Kerem Nişancıoğlu, SOAS University of London
Maïa Pal, Oxford Brookes University

Counter-Conduct in the University Factory: Locating the Occupy Sussex Campaign[1]

Abstract:

Deploying the Foucauldian concepts of 'conduct' and 'counter-conduct', this article provides an analysis of 'Occupy Sussex' – a two-month long student occupation launched in opposition to the outsourcing of service staff at the University of Sussex. Situated in the context of a post-Fordist political economy, we argue that the British university constitutes an especial site of conduct formation – a University Factory – wherein individuals are sorted and socialised as immaterial labourers. We argue that Occupy Sussex was a reaction to such conduct formation. As such counter-conduct is deployed as concept that can effectively map the tactics and strategies undertaken by Occupy Sussex against the university management. Moreover, counter-conduct is used in order to trace prefigurative attempts to redefine the university within the space of the occupation – away from the University Factory, toward collective self-management, alternative understandings of the 'university experience', and an emergent notion of 'community'. Finally, the use of counter-conduct serves to highlight the dangers of appropriation and co-optation; how university management attempted to co-opt and thus defuse the counter-conduct of Occupy Sussex.

Key Words: Counter-conduct; Foucault; Occupy Sussex; post-Fordism; University

Introduction

This article analyses the recent struggle at the University of Sussex over management proposals

to outsource 235 service staff members, culminating in a two month long student occupation of

1

a university building. Known as Occupy Sussex, this case is symptomatic of the rapid transformations in the Higher Education (HE) sector, as well as the nationwide opposition to such changes in the form of student and worker movements.[2] As such, the study of Occupy Sussex has the potential to provide insights into how we theorise both HE reform and the resistance to it, as well as developing a wider understanding of contemporary social movements.

In order to tease out the significance of Occupy Sussex, we deploy the concepts of 'conduct' and 'counter-conduct' as a framework through which some overlooked elements of resistance to HE reform can be disclosed. By capturing the 'messiness and complexity of contemporary politics',[3] a 'counter-conducts approach'[4] helps to serve a strategic function. Insofar as conduct and counter-conduct are mutually constitutive, these concepts may help identify ways in which attempts at conducting might therefore inadvertently generate conditions and subjectivities that make counter-conduct a possibility. Conversely, it also helps us trace how resistance might, ironically, be subsumed or appropriated in ways that reproduce the very thing it opposes. More

---

[2] Joseph Ibrahim "The moral economy of the UK student protest movement 2010–2011", *Contemporary Social Science: Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences* (2014), 9:1, 79-91. At the University of London, outsourced cleaners have been fighting for pensions, holiday and sick pay – the 3 Cosas campaign – with significant student support. See Harry Stopes, "Miembros No Números," *LRB Blog* (April 2013). Available at: http://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2013/04/09/harry-stopes/miembros-no-numeros/; 3cosascampaign, "3cosascampaign," *3cosascampaign*. Available at: http://3cosascampaign.wordpress.com/ Accessed April 14, 2014. Students have also been contesting the securitisation of campuses with a series of 'Cops off Campus' demonstrations. See James Burley, "Up to 4,000 Students March in 'Cops Off Campus' National Day of Action," *London Student*, (November 2013), Available at: http://london-student.net/news/12/11/4000-march-senate-house-cops-off-campus-national-day-action-news-london/ Accessed April 14, 2014. At Sussex, Birmingham and Warwick, student occupations in solidarity with striking university staff have been met with an array of disciplinary measures and legal proceedings. The December 2013 wave of student occupations and demonstrations in solidarity with university workers included actions at Sussex, University of London, Goldsmiths, SOAS, Birmingham, Warwick and Sheffield. See Maïa Pal, "The University in Turmoil: Occupations, Strikes and the Search for More," *New Left Project*, (December, 2013), Available at: http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article_comments/the_university_in_turmoil_occupations_strikes_and_the_search_for_more. Accessed April 14, 2014. More recently, fractional staff at SOAS have been involved in a struggle to improve pay and employment conditions, and a wave of occupations in Spring 2015 at LSE, UCL and UAL focused on rejecting neoliberal conditions affecting students and staff.

[3] Carl Death "Counter-Conducts: A Foucauldian Analytics of Protest," *Social Movement Studies* 9, no. 3 (2010): p. 238.

[4] Ibid. We follow Carl Death's use of a counter-conducts approach in the plural to accentuate the diversity of these practices and rationalities.

concretely, a counter-conducts approach alerts us to the ways in which the strategies employed by Occupy Sussex may have facilitated Sussex management's own strategies, thereafter aggravating the conflict and gearing it away from the original problem of outsourcing. This raises the discomforting yet necessary question of how tactics and strategies can be formulated in ways that escape appropriation.

As postgraduate students and teaching staff at the University of Sussex that became involved in various ways in the campaign against outsourcing, these questions are motivated by our own participation. In particular, we found that what characterised the campaign and deserved deeper reflection was the cycle of appropriation of firstly, student protest and secondly, strategies to resist appropriation. This problem had in fact been raised, discussed and debated by participants during the occupation.[5] Beyond our own participation, observation, and informal conversations with participants and interested observers over two years, we also conducted interviews with campaigners in February-March 2014. These took the form of four questions sent to a range of participants, directly by emailing known individuals, and indirectly by emailing the campaign's group mailing list. We gathered the responses of eight participants, including five undergraduate students, one postgraduate student/teaching staff, one '235' outsourced staff member and one non-academic staff member. Although by no means comprehensive, this is approximately representative of each group's active presence in the campaign. Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting that the campaign was marked by significant heterogeneity, in terms of participants' political perspectives and experiences. While we have primarily sought to identify general trends we have also, where possible, tried to capture some of the disagreements among participants. However, we write this fully aware that any such attempt at a properly 'objective' (re)presentation of events is fraught with problems, not least for those with such proximity, in terms of time and participation, to the campaign. Instead, we present this paper as our record,

---

[5] Queer (in) Crisis Collective, "Thoughts on the Sussex Occupation as Dead End," *Anticapitalist Initiative*, (March 2013). Available at: http://anticapitalists.org/2013/03/16/sussex-occupation-dead-end-protest-toxic/. Accessed April 14, 2014.

3

and our attempt to critically theorize Occupy Sussex, in the hope that it may stimulate further reflection on the events of February-April 2013, and perhaps social movements more broadly.

In the first section, we expand on our use of the concepts of conduct and counter-conduct. By providing a focus on practices of resistance concerned with subjection and subjectivation, these concepts enable a discussion about how the ethical relates to economic and political social relations. This is particularly useful for mapping power relations in universities. To do so, we discuss the relationship between Autonomist Marxism and Foucauldian governmentality studies, and argue that the latter require a broader conception of political economy so as to account for the shifts in post-Fordist economies.

In the second section, we argue that interrelations between the ethical, political and economic are especially pronounced in the University. As such conduct (and by implication counter-conduct) provides a vantage point through which it is possible to reassess the so-called neoliberalisation of the University. More specifically, in this section we demonstrate how recent HE reforms have necessitated and thus produced certain kinds of conduct amenable to post-Fordist production. This has involved generating individualistic, compliant and 'self-caring' behaviours among three key actors in what we, following others, call the University Factory[6] – the student-consumer, the selfish researcher and the outsourced worker. This section thus uncovers the general forms of conduct that Occupy Sussex (in part) responded to and emerged out of.

In the third section we provide an overview of the specific 'tactics and strategies' of Occupy Sussex. We argue that these were forms of counter-conduct that developed in a mutually constitutive relationship with Sussex University management's attempts to 'conduct' and manage both outsourcing and student protest. In the fourth section, we identify forms of

---

[6] The Edu-Factory Collective, *Toward a Global Autonomous University* (New York: Autonomedia, 2009).

4

counter-conduct in the 'mentalities and behaviours' exhibited by participants in Occupy Sussex.[7]

Here, we observe three types of prefigurative transformation: experiments in collective self-management; the development of alternative understandings of the 'university experience', and; an emergent notion of 'community' linking disparate members of the campus. We show that despite attempts of the management to appropriate, normalise and defuse Occupy Sussex, the occupation served as a space in which alternative mentalities and behaviours could be cultivated.

The final section explores the theoretical implications of our use of 'conduct' and 'counter-conduct'. Here we further connect the context of the post-Fordist 'University Factory' to the specific forms of counter-conduct witnessed in Occupy Sussex. We argue, by way of conclusion, that the forms of counter-conduct witnessed in Occupy Sussex effectively appropriated, repurposed and subsequently weaponised the conducts generated by and in the University Factory in order to (provisionally) resist and oppose it. This raises pertinent questions of strategy, and the research of it, for social movements taking place within the HE sector.

1/ Conduct, Counter-Conduct and Immaterial Labour

According to Michel Foucault, 'conduct' refers to strategies, mentalities and behaviours of obedience, or 'forms of power that do not exercise [political] sovereignty and do not exploit [economically]'.[8] Conduct is instead concerned with the 'task of conducting men in their life and daily existence',[9] which simultaneously specifies acts of conducting others on the one hand and self-conduct, or the way one conducts oneself, on the other. For Foucault, conducts are not simply ideological articulations of otherwise material motives, nor are they a unidirectional assertion of agency over structure. Conduct instead acts as a conceptual 'hinge' that seeks to

---

[7] The distinction between tactics and strategies on the one hand, and mentalities and behaviours on the other, follows Foucault's definition, but also work by Death, who differentiates between 'practices' on one hand and 'rationalities' of counter-conduct on the other. Death, "Counter-Conducts."

[8] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (St Martins Press, 2007), p. 266.

[9] Ibid., p. 267.

transgress such binaries and in doing so articulates how subjectivities *enact* relations of power. The 'art of conducting' thus involves:

> directing, leading, guiding, taking in hand, and manipulating men, an art of monitoring them and urging them on step by step, an art with the function of taking charge of men collectively and individually throughout their life at every moment of their existence.[10]

Conversely, *counter*-conduct refers to the refusal of conduct, those webs of resistance that form 'against the processes implemented for conducting others';[11] that is, the act of *not* being conducted, of *not* conducting. Counter-conduct is developed in Foucault's later work as the 'ethical component to the notion of resistance'.[12] After emphasising the need to take 'forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point'[13], he defines conduct and counter-conduct as resistance 'against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way'.[14] These struggles are of two sorts: on the one hand they refer to processes of *subjection* (or subjectification)[15] where individuals submit to themselves; and on the other to *subjectivation* where individuals submit to others. These processes are distinguished from struggles over exploitation and struggles over domination.[16] In other words, counter-conduct focuses on ethical processes of subjection and subjectivation as separate from economic and political techniques and practices of power and resistance. Moreover, the counter-conducts approach emphasises how mentalities and behaviours that refuse to be conducted are inextricably linked in a mutually constitutive relation with 'conduct'. In this way a counter-

---

[10] Ibid., p. 165.

[11] Ibid., p. 268.

[12] Arnold I. Davidson, "In praise of counter-conduct", *History of the Human Sciences*, 24, 4 (2011): p.28

[13] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power" in *Power. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984 Volume Three*, ed. By James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2000), p. 329

[14] Ibid., p. 330

[15] Weidner follows Trent H. Hamann's distinction between subjectification (*assujetissement*) and subjectivation (*subjectivation*). Jason R. Weidner, "Governmentality, Capitalism, and Subjectivity", *Global Society*, 23, 4 (2009), p. 390

[16] Ibid.; and in Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 259

conducts approach also rejects, and seeks to transgress, rigid binaries of 'power and resistance, government and dissent'.[17]

We consider moving beyond the power-resistance binary important because it tends to assume 'full, self-present and coherent subjects working against something or someone'.[18] We believe such an assumption fails to capture the marked instability and transformation in both collective and individual subjectivities observed at Occupy Sussex. In using counter-conduct, we seek to interrogate practices that do not presuppose "coherent, full subjects". The use of 'counter-conduct' over 'resistance' therefore helps us better understand the way in which Occupy Sussex firstly involved a *disturbance* in the coherence of participants' subjectivities; and secondly, the way in which these disturbances were mutually constituted in and through the relations to the 'conduct' expected of individuals and collectives in the University of Sussex. As Foucault puts it, counter-conduct implies the objective 'not to discover but to refuse what we are'.[19]

Above all else, we find these concepts useful inasmuch as they open the possibility of theorising and critiquing the strategies of Sussex University management and Occupy Sussex. As the campaign against outsourcing progressed, the content of the campaign increasingly moved from an exclusively economic struggle, to take on broader ethical questions including, in particular, what the university means as a social, public institutional space. The concepts of conduct and counter-conduct help to trace this development and its limits. If counter-conduct 'allows one to move more easily between the ethical and political',[20] we suggest it can also help trace the development of struggles in the University between the economic, ethical and political. It allows us to raise the question of whether struggles over subjectivities in the University should

---

[17] Carl Death "Counter-Conducts" p. 240.

[18] Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. (London: Duke University Press, 2014)

[19] Foucault *cited in* Davidson, "In praise of counter-conduct", p. 37

[20] Davidson, "In praise of counter-conduct", p. 28

7

be defined as predominantly ethical, political or economic; and how reforms of the University are affecting the form of these struggles.[21]

However, in using counter-conduct we also recognise that there remains a "need to produce some way of accounting for the mechanisms with which these subjectivities are produced".[22] In other words, more work is required on *why* rather than *how* neoliberal subjectivities are formed in the way they are. For example, Couze Venn, following the work of Autonomist Marxists such as Maurizio Lazzarato, argues that post-Fordism constitutes a new biopolitical *dispositif* producing neoliberal subjectivities and immaterial labour, which act to govern and conduct individuals: "the media, university and experts act as relays in correlation with legislative mechanisms to form opinion and bring conduct back within the established order".[23] Lazzarato identifies four types of counter-conduct: escape; ruse; strategies of reversal; and violent confrontation.[24] These struggles pertain to the production of knowledge, education, and research as correlations to the development of immaterial labour. In other words, counter-conduct is the type of struggle that is associated with distinctly economic processes typical of post-Fordism: the waning of industrial labour, large-scale union-based actions and traditional labour demands.[25] Similarly, Mitchell Dean's approach also acknowledges Foucault's neglect of 'finance, debt and money', although the rise of debt remains consistent with Foucault's emphasis on conduct: "debt is the most effective way in which the contemporary arts of government have managed to limit sovereignty and close down counter-conduct and contestation and indeed, the

---

[21] For Foucault, 'even when they [struggles] are mixed, one of them, most of the time, prevails.' In *Power. Essential Works*, p. 331

[22] Weidner, "Governmentality, Capitalism, and Subjectivity", p. 391, 392 & 409

[23] Couze Venn, "Cultural Theory, Biopolitics, and the Question of Power", *Theory, Culture and Society*, 24, 3 (2007), p. 122

[24] Lazzarato *cited in* Venn, "Cultural Theory, Biopolitics, and the Question of Power", p.122

[25] Maurizio Lazzarato, "Puissances de la Variation", *Multitudes*, 20 (2005), p. 195

potential horizons of our societies".[26] As Dean goes on to suggest, this is particularly relevant to 'student debt and academic political inertia'.[27]

Concurrently, what the present study shows is that Foucault's conception of political economy needs to remain broad so as to account for the influence of economic struggles (outsourcing, debt) on the production of political subjectivities contesting the ethos of the University (as public space and as community). To better understand the way in which the economic and ethical intersect in the space of the University we combine Autonomist Marxist analyses of late capitalism - post-Fordism - with Foucault's concepts of conduct and counter-conduct. In particular, the Autonomist concept of 'immaterial labour' – with its emphasis on cultural, informational and communicational production, affective labour and social care[28] - can be understood as a social relation in which the ethical and economic most clearly intersect, not least in the institutional context of the University. We examine these intersections in the following section, by identifying three subjectivities that embody conducts typical of the University Factory – the selfish researcher, the student consumer and the outsourced worker.

2/ Conduct in the University Factory

HE in the UK has become a mass institution, with an ever larger proportion of the population enrolling. For many, access to university is now seen as a socio-economic necessity, wherein a degree has become a minimum requirement for entry into the labour market.[29] This quantitative increase is representative of qualitative change in the composition of labour in the UK, specifically, shifts to a post-Fordist economy in which the exploitation of immaterial labour and

---

[26] Mitchell Dean, "Michel Foucault's 'apology' for neoliberalism", *Journal of Political Power*, 7,3 (2014), p. 440
[27] Ibid.
[28] Alberto Toscano *cited in* Weidner, "Governmentality, Capitalism, and Subjectivity", p. 394
[29] In the mid-1980s, graduate jobs accounted for about one in 10 jobs. Now, more than a quarter of jobs are only available to graduates Sean Coughlan, "Graduate Job Rate 'Tops Unqualified,'" *BBC*, (April 2013). Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-22268809. Accessed April 14, 2014.

9

cognitive capacities takes precedence over physical capability.[30] Such exploitation demands a certain kind of worker – workers with the correct 'personality'*, workers that conduct themselves in the correct way.* Put differently, *the way a worker conducts themselves determines (in part) the value of their labour power* which is, in turn, measured by their capacity to be flexible, passionate, creative, even 'charming'; self-reliant but also co-operative, 'team players'.[31] Under these conditions, the university functions as a privileged site for creating subjects imbued with such conducts; an institution responsible for creating the kinds of conduct expected of immaterial labourers. By 'mobilizing the imagination, creativity, skills and talents of all our people'[32] for economic ends,[33] Universities have increasingly become 'training grounds' for producing 'technocultural subjectivities necessary to a post-Fordist accumulation regime'.[34] Neoliberal subjects are thus trained to make not only the rational choice, but to internalise this choice as their responsibility; they are 'engaged in an enterprise of maximising their self-value, in the context of an always already structured game with its own rules.' This subjectivity 'also requires that the rules of the game are embodied and performed.'[35] Universities thus become

---

[30] Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labour," in *Radical Thought in Italy*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 132–46; Antonio Negri, "Workers' Party Against Work," in *Books for Burning: Between Civil War and Democracy in 1970s Italy* (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 51–117; Paolo Virno, "General Intellect," *Historical Materialism* 15, no. 3 (2007): pp. 3–8.

[31] We see this evidenced in 'person specifications' for job applications, where relatively short lists of technical skills are dwarfed by extensive lists of personality traits. *Every* job vacancy advertised by Chartwells (the external provider to whom Sussex catering services were outsourced) contains 'can-do attitude' as a person specification. About 2 in 3 include 'passion for the job'. All job descriptions include the Chartwells mantra: "To achieve our vision we *live* by the *values* of Integrity, Team work, Passion, Can-Do and Responsibility" We have emphasised 'live' and 'values' to highlight the subsumption of conduct (living) into the logic of capital (value), and vice-versa. Chartwells, "Working at Compass," (2013). Available at: http://www.chartwells.co.uk/working-at-compass.htm. Accessed April 14, 2014.

[32] This quote is from a foreword by Charles Clarke (then the Secretary of State for Education and Skills) to the 2003 White Paper: *The Future of Higher Education,* (2003) Available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20040117001247/http://dfes.gov.uk/highereducation/hestrategy/foreword.shtml. Accessed April 14, 2014.

[33] Rowena Harper, "'Being' Post-Death at Zombie Univeristy," in *Zombies in the Academy: Living Death in Higher Education*, ed. Andrew Whealen, Ruth Walker, and Christopher Moore (Bristol: Intellect, 2013), p. 31.

[34] N. Dyer-Witheford, "Cognitive Capitalism and the Contested Campus," *European Journal of Higher Arts Education* 2 (2005): p. 71.

[35] Weidner, "Governmentality, Capitalism, and Subjectivity", p. 406-407

10

sites to rehearse the embodiment and performance of neoliberal subjectivity, in which researchers, teachers and students are held responsible for maximising their rehearsal time. In particular, it is possible to identify three kinds of subjectivities created in the University Factory[36] that are imbued with the conducts of post-Fordism – the selfish researcher, the student-consumer, and the outsourced worker – which we now explore in turn.

