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TITLE

The Tertiary Turn: locating "the academy" in autobiographical accounts of activism in Manchester, UK and Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

Activists often strategically negotiate sectoral boundaries by switching between public, private and voluntary sectors over the life-course in order to pursue their aims. This paper draws upon a cross-national study that explored the extent of this inter-sectoral movement and the specific "career pathways" activists developed in relation to governmental, private and voluntary/community sector organisations. Using analysis of 46 biographical narratives gathered from activists in Manchester, UK and Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand during 2007 we situate "the academy" in these life stories of activism. Teasing out from these accounts the motivations behind a turn towards tertiary education at particular moments we examine how "academia" supports and sustains individual activists while legitimising and professionalising their activism. In so doing, we track the tactical transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise effected by contact with "the academy" to make substantive and conceptual claims around the future role universities might play in the knowledge economy.

KEY WORDS
Voluntary Sector

Activism

Academia

Autobiography

Manchester, United Kingdom

Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

INTRODUCTION

Voluntarism has been heralded by neoliberal governments across the political spectrum as one of the mechanisms to variously tackle the growing challenge of welfare provision as post-war corporatist models face overstretch, turn the tide of civic disengagement, and halt the commensurate decline in "social capital" (Putnam 2000). In line with this reinvigoration by government, scholarly interest in voluntarism and the changing nature of state/third sector relationships has experienced something of a resurgence (Milligan 2007). Scholars have argued however that despite drawing on spatial discourse and metaphor much of this work remains aspatial (Fyfe and Milligan 2003; Milligan and Fyfe 2004). In response, critical *geographies* of voluntarism have emerged that take seriously the difference space and place make to the form and function of voluntary activity and organisations across a variety of sub-sectors and geographical scales (Brown 1996; Fyfe and Milligan 2003; Milligan and Conradson 2006; Mohan and Gorsky 2001; Wolch 1990). However, only a few studies to date have documented the impacts of shifts in state/third sector relationships and the resultant emergence of new hybrid forms of governance on *voluntary activism* (Larner and Craig 2005; Milligan and Fyfe 2004). Further, commentators have argued that studies of voluntarism and activism have tended to develop independently despite having much in common (Wilson 2000).

This paper emerges from a project that addressed these twin concerns. *Placing Voluntary Activism* examined activism within two sub-sectors of voluntary welfare activity – mental health and community safety – in Manchester, UK and Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (see Milligan et al 2008). Principally, it sought to explore the material importance of place for understanding the interrelationship between government, the voluntary and community sector, and "activists". More specifically, it was concerned with the ways in which recent shifts in the social policy terrain have changed the nature of these relationships. Hence, it explored the strategies voluntary and community sector organisations and "activists" adopt to navigate a landscape increasingly littered with a proliferation of thematic and geographic partnerships designed to tackle "traditional" social welfare problems and cross-sectoral "wicked" policy issues, promoted, in part, to re-engage and activate the citizenry and catalyse voluntarism (see Milligan et al 2008:45-46).

A central part of this research involved individuals narrating their "career trajectory" through the various movements, campaigns, organisations and sectors with which they had been involved as their life as an activist unfolded (Acheson and Williamson 2001). In this way these "activist biographies" not only provided a lens through which individuals' navigation of the shifting social policy and urban governance terrains of the past quarter century could be viewed but also served to identify cross-national and cross-sectoral similarities and differences in activists' experiences and the strategies they adopted (see Milligan et al 2008).

As a result of the adoption of this biographical approach the terms "activism" and "activist" were broadly defined. A questionnaire conducted in an earlier phase of the study identified the usefulness of thinking about activism in terms of a spectrum ranging from "working to change or improve 'the system' from outside" on the left, through "working to change or improve 'the system' from within", to "working within 'the system' to help it to continue to function as it is" on the right (see Milligan et al 2008: 5). Conceptualising activism as a continuum avoided a terminological trap that might restrict an understanding of the twists and turns of activist lives. Such lives could conceivably (and often did) lead an individual from highly politicised, voluntary engagements with direct action at the grassroots to an altogether more subtle and sophisticated "back room activism" (NZ ABI 22)[1] navigating circuits of influence from senior paid positions within voluntary and statutory sector organisations or, indeed, government. This expansive definition enabled the richness of the activist experience over time to be embraced and, moreover, effected a sort of alchemy between notions of voluntarism that emphasise the free giving of time and understandings of activism as a goal-oriented process that did not privilege one term over the other. Further, this approach allowed "activists" themselves to reflect upon the tensions between these two terms and their identity as "activists" (particularly when defined as such by others). Hence, despite appearing relatively de-politicised (insofar as the notion of change it embodies is relatively neutral), the activist spectrum allows an embracing of both the reality and the relationality of activism as a product of the collective actions of networked actors, differentially located within or without organisational infrastructures.

An unexpected finding from these biographies was the strategic importance for these activists of engagement with "the academy". Hence, though emerging out of debates around critical geographies of voluntarism this paper also contributes to long-standing disciplinary concerns around (and tensions and disjunctures within) the relationship between activism and the academy.

In the 15 years since Nick Blomley's *Society and Space* editorial decrying the "lack of discussion about progressive activism and the academy" (1994:383) and the "uncoupling of the categories 'academic' and 'activist'" (1994:384) much has been done to address his concerns on both counts. Regarding the first concern, Blomley's intervention reopened a debate about the activist-academy and, more specifically, geography's engagement with the state (Blomley 1995; Tickell 1995) and its policy-making apparatus (Banks and MacKian 2000; Peck 1999, 2000; Pollard et al 2000) that recalled earlier exchanges in *Area* between Berry (1972) and Blowers (1972) (Cloke et al 1991). This debate has resurfaced intermittently during the intervening decade and, most recently, has crystallised around the boycotts of Israel-based academics (Slater 2004; Storey 2005) and Reed Elsevier in response to its potential contemporaneous involvement in both the publication of the *International Encyclopaedia of Human Geography* and arms fairs (Chatterton and Featherstone 2007; Driver and Wynn 2007; Kitchin 2007; Pringle 2007). Once again, issues of personal, professional, and global responsibility have been cast into the spotlight (see especially a forthcoming *ACME* special issue 'Whatever Happened to Ethics and Responsibility in Geography?' edited by Chatterton and Maxey).

The academy in general and geography in particular has, then, been repeatedly challenged to sharpen its radical edge and strive towards renewed relevance in the face of the rapidly changing political, economic, social and environmental issues it attempts to speak to and against. So too have its constituent academics. Writing in the same year as Blomley, Vera Chouinard (1994:5) reconnected the categories of activist and academic and suggested in an oft-quoted call that navigating this activist/academic interface:

> Means putting ourselves 'on the line' as academics who will not go along with the latest 'fashion' simply because it sells, and who take seriously the notion

that 'knowledge is power'. It means as well personal decisions to put one's abilities at the disposal of groups at the margins and outside academia. This is not taking the 'moral high ground' but simply saying that if you want to help in struggles against opposition you have to 'connect' with the trenches.

