

ZINES: Crafting Change and Repurposing the Neoliberal University

Jen Bagelman

Department of Geography
University of Victoria
bagelman@uvic.ca

Carly Bagelman

Co-operative Education
University of Victoria
bcbagel@uvic.ca

Abstract

bell hooks famously insists that education can be ecstatic! It can be a ‘practice of freedom’ that disrupts unequal power relations and generates social justice. According to hooks, university education can only become this type of energetic practice if students and educators alike experiment, feel and take risks in the classroom. This paper asks: how can we cultivate and sustain this energetic approach to education given the restructuring of the neoliberal university comprising reduced state funding, increased precarious labour and an expectation for speedy delivery? Grounded in classroom experience, I explore how slow pedagogy can contribute to a growing Slow Scholarship Movement that takes collective action against the fast-paced, metric-driven neoliberal university. In particular, I examine how the practice of crafting feminist-inspired ‘zines’ might function as a tool to repurpose universities into more generative, loving spaces for engaged learning and living.



Introduction

My sister, Carly, managed to inherit most of the discernable artistic talent in my family. I have always loved to draw, paint, stitch and craft. Yet at best even my most whole-hearted efforts result in stick-people, nondescript blobs of acrylic, pinpricked fingertips and shorts with one leg accidentally sewn shut. I remember a primary-school teacher referring to my artistic endeavours as ‘dangerous mishaps’ after I hot-glue-gunned a popsicle-stick to her finger. Over the years I have developed a sense of appreciation, and even amusement, for my ‘mishap’ art. I have come to relish experimenting with different forms of artistic expression. I think it is partly because of this that I was taken by the practice of zine-making.

I was first properly introduced to this practice by Newcastle activist-academic Julia Downes at a zine-making workshop hosted in Empty Shop, an arts collective in Durham, United Kingdom. Downes describes the zine (which rhymes with ‘scene’) as a self-published work ‘that’s easy to make and inexpensive to distribute’ (2013). Wielding her own colourful collection, she summarizes zines as a visual and textual mode of storytelling. ‘Cutting and pasting’ is key to this practice, she explains. Alongside daily ephemera you cut, paste and repurpose images from dominant-print media to tell your own idiosyncratic story. This is part of the do-it-yourself (DIY) philosophy animating this narrative form. The zine, she explains, is inherently democratic: anyone can make one. You don’t need access to a computer, or printing press. You don’t have to fancy yourself an artist to design.

Poring over the pages of her zine collection, I fell in love with this practice of creating and sharing. Brimming with fragments from the quotidian her zines call out to be carefully considered – they feel like being invited into a tender secret with a stranger. Rather than feverishly flipping through pages of adverts that occupy so many magazines, I find myself slowly savouring the charming layouts and delicately constructed pages. I adore the temporality of these textured texts.

In her writing about zines, Downes explains that there are debates about the origin of this practice. Many trace their emergence to the 1920s – when artistic and philosophical movements like Surrealism used small runs of self-published material, decorated in collage and bricolage, as a forum for ideas. Zines are sometimes said to have emerged as a ‘distinct’ form in the 1930s when science fiction fans began to publish and trade their own stories in ‘fanzines.’ In the 1970s, zines became a way to publicize underground punk shows that could not (or did not care to) garner the attention of established music press publications. The 1990s saw a surge in zine production as thousands of young women began to produce personal and political zines with explicitly feminist themes as part of the riot grrrl movement that emerged out of the underground feminist punk music scene in the United States. Downes concludes that writing a history of zines ‘is like walking a tightrope, blindfolded, over hot coals with a bad sense of balance’ (2012). She suggests that rather than seeking to secure the true origin, a key aspect that links various zines is their emphasis on intimacy and connection. Calling upon critical feminist theorist Lauren Berlant (2012), intimacy is not conceived as the opposite

of the political; in fact, zines interrupt this false dualism by viscerally revealing the layered politics of everyday life. Moreover, zines bring attention to how we live and interact with one another, and illustrate tangible possibilities for how to live together in more caring ways (Ahmed, 2014). These possibilities emerge not from above, but from multiple in-between margins. In this sense Downes suggests that the zine is an embodied practice of feminist theory, creating political places for diverse voices, on intersecting scales, to be exchanged (2007).¹

