

Jane Austin and the Belly of the Beast: OERs and Neoliberalism V2

Lightening talk? 5 mins

1. Local, national, and international policy and practice (including, but not restricted to, gains and challenges, governance and power, government and law).

Re-edited for reviewers comments

This idea for a flash talk was sparked by a comment made in Jim Groom's OER 2016 keynote, about OER's in America being used to politically undermine funding in public higher education <http://bit.ly/2fNdNpU>. Others have expressed similar unease about how OERs are situated in current economic political developments with Weller (1) observing the growing links to corporate business interests and Daniels (2) making the comparisons to a form of neo-colonialism

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This talk situates OERs in the context of present day neoliberalism and asks what's going on here? To do so we (briefly!) describe neoliberalism from Harvey's (3) perspective as the reimposition of economic and political control by the 'ruling class'. We explain what we understand to be OER's, taking the more inclusive definition from the Hewlett Foundation (4) and ask how our work with OERs may avoid being co-opted into neoliberal strategies of austerity, control and legitimization.

Jane Austen's novels are widely admired as insightful accounts of human character set in the style of an entertaining 'comedy of manners' that lampoons the pretensions of polite society. Less widely appreciated in Austin's writing is her great attention to financial detail, reflecting the tumultuous social and economic uncertainty that the rural gentry were facing as a result of the agrarian and industrial revolutions – the first bloom of liberal economics. We see parallels with this in present day discourse about technology in education. Guided by Cicero's dictum of 'cui bono?' ("who benefits?") we argue for the need to examine how our work with OERs fits into the wider changes that are going on in society. To do this we need to adopt a systems approach to identify the political 'feedback loops' described by Apple (5) that may be operating to gain a better understanding of how we manage our work. We don't have all the answers – but we do have some of the questions!

References

(1) Weller, M. *The Battle for Open: How openness won and why it doesn't feel like victory*, Ubiquity Press: London, 2014.

(2) Daniel, J., (2012). Making Sense of MOOCs: Musings in a Maze of Myth, Paradox and Possibility. *Journal of Interactive Media in Education*. 2012(3), p.Art. 18. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/2012-18>

(3) Harvey, H. (2007). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press, U.S.A

(4) OER Defined (2016). The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

<http://www.hewlett.org/strategy/open-educational-resources/>

(5) Apple, M. Ideology and Curriculum, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1990

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First submitted version

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Sparked by a comment made in Jim Groom's OER 2016 keynote, about OER's in America being used politically to undermine funding in public higher education (<https://youtu.be/IFzZM0hkBNw?t=198>). This talk situates OERs in the context of present day neoliberalism and asks what's going on here? To do so we (briefly!) explain neoliberalism and what we understand to be OER's and ask how can our work with OERs may avoid being recuperated into neoliberal strategies of austerity, control and legitimization.

This bit is really for the presentation

Liberal Economics 1.0 19th century style

Emphasised individualism in opposition to community, competition and market mechanisms as the best way of organising human life. Underpinned by the concept of private property contract law and the power of the state

Unprecedented increases in technology, productivity and wealth. Famine, population displacement, war, exploitation and poverty. Supported by an educated elite as well as economic and physical violence

Liberal Economics 2.0 21st century style

The same plus the internet.....

Transgressive – important to understand the implications

'I do not get it!' ad infinitum.... educationalist
'We cannot control this!' It Dept.

Quotes

The trajectory (and hubris) of neoliberalism 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

Reality Therapy

2013 Red Cross start distributing food in Britain for the first time since the Second World War

2017 Red Cross Announce a Humanitarian Crisis in Britain's NHS

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"Never thought I'd have to pay so dearly
For what was already mine" Warren Zevon

De Botton from Status Anxiety

Neoliberal Ideology - the dominant ideas of our age

How it works

Ideology is released into society like a colourless and odourless gas in newspapers, education, entertainment, history, media etc. - it is simply stating 'truths', with which only a fool would disagree with.

(De Botton, Status Anxiety p. 214)

Dealing with it

We must clear our minds of the childish fancy that the institutions under which we live are natural like the weather. They are not. This is a dangerous mistake. They are in fact transient makeshifts

Shaw, from the Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism as quoted in De Botton p. 215

Post Modernism - the perfect partner for Neoliberalism? the philosophical and cultural wing of Neoliberalism?

As neoliberalism dismantled the economic and political power of organised labour postmodernism filled the ideological and cultural vacuum.

Facilitated moving resistance from the economic sphere to identity, the individual, and culture. It is a weakening agent in its ethical and cultural relativism, pragmatism, localism, dislike of solidarity and organisation. Has no adequate (or need?) of a theory of political agency. It leaves us weak in the face of an increasingly authoritarian form of capitalism

Paradoxically has brought many benefits rich insights into understanding issues of race , ethnicity, feminism, sexuality, the nature of power and the dangers of totalising ideologies.

Terry Eagleton, The illusions of Postmodernism

Acknowledgements - wikipedia

<https://oer16.oerconf.org/sessions/keynote-jim-groom/>

Themes

1. Local, national, and international policy and practice (including, but not restricted to, gains and challenges, governance and power, government and law). for OER, mainstreaming open cultures).
3. Participation & social equality (including OER for inclusion, barriers to openness, building the open movement)

Jane Austin and the Belly of the Beast: OERs and Neoliberalism V1

Lightening talk? 5 mins

Sparked by a passing comment made in Jim Groom's OER 2016 keynote, this talk situates OERs in the context of present day neoliberalism and asks what's going on here? To do so it, briefly, defines OER's and neoliberalism and goes on to ask how can our work with OERs avoid being recuperated into neoliberal strategies of control and legitimization and the nature and locations and forms of such resistance

Jane Austen's novels are widely admired as insightful accounts of human character set in the style of an entertaining 'comedy of manners' that lampoons the pretensions of polite society. Less widely appreciated is Austin's attention to financial detail in her stories, reflecting the economic uncertainty that the rural gentry were facing as a result of the agrarian and industrial revolutions that were in full swing during this period.

The period in which Austen was writing was also the first flowering of economic liberalism with a philosophy that emphasised individualist approaches to organising the economy in society. This was in opposition to the feudal societies that had preceded capitalism and it stressed the primacy of competition and market mechanisms as the best way of organising human life, underpinned by the concept of private property and contract law. This era gave rise to an unprecedented increase in technology, productivity and wealth, it also witnessed unprecedented famine, population displacement and brutal human exploitation and urban poverty.

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Liberal Economics 1.0 19th century style

This was the first flowering of economic liberalism, a philosophy that emphasised individualism in opposition to the feudalism that had recently preceded capitalism, it stressed the primacy of competition and market mechanisms as the best way of organising human life. Underpinned by the concept of private property and contract law, the era gave rise to unprecedented increases in technology, productivity and wealth. It also witnessed unprecedented famine, population displacement and human exploitation and poverty. Then, as now, this was supported by an educated elite as well as economic and physical violence