It was, perhaps, William Bunge's pioneering geographical expeditions in Detroit and Toronto (1973, 1975) that first pinpointed the difficulties of the position Chouinard would advocate 20 years later (Fuller and Kitchin 2004). In recent years, Paul Routledge's (1996) conceptualisation of a "third space of critical engagement […] from where we may negotiate the locations of academia and activism" (1996:400) has alerted scholars to the inherent struggles in this "space of betweenness" (England 1994; Katz 1994) where "neither site, role, or representation holds sway, […] one continually subverts the meaning of the other" (Routledge 1996:400) and in which "the boundaries between […] 'activist' and 'geographer' [roles are] always in flux, always being negotiated" (1996:405). The challenges of sustaining a position as an activist-academic has featured frequently in his and others' research (see for example, *Area* 31:3; Castree 1999; Chatterton 2006; Lees 1999; Routledge 2001, 2002, 2003). Indeed, in a recent series of autobiographical articles in this journal (*Antipode* 40:3), individuals located in this "third space" provided insightful analysis (and critique) of the events and movements that triggered their "activist turn" and honest reflection on the difficulties and challenges of sustaining – personally, professionally and emotionally – their positions as activist-academics. More recently, a collection of papers curated by Brown and Pickerell (*Emotion, Space and Society* 2:1) has explicitly examined the role and importance of emotions in sustaining activism within and without academia (see especially Askins 2009; Brown and Pickerell 2009). Despite such interventions and repeated recognition within this work that activists often turn towards academics for the material resources, skills and knowledges they accrue or can access (Blomley 1994; Chouinard 1994; mrs kinpaisby 2008) little work to date has examined the ways in which activists engage with "the academy" to pursue personal and social goals *from the activists' standpoint*.

OurThis paper redresses this imbalance in addition to speaking into the aforementioned silences in the critical geographies of voluntarism. Drawing upon biographical narratives offered by activists in the United Kingdom and Aotearoa New

Zealand, we tease out from these accounts the motivations behind a turn towards tertiary education at particular moments in their activist careers and examine how "academia" – variously comprising formal academic knowledge, research process, individual academics and infrastructures of power, privilege and provision – supports and sustains individual activists while legitimising and professionalising their activism. A turn towards "the academy" featured in a significant number of autobiographical accounts. Indeed, this transition often proves pivotal to the furtherance of many individuals' activism, commonly defined as a desire to strategically influence policy makers and actively work for positive change for particular groups and interests they represented (see Milligan et al 2008). Hence, we argue that this "tertiary turn" evidences activists' strategic negotiation of sectoral boundaries and, moreover, effects a tactical transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise to enable further pursuit of these aims. In so doing we make substantive and conceptual claims around the future role universities might play in the knowledge economy through the forging of knowledge transfer partnerships that go beyond those underpinned by the rhetoric and practice of commercialisation.

The paper proceeds in four parts. Initially we outline the research methods adopted. Two empirical sections follow. In the first, we consider the role of tertiary education as a trigger for activism before moving, in the second, to unpack our conceptualisation of "the tertiary turn" by outlining four dimensions of the interaction between the academy and activism (ie, supporting and sustaining activists, legitimising and professionalising activism). Finally, we discuss the lessons that might be learned from these narratives that enable us to set out four aspects of an academy amenable to both activists and activism. Serving as a counterpoint to current constructions of universities within knowledge economy discourse, we close by using this sketch to rethink the concept of knowledge transfer.

METHODS

The two-year study employed a mixed-methods research design comprising four phases: i) a self-completion postal questionnaire to all voluntary and community sector organisations in Manchester and Auckland operating in the fields of mental health and community safety; ii) semi-structured interviews with 24 voluntary and community sector organisations in each city; iii) semi-structured interviews with 16

key statutory sector representatives from local, regional and national government in both the UK and Aotearoa New Zealand; iv) 23 autobiographical narratives gathered from activists in each city. This paper draws upon the study's final phase. The central theme of these 46 narratives was to unpack respondents' career trajectories over time, tracing the story of their activist involvement from its trigger point to the time of the narrative. Because of this focus, middle-aged activists were approached as they would have lengthier accounts of activism to narrate and reflect critically upon (Table 1). Respondents occupied a variety of sectoral positions with representation largely from the voluntary and community (*n*=25), statutory (*n*=10) and academic sectors (*n*=7) reflecting a recruitment strategy that asked interviewees in phases two and three to identify activists (Table 1). Consequently, not all activists initially associated themselves with this term but, rather, the narrative provided an opportunity to explore both their understanding of the term and alternatives such as "volunteer" (UK AB 11) or "do-gooder" (NZ AB 22) with which they did identify. Further the elicited narratives allowed an opportunity to reflect critically upon how personal, political and professional changes over their lifecourse meant they associated with different terms at different times. Moreover, the trigger point for individuals' activism and their current activist engagement was similarly diverse. Biographical sketches summarising the backgrounds and trajectory of the 13 individuals quoted herein are therefore presented to recover some of the richness of these accounts that would otherwise be squeezed out due to the strictures imposed by an academic paper format (Table 2). Analysis of narratives gathered was conducted using constant comparison methodology supported by team data workshops and the use of ATLAS.ti software (see Milligan et al 2008:47-48).

THE TERTIARY (RE)TURN

It appears almost counter-productive to coin a term in one moment only to qualify it the next. Nevertheless, a failure to acknowledge the role of the academy as a catalyst for individuals' activism would be to retell only part of their story; for many activists their tertiary turn is a *return* to academe. The role of tertiary education as a trigger for activism is both well-established and well-documented (see, for example, Boren 2001). It featured frequently in interviewees' autobiographical accounts, with involvement in campus protest and "small p student politics" being common catalysts (UK AB 1). As one activist noted:

I think that my interest in being a more active citizen started to develop when I went to university. So that, I think, I see as being a start because I got involved in societies that I was interested in at university. For example, the Islamic society, other cultural groups, and was quite an active member there in organising events and organising things. Very involved in debates, very keen on equality and particularly feminism and so was quite involved and engaged in debate around those issues. And possibly more in terms of more liberalisation for Muslim women and how important a part education plays in that. So I remember at university being very involved and engaged in that respect. (UK AB 15)

The role of student activism in interviewees' accounts does, however, subtly differ between the two countries. Where in the UK the activists interviewed were involved in a more diverse range of activity often around social justice, race and gender equality or triggered by changes in economic and social policy, in New Zealand the interests of the cohort coalesced around three key interlocking issues. Hence, interviewees frequently share a common "birth" as activists in the women's rights, anti-war and anti-apartheid movements of the 1970s. As one Auckland-based activist remarked:

I think [my activism] probably started when I was at university in the 1970s, the heady days of the 1970s when people like Germaine Greer came to the university and got arrested for saying 'bullshit', which was just bizarre. And there were a number of really big political issues in New Zealand. There were issues around women's rights and abortion. There were issues around New Zealand's participation in the Vietnam War. There were issues around the Springbok rugby tours. And so, Victoria University and most campuses in New Zealand in the 1970s were ferments of activism (NZ AB 10).

But, just as involvement in this extra-curricular activity sparks student and subsequently life-long activism, tertiary education and the process of learning itself is also an important trigger. For some the "discovery" of new approaches provided the foundation for their activism:

I discovered community development in the course of social work training in Wellington and was very involved in Student Christian Movement which was quite political at this stage in terms of all the liberation theology stuff and questioning things in that direction and again a group of people who were quite involved, friends involved in student politics with Vietnam war issues and others. Really from there it was doing community development training after a sociology degree. And that community development frame has really been the foundation for my own analytical framework, if you like, of where I've got in activism. (NZ AB 20)

For others formal academic learning is akin to an awakening:

I went to university and did a sociology degree. As part of my dissertation I studied race and class and that brought back issues around immigration and homelessness amongst black people and mental health issues and drug issues. It all started to make sense then, the pieces were falling into the jigsaw then. Oh right, I thought about this a few years ago but didn't really understand the bigger picture. So doing that sociology degree galvanised some of my thoughts around some of these issues and I thought "right, ok, there are loads of people who are campaigning about these issues all over the country. Wow!" (UK AB 4)

Leaving aside the role of the academy as a catalyst for activism, at various moments the academy weaves through activists' biographical narratives. Often activists pro-actively turn towards "the academy". On other occasions, however, the reverse is true: the academy turns to support activists. Both scenarios will be explored, starting with the second.