Zines: as slow pedagogy for slow scholar-studentship

There is a rich scholarship on the history of zines (Kempson, 2014; Monem 2007; Piepmeier 2009; Poletti 2008; Zobl 2001), some of which explores the educational and research role of zines in addressing contemporary social justice issues. In particular, there is a wide range of work exploring how zines can be used in the primary (Bott 2002; Wan 1999) and high school classroom (Piepmeier 2009). So too, a growing body of work explores zines as a participatory action research (PAR) tool wherein communities are invited to visually map experiences of exclusion (Miewald & McCann 2014; Houh 2015). How this can play a critical role in post-secondary education, however, has been largely overlooked. A central aim of this paper is to examine: *how might zines be used as an engaged-teaching tool to politicize everyday spaces and relations, particularly of the university?*²

I address this through the prism of bell hooks' conception of engaged pedagogy, which she presents as a process of developing skills to question knowledge (1994). On this view, the role of education is not merely to acquire knowledge but to cultivate critical consciousness. For hooks, this type of education is integral to actively confronting unequal power relations. How, she asks, can we expect people to actually critique and challenge inequity in the world if in the classroom we are taught to obey authority and accept the status quo? Reflecting on her own early experiences as a student in segregated schools, hooks identifies the moments in which she was encouraged to challenge received orthodoxies, and articulate her own lived experiences of racial violence, as integral to personal and political processes of decolonization (1994, 2). hooks insists that these moments were only possible when the classroom ceased to perform familiar hierarchies—those which alienated teacher from student—and instead became a space for mutual, embodied learning. Inspired by these formative experiences, hooks advocates that education can and should be approached as a shared task committed to challenging inequity within and beyond the classroom itself.

¹ A growing body of work explores the role that literary texts —plays, poems, and novels – take in shaping how geographies are imagined and worlded. See: 'Place Symbolism and Land Politics in Beowulf' 2009 *Cultural Geographies* 16(4): 447-463. How might accounting for the zine as literature expand the terrain of this discussion?

² Particularly interested in how this tool might be conducive to what Gregson et al 2015 refer to as a 'post-disciplinary' geographical pedagogy.

These ideas have been widely influential. In particular they have fostered a lively academic literature that casts pedagogy in terms of a critical effort to destabilise colonial practices (Madge, Raghuram & Noxolo 2009; Gaudry & Hancock 2012). For instance, Clare Madge, Parvati Raghuram and Pat Noxolo submit that hooks' engaged pedagogy can play a role in challenging the colonial assumptions that British academy is the 'centre' of knowledge production and that postcoloniality is something others do, elsewhere (2009, 41). In doing so, they emphasise how hooks' pedagogy problematizes uneven and highly differentiated geographies in our teaching and commits us to continually question how this plays a part in shaping the 'postcolonial present' (2009, 45). Reflecting on possibilities for revitalizing Indigenous education, Adam Gaudry and Robert Hancock have proposed that hooks' focus on experiential learning provides a strong basis to develop pedagogies that incorporate community and land-based learning which function by encouraging students and academics to stray beyond their comfort zones (2012, 21). Gaudry and Hancock explain, hooks' engaged pedagogy offers a productive teaching model that exposes and incites us to feel the contingencies of colonial spatial frames so often represented as timeless and universal. Within this rich literature, then, hooks' engaged pedagogy is understood as a tool to be used in anticolonial struggles.

