

Campus closures and the devaluing of emplaced Higher Education: widening participation in neoliberal times

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Abstract

Widening participation (WP) in Higher Education (HE) is often positioned as key to resolving social inequality, it underpins arguments that increasing levels of education lead to reduced levels of poverty. Located within the tension of duty and need, WP is positioned as both the responsibility of the University and a financial imperative. This paper considers the student experience of this tension, specifically the contradictions between discourses of equality and diversity and neoliberal conceptualisations of HE as market. Drawing upon qualitative research conducted during the closure of a WP satellite campus, the paper explores the consequences of the withdrawal of HE provision for 'local' students. Utilising focus group methodologies to develop an approach for 'thinking with' seven WP students, the paper explores the material, social and affective contexts within which students experience university in their 'hometown'. Foregrounding participants' critical understanding of their 'place' within a marketised HE sector, we consider the formation of student identity as a site of struggles for value. We argue, the closure of satellite campuses must be understood within the context of deepening social-spatial inequalities. Developing a critique of individualised constructions of 'social mobility', we outline an alternative imaginary of HE as an intergenerational community resource.

Keywords: Widening participation; Neoliberalism; Emplaced higher education; Social class

Introduction

Sociological analyses continue to illustrate the impact of neoliberalism on both policy and practice within Higher Education (HE). This body of work has explored issues of rising tuition fees (Marginson, 2007), the redefinition of the student as consumer (Busch, 2017), the globalisation of HE (Davies, Gottsche & Bansel, 2006) and the intensification of the scholarly practices (Brienza, 2016). The expression of neoliberalism within HE is evident in the marketisation of the sector, as the state withdraws and the burden of investment is shifted onto the student, institutions must compete for highly valued students within a global market. As a result, universities have increasingly specialised their provision to attract their targeted student markets. Whilst the expansion of HE can be understood as inclusive, even without declining inequality, as larger proportions across all social classes attend (Shavit, Arum, Gamoran, 2010), the sector is becoming increasingly stratified, with degrees differentially valued (Wakeling and Savage, 2015). The logics underpinning these changes have also influenced institutional approaches to Widening Participation (WP), where concerns about efficiency, effectiveness and economic value are privileged over commitments to social justice and values of equality and diversity. This is manifest in the increasing role measurement of student recruitment and outcomes has on the initiation and withdrawal of WP programmes. Despite commitments to fair access, social class remains an effectively maintained inequality (Lucas, 2001) in HE within the UK (Boliver, 2013) and internationally (Jerrim and Vignoles, 2015; Jerrim, Chmielewski, Parker, 2015). With students from more advantaged social class backgrounds better placed to take up educational opportunities and access higher status degree programmes (Boliver, 2011).

This paper explores the experiences of students during the closure of a WP satellite campus located in Highfield¹, a deprived town in England (Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019). Situating campus closures

¹ Pseudonyms are used to anonymise the town and participants

within the neoliberalisation of HE we argue that the logics of marketisation are incompatible with the perceived commitment and responsibility to widen participation in HE. Using a participatory methodology of ‘thinking with’, we connect contemporary theorisations of class as struggles for value (Skeggs, 2004; Skeggs & Loveday, 2012) with notions of emplaced identity and a troubling of ‘social mobility’ in order to reveal the material, social and affective impacts of HE withdrawal on marginalised communities. We suggest that the devaluing of WP ambitions and the closure of the satellite campus not only shapes students’ formation of selfhood, value and belonging, but has deep and lasting consequences for members of the community to imagine a hopeful future.

The neoliberalisation of HE

Neoliberalism is a highly contested concept, which can all too easily become a shorthand for moral distinctions, whereby all that is “wrong” is taken as evidence of neoliberal processes (Peck, 2010; 2013; Horton, 2016). Nevertheless, taken as a set of rationalities which legitimate certain practices, the concept of neoliberalism may be helpful in unpicking the normalisation of ‘no alternative’ politics. Seen in this way, neoliberal logics include the roll back of the state, reductions in public expenditure and the formation of ‘quasi-markets’ within the public sector (Lobao et al, 2018). Arguably, this manifests in the state abdicating its responsibilities both to provide services and to regulate them. This requires the transformation of the social contract between the state and the citizen, whereby citizens must negotiate access to services through the enactment of individual choice and liberty. Therefore, the citizen becomes responsible for their own safety and welfare, whilst the state facilitates the provision of services via a free market economy. The provision of essential services predicated on free market principles reproduces an unequal distribution of resources. There is little incentive to provide services in areas of structural disadvantage when the neoliberal logics of economic efficiency and effectiveness determine the viability and success of services. Inevitably, the construction of the consumer-citizen results in the entrenchment of socio-spatial inequality, as citizens with the prerequisite capitals to enact choice accumulate wealth and are able to access the markets of service provision (Lopez-Santana, 2015).