THE TERTIARY TURN
THE ACADEMY…SUPPORTING AND SUSTAINING ACTIVISTS
Academics potentially play a crucial role in supporting and sustaining activists practically and emotionally. Although unique among the narratives gathered in terms of the time devoted to discussing this relationship, one activist's recollections are

nonetheless noteworthy. During this episode this individual held the position of Chair in her local Tenants' and Residents' Association, a volunteer-led organisation comprising and representing members of the local community committed to improving housing, environmental and living standards. Contact between this activist and the academy was fortuitously triggered by the intervention of a journalist who sought out a local academic's opinion, after reading a letter from the activist in which she argued that the people living on her estate had been "brainwashed" (UK AB 10) into thinking "that they don't deserve their area cleaned, that it's their fault that it's like this" (UK AB 10),. The academic supported the activist's viewpoint and a resulting article was published drawing on both the original letter and the academic's comments. From a situation where "everything seemed so hopeless" (UK AB 10) prior to writing the letter, this event revitalised an individual's activism: "It gave me a real boost where I probably would have given up at that point" (UK AB 10). Later in this conversation this person commented:

> Once I'd had that success of writing that letter I was firing them off everywhere. […] Firing them off into our postbags, any local papers, *Manchester Evening News*. I had a 2,000-word one in that. And I can't tell you the excitement of it! (UK AB 10)

Through the discovery of common ground the academic supported this activist by becoming a strategic and symbolic mouthpiece (Blomley 1994:385; Routledge 2004:87). Initial contact with the academy was established by the activist thanking the academic for this supportive intervention and continued through involvement in a participatory action research (PAR) project conducted with one of his colleagues. This involvement provided further support, often of a practical nature, particularly proofreading and editing of letters to be sent to the press. However, practical support evolved into something more and ultimately led to a growing awareness of the experiences of "struggling others" elsewhere:

> The university had printed papers for us to deliver, leaflets for our meetings, things like that, and like I say, sent us things about other people in other countries. And I was thinking 'oh, I'm not interested in other countries'. But you'd see the parallels with what we were trying to do and about how poor and

oppressed people all over, it suits some people for that to be the case. (UK AB 10)

The longevity of this relationship meant that for this activist contact with the academy became important in helping to sustain her activity. Writing letters, often running to between 10 and 20 A4 pages a week, became a cathartic experience; a personal out-pouring cataloguing past struggles and current challenges of everyday life as a community activist. Moreover, this relationship with the academy also resulted in this activist gaining confidence, cultivated through attendances at conferences and contribution to published papers, emphasising anew the importance of activists' engagement in the academic writing and publication process as a central plank of PAR (Kindon et al 2007; mrs c kinpaisby-hill 2008). Indeed, such was the level of support offered that this activist later said:

If I hadn't of had the university I wouldn't have had all these years active because they gave me the [ability] to say "yes, you're right what you're saying". […] My neighbours were saying you're wrong, everybody else was saying I was wrong, I was mad and it would never work and all that. But the university reassured me in lots of ways and when I saw papers written with things I'd said and that what I was saying was right then I got more confident. (UK AB 10)

Two crucial demonstrations of the impact and importance of relationships between academics and activists surface though this discussion. First, in an era of "evidence-based" practice, decision-making, and policy, the initial engagement regarding the letter exemplifies that potential exists for academics to work with activists to help them understand how the evidence bases that inform academic opinion (that may, as in this case, support activists' work) are constructed and (re)presented. There is clearly further scope here for co-operation between academics and activists to develop and conduct research and evaluation together by embracing the transformative methodologies of PAR. Second, this activist's subsequent engagement in a PAR project reveals that the products of engagement with academics are not only practical but also distinctly personal and emotional. In this case involvement prompted processes of awakening, catharsis and confidence-building, each of which sustained and furthered this individual's activity. Of course, in one sense this episode is "one-

off", contingent and contextual. Yet, we contend that these benefits are neither atypical nor one-way. Instead, they potentially accrue to all activists working with academics (and vice versa) provided that both academics and activists *consciously* create the spaces for these relationships to develop and do so with a sense of common struggle (The Autonomous Geographies Collective, In Press).

Hence, this discussion perhaps serves as a potent critique of the ways in which shifts within the academy such as the introduction of output-focussed audit regimes (see below) are in danger of closing down such spaces. The relative dearth of academics engaging in such work is, perhaps, an indictment on these changes which bring with them considerable disincentives in terms of lost research time, income, and arguably, personal career advancement. Moreover, these developments privilege tangible 'outputs' over affective 'outcomes' cultivated over many years of co-operation that potentially accrue to *both* activists and academics. Indeed, given these trends it is perhaps now more practicable to embark on these forms of activist engagements from a base in a less research-intensive institution as, incidentally, was the case in the episode recounted here.

However, what this example also demonstrates is the way in which the academy helps to legitimate activism itself. This activist's confidence sprang from reassurance that her work was not only "right" but also valued. Contact with "the academy" lent legitimacy to her work. In this case, however, legitimacy was not consciously sought but was a consequence of the reactive involvement of an academic. Nevertheless, this case study serves as a useful springboard into the second half of this empirical section. Thus, we now turn from a serendipitous encounter to activists' deliberate turn towards the academy. In so doing, we make a shift from the effect of the academy on the individual activ*ist* to how it impacts activ*ism*.

THE ACADEMY…LEGITIMISING AND PROFESSIONALISING ACTIVISM

Several activists in both countries had at some point in their career trajectory made a proactive turn towards tertiary education. For these individuals it is not the academy's role as an assemblage of individually supportive academics that is crucial but rather its ability as an institution to confer degrees and qualifications. As one activist succinctly noted:

I realised that in order to be able to negotiate and make real change in organisations, whether I liked it or not, qualifications gave you legitimacy. (UK AB 1)

For this activist this realisation came after successfully running an Asian women's refuge in Manchester for nine years. Despite being a highly qualified lawyer, this individual returned to university and completed a social work course. Thus, for this and several other individuals who offered narratives of their activism, an ability to influence and agitate for change within organisations is explicitly linked with gaining qualifications, and moreover, the *right* qualifications. Academic attainment not only facilitates upward career progression through an organisation to reach influential decision making fora comprising senior colleagues but having the right qualification also becomes a way through which activists ensure interventions they make around such tables are taken seriously. It provides them not only with the necessary "insider understanding" of the issues under discussion but also the "ammunition" which enables them to respond to individuals and issues knowledgably. These comments evidence organisational cultures where experience alone does not "count" but instead must be reinforced through "pieces of paper" that prove activists' presence and contribution is legitimate. The tertiary turn can thus be conceived as a transaction through which by strategically selecting from the range of academic programmes on offer and conforming to its standards and disciplines of academic learning and scholarship activists convert experiential knowledge into that which has currency in their chosen area of activity. Others demonstrate how this conversion process both legitimises and, crucially, provides transferable evidence of past experience:

I think one of the issues is that all the skills and the experience I've gained through political activism, I haven't got a piece of paper that says "yes, I can do this". And part of the reason for me thinking of going to university is to do a degree in public services so that I've actually got that piece of paper that says "yes, she can really do these things". (UK AB 3)

For one activist a turn towards tertiary education proved a pivotal step in a career characterised by a meteoric rise from relatively low-level administrative roles to a

senior managerial position in the National Health Service (NHS). Having "broken through without a degree, no university education […] into quite a powerful role" (UK AB 17) this individual decided to embark upon an Open University course in order to provide similar evidence of "on the job" experience:

> I started then to do an Open University course. I got quite into mental health. I'd seen this flyer and kept thinking I must do something, I really must, because if this job goes I'm not going to be able to go anywhere because this is all experience that nobody really will want, I need something behind me. (UK AB 17)

These examples illustrate how the activist's turn towards tertiary education is part of a tactical manoeuvre to convert knowledge and formalise experience in ways that are seen as "acceptable" by statutory agencies, so "legitimising" their expertise. In other ways, the tertiary turn also effects knowledge transfer.