Extending the legacy of hooks' work this paper asks: *how can engaged pedagogy play a political role in resisting the commodification of education characteristic of the intensifying 'neoliberal university'?* I follow a growing field of critical scholars who intentionally deploy the concept of the neoliberal university to both name and identify a set of processes which – though highly contextual – are global in reach (Berg and Seeber 2016; Gregson et al. 2012; Mountz et al. 2015; Slaughter and Rhoades 2000). This critical scholarship views the neoliberal university as part of a 'contextually contingent articulation of free market governmental practices with varied and often quite illiberal forms of social and political rule' (Sparke, 2006: 153 quoted in Mountz et al, 2015). As 'free' markets trump free thought we witness the retreat of state funding alongside heightened expectations for academics to secure external grants. We witness standardized metrics being wielded to rank individuals and institutions, creating competitive cultures. We witness temporary labor contracts becoming a more permanent part of the academic infrastructure than employees. In this precarious context academics are expected to perform more tasks (more tweets, more teaching...) within accelerated timelines (all while striving to maintain a chili pepper on Rate My Prof).

While critical scholars demonstrate the impacts of the neoliberal landscape they also enact resistance through an emergent Slow Scholarship Movement. The text, *For Slow Scholarship* has articulated this movement in particularly incisive terms, garnering wide appeal even beyond academic audiences. In this piece a collective of feminist geographers argue that neoliberal restructuring cannot be understood through the same abstract terms currently being used to render legible academic life. Instead, they argue, for attending to the embodied work conditions

and isolating lived affects of this restructuring. As such, they offer intimate ethnographic vignettes that expose the exhausting realities of a neoliberal agenda that demands more outputs in less time (Mountz et al., 2015). Within this pernicious temporal landscape bodies and hearts become squeezed, fractured and sometimes even broken. Simultaneously, they point out, students experience the pressures of neoliberal university. Frazzled teachers, increased fees and receding employment prospects are a recipe for producing burnout and a consumer-student-subjectivity wherein knowledge is viewed as a product to be delivered. This dangerous feedback loop serves to alienate, rather than create, opportunities for co-learning. To resist this neoliberal model they suggest that scholars embrace a slower mode of doing and inhabiting academic work (Mountz et al., 2015). Informed by a feminist politics, they provide a number of tangible, collective tactics to resist: write fewer emails, take care, make time to think and write (differently), talk about and support slow strategies (Mountz et al., 2015). This paper aims to add to this articulation of the Slow Scholarship Movement in two main ways.

First, I suggest we need to better understand how students can and do play an active role in slowing things down. While the Slow Scholarship Movement insists that change is collective, primacy tends to be placed on slow forms of scholarship that cast (permanent) academics as central agents of change. In an effort to widen the scope for resistance this paper orients conversation towards developing concrete pedagogical tools that mutually promote *slow scholarship*. In particular I explore how the seemingly non-academic zine can be used as a tool to create possibilities for more robust, caring and solidaristic forms of resistance to the neoliberal university. I ground this analysis in my experiences as a Temporary Assistant Professor teaching a second-year Cultural Geography course at the University of Victoria, UVic (unceded Coast Salish and Straits Salish territories) in which I assigned students the task of mapping food practices on campus in the form of a zine. I aim to demonstrate how this form of slow, embodied pedagogy jars the speedy delivery model of teaching that situates student-as-consumer and teacher-as-producer typifying the neoliberal university.

The second way I hope to contribute to the Slow Scholarship Movement is to draw more critical attention towards the ways in which the neoliberal university is materially entwined with colonialism. While this movement has gestured at the ways that neoliberal logics are ‘hyper-extensions of colonial time’ we need to more carefully contest how this logic actually enacts education as extraction – a process which Indigenous poet and scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson articulates as a fulcrum of colonialism (2013). As Simpson explains, the act of extraction, ‘removes all of the relationships that give whatever is being extracted meaning. Extracting is taking. Actually, extracting is stealing—it is taking without consent, without thought, care or even knowledge of the impacts that extraction has on the other living things in that environment’ (2013). Simpson explicitly links this technology of extraction with processes of colonialism and conquest. She says ‘colonialism has always extracted the indigenous—extraction of Indigenous

