptian economy began in the 1970s under President Anwar Sadat, but in became “aggressive” in the 1990s when the IMF and World Bank sponsored the Economic Reform

and Structural Adjustment Programme. Food prices rose and relative incomes dropped as people struggled to make ends meet. Entrepreneurs and foreign investors profited as workers' conditions declined.

Faced with a transition government that has promised the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development that it remains committed to the open market approach and that it will pursue it at an accelerated rate following the upcoming elections, many people worry their situation will only get worse. The question then arises, what meaning does democracy have, what use is there in having many political parties, when there is only one economic system? Regardless of the election results, the economic system will be the same. This specific political problem is one people all over the world are waking up to. As another protester in Cairo reflected, "Elections almost have this magical sense to them. But when it comes down to it, there is actually very little value in that process because it is not allowing for change. It is not empowering the people to have their voice heard. The only way the people are going to have their voice heard is by going to the streets."

The Revolution is Continuous

It has been over ten months since the initial eighteen days of revolution that inspired a global wave of revolts last January, but it seems that in Egypt and across the world, this revolt is unlikely to end soon. The streets of Cairo alternate between calm and chaos, but the political struggle continues. As one protestor in

Egypt put it, it is not about winning or losing the fight, it is about continuing to struggle until we find a way to build a better political system, one that can actually ensure the social justice that the Egyptian revolution has inspired us all to seek.

Marianne Maeckelbergh is lecturer in Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University, Netherlands. She has 15 years experience as an activist, organising and facilitating exactly the decision-making processes that lie at the heart of her study. Her book The Will of Many is available from Pluto Press.

MAKING MUSIC A RACKET

Mat Callahan

The criminalization of file sharing spearheaded by groups such as the Recording Industry Association of America has been underway for more than a decade. While this strategy has failed to halt the decline in the sales of recorded music or the increase in the sharing of music via the internet it has nonetheless sown a great deal of confusion. In particular it has succeeded in pitting musicians against each other and their audiences. In a climate of fear and mutual recrimination the real culprits get off scot-free. To shed some light on this situation it is useful to examine how the music industry in the United States took shape, how copyright law evolved to serve it and how music has been affected by this process. While specific to one country, this experience is valuable to people in the Global South as a negative example that should not be followed. Most important, this history reveals characteristics of music and music-making that militate against its being turned into property and furthermore indicate possible solutions to our current dilemmas. To begin, we have to go back a hundred years.

In 1911 “Alexander’s Ragtime Band”, a song composed by Irving Berlin, became a big hit in the United States. There is some evidence that Berlin borrowed (to use the polite term) the music from a song written by Scott Joplin

which had been submitted to Berlin’s publisher. In any case, the song made explicit lyrical reference to a musical style, ragtime, that had been created by African-Americans, was associated with them in public consciousness and was enjoying widespread popularity at the time.

Meanwhile, also in 1911, “The Preacher and the Slave” was composed by Joe Hill, using the melody of the well known Christian hymn, “The Sweet Bye and Bye”. Hill was a revolutionary unionist, member of the Industrial Workers of the World and already well-known as a writer of songs for the workers’ struggle. “The Preacher and the Slave” was a parody, making deliberate and obvious use of another composition as part of its own message.

That these two songs became popular at the same time is both an indicator of the way music was then developing in the US as well as the conflicting interests involved in making it. What they had in common was that they were popular in the sense that many people heard and sung them. But “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” was made popular-meaning it was promoted and sold to the populace while “The Preacher and the Slave” was already popular because it arose from within the populace itself. Perhaps more importantly, Hill’s song was meant to serve the interests of the people while Berlin’s was meant to serve his own and his publisher’s.

Leaving aside the musical merits of either song, their creation and use were and remain diametrically opposed.

Berlin himself went on to fame and fortune whereupon, in 1920, he wrote his “Nine inviolable rules for writing a successful popular song”. The last two summarize the rest:

“8. Your song must be perfectly simple...

9. The song writer must look upon his work as a business...”

Hill was executed by the State of Utah on false murder charges because he was a militant labor leader and songwriter of the people. His songs are played to this day throughout the world and his example is an inspiration to all who struggle against suffering and injustice.

There are several conclusions one should draw from this comparison. First, is that the source of both songs in question was the vast reservoir of music circulating widely among the American people at the time. It is no exaggeration to say that this was an inexhaustible resource including diverse traditional forms from Africa, England, Ireland, Scotland and other European countries as well as religious and classical music both ancient and contemporary. Much of this had no known author and was developed

through what can be called the folk process-taking an existing song and modifying it in an endless series of additions and subtractions made anonymously by participants in the process.

Needless to

say, copyright played no role in the folk process. In fact, copyright had only recently become significant to music making when Berlin wrote “Alexander’s Ragtime Band”. This should convince us that the American people did not need music written for them, they were making it themselves. Furthermore, much of this came from materially impoverished workers and farmers who were nevertheless musically rich. Finally, as has ever been the case in the United States, the particular role of African American music-in this case ragtime, a precursor of jazz-was fundamental to anything the world has come to know as “American” music. Of the many injustices done by the music industry in particular and capitalism in general none are more obvious and egregious than those done to black people and their musical legacy. In



Carlos Cortes

fact, this is so well known by anyone vaguely aware of American history and culture that it is astonishing that the music industry can still fool people into thinking it is some innocent, neutral force serving the public good.

Yet that is precisely how in 1909 publishers presented themselves when lobbying for the passage of the United States Copyright Reform Act. In a pattern that has been repeated ever since, appeals were made, not on the basis of the publishers' financial interests but on the basis of the rights of composers and the benefit to the public of encouraging composers' creativity by financial reward. But this concealed the fact that very few composers actually supported the Copyright Reform Act. Indeed, FW Hedgland, an inventor of musical instruments, testifying before the congressional committee considering the bill, said he had "failed to find a single, solitary letter from any one composer petitioning or asking for protection under a measure of this kind." Furthermore, publisher Isidore Witmark "...tried to marshal the support of the five or six thousand aspiring songwriters whose works his firm had rejected in recent years, by sending each one a letter suggesting his or her song might have been accepted for publication if not for the phonograph and piano roll businesses, whose reckless and opportunistic exploitation of others' music-free of charge-handicapped publishers' growth and ability to acquire new songs. He urged the songwriters to write their elected representatives to demand a revision of copyright law." The point here is obvious and more relevant now than ever: copyright was not about music or even about rights. It was about publishers gaining state sanction, the legal enforcement of laws protecting capital

investment and guaranteeing the highest possible return. This capital investment was not in paying composers but in promoting songs and their performance in public by famous singers or orchestras. The real aim of the music industry in the United States was and is to control, monopolistically, the manufacture of celebrity and the use of public space. In order to achieve this they needed to enlist composers in their cause. To that end, they were happy to offer composers a royalty payment that left the lion's share of profits with the publisher. A leading music producer, David Rubinson, has likened this to the sharecropping system in all essential features.

"It is astonishing that the music industry can still fool people into thinking it is some innocent, neutral force serving the public good."

Other parties to copyright reform were the manufacturers of three technologies, namely, the player piano, the phonograph and the radio. Initially, the manufacturers of these devices opposed copyright reform because they needed recorded music in order to sell their products and thus rejected any impediment to acquiring it. They were joined in this opposition by the leaders of orchestras, which were very popular at the time, who contended that once they'd bought the sheet music they were entitled to use it as often as they liked without further

payment. It need hardly be mentioned that this scenario has been repeated in the case of the iPod and with similar consequences (Steve Jobs of Apple cutting a deal with the majors to have access to their copyrighted material in order to attract customers for his music player). At the time, however, the publishers won out and over the next decade were able to establish all the structures that have remained unchallenged until the advent of file sharing. One outstanding example of how this actually took place is the story of Ralph Peer and the Victor Talking Machine Company, manufacturer of the victrola or phonograph.

Ralph Peer was a recording engineer who'd already made a number of field recordings in the southern United States when he made a deal with Victor to work for free in return for the copyright to the recordings he made for them. Victor happily agreed seeing great value in having more recordings to make their machines attractive, particularly to working people who did not have the electricity needed to play radios. Many such people were living in the rural South with which Peer was familiar. What Victor didn't see and Peer did was that a lot of music was written and performed by these very people and, most importantly, there was value in the copyrights to the songs. In 1927, Peer went to Bristol, Tennessee, advertised in the local papers that he was holding auditions and musical history was made. He recorded many musicians, amateur and professional, playing a wide range of songs, some traditional, others original. To the performers he chose, Peer paid \$50 and a 2 and 1/2 cent royalty for each copy sold. A couple of these performers went on to become famous-the Carter Family and Jimmy

Rogers. In one quarter of one year, 1928, Peer made \$250,000 from the copyrights he controlled.⁶ This exemplified the model on which the music industry was based and continues to be to this day. A few artists become famous, most do not, a publisher becomes rich.

Properties of Music against Music as Property

But there is more to this story. In 1952 Folkways Records released "The Anthology of American Folk Music". This was a peculiar item for a number of reasons. First of all, its 84 songs had been selected by one man, Harry Smith, from his personal collection of over 10,000 78s acquired largely from disused or discarded stock in music stores and other outlets. Secondly, it drew to a large extent from the recordings Ralph Peer had made between 1927 and 1932. Third, the entire collection was a pirate copy according to copyright law since no permission was sought or granted for use of the music or the master recordings. Now this collection is considered a major contribution to musical history, a treasure trove plumbed by the likes of Bob Dylan and the Grateful Dead. It has been reissued to great acclaim by the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. Smith was even given a Grammy award. But its origins bear striking similarities to those of music lovers who use the internet to compile their own "Anthologies" today. Moreover, Smith sold his collection along with his detailed annotation of each song to Folkways Records because he was in need of funds. Did he rip off the composers of the songs? Was he a pirate or was he, instead, a devotee of music serv-

ing the common good? Remember, by the time the Anthology was compiled the original recordings were gathering dust, even the medium on which they had been released was by 1952 almost obsolete. (the 78 was being replaced by the 45 and the 331/3 LP) What Smith and Folkways Records did was in fact a resurrection of timeless music that in the hands of the music industry had been turned into a passing fancy to be enjoyed briefly and discarded.

The recordings on the Anthology show that the music industry was perfectly happy to record and release music not made in New York by songwriters such as Irving Berlin if it could make a profit. "Thar's Gold in Them Hillbillies" was the title of a 1938 magazine article reporting that talent scouts working for Columbia, Victor and Okeh Records had been scouring the South for music that could be packaged and sold. This formed the basis of distinct musical categories for white and black people—namely Hillbilly (later Country&Western) for whites and Race records (later Rhythm&Blues) for blacks. What it did in all cases, however, was to emphasize the novelty of every release, promising new songs to replace the old ones on a weekly basis. Even when they were identified as "Old Time Music" or "Old Familiar Tunes" it was the recorded medium itself that was being sold, record players and radios proffering modernity to their purchasers. Since much of the music on the Anthology was in fact old music, its novelty was artificial—indeed, oldness and familiarity were themselves being marketed as novelties. But no matter, once a song or performer had exhausted its lifetime as a profit making unit it was discarded and replaced by

the next release. Moreover, it entered a broader market that had already substantially broken down the regional and ethnic barriers subjecting musicians to the demands coming from New York. And this impacted music in particular ways.

For example, Irving Berlin and others of his ilk were not only calling songwriting a business, they were quite deliberately narrowing what a popular song's musical content should be. In a word, popular music should be entertainment, systematically excluding any reference to controversy or conflict of a social nature except to the extent that it was patriotic or extolled vague moral truisms. Not only did this stance pit the music industry against songwriting such as Joe Hill's which had an overtly political purpose, it excluded entire legacies of music from both the working classes as well as composers of "serious" or art music that expressed the full range of lived experience. Indeed, the characteristics of authentic music of the people everywhere is that it expresses three conditions of life, namely, suffering, struggling and rejoicing. Diversion and escape only become its dominant features when it is made on commission for the music industry and for advertising. Evidence of this is found both in Smith's Anthology and in how this Anthology was taken up by young people during the decade following its release.

Participants in what came to be known as the Folk Music Revival considered the Anthology a "Bible" of sorts, partly because one could hear in it a way of life that was a rapidly receding memory. The migration of millions of black and white people from the southern US to the factories of the North following the Great De-



pression and during WWII changed America profoundly and this was evident in the music America made. But what is of particular interest here is that a young generation began listening to the music of the Anthology as being genuine, not fake; more authentically popular because it was non-commercial unlike the pop music being sold to them by the music industry. And this, in spite of the fact that it had originally been recorded for commercial purposes. This is clearly ironic but not in the sense that young folk revivalists were deluding themselves about the sources of their “Bible”. No, the irony lies in the music industry stumbling onto timeless music, priceless to those who loved it, and attempting to turn it into fashionable consumer goods which quickly become dated and of no further interest. As young people became increasingly aware, the music industry was not their friend. It was waging a relentless campaign to gain control of what is ultimately an ungovernable force, namely the music that provided young people such inspiration. We mustn't forget that the business has never been completely successful in achieving its ends. Indeed, the great revolutionary storms of the Sixties were characterized by among other things, a conscious and vehement rejection of the musical and commercial norms established by the music industry

in the first half of the 20th Century. Though rock and roll and other forms were ultimately recuperated and used to strengthen the grip of the music industry itself does not alter the fact that in musical terms the mold was broken. In fact, the Sixties were the death knell of Tin Pan Alley, the rejection of Irving Berlin's model of songwriting and even the overthrow of the hierarchy which put classical music at its pinnacle and rock and roll in the gutter. This happened, in part, because certain characteristics of music and music making inevitably pit it against attempts to turn it into a marketable good.