Paradoxically, the failure of markets manifest in global financial crises, produce regimes of austerity whereby neoliberal logics become further entrenched. Austerity policies share common features of neoliberal governance: reducing expenditure whilst not raising tax revenue; retrenchment in public services; and focussing cuts in areas that impact poor and marginalised populations (Lobao et al, 2018). As a process of neoliberal ‘state crafting’ (Wacquant, 2010), austerity policies are legitimised through the ideological dismantling of class identity, where inequality is redefined as an individual problem, best addressed through reflexive work on the self (Tyler, 2015). As such, dominant ideas of the ‘undeserving poor’ not only inform austerity policies but also become discursive repertoires of selfhood (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2013). Therefore, stigmatising divisions between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ have become a resource of identity formation for working-class groups (Leaney, 2020). In this way, austerity politics have material and affective consequences for the poorest members of society.

Thus, we can think of the political-economic context of neoliberalism as producing particular affects of selfhood, value and belonging. For communities disadvantaged by the social-spatial inequalities of austerity politics, there is a heightened awareness of precarity, where the anticipation of future cuts shapes the current conditions of life (Horton, 2016). Despite foregrounding commitments to social mobility, the UK Coalition Government’s (2010-2015) austerity programme specifically disrupted transitions from secondary to further education and disproportionately impacted the poorest members of society through: the removal of educational maintenance allowance (financial support to 16 to 19 year olds continuing education) and the Future Jobs Fund (subsidisation of youth employment); welfare reforms including the reduction of payments and redefinition of criteria; and the enabling of universities to triple fees (Atkinson, Roberts, Savage, 2012). As such, austerity destabilised provision, creating anxieties around their continuation, establishing a state of flux as the normative background for managers, practitioners and service users, and realigning the rights and responsibilities of the state and the citizen. This neoliberal landscape has led to fundamental questions about the aims and purposes of HE, resulting in the reimagining of HE provisions as global marketable commodities (Busch, 2017; Mwale et al, 2017). As a consequence,

the context of HE in the UK today is defined by rising tuition fees, the redefinition of students as consumers and the reduction of the purpose of HE to the economic returns of graduate employability. The agenda within HE has therefore become dominated by financial rationalities and the logics of marketisation (Radice, 2013; Mahony & Weiner, 2019).

Widening participation: duty or need?

Although concerns of WP took precedence under New Labour (with Tony Blair's 1997 famous mantra of "education, education, education") it has been a central debate in HE since the 1950's. The underpinning arguments for WP suggest that increased levels of education lead to reduced levels of poverty, as it catalyses the enhancement of marginalised individual's social and economic life chances (Brown, Hesketh and Williams 2004). Nevertheless, there have been shifts in the targets of WP practices. Early commentators were concerned with enabling access to the 'bright poor' through the selective grammar school system. Following the Robbins Report published in 1963, HE was positioned as key to sustained economic development, with the focus of WP shifting to expanding access to women largely from middle-class backgrounds. More recently WP has come to be conceptualised in terms of facilitating equity, with the active recruitment of those from disadvantaged backgrounds who may have underachieved in school due to institutionalised inequalities within education (Vignoles and Murray, 2016).

As a central government priority, Universities are responsabilised to implement WP policies, with a requirement to support entry pathways and continuing up to further study or employment (as outlined in the HE green paper Department of Business, Innovations and Skills, 2016). Located within the tension of duty and need, WP is positioned as both the moral responsibility of universities and a financial imperative. Despite the social justice rhetoric embedded within WP policy and practice, universities are increasingly having to negotiate the tensions inherent within the 'market' of education. On the one hand they should encourage social mobility by widening the base of their student intake, on the other they should compete to attract the 'best'/'most valuable' students within the context of a stratified HE sector (Bowl and Hughes, 2016). Consequently, WP becomes part of the broader neoliberalisation of HE, with inter-institution competition superseding the wider social justice values of WP (Harrison and Waller, 2017). As Archer (2007) suggests, this privileging of the economic potential of WP and its use within the market of HE results in the abuse of 'equality and diversity' as a moral discourse which silences critique of WP practices. Therefore, the logics of capital accumulation become the only measure by which to understand the success of WP, with employability, student mobility/immobility and financial sustainability being the legitimate basis for both the initiation and withdrawal of WP programmes.

Such aims to 'measure the measurable' (Harrison and Waller, 2017) obscure the limits of WP in addressing social inequality within HE. Despite the overall increase in HE enrolment, there continues to be socio-economic divides in progression and access to elite institutions (Boliver, 2017). Moreover, there is mounting critique of the relevance and usefulness of HE for the very targets of WP programmes. Questions have been raised about the suitability of HE in providing the skill set required for economic development (Avis and Orr, 2016), with claims that HE has 'colonised' vocational education (Wolf, 2015), an avenue that has traditionally provided skill development for working-class groups. Such critics suggest that 'skill based' vocational education is being replaced by 'Mickey Mouse degrees' (Busby, 2019) where students are not adequately prepared for working life. The shifting notions of value at play here, where the embodiment of skills is privileged above critical thinking, reproduce assumptions around the provision of distinct forms of education for different classed groups. As such, WP practices remain underpinned by a deficit model, where problematic mobility discourses of 'escape' position working class students as indebted to the university (Loveday, 2015). Therefore, WP debates must be located within broader contexts of classed inequality, where dominant discourses of value bring to bear the tension between moral and economic imperatives, informing both the ambitions of WP and its critiques.

Emplaced higher education

Place is key to the unequal distribution of HE opportunities, with socio-spatial inequalities shaping HE hierarchies (Tight, 2007). Place-based identities, local attachments and interpersonal relationships at home

are central to young people's decisions about which university to attend (Christie, 2007; Hinton, 2011). Donnelly and Evans (2015) highlight the significance of local context in shaping university choices. However, the language of 'choice' can mask the challenges faced by those in marginalised areas, where 'localised' provision is the only 'choice' (Holdsworth, 2009). Therefore, the localised provision of HE in areas with low participation rates and high levels of deprivation has been a key vehicle for WP. The introduction of satellite campuses where universities decentralise their provision, has provided university access in areas previously lacking HE. These campuses were seen as providing a qualitatively different contribution to HE, as course design and pedagogic practices were tailored to meet community needs (Rossi & Goglio, 2020), foregrounding inclusive practices for the majority intake of non-traditional students. The provision of HE in these satellite campuses was therefore predicated on ideas about education led regeneration. Whereby HE provides access to the 'training' of populations to produce a labour force fit for purpose within the knowledge economy.

As such, satellite campuses are founded upon assumptions of how local needs can be addressed through targeted educational programmes. However, this diversification of HE recreates social stratification within the sector. These processes have been outlined in analyses of the distinction between elite and non-elite institutions (Reay et al., 2001). However, we suggest that satellite campuses form another site of distinction, between localised and non-localised provision, which reproduce classed inequalities of access and outcomes. The spatialization of HE is often framed by ideas of inclusion, where courses are designed and delivered with the aim to engage students in learning that is meaningful, accessible and relevant to local economic needs (Hockings, 2010). Yet in practice, desires to be inclusive are shaped by the broader socio-political landscape within which HE is provided (Burke, Crozier & Misiaszek 2016). Therefore, there is a specific need to interrogate normative assumptions of inclusion, particularly in terms of how these relate to emplaced HE provisions. The emplaced provision of HE raises questions about what it means to be a student on a satellite campus, where students must negotiate embedded local identities with transformative student identities. Here students are located in-between two communities of 'home' and 'university', which can create feelings of isolation and lack of belonging (Holdsworth, 2009; Hope, 2017).

There are tensions between the ambition of providing emplaced HE and the promise of WP to facilitate mobility. Within dominant middle-class constructions of the self, mobility is an indicator of success, with social mobility becoming entangled with physical mobility. Within this frame, the satellite campus becomes delegitimised in its ambitions to provide 'local' HE. On the one hand, emplaced HE is perceived as failing to facilitate physical mobility, undermining opportunities for working-class students to access mainstream HE. On the other hand, the location of HE within marginalised communities cannot guarantee access for 'local' students to the middle-class professions. Therefore, mobility is a significant factor in the reproduction of inequalities within a stratified HE sector (Sellar & Gale, 2011). However, as Skeggs (2004) notes, an analysis of mobility should focus not on who moves and who is fixed, rather who has control over their mobility. Mobility is a moralising discourse which undermines the value of emplaced education, whilst reinforcing classed distinctions within the education system. Within the context of neoliberalism, access to HE is individualised. The responsabilisation of the individual brings about a contradiction between education as a right and as a responsibility to enact 'mobility'; in order to achieve social mobility through HE, students must be physically mobile.

