JANE AUSTEN & THE BELLY OF THE BEAST: OERS AND NEOLIBERALISM

A flash talk sparked by Jim Groom’s keynote at OER16 and the role of OERs in cuts to public education...

John Casey, City of Glasgow College, UK
Wolfgang Greller, Vienna University of Education, Austria
Jane Austen

- an acute observer of social and economic change amongst the rural gentry in the early industrial / agrarian revolution
THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

- “to be in the middle of a very bad situation”

Image George Grosz, Pandemonium, 1914
Life under neoliberalism...2017... Wutbürgers
OERS – MOVING OUR FRAME OF REFERENCE?

- Current definitions/practice concentrates on digital materials – Less Risky? Moocs as exploitation?
- Adopt a wider definition: Hewlett + Jim Groom:
  - Include ‘real world’ things, such as services, infrastructure, certification? Physical Spaces and connections?
- Reassertion of shared civic spaces online and in the real world (19c lessons)
UNDERSTANDING NEOLIBERALISM 2

Diagram: Neoliberalism - Trends Over Time - Wealth & Power

Methods:
- Privatization,
- Financialization,
- Crises,
- State Interventions
- Culture

1930  1975  2107

After David Harvey
UNDERSTANDING NEOLIBERALISM 3: IN QUOTES

- “There is no alternative” (TINA)
  - Margaret Thatcher

- “The end of history”
  - Francis Fukuyama

- “Globalisation is as inevitable as the weather”
  - Tony Blair

- “This sucker could go down!”
  - George W. Bush 2008 (crisis begins)

The trajectory of neoliberalism from pomp to perma-crisis
‘EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY’

A neoliberal attack dog… disguised as a Ted Talk?

- “Digital Natives & Immigrants”
- “Higher education in 50 years will be provided by no more than 10 institutions worldwide”
- “Education is broken”… a meme for selling tech
- ”The next big killer application for the Internet is going to be education.”
Our Predicament?

“until we take seriously the extent to which education is caught up in the real world of shifting and unequal power relations, we will be living in a world divorced from reality”

Michael Apple
WAYS OF SEEING - SYSTEMS

- Who runs this place?

After Anthony Sampson
WAYS OF SEEING - FEEDBACK LOOPS

- Critique the calls for disruption in education with technology from the neoliberal mantra of TINA (There Is No Alternative) to:
  - techno-utopianism,
  - pseudo science, and the role of
  - academics,
  - celebrity experts,
  - media commentators,
  - commercial interests,
  - ... ask who benefits?
Cognitive dissonance… as neoliberalism rapidly transitions from its ‘liberal’ global system into an increasingly authoritarian ‘crisis mode’.

Mystifying narratives about technology, education and economic opportunity, personalisation…will intensify

OERs and Open Ed: Complicit or a part of an alternative?
SUMMING UP: THE FUTURE

- To develop alternatives we should know from where we are starting.
- Democratising HE – lessons from the 19th century?
- There is a role for the state, public institutions and government...rolling back privatisation
- The democratic radicals of the early 19th century held that education should be ‘accessible to the public and transparent to the public gaze’

- END
  - References and further reading follow:
REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS