Of Measures & Metrics – A Foucaultian/Žižekian influenced exploration of the impact of accountability regimes on academic subjectivity in Irish higher education

Abstract

This paper reports on a project aimed at examining the impact of accountability regimes on academic identity/identities in Ireland. Framed by a view of Foucaultian power relations and the Žižekian idea that academic life may contain irreducible fissures and voids that defy any totalizing descriptions, a number of extended interviews were carried out with academics in four of Ireland's seven universities. An initial analysis of the defining tensions in the lives of three of the academics interviewed reveals the difficult negotiation of their identities on three levels framed by policy, discipline and institution. These tensions are characterized by a heightened sensitivity and awareness of power relations both within and external to the university and manifest themselves in some cases in variable modes of acceptance and resistance to the use of metrics - actual or anticipated. A second result of the analysis is that the Žižekian notion of an inherent disruptive "excess" in the internal dialectic between metric and accountability systems and self is not [yet!] evident in the lives under consideration. However, the interpretative framework adopted is offered as a useful tool that reveals the tensions academics lives in a new light. [191]

Keywords: *academic identity, academic work, Foucault, Žižek*

Introduction

In this paper we interrogate aspects of the recent cultures of new public managerialism (NPW) and quasi-marketisation in Irish higher education by applying a Foucaultian/Žižekian analysis of the lived experience of academic subjectivity in three closely examined cases of academic/scholarly life . We pose the question 'whether academics' experiences of the metrification of their work and other facets of NPM can be read as a conflict between an attempted ideological totality in the form of technologies of power', and whether their experiences give expression to Žižek's notion of distorting and traumatic effects of a 'Real' in academic life?' An interpretative framework, employing three aspects of power-relations and resistance, is suggested as a way of understanding academic subjectivity in terms of the disruptive 'otherness' of the discourses of higher education and institutional policy in the dialectics of both academic identity and institutional power. This approach allows, we argue, in a not uncontested way, a means of reading both large-scale discourses and experiences of professional and personal self and identity using the same framework, thus augmenting recent work on academic work and identities (Billot, 2010; Churchman & King, 2009; Malcolm & Zukas, 2009; Waitere, Wright, Tremaine, Brown, & Pausé, 2011)

Irish Higher Education: *The little engine that can?*

The Irish higher education system has undergone a significant transformation over the past three decades in part accelerated by a decade and half of rapid economic growth. It has also become a much more publicly contested arena regarding its purpose and relationship to the state and civil society. As argued by Loxley and Seery (2011), this shift can be categorised around three policy themes:

1) expansion and diversification of the student body,
2) knowledge generation through increased levels of research activity, and

3) knowledge transfer via either entrepreneurial activities or professional and/or vocational education and 'upskilling'.

Current negative economic dynamics notwithstanding, these broad changes are in line with well documented international trends (for example Barnett, 2000, 2010; Skilbeck, 2001; OECD, 2006, 2008, 2010; Dale and Robertson, 2009; Marginson, 2009, Limond, 2005; HEA, 2011). To quantify the expansion, there were 18,127 full-time undergraduate students in 1965 located in five institutions which increased to 153,329 in 2009-10 distributed across 26 institutions. There were also 35,220 registered postgraduate students for 2009-10; with 8,419 (23.9%) undertaking doctoral studies and 17,498 (49.6%) on masters (taught or research) programmes. Although participation rates have risen from 20% of school leavers in 1980, to 46% in 1998, to 55% in 2004 and to over 60% in 2007 (McCoy et al., 2010), there is continued concern over the lack of diversity of the student body in terms of age, disability, ethnicity and socio-economic status. These issues have been treated in a number of major quantitative studies on the varying participation rates of different socio-economic groups in higher education (Clancy, 1988; 1995; Clancy and Wall, 2000; O'Connell, Clancy and McCoy, 2006; McCoy et al., 2010)

In comparison to increases in participation generally, the proportion of GDP spent on higher education has hovered around the OECD average of 1.36% for the past 16 years at about 1.33% (OECD, 2010). Given that on average approximately 80% of institutional income is derived from exchequer sources (i.e. public funding), this accounts for 2.9% (€1.8 billion) of all public spending (which for 2010-11 is €61.2 billion or 36% of GDP), of which the education sector as a whole, constitutes some 15% (Government of Ireland, 2010). Furthermore, this is a quasi-marketised system, with 95% of this funding distributed to HE institutions via a weighted per capita formula, with the remaining 5% through research performance. Institutions are relatively free to distribute these funds internally, as appropriate to their own strategic and operational plans, though the 'recurrent grant allocation model' (RGAM), as it currently stands, has been challenged by demands for more 'entrepreneurial' activities, individual contributions (e.g. students fees, research income etc) and 'service level agreements', linking outcomes to both institutional and national strategic priorities and plans. This could generate a much increased, as well as contested, role for performance indicators at both an institutional and national level.

In relation to research and 'knowledge generation' there has been shift in the volume, type and quality of research. From a very low base 15 years ago, the Irish state has provided approximately €3.5 billion via competitive initiatives to develop this strand of HE work. New agencies or institutions dedicated to developing doctoral research such as Science Foundation Ireland, the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences and the Irish Research Council for Science Engineering and Technology, working under the auspices of the Department of Enterprise, have become significant forces in the funding and organisation of higher education within a short period of time. This policy shift has not only given the status of research in HE greater strategic importance, it has also generated and reinvigorated a number of debates around the kind of research undertaken (in particular the dominance of science and technology); the legitimation and valorization of certain kinds of knowledge; the question of where different types of research should be undertaken; the auditing of research work; the place of 'academic capitalism'; the relationship between teaching and learning, and the potential to 'downgrade' teaching and scholarship as core academic activities.

However, we would argue that, for Ireland in particular, at the centre of all this activity is the notion of HE as part of a deeper ideological struggle so that it becomes (for want of a better phrase), a 'cure and restorative' for structural and cultural inequalities, and deficiencies manifest both during and after the 'Celtic Tiger' era (1995-2007). This narrative about the purpose of Irish HE occupies a powerful position in an ever-expanding corpus of governmental and non-governmental reports, institutional identity statements and media debate.

'We know what you've been doing': audits, metrics and tables

It would be easy to dismiss the current narratives in Irish HE outlined above as being nothing more than recycled crass neo-liberal evangelism, but the force of instrumentalist and economistic thinking has underpinned and dominated much of the restructuring of the processes and mechanisms of governance and management of Irish HE institutions and rendered almost heretical any other possibilities. Although the changes within the Irish system has been less dramatic than, for example, in the UK or Australia, due to the dampening effect of the Irish social partnership model (essentially a compact between unions, employers and the state), they have, nonetheless, followed a similar script on the supposed benefits of NPW and quasi-markets (via the RGAM), as opposed to the allegedly sub-optimal, traditional work practices based on high-trust and autonomy in a framework of light regulation which would have been fairly typical in the past. Importantly, and similar to the UK context (see Deem, Mok & Lukas, 2008), these changes have brought into very sharp relief the traditionally nebulous matrix of power, control and resistance (passive or active) within Irish institutions which forms the backdrop to the second part of this paper.

The emergence of both qualitatively and quantitatively different accountability regimes in HE over the past 30 years has been well documented and discussed (for example Power, 1999; Tight, 2000; Ranson, 2003; Dill & Soo, 2005; Ussher & Massimo, 2006; Oancea, 2007). However, and in particular for those systems like Ireland's which are predominately publicly funded, the origins of this shift have generally been attributed to two broad changes in the provision, organisation and management of state services more generally through: 1) some form of quasi-marketization (underpinned by direct or elliptical references to neo-liberal axioms) and 2) NPM, through devolved forms of control, performativity, self-governance and performance indicators. Put simply, the former is implicated in rectifying so-called supply side deficiencies in public services, whereas the latter is used as a mechanism to construct allegedly more efficacious internal structures and cultures; in particular the transformation of semi-autonomous bureau-professionals of which academia would be a typical example (Clarke, Cochrane & McLaughlin, 1994).

In summary, these structural and systemic changes are not just about metaphorically re-arranging the institutional furniture, but are an attempt to reconfigure academic relationships and subjectivities that can be read in terms of Foucault's notion that power is both oppressive and productive. It reminds us that these accountability regimes not only act in channelling and directing our work, but attempt to re-orientate our sense of academic identity. It has the effect of seeping into professional identity 'as every individual working in academia is made aware that their performance, productivity and professional conduct is constantly under scrutiny within non-

negotiable frameworks' (Morley, 2003, p67). This echoes Foucault's notion about the capillaries of power, that if we wish to really see power at work then we need to explore the actual and metaphorical nooks and crannies of institutional life, which is what we do next.

A theoretical frame- Foucault and beyond with Žižek.