We have discussed elsewhere how individuals' movements between public, private and voluntary and community sectors in the course of their career results in an accumulation of knowledge, skills and expertise that activists then tactically deploy to more ably perform their new roles (Milligan et al 2008:24). Fluency in different sectoral "languages" is an important aspect of this transferable "toolkit" enabling individuals to become translators who can engage in multiple arenas of activity. Individuals from voluntary and community sector organisations who are well-versed in statutory sector terminology can, for example, exert considerable influence because this ability legitimises both their knowledge and expertise in the eyes of the statutory sector. Likewise, activists' engagement with academic discourse can also prove influential. For one already quoted activist contact with the academy "gave [her] a language to say what [she was] witnessing" (UK AB 10), a language subsequently used to achieve influence through, for example, the inclusion of "social capital" and "social exclusion" in her lexicon during dialogue with local government and other officials.

Activists are therefore adept at taking advantage of the academy, tactically assessing the utility of its constituent academics, resources, knowledges and, ultimately,

qualifications to accomplish their own ends. It is an arena used to convert experiential knowledge and learn languages and skills with significant currency outwith academe. Hence, the academy need not alter significantly to fulfil this role; rather it is a terrain that activists navigate strategically much like any other. In the face of repeated calls by academic-activists to engage with struggling others outwith the ivory towers (see above) this statement perhaps seems conservative in the extreme. However, far from a call for complacency or retreat from radicalism, understanding and acknowledging that activists are adept at utilising the academy in this way should be a trigger to resolutely defend academic standards from dilution and restriction of access to tertiary education on financial grounds (see below). Put simply, an accessible academy awarding qualifications that are recognised as the product of diligent scholarship and meet rigorous assessment criteria is essential to ensure universities continue to perform this vital function for activists. In short, activists must be able to enter the academy in the first place and leave with qualifications that "count".

But it is not only safe passage through the academy which activists seek. Rather, there is evidence that activists are entering the academy and effectively turning tertiary education towards their own ends by founding and shaping academic programmes, a trend particularly apparent in New Zealand. Arguably, this process is aided by the blurring of sectoral boundaries and activists' free and frequent movement between sectors in New Zealand *vis-à-vis* the UK that we have highlighted previously (see Milligan et al 2008). One interviewee succinctly recalled the motivation behind a decision to establish an academic programme for voluntary sector activists:

> I got bored with fixing the same problems, and started to look at a more systemic approach, and dreamed up the notion of a graduate qualification in NGO leadership and management that was values based, that acknowledged as first principle that advocacy was a core issue, that we weren't service providers. And we built that, and I stuck with that for almost nine years. And we ran it all round New Zealand. We run it in most of the states in the Pacific. I've spent a lot of time back in Papua New Guinea and Samoa, Tonga and Fiji, and all these other countries. And it was, and still is, a programme which is very much founded on issues of social and economic justice. (NZ AB 18)

The "upscaling" of activism evident in this individual's account was not an uncommon feature among those offering narratives. Frequently during activists' recollections of their activist trajectory its twists and turns led to an impasse; a point at which a realisation suddenly struck that in order for their activism to become more influential they must adopt a slightly different *strategic* approach. This often coincided with a desire to seek promotion within an organisation or, as mentioned above, a formalisation of their experiential knowledge through pursuit of academic qualifications. Further, it repeatedly triggered a shift in the *geographies* of activism – from the grassroots to the boardroom – and an increasing appreciation of the strategic alliances necessary to effect change in increasingly widening circles of influence: put baldly, a move from placards to partnership (Milligan et al 2008). This is not to suggest that subtle and "sophisticated" (NZ AB 15) manoeuvrings within "the system" have superseded more overt demonstrative forms of activism. Nor is it to say that the attainment of educational qualifications (though clearly crucial in terms of legitimacy) negates tacit knowledge gained "in the field". Indeed, as one activist insightfully noted:

> I think one thing I've certainly learnt from a professional aspect is the kind of importance of process and the importance of, it's not what you do but how you do it and who you talk to and who you take along with you. And timing around all of these things and learning judgement on some of those things has certainly aided the way that I've been able to achieve what I've achieved in my work. A lot of those things can't be taught on a university course or these are all experiences that you pick up by watching other people that are really good at doing it. We've had some people out here that have been fantastic that I've worked alongside and all the how-to stuff starts to rub off and I think in terms of skill transference and things, a lot of the stuff is mentored and observed rather than professionally taught. There's a big gap in terms of what the tertiaries are actually doing in terms of teaching the theory [laughs] and actually the practical side of how you pick up these skills because, to be effective as a practitioner these days, that relational stuff is key […] and how that gets built into academic teaching is an on-going challenge. (NZ AB 22)

Hence, activists frequently referred to the development of a personal "toolbox of tactics" over time and the need to draw on experience to select from it the most effective approach to use and the most productive relationships to forge and fortify to influence change in each situation. This accrual of activist expertise is a process we liken to maturation: a slow polishing and perfecting of the art of activism through the accretion and accreditation of experiential knowledge, skills, strategies and relationships.

Another individual subsequently charged with the continuation of the aforementioned NGO leadership and management programme after the departure of its founder shared a similar rationale for their involvement:

> [It's] really the extension of the activist stuff as well. It's both wanting good sound and strong management in organisations but also wanting to keep management training. If you go off and do business management training you're going to get nothing that says anything other than efficient and effective service delivery. And part of that unique and special quality of this programme is that we're giving people a bigger vision about what the sector's about, as well as their core. And ok, the only visible signs really on the programme are perhaps the initial course on values and culture, and what is this sector, and the social policy and social change good organisations cause. But if you actually look at the staff who are teaching on the programme and the flavour of discussions that we're bringing and the competencies that we're building in people to think analytically and critically and be aware of the environment around them. […] It's not just the programme or the founding leader of it, it just permeates the culture of the programme and therefore has quite a significant influence in every classroom discussion with students as well: that critical thinking stuff that questions. (NZ AB 20)

As this interviewee suggests, activists *extend* their activism by entering the academy. Reclothed as an academic, compliance with the institutional structures of tertiary education – playing the games of the academy – allows activists to package up and proliferate the knowledge accrued and activist tactics polished and perfected on the

"front line" to wider audiences in a new arena, an act charged with transformative potential. As another Auckland-based activist noted:

> The area of health that I'm in has the potential to be a very political area and that's what I'm trying to engender in the people that I teach. I want my university students to go out and be activists (NZ AB 11).

This is, therefore, no retreat to the classroom for the battle-weary. Rather, as the above quotations attest, this turn inside the academy is a *strategic* manoeuvre through which activists, arguably, become what mrs kinpaisby (2008:295) has recently termed "acadivists". This concept is, we believe, more than a playful portmanteau. Instead it is appealing because in addition to retaining an overall sense of career hybridity and stressing the tension between, and mutually constitutive nature of, the twin roles of activist and academic often denoted by a hypen or slash between these two words, "acadivist" also suggests a partial erasure of one's previous performative identity as part of a deliberate strategy to attain new goals. Echoing the definition and practice of these activists' activism (see above) it stresses the necessity of negotiation, compromise and minute-by-minute micro-political calculations to not only further one's activity but also to sustain one's self. Carrying forward this concept, through acadivism, then, the core activist values – of social, economic and environmental justice – are professionalised and subsequently promoted through critical pedagogy that not only challenges prevailing attitudes but embeds these values in a new wave of voluntary sector employees and potential activists. As an already quoted activist noted:

> I've had conversations with students in Auckland who've said to me before I came into this programme I didn't even realise that social policy advocacy was part of what the [voluntary and community] sector does. Now that's also a product of a contracting culture of the last fifteen years, where people have seen their role in the sector as service deliverers and not as activists for social change. And I guess that's a key reason why I'm here embedded in this programme. (NZ AB 20)

We have, hence, returned full-circle to the start of this section: a sense of awakening infuses the above quotation, echoing that experienced by those individuals for whom engagement with tertiary education proved a potent trigger for a life-long commitment to activism. But in reaching this point we have also returned to the paper's springboard: the need for both universities and academics to adopt a radical stance with respect to activism and activists.