The *selfish-researcher* refers to academics whose daily conduct is increasingly devoted to reproducing the logic of the market in research and teaching activities.[37] Such conducts are typically generated by new forms of governmentality[38] prevalent in the University Factory. Under the disciplining surveillance of 'global competitiveness', 'benchmarking', 'best practice', 'efficiency', and performance-related pay, staff are expected to reorient academic activity around measurable (and yet paradoxically intangible) outputs such as 'quality', 'impact' and 'excellence'.[39] Such techniques are not neutral. Rather they determine 'conditions of work and

[36] This term designates the increasing commercialisation, marketization, privatization, corporatization of both the ethos and functioning of HE; as capital has become more 'intellectual', universities have become more 'industrial' (Luke Martell, "The Privatisation of the Universities," *Shifting Grounds*, (July, 2012). Available at: http://shiftinggrounds.org/2012/07/the-privatisation-of-the-universities/ Accessed April 14, 2014; The Imaginary Party, "Housing Speculation, Student Debt, Fees and Dispossession - a 21st Century Love Story - Communique Concerning UCL Stratford," *THE IMAGINARY PARTY*, (November, 2012), http://imaginaryparty.tumblr.com/post/36738922262/housing-speculation-student-debt-fees-and. Accessed April 14, 2014. Andrew Robinson and Simon Tormey, "New Labour's Neoliberal Gleichschaltung: The Case of Higher Education," *The Commoner* 7 (2003). Sarah Brouillette, "Academic Labor, the Aesthetics of Management, and the Promise of Autonomous Work," *Nonsite.org*, (2013). Available at: http://nonsite.org/article/academic-labor-the-aesthetics-of-management-and-the-promise-of-autonomous-work. Accessed April 14, 2014.; Benjamin Johnson, Patrick Kavanagh, and Kevin Mattson, *Steal This University: The Rise of the Corporate University and the Academic Labor Movement* (Routledge, 2003); Andrew McGettigan, *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets and the Future of Higher Education* (London: Pluto Press, 2013); Cris Shore, "Audit Culture and Illiberal Governance Universities and the Politics of Accountability," *Anthropological Theory* 8, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): pp. 278–98; The Edu-Factory Collective, *Toward a Global Autonomous University*.
[37] In no way is this moral judgement on the behaviour of particular individuals, but rather the identification of a structural condition experienced by all.
[38] That is, 'a process and set of management techniques' Shore, "Audit Culture and Illiberal Governance Universities and the Politics of Accountability," pp. 292.
[39] Massimo De Angelis and David Harvie, "'Cognitive Capitalism' and the Rat-Race: How Capital Measures Immaterial Labour in British Universities," *Historical Materialism* 17, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): pp. 3–30; Lee Jones, "HEFCE, the REF, Open Access and Journals in Politics, IR and Political Theory," *The Disorder Of Things*, (August, 2013). Available at: http://thedisorderofthings.com/2013/08/16/hefce-the-ref-open-access-and-journals-in-politics-ir-and-political-theory/ Accessed April 14, 2014.; Paul Jump, "REF Non-Submission May Have

thought and, more importantly, on the way in which individuals construct themselves as professional subjects'.[40] This might include the deepening conditions of proletarianization and employment precarity;[41] tightening constraints on academic freedom;[42] the added disciplinary pressures of auditing; the culture of 'Publish or Perish'; the necessity to partake in unremunerated activities to secure impact of research; and the instrumentalization of teaching through lecture hand outs, PowerPoint presentations and online platforms. In these ways academic conduct is defined by the complicity of *'playing the game'* to secure research funding and ensure job security. Such complicity buttresses additional conducts of increased intra-academic competition and decreased collegiality – in short the emergence of the 'selfish researcher'.[43]

For the student – now redefined as the *student-consumer* under the £9k per annum fee regime - education has become a product, and a degree an investment of a student's capital on which they expect to see returns (more often than not, in the form of a well-paid career as an immaterial labourer). As public funding is removed, the value of courses is measured less by the content or academic learning outcomes, but more in terms of market choices based on

---

Consequences, Leicester Warns," *Times Higher Education*, (August, 2013), http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/ref-non-submission-may-have-consequences-leicester-warns/2006343.article; The Edu-Factory Collective, *Toward a Global Autonomous University*, p. 67.

[40] Wendy Bellanger, "Global Trends in HE," *Prezi.com*, (2013), Available at: http://prezi.com/36yr8dzokg5m/global-trends-in-he/. Accessed April 14, 2014.

[41] Shore, "Audit Culture and Illiberal Governance Universities and the Politics of Accountability," p. 282.

[42] Paul Kirby and Meera Sabaratnam, "Open Access: HEFCE, REF2020 and the Threat to Academic Freedom," (2013). Available at: http://www.academia.edu/2418995/Open_Access_HEFCE_REF2020_and_the_Threat_to_Academic_Freedom. Accessed April 14, 2014.

[43] Jamie Heckert, Anna Feigenbaum, and Anja Kanngieser, "The Antagonistic University? A Conversation on Cuts, Conviviality and Capitalism.," *The Sociological Imagination*, (November, 2010). Available at: http://sociologicalimagination.org/archives/2854. Accessed April 14, 2014.; Holly Randell-Moon, Sue Saltmarsh, and Wendy Sutherland-Smith, "The Living Dead and the Dead Living: Contagion and Complicity in Contemporary Universities," in *Zombies in the Academy: Living Death in Higher Education*, ed. Andrew Whealen, Ruth Walker, and Christopher Moore (Bristol: Intellect, 2013), p. 61. Stephen Petrina, Sandra Mathison & E. Wayne Ross, "Threat Convergence: The new academic work, bullying, mobbing and freedom", *Workplace*, 24 (2015), p. 58-69

12

predictions of future earnings. Students anxious of getting on the career ladder so that they may access a secure 'middle class' lifestyle are thus encouraged to 'consume their way of poverty'.[44]

Because the University Factory now deals less with students and more with 'customers', it is expected to provide vocational skills, individuated capacities, dispositions and proficiencies, rather than critical analysis and free inquiry.[45] For Harper,[46] 'students are ultimately positioned as products of the educational "machine" emerging as "skilled and qualified bodies" that can be put to work in the global knowledge economy'. It is therefore not for nothing that the Summer 2013 graduation ceremony at Sussex saw Vice Chancellor Michael Farthing, refer to 'students' as 'units' in his keynote speech.

Furthermore, because of the very ubiquity of university education, a degree is increasingly seen as not enough. Hence the university takes on the additional function of developing career paths either through non-academic vocational training or unpaid internships in place of course modules.[47] Even hobbies and extra-curricular activities are mobilised as personal investments that render students' conduct – and hence labour-power – more competitive, marketable and sellable. In short, these accumulated activities that take place in and during university create subjectivities that are 'sorted and socialised'[48] – conducted – for a life as an immaterial labourer: flexible, casualized, precarious, indebted, but also individualistic, self-reliant, self-motivated and

[44] Harper, "'Being' Post-Death at Zombie Univeristy," p. 31; ; see also Mike Molesworth, Richard Scullion, and Elizabeth Nixon, eds., *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2010).

[45] Harper, "'Being' Post-Death at Zombie Univeristy," p. 31; Rajani Naidoo and Ian Jamieson, "Empowering Participants or Corroding Learning? Towards a Research Agenda on the Impact of Student Consumerism in Higher Education," *Journal of Education Policy* 20, no. 3 (2005): pp. 267–81; Alisa Jane Percy, "A New Age in Higher Education or Just a Little Bit of History Repeating? Linking the Past, Present and Future of ALL in Australia," *Journal of Academic Language and Learning* 5, no. 2 (2011): pp. 131–44.

[46] Harper, "'Being' Post-Death at Zombie Univeristy," pp. 31–32.

[47] For example, Global Studies at Sussex runs a 12 week professional placement programme so that students can 'gain practical work experience'. This takes place in the second year spring term in place of module options and earns the student 60 academic credits. University of Sussex, "Undergraduate Placements," *University of Sussex*, (2013). Available at: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/global/prospectivestudents/ugplacements. Accessed April 14, 2014. Work placement modules are now common to undergraduate degrees across the disciplines.

[48] Dyer-Witheford, "Cognitive Capitalism and the Contested Campus," p. 76.

13

competitive. Conducting the student-as-consumer involves constructing subjectivities that are not only compelled or willing to sell themselves as individuals on the market, but are passionate about doing so.

It is within this context of the University Factory as a site of conduct formation that we situate the spark for the anti-privatisation campaign, which after 10 months, led to Occupy Sussex. Why did outsourcing, primarily a service staff issue, lead to Sussex University's most long-lived student mobilisation? In order to explain, the practice of outsourcing must be understood as a plank in the wider practices of conducting individuals in the University Factory. It involves shifts in the ethos of the university from non-profit to for-profit, and introduces mechanisms through which pay and conditions are eroded by introducing new workers on more precarious terms. In particular, this has the effect of complicating the singularity of the labour-capital relation via the introduction of a third party. In doing so, the workforce tends to become fragmented across different jurisdictional lines, where co-workers are employed by a multiplicity of employers (the university, the agency, the external provider) on a multiplicity of contracts (the permanent, the fixed-term, the part time, the zero-hours, the temporary). These separations tend to undermine potentialities for collective bargaining, blur 'boundaries of decision-making and responsibility',[49] and exacerbate precarity among service staff.

Moreover, those sections of the university previously considered 'in house' become redefined as something *external* to the reproduction of the university. This is not to fetishize an imaginary utopia of the Public University of yesteryear. Historically cleaners, caterers and porters have always remained effectively 'invisible' to the 'actual' function of the university as a space populated by researchers, teachers and students.[50] Nonetheless, we witness with outsourcing a

---

[49] Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), p. 34.
[50] Lynda Finn and Gavin Williams, "Bureaucrats and Women Cleaners: The Durham Experience - Lynda Finn and Gavin Williams," *Libcom.org,* (1976). Available at: https://libcom.org/library/bureaucrats-women-cleaners-durham-experience-lynda-finn-gavin-williams-solidarity. Accessed April 14, 2014.

14

qualitative shift towards defining services as formally outside of the remit of the university – 'part of office life, but not colleagues'.[51]

In short, outsourcing has the effect of further fragmenting and atomizing the various individuals that encounter each other on the university campus – the student consumer; the selfish researcher; the outsourced worker. Subsequently, these individuals are 'divested of any orientation to the common' and become increasingly concerned exclusively with 'self-care'.[52] In this way, privatization and outsourcing produces 'citizens as individual entrepreneurs and consumers' whose conduct is measured in terms of 'work on the self' or 'their ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions'.[53] Stated simply, outsourcing contributes to and entrenches the broader social conditions of the University Factory.

In what follows, we elucidate how Occupy Sussex emerged as a counter to the conditions of the University Factory. Although the spark for the campaign was the practice of outsourcing, over time the conducts expected of the 'student-consumer' and 'selfish-researcher' were also countered. We begin with a particular emphasis on the shifts that occurred in the campaign's *tactics and strategies* prior to and during the February-April 2013 occupation. We subsequently argue in the penultimate section that in addition to practices of counter-conduct, Occupy Sussex developed *mentalities and behaviours* of counter-conduct.

3/ Occupy Sussex as a site of counter-conduct: strategies and tactics

The primary objectives of the anti-outsourcing campaign at Sussex originally consisted in maintaining an in-house solution where services would be returned to and run by current managers. In other words, the campaign was not initially built to radically question the processes and structures behind the outsourcing; its main goal was to keep the status-quo and find a better

---

[51] Emma Jacobs, "Part of Office Life, but Not Colleagues," *Financial Times*, (March, 2014). Available at: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/df8fe78a-b4ca-11e3-9166-00144feabdc0.html. Accessed April 14, 2014.
[52] Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization," *Political Theory* 34, no. 6 (December 1, 2006): p. 695.
[53] Ibid., p. 694.

in-house solution that guaranteed the pensions and other work entitlements of the 235. Hence both the parameters of outsourcing and its opposition were initially defined by specifically economic issues – pensions, job security after the transfer, redundancy, casualization.

However, as the campaign evolved and the position of VCEG became clearer in its intransigence and lack of 'actual' consultation,[54] a growing discontent emerged towards the attitude and procedures of senior management's decision-making. In effect, contrary to management's claims,[55] the plans were not 'proposed' but 'announced', and the management's intended application of the word 'consultation' was limited to minor implementation details. In other words, there was no discussion prior to the decision and issuing of public tenders for the two contracts. As a consequence, by January 2013, 8 months after the announcement, campaigners decided to take a different approach to the usual ensemble of weekly meetings, flyering, stalls, and occasional demonstrations.

This shift to new tactics and strategies is one we identify as counter-conduct. Inspired by events in Québec, a visual campaign was launched by adopting the yellow square as symbol and distributing badges and window posters to supporters. Offices across campus became individual and lasting theatres of support, visible to all and maintaining a constant reminder of opposition towards management. A media offensive was launched with blogs, contributions to local and national newspapers, radio shows, appeals to political groups and related campaigns. Boycotts of the campus cafes were organised on a weekly basis, bulletins and 'propaganda' served as counter-information to the management's PR machine.[56] The fortnightly demonstrations picked

---

[54] UCU News, "University of Sussex Accused of Keeping Staff 'in the Dark' over Privatisation Plans," *Ucu.org.uk*, (August 2012). Available at:
http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=6285&from=6207. Accessed April 14, 2014.
[55] John Duffy, "No Sell-off at Sussex," *The Guardian*, (March, 2013). Available at:
http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/mar/11/no-sell-off-at-sussex. Accessed April 14, 2014.
[56] Two satirical brochures, 'The Bulletin' and 'The Bullshitten' were anonymously produced by activists involved in the campaign, symbolically and stylistically *appropriating* the design of the official VCEG-produced Bulletin. This sort of parody demonstrates the tight intersection between conduct and counter-conduct. For a collection of material produced see Libcom "Occupy Sussex Propaganda," *Libcom.org*, (March, 2013). Available at: http://libcom.org/gallery/occupy-sussex-propaganda. Accessed April 14, 2014.

up more and more numbers, attended by academic and administrative staff, students and service workers. Then, on the 7th February 2013 a large demonstration of around two hundred people stormed into and occupied the Bramber House conference centre – a space symbolic of the university's new commercial strategies.