Against the background sketched above, we first take up the idea in this section that the culture and practices of research metrics systems and other boundaries of academic life are examples of localised technologies of power that are enacted on the bodies and lives of Irish academic scholars. Data were generated as a result of extended interviews with 15 scholars in different disciplines in four Irish universities framed by a series of questions concerning their professional lives and practices in the context of university management structures and research metric regimes. The academics interviewed were chosen randomly across disciplines in each university with the criteria that they should be mid-career scholars with some experience in research and publishing. The data were interrogated for the possibilities of resistance within the framework of Foucault's technologies of power and self (Thompson, 2003). This is done by examining, first, the possibility of such resistance in the work of Foucault himself, particularly in his later work on the technologies of self and the suggestion that each technology of power has an own form of resistance inherent to its nature. Secondly, the discussion is extended to the particular manner in which Slavoj Žižek understands how an internal "excess" is operative in these relations, which he, in contrast to Foucault, claims are dialectical. The result of this interpretation is likely to be a greater understanding of the inherent and particular forms of resistance that are particular to institution, career path, academic discipline and personal disposition.

A fundamental assumption for resistance is that the "self is … no longer considered as the passive product of an external system of constraint and prescriptions, but as the active agent of its own formation." (Hofmeyr, 2006, p. 216). This claim is rooted in Foucault's later work and his change of focus away from the manner in which subjects are formed as a result of subjection [*asujettisement*] to the processes and technologies of subjectivization, that is, the ability of individuals to counter the forces of subjection and to engage in the art of creating new selves and subjectivities.

Therefore the focus of analysis will be on the technologies of self as *points of critical resistance* (McGushin, 2005) which, in Foucault's words:

> permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain
> number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of
> being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity,
> wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault, 1988, p.16).

In this process of subjectification Foucault retrieves the Greek idea of 'care of self' understood in the polis as an aesthetic and ascetic struggle (Myers, 2008) against forms of subjection. However, the freedom from subjection to relations of power that can thus be gained are purchased at a price. In each movement to autarky there is a "refusal of self", a renunciation of a certain knowledge of self that must be made in order to function rationally within given sets of social and political [power] relations. This, in turn, presupposes that the only kinds of knowledge of self that can be sacrificed are those of which one is aware and Foucault can claim that the

more important ancient moral imperative is not "take care of yourself" but the Delphic "know yourself". Therefore, these techniques of care and knowledge cannot be considered completely independently and depend on the ability to understand the knowledge languages that are available in order to construct an understanding of self.

In the context of academic metrification it must also be noted that these exercises of control and performance measurement should be understood as "power" rather than simply mechanics of "domination". In this regard, they are matrices of discursive relations that constitute the individual not only in the sense of placing boundaries on self-knowledge and resistance but also, at the same time, providing the knowledge of self and the power relations of the world that permit agency. Thus, the resistance/accommodation and negotiation of the particular power relations of metrics in academic life are to be interpreted in such a way that it is only within matrices of power and knowledge that such resistance is possible (Foucault, 1979). Academics, if Foucault is correct, cannot take up an Archimedean position outside their cultures, languages and lives in order to mount resistance to their predicament. Not only that, but it is the very structures of the power relations that permit certain kinds of resistance inimitable to them.

While there are a number of examples of the use of Foucault to interpret institutional-level power relations (Sidorkin, 2004; Tobias, 2005), and, specifically, the ways in which certain academics take up overt positions of resistance to structural imposition (Huckaby, 2008), the data in this case are examined under two particular aspects of the power-resistance relationship.

1. That resistance is an aesthetic and ascetic struggle
2. That the power-resistance game "aim(s) to engender isolated self-regulating individuals", and can be "described as depoliticizing to the extent that they discourage associative relations among individuals"(Myers, 2008, p. 128).

With the idea that power relations inherently contain the condition for the possibility of resistance, one could imagine that Foucault comes close to the position that power and resistance stand in some kind of dialectical relationship. However, this is where the significance of the work of Žižek for this project becomes evident. Foucault is anti-Hegelian and does not construe the relationship between the two in a dialectical manner. This, according to Žižek, is the weakness in Foucault's analysis. The Žižekian contribution to the frame is provided by the idea that the power-resistance-freedom dynamic is a dialectical one. In Žižek's reading of the Hegelian dialectic, power relations contain within them the seeds of their own negativity or destruction. They contain what he refers to as an "excess" that renders the power relations intrinsically unstable. Taking this idea, we added a third aspect for investigation in the data

3. That the power relations experienced by academics contain an inner excess that, at some point, brings about their own negation. This excess possesses a libidinal strength and dialectical origin that allows the possibility of resistance only within the dialectic of power and resistance, and only as a radicalization of that power.(see Žižek, 1999)

A selection of case-studies

Taking a similar approach to Huckaby (Huckaby, 2008), three individual cases of academic lives are considered here. These academics work in different disciplines and in different Irish universities. They have been working in the sector for between 6 and 15 years and are at different levels in the academic hierarchy.

The data, generated from extended interviews in each case, reveal a series of power-resistance relations. These relations seem to be manifest at three levels: first, around knowledge and the legitimacy of different kinds of research knowledge; secondly, around the cultures of academic Schools and departments and thirdly that of individuals' experience with regard to teaching/research and administration.

The clinical-researcher in health care

The first case is that of a health science educator working in the university sector for the past six years. Beginning as a clinical practitioner she moved into academic research as one of the first in her field because of her perception that answers she sought to professional questions were not forthcoming in practical discourse.

The first relation evident is a power-knowledge in which clinical knowledge opposes academic knowledge not only in her own life but as a structural tension within the field. The second set of relations is found in the power relations in the academic School between sub-disciplines in the field. Finally, a third set of relations are revealed in her negotiation of the teaching-research-administration triad. Each set of relations is characterized by disciplining forces that impinge on her agency and identity, calling forth different kinds of resistance and potential freedoms. In the case of the knowledge relations, academic research is conceptualized in a way that gives credence to rigorous evidence and the research process but is attenuated by the demand that the research is clinically relevant and provides "evidence of care…as we should always be questioning what we are doing". The resistance to the demand to belong to one or other domain, the clinical or academic, is negotiated by insisting that the academic research has its legitimacy and even supremacy, as a means for change and best practice in care. The second set of powers and disciplining forces within the School are manifest in the language of the following passage:

> The other thing that, I think, we were cursed by… was the small mass within the critical mass of the [discipline]. In general, the Xs are ten years, or more, younger than the Ys. We have had far more PhDs, [in our sub-discipline] proportionately than in [the larger fellow-discipline]... and we have had far less years experience working within an institutional School…so we are trying to operate where our [other] colleagues have had an old institutional School type mentality but we don't have it,… so what we are trying to do is say, so OK, we are X we don't care what you think of us, we are going to do things differently…because I certainly couldn't cope with the level of oppression that there is in [the discipline] in terms of the way they oppress themselves or the way in which they oppress the students through a rule-based punitive system…it's just barbaric!

Viewed in terms of the second aspect of power relations referred to above, that of discouraging "associative relations among individuals" (Meyers, 2008), the passages suggests the more extreme active rejection of association as an act of resistance.

An example of the way in which the system of power relations can be embraced, despite the knowledge of negative effects, but undermined at the same time is suggested by the following quote:

> So we would be seen as the two strongest researchers in the School and we have been successful in getting funding which is an abhorrent marker of success but the way it has worked for us...we have tried to cope with its abhorrence in that it means that we have been able to fund people to do their PhDs full time which has helped us to build the capacity faster.

The "abhorrence" comes from the "controlling by funding bodies, [and] industrial model research" so that "research that maybe for the greater good, research that would really contribute to the profession, to capacity building in women or in service-users not being valued…"

The third set of relations at the level of personal struggle is clear in the following:

> I have learned to do what I want to do within the team... I have learned to say only what has to be said in order to be able to do what I want to do. I have learned how to extricate myself and to be more autonomous...I have learned how not to be controlled by others rather than learning how to say no...I actually think that... getting the promotion to SL [Senior Lecturer] has had an impact… there is a perception that I am somehow now slightly different as the only one in the team. It's like she's a little different, she is SL and she got it on the basis of research. So therefore we need to leave her to do her own thing. But that is the naivety of the School that I am benefitting from. There is the notion that the crap that they are going to give me will be a different crap!

Here again, the data give expression to the theoretical idea that the power relations of academic life isolate, but are, nevertheless, embraced to the extent that the way to freedom is through the system itself. By accepting the promotions framework and discipline, the clinical researcher has gained a certain freedom for herself, but without undermining the system.

The scholarly-researcher

The second case considered here is that of a scholar in a traditional academic discipline. His work is with texts, rather than people. He identifies his academic life and work closely with his current field of study since he was an undergraduate and is working institutionally "close to the top of the food-chain in Ireland". Despite being happy to stay in Irish academic life, he has recently become somewhat disillusioned with his institution. This disillusionment can be read as the result of the particular power-relation that surrounds academic promotion and metrics. In the case of this academic, it is not an overt exercise of authority, academic prejudice or preference, but is rooted in systemic opacity. Despite having seemingly conformed and performed to the published and declared standards, promotion has not only not happened but there is no knowledge of why this is the case.

> …I have over the last two or three years generated a fairly significant sense of alienation from [my institution] and disillusionment with its processes so...and the alienation is about the promotion process here…yeh…I feel really annoyed about what's been happening about getting promoted. The whole process seems quite opaque as to how it works…I feel that I have a sound research track record and the kind of responses that I am getting about why I am not being promoted do not add up for me…so I don't know if I have annoyed someone somewhere or what, but it just ain't happening.

However, later in the interview there is a hint of what might be at the core of this particular promotions process that reveals a similar power-knowledge relationship that was evident in the case of the clinical researcher. In a reference to his academic interests, he reported interest in two quite disparate fields, one of which would be considered mainstream and another which has a strong tradition of its own but would not feature in what is "out in front". His institution has indicated that he should find "one thing that you work at". However, this demand seems in conflict with that of a School demand that he take on PhD students outside of his field(s) of expertise as a result of the political expediency of increasing PhD students as a way of gaining strength

> So certainly, the X people that I don't particularly feel on top of, I agreed to take on under pressure and there is a particular story…at the time we were [as a School] weakened and we had to be seen to take on PhD student …to increase our capitation grant ...I think now I would be less comfort able…but at the time it was politically expedient to do that.

The culture of metrics is operational in the power relations between disciplines with larger groups holding a "metric power" over others and only a small space remaining for resistance which is experienced as a kind of therapy:

> We don't count…they [a larger discipline in the area] very much have a sense of the their own research methodology and operating in a certain way…there is the impression that we are very much more old fashioned stick in the mud in terms of how we do our things. There is a sense of resentment toward us...we are the rump who do not co cool things and do not agitate enough. We have come together to form a 'self help' group!

At the level of the personal struggle with metrification, the sense of the possibilities of resistance and of a care of self that as an aesthetic and ascetic process was firmly situated in a robust asceticism of withdrawal and renunciation

> We got slapped [in a recent review]…around our research culture they did not like what we did. ...one colleague is working in peripheral journals. I had written… books in distance education modules but they said they did not count … the process felt unfair…you have a sense of beavering away hard and doing all kinds of stuff and then it is unmotivating when you get a negative response

> One of the impacts of this whole saga is I have gone back to a kind of a sense of a solitary scholar interacting with an international community but they are not here ....but I don't have a big sense of collegiality here. I produced three textbooks and they

[reviewers] considered them crap. I began to feel like Solzhenitsyn in internal exile. The metrification is going to happen… we have got to do the thing they do in the UK. The university acts in this dumb and irrational way.

A Žižekian moment is evident in a response that hinted at the internal absurdity of the culture but without any suggestion that this absurdity would ever lead to the internal collapse of the system:

> Our head of department is very good at bridging these kind of things and with re-describing and presenting stuff he is able to operate systems well and we feel a good sense of benefit from him being there...but he will admit that it is crap but we have to do it.

The social researcher

The third case concerns an academic in the field of adult learning with an emphasis on emancipatory education, community building and political agency. In this case the knowledge-power relations are not around evidence bases for practice, or scholarly acceptance by peers, but in the way in which the knowledge generated in the university has credibility and is rooted in the concerns of people "on the ground…for working class people on estates…helping them to organize things."

However, there is also evident a set of knowledge power and resistance relations that are played out on the wider stage of society and economy. The kind of knowledge pursued by this researcher is not the knowledge of the "smart economy", but is nevertheless legitimate and even needed:

> It is very clear to me that the "smart economy" is a euphemism for technology and computers, engineering and pharmacy, and I think that is fine. We need a smart economy, you know… OK, well, let them do it. I think there is also a job for the humanities and social sciences which are in pursuit of a different agenda. It does not mean that we are not smart! I think that…education and the social sciences stand for something else; there is a society, there is community, there is democracy, there are citizens… But it is the monopoly position of that economic position that is deeply problematic in terms of funding for research, in the [way] it sets a research agenda and the way in which it controls a lot of what happens in a university And I think it is the social sciences that alert us to these things. I haven't seen many smart economists…dismal rather than smart. The social sciences have known for a long time what we know today. Like even poets and playwrights have known. That's our job in humanities to put these views forward and to teach students.