DISCUSSION

TOWARDS THE "ACTIVERSITY"?

The empirical evidence presented above has exemplified the many practical ways through which activists' engagement with the academy and its constituent academics sustains and supports activists, and legitimises and professionalises their activism. We have identified three interlocking dimensions of an event in these activists' trajectories which we call "the tertiary turn": first, a reactive turn by the academy towards activists; second, a proactive turn by activists towards the academy; and third, a turn towards "acadivism" as activists' seek to turn tertiary education itself. Although some activists were already academics (see Table 1), others actively stepped inside the academy in their attempts to shape what the academy can offer. Such turns may be concurrent or occur at different stages of the lifecourse and, clearly, not always does one of these turns feature in an activist's trajectory. Moreover, as forcefully emphasised by the caveat prefacing this discussion, a tertiary turn may, in fact, represent a return to academia.

Yet this paper's scope would be limited if it set out only to straightforwardly catalogue instances of this tertiary turn in activists' autobiographical accounts. Instead, by outlining this multi-dimensional concept we seek to provide a solid empirical platform from which to pose two crucial questions: what does a university that supports and sustains activists look like? And, perhaps more critically, how can this vision be realised?

In a recent intervention, mrs kinpaisby (2008) envisioned the "communiversity". Emerging as a challenge to the "neoliberal normalisation" of tertiary education and university campuses (mrs kinpaisby 2008:294) they note:

We coined this word "communiversity" – we were re-thinking and re-working what we can do through the community as academics, using our talents, our abilities, our resources, to do other things simply than write journal articles and achieve academic accolades. We were talking about how we could orient all of this ability and capacity in much more useful ways.

This sketch of the communiversity is attractive, providing a launch pad from which to start to envision an altogether different type of academy that serves activists' needs, an arena that could, equally playfully, be termed the "activersity". Teasing out the key findings from the empirical investigation above, it becomes clear that the creation of the activersity is dependent upon the ardent defence of four integral aspects of the academy that are increasingly under attack from the process of neoliberal normalisation mrs kinpaisby and others have repeatedly identified and challenged (see, eg, Castree 2000; Castree and Sparke 2000; Routledge 2004).

First, the apparent necessity for activists to be able to certificate experiential learning in order to advance their activism leads to a defence of *access*. To adequately serve activists' interests the academy must support those turning or, indeed, returning to tertiary education as mature students and, moreover, recognise experiential learning as suitable entry criteria and embrace flexible forms of education delivery. Widening participation has been a cornerstone of UK higher education policy in recent years (DfES 2003, 2006) evidenced by the establishment of an Office for Fair Access through provisions in the 2004 Higher Education Act. Similarly, in New Zealand, commitment to "equity of access and achievement" among currently underrepresented populations is a stated priority of the second Tertiary Education Strategy 2007-12 (Ministry of Education 2006). However, the considerable emphasis placed by the UK government on attainment of a 2010 target of 50% of 18 year-olds entering higher education by the time they are 30 (Labour Party 2001:20; 2005:40) has continued to focus the remit of higher education on this life stage rather than expanding the sector's scope through, for example, a lifelong learning approach to tertiary education as adopted in New Zealand. Indeed, this policy has arguably been accelerated through the controversial and contested redirection of £100m (US$150m, NZ$250m) of government funding away from those studying towards a second equivalent or lower qualification (ELQ) to those attending university for the first time. For activists

this represents a double-edged sword. On the one hand, a £10m increase in targeted part-time undergraduate funding (from £20m to £30m) in 2009/10 to compensate for this withdrawal of funding potentially provides opportunities for those turning to the academy for the first time (HEFCE 2008). Continued financial support for those undertaking a second professional qualification (eg, Social Work) is also beneficial. On the other hand, for those returning to university opportunities are restricted by this redirection of funds. Initial soundings from the sector suggest that this policy will differentially affect women and mature students and have a negative impact on institutions arguably already more attractive to those returning to learning due to the flexible academic programmes on offer (eg, Open University) (HEFCE 2008). The institutional fall-out from this policy shift is yet to be fully felt across the sector and perhaps may not materialise until funding "safety nets" are removed in 2010/11 (HEFCE 2008). Other recent developments in the academy also potentially work against accessibility and flexibility. For example, the publication of PhD completion rates (HEFCE 2005, 2007) has resulted in institutional policies that make completion within four or seven years mandatory for full- and part-time students, respectively. Departments in which students take longer are often penalised through withdrawal of funding and students are increasingly being incentivised to complete "on target" through completion bonuses. Such measures potentially penalise "non-traditional" students at greater risk of non-completion, eg, those who study part-time, are older, from ethnic minorities, and who do not hold research council or charity scholarships (HEFCE 2005, 2007; Park 2005). Activists (many of whom clearly match this profile) are best served through the academy's adoption and increasing use of different and more flexible approaches to teaching and learning such as part-time courses delivered by distance and online learning, block mode teaching and evening classes, given the often significant pressures on activists' time not only due to their community and voluntary activity but also the routine demands of family and work life. A radical sea-change in thinking regarding the role of higher education throughout the lifecourse is therefore required if universities are to be truly accessible to all sections of the communities within which they are embedded, especially those turning to academia later in life for the first time. Further, at least part of this about-face rests on accessible academic recruitment policies that facilitate the smooth transition of activists into acadivist roles. In a circular fashion, this potentially opens up opportunities to reshape the content and form of academic programmes on offer in

response to community need drawing in other so-called "new" students (Leathwood and O'Connell 2003) who may not previously have considered tertiary education. Moreover, this change offers opportunities for programmes to be re-oriented to close the gap between theory and practice one activist has already noted (NZ AB 22) matching content to practitioners' needs. Arguably, by taking these steps, each university is further embedded in its community and starts to better reflect that community's composition and need.

Second, the frequency with which engagement with higher education triggered a process of awakening among activists prompts a defence of *critical pedagogy*. Values- and rights-based education underpinned by a commitment to socio-economic and environmental justice that raises awareness of the campaigns and movements mounting challenges to inequality alerts activists to the connection between their own local community struggles and these wider national and global social movements. As witnessed above, this knowledge often sparks life-long activism and continuously fuels their activity. Cleary this approach to teaching has a long lineage (Freire 1970) and continues to be popular, particularly among critical geographers keenly aware of the socio-spatial inequalities inherent in contemporary social, economic and environmental crises and the urgent need to communicate this message within and without their lecture theatres (Hay 2001a, 2001b; Heyman 2001; Wellens et al 2006). Yet, its potential to stir-up progressive politics beyond the classroom is worth restating both as a call, and justification, for continued development of this teaching practice.