Although originally based on contesting the short-term consequences of outsourcing on an increasingly precarious body of workers, the emergent discourse and ultimate motivation for occupying represented a turn towards more autonomous activities, supposedly free from the appropriation or control of management. Strategies evolved because they were driven by the feeling that partaking in normal structures of decision-making, as well as using more traditional forms of protest, would be futile. As one activist said at the time, 'we're here as a last resort – we've held discussions, petitions, demonstrations, meetings and boycotts, but they haven't listened to our concerns'.[57] These practices indicated a growing 'refusal' to be conducted by top down decision-making processes. Indeed, it was during the occupation of Bramber House that explicit demands were first made for participation of workers and students in the running of the university, as well as an insistence that no one should not be victimised for airing and acting on concerns.[58]

However, such counter-conducts retained a mutually constitutive relation to the conduct of the management. Indeed, the capacity of VCEG to normalise and defuse the occupation highlights some of the concerns about the '(im)possibility of autonomy' [59] implied in the concept

---

[57] Quoted in Kerem Nişancıoğlu, "As the Sussex Uni Occupation Shows, Government May See Education as a Market, but Students Do Not," *The Independent*, (February 2013). Available at: http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/as-the-sussex-uni-occupation-shows-government-may-see-education-as-a-market-but-students-do-not-8488719.html. Accessed April 14, 2014.
[58] Sussex Occupation Statement, "Against Privatisation: Statement from Sussex University Occupation," *Sussex Against Privatization*, (February, 2013). Available at: http://sussexagainstprivatization.wordpress.com/2013/02/08/statement-from-sussex-occupiers-against-privatisation/. Accessed April 14, 2014.
[59] Steffen Böhm, Ana C. Dinerstein, and André Spicer, "(Im)possibilities of Autonomy: Social Movements in and beyond Capital, the State and Development," *Social Movement Studies* 9, no. 1 (2010): pp. 17–32.

of counter-conduct.[60] For example, immediately following the start of the occupation, Vice Chancellor Michael Farthing openly extolled Sussex's culture of protest:

> I respect students' right to voice their opinions, and we always have done, and Sussex has been a place where people have been critical of a whole range of issues from management to government. Providing protests are peaceful, providing they're legal, and providing the students are safe we have freedom of speech here and we allow people to express their views.[61]

This led some activists to question whether the occupation had become in itself a 'dead-end'[62] especially at Sussex, where a long-standing radical identity had arguably emptied such forms of counter-conduct of any 'toxic' content. Sanitized and manageable, it was argued that the occupation was responsible for reproducing the forms of conduct it originally sought to counter:

> The occupation as form is no longer unmanageable but is employed as a prophylactic agent within the university body. The toxic content of the campaign against privatisation's aims is reified by the form of the occupation, as a symbolic value profitable for management. We could even call this a process of real subsumption within the social or university factory.[63]

Indeed, the University's marketing strategy proudly celebrates Sussex's culture of protest and disobedience. For example, a series of postcards documenting instances of protests throughout Sussex's history were distributed at the Summer 2012 Graduation ceremonies (see figure 1). Another example: one of the new buildings epitomising Sussex's turn to the future and the current management's long-term vision contains a mural depicting Sussex campus that proudly includes the obligatory student protest (see figure 2).

[insert figure 1 here]

---

[60] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 264.
[61] BBC Radio Sussex, "Sussex Occupiers and Vice-Chancellor Michael Farthing," (February, 2013). Available at: http://the-pamphleteer.tumblr.com/post/43648197911/sussex-occupiers-and-vice-chancellor-michael. Accessed April 14, 2014.
[62] Queer (in) Crisis Collective, "Thoughts on the Sussex Occupation as Dead End."
[63] Ibid.

[instert figure 2 here]

In part as a response to the management's attempts at normalisation, Occupy Sussex called a national demonstration on 25th March 2013, which drew 2,000 people from across 20 universities to participate in the largest protest in the campus' history. Following a rally and a march through campus, Sussex House (the university's administrative building and home of VCEG offices) was briefly occupied, before the demonstration returned to Bramber House to hold a general assembly of about 1,000 people. One result of the demonstration was an escalation of the campaign, pushing VCEG to close down campus for the day, after a series of synchronised pickets and flash occupations of all catering outlets. A second was the physical growth of the campaign to a 'national' level through the participation of non-Sussex activists. Controversially, management linked this participation to the damage to Sussex House during its brief occupation, giving the cue to a High Court injunction to evict the occupation. In effect, these two achievements confirmed that strategies of resistance had escalated to a level of toxicity that was impossible for VCEG to appropriate within the bounds of what they considered 'tolerable', and therefore sterile, (counter-)conduct. However, this escalation also contributed to widening the gap between the campaign's first objective (stopping the outsourcing and supporting workers) and the emergent objective of contest and disruption of managerial authority. For certain observers and occupiers, the toxicity of the campaign was a travesty for the furthering of its original aims.[64] Indeed, from this moment, management upgraded its tactics to reassert its authority through more explicitly coercive means. Alongside the court injunction against the occupation, management also placed a blanket ban on protests that were not approved in advance. On 2nd April 2013, occupiers walked out faced by a security barrage composed of an

---

[64] For the sake of completeness, we note that there was a discussion (and eventually consensus) within the occupation the night before the national demonstration insisting that no distinction would be made between 'good' (peaceful, tolerable) and 'bad' ('violent', toxic) protestors (in the way the National Union of Students had done, for example, following the occupation of Milbank in 2010)., should management attempt to play up 'acts of violence' We read this as further evidence of OS seeking to avoid management attempts at sanitizing strategies of counter-conduct.

19

extraordinary number of police and bailiffs thus instantiating a long series of legal battles over evictions, protest bans, various individual court charges, suspensions and disciplinary hearings.

In sum, the strategies and tactics used by Occupy Sussex and by management described above can be mapped according to the mutually constitutive interplay between management's attempts to conduct and campaigners' attempts to counter-conduct. Faced by the prospect of sanitization and normalization, the campaign once again countered and escalated, instantiating the national demonstration, shutting down the University Factory and "fucking shit up".[65] Here the university interjected through more explicitly disciplinary processes in an attempt to reassert their authority as 'conductors'.

4/ Mentalities and Behaviours: Prefiguration in the University Community

In addition to pinpointing strategies used by Occupy Sussex, counter-conduct offers a framework through which we can examine shifts in *mentalities and behaviours* of participants. More specifically, we see that occupying a permanently active social space for the needs of the campaign led to the emergence of practices that experimented in *alternative* forms of conduct. In this regard it resembled – albeit in an incomplete and fleeting form – what Foucault describes as 'a counter-society, another society', that is, 'the project of giving birth to a new social order and creating a new man.'[66] Elsewhere such practices have been analysed in terms of prefiguration,[67] wherein activists become less interested with making demands on those they oppose and more concerned with forging new social relations in the image of an alternative society. Although Occupy Sussex remained committed throughout to making claims and demands on the university management, we also observed three types of prefigurative

---

[65] This latter, partly tongue-in-cheek, slogan was developed around the time of the national demonstration, pointing towards a need for disrupting and sabotaging the ordinary running of the University Factory.
[66] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 265.
[67] Wini Breines, *Community and Organization in the New Left, 1962-1968: The Great Refusal* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Marianne Maeckelbergh, "Doing Is Believing: Prefiguration as Strategic Practice in the Alterglobalization Movement," *Social Movement Studies* 10, no. 1 (2011): pp. 1–20.