Once upheld as emblems of the universities social justice ambitions satellite campuses have now become subject to ideological and economic critique. With HE 'success' measured via 'key performance indicators', the recruitment of WP students through the satellite campus disrupts the performance of the university. The marketisation of HE has impacted institutional conceptualizations of cost, value and viability. The consequence of this is a trend in satellite campus closures, where the provision is positioned as economically inefficient and financially unsustainable. Although it is difficult to identify the precise dates of satellite campus closures, an analysis of media reports suggests there has been significant withdrawal of emplaced HE provision in the UK over the past ten years: the University of East London closed the Barking campus in 2006; the University of Lincoln closed the Hull campus in 2013; the University of Hull closed the Scarborough campus in 2017; in 2019 both the University of Brighton closed the Hastings campus and the Manchester Metropolitan University closed the Crewe campus; and there is

the impending closure of Canterbury Christ Church University Broadstairs campus in 2021. The justification of these closures is predicated on logics of financialization and measures of academic standards, both of which are legitimised through the ongoing devaluing of the purpose and practice of WP.

Therefore, it appears that the logics of marketisation are incompatible with the University's ongoing commitments and responsibility to widen participation in HE. Drawing upon contemporary theorisations of class as struggles for value (Skeggs, 2004; 2014; Tyler, 2015) this paper explores the experience of students during the closure of a satellite campus. Through an analysis of the affective consequences of the campus closure, the paper explores how the devaluing of HE provision shaped students' formation of selfhood, value and belonging.

A methodology for 'thinking with'

Employing a qualitative methodology, the research aimed to obtain an in-depth, contextual and nuanced (Barbour, 2008) understanding of student experiences by asking what are the material, social and affective impacts of campus closure for the students and the wider community. The research explored the experiences of a group of local students affected by the closure of a satellite campus located in Highfield, a town 40 miles away from the main City campus. As an area of multiple deprivation, with some neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% in England (Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019), the satellite campus aimed to improve HE opportunities for local people and was central to Highfield's regeneration strategy. The participants were in their first year of their social science and humanities degrees when the closure was announced and the research took place in their final year of study. Drawing upon Skeggs' methodological practice to 'think with' we aimed to engage in a critical and open dialogue, providing a space for analysis, where the participants could critically reflect on their experiences (Olsson, 2008). We foregrounded our interest in the interaction between the material, social and affective, encouraging the sharing of narratives and reflection on the meanings, feelings and thoughts which arise through the practice of 'thinking with'.

Participants were self-selecting final year undergraduate students, recruited through emails and poster invitations to take part in three group discussions held over consecutive weeks (spring 2018). This cohort was selected as the campus closure was announced a few months into their studies and therefore they had experienced the changing nature of HE provision on the campus. Seven students were recruited, five participated in all three thinking sessions, one participant contributed to the first discussion and another participant took part in the first and second discussions. The participants were non-traditional students, being both mature and first-generation scholars (Murray & Klinger, 2013), six were female and one male.

The research design aimed to incorporate a participatory approach in which the participants are encouraged to actively direct the focus of the discussion (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008). The sessions explored 'journeys into higher education', the 'experience of studying at university', and the 'impact of the campus closure', enabling themes to emerge over time, ideas to be revisited and reflections incorporated into individual and group narratives. Reflective writing undertaken before the session facilitated the participants to critically reflect on their experiences. Each session began with the researchers asking participants to share their thoughts on their reflective piece. Following this initial activity, the discussions were unstructured with the researchers providing prompts for further detail. Our aim was to not simply capture participants' experiences but to provide space for analysis during the discussions.

The discussions were audio recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically together with participants' reflective writing. Thematic analysis involves a six-stage process. Familiarisation and immersion by reading and re-reading data to become intimately familiar with it; coding of essential characteristics of the data relevant to answering the research question; searching for and collating coded data into themes; further analysis to refine the scope and focus of the theme; finally, developing narratives with data extracts in relation to the literature (Braun and Clarke 2006). The analysis incorporated deductive and inductive approaches, with the broad themes of material, social and affective guiding the research design and our initial reading of the data (Cerwonka, and Malkki, 2008). The research was subject to university ethical approval, participation was voluntary and fully informed consent was obtained.

'Outside of here life is a bit of a battle': Stability to enable transformation

The practice of 'thinking with' our student participants provided a unique insight into the context within which they lived. The method facilitated critical reflexive analysis where the participants located their experience of university within broader contexts of austerity, inequality and poverty. Discussion developed a contextual narrative through the weaving together of personal and communal experiences of everyday life. Participants navigated discourses and processes of spatialised stigma which position Highfield both nationally and locally as deprived. Such discursive repertoires permeate community identity and personal sense of self (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2013). This is illustrated in the exchange below where participants discuss their everyday encounters with widening inequalities.

Researcher: Has it made you feel differently or think differently about the town now you're studying here?

Sophie: You notice more, don't you?

Emily: But it has got, I think anyway, I think it has got far more blindingly obvious anyway, especially since the Conservatives came in, here we go again, but it has, all the policy changes and all the benefit changes, everything else, it has had such a huge impact on the last few years, I think it's kind of come at a time when the closure was happening as well anyway, so the time when we're studying this, there's a lot of changes too, I think, I don't know if it's because I'm...

Sophie: It's not hidden is it anymore, like the homeless in the doorways.

Angela: I'd never seen heroin taking before the last few years. The museum car park, other car parks, it's openly out in the street...Never ever seen that and I've grown up here, and there was a big drugs problem.

The visceral presence of poverty described above clearly illustrates the interconnection of the material and affective consequences of austerity. Participants demonstrated an acute awareness of precarity and the implication of public service cuts for their community which was disadvantaged by the social-spatial inequalities of austerity politics (Horton, 2016). Despite facing personal material disadvantages, participants discussed how the university provided a space of solace from everyday battles, promising stability founded upon meritocracy.

Sophie: And I think particularly because, again I don't want to speak for everybody, but outside of here, life is a bit of a battle sometimes, and so, you know, you feel outside of here you're fighting for everything all the time, having to, you know, not saying struggle as being downbeat, but sometimes that, you know, life's just shitty isn't it really and sort of coming here was sort of that solace and that...

Emily: Like continuous is a word I'd like to use...It's going to be solid and as long as I put the work in it'd work out for me...

Participants discussed the ways the university offered stability, not only in the present but in providing a vision of a secure future. They considered the University as a symbol of moral good, where fairness was facilitated and protected in ways that they had not experienced before. The university provided material and social protections, with the student identity opening up access to funds and respectability (Skeggs, 1997). This new-found stability was a source of transformative potential, enabled by the emergence of a new configuration of affect toward hope and trust (Davidson et al, 2013). The participants shared narratives of change, where access to the 'privileged' space of the university had increased their confidence and self-esteem. Studying was understood as a process of capital accumulation (Bourdieu, 1983; O'Shea, 2016) where their actions and beliefs were given an *'oomph of understanding'*. Through the embodiment of

recognised modes of communication and action, participants felt able to speak out about injustice and have their voices heard.

Emily: I still feel like it has changed my life immeasurably, you know, I am a different person in so many ways since doing this and it yeah, I really am, honestly you know, my self-esteem was below low...I consider myself a bit of an activist now so and I never would have had the courage, to even speak out against things but now it's not only do I want to speak out about injustice...I've got the kind of oomph of understanding with it so yeah without a doubt it's changed my life so for the better

Nevertheless, embodied transformations, experienced as new ways of thinking, feeling and doing, inevitably marked distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). Participants reflected how their experiences in HE shaped their interactions with friends and family. The changes they experienced throughout their studies highlighted differences and tensions emerged as they sought to maintain established social relationships.

Sophie: I just think, oh I can't, can't be doing with you, no, which is really bad isn't it, I think in a way.

Kylie: I don't think so, I think it brings a certain amount of peace to your inner self, that you don't have to...

Sophie: Yeah, but it's very judgemental isn't it?

Emily: But also encouraging change as well, so you know, just on my social media, I do some occasionally step back and I think, no no, but a lot of the time I also have that voice in my head that says, well if you don't say it then who's going to, and that's how change happens, so many people disagree with me all the time.

Sophie: But it's finding a way to suggest that someone else should think about something different, but because I have now had this education doesn't give me the right to tell everyone they're wrong.

Kylie: No, but like you say the way you put it, is to say but maybe you should consider this way, because I don't think we've come out of here saying that we now know the right way, but as in you should be questioning things.

Participants valued the knowledge and practices gained through their education and recognised the ways in which this enabled them to be heard. However, they were required to undertake complex affective labour to manage their new position (Reay, 2015; Bourdieu, 2007). They were aware of the power of knowledge and careful not to use it to demean others. They positioned their accumulation of knowledge as something facilitated through their access to HE and not tied to a sense of personal ability.

'I feel like I almost have like a split identity of Uni': Negotiating student identities

The participants expressed troubled connections and disconnections to the student identity. Rather than presenting a clear narrative of 'becoming' a student (Lehmann, 2009), the emplaced nature of the campus (Hope, 2017) required a continuous re-negotiating of their identities in their everyday life.

Barry: I mean it's such a small town, I mean one of these windows I can see my house...talk about blurring, do you know what I mean, where somebody if you go to, I don't know, [City University] and you don't know anyone there, then you can build your identity as a student around, like you say living on campus as well or something, whereas here you just literally walk out the door and there's the Pub there, and remember last Saturday night or whatever [laughter], nothing to do with being a student.

Kylie: ...I look at the schedule for the week and think, right, what can I tie into while I'm in town at Uni, what else can I tie into being in that vicinity, what else do I need to be doing, where do I need to pay bills, where do I need to go, things like that, so it's like a constant intertwining in that sense.

The complex negotiations of class identity are well documented for working class students who enter university (Reay et al. 2010) and this is heightened for our participants who experience everyday slippages between established identities and new emerging student identities. For many, their student identity was facilitated by the materiality of the campus, the University provided a physical space of transformation where they could enter the 'zone' of being a student. Being on the satellite campus was positioned as a privilege where the participants have the time and space to study. Although the participants were able to become a student within the space of the university, the identity and practice of being a student was difficult to maintain alongside their social and material positionings as mother and or worker.

Kylie: I think it's difficult, I think it's that whole thing of like I know for myself like with being a mum, you know how sometimes it's like I want to be me, I don't just want to be mum all the time, I feel like I almost have like a split identity of Uni, so I come here and I'm a student, I find it very hard to transition...like I find it very hard to try and do it at home...you're just not in the zone. So yeah, I find, I tend to have a split with that, I have to be at Uni to be a student.

Although the satellite campus enabled participants to access a student identity, this remained distant from their imagination of what student life should be like. Participants drew upon dominant representations of university learning, which positioned their experience as inferior.

Ruth: I know one of the reasons why I chose to have one of my modules in [City Campus] this year was because I wanted the experience, I wanted to go over there and feel what it's like to be on a big campus with lots of students being in a big lecture or whatever and, and so I think subconsciously even from year one I was very aware [of] that...

As such, the participants remained cautious of their unstable connections to the student identity. They acknowledged that they were not positioned as the 'ideal' students within the explicit marketisation of the HE sector (Molesworth et al, 2011). As noted in the quotation below, the participants felt that they 'sway' the performance metrics of the university, 'upsetting' its status.

Barry: We don't fall into those traditional statistics if you like...[we] skew results

Kylie: We upset that, we sway, we upset them

The branding of the university, drawing upon the values associated with the city of its main campus as 'young and hip', positions the satellite campus and its students as 'other' (Said, 1978; Jensen, 2011). The participants felt devalued as 'not attractive' enough to sell the university to the 'ideal consumers' of traditional students.

Emily: I think that comes down again to money, and treating education primarily as a business.

Angela: Yeah, and that we're just, we're not attractive enough to bring in other students, you know, that we probably put people off, you know, do you want people of that age, that's what it feels like, you know, do you really want them in your class, when they're projecting an image of the [City] as being the place to be at.

Emily: Yeah, young and hip and high employability rate afterwards.

Although the materiality of the satellite campus provides the space and resources for participants to embody and perform a student identity, they remain in a precarious relationship with it. The participants reflected on the differential valuing of the satellite campus both by the University and broader representations. The

participants' distance from constructions of the 'ideal' student results in feelings of ambivalence towards the 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2011) inherent in the promise of WP.

'Having to fight for everything whilst it's being dismantled around us': Struggles for value

Although the transformative potential of education is widely celebrated and our participants recognised the value associated with the re-formation of their identities, it is of course entangled within their classed positioning and the structural inequalities reproduced in neoliberal constructions of education. Thus, the reshaping of our participants' identities into 'activists' should not be understood as an inherently 'good' thing, the dominance of individual responsibility masks the inequalities inherent within the marketised HE sector. It is within this context that participants must fight for what traditional students 'naturally have' access to.

Sophie: And I think too much responsibility has been put on us for that as well in a way...I didn't come to university to be an activist about my own education, I came to learn, and to be able to enjoy that experience, and not have to fight for everything that we should naturally have.

The legitimisation of differential provision of HE within frameworks of choice obscures the structural barriers that WP students must navigate (Holdsworth, 2009). The neoliberal logics underpinning HE provision result in the entrenchment of socio-spatial inequality, whereby emplaced education falls into a cycle of disadvantage (Tight, 2007). With the success of HE determined by key performance indicators, such as social mobility, the WP ambitions of satellite campuses are overshadowed by their failure to produce physically and socially mobile graduates. The narrowing conceptualisation of the purpose of HE to achieve measures of 'social mobility' act to devalue emplaced HE provision. As our participants reflect, they cannot engage with individualised constructions of 'social mobility' – they are socially and physically located within Highfield, through kinship and community connections; work and family responsibilities; and material and economic disadvantage. Nevertheless, participants presented an alternative imaginary which resisted individualised notions of social mobility.

Angela: [We] skew the results despite the fact that yeah we'll graduate out of here and we will have an impact on the town and our children, it's, it's so much more than that [employability] and I've seen, what I've noticed, the last few years is so many people I went to school with, some of them I mean didn't even take GCSE's, sounds awful but you know they come out of here with degrees, because they were written off and I think you know there's that cultural thing in Highfield, certainly I've seen it with my daughter battling through school you know, you get a "C" and that's fine because actually that's "good for Highfield".

Our participants understood access to HE as a resource shared through kinship ties and not merely as a means for bringing about individual social mobility. Their conceptualisation of social mobility extended beyond their individual job prospects to include future generations and benefits for the wider community.

Emily: For an area like Highfield, to have Applied Social Science and things, and as a module, as a degree to study for, it is fantastic, this is an area that needs more support, and more people who understand or care about politics, care about injustices and inequalities, and you know, all of those issues that we talk about and learn about in this course, are things that go on obviously everywhere to a certain degree, but here particularly...

Kylie: Right outside the door.

Emily: ...it wasn't just how the closure was affecting me personally with my studies, it was about future generations in this town as well. I mean when we did the protests, one of the protests I had [my son] with me and I thought, I'm taking you with me, because you're part of the reason why this is such a wrong thing for them to do, and actually his photo ended up in [National Newspaper], so four year old boy, and he had a sign and it said, "Hands off my future", and that was the

message I really wanted to show with him obviously, but yeah, it's just, it wasn't just, I wasn't just gutted for me, I was gutted for all the future people as well, future generations.

Discourses of responsibility and choice continue to position those unable or unwilling to enact individualised forms of 'social mobility' as beyond the remit of HE. Thus, the discourse of 'social mobility' legitimises the closure of satellite campuses which are construed as failing students through the provision of emplaced education. However, the participants challenged this logic of equality, suggesting an equitable HE provision must account for the personal obstacles faced by WP students (Vignoles and Murray, 2016).

Emily: But that's part of why this is so as well I mean everybody should have equal opportunities but especially when we are sitting round a table discussing like all of the personal obstacles we've overcome throughout through life to get here, as well, as well as being a mature student and then to kind of have that experience axed in half...

The participants located their experiences of the closure of the campus within the deepening of material inequality inherent within the contemporary context of austerity. The experience of having their degree 'axed in half' is told alongside struggles accessing Universal Credit, everyday encounters with homelessness, and experiences of poverty.

Emily: Well like you say, especially with the changes to [welfare] what we're actually entitled to now, it is, I mean I've had to go and get a job, so that so it's another thing, it's another barrier, during this degree, it's like, okay, it's not just accessing it anymore, it's not just the news of the closure, it's not just having to fight for everything whilst it's being dismantled around us, now it's actually money as well, so the time I should be...

Kylie: We've had it because of Universal Credit, so now they're taking our grants and loans, our loans into consideration whereas before they hadn't...so we both lost money this year, that we've had before.

Emily: So, I'm £200 a month worse off.

Studying at the satellite campus offered a unique experience of both becoming part of the academic gaze and being the object of the academic gaze. As our participants reflect, the things they are studying are 'happening on their doorstep'. Thus, for the participants the entrenchment of material inequality within Highfield is an affective part of their everyday life. It is formative of their sense of self, community, and life trajectories.

Barry: The community here is on a constant knife-edge, as I drive around in the taxi there's one job, or a few jobs it'll be these down from London types, with lots of money and everything, buy houses, and they go to art exhibitions and everything...and then the next few jobs is just such desperation, and sickness and poverty, up on the council estates, and drugs runs, and everything you can possibly imagine, and it's got worse, the disparity has become more extreme.

The closure of the satellite campus must be located within the affective experience of broader inequalities. As embodied, affects may emerge within the individual but are revealing of social, historical and political contexts (Danvers and Hinton-Smith, 2020). Therefore, a focus on affect enables an exploration of the process by which social divisions become sensate (Leaney, 2019). Our participants explored the profound emotional consequences of deepening inequalities on their lives, with the campus closure becoming entwined with the material impacts of austerity policies.

Emily: I remember when the closure was announced, going to the lecture theatre and getting everybody around...

Kylie: It was horrible.

Emily: ...and the feeling of just pure rage and devastation, and that all the students, a lot of the younger ones, yeah, that that energy, just so many people...

The juxtaposition of embodied experiences of rage and devastation captures the complexities of resistance within contexts of inequality. Participants described the affective labour of resistance, where failures to make a difference resulted in feelings of guilt. Participants had to manage their responsibilities as students with their aims as activists, resulting in their acts of resistance, as one participant put it, *'going out like a flame'*.

Conclusion

The permeation of neoliberal logics into HE has altered the vision, purpose and function of universities (Bullough, 2014). This paper has explored the impact this narrowing conceptualisation of HE has had on WP through the devaluing of emplaced provision. Previously celebrated as integral to universities social justice agenda, satellite campuses have faced ideological and economic delegitimization. This paper considers the material, social and affective consequences of the withdrawal of emplaced HE for WP students attending the satellite campus. Through developing a participatory methodology for 'thinking with', the research provided space for participants to articulate a critical understanding of their 'place' within a marketised HE sector.

The closure of satellite campuses must be understood within the context of deepening of social-spatial inequalities as a consequence of austerity politics. As Horton (2016) notes, the anticipation of future cuts shapes the current conditions of life, producing a heightened awareness of precarity (Horton, 2016). Participants narrated their non-traditional journeys into HE alongside their personal and communal experiences of poverty and its entrenchment through austerity measures. They recognised the possibility of transformation enabled through the protective stability of HE, however, their embeddedness within their community heightened the affective labour of managing new distinctions. Highlighting the need for WP programmes to develop innovative approaches to pastoral support, which shift the burden of access onto the university rather than the student.

Positioning WP within the tension of duty and need, we argue that the mobilisation of 'equality and diversity' as a moral discourse masks the privileging of the economic rationalities within WP (Archer, 2007). As a result, financial viability has become the basis for the initiation and withdrawal of WP programmes. Although the materiality of the satellite campus enabled our participants to negotiate and develop a student identity, their positioning as 'problematic' to the economic sustainability of the wider university resulted in a precarious relationship to constructions of the 'ideal' student. Reflecting stigmatising classed divisions of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2013), we argue that WP students are positioned as beyond the remit of mainstream HE, illustrated in both the specialisation of HE provision and its withdrawal. This requires universities to critically reflect on the assumptions underpinning course and campus specialisation, which can lead to limiting access to HE for marginalised communities.

The ambition of the satellite campus to provide HE in areas of socio-economic disadvantage has been critiqued for failing to facilitate social mobility. The responsabilisation of the individual within the context of neoliberalism conflates the right to access HE with the responsibility to enact mobility. We have shown how although participants were excluded from individualised constructions of 'social mobility', they presented an alternative imaginary of HE as an intergenerational community resource. They critiqued the foundation of WP on a deficit model, where working class students are indebted to the university for enabling 'escape' (Loveday, 2015), rather they suggested that HE provides the resources needed within working class communities. There is a need for universities to revisit the policy and practice of lifelong learning and detangle HE from simple measures of employability, which can devalue emplaced WP students.

Highlighting the limitations of WP discourses and practices, the paper has explored the complexities of transformation through emplaced education, which on the one hand equips students with the embodied capital to resist inequality, whilst reproducing hierarchies through assumptions around the forms of education the community needs. The marketisation and the subsequent stratification of HE, results in the ideological devaluing and dismantling of the WP project and ultimately the closure of satellite campuses.

We have shown that the physical retreat of HE from disadvantaged communities has material, social and affective consequences for current students, their families and the wider community.

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