knowledge, Indigenous women, Indigenous peoples' (Ibid). Building on Simpson's critique this paper offers resistance tactics that might address this intractable problem. I suggest that zines – which place primacy on relationships of care – are but one modest pedagogical tactic that might destabilize the extractive relations that Simpson identifies. I also want to explicitly note that zine-making, in and of itself, does not necessarily constitute a material act of decolonization, although it very well could constitute part of such a process if enmeshed with other material acts of land repatriation and representation (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Rather than presume that zines decolonize, I suggest that feminist DIY zine tactics politicize the neoliberal branding strategies that conceal the persistence of colonialism on campus. In particular I document how a collection of 50 student-zines applied art, poetry and Indigenous theories (which featured prominently in the course syllabus) to challenge the top-down metrics³ that have assessed UVic's food practices as 'perfect' (2015).⁴ These student zines critically demonstrate how university 'foodscapes' are not characterized by perfection but dispossession.⁵ Contesting the supposed neutrality of the geographical referent (UVic, BC, Canada) as a given foundation upon which knowledge might be built zines served as a tool to question the neoliberal university that profits from its occupied position on unceded Indigenous territory.

I conclude this article by suggesting that while the process of making zines might slow down the hyper-productivity model of the neoliberal-colonial university, slowness should *not* be mistaken for idly waiting. Rather than waiting on dominant media, zines are in fact able to quickly interject multi-sensorial political expression by seizing the means of production.⁶ Zines create opportunities to actively take apart hegemonic narratives, refuse elitist authority and knit together intimate relationships that serve to repurpose spaces – such as the neoliberal university.

³ These mimic those metrics used to evaluate, compare and entrench certain 'aspirational' forms of urbanism. See excellent critique of this process in McCann E, A Roy and K Ward. 2013. 'Assembling/Worlding Cities' *Urban Geography* 34(5).

⁴ The Princeton Review, which tallied Green Rating scores for 861 colleges in the US and Canada, ranked UVic with 'a perfect score of 99' thereby placing it on the 'Green Rating Honor Roll.' The project, now in its 8th year, offers a measure on a scale of 60 to 99 of how environmentally friendly the schools. Robert Franek, The Princeton Review's Senior VP-Publisher states: 'We salute their administrators, faculty, and students for their collective efforts to protect and preserve our environment.' In particular the company Princeton highlighted UVic's exceptional food practices as: sustainable, local – 'perfect.' See here: <http://bit.ly/1XUHHe1>

⁵ Much like zines, a foodscape analysis cherishes the experiential. As a growing food literature suggests, a foodscape approach requires being situated in a particular place and is focused on the 'relationships that a particular community has with food' (Bradley & Herrera 2016; Miewald & McCann 2014). This highly situated, relational approach enables intimate mapping of complex political food landscapes, including moments and spaces of exclusion. The aim of a foodscape analysis, however, is not simply to identify and describe how people experience such exclusions, but to identify possibilities for change (2014).

⁶ *Camus Books & Infoshop* located on Lekwungen Territory offers workshops and houses a wide collection of beautifully political zines. Many of these zines explicitly take issue with the restrictive frames imposed by national media outlets, such as the *Globe & Mail*, or local ones, such as *Times Colonist*. <http://camas.ca>. Also check out @ThirdspaceZine – an awesome feminist zine produced by students at UVic.

Method/Methodology

The shape of this paper is inspired by zines. I write in conversational, narrative form incorporating images and other fragments to recount some of the possibilities and limitations of leading an in-class zine workshop. Although this paper is written in first-person, I have also included written and verbal reflections offered by students.⁷ Given their experience producing zines, students' views on this process and its educational value are a useful resource that we would be foolish to overlook. I also weave discussions that I had with my sister Carly, who took a leadership role in teaching the zine workshops and who contributed to this paper.

In an effort to stimulate concrete modes of experimentation with pedagogy, this paper traces the five main steps of leading a zine workshop. In this sense, it could be considered an annotated 'How To' use zines in the classroom. Unlike many lesson plans, however, this is not prescriptive – but playful. The hope for writing in an almost-'guide' format is that it could springboard experimentation in how to use the zine as a political teaching tool.