20

transformation that fall under the rubric of counter-conduct: collective self-management on a non-hierarchical and participatory basis; a redefinition of the 'university experience' in terms of curricular and extra-curricular activities, and; greater unity and recognition among students and staff, as captured in emergent discourses of 'community'. We look at these three transformations in turn.

Firstly, the occupation served as permanent organisational space for the campaign in which 'management' was both collectivised and democratised. The daily activities of the occupation consisted in general meetings held two to three times a day, where anyone present could partake in decision-making. Delegated beyond the general meeting, action and strategy groups were formed, each open to any participant, and responsible for a particular section or activity necessary to the everyday functioning of the occupation: security, food, entertainment, events, exercise, study, campaigning, outreach to 235, media and PR, and so on. This horizontal organization and process was intended to avoid the formation of leaders and fixed roles and enabled more fluidity and variation in the way actions are decided and carried out. But moreover, it constituted an organizational form through which self-determination (of individual participants and the collective) was facilitated, articulated and indeed celebrated. In doing so, it served as a working (albeit still limited and problematic) alternative to the University Factory - less hierarchical, and more democratic and egalitarian.

Secondly, in terms of prefiguration, the occupation space was used for seminars, lectures and events. Educational events inside the space forced teachers and students to rethink the way in which content is conditioned and often stifled by the monotony and repetitiveness of regular lecture halls and seminar rooms, opening the possibility to more experimental pedagogical methods. The open, spatially non-hierarchical circle replaced the rows of the lecture hall. Teaching burst the bounds of existing curricula, and students were invited to learn about topics – such as HE reforms – that have typically been considered outside the scope of (undergraduate) university teaching. One lecturer held a session on the history of political posters and banners, and immediately after, a workshop took place where posters and banners were made for the

21

campaign. Participation – as both 'students' and 'teachers' – in these learning activities was open to all and free. In short, what we witnessed was the refusal of the forms of conduct pertaining to the selfish-researcher and student-consumer.

The reconfiguration of the university life extended to extra-curricular activities. During the occupation it was clear that a large number of students turned more to autonomous, disobedient, and boundary-crossing social relations in order to have the 'university experience'. Indeed, one of the student participants observed that 'as the occupation went on people became more in favour of a diversity of tactics – certain actions that would've been rejected out of hand earlier on received a lot of wavy-hands [i.e. approval] a few weeks later.' The fact that some students became activists and started new campaigns, changed their behaviour, and developed new ways of thinking was a fundamental part of the occupation taking over and subsuming the sorts of conduct expected in the University Factory.[68] For one student, fresher to the Autumn 2013 wave of protests, the campaign 'changed the news sources I look to, the kinds of books I want to read, the kind of arguments I get into down the pub'. For another, who graduated in July 2013, 'The richness of debate which I experienced during my stay in Bramber House has helped to add nuance to my global outlook (particularly issues such as feminism, hierarchy and consensus decision-making). The sense of personal satisfaction which I have experienced by genuinely believing that what I am doing is right has inspired me to live a life of activism.' Hence, counter-conduct became more than just a refusal or disobedience, but also a creative, transformative process of alternative forms of conduct.

Thirdly, perhaps the most important consequence of the campaign's forms of counter-conduct was the engagement between students and the people who run the everyday life of the university – the service staff. In contrast to the practices of separation and externalisation prevalent in the management's rationale for outsourcing, the campaign developed emergent

---

[68] For example, many activists from OS spent the summer of 2013 engaged in anti-fracking protests in Balcombe, Sussex. Marit Rosol also notes that participation in other protest groups is characteristic of counter-conduct in his study of struggles against a 'big-box' urban development. "On resistance in the post-political city: conduct and counter-conduct in Vancouver" *Space and Polity*, 18, 1 (2014), p. 79

22

notions of 'community' as the rallying call through which opposition to the outsourcing (and management more broadly) was articulated. This was captured by a photo exhibition run by students and workers inside the occupation, entitled 'Sussex: One University' (see figures 3 and 4) and the video 'Sussex: One Community',[69] both of which visually represented the 'coming together' of students and service staff, and platforms through which students and workers could engage in dialogue and recognition beyond the commodified student-consumer and service-provider relation. Within the occupation, bonds of trust were formed as problems were solved and actions carried out.[70] Such relations were further solidified through the joint work of student and staff on labour organising. This endeavour arose out of the difficulty staff experienced in garnering support from the officially recognised unions' regional and national branches, the refusal by some reps and members to fully contest the process and engage in industrial action, and the systemic issue of miscommunication and divisive tactics by management. These combined to push staff and campaigners to set up a single issue and temporary union to organise industrial action against the outsourcing. The 'Pop-Up Union'[71] was set-up and transgressed the boundaries of separate unions. In fine, by establishing some institutional continuity, 'community' became more than just a catchword for the campaign.

In our discussions and interviews with activists and staff during 2012-2013, students and staff expressed feelings of being reconnected and part of a community they thought had been

---

[69] WaxJacketCollective, *Sussex: One Community*, (2013). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fah9t6ePJDA&feature=youtube_gdata_player. Accessed April 14, 2014.

[70] A student recalls: 'on the first demo after the occupation… one of the security guards did the macho wannabe-cop thing and started shouting "get back", and everyone did but me. After that I said some pretty pointed things to various members of security and no one from the campaign backed me up. I don't want to set myself up as some sort of old-guard veteran activist but at that point I definitely felt like the people with me weren't necessarily people who knew what they were doing or who I could trust. I stayed away for a few days though, and *after I got back involved those feelings gradually went away*"

[71] Faced with organisational difficulties and legal challenges by the University, it had to abandon its ballot; but it succeeded in putting increased pressure on both management and trade unions see The Pop-Up Union, "About," (2013). Available at: http://popupunion.org/about. Accessed April 14, 2014. Also see "The Pop Up Union: a post-mortem" (16 Nov. 2014) Available at: https://libcom.org/library/pop-union-postmortem

23

lost. Reflecting on the affect this had on her, one student told us: 'I feel more confident in expressing my views knowing I have a community that also embraces many of them'. For one of the '235', 'the campaign was massively successful in 2012/2013 at recreating a sense of community that I had felt to be dormant in previous years.' Similarly a non-academic staff member was struck by 'the sense of community that has been created in which people from all walks of university life have been able to meet and exchange views outside their "proscribed" roles.' Prof. of Anthropology Andrea Cornwall wrote in March 2013: 'By staking a claim to the right to participate, the students have created a space for deliberation that we ought as a community to be able to continue to foster.' For a postgraduate researcher, 'the most important thing has been the way the campaign has rooted peoples' studies, social life and politics in the immediate community.'[72]