Third, and relatedly, the importance of involvement in student politics as part of this awakening suggests an urgent need to defend *radicalism on campus*. Arguably, in the UK this crucial activist breeding ground is increasingly threatened by changes in university funding regimes that herald the emergence of student cohorts who consider not only the opportunity cost of a university education in fiscal terms but also the life-costs associated with higher education (eg, delays to home-buying or starting a family) in the context of record levels of student debt. Activism, understandably, slips down the list of priorities among career-focused students, and term-time employment to lessen their debt burden potentially takes its place, particularly among students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Pennell and West 2005). This is

perhaps a curious claim to make, writing in a year when students staged occupations at 24 UK universities in solidarity with the people of Gaza, a resurgence of campus radicalism reported by sections of the press as a "reawakening [of] the spirit of '68" (*The Independent* 8/2/09). Yet this episode has reconfirmed that student-led explanations of declining campus radicalism must be tempered by an appreciation that institutional policies towards protest, and especially changing legal constructions of this activity, have also contributed to student de-radicalisation. Universities occupy a pseudo-public space, commonly "owned" yet corporately controlled. Arguably, as universities have increasingly positioned themselves on a business footing (see below) campuses have become more akin to the spaces of mass private property – the shopping mall or managed town centre (Goss 1993) – in their drive to control and sanitise this space. Frequently this has been effected by foreclosing protest through appeals to ensure the business of the university proceeds unhindered or a corporate duty of care towards both protesters and others on campus is met. Clearly, restricting campus protest is not a new phenomenon (witness one activist's recollection of Germaine Greer's campus arrest above [see also Tait 2006]). But in recent years there has been a noticeable, and we would add troubling, rise in universities *themselves* threatening and taking legal and disciplinary action to curtail direct action on campus. Recent high-profile cases include the arrest and conviction of the "George Fox Six" for aggravated trespass after disrupting a Lancaster University-sponsored corporate venturing conference (*Times Higher Education* 2/9/05, 7/10/05, 24/3/06) and the eviction and suspension of 18 students representing "Take Back NYU!" – a coalition of student groups at New York University demanding *inter alia* corporate transparency over budgets, endowments and investments, and the provision of scholarships for students from Gaza – after officials cut-off power and internet access to the occupied building (*The New York Times* 20/02/09). Similarly, recent Gaza solidarity sit-ins in the UK were broken up through legal or disciplinary action (at Cambridge, *The Guardian* 14/2/09) or police and security intervention (at Birmingham and Nottingham, *The Guardian* 2/2/09). Shifts in the corporate governance and legal landscapes of universities have fundamentally altered and restricted the available space for campus protest. However, it would be wrong to use this rise in punitive action against campus protest to paint a wholly pessimistic picture of the future of student activism. Instead, as recent campus protests in the UK and USA have also forcefully demonstrated, students are increasingly capitalising on their

role as consumers of tertiary education to gain leverage over institutional decision-makers. Moreover, inventive use of new technology, such as (micro-)blogging and social networking facilities (eg, Twitter, Facebook) has opened up new networked spaces of solidarity and support. Relatedly, the development of new performances of protest (eg, the flashmob), often covertly co-ordinated through these technologies, have potential to challenge the corporate control of campuses due to their transient nature. If "student activism is back" (*The Times* 16/2/09) it has returned as student activism 2.0. Hence, this critique should not be read as a naïve call for a retreat to a nostalgic vision of the academy of old. Rather, it serves to forcefully reinforce frequently rehearsed arguments around the need for academics to find diverse and equally innovative ways to work towards "domesticating critical geography" (Castree 1999, 2000) perhaps through development of critical pedagogies that embrace new technologies and position radicalism and critical engagement not as a side-line to scholarly activity – something only for students' free-time – but as core curricular activities (see, eg, Chatterton 2008).

Finally, the important role individual academics play by offering support to activists and sustaining their activism through resource-sharing and knowledge-exchange encourages a defence of the *activist-academic*. The existence of these individuals is undoubtedly a product of their personal ability to cleverly play the performance games of the academy on the one hand (eg, through the continued production of audit-worthy "outputs") and departmental and institutional support for their activities on the other. By setting out the importance of these individuals to the community activists with whom they often work, this paper provides a further justification of their role, encouraging continued institutional support for their activities, particularly in the context of UK higher education with its increasing focus on universities as Beacons for Public Engagement (www.publicengagement.ac.uk) and the role of New Zealand universities (and by implication their constituent academics) as "critics and conscience of society" as mandated in the 1989 Education Act. In a sense, twisting our core message, by presenting the ways engagement with the academy and its academics supports and sustains activists and legitimises and professionalises their activism, this paper also personally supports and sustains activist-academics and legitimises and professionalises *their* activity.

Clearly, there is much work to do on each count, and when considered collectively, to justify the emergence of the activersity in the first place. To paraphrase a previous interviewee there is an urgent need to spark a realisation that advocacy and activism is "part of what the sector does" (NZ AB 20). This undoubtedly presents a major challenge. But this challenge is greater still because this vision of the tertiary sector butts up against an alternative future emphasising higher education's pivotal role in the knowledge-society, or perhaps more accurately, the knowledge-economy.

REFASHIONING KNOWLEDGE-TRANSFER

With its etymology rooted in policy reports published in the late-1990s by international organisations such as the OECD and World Bank, the knowledge economy is "characterise[d] in terms of an economics of abundance, the annihilation of distance, the de-territorialisation of the state, and, investment in human capital" (Olssen and Peters 2005:331). Though critique could be ranged against each of these facets, the embrace of this discourse in advanced capitalist economies has profoundly altered the relationship between the state and the tertiary education sector. Indeed, such has been its influence that Olssen and Peters have suggested that "higher education has become the new star ship in the policy fleet for governments around the world" (Olssen and Peters 2005:313). Recent policy documents in both the UK and New Zealand are replete with rhetoric espousing the merits of the knowledge economy (see, eg, DIUS 2008a, 2008b; Ministry of Education 2006). In practice, increasing recognition that universities are the propellants of the knowledge economy (Dale 2005; Olssen and Peters 2005) has resulted in significant and oft-catalogued changes within universities, not least, the shift from collegial co-operation to individual and institutional competition and *strategic* collaboration, and a concomitant focus on accountability (read: accounting [see Castree 2002; Fuller and Kitchin 2004; mrs kinpaisby 2008]) propagated through audit regimes such as the UK's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) (Routledge 2004) and New Zealand's Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) (Curtis and Matthewman 2005; Larner and Le Heron 2005). Consequently, commentators have argued that there has been an erosion of academics' "professional autonomy over work in relation to both teaching and learning" (Olssen and Peters 2005:325) and a "new set of pressures to 'dumb' courses down, as well as to demonstrate their relevance to the labour market and future prospects" (Olssen and Peters 2005:326; see also Berg and Roche 1997). Hence,

through its marketisation the "after-modern university" (Castree 2000) is arguably increasingly wed to the interests of business and industry rather than serving civil society or the communities within which they are embedded. The valorised *product* of tertiary education is cohorts of students equipped with transferable skills (DIUS 2008a; QAA 2008), or, put another way, abstract and docile bodies (Duncan 2002) that exhibit flexibility and are ripe for inscription by future employers. Indeed, as the New Zealand Government's second Tertiary Education Strategy for the period 2007-12 succinctly noted:

> Educators connecting more effectively with employers in course design and delivery will help ensure that teaching and learning are relevant to employers' needs and equip students with the broad competencies they need to be productive, adaptable workers in a knowledge economy (Ministry of Education 2006:26).

Similarly, the increasing dominance of knowledge-economy discourse in higher education policy and practice has resulted in an approach to knowledge-transfer underpinned by commercialisation (Ozga and Jones 2006). In short, knowledge transfer has become virtually synonymous with university-business/industry relations. It cannot, however, be uncritically equated.

Larner and Le Heron (2005) have recently charted transformations in the New Zealand tertiary sector over the past 25 years through three phases of the country's neo-liberal experiment. They posit that the third phase, starting in the mid-1990s, is an era of perfomativity and a partnering ethos characterised by a reconstruction of the calculative practices of previous phases (through, for example, the PBRF) and a "new emphasis on the responsiveness of researchers to various constituencies (industry and community)" heralding "competitive collaboration" (Larner and Le Heron 2005:853). Similar trends are arguably evident in UK higher education through the RAE and the rise of "partnering universities" through knowledge transfer initiatives such as the Beacons for Public Engagement scheme or Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering (CASE) PhD studentships offered by Research Councils. Emerging from intellectual common ground conceiving neo-liberalism not as a completed project but rather a contested, contradictory and rather more "messy" process, Larner and Le

Heron (2005) stress the contradictory and multiple ways in which recent transformations impact the tertiary sector. In short, they emphasise the potential for multiple relationships. Consequently, they note:

> While we may have very real concerns about these changes, our argument is that they *may* also be more liberating than previously anticipated (Larner and Le Heron 2005:858: original emphasis).