Making a Zine

Step 1: Before class

Carly and I arrive to the classroom 15 minutes early to set-up. I have asked my sister to co-lead a zine workshop for my Cultural Geography course today. I find myself meandering rather than rushing to class knowing we are in this together. We arrange all the seats into a circle and at each seat we place a little 'zine-kit': four pieces of recycled paper, a long piece of thread and a needle. In the centre of the room we assemble the collective 'zine station' which comprises of scissors, rulers, an X-ACTO knife and a stack of free magazines that we have gathered from the Student Union Building before class. We begin to tear out a few images that grab our attention and are relevant to the assigned task of creating zines that map the campus 'foodscape.' A foodscape analysis, as we will explore, unearths intimate experiences of a food system through interviews and other forms of qualitative data in an effort to map the social, relational, and political geographies of food (Miewald and McCann, 2014). The goal today will be to weave this theory with practice of zine-making.

I find a story in *The Ring*, the official campus newspaper, and clip it out to share with the students when they arrive. This story features Princeton Review's recently published 'Guide to Green Colleges' (2015). According to this review UVic is the only Canadian institution to receive a '*perfect*' score for its sustainability practices. The university is particularly celebrated for its sustainable, 'green' food practices. Based on the company's metrics, UVic is noted for its focus on local and regional practices and receives a gold star given that:

⁷ Having gained permission, I have included student observations about what they enjoyed about making a zine, what they struggled with and their suggestions about how this might be developed in the future.

50 per cent of its food budget is spent on locally grown food; roughly 72 per cent of all food waste is composted; 75 per cent of all new plants installed on campus are native; all toxic chemicals are being eliminated from its routine landscape management; and selected areas of the campus are being “naturalized,” reducing irrigation and saving resources—8,500 cubic meters of water and \$17,000 annually.

This story of sustainability does seem impressive. In keeping with a foodscape analysis, however, the goal of our class today is to probe into some of these celebratory findings. What does this highly publicized story of the food system perhaps exclude? What might a foodscape analysis of campus – which values diverse lived experience – reveal? The task for our class today is to engage in a qualitative review of the campus foodscape and examine if this meshes with this finding presented by Princeton that relies on a top-down, quantitative approach.

Step 2: Extending the classroom to friends and family

As students filter in a sense of boisterousness fills the more-crafty-than-usual-classroom. Students pick up pieces of threads and paw through the messy pile of magazines. It is more challenging than usual to quiet the chatter. It is a challenge that feels satisfying as I can sense a curiosity and even excitement in the room. I use my big voice, ‘today I’d like to introduce you to my sister – Carly – who will be helping us make zines.’

I am feeling a bit nervous inviting my sister to class. I am anxious that between bring-your-family-to-work-day and the ‘craft corner’ the students will perceive me as an immature girl not worthy of the title, teacher. Will they think I am infantilizing them? As I begin introducing Carly, not by her formal ‘Dr. of Education’ title but as my ‘artsy sis,’ I feel perhaps this is the first time in the term that the students see me, at all. Instead of presenting myself as a bobbing head, poking out above a lectern cut off from the world, I introduce myself as a sister, a daughter, a friend, a teacher, a co-student eager to learn.

As Carly and I continue to describe today’s assignment I notice that, as per usual, we are finishing one another’s sentences. When I suggest that we begin with questions from the assigned readings she intervenes ‘Jenny I think we should watch the short movie first.’ I can see the students snicker as they witness a mild sisterly disagreement. Again, a wave of worry washes over me – is this appropriate? But they seem to enjoy this genuine engagement. One student asks, ‘are you the older sister?’ I joke that they are docked three points for assuming so. I sense the atmosphere shift. There seems to be more room to breathe (Ahmed 2014).

We then do a round of introductions. I am surprised that the students begin to share more details than usual. One student tells us about her own sister. Did even this slight effort to share, rather than cut out, my own relational webs of connection open a small space for student to do the same? hooks writes that ‘professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling

to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive' (1994, 21). She states:

I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way that I would not share. When professors bring narratives of their experiences into the classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-knowing silent interrogators (hooks, 1994, 21).