In each instance reviewed above - the student, the academic, the service staff - the affirmation of community served to subvert atomized, self-interested conducts expected of them within the University Factory. In its most politicised form it constituted a fleeting and local solution to what others have called the 'coordination problem' – how to bring together otherwise atomized, disparate and stratified sections of society into a coherent yet *original* collective subject.[73]

[insert figure 3 here]

insert figure 4 here]

---

[72] It is noteworthy that this notion of community was even taken up by management as it strove to win over the public debate. Registrar and Secretary John Duffy declared: 'we are determined that when [outsourced services] transfer to new providers they will... remain part of the campus community'. It appears the university management felt compelled to appropriate this emergent discourse of community. John Duffy, "What Sussex Is Gaining...," *Times Higher Education*, (April, 2013). Available: http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/comment/opinion/what-sussex-is-gaining/2003224.article. Accessed April 14, 2014.
[73] Endnotes Collective, "Spontaneity, Mediation, Rupture," *Endnotes*, (2014), Available at: http://endnotes.org.uk/en/endnotes-spontaneity-mediation-rupture. Accessed April 14, 2014.

5/ Conclusion

As seen in section 3, counter-conduct's conceptual strengths lay firstly, in its ability to articulate the refusal of conduct over the course of Occupy Sussex; and secondly, how this refusal was continuously shaped by its interaction with conduct. In this form, we found the mutually constitutive conduct/counter-conduct relation to be useful in mapping the pulse of resistance in the case of Occupy Sussex – its ebbs and flows; its normalisation and toxification; its appropriation and re-appropriation. In section 4, we observed that in the course of these ebbs and flows, the mutually constitutive relations of conduct/counter-conduct also produced mentalities and behaviours of counter-conduct that prefigured what might be described as new and alternative social relations and subjectivities – new relations between workers and students, teachers and students, and a sense of community that defies the neoliberal processes fragmenting individuals within the University Factory. Moreover, a counter-conducts approach enables us to distinguish emerging struggles in the University as shifting between the ethical, economic and political domains. Specifically, we note how its management ethos is to implement economic neoliberalism and how the struggles this generates forces students and staff to rethink their politics and ethics towards education. These shifts reflect how under neoliberalism, 'all conduct is economic conduct'.[74] However, beyond this *descriptive* cartography of struggle, does a counter-conducts approach *explain why* the strategies and behaviours of Occupy Sussex took the form that they did?

We would argue 'yes and no'. 'Yes' in the sense that a counter-conducts approach successfully helps to identify and explain what Foucault describes as 'infinitesimal mechanisms [of power], which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics';[75] but also 'no' in the sense that a counter-conducts approach does not connect these 'infinitesimal mechanisms' to 'ever more general mechanisms' and 'forms of global

---

[74] Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos* (New York: Zone Books, 2015) p.10
[75] Michel Foucault *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (Colin Gordon ed. New York: Pantheon, 1980) p. 99

25

domination'.[76] This is perhaps an unfair criticism; after all a counter-conducts approach does not claim nor desire to make any such 'connection'. Nonetheless, in the absence of any such connection, it is difficult to see how the 'infinitesimal mechanisms' identified by a counter-conducts approach might be "invested, colonised, utilised, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended etc., by ever more general mechanisms".[77] That is, when taken in isolation, a counter-conducts approach fails to grasp how wider configurations of social relations inform the micro-process of counter-conduct in any given situation. As such, analysing Occupy Sussex and outsourcing simply as strategies and tactics misses crucial dimensions of Foucault's conception of power. We have argued that foregrounding an understanding of conduct and counter-conduct in the political economy of the University Factory helps us better understand the 'general mechanisms' and 'domination' 'tactics', 'techniques', 'trajectories' and 'histories' of Occupy Sussex.

Firstly, situating Occupy Sussex within the broader political economy of the University Factory helps us understand why a campaign of hitherto 'invisible' service staff had such an impact and effect on students and various individuals both inside and outside Sussex.[78] For under similar pressures of proletarianisation – that orient students, faculty and service staff alike around the production and reproduction of the post-Fordist economy – our interests as immaterial labourers have become increasingly comparable and commensurable. Put simply, the redefinition of the university as a factory creates the conditions for class solidarity among otherwise disparate sections of the campus. Indeed, it is this that helps us grasp why the campaign's refusal to be conducted was articulated through emergent notions of 'community'.

Secondly, returning again to the argument developed in section 2, we posit axiomatically that the wage-labour relation is inherently exploitative, and that now being passionate, flexible and self-motivated is a pre-requisite for entering that wage-relation. Therefore, when we talk

---

[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Again we note the similarity with the 3 Cosas Campaign at the University of London.

about conduct(ing) today, what we are in fact talking about is being passionate, flexible and self-motivated in our own exploitation. The contradictory implication is that under such social conditions, the role of a distinct class of managers to oversee and conduct this exploitation is logically and practically obsolete: if you don't need a boss to exploit you, *you don't need a boss*.[79] This is the 'excess' created by forms of conduct typical of immaterial labour; it creates the ability to *self*-manage (albeit constituted at the level of the individual, as opposed to the communal, within existing forms of conduct). We thus see in the case of Occupy Sussex counter-conduct as a rejection of 'management', most clearly expressed in the slogan 'management, get out!'[80] We also note that the occupation itself was a prefigurative experiment in the collective self-management of the university, including fully functioning teaching facilities, a library, catering, cleaning, accommodation, entertainment, and security. Within these new parameters of collective self-management we can locate counter-conducts that explicitly reject the conducts typical of the post-Fordist University Factory. What was Occupy Sussex if not a refusal of the atomised, individualistic, competitive, career-driven student-consumer and a fundamental subversion and reconfiguration of the instrumental vision of education-as-a-product?

Such is the 'messiness and complexity' of negotiating these politics of struggle that conduct and counter-conduct constitutes an especially apposite analytical framework. Specifically, such an approach raises pertinent questions that would need to be addressed in future struggles. What forms of counter-conduct might be co-opted and reproduce – via appropriation or normalisation – extant relations of exploitation and forms of conduct in HE? How do we go 'beyond counter-conduct' and imagine (and implement) alternatives to the University Factory? This paper has offered some preliminary analysis that might assist in answering these questions.

---

[79] For Foucault, counter-conduct was expressed by "eschatological beliefs that imply that the faithful 'will no longer need a shepherd'" *in* Davidson, "In praise of counter-conduct", p. 29.

[80] This refusal to be 'managed' is reflected in student protests nationally. The recent wave of Cops off Campus protests were rife with the slogans: "we will not be managed"; "you can't manage us"; "we must become unmanageable"; "we'll manage ourselves"; "tomorrow we will become unmanageable", etc.

Beyond an assessment of the conceptual merits of counter-conduct, the study of Occupy Sussex

and similar movements are essential for engaging in this debate, which in turn must remain

grounded in and conditioned by the struggles carried out by students and workers inside and

outside universities.