There is much that activists and academics will find anathema in the recent trends towards greater collaboration between universities, business and industry (eg, clearly much activism is targeted at the socio-spatial inequalities inherent in the capitalist ends these endeavours seek to further). We believe, however, in concert with our colleagues, that though these are to some extent competing visions herein lies latent potential and possibility. On a discursive level there is scope to recapture the language of knowledge transfer, in much the same way as our respondents repeatedly reshaped and deployed academic and policy lexicons, to divert rhetoric away from that underpinned by commercialisation and unbridled economic progress towards the reality of community engagement and social justice. Undoubtedly, this is a timely proposition given the already occurring and sure to be seismic social consequences of the present global financial crisis. In this regard, by outlining the ways in which the sites of tertiary education are already effecting a process of *progressive* knowledge transfer between universities and community activists at the moment of their "tertiary turn" this paper has, arguably, taken tentative steps towards this reconceptualisation. Yet, this will be a long road, for it starts, as we have here, with interventions within the academy (Castree 2002). As one activist located in a university succinctly said:

> [Activism] must be in me. But it can't be in every academic, can it? Because otherwise our universities would be very different kinds of places [laughs] (UK AB 11).

Despite the considerable effort required this place is, we believe, a worthy destination.

CONCLUSION

Activists are skilled negotiators of sectoral boundaries, adroitly navigating between public, private and voluntary sectors over the lifecourse in order to pursue their social goals (Milligan et al 2008). This paper set out to specifically locate "the academy" in these strategic manoeuvres. Engagement with the academy and its constituent academics featured frequently in activists' autobiographical accounts of their career trajectory, such that we have coined the term "tertiary turn" to conceptualise this confluence. An empirical investigation of the instances of this event in activists' accounts unpacked this idea further, revealing three interlocking turns: a reactive turn by the academy towards activists, a proactive turn by activists towards the academy, and activists' turning of tertiary education to their own ends by designing and delivering academic programmes. Doing so enabled us to tease out the ways in which the academy and its academics supports and sustains activists and legitimises and professionalises their activism. This, in turn, provided a solid platform upon which a vision of a tertiary sector that was supportive of activists was built: a sketch of "the academy" resting upon the resolute defence of access, critical pedagogy, campus radicalism and the role of activist-academics. Realisation of this vision is mutually beneficial. For activists the academy becomes an alternative arena through which they can effect change by shaping, say, the content and delivery mode of academic programmes, the direction of future research, and judiciously deploying "evidence-based knowledge" to influence the policy agenda and "real-world" practice. For academics, repeatedly exhorted and make ever greater efforts to influence policy and practice through direct engagement with policy-makers or evidence that our research is on their radar, working with activists potentially provides an alternative, and arguably more effective, route to this end, especially given the high-profile of some local and national campaigns, movements, organisations and, indeed, individual activists. Hence, here we have done more than simply provide evidence of this turn, but rather, have used this to launch both a critique of the present discursive construction of knowledge-transfer within the rubric of the knowledge-economy and elucidate a potential escape route through the refashioning of this discourse. Arguably, this paper provides the first steps in this progressive political project by not only emphasising the importance of "the academy" to activists but by elevating the role of those academics working with these individuals for whom the tales of engagement recounted here will undoubtedly be familiar. On one level, then, this

paper offers practical personal and professional support and sustenance to many of its readers.

On another level, though largely empirical in scope, this paper has extended theoretical debate in both the geographies of voluntarism from which the study emerged, and more broadly, contributed to the on-going conversations in critical geography about activism within and without the academy. Our contribution to the former is an overdue rapprochement between studies of voluntarism and studies of activism that have to date been disparate fields of study despite a high degree of overlap (Wilson 2000). Speaking to the latter we stress once more the tensions at the heart of the tertiary sector between economic and social relevance. Yet, we have proposed that starting "in here" (Castree 1999) and refashioning the current discursive construction of knowledge transfer allows us to bridge this schism and, moreover, envisage different forms of partnerships between activists, communities and universities that rest on the free two-way exchange of knowledge, resources and skills to effect radical social, political and environmental change. Simply put, the goal is a construction of knowledge transfer in which critical *community* engagement is supported and valued to (at very least) the same extent as those partnerships based on economic imperatives designed to *capitalise* on intellectual property, through, for example, product innovation and entrepreneurial company spin-offs. To this end, further research is required to develop our understandings of the role universities play in activists' strategies and lives that we have begun to tease out here. And here, acknowledging that this paper drew largely upon unexpected findings that emerged from our study, we believe a particularly productive avenue for future research lies in longitudinal studies adopting participatory and biographical approaches that track, and work with, a particular cohort of activists across the lifecourse. Put another way, retrospective activist biographies should give way to activist lives in progress. This timely research proposition would, we contend, complement the reflexive accounts of activist-academics discussed at the outset and, moreover, provide a crucial litmus test: for an academy that will be able to support and *value* such studies will be far closer to the academy the activists we spoke with seek and urgently need.

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TABLES

Table 1 Characteristics of activists at time of biographical narrative

Identifier	Gender	Approximate Age	Sector
UK AB 1	Female	>50	Voluntary and Community
UK AB 2	Male	40-50	Statutory
UK AB 3	Female	40-50	Politics (local)
UK AB 4	Female	30-40	Statutory
UK AB 5	Male	>50	Statutory
UK AB 6	Female	40-50	Voluntary and Community
UK AB 7	Male	>50	Voluntary and Community
UK AB 8	Male (x2)	30-40, >50	Voluntary and Community
UK AB 9	Male	40-50	Voluntary and Community
UK AB 10	Female	>50	Voluntary and Community
UK AB 11	Female	>50	Academic
UK AB 12	Female	40-50	Academic
UK AB 13	Male	40-50	Voluntary and Community
UK AB 14	Female	30-40	Statutory
UK AB 15	Female	40-50	Voluntary and Community
UK AB 16	Female	40-50	Statutory
UK AB 17	Female	40-50	Statutory
UK AB 18	Female	40-50	Statutory
UK AB 19	Female	30-40	Voluntary and Community
UK AB 20	Female	30-40	Voluntary and Community
UK AB 21	Female	40-50	Voluntary and Community
UK AB 22	Female	40-50	Voluntary and Community
UK AB 23	Female	40-50	Voluntary and Community
NZ AB 1	Male	>50	Statutory/Private
NZ AB 2	Male	>50	Voluntary and Community
NZ AB 3	Male	>50	Politics (local)
NZ AB 4	Male	40-50	Voluntary and Community
NZ AB 5	Female	40-50	Academic
NZ AB 6	Female	40-50	Academic
NZ AB 7	Male	>50	Voluntary and Community
NZ AB 8	Male	<30	Voluntary and Community
NZ AB 9	Male	40-50	Voluntary and Community
NZ AB 10	Female	>50	Voluntary and Community
NZ AB 11	Female	40-50	Voluntary and Community
NZ AB 12	Male	>50	Academic
NZ AB 13	Female	>50	Politics (national)
NZ AB 14	Male	>50	Clergy
NZ AB 15	Female	>50	Statutory
NZ AB 16	Female	>50	Voluntary and Community
NZ AB 17	Female	40-50	Voluntary and Community
NZ AB 18	Male	40-50	Voluntary and Community
NZ AB 19	Male	30-40	Voluntary and Community
NZ AB 20	Female	>50	Academic
NZ AB 21	Female	40-50	Academic
NZ AB 22	Female	30-40	Statutory
NZ AB 23	Female	30-40	Voluntary and Community