It seems that interrupting this all-knowing silence even in a small way is a step towards interrupting the neoliberal university, one that depends on an austere distance between student-as-consumer/teacher-as-producer relation (Archer, 2008; Gregson et al., 2012; Mountz et al., 2015). In this neoliberal context, personal 'asides' might be conceived as distractions to the smooth transaction of knowledge transfers. Yet as hooks argues, these interactions are in fact vital to cultivating an atmosphere of trust and commitment and are always present when genuine learning happens (2010, 22). A deepened sense of ease seems to percolate through the class when I explain that everyone will be given ample time to complete their zine assignment. I acknowledge that the act of producing ones' own book, carefully stitching its pages together, takes...time. While students are usually expected to produce a one-page reflection piece (which they are bored of writing and I am bored of marking) each week; instead, they will have three weeks to design a short zine. The group sinks more calmly into this crafting activity with the knowledge that we are not so rushed to produce.

Step 3: DIY and repurposing praxis

Upon Carly's suggestion, after this brief introduction we watch the five-minute documentary (<http://bit.ly/1IKUU1K>). This short clip draws us into the diverse political world of zines. For one speaker in the documentary, who identifies as being part of the riot grrl movement, zines have been a way to access queer culture. A key point that emerges in this documentary is that the zine form embraces an intersectional, diverse feminisms; it debunks the misconception that feminism is 'only consisted of small group of white, middle-class college-educated cisgendered girls' (2015).

Young woman, too often framed as culture's passive consumer, are the knowledgeable zine-making guides in this film. It's a rare pleasure to watch students learn from their wisdom. Of course, this was not met entirely with enthusiasm. After the film one student says: 'ya, I made a zine in high school.' This comment stings a bit. Zines are not 'new,' and probably not cool. I begin questioning whether this crafting activity feels a step too far from the academic and often highly theoretical papers we are accustomed to digesting. Although I am sure some do feel this, as we chat about how zines us not bereft of theory – but an embodiment of theory as practice – this fearful sting abates.

This feeling fades further as Carly reiterates some key points from the film. When going for a cut-and-paste aesthetic, zine-making often begins with cutting up

widely circulated print media (newspapers, advertisements). Next, these clippings are arranged and pasted on paper alongside the author's own text (prose, poetry, quotes) and visual illustrations (photography, sketches) and, often, found objects. The rough-cut and pasted pages are typically photocopied and bound (stapled, folded or sewn) to produce a booklet for distribution. She notes that one of the benefits of the zine is the expedience with which one can create and disseminate materials in the absence of restraints imposed by the formalized publishing world. For our purposes emphasis is not on speed but on experimenting with ways to represent and disseminate knowledge. Instead of their weekly reflections pieces, which I read and return, zines will be shared in class and distributed far and wide.⁸

Then there is that quiet moment when eyes dart. One student pipes up 'what's the point of this?' Carly asks the class their thoughts, and another student responds suggesting that the zine interrupts and repurposes dominant media in order to give it new life and assert ones own voice. Carly chimes in to describe how it can be an empowering tool of reclaiming existing stories and telling new ones. Normally to use existing media you need copyright permission. But, according to 'fair dealing' policy in Canada (and 'fair use' in the United States), it is possible to avoid the expensive permission process by taking a small portion of published work and incorporating it into collage, illustration or other zine layouts.⁹ One tattooed arm shoots up in the air, 'so you can get around copyright?' Carly responds 'yes, it's a crafty way to reclaim media, right?' This is greeted with some cheerfully deviant nods. Channelling this practice, we suggest that our job today is to repurpose the university – to cut up official maps, and stories we are accustomed to hearing and to explore those that been cast aside.

Carly continues to describe that the beauty of the zine is that it provides a simple tool for people to directly share information and represent their own, sometimes marginalised, stories. As suggested in the film, many zinesters express intimate feelings of fear and experiences of sexism, rape, homophobia, racism, human rights abuses, and religious pressure. Adding to this, I draw attention to an interview with the editors of *Bendita: Latin Women's Initiative against Violence towards Women* who see their zine as a 'big FUCK YOU to a patriarchal society that tells us to shut up when it comes to rape' (Zobl, 2001).