At the level of institutional powers and resistances, this particular researcher has had greater experience of working in universities than those previously considered and identifies the particular tensions that arise as a result of senior administrative load. Dividing his career into three stages of approximately five years in which he was first given freedom to develop programmes, research initiatives and a new department, the second phase was taken up as a Head of Department with a consequent shift in emphasis away from research

> In some sense, research died. Some little bits were done but nothing like what I have been able to do in the last five years. Taking on an administration load has no weighting

when you set out on a promotional track. You ask: "why am I doing this for the university". …when it comes to promotion they are going to say...it carries about 10% of the weight…(but) it's like 90% of my weight!

The final and current phase is described as a phase of "freelancing". The term used suggests that the relationship with his institution has changed in a radical way so that the identification with the university is now much weaker than before. Ironically, perhaps this has been the time of greatest research activity and productivity but one not void of conflict:

> I just resent the way in which the university thinks it should be paid for any research that we do. It is not really doing a great deal to deliver…like…the university delivers you this space…no matter what happens it delivers you this space, so it should forget about it. I have never seen the university offer any value to what I have done. I resent that they take money from us

Discussion

The intention of this article was to investigate the possibility of reading academic subjectivity using three characteristics of power-relations and resistance found in the work of Foucault and Žižek. In all three cases, struggles in the areas of knowledge legitimacy, the cultures of School and institution and in the triad of teaching/research/administration could be read using at least two of the aspects suggested. Each story contains the themes of "knowledge legitimation" and "promotion" as sub-plots in a way that emphasizes their aesthetic and ascetic place in the set of cultural power relations in academic life. In the case of types of knowledge and their legitimation, the tensions evident in professional schools between academic knowledge and either clinical practice or social engagement have their parallels in scholarly work in which disciplinary areas also vie for knowledge legitimacy and rank. The moments of resistance to domination of one form of knowledge over another are characterized either by attempts to reconcile academic research with professional and vocational purposes in a way that highlights the potential benefits to both sides or by retreat to a personal research space that attempts to avoid the institutional or field conflicts.

The sub-plot on the theme of promotion indicates at a systemic level a general acceptance of the regime, with no resistance to the idea that promotion is an accepted part of the discipline and power-relations of academic life. An examination of the individual data items reveals that the promotion regime can be embraced as a way of securing greater freedom and a way of producing a new set of power-relations to the advantage of the individual, but also can be experienced in a way that dis-empowers and alienates or introduces a new disciplining of academic life through the burdens of increased administrative load.

Within these struggles, the aesthetic and ascetic work of individuals in the fashion of "care for self" as resistance is manifest in different ways. Common to them is the aesthetic shaping of an identity that is based on a creative passion to engage with their discipline in a manner that makes a contribution to scholarship, clinical practice or social change. In each case there is also evidence of a "renouncing" of self in the sacrifices that are sometimes made, or are necessary,

with regard to promotion or the demands of administrative work. The aesthetic work on self does not occur without a concurrent asceticism.

Secondly, the aspect of the self-regulating individual that is, to a considerable extent, depoliticised and lacking in associative relations is threaded through all three cases, but to different degrees. In the case of the clinical researcher, it would seem evident that research and academic work are possible and relevant only in relation to a community of practitioners. However, her work is characterised by pioneering individualism and her reported success seems to derive in no small way from an individual engagement with the power relations that maximize her own efficacy. In the case of the scholar-researcher, the isolating effect of a particular set of promotion structures is quite evident and his work remains, to a large extent, a matter of individual intellectual pursuit, not conducive to associative relations, having political character only within a narrow disciplinary domain. In the case of the social-researcher it seems possible to point to an isolating effect of administrative work, at least at a certain level. This isolation seems evident both with regard to colleagues, but also with regard to the pursuit of research.

The third aspect or lens proposed, that power relations, as manifestations of ideologies, reveal a certain inner "excess" that ultimately leads to the collapse of the system from the inside is not as evident in the cases presented here. It might have been assumed that traces of suspicion of the ultimate absurdity and inner incoherence in the negotiation of systems of metrification and managerialism, together the adoption of an ironic stance with regard to these measures and a certain black humour concerning one's own position of "seeing through" the system while at the same time going along with it, could be read in the stories told. However, even though this last aspect of the interpretative frame "performed" perhaps less strongly, it is suggested that the framework seems to illuminate aspects of academic subjectivity in a novel manner.

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