Table 2 Biographical notes for quoted activists

UK AB 1	This is a female in her mid-40s who is currently the director of a voluntary sector mental health organisation. She migrated with her parents from Africa in childhood and recalls her shock at discovering poverty in the UK. This together with early experiences of volunteering and engagement with "small p" politics as a student trigger her activism. She clearly defines herself as an activist and has moved back and forward across the voluntary and statutory sectors in the course of her activist career.
UK AB 3	This is a female in her early-40s who is currently a local councillor in Manchester. Her activism began in the trade union movement through involvement in campaigns around workers' rights. She increasingly became interested in local party politics and became an elected official. Her specific responsibilities are around domestic violence strategy and prostitution. She considers her activism to be "sophisticated" because alongside working within the system for change effort must also be expended getting re-elected to enable her work to continue.
UK AB 4	This is a female in her mid-30s who is currently employed in the statutory sector. She spent her childhood in inner-city Manchester and traces her activism to her involvement in a youth club during her teenage years and, more specifically, a youth worker who gave her a strategic view of the issues of homelessness, prostitution, and addiction in her community. Following a series of "dead-end jobs" this youth worker encouraged her to overcome her belief that university 'was a middle-class white aspiration' and she studied sociology at a local university in her early-20s. After graduating, she returned to similar jobs but eventually trained as a welfare rights advisor which led to involvement in campaigning around poverty, immigration and, particularly, the disproportionate disadvantage experienced by women and ethic minorities. It was her experience of racism that triggered her move to the statutory sector.
UK AB 10	This is a female in her early-60s who is currently involved in a Tenants' and Residents' Association in an inner-city area of Manchester. She battled with alcohol addiction and depression throughout her 20s and 30s and after combating her own issues she devoted herself to counselling others experiencing similar problems. She has since been involved in a number of campaigns and actions to improve the environmental quality and housing conditions for the residents of several social housing estates in Manchester. This work has frequently brought her into conflict with both the local council and media.
UK AB 11	This is a female in her mid-50s who is currently both an academic and board member of a voluntary organisation working with young people experiencing mental health problems. Her experience of mental health issues within the family during her childhood led to an increasing awareness of politics around mental health and the anti-psychiatry movement. This led to involvement in voluntary organisations adopting a similar critical stance and anti-deportation campaigning. She states that she "used to be an activist" but now distances herself from this "old-fashioned" term. She identifies as a volunteer as this is "comparatively de-politicised" and she is no longer involved in "highly overtly political campaigning" with which she "associate[s] the word activist".
UK AB 15	This is a female in her early-40s who currently sits on the boards of a number of voluntary organisations at regional and national level. She does not attribute her activism to a single moment or event but suggests that growing up in East Africa her "heritage, faith and family background" engendered a set of values that led her towards being a more "active citizen", particularly at university. After graduating she was employed as a community development officer, set up an Asian women's group and became involved in campaign and lobbying activities around immigration and childcare. She then moved to Manchester and established a network for Black women and became increasingly involved in other voluntary organisations in the city, including those involved in community development and regeneration. She characterises her activism as a gradual shift from "grassroots" to "strategic" activism and now views her role as influencing policy. At the time of the biography she was also standing for election as a local councillor.
UK AB 17	This is a female in her mid-40s who is currently a senior NHS manager. She traces her activism to advocacy she undertook for clients alongside the administrative role she held in the NHS at the time. She rapidly climbed the career ladder and embarked upon campaigning initially around women's issues and later older people and mental health. Concurrently she studied for a number of Open University qualifications and established support groups for those battling addictions, using mental health services or experiencing trauma (e.g., following miscarriage). Later she became involved in issues around social exclusion and, particularly, homeless young people which led to involvement on the boards of voluntary organisations.

NZ AB 10	This is a female in her early-50s who is currently the CEO of a philanthropic organisation. Her activism was triggered at university through involvement in campaigns around the Vietnam war, the 1981 Springbok rugby tour, and women's rights. After graduating she taught in a primary school in a deprived area of Auckland. Having initially volunteered with an overseas aid organisation involved in community development she then worked for this organisation. Upon return from a period of international travel she became involved in a number of voluntary and community sector organisations and, as her career progressed, moved into the philanthropic sector. Although she does not identify as an activist (preferring the label "liberal") she does remark that "if an activist is someone who impacts on social change, I suppose that's what I do. And I suppose I've been an activist in the philanthropic sector in particular".
NZ AB 11	This is a female in her early-40s who works in the field of health promotion. She does not identify a particular trigger for her activism but thinks that she was "raised an activist, as being politically aware" and recollects that her first experience of direct action was spraying anti-war graffiti on a government minister's house at the age of 15, for which she was later arrested. A "very brief year at university" is remembered only for her engagement in gay rights marches and a three-day abortion debate. While working in the arts was involved in a series of campaigns around the anti-nuclear movement and Springbok tour and began to be increasingly interested in women's rights, particularly regarding abortion and contraception. She has been involved in several voluntary organisations around issues of women's sexual health, the rights of people with disability to be autonomously sexual, domestic violence, prostitution, housing issues and the trafficking of women. Alongside this involvement she is conducting research into the mental health of women who have experienced domestic violence and drug and alcohol addictions and using this to inform the development of appropriate services.
NZ AB 15	This is a 52-year old female who works in the statutory sector in the area of public health. She traces her activism to the 1970s feminist movement at which point she "made a political choice to be a lesbian feminist" and was involved in several campaigns around abortion law reform and women's rights to equal pay and childcare. She set up a number of consciousness raising and women's health groups exploring alternative healing that challenged the "hegemony of the medical profession, particularly the power of male doctors over women's health". The "next phase" of her activism was engagement in anti-racism campaigns around the Springbok tour. By the end of the 1980s she felt burnt-out and for the next five years was part of a spiritualist movement and spent time in India. On her return she became involved in the provision of sexual health services for street children and sex workers and setting up sexual assault clinics which led to her current role co-ordinating health services for asylum seekers and refugees.
NZ AB 18	This is a male in his late-40s who is currently the CEO of a large voluntary sector organisation. He has been engaged in activism since his youth and at 18 spent time overseas as a community development worker. On his return he studied social policy and social work at university and became actively involved in the student and tenants' union movements. After several years as a trade unionist and community development practitioner he entered academia to develop a course for voluntary and community sector managers. Now "an academic in recovery" he heads a major voluntary organisation involved in support and lobbying activities around addiction.
NZ AB 20	This is a female in her mid-50s who is currently an academic. She cannot trace her activism to a single trigger event but instead remarks that over time she has realised that it is "in her genes" and that her "core values are very deeply rooted in [her] Scottish ancestry and [her] parents and the generations that went before them". She suggests that her father's Scottish Presbyterian roots to which she attributes his "service ethic" and "critical thinking ethic", her mother's involvement in community development work and her older brother's participation in the university Maori club were all influential to her own emergence as an activist. As a teenager in the 1960s issues around the Vietnam War and racial equality in apartheid South Africa were also "incredibly formative". Following social work training she became increasingly involved in community development approaches both in the voluntary and statutory sector. After a year in Canada to complete a certificate in not-for-profit management she returned to a CEO position in the voluntary and community sector. She subsequently moved into academia to work on a not-for-profit leadership and management programme.
NZ AB 22	This is a female in her late-30s who works in local government. She considers herself a "do-gooder rather than a community activist". Following university she took an appointment with her current employer and alongside this role she has been involved in a local community organisation. She considers her paid work to be advocacy on behalf of communities and comments that her 'insider' status has assisted the organisations with which she is directly involved in a voluntary capacity. This strategic negotiation is, she suggests, "back room activism rather than front room activism".

NOTE

[1] All quotations have been anonymised and are coded by country, research phase and narrative number to enable tracking of respondents across quotations and publications arising from the *Placing Voluntary Activism* study. Thus, NZ AB 22 refers to the twenty-second Activist Biography narrated in New Zealand. Individuals' names within quotations have been pseudonymised.