We discuss how this is an expression of the feminist theory we have explored in class thus far. I remind the student of Gerry Pratt's piece 'Working Feminism' which we read earlier in the term. I ask: how does the zine 'put feminism to work'? One student suggests that by focusing on lived experiences these zines provide an alternative to overly abstracted theory. I beam a little at this superb connection that cuts not only across course-themes but intersections of activism. I rustle in my bag, and pull out Pratt's book that I have brought to read

⁸ The link between asking students to write for 'authentic' audiences and student motivation to generate meaningful work has been well documented. Visit: <https://cndls.georgetown.edu>

⁹ Visit: <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/academic-integrity/copyright/fair-dealing>

out the following passage to engage discussion about the relationship between zines-feminism a bit further:

The political impulse of feminism is the belief that things – the systematic production of social difference – can and must be changed. Feminist theory is a limited resource if it lacks the subtlety not only to diagnose the specificity of this production, but the vitality to animate social change. Theorizing within the concrete in the good company of those who have committed their daily life to social change returns some of this vitality’ (2004, 9).

‘Does the zine help us in this political impulse of feminism?’ I ask. One student suggests that maybe if the zine creates a sense of community and solidarity for action between marginalised voices, change is more possible. Another student says that by designing zines and not relying on dominant print media some change already takes place. Zinesters put their thoughts and material artifacts out there for others, not waiting to be heard. I underscore this point, adding that zines often circulate through a ‘gift economy’ – a small but profound remove from the capitalist marketplace and the operations of the consumer culture industries (Piepmeier 2009, 197).

We have a brief discussion about the ways in which the university is very much part of this capitalistic mode of exchange. One student says ‘ya, we are paying good money to be here.’ I confess that I often feel the pressure to provide a product that is worthy of their fees. Perhaps, I suggest, the gift economy of zines remind us that we can enact different modes of exchange which do not subscribe to extraction but sharing, and reciprocity. A male student suggests that he likes Pratt’s expression of feminism because it makes him feel part of possible change; he says this while stitching together his zine (masterfully and without need of instruction). He explains: ‘I always sew at home.’

Step 4: Bookbinding

Carly now passes out a few examples of zines that our friend, Danielle, has made chronicling her changing relationship with rice during her years in Japan. People giggle with endearment as they thumb through drawings and text rendered by her honest, untrained hand. The pressure to produce ‘perfect,’ or technical, art fades. I am reminded of hooks’s assertion that engaged teaching can only occur if there is a sense not only of excitement but relaxation (1994). I reflect on the way that I have previously tried to manufacture this relaxation in our class, saying things like ‘you don’t have to have a perfectly formed thought here, let’s experiment with ideas.’ Yet too often though I end up deferring to polished pieces of published work from senior academics. These, often male, models are poised as producers of knowledge. In this course I have tried to breathe more life into the syllabus by including self-published zines as well as incorporating feminist scholarship and articles by folk who are writing at different stages in their academic career. The course syllabus also highlights theory by Indigenous scholars

working in the region such as Cheryl Bryce, Glen Coulthard and Sarah Hunt. Students are also advised to consult the rich body of literature featured in the syllabus which demonstrates how to expand academic space and method to include modes of knowledge exchange, such as story, that continue to play a vital role in particular Indigenous communities (Kovach, 2009; Kulnieks, Longboat & Young, 2010).

We now turn to constructing our zines. Carly begins by holding open Pratt's book, 'Working Feminism' that I have brought to class. She opens the spine and points to the way that the pages have been bound: a series of paper (bifolios) stacked together, folded in half stitched together making a 'signature' (little booklets). Concealed by the spine, pages appear part of an impressive, indivisible unit that only publishing houses can generate, but when it is deconstructed we can see how they are assembled through a simple technique. Carly says 'a zine is constructed like any academic text – only a smaller scale.' She passes the text around the room and encourages students to 'smell the spine.' One student says that despite having spent a lot of times with books, this is the first time he has ever really thought about its construction. Concretely revealing how anyone can make a book seems to democratize the practice of authorship,