First, music making is a collective activity. Music is most often made in groups, from small bands to large orchestras. Even when an individual composes and performs alone, there is always the audience to consider. More importantly, music always involves many participants when one considers those who trained the musician, those whose music inspired the musician and those who will be influenced by the musician in the future. This is why music necessitates the forming of communities. That is, communities of practitioners and communities of shared interest. The designation author or composer made by copyright law and industry practices is a distortion of the collaborative nature music making rests upon. Besides, this move was made to accomplish two interdependent objectives having nothing to do with music as such, namely, to replace the virtually limitless supply of already existing music with a disposable, manufactured unit needing constant replenishment (i.e.: the pop song) and to firmly attach the individual to the manufacture of this product. This was not only accomplished by the propaganda used by Irving Berlin and

other Tin Pan Alley songwriters. It was also done by outright fraud. One classic example of this is in the case of Chuck Berry's first big hit, "Maybellene". Johnnie Johnson, pianist on the recording session for the song recalls, "It was an old fiddle tune called 'Ida Red'. I changed the music and re-arranged it, Chuck re-wrote the words, and the rest, as they say, was history."⁸ Unfortunately, it is not history, either in being a thing of past or in being taught in history or music classes. To begin with composer's credit was given to Alan Freed, a popular disc-jockey, in return for Freed's plugging the record on his show.

Secondly, Johnnie Johnson was given no credit whatsoever. Third, the song itself was "an old fiddle tune" of unknown authorship. To make it become a profit-maker it had to be appropriated: a composer had to be assigned to it. And it had to be promoted which meant turning a promoter into a composer in order to create a demand for the song. The fact that Chuck Berry was and is an extraordinary songwriter and pathbreaking guitarist does not diminish the debt he-and all musicians-owe to their musical forebears and the wealth of material from which they draw to make their own contribution. Perhaps even more significant is that the millions inspired by Berry's music began making their own, by and large rejecting the notion that it had to be made for them by professional songwriters. This led to what was undoubtedly a musical renaissance not only in the US but in many parts of the world.

A second characteristic pitting it against commercial constraints is that, like all the arts,

music can be a rival of the State. From the legislation of morals to the mobilization of movements, music has often threatened the legitimacy of authority. There is no clearer example of this than the role music played in the revolutionary Sixties, certainly in the United States, but also in Brazil in the case of Tropicalismo and its leading proponents Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso. Contrary to the music industry's insistence that music's sole function be entertainment, music's function is to instruct. It tells people what to do and how to be. If this were not the case, why are there parental advisory stickers on CDs? Why is music everywhere under surveillance, the subject of laws governing its performance, including censorship? Governments are more than willing to accuse and to punish certain musicians of corrupting the youth while simultaneously using music to further their own agendas. Thus, we find that music can also be a servant of the State. The State has long used music to galvanize support for its rule and as a weapon against its enemies. National anthems and patriotic songs are obvious examples. But we also have the recent case of the US military using music as a means of torture. There has even been speculation that they may be liable to paying royalties for such use of music. Whatever the outcome, the very idea that music's main function is as a commodity or that it is in any reasonable sense a piece of property is rendered absurd by prevalent uses to which it is put everywhere and on a continuous basis.

There is yet one further point to make in this regard. Music's function as instructor includes the instruction it requires for its own maintenance. In other words, there is the craft which

must be learned. Here, the exchange of goods plays a decidedly secondary role. Music can be made by anyone, even small children, yet, it has for thousands of years been a highly developed craft. This requires disciplined commitment to acquiring skills as diverse as virtuosic performance and instrument building. While there may be goods exchanged in these processes there can be no substitute for the Good which is mastery of the craft. This of course applies to all crafts and not to music alone. But it takes on a special significance when one considers a property of sound. While music

“We mustn’t forget that the [music] business has never been completely successful in achieving its ends.”

may be fixed in a piece of paper, vinyl record, or an audio file it cannot be heard unless it actually moves air as it enters and passes out of existence. It does not exist as a static object. Its ontological status is transitory and ephemeral, always in motion, never at rest. In addition, like the air through which it moves, music is an inexhaustible resource. Not only is there more being made all the time, what already exists is for all practical purposes of infinite proportion. This is not only a question of quantity, though. It is also the quality of music, that it can under certain conditions provide experience of the infinite. This, above all, is what the craft of music instructs its disciples to seek even if it takes a lifetime.

These characteristics present a serious obstacle to applying legal concepts such as ownership and property to music. They pose a logical and practical threat to the elaborate legal edifice upon which copyright rests and corporate practices rely. File sharing is only the most obvious and predictable result of what people have been doing with music from time immemorial. How did any tradition of any kind occur if it was not passed from person to person and from generation to generation, its defining characteristic being shared experience? This is among the reasons music was made the principal focus of attack at the turn of the 21st century with the notorious Napster case. What has become increasingly clear, however, is that the controversy over file sharing was in fact a stalking horse and a tool for bullying the public into supporting the expansion of Intellectual Property regimes to include everything from the songs we sing to the water we drink to the human genome itself. What my brief excavation here has sought to show is that the claims of the music industry and defenders of copyright are not supported by the evidence. The evidence reveals instead a long history of deceit which has produced intractable conflicts from which lawyers, politicians and large corporations have profited and the general public has suffered. But this is not all.

Requiem for Dead Ideas

There are certain lessons we can learn from music and from history that may help change things in the future. The music industry was constructed on the basis of a fictitious community of interests needing to be constantly reinforced by appeals to the public interest

combined with lavish rewards to some and ruthless suppression of others. Moreover, this fiction was maintained to prevent a genuine community of interests from asserting itself. The keystone of this fiction is the identification of the composer with the publisher and music with property. Now it would appear to be common sense that composers join with their fellow musicians and with their audience as equal partners in a common endeavor. It would appear that each needs the other in an exchange of mutual benefit. But this is the solution and not the problem. The problem is that for more than a hundred years and spearheaded by the political and cultural influence of the United States, all of us have been led to believe that the solution is the problem to which the problem is the solution. In other words, composers have to protect themselves from being ripped off by other musicians and an uncaring, selfish public. In this scenario the publisher suddenly appears as the saviour to whom the composer should be grateful. This turns things upside down and inside out making it impossible to address legitimate concerns in a constructive manner.

To begin with what concerns most music makers be they composers, performers, instrument builders or technicians is credit and just compensation. Credit and just compensation are not equivalent to the ownership of an object such as a piece or performance of music. They are principles in their own right corresponding to historical facts and the necessity for maintaining living practitioners of a craft. It is important to know how and by whom creativity was expressed in particular contributions to music. It is vital that musicians be supported in making music. But it is precisely for these reasons

that credit and just compensation are in conflict with current structures which take the greatest portion of credit and compensation and hand them over to corporations which perform no function necessary to the making and enjoying of music. Instead, these corporations invest in expanding their dominance of public space. They do this by advertising stars and hits at the expense of the vast majority of music makers and the public at large. The fact that many people consume such stars and hits is no argument

“The designation author or composer made by copyright law and industry practices is a distortion of the collaborative nature music making rests upon.”

in their defense, bad ideas are often held by many people before they give way. An obvious example is slavery, a legally sanctioned institution in which many people once believed.

New structures are needed that would ensure that credit and compensation are awarded fairly. These require that people act as citizens and not as consumers. Political decision-not the market's invisible hand-must determine how best to employ society's resources. This already happens to a limited extent in the case of classical music and other arts considered to be our heritage. While at the present time this is narrowly confined to a cultural elite it nonetheless puts the lie to the idea that we need big business to make great art. It also offers possibilities for

cooperative effort on the part of a wide range of social actors once we take responsibility out of the hands of the so-called free market and place it firmly in our own. Time does not permit going into details here. But suffice it to say that there are numerous proposals readily available that indicate a direction forward. The main obstacle, of course, are habits of thought and the music industry itself.

In closing I would like to add that If sharing is a crime then ownership is a prison. If musicians are cops protecting their precious property then audiences are thieves since they take possession of this property every time they listen to it. But this is a dialogue of the dead. Dead ideas, dead institutions, dead weight. Fortunately, music is alive and being shared. Let's live!

Mat Callahan is a musician and author from San Francisco, now residing in Bern, Switzerland. He composed and performed music with seminal world-beat band, The Looters, whose success led to the founding of the artists' collective Komotion International. For eleven years Komotion was a center of radical art making and revolutionary politics in San Francisco. Komotion's performance space, art gallery and sound magazine brought together artists and activists from around the world. Callahan continues to compose and perform today, including a recently completed tour of Swiss Prisons and the revival of James Connolly's "Songs of Freedom". He is the author of three books, Sex, Death and the Angry Young Man, Testimony, and The Trouble With Music. He can be contacted at: info@matcallahan.com or www.matcallahan.com

AN EDUCATION SYSTEM: BUT WHAT FOR? AND WHEN WILL WE ANSWER THE QUESTION?

Michael Newman

We are trapped in an ever-repeated education debate, whose very simplicity and facile nature allows everyone to contribute equally; meanwhile, our children are taught that learning is about exams, their futures, and what jobs they are to do. The majority struggle, the majority fail the five GCSE's grade A-C, but once they are free from school they can 'control' their lives and will not have to study again, except maybe to improve their jobs. Our society continues to confuse human rights with consumerism — we have shopping riots, we have problems with community, with child poverty, with fear of youth, with ethnic differences. What kind of society do we want? How can our schools support this aim? And how can we escape the nausea of this ever-repeating debate that is more like sound bites from a popular TV show than an attempt to answer some of the most important questions we face.

Our new government has been challenging many apparently progressive moves that occurred under Labour. Whilst people on the web and in industries linked to ICT and creativity are holding debates around innovation and revolutionising our schools, there appears to be a regression back to the training of children to pass exams and gain qualifications that will allow them to take opportunities to further study and work. This is reflected in Toby Young's

'Free School', based on his own experiences of schooling: the back to good old basics attitude that only requires that you have been a child in a school for you to talk about schooling and education, whilst the actual child has little voice in the debate.

“What we need to do to address the recycling of schooling debates is to include the children.”

The education secretary Michael Gove focuses schooling on exams as the conclusion to courses, and has recently announced a new Chief Inspector of Schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw, “who has told the BBC he is prepared to shake up England's schools and that he will not tolerate any school being given an Ofsted rating of “outstanding “ unless it achieves outstanding academic results”. Gove is critically looking at the place of citizenship education and its contribution to academic achievement, and in his support of the baccalaureate measure of a school's success seems to downplay the creative aspects of the curriculum. Teaching is about control, respect for authority, the efficient learning of academic subjects, and the measurement and celebration of outcomes as exams and

qualifications. There is no need for education philosophy, or sociology, or psychology except for increasing the effectiveness of teaching.

What is at stake in the current education debate? Why is its very nature part of the problem? How can we escape from the recurring nightmare of the repeated mantras of standards, basics and achievements: either from the right wing — training to be good producers and consumers — or the left wing —increasing equality through the opportunities of motivated training to pass exams — and, from both, the turning of our children into willing volunteers for the Big Society.

Let us start with some surprising establishment views about the direction education should have taken:

“What cannot be doubted is that a piece of fascinating and valuable educational research is going on here which it would do all educationalists good to see.” (HMI report 1949 on Summerhill)

“A vision of what the new form of secondary school can be.” (HMI report 1948 on St Georges in the East)

These are the words of HMI, or Ofsted, the

very organisation that threatened Summerhill School with closure in 1999. We used the first quote to invite politicians, the Select Committee on Education, and educationalists to visit the school, or to meet us all when we held a democratic community meeting in the Jubilee Room at the House of Commons in 1999. They have yet to visit. They prefer to meet with celebrities and hear about Jamie Oliver’s experiments in education made for a popular TV audience. Even so, they have discussed Summerhill’s fight with Ofsted and the consequences of its legal fight for survival.

Sadder still, no one seemed to respond to the opinions of HMI in 1948 and 1949. The 1948 comment is about an East London school that A. S. Neill, the founder of Summerhill School, thought was the furthest any state school could



Michael Newman on a panel with Summerhill students celebrating the school’s 90th birthday at the Institute of Education’s students union.

go with democracy, participation, and children controlling their learning. He visited the school a few times as guest of honour at their prize giving ceremony. You may have read about St Georges-in-the-East in the novel 'To Sir, With Love' by E.R. Braithwaite.

A. S. Neill was a teacher and writer who in 1921 founded Summerhill School in response to his experiences of teaching in state schools in Scotland. He wanted to create a school in which the children would be happy, would have no fear, would be able to choose how and what they learn, would be able to play as much as they wanted, would be able to express and share their emotions and creativity, and would be able to control their lives through democratic meetings.

How can schools based on children's rights be created? "By the children."

— Mary Robinson
UN Human Rights Commissioner

In 1915 he published his first book, *A Dominie's Log*, which would become the Dominie Book series. This was a diary of his life as a teacher. He begins sitting on his school desk reflecting on the rules of writing an official school log. 'You must not put your feelings, ideas or reflections into it.' He goes on to think about why he is the head teacher of Gretna Green village school, and why the children of farm workers, who will never own a home or go to university, come to his school. The

series ends with the book, *A Dominie Abroad*, in which he sets up his own school as a result of his thoughts and experiences of education and children. Summerhill School is the result of years of reflection on philosophy, different models of practise, experiences of teaching, discussions with other practitioners, psychologists, criminologists, educationalists. Neill is now recognised by UNESCO as one of the world's hundred most important educationalists.

This is a different world from that of Toby Young's inspirational experiences of being a teenager in a strict, traditional, and successfully academic school. This difference in 'heroes of change' reflects the difference in their values. The arguments of the traditionalists are obvious — ones that we can all sympathise with as they relate to how we felt as children in our own schools. Give us soldiers or great communicators from television, and without any knowledge of education theory, practice or history, they will make good teachers and schools. If not, then we simply need to train them in classroom methods.

Neill reflects on the wider questions, necessarily ignored by the Toby Youngs and Goves of this world:

"Books are the least important apparatus in a school. All that any child needs is the three R's; the rest should be tools and clay and sports and theatre and paint and freedom. Most of the school-work that adolescents do is simply a waste of time, of energy, of patience. It robs youth of its right to play and play

and play; it puts old heads on young shoulders.

When I lecture to students at teacher training colleges and universities, I am often shocked at the ungrownupness of these lads and lasses stuffed with useless knowledge. They know a lot; they shine in dialectics; they can quote the classics – but in their outlook on life many of them are infants. For they have been taught to know, but have not been allowed to feel. These students are friendly, pleasant, eager, but something is lacking – the emotional factor, the power to subordinate thinking to feeling. I talk to these of a world they have missed and go on missing. Their textbooks do not deal with human character, or with love, or with freedom, or with self-determination. And so the system goes on, aiming only at standards of book learning – it goes on separating the head from the heart.”

Imagine if HMI’s comments on St Georges and Summerhill had been followed-up. If our schools were now based on the work and experiences of these and similar schools, imagine what our children would be like. Imagine what learning would be like if, as Sir Ken Robinson stated in his concluding speech to the TEDx London conference, our progressive schools should become the mainstream innovators. Indeed, imagine what our teachers would be like.

Strangely, there is a sense that this has hap-



A. S. Neill, founder of Summerhill School

pened with creative, self-directed, and individualised child-centred learning; the input of children’s voices into their learning and their schools; the right not to be physically punished; the importance of play and the role of emotions in learning; the previous government’s growing importance of citizenship education, participation and enterprise. All this may be seen to be influenced by Summerhill – if nothing else but as the icon of progressive education. Again, quoting the ‘enemy’, the Conservative Leader of the House of Lords, Baroness Young, in 1999:

“My Lords, is it not a fact that in many respects Summerhill School has been the pioneer of many educational ideas which have subsequently been incorporated into mainstream school teaching and practice?”

Sadly, these changes have greatly affected our primary schools but not our secondary schools. I remember picking up a battered Penguin children’s book on my local doctor’s waiting room table called ‘The Primary School’. The class take a vote on where they want to go for their class trip!

Our national curriculum subject descriptions and assessments, literacy and numeracy hours, and SATs all undermined these changes. Indeed they undermine the aims and values of the National Curriculum and state education, which are to develop successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve; confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives; and responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

These values are very close to those of the progressive education movement, and are hardly referenced by the traditionalists. In Summerhill's most recent inspection in October 2011, on the school's 90th birthday, Ofsted finally recognised that we fulfilled these aims:

“Pupils behaviour is outstanding...”
“Pupils develop clear views in how to live their lives and there is a tangible atmosphere of tolerance and harmony.” “Pupils have an extremely deep understanding of work-related learning.”

At last, as a result of a legal battle in the Royal Courts of Justice in 2000, a team of modern inspectors examined the school according to its values and philosophy instead of those of academic classroom teaching. Summerhill is now seen to be a working school that shows excellence in its development of active citizens, ‘outstanding’ in eight aspects of its provision and practice, and ‘good’ in all others. Even so, we do not expect the government or the Select Committee of Education to come and learn from us.

So why should they? What issues about schools, learning and modern society does Summerhill address?

We are in a rapidly changing world: our technology, our knowledge, the nature and diversity of our communities are all being transformed. Religious people claim that we are in a moral malaise because people are deserting God and so they are fighting for religious schools and the influence of religion on values education in state schools; business people claim our children are not ready for work and that we need to compete with producers and businesses around the world; our universities are always criticising the young people they get as lacking in basic information and literacy and numeracy skills; our government argues that we must get back to basics to ensure that children become literate and numerate so that they can access opportunities in our society; our children need to learn parenting skills so that children in the future do not become ‘feral’...the list goes on and on.

The irony of this debate, and the sense of superficiality of it all, only hits you if you bother to look up a bit of history. The arguments have been repeated again and again and again. Darwin's Bulldog, the scientist Prof T. H. Huxley, who coined the term ‘agnostic’, was on the first School Board of London and his words echo through time:

“In fact there is a chorus of voices, almost distressing in their harmony, raised in favour of the doctrine that education is the great panacea for human troubles, and that, if the country is not shortly to go to the dogs, every-

body must be educated. The politicians tell us, 'You must educate the masses because they are going to be masters'. The clergy join in the cry for education, for they affirm that people are drifting away from church and chapel into the broadest infidelity. The manufacturers and the capitalists swell the chorus lustily. They declare that ignorance makes bad workmen; that England will soon be unable to turn out cotton goods, or steam engines cheaper than other people; and then, Ichabod! Ichabod! the glory will be departed from us. And a few voices are lifted up in the favour of the doctrine that the masses should be educated because they are men and women with unlimited capacities of being, doing, and suffering, and that it is as true now, as ever it was, that the people perish for lack of knowledge."

These issues hit the headlines during the debate around public education that led to the Foster Act (1870) that created a national schooling system. In the school boards around the country and in the House of Commons they had to discuss 'What is a school? What is a teacher? How big should a classroom be? What should be taught?' They are in the writings, speeches and the workings of the school created by Robert Owen in response to the industrial revolution at New Lanark.

There are several problems here. Firstly, the failure of our schooling system to respond to debates and to take account of the evidence and work in the fields of sociology, education

research, psychology and child development. Secondly, the failure of our school system to reflect the values to which it is framed and is supposed to legally express — the Education Act and the aims of the National Curriculum. And lastly, the failure of the school system to tackle the problems projected onto it.

What we need to do to address the recycling of schooling debates is to include the children. It is to allow our school students to find out about the evidence, the history, the working models of progressive schools and communities — from Robert Owen's school at New Lanark, to Nellie Dick's Whitechapel school that she founded in the early 1900s at age thirteen, to Janus Korczak's Warsaw ghetto orphanage, to Bloom's St Georges-in-the-East, to A. S. Neill's Summerhill. Let these models of practice, of the history of the implementation of children's rights, become a part of our children's culture, and then let them see how they can adapt these successes to their own schools and communities.

The fight for good education is part of the fight for our children to have their rights expressed in their communities including their schools. After women, blacks, ethnic minorities, the working class, and groups of different sexuality, children are the last group prevented from struggling for their rights. Ironically, the image of the child was the powerful argument used to deny most of these groups their rights. We continue to do so by projecting onto our children the need for authority and control, experiences from our own childhoods, rather than the contrary examples of what children do when given those rights. We need the children to be able to respond to Toby Young and attack his view

of childhood with a look at what's happened, is happening and what has worked.

Without children's rights all of our human rights are undermined. How can we have the values and culture of rights that protects groups from being bullied, imprisoned, disempowered, exploited, and killed if our childhoods are based on the opposite, paternalistic authority? When asked how schools based on children's rights could be created, Mary Robinson, UN Human Rights Commissioner, said "by the children". This can only happen if the children can see that rights are about justice, and that arguments about responsibilities and practicalities can be answered through models of extreme practice. They need to disarm those adults who hang onto unaccountable power by showing them that schools based on children's rights can work, have worked and will work.

My mission is to help our children transform their schools as active citizens fighting for their rights. For children to be active global citizens they should learn about school councils and children's voice through radical models of practice that create an alternative framework from orthodox, traditional schooling, allowing them to question the assumptions of the nature of childhood, learning and power. This will enable them to develop the underlying values of children's rights and social justice.

Michael Newman trained as a science teacher to deliver the then newly created national curriculum, attended the Speakers Conference on Citizenship in 1990, which was chaired by Francis Morrell, and included Shadow spokesperson Jack

Straw with the Education Secretary John McGregor. He has been active at conferences either as a delegate or speaker on citizenship, rights and educational innovations including social enterprise with the Executive Director of the Serco Institute, Gary Sturgess. He has also worked at A. S. Neill's Summerhill School for over 11 years as teacher and then houseparent, facilitating the children's campaign to save the school in 1999, and organising events with them ever since to share Summerhill's history and philosophy with other children and educationalists. For the past six years he has been a school project worker for active global citizenship working with primary and secondary schools in Tower Hamlets and London, working on children's and human rights, local democracy, sustainability, ICT, community cohesion, and co-operative enterprise.

INTERVIEW: WU MING I

with Jonny Gordon-Farleigh

As I'm with the Bears, a collection of short stories from a damaged planet, is published, I interviewed Wu Ming I about his contribution, climate activism, the occupy movement and the mystery why writers on the left still do not publish under copyleft or creative commons.

STIR: In Bill McKibben's introduction to *I'm with the Bears* he says that "science can only go so far...it is the role of artists to make us feel". This expresses the limits of knowing something intellectually – "the climate science" – and emphasises that our experience of these important issues are complicated by psychological, historical, political and social forces. How important is this understanding in your own work and do you think that if we are to have any success against runaway climate change that we will have to take these considerations seriously as authors and activists?

WU MING I: I'm an Italian novelist trained in continental philosophy, so this kind of reflection sounds like a truism to me. I think that there's no real comprehension of the world without feelings. Neuroscience has demonstrated that Descartes' concept of an abstract, disembodied, rational mind was utterly wrong, and that there's no dichotomy between reason and emotion. Whatever



Oxfam's stunt illustrates the devastating impact that climate change is already having on the world's poorest people. Durban, South Africa. By Oxfam International. CC BY-NN-ND 2.0

"reason" is, it is embodied, and there's really no rationality without emotions. We think through narratives based on primary metaphors, narratives whose unfolding has emotional and moral implications. By the way, this is precisely the reason why I prefer "continental philosophy" over "analytic philosophy". I think that fans of analytic philosophy tend to have a somewhat narrow-minded idea of what the mind is and what language can do, they tend to focus almost exclusively on logic and the empirical realm, while continental philosophy in all its strands (Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Deleuze, Foucault etc.) has tried to re-invent language in order to force us into thinking in different ways, into grasping the world not only as it is but as it could be. What continental philosophy is about is casting different glances on the

world. That's why continental philosophy developed a very fruitful relationship with poetry and literature, and sometimes even merged with them, as is the case with Nietzsche, Deleuze, Foucault etc. Foucault's style was described by some scholars as "demonstrative lyricism". When Rudolf Carnap rejected Heidegger's concepts by saying that they lacked any empirical basis, he failed to understand that Heidegger was using language in a poetic way.

S: Your short story *Arzèstula* is a post-apocalyptic tale that takes place after the crisis. Do you think the promotion of this negative vision of the world is crucial to avoiding it?

WM1: When I wrote *Arzèstula* (a heavily, disturbingly autobiographical story) I tried not to lay too much emphasis on nightmarish descriptions of a post-apocalyptic future. Actually, I wanted to write a surrealistic, dreamlike tale of hope and redemption. And you probably noticed that global warming is never mentioned in the story. Honestly, I'm not even sure it fits in the anthology, Mark Martin thinks it does, and I trust him, but it isn't a cautionary tale... Generally speaking – that is, forgetting *Arzèstula* for a while – I think that many writers (including yours truly) would like to produce a positive state of social alert. It may happen that an artistic work raises awareness of a great problem and takes part in spurring a decision process. I'm not talking about solving the problem, that goes way beyond what you can do with literature, but take for example the nineteenth-century serial novel, the stuff Dickens wrote in Britain and Dumas, Sue

and all those guys wrote in France, where the genre was called "feuilleton". Serial novels were very successful, and made the French public opinion aware of ghastly living conditions in poor neighborhoods, with such a clamor that the parliament was induced to pass an "anti-feuilleton" act. Moreover, literature and fiction can make us imagine "worst case scenarios" and thus serve as admonitions, to avert further deterioration of the situations. If during the Cold War civilisation wasn't destroyed by nuclear weapons, it was in part because public opinion was constantly kept on alert with scenarios of apocalypse, post-nuclear stories, movies and novels about wandering survivors scorched by radiation. In 1983, *The Day After* was seen by one hundred million people. In Italy it was distributed at cinemas and was the third biggest hit of that season. Wherever it was broadcast or screened, it sparked heated debates on nuclear armament. The quality of that film was rather mediocre ... But it had a function, it increased awareness. Think also of Stephen King's *The Dead Zone*: the question raised by that novel was whether it is more ethical to let a warmongering president be elected or assassinate him during the campaign! Without public opinion being constantly prodded in that direction, who can be sure that Nixon or Reagan or Brezhnev wouldn't have dropped the bomb some day? However, we're talking about ages ago. The question is: are cautionary tales still useful? Or should we authors write stories that are already... post-cautionary? Stories that take the catastrophe for granted, and try to figure out how people could go on and live and find a new sense of community after the world



The Occupied Wall Street Journal. By Mat McDermott via Flickr, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

we know has fallen down? That's really what Arzèstula is about.

S: After the protests in Genoa in 2001, you described the event as a “crucial moment for the latest generation of activists” and talked about how it contributed to the understanding that you cannot “besiege a power that is everywhere” – the realization that capitalism’s power lies in the fact that it does not reside in a single place (a castle, a conference hall etc) but has been incorporated into almost every aspect of our social and economic life. Can this criticism be easily applied to the Occupy Movement that has turned up at Wall Street – the formal home of our financial system – or do you think there are important differences?

WM1: Violating the “red zones” was pure self-delusion, there was nothing in there, actual decisions were not taken in those summits. Capitalist power isn’t inside any fortress: it is in the microphysics of daily exploitation, in financial exchanges, and so on. The Occupy Wall Street movement, which has now turned into the Occupy Everything movement, is already a step – maybe several steps – ahead. As McKenzie Wark wrote, they started by occupying an abstraction, they weren’t actually occupying Wall Street, they were occupying the concept of Wall Street, and the rhetorical device by which Wall Street had come to mean “financial capital”. There is a more precise insight on how power works. In Italy we had “Occupy Bank of Italy”: campers weren’t really

occupying the bank, they were shifting the focus of public discussion from Burlesquoni's theatrical antics to the austerity measures dictated to Italy by the European Central Bank. They chose Banca d'Italia as a target because that was Mario Draghi's last week as governor of the Bank. He was going to become president of the ECB. The movement was attacking enemy troops not in the positions they were leaving, but in the positions they were about to take possess of. In short, there were no trivialities like "Let's besiege the palaces of power."

S: You are a member of the writing collective Wu Ming which is a symbol used by Chinese dissidents, and means both anonymous and five. Could you explain how anonymity is part of your political and literary approach and why you use other uncommon forms of writing practice, such as the revision of female characters based on feedback from female readers, in your novels?

WM1: Well, we aren't anonymous. "Wu Ming" is the name of our band. Then each members has a nom de plume that's consistent with the band's name, in the same way each member of the Ramones took that fake surname: John William Cummings became "Johnny Ramone", and so on. Thus we are "Wu Ming 1", "Wu Ming 2" etc. That's no anonymity, that's pseudonymity. And our real names aren't secret, in Italy everybody knows that my name is Roberto Bui, but nobody uses it, it would be like calling Joey Ramone "Jeffrey Ross Hyman", there would be no point in doing that. Confusion arises because our band's name is a tribute to the political and cultural use of

anonymity, but we aren't really anonymous ourselves. As to uncommon writing practices, we always find it strange when people find our practices strange. To us, they are perfectly soundly normal. Submitting our female characters to the judgment of female readers is hardly revolutionary: we are an all-male band after all, we need to vicariously look at ourselves from an outside, indeed, we need to vicariously look at ourselves from an outside while we're creating and depicting female characters, in order to breathe life into them and make them credible.

S: You have long published under Copyleft – a license that allows noncommercial and attributive reproduction of creative works. This license, along with Creative Commons, is still largely unpopular amongst radical political publishers and authors. Why do you think this is so?

WM1: I know this answer will disappoint you, but I really don't have a clue. To us, it is a mystery. It would seem the most rational, useful, coherent thing to do, and yet only a few people do it. Quite strange and mystifying.

I'm with the Bears is published by Verso for £8.99 and royalties from the sale of I'm with the Bears will go to 350.org, an international grassroots movement working to reduce the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere.

Wu Ming1 is a member of the Wu Ming Foundation, grew up in the lands between Ferrara and the Adriatic Sea which are depicted in his story, and blogs at www.wumingfoundation.com

AVIATION JUSTICE TOUR

Abby McFlynn & Jonny Gordon-Farleigh

“Clearly somebody doesn’t want to hear the story about the Heathrow Campaign, said John Stewart, someone who has been described as the most effective activist in the UK, as he retold his seven-hour detainment and interrogation by FBI, secret service and immigration officers at New York’s JFK Airport. However, there were communities all across North America who did want to hear about the victory of the ‘No Third Runway’ campaign at Heathrow Airport, and decided to invite John and Plane Stupid activist Dan Glass to visit their communities that are being affected by the expansion of the aviation industry.

Even with a file full of support from MPs, MSPs, congressmen, senators, human rights lawyers and scientists, Dan didn’t even get as far as New York because of the “incident”. “Which one?” “You know which one! The superglue.” At the Belfast passport office a CIA agent took him aside to a Hummer with deck chairs, and when he finally made it to his interview, he was asked “Dan, I hear you want to superglue yourself to Sarah Palin?”. This suggestive question concluded any chance of Dan traveling into the United States, and now with both John and Dan barred from the country, the Aviation Justice Tour went ahead thanks to Skype, and the ‘Let John and Dan in’ petition maximized publicity for the tour.



Dan Glass and John Stewart broadcast on Skype to an activist audience in America. Courtesy So We Stand.

A Tour for Environmental Justice

We are often told about the apathy within communities facing the aviation industry and airport expansion, John explained, but this is a myth. The reality is that these communities lack the resources and political capital necessary to viably challenge the aviation industry. This is why we so often see flight paths put directly over places with large minority populations, he said, and why the global south is worse hit by climate change even though it has contributed to it least. This kind of environmental racism is one of the key issues that the Aviation Justice Tour set out to amplify and address.

The success of Plane Stupid’s anti-aviation campaigns has been the realisation that climate activism cannot ignore environmental racism.

John makes this point well: “If you are poor and you are black and live under a flight path, you have far fewer choices such as moving away.” His example of this in London is “the difference between people living in Richmond, a very wealthy area and under a flight path, and people living in Newham, a low-income area, near the City of London airport. The difference in campaigning is that the people in Richmond know how to work the system – they have the time, the energy, the resources and their jobs are not threatened – whereas in Newham they have neither the political or social capital behind them.” It is clear that different groups are not equally affected by the aviation industry.

The strength of the campaign, and something that interested the communities they spoke to in North America, was the fact it was not single topic. Dan said one of the things he found inspiring during the Heathrow campaign was that “various groups did not only challenge it on economic, climate or noise grounds but also on equality grounds, using equality impact assessments.” This meant they combined climate change with civil liberty campaigns and started conversations about equality that questioned why these industries disproportionately affected minority and indigenous groups.

By the end of the tour Dan and John had met with people to discuss the process of coalition building and had shared direct action tactics that were successful for Plane Stupid. The American communities were especially interested in how Plane Stupid brought various interest groups together, “activists who were

primarily concerned about climate change and residents who were primarily concerned about noise”, to form a coalition that gained victory over BAA and blocked airport expansion during a conservative government.

‘Unity of purpose, diversity of tactics.’

The Plane Stupid coalition was formed at the first Climate Camp to campaign against the proposed third runway at Heathrow Airport that would have resulted in the destruction of the village of Sipson and an increase in CO2 emissions that would be the same as the whole country of Kenya. It was a convergence of a diverse group of communities, opposition groups and direct action activists, each bringing different issues and tactics to the table. The challenge to find a way to build a community of shared interest without sacrificing anyone’s agenda was critical to the campaign.

“There is a danger when direct action is separate from community campaigning,” John says. “It can be easily marginalized” and the activists acknowledged that their power to stop the seemingly irresistible advancement of the aviation industry was with the support of the threatened community. In this regard, Plane Stupid made it a priority for residents and activists to get to know one another and respect each other’s agendas by organising direct action workshops and “Adopt a Resident”, where Bingo was played to pair activists with local residents. This initiative extended to activists moving into houses that were due for destruction if their campaign failed to stop the airport expansion.



Activists and residents dance at the Plane Stupid Adopt-a-Resident in West Drayton community centre. Courtesy Plane Stupid

This helped to change the face of activism and the authorities – both BAA and the government – could no longer easily distinguish between activists and residents. Dan said this made it impossible for the authorities to divide the anti-aviation activists from the local residents whose community was at risk. They could no longer point and say “this is what a resident does and looks like, this is what an activist does and looks like. They did not know what had hit them when they saw old ladies preparing for direct action training and these seemingly extreme Plane Stupid activists having tea in the basement of an old lady’s house that was due for demolition.”

This practice was expressed in the campaign’s slogan “Unity of purpose, diversity of tactics”, which was created to accommodate the various groups who were against the third runway

at Heathrow. This diversity became a key contributor to the strength of their anti-aviation campaign and empowered them to defeat two powerhouses – BAA backed by the government.

The Changing Face of Activism

There has been a definite shift in the tactics of direct actions in the past decade with the rise of “creative resistance”: flash mobs, street theatre and political humour. This is not to say that creative resistance was completely absent from the last generation of activists but an adoption of a more humourous and less combative approach has been used to diffuse tense situations, and has also significantly changed the relationships between protesters, the police, the press and the public. John recounts an example of staged protest when “Plane Stupid activists went onto the House

of Commons. It was quite an aggressive act. Beforehand, they planned what they should wear and decided to dress like the sons and daughters of Daily Telegraph and Daily Mail readers. It worked to such an extent that the five activists were featured in a sympathetic article in the Daily Mail, all looking very smart!”

Creative resistance “is a way in which you can flatten the authorities, because the edge is there, but at the same time not flatten people at home.”

This thinking has been central to Plane Stupid and politeness and civility has replaced the self-righteous indignation of the ‘60s generation. The successful campaign against the third runway has now become a great example of modest people doing immodest things and has contributed to a significant change in public perception. Many in oppositional groups have long complained of the unsympathetic characterisations in the mainstream media, and while they are mostly right, it must be said there have also been some very unsympathetic characters amongst activist groups. The understanding that there are people who would normally support a protest but are alienated by certain tactics, has been used to great effect by Plane Stupid.

“I think this whole idea of humour and street

theatre — particularly if it’s got an edge to it,” John said, “is a way in which you can flatten the authorities, because the edge is there, but at the same time not flatten people at home. So you maintain the support of people at home, which sometimes can’t be done if direct action is more ‘in your face.’” By retaining creativity and politeness, activists “can actually gain a lot of sympathy amongst the public”. John points out that successful actions often come down to the message being sent to the public. Not only to gain their support, but if the government sees the public responding positively to an action, or at least tacitly supporting a particular position, then it is much harder for the authorities to condemn it and deal with it forcefully. Dan’s superglue “incident” is a good example of this: When he superglued himself to the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown, “he did not say ‘We’re going to get you bastards,’ but ‘excuse me Prime Minister, can you please not move because I am glued to your jacket.’”

Another aspect of Plane Stupid’s campaigning has been the importance of inter-generational involvement in their protests and direct actions. Explaining how a flash mob at Heathrow airport began to turn “lary” when police began pushing people around, Dan said, “I’ll never forget when this man who must have been about 80 years old said very calmly and humbly to one of the young police officers ‘Don’t you dare continue acting in that manner, I pay your wages don’t you know?’” This had an effect that would have been far less powerful coming from a protestor who was the same age as the officer.

Young people have also played a prominent

part in Plane Stupid's protests. At an action at Stansted Airport in December 2008, there were approximately 70 young protestors on the runway who were standing for intergenerational justice. "There was no one over the age of 21 and so I was not allowed to go on the action because I'm passed it!" Dan told me. Every protestor had 'Just Do Something!' on the back of their high-visibility jackets and the reason for this, he explained, was because "as young people all they've heard is talk, talk, talk and nowhere near enough action. The Government say they care about climate change but they are actually contributing to it more everyday".

Aviation Justice Successes

Despite being barred from being physically present on the tour, both John and Dan felt the tour surpassed their expectations. "Firstly, we brought hope to people. We showed that ordinary people can win against the odds," John said. "Second, it might result in a radical network of aviation activists, bringing together local communities and climate change and direct action activists. And third, it showed the power of the new media to link activists."

The most inspiring moment? "What has developed between affected communities and the way in which they have started to share strategy," Dan said. "The communities directly affected by expansion at Toronto and Chicago airports, for example, have started to send each other messages of support, sharing facts about the International Council of Aviation and all of the big bodies

that are lying to both of them. They are sharing the methods they have used – noise monitors, participatory video activism, and community-led air quality buckets." This shows how communities are becoming far more self-reliant and not waiting for the local council to provide equipment which Dan says "takes a few years and when it does come the equipment is inadequate". These communities are not looking to aviation officials to check air quality or to monitor noise pollution but are renting equipment and carrying out the tests for themselves. It is inspiring and encouraging to see these instances of self-determination.

Although the tour has ended it is only the start of what should be a sustained response to the expansion of the global aviation industry. They've left something in place for each person to be a part of and created a network for sharing direct action strategies and coalition tactics, and also a whole new crop of community activists better prepared to tackle their own issues and injustices.

The true success of Plane Stupid, after the climate science and the victories, is to show that a sustainable lifestyle is not the sacrifice it is supposed to be but tremendously enjoyable.

You can find out more about John Stewart, Dan Glass and the Aviation Justice Tour at <http://sowestand.com> and <http://www.planestupid.com>.

Jonny Gordon-Farleigh is the founder and editor of Stir. Abby McFlynn is the producer of Stir.

A COMPETITIVE COOPERATIVE

Katherine Selby

Now in its 40th year, the Essential food cooperative presents itself as a viable alternative to the unjust food system, and its worker-owner management model is a inspiring example to anyone who wants to change their relationship to people and food.

The days of wholefoods being considered impractical, 'odd' and personified by 'brown rice and sandals' have long gone. Much has changed in this market since its humble beginnings in the 1970s to embracing organic, fairtrade, ethical and sustainable goods. Oddly, such goods are now considered more upmarket and desirable than their mainstream counterparts and the choice of conscientious consumers, as opposed to the 'wacky' audience of its early years.

There were critics a-plenty when wholefoods first emerged and many thought this would be a fad; a passing phase. How wrong they were! Essential Trading - one of the pioneering wholefood retailers - is celebrating 40 years' successful trading this year. As it goes from strength to strength, the critics have long been silenced and ethical, sustainable, organic wholefoods are here to stay.

As it celebrates 40 years in the business, Essential Trading has a turnover of around

£12m. It produces its own Essential branded products and offers a cash and carry service for around 6,000 goods in the UK and abroad. Its export arm that supplies European countries is growing 15% year on year.

Essential Trading employs 85 people, making it one of the largest successful worker co-operatives in the UK. Yes, not only is this a successful wholefood business, it is superb proof that a cooperative can be competitive.



How it all started

Essential Trading was one of the first wholefood businesses to set up shop in 1971. It has come a long way since selling pulses and muesli out of hessian sacks on the shop floor. Over the years the market and consumers have changed and come around to the sustainable way of thinking, but the ethics and principles at Essential Trading have remained unchanged in all its 40 years. Essential supplied organic and fairtrade food for ethical reasons, long before it was trendy to do so. It has held steadfast to its views and gradually - with issues such as BSE, salmonella in eggs and GM crops attacking the 'traditional' mode of thought - the mainstream market has finally seen that the ethical, organic, fairtrade and wholefood movement is, in fact, not just viable but preferable. Essential was a founding member of Genetic Food Alert and lobbied parliament against GM. To this day, brands that cannot guarantee to be GM-free are not listed with Essential.

Supporting the independents

It took the supermarkets nearly 20 years to make the leap into wholefoods - when they were good and sure that the independent sector was onto a winner. Despite its strength and reputation, Essential made a conscious decision not to supply supermarkets and instead stayed

true to its values and core principles by continuing to trade with local, artisan and specialist producers and to supply only the independent health food trade. This ensures retailers retain many unique lines that they know customers cannot find elsewhere and has been key in keeping the independent health food shop alive on our high streets.

"The last 40 years have seen the wholefood market grow exponentially," says Eli Sarre, marketing manager for Essential. "Back in the 1970s health food stores were novel and the foods they stocked relatively limited," she explains. "But now, through education, a distinct rise in vegetarian and vegan diets, growth in free-from diets and the shift towards organic and ethical foods, we have a strong and thriving industry. It has been most gratifying for Essential to see the changes and improvements down the decades, and we are looking forward to seeing what the next 40 years will bring."

Ethical Code

Essential adheres to a strong code of ethics that runs through its business, employees and suppliers. It actively supports organic and fairly traded goods and continues to call for the banning of GM crops. "The wholefood movement started with organic commodities - most of which were supplied in bins, such as pulses

and rice,” recalls Steve Penny, Finance Director at Essential who has 25 years’ service within the company. “Everything was in 5kg and 10kg bulk sizes but the health food stores and their customers didn’t mind. It was a brave new world of wholefood shopping and demand grew rapidly,” he says.

Mass Market Triggers

Essential believed strongly in the inherent value of eating good, unprocessed, additive-free, organic and vegetarian food. But it took a few major events in the 80s and 90s to start to change the opinion of the masses. Firstly, the Daily Mail published the F-Plan diet, which advocated the importance of fibre in the diet from whole grains instead of processed “white” foods. This created a big run on such goods. Next came salmonella, BSE and pesticides scares, not to mention the worrying concept of GM crops. Suddenly people were questioning the provenance of their food. With 15 years’ experience in the organic, sustainable, wholefood market, Essential was ready for this new dawn of conscientious consumer demand. When in 2004 Dr Gillian McKeith recommended people eat more pulses, she ‘nearly killed us with success’ says Eli. While the F-Plan and pulses stampedes may have subsided, their legacies remain.

A Little Essential History

Essential Trading is the company and Essential is its own brand label but the business was borne out of local co-ops established in the 1970s, Harvest in Bath and Nova in Bristol. Harvest dealt mainly with retailers while Nova had a customer base of wholesalers, so a merger

made absolute sense. The two came together in 1991 and the company name was changed to Essential Trading. All jobs, customers, products and ethics from both companies were kept at the bigger company.

As a co-op supplying wholefoods, Essential Trading wasn’t trusted by the big banks who considered their business to be a fad and unreliable. So Essential had to trade very carefully to



ensure cash flow and survival. They devised a system whereby orders were in on Wednesdays, they bought the goods on Fridays and delivered on Saturdays. Essential asked for seven days’ credit from their suppliers and cash on delivery from their customers.

All the sales money was banked before the

cheques were presented. All the profits were invested in building up stocks, to ensure a reliable supply and better margins. Gradually - organically! - the business grew. Its development, like its goods, was sustainable. This business model is worthy of anyone starting out in 2011 - and preferable to shouldering a business loan or overdraft.

Supplying organic and fairtrade food before it was trendy meant Essential was early to market and, when the demand escalated in the 1980s, it stepped up its business and grew rapidly right up to 2008 when things started to plateau. By the 1990s, organic was really coming into its own across Europe. Essential's buyers went to the European trade show Biofach to see what producers further afield had to offer. Essential started importing key organic food and non-food goods and its status as an international trader was established. As in the UK, Essential was competitive and other businesses had a similar trading pattern: the market was becoming exciting and dynamic.

Supermarket Wake-Up Call

Once the wholefood companies had established a substantial market, the supermarkets woke from their slumbers and started to stock organic. The honeymoon period was most definitely over and Essential had to regroup to ensure it maintained its success, despite the threat of the 'mass market' organic brands being sold through the supermarkets.

The Essential Trading co-op made the decision to not supply the supermarkets. By trading with the independent wholefood stores only, it

guaranteed retailers a bespoke range that could not be bought at the supermarkets. Thus it protected its heritage and gave the independents key selling advantage of selected lines to keep their customers coming back.

Fairtrade Movement

As organics levelled out, the new kid on the ethical food block was fairtrade. Arguably, fairly traded and sustainably sourced foods set the independents apart from the multinationals even more so than organic. Again, Essential's ethical code that had embraced fair trading saw the business in the right place at the right time: it was simply a case of stepping up its fairtrade business in line with the demand.

"Organic trading was bigger financially and commercially, but fairtrade defines Essential internally," says Eli Sarre. "We all believe in the bigger picture that includes people and communities across the world. Organic farming is important but sustainability of this farming is even more important. Markets need to be sustainable if they are to survive. And the livelihoods of the producers must also be safeguarded."

Why a Co-op?

Essential Trading - and Harvest and Nova before it - is a workers cooperative meaning the business is owned and managed by its workers. Like its stock-in-trade, co-ops were considered rather faddy and 'alternative' back in the 1970s. The Thatcher years were not exactly conducive to flat management structures or seeking a consensus of opinion across all employees. But Essential



had unshakeable faith in its coop status and employees all embraced the opportunity of being a stakeholder with a voice. Each employee pays a minimum £500 to Essential as their 'stake' in the business. Every member has an equal say in all major decisions and this democratic and non-hierarchical structure makes for an empowering environment - and a spirited community where all views are welcome. The co-op structure also gives some financial stability and Essential Trading currently has over £90K of members' loans. As a cooperative, Essential actively seeks out other co-ops at home and abroad to work alongside to perpetuate this caring, sharing business model that is endemic to the whole-food trade.

Looking Forward

Like most 40 year olds in 2011, Essential Trading is far from middle-aged. In fact, it aligns itself more closely with those who

believe 'Life Begins at 40'. The market will no doubt continue to change but, as Essential has shown for four decades already, it is alert to opportunities and will move with the times to sustain its business. Organic is here to stay and fairly traded food continues to gather pace with new goods coming on-stream every year. The overarching goals of sustainable farming and production and ethical wholesale and retail practices will see this market survive. Supporting the planet, protecting people, eating healthy food and cooperating with your business and social partners will not go out of fashion.

Essential Trading Co-operative is a worker-owned organic food wholesaler based in Bristol. It supports strikers with food and pallets for fire wood, and also sponsors the Easton Cowboys and Cowgirls.

BRING IT TO THE TABLE: CREATING JUSTICE THROUGH FOOD

Guppi Bola & Bethan Graham

Our decisions about food are complicated by the fact that we don't eat alone. Table fellowship has forged social bonds as far back as the archaeological record allows us to look. Food, family, and memory are primordially linked.

— Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*

What do we understand by the term food justice? Is it the search for accessible, affordable and healthy food for all? Or is there a role for food in tackling today's larger-than-self problems?

If we think about scarcity, the term food justice describes our reaction to the stark injustices of our food system; one in which more than a billion people live in hunger while more than half of all the food produced globally is lost, wasted or discarded. The UK alone produces 16 million tonnes of food waste each year, while The Trussell Trust food bank has reported a 50% rise in the number of people coming to them for food parcels. At the same time giant multinational companies, banks and hedge funds rake in the profits as food is traded and speculated on, like any other commodity on the global markets. The essential role of food in maintaining human life and health is devalued as the system is skewed against the people who need it most.

Living in a world of contradictions prevents us from feeling a real connection to, or the power to change, the political structures around us. For activists, our understanding of the problems can be so far removed from what we do and where we live that we find an added challenge in connecting our personal activity and our activism. Making this connection — for example by rummaging in bins for thrown away food, changing our diets or growing our own vegetables — is truly empowering as it represents an active disengagement from the companies we disagree with and a redirection of money and/or energy to the practices that we approve of. Yet to do it alone, or only with other activists, can lead to isolation from our own communities as we seek to stay true to our own values yet miss the opportunity to reach outside our comfort zones and engage with others.

Here we look at some examples of exciting projects in the UK that are working with their communities to create food justice, and in doing so are bringing up new ideas and thinking around creating justice through food.

Transition Town Brixton

Our first project takes us to the bustling streets of Brixton, South London. With its rich mix of cultures and history, it was

also the birthplace of the first inner-city Transition Town. It is here we meet Emily*, part-time Brixton Farmers' Market manager and part-time London Honey Company worker. Between both these jobs, she spends time with her neighbours growing vegetables in a community garden plot. For her, food is an essential essence of life as it punctuates and structures our day three or more times and gives us the opportunity to enjoy and be good to ourselves. It is a crucible of history and culture; a common thread between everything that lives.

“When I was at an international school food was an important means of teaching each other about our cultures,” Emily says. “Again, it is a chance to give, to show generosity between cultural groups. Food tells stories of religion, climate, abundance or inequality and of historical influences: why do Brits like curry? It is an excellent way into any discipline you want to teach or issue you want to explore.”

Living in a highly urbanised area of London, our connection with food is a good way to remind us of our animal nature. We hunger, we eat, we shit. All food ultimately comes from nature and we are more removed from this as a society than we consciously realise.

“I have tried to involve people in my block in growing food and I have been surprised not by the ignorance but by the interest,” she says. “Sarah who lives upstairs suddenly started arriving with gardening equipment, old copies of gardening magazines and all sorts of knowledge. I used to find Tim and Kevin a little scary due to their drinking and



*Soil tests at a community garden in South London.
By London Permaculture via Flickr CC BY-NC-SA 2.0*

sometimes loud discussions on the balcony. But when I started growing food in the courtyard Tim was the first to rush down and start giving me advice.” Little did she know he was a gardener during the week, and his expertise and enthusiasm became the foundation for the others' interest in recreating their local space.

Emily soon found that by growing food in a neglected corner of the garden into her own block of flats, she had found the common ground that was missing in her interactions with her neighbours. Food provided the context for this to happen, which is all the more poignant in city neighbourhoods where the environment has mostly been concreted over and communities are transient and stratified.

“The necessity of food unites us,” Emily says. “This is why I feel it is an important lynch pin in the community. In the food shop where I work, I cherish meeting a wide variety of people. Sharing tips and ideas about food is a conversation starter and the food itself a prop which gives us a reason to interact. People

are more inclined to talk when they have an activity they are engaged in. The tactile nature of picking up vegetables and fruit slows you down - which is why they are always at the front in supermarkets. When working at the farmers' market I have met many people I never otherwise would have. Food shops help people feel less lonely in the community. That the barista knows which coffee you want before you ask, because they recognise you, is a nice feeling of belonging. In the urban jungle we can often miss this."

Foodcycle

When thinking about food injustice, the issue that seems to shock and resonate with people the most is the sheer amount of good food that is wasted. Globally, 50% of food stocks are thrown away, and the British food industry alone wastes 18 to 20 million tonnes of food each year. That's five tonnes for every person in the UK living in food poverty. While good food goes to landfill every day, and malnutrition costs the NHS £13 billion every year, more than 2.4 million people are searching for work, including a million 16 to 25 year olds. These statistics too can be seen as waste; it is a waste of human potential that is denied the opportunity to learn and develop new skills. These contradictions are at the heart of Foodcycle, an organisation that seeks to tackle this waste with one simple idea. By providing expertise and lots of support, Foodcycle empowers communities to set up groups of volunteers in their own cities to collect surplus food and turn it into nutritious meals in unused kitchen spaces. The meals are then served to those in need in the community.

For Foodcycle each different type of waste — wasted food, wasted potential and wasted kitchen space — provides a kernel of a solution to the other. Volunteers have the capacity to transform surplus food into nutritious meals for people who need it and in doing so reclaim more than just food. They take back physical space, too, in the form of empty kitchens. More importantly they restore human potential, as people of all ages who have struggled to find meaningful employment are given the opportunity to develop skills, build confidence and take away useful qualifications and character references.

"The essential role of food in maintaining human life and health is devalued as the system is skewed against the people who need it most."

Regular volunteer at the Bristol Foodcycle Hub, Tristan Pringle explains what attracted him to the project:

"The thing that inspired me about Foodcycle initially is still what motivates me to volunteer regularly now — and that is an appreciation of the essential and unique position that food occupies in our personal and social lives, and its resulting power to bring people together. My experience of attending Foodcycle events and feeling the atmosphere of community and kinship created through the act of communal



*Certainly Not Rubbish: Loading the trailer with top quality Metfield bread in Norwich.
By Unique Multiples via Flickr, CC BY 2.0*

eating really highlighted how working with food could be a way to make a positive impact. From the creativity of preparation in the kitchen to the conversation around the dinner table, I realised that every element of the process can be a source of enjoyment and good energy.”

For Tristan, it’s about communicating the message of food justice in a way that includes everyone. Food isn’t the only way you can do this – but it is a language that every human being shares. The heart of Foodcycle in Bristol is the Community Kitchen that runs every Sunday in the Easton Community Centre. With no shortage of volunteers or customers, 60+

people come together to chop, eat and chat. Outreach is particularly strong, and has seen many people from homeless and refugee groups initially come to the project for a free and healthy meal, to then become regular volunteers.

The need to generate funds and ensure a steady flow of volunteers for The Community Kitchen has led to the formation of a Student Restaurant, a fortnightly event in which student volunteers prepare a three course meal using food which would otherwise go to waste and sell it for £3 to other students. Different student groups take turns to organise the events, bringing with them their own volunteers to help. In this way one organisation isn’t stretched beyond its capacity, as the responsibility is taken on by a different group each time. Once costs have been covered, the co-ordinating organisation takes 20% of any profit, while the rest goes back to the Community Kitchen, so that everyone who puts energy into the project benefits. Each organisation has a different cause and so their volunteers learn from each other, as new opportunities to collaborate arise.

“Previously in Bristol there had been disparate pockets of motivation,” Tristan says, “but a lack of connection between them and not enough physical events bringing people together to share what they were doing, inspire and learn from each other. Both The Community Kitchen and the Student Restaurant act as hubs for people to meet and talk. Topics of conversation are often centred around ethics and politics; it’s an opportunity to meet new people and discover new ideas,

while the meal ties it all together.”

The success of the project lies in the way it combines the power of food with creativity to engage a wide range of people in long term action. Tristan summarises it like this: “It’s all about making the experience as powerful as it can be so it has a lasting effect. To do this you have to make it as fun and as interesting as you can.”

In an effort to make this happen the restaurant is now a place for other student societies to display their work, giving them an outlet to play live music, display artwork and screen films to a large audience. The Photo Soc’s most recent theme is ‘waste’, illustrating how the message behind Foodcycle has been taken and translated into a new medium in a way that helps to spread the message.

The impact of the food system on the environment is not only about where wasted food ends up. It also about where and how it is produced — how far it has travelled, under what conditions workers along the chain have been subjected to, what price farmers have been paid for their product, with what pesticides, on whose deforested land. The problem is political — about who profits and who pays — as food now arrives in Britain from countries around the world with appalling human and animal rights records, and trade systems which benefit big business and lock small farmers into poverty.

Historically, food justice developed during the anti-slavery movement. In Haiti, African slaves were brought over to plantations to

raise food and other crops for the French colonisers. After recognising the injustice in which they lived was directly connected with growing sugarcane for their masters, Haitian slaves burned the fields in an attempt to free themselves from oppression. The role of food was not used as an end in itself, but as a means to an end: the sugarcane fields were a representation of suffering and their destruction was a necessity for freedom.

Actions echo through history, and on Environment Day in June 2010, approximately 10,000 Haitian farmers protested by setting fire to the seeds sent to them by Monsanto, a multinational corporation that gains huge profits from propagating hazardous chemical herbicides and genetically engineered seeds that grow into sterile plants, thereby preventing small farmers from carrying out their tradition of saving seeds from one harvest to the next. For a country which suffered so severely during the 2008 food crisis, to then be ravaged by an earthquake which magnified already entrenched problems, food sovereignty is fundamental. It is an approach that emphasises self-determination for small farmers and rejects the corporate control of the globalised food system.

Leeds Abundance Harvest

The last project we will look at, Leeds Urban Harvest, is about highlighting the abundance of fruit growing for free in your local area, entirely outside the capitalist system of food production. In this way it shares the values of the food sovereignty movement, as the project rediscovers the natural routine

of picking unharvested seasonal fruit every autumn. The trees and bushes grow in both public and private spaces around the city, thereby pushing through and creating links between the usual demarcations that separate us from each other. The fruit is distributed around the city to local groups, volunteers and the local community, while damaged fruits, which would otherwise be viewed as unsellable in shops and supermarkets and end up in the bin, are turned into juice, preserves, jams and chutneys. The money raised is put back into the project to help with the running costs.

The Urban Harvest project was founded by a group of people who were interested and active in growing their own food. Already engaged in planting fruit trees in nurseries, they began to notice the fruit trees already growing in parks and gardens around them, and the amount of fruit that was available to be picked. Inspired by the The Abundance Project in Sheffield, which hands out free fruit outside supermarkets and uses bike trailers to deliver collected fruit to people in need, Leeds Urban Harvest was formed with the principles of sustainability and sharing free food at its centre.

“It’s a brilliant project,” says Ben, a volunteer who has been involved since the start, “because people get really excited about it, and anyone can get involved, from all ages and backgrounds.” Both

projects have an educational aspect, as they seek to show people that home-grown fruit is just as tasty as anything you could find in the shop. When locating fruit trees in Sheffield, the project came across an old lady who would bag up all the apples growing in her garden and put them in her black bin at home because she thought it wasn’t safe to eat them. It is these types of myths that the Leeds Urban Harvest aims to dispel.

“People come just for apples but end up trying all the other different kinds of fruit that they might never have even heard of; cherries, plums, pears but also quinces and mulberries. In doing this you educate new people about the diversity of indigenous fruit in the UK, and start to break down the idea that you need to import tropical fruit for a varied diet. In the supermarket there are sometimes only four different types of apples to choose from, whereas in reality there is so much diversity in the many different varieties of apples that



Leeds Urban Harvest volunteers pick and sort apples. Photo courtesy Leeds Urban Harvest

you can sample; each one has its own unique flavour. The project is also becoming more skilled in developing new ways of preserving fruit, so we can extend the amount of time we can rely on it.”

The group are also developing a map for their website, showing the location of all the fruit trees in public spaces around the city. They are also dividing the area they cover with local Transition and community groups, as there is too much fruit available for one group to manage. Each group will pick the trees in their local areas, allowing them to rely on more sustainable modes of transport, as the majority of all fruit picked is taken to the kitchen and storage area using handmade bike trailers. Food is grown locally, eaten locally, and the money that is generated from the project simply allows the process to repeat itself the following year. It’s a closed-loop system that allows an urban community to take ownership of food production, and in doing so come to know the city in a whole new way.

Food justice issues are complex and communicating them can be difficult. In a country where supermarkets are stacked to the ceiling with food products, how is the population to understand the reality of a global food crisis? The front line of food injustice is felt most keenly abroad, but food projects in this country do have a vital role in addressing the issue here — they reinstate the value of food, bringing it to the centre of our debates around social and environmental justice, whilst reducing some of the environmental impacts of food production and delivering access to healthy food for the community right

now. In doing this, food projects facilitate the discussions and learning that leads to action, and promotes the ‘social glue’ that makes communities more resilient and vibrant in the face of insecurity.

The three projects we have looked at are three of hundreds taking place around the UK. They are a small snap shot of the multitude of different ways people are expressing their relationship with food, and in doing so creating positive change:

Emily started gardening with her neighbours in order to break through the irony of the isolating structure of an urban block of flats. How it is possible for people to live on top of one another, and yet can remain strangers until some common ground is found?

Foodcycle in itself doesn’t demand structural change to the system that creates the imbalance, but allows people to come together, giving time and space for discussion, whilst making a direct, long lasting, positive impact on the people involved in the project and therefore on the whole issue of waste in the UK.

For Leeds Urban Harvest, the map that traces the fruit trees in Leeds are symbolic of the links that are made between people as they rediscover the productivity of the land beneath the city streets. The map is a blueprint for the future, one in which the food system is something we can trace from tree to table, and that we work together to create.

“Food is a way to engage people in complex

environmental and societal issues,” Emily says. “More importantly, my interactions with food allow me to interact with people from different cultures and different age groups that I wouldn’t otherwise connect with. Building social capital is vital for our feeling of general wellbeing. It is simply the ability to phone a neighbour and ask if they could check whether we left the oven on. The more we have of it the more we are able to tackle problems together.”

In this case, food justice can be said to mean bringing the many issues connected to food, as well as food itself, to a table that is surrounded by the diversity of your community. By sharing food you create ‘table fellowship’, which does not change the broken system, but can break down the walls that, by separating us, allow a system so broken to survive.

Guppi Bola came into food justice activism after having a brainwave with her partner-in-crime Casper Ter Kuile on Brighton beach. She gets fired up by the environmental and health impacts of the food industry, but has enjoyed exploring new food based campaign tactics after helping run the Create Justice Through Food programme earlier this summer. Guppi’s academic background is in public health, her “spare time” is spent on activism.

Bethan Graham started thinking more consciously about food after dicing what felt like a thousand onions in the Wales neighbourhood kitchen in the Kingsnorth Climate Camp in 2008. Since then, she has been involved in community kitchen and food growing projects in Leeds and Swansea, and has recently moved to London.

THE ASSAULT ON UNIVERSITIES: A CONVERSATION

Nina Power, Michael Bailey & Andrew McGettigan

The ongoing assault on the university needs continued analysis and sustained action if we are to have any chance of stopping the intensified marketisation of education. In conversation, editor Michael Bailey, teacher and campaigner for Defend the Right to Protest Nina Power, and independent researcher Andrew McGettigan, discuss how the budget cuts have impacted the university, the experience of and access to learning, and the importance of students and lecturers working together, not simply to defend the “education factory we have, but to build the universities we want.

NINA POWER: Let’s start with the book – can you talk about the motivations behind getting these essays together? Why you decided to work with Des Freedman? What you hope the response will be to the manifesto? And the practical demands that you have at the end of the book?

MICHAEL BAILEY: The main motive for the book was in response to the coalition government’s spending review last year, not least the announcement that it plans to abolish the block teaching grant for higher education and allow the trebling of tuition fees from 2012 onwards. Both Des and I feel very strongly, as do all of the contributors, that adult higher education

is a public good which benefits the whole of society, and as such it should be publicly funded. But what Des, myself, and the contributors are especially concerned about is that the new fees regime will disproportionately affect young adults from socially disadvantaged families insofar as they’re less likely to apply to universities when faced with what potentially could be



Andrew Moss Photography via Flickr. CC BY 2.0

a lifetime of debt. For example, my own family background is one where my parents, both of whom are working-class, are very risk-averse and they would never pay for anything on the ‘never-never’, apart from a house mortgage – but that’s it. And it’s a way of thinking that was instilled in myself. Of course, traditional working-class attitudes and habits have changed a lot in recent years. But I honestly don’t think I would have chosen to go to university to study for a three year degree if I’d been asked to pay £9,000 per year, even if it is a loan. Taking on

that amount of debt as an eighteen year old would have been unimaginable. And I expect the same is true for many young people today.

Another motive for putting together the collection of essays is that they're intended as a riposte to much of the media coverage of last year's student protests. There was a lot of bias and misrepresentation; you know, the way much of the press reinforced David Cameron's portrayal of student protesters as a 'feral mob' but had very little to say about the heavy-handed tactics used by the police. And it wasn't just the national press – some of the BBC's coverage of the protests was unbelievably one-sided: for example, the debate between Jeremy Paxman, Claire olomon, Aaron Porter and Simon Hughes MP on Newsnight was infuriating. And the interview between (BBC News Channel broadcaster) Ben Brown and Jody McIntyre was utterly disgraceful – the interviewer was clearly trying to bait the student by suggesting he was the aggressor, not the police. And this is a disabled student, for god's sake! Anyhow, both Des and I felt there was a need for some sort of publication that presents an alternative picture to the one being depicted by mealy-mouthed politicians, journalists, news presenters, and the like. Hence we asked a handful of colleagues and student activists if they would each write a short essay that would better inform public understanding about the true motives behind the government's marketisation of higher education and about the likely consequences. In actual fact, contributors approach the subject from different points of view and methods of analysis: some are more explicitly political than others, some write from a liberal-humanistic perspective, one or two look at historical devel-

opments, whilst others compare the situation in the UK with countries elsewhere ... so, though we're all fellow travellers, the book is quite a broad church made up of different opinions and ideas.

But it's more than just a collection of academic essays. During the process of editing the essays, I happened to read the *May Day Manifesto* (1967) edited by Raymond Williams, Edward Thompson and Stuart Hall, and I was struck by the clarity with which they articulated a list of demands on the then Labour government. And I suggested to Des that we do something similar, so he drafted a series of demands aimed at both the coalition government and university Vice-Chancellors, and we decided to call it 'A Manifesto for Higher Education'. We published the manifesto online and as an appendix in the book, and we've had over a thousand messages of support from colleagues and students all over the world. In terms of what we hope to achieve with the manifesto and whether it will have an actual impact, it's too early to say. What I do know is that it puts public values and democratic criticism at the heart of what we ought to be discussing amongst ourselves as educationalists. I say this because the instrumentalisation of higher education has been long in the making and academics have been party complicit in going along with this: for example, we tend to be very individualistic when it comes to doing research and wanting to be recognised by our peers, and this can sometimes undermine professional collegiality. Also, higher education is very sectarian with research-intensive universities on the one hand and post-92 institutions on the other, and this can result in a complacency in those colleagues whose work conditions are

relatively cushdy. But by far the worst development, in my opinion, has been the gradual rise of university managerialism and this McKinseyism doctrinaire. And it always amazes me that it's often promoted by colleagues, and sometimes very aggressively, who were once 'radicals'. It's Malcolm Bradbury's History Man writ large!

POWER: I think sometimes you end up with the paradox where academics are working on politically radical history and at the same time absolutely acquiescent when it comes to middle management demands about filling in forms and so on.

ANDREW MCGETTIGAN: I think many academics can teach Marxist theories of exploitation but are not very good at spotting when they are giving it away.

POWER: Yes, I find that strange. It would be interesting to work out the psychological mechanisms to explain why academics do that.

MCGETTIGAN: Well, people are very personally invested in their own research and will work Saturdays and Sundays and do it as a hobby. This means that you become open to a certain kind of management manipulation to do more hours because you would do more hours anyway.

BAILEY: A very good instance of this is the present 'work to contract' dispute. In my opinion, it's just not going to be effective because academics have never worked to contract – we continually self-exploit. When was the last time either of you worked a 38 hour week?

POWER: I think there is also a structural problem with research. I agree that people are very invested in their own research but one of the effects of this seems to be that research is often very narrow and specialized, and there is no link to important political questions or the political scene. This means that you're not engaged and become, as a result, the most neo-liberal privatized individual – whether you are working on something that is politically radical or not.

MCGETTIGAN: Specialisation is also atomization.

POWER: Yes, the university is also more specialized than most jobs. It is isolating and people are doing this seemingly of their own will on the weekends. I do not understand why people abdicate their ability given the position they're in. Academics don't have much left in terms of status and respect, but they do have some. Actually, it is interesting in the recent court situations (student protests), how much weight witness statements have if they come from academics. Academics may have lost status in some senses, and certainly in relative pay, but they still have social and cultural status. So, if academics want to take a stance on something – write an article or letter to editors – then it will be picked up in a way that a group of bakers writing a letter, sadly, probably wouldn't be. So, there is a strange way in which people abdicate that potential for intervening in public matters.

MCGETTIGAN: Something that I have come across, in terms of my writing, is that sometimes people assume that everything is a func-



UCL Occupation, 1 December 2010. By suburbanslice via Flickr. CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

tion of my politics: that I have political values that I direct my research through and that this predetermines the results. In fact it's the research itself that is producing the politics. There is this issue about the broader cultural understanding of academics, particularly when they engage in public, that there is a preset mode of engagement. Your research produces concerns that you want to share with people – that model lacks authority and avenues in many places.

BAILEY: I think that that is something peculiar to this country. This is not the case, say, in France, where they have a long history of academics speaking as public intellectuals. But in this country it's almost frowned upon, even within the academy. I know that Stefan Col-

lini has argued that Britain does in fact have an intellectual tradition, which it does, of course, but it's very cloistered. And when you do get academics debating in public, it's often carried out in a very contrarian and overly academised fashion – it's rarely about informing public opinion or speaking truth to power, as Edward Said did, for example.

MCGETTIGAN: Some of the responses to Colini have really tended to focus on the fact that he's certainly writing for the *London Review of Books* by interpreting documents, and in fact people see him as not discussing the broader political agents at work in this process. So, he is within Cambridge and the idea that Cambridge has nothing to do with it and has done

no lobbying or had any engagement in these processes in the last year, is false. So, there is a problem with Collini and it looks as if when he writes that these things are being imposed on us as universities. But, as you've said before and maybe we should talk about it again, universities have been complicit in these approaches themselves.

BAILEY: I think this is deeply problematic, not least because it's a very difficult subject to broach, for obvious reasons. I just sense that some colleagues actually see the present political conjuncture as an opportunity to reassert the old regime whereby Russell Group universities monopolise research funding and the rest are just teaching fodder.

MCGETTIGAN: Some people think that the rot set in when the polytechnics became universities and certainly trying to work within a very broad range of academics. One thing that I have noticed is how little sectorial solidarity there is, and that a number of people would, were the government to take its tanks off the lawns of Oxbridge colleges, then those academics would be quite happy regardless of what happens in the rest of the sector. The number of people who are most vocal in this, again, maybe its not right to focus on Collini here, but when he talks about humanities, he is very much embedded in the Oxbridge tutorial model and the way in which the humanities exist outside of that model clashes with the way in which he talks about it. And if you talk about the newer universities, post-2000 universities and design colleges, then the broader sense of how you have a collective sectorial solidarity across all those different kinds of institutions, all these different kinds of

pressures, it's a huge problem.

POWER: I think some of this comes back to details. In the last research assessment exercise, however critical you may want to be about it, when it actually came to peer review on the ground, lots of Post-92s did much better than people thought in certain areas. At Roehampton University we had the number one ranked department in Dance, very high ranking in Anthropology, and so on. But following this academic result, the government's response was 'now is not the time to be redistributing research funds'. So, even if people know there are pockets of excellence, they are going to concentrate their funds in the same old places. You have this kind of situation where people do not want to admit that there is incredibly interesting work going on at other places on a very high level of research. Even though the teaching and other demands of working with students who come from non-traditional backgrounds (or whatever euphemism they use) nevertheless there are places that do produce amazing research. It is sometimes recognized on the ground but it is not recognized financially at all, so that funding is pulled.

MCGETTIGAN: And the funding for science, engineering and maths are ring fenced and protected, where as in the other disciplines it wasn't.

POWER: Yes, and I think that it is a kind of inter-departmental solidarity. If you take something like philosophy, it's been almost completely destroyed in the post-92 sector. In London, Roehampton University is the only post-92 university that is still recruiting for its Philosophy department.

MCGETTIGAN: It's moribund.

POWER: There is very little support from people in more established philosophy departments and this is a huge problem. There is no sense in which, even from a point of self-interest, you would have thought that the more philosophy the better, right?

MCGETTIGAN: Well, the philosophy establishment in Britain has not come to terms with the popularity of the philosophy A-Level. The philosophy A-Level came in the late eighties, early nineties, and no philosophy department in the country even recognizes that their undergraduates may have already done two years of philosophy when they start. I think this is a particular problem with philosophy – and it is a discipline that has got itself into an awful mess on a lot of levels

BAILEY: I'm really struck by what Nina said about new universities outperforming older universities in some subjects. If you look at Media and Cultural Studies, it's often the case that the very best research is carried out by colleagues working in post-92 institutions and this is evident in the rankings for the last Research Assessment Exercise. But instead of celebrating the achievements of these departments and the importance of teaching young adults about media literacy, communications policy, political economy, cultural history, critical theory, etc, what you got was a backlash from a minority of colleagues working in older universities saying that the research funding allocated for Unit 66 would be better spent on more traditional subjects. But what these people fail to understand is that the academic study of the media and

cultural industries has a transnational history that goes back some sixty odd years, and that it's an academic field that was pioneered by very eminent scholars from a variety of older academic disciplines.

POWER: The other really cynical point about the 100 percent cuts to the arts and humanities is it's not because these subjects do not attract interest because they do. It is setting up a scene, where you ideologically say, 'well no-one is going to pay £7,500-9,000 to study philosophy at somewhere like Roehampton University', and you present it as a fait accompli about numbers and recruitment. But actually what it really is about is that lots and lots of people want to study subjects like philosophy, history, art history, classics and so on, but private enterprise can make shit loads more money taking over those kind of teaching things.

MCGETTIGAN: I don't think private enterprises are going to teach those kind of subjects. I think they will teach vocational subjects like business, accountancy and law, which they have always provided; but because they are outside of state-funded system, their tuition fees are uncompetitive and so they only cater for the overseas market. But with the removal of the teaching grant their fees are lower than it is possible to run a humanities degree on, and so that form of competition changes. People used to go to university and study a three-year BA and pay much lower fees than they would to study business and accountancy, but now that is reversed. And so people's decisions will be affected because of it. Take for example the idea of the law conversion course: there is this old idea that people went to university and did

the BA they were interested in and then do a conversion course. What we are seeing now, especially in the psychology of law, is that they are setting up the accelerated course two-year law degrees in 2012 precisely to reverse that situation. So, students go and get enough law to go and get a job in a solicitors office and then pursue the humanities as a hobby afterwards outside of the degree structure.

POWER: I agree with that, but don't you think there will be a situation in which you will have institutions providing budget cut courses in the arts and humanities degrees – maybe in the evening, maybe part-time or online?

MCGETTIGAN: Yes, but not as degrees but as other kinds of qualifications such as HNDs and short courses. I think there will be a huge market for short courses. But I am not convinced there will be the commitment to pursue a BA in the Humanities. It will be interesting to see what happens at places like Birkbeck and the Open University; but what we are already seeing in the statistics is that the take-up of apprenticeships is suddenly exploding in the over-25 age group. People are moving towards different kinds of qualifications and those that are vocational.

POWER: I just wonder that given there is a desire, let's say in a hobbyistic way, to spend three years studying literature, why wouldn't there be a market for a three-year degree that is part-time or online?

MCGETTIGAN: This is the question, if you remember, that I put to Collini in November. If you defend the humanities you have to defend

it in quite a rigorous way because people are going to ask 'what can I get from a humanities degree that I can not get from a reading group?' And his response is that universities have no monopoly on learning, which is a politically dangerous thing to say but is indicative of the fact that universities are not in a position to argue what the difference could be. If you have a reading group and you all put in £5 a week and you bring in an expert to talk about a book you have read, then what is the difference? I think this the argument that the humanities is really struggling to make: what is the difference between extra-mural autodidacticism or a three-year degree?

BAILEY: I think one of the positives that's come out of this wider discussion about the idea of the university is that it's forced colleagues and commentators to acknowledge that universities ought not necessarily have a monopoly on adult learning. As you've just mentioned, there's a very successful model of co-operative education in the UK and we shouldn't forget that many of the best university educators cut their teeth teaching non-traditional learners, otherwise known as the 'Great Tradition'. We can still learn a lot from the likes of Albert Mansbridge, William Temple, Richard Tawney, Arnold Toynbee, Richard Hoggart and organisations such as the Worker's Education Association and Ruskin College in terms of their commitment to democratic scholarship and critical pedagogy.

MCGETTIGAN: The Worker's Education Association have just advertised for a director and last week I met with the new CEO of Conway Hall. Both these organisations see that they

lost ground with the expansion of the university. Those they previously catered for went to university, but now they see a whole new terrain open up where universities are going to be overpriced, run by managers in a way that may be to the detriment of the education provided, and they can come back in as an alternative offer that people may well now be much more amenable to and may meet their interests.

POWER: I think that is right, but I suppose one of the problems for me is that you are still going to get an elite group of people who have degrees in philosophy, classics and history. It is returning to that system where you get a group of people who are rich enough, or have enough time or privilege, to study those things that we are to endlessly see as indulgences or hobbies. That is a huge problem for culture and a huge problem for politics. I am really committed to the expansion of these subjects within the university structure to non-traditional students. I think a three-year philosophy degree makes a huge difference to the way people think, the way people write, the way they approach the world. There is something about the degree structure (with all of its problems) and going to the university that is different. It is like we expected to prepare for it to elastically snap back to the same elite group who have always been privileged enough to study those subjects. That is the problem for me.

MCGETTIGAN: These points are made very well by Natalie Fenton in *The Assault on Universities*, where you see the difference in third-year students in that the previous year is starting to come together, they are a lot more focused and had more time to think about

things, they produce a higher level of work. I think there is a huge danger in the government, particularly in the way the market has set up various pools of applicants with AAB and above at A-Level or this new lower 20,000 pool. In particular to the lower 20,000 pool, the places in that pool are not for three-year undergraduate degrees. They are also for HNDs, HNCs, Foundation degrees, accelerated two-year courses, and these are presented as if they are equivalent. If there was a sector that was also on offer but it wasn't at the expense of the established provision, that would be one thing. But because the way the number controls are going to work, each place awarded for a two-year accelerated degree in law or business, you take away a place from somewhere else.

POWER: If it is always client-directed learning or choice learning, lets say you decide you want to spend two years doing a part-time degree in history of art, that is lovely – but it is a hobby model. And what you said about the anecdotal description of people being transformed by the their third year, or writing focus changing, I would totally agree with that. If you presuppose what it is you want to know then there are certain things that you are never going to learn. If I decide that I want to study this subject because I am already interested in, then it is a different model of learning than learning as a commodity – in two years time I will know a little about the history of art as opposed to being part of a structure which is more open-ended in a way and potentially more painful. You do not know what you want to learn but you have a vague idea that you want to study philosophy.

MCGETTIGAN: Commodification has that



As the Demo-Lition march in December 2010 passed the Millbank Tower headquarters of the governing Conservative Party, hundreds of student protesters branched off to express their anger in person. By lewishamdreamer via Flickr. CC BY-NC 2.0

aspect in the sense that if it really works and we become the consumers they want, and they pay so much money and have preset expectations but because the education sector does not work like a commodity where if you do not get your expectations met you cannot easily change what you buy next week. It is pretty much going to be a one-time purchase and this is going to be hugely problematic in one sense. Another thing is that it is meant to be a qualification, so people are meant to earn it and pass. There's a danger in the commodification model – and we already see this in the initiative announced by Coventry University where they have a subsidiary Coventry City College which will be run a gym membership line where lecturers will be provided from 10-9pm every week day and the 10-4 on Saturdays and Sundays and people will do courses. At the same time, Coventry City are providing effectively a money back guarantee, where if you fail you get to repeat for free until you pass, and at that point, what was once a qualification has become a commodity.

BAILEY: But this is something we're start-

ing to see even in the University sector where academics are under increasing pressure to increase the number of 1sts and 2.1s, or to compensate those students that are failing so that they can progress to the next level. But we're doing students a real disservice here – if they're failing or not doing as well as they'd like to, universities should be offering more tuition and institutional support, assuming the student in question is prepared to put the extra effort in.

POWER: I think grade inflation is a real fact. It's definitely happened and of course it's not unrelated to the fact that people are paying for this (or borrowing so much money) and they feel that there is a direct relation.

BAILEY: And it's to do with national league tables as well.

POWER: Yes exactly, but both at once. I've been in situations at work where it's become impossible to fail somebody because the students' parents have threatened legal action if their son or daughter fails. Then you can have students putting cases against universities saying, 'well I paid for this, I wasn't given enough supervision; it's the fault of the university that I failed; it's not my fault.' If the university says 'look, you're a client; you're buying a product', is the product the degree?

MCGETTIGAN: Well we've not seen a legal case like that have we?

POWER: No, but what you have is pre-emptive action by universities telling us not to fail people. I'm not joking.

MCGETTIGAN: Well it's the erosion of this notion of academic judgement.

POWER: Yeah, the university management won't back academic judgement; if we want to fail somebody they say 'Oh can't you just give this person the lowest possible mark, because it's too much hassle to fail somebody.'

MCGETTIGAN: I've been in a similar situation. I don't want to go into too much detail, but I think there is a case where if too many students fail a course there does need to be a review of what has happened there. I wouldn't say academic judgement should be in lieu of any kind of review or testimony. If say you've failed a third of the people on the course, you should be prepared to have that looked at, and back it up.

POWER: I agree, but I think that situation is incredibly rare now. I think most students don't fail, they just get the lowest possible mark. People are less and less willing to fail students because of the hassle and bureaucracy involved, and the legal threat. You think I'm exaggerating but it's really like that.

BAILEY: Can we talk about the protests?

POWER: Yeah if you want. Why don't you say what your feeling is about the strengths and weaknesses of the student movement? Obviously in a sense almost all of the main demands weren't met. The protests didn't stop the fee rises, they didn't stop these reforms.

BAILEY: That's true, and a part of me is deeply pessimistic about the way in which the student

movement has been ignored by politicians and university management, but I have found the past twelve months or so incredibly energising and very politicising. For example, I've had quite a few students telling me about the protests and the cuts in public funding, and the same is true of other colleagues, and I think this has caused some colleagues and students to rethink the teacher-student relationship. It's very easy for one to blame the other for the way in which higher education has changed this past twenty years or so. But the fact of the matter is that we're in this together and seeing thousands of lecturers and students standing shoulder-to-shoulder on the marches in London and elsewhere has been a breath of fresh air.

POWER: First of all, there's an important point about political consistency. You're saying lots of lecturers went on these protests. Particularly the first one in November last year, there were thousands of lecturers on that protest, but it's some of the students who have got punished for it. Given that we were all on that march for similar reasons, as in we oppose the increased fees, we oppose the cuts to our humanities grants, we oppose the privatisation and the reform of the university in these negative ways, I think it is only politically and personally consistent for those lecturers who also fought against those things to remember the students who are being picked on to make a political point. All the documents that lecturers get sent round on 'what to do in the event of an occupation' and so on – they're all about somehow pitting lecturers against their students or vice versa. From the universities standpoint they have a completely bizarre model of what the student is, on the one hand, yes, it's a source of income and the university wouldn't

exist without them, but at the same time they're absolutely terrified of the students if they have any kind of political desire or will whatsoever. The increasing way in which academics are being asked to spy on their students, which in the past decade was far more addressed to Muslim students; if people were missing classes or seemed unduly pre-occupied with foreign policy or whatever, which is now expanded to include any 'domestic extremism', any sort of radicalism among the student body. But I think this is an opportunity for a form of political solidarity. You see far more students and lecturers realising in the past year that they have common interests, that these cuts and changes effect each other in similar ways, so when we have UCU picket lines outside the university you get a lot more students joining than in previous years.

BAILEY: Could you say something about those students that are being prosecuted? I understand that you were in court yesterday.

POWER: Clearly this something that has been going on for a long time and lots of the charges that we're now seeing against students and other protestors are a step back to last November, and they've been very heavily delayed because of the riot rulings because they wanted to rush those through. In some ways the protestors are being retroactively punished because of decisions now made about public order situations in general. What is happening, which is very explicit in the judges' rulings, is that where students and protestors have really done very little by any standard they are nevertheless fitting these charges of serious violence or disorder, which if you look at them seem to involve neither violence nor disorder, or only disorder in a

very minimal sense. We are seeing people getting sent down for twelve to eighteen months for chucking a couple of banner sticks in the direction of the police, not hitting anyone, not hurting anyone. It is very explicit in the judges summations that this about deterrence, this is about stopping future protestors thinking they will be able to do anything other than march from A to B. But there is also a bigger political question about what public order is and about what collective gatherings of numbers of people for a political reason means for the state. Obviously the British state is not going to come out and explicitly say, 'we don't want people to gather on street corners', we don't want people to collectively protest' because we have to have a fantasy of Britain as a democratic country in the sense that people will have the right to protest but in practice it is clear that that is not straightforwardly true. It's very useful for the state to have these individuals held up and be punished, and their lives, where not completely ruined, at least for a few years are pretty fucked up. Long term employability is a huge question, people putting degrees on hold, a lot of these people are very young; seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, having to wait a year out on bail to have a criminal trial by a jury is an insane proposition. So a lot of people are changing their plea to guilty or pleading guilty just to in principle get it over with, but that's obviously not what's actually happening.

BAILEY: Is there anything academics can do to support these students?

POWER: Yeah I think there's several things. There are very personal things such as writing character references for individual students,

but also at the institutional-level making it very clear that the institution recognises that these are political sentences, that academics on campus have the same political views as the students being prosecuted. We did have a case where one lecturer was up on a criminal charge but it got dropped. I think it would have been very interesting to see what the response would have been had it not just been students but also lecturers.

MCGETTIGAN: Do you think that's part of it: the age of these people? That they seem to be uninformed, they have no counterbalancing gravitas of a certain sense; that they can be seen to be reasonable individuals by virtue of what else they've done in their mature adult lives, so they're able to be presented as potentially wayward, led astray and therefore need correcting?

POWER: No, I think it's even more sinister than that. Because actually all the young people I've see – they are actually already very politically aware. They don't seem wayward in any way whatsoever. There is no sense of correction; these sentences are not about correction. The individual in a way is not the point. The point is the deterrence. It is not about individual reform, redemption, punishment or correction.

BAILEY: Do you think they're been scapegoated?

POWER: Yeah, the law, the police and the government are completely indifferent to these individuals, of course they are.

BAILEY: Do you think there are analogies here with the recent riots in London, Manchester and Birmingham?

POWER: Yeah for sure, certainly in terms of public order. If you look at all the judges' summations they're all about how public order situations are somehow exceptional, that you can't talk about ordinary criminality in these circumstances; that somehow if you committed fraud in the real world you would get a certain sentence, if you wrote a dodgy cheque in the middle of a protest you'd probably get five times that sentence. It's something about the context. It's about public order, it's still in fear of people; about people not getting into public order situations, basically. That covers whatever you want to call riots and civil unrest, young people hanging round street corners, groups, gangs, demonstrations, protests; any situation where there is a collective goal or even just a physical presence of people in a certain place. I don't think it's an over-determination to say that: you can see it in everything they say. They get to determine the context, they get to say crowd situations are exceptional and should be punished much more harshly than any other situation.

BAILEY: Could you finish by saying something about the Defend The Right To Protest campaign, about how students can be a bit more savvy when going on protests, things they should look out for, legal observers, points of contact.

POWER: The Defend The Right To Protest campaign is less about stuff on the ground, as there were already groups doing that work: Legal Defence and Monitoring Group, Green and Black Cross, people who hand out bust cards about what to do if you're arrested. We're working at the moment on a bust card that includes stuff about witnessing, to be on the

lookout for police behaviour, because one of the problems we're having defending students and protestors is that people aren't coming forward when they've seen police beat someone up. We're trying to get more pre-emptive awareness of being aware on protests. Of course you're there as representing your position but I think we've got beyond this idea that the police are always going to steward neutrally, or that they don't spend a lot of time stopping and searching. We saw this a lot on March 26th and June 30th. They're doing that more and more, they're doing targeted stop and search. It's very heavily racialised: it's the age thing as well. Basically anyone with a hood, anyone who looks to be nineteen, twenty or younger, often younger really, they are pre-emptively targeting certain kinds of protestors. Anecdotally one thing that's quite common among the people who have been arrested is that they're often quite tall. So police pick out certain people in the crowd and focus on them. The police have really ridiculous and naive models, not only about policing crowds and what they think a crowd is, and what they think fear is in a probably broader situation, and it's probably all highly cynical, but they also have a really rubbish model about leadership and political organisation. They're still working to models of charismatic student leaders. They think that this is how things work. So they do come armed with pictures and images of certain individuals that they will pick out at protests.

The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance is published by Pluto Press for £13. In this issue of *Stir* there is also a review of the book by Nina Power and a recording of an event for the

book with Alberto Toscano, Clare Solomon and Peter Hallward.

Michael Bailey teaches sociology at Essex University.

Andrew McGettigan is a freelance writer, speaker and researcher based in London.

Nina Power is a Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at Roehampton University