Carly and I now guide the students through their own construction. Two options are a simple fold or hand sewing. Today we will give sewing a shot:

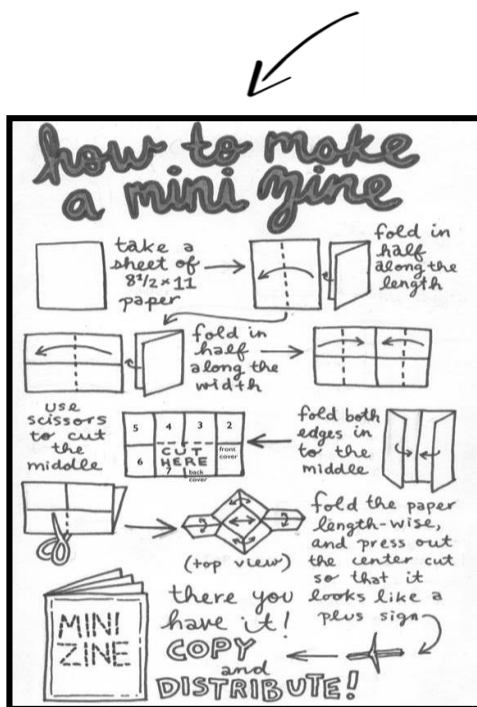


Figure 1. Simple fold¹⁰

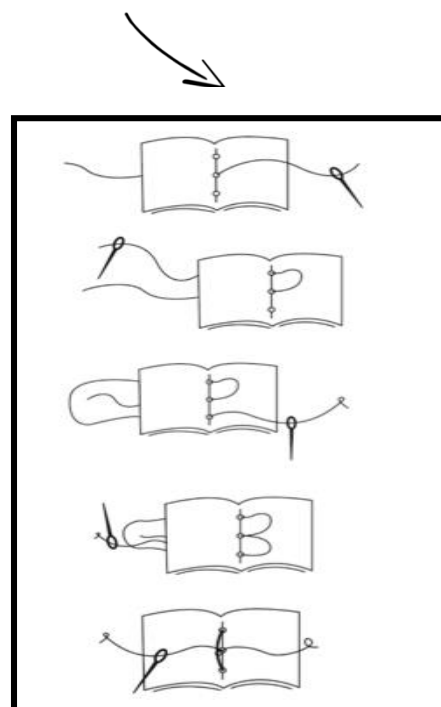


Figure 2. How to sew¹¹

¹⁰ Download available here: <http://www.swap-bot.com/swap/show/180225>

There is a simple delight in watching this group of students stitch together pieces of paper. It's fun. I mention in passing, 'please try not to stab yourself or others with the X-Acto knife.' Again, the authoritative voice creeps in: 'okay, this is an accident waiting to happen.' But, unsurprisingly, we do just fine. I reflect on how much a sense of fear tends to dictate and restrict this learning space (Gregson et al., 2011)

hooks critiques fear-driven education arguing that this serves to alienate student from teacher, and even has the effect of removing the presence of our own bodies from the classroom. She argues that too often educators are scared of the body (hooks, 1994). Scared to acknowledge the smells it produces in the classroom and scared (maybe for 'good' health and safety reasons) of its predilection to bleed. hooks reflects on the university as a space so designed to control the body and even deny the body its basic needs, like using the toilet (1994). She suggests that we need to instead learn to educate and relate as a 'whole,' rather than engage with one another as objective, disembodied voices. An important step for hooks in this is to use movement, body language, acknowledge and even embrace the body as an undeniable part of the classroom. Drawing on the teachings of Buddhist monk Thich Nht Hahn, hooks advocates education must engage 'mind, body, and spirit' rather than separate these elements (1994, 18). She sees this 'holistic approach to learning,' which allows 'the whole body in the classroom,' as vital to activating engaged scholarship that 'wholeheartedly' aims to tackle interconnected systems of oppression (1994, 193).¹² She asks, how else can we manage to challenge the deep inequities produced through systems of colonialism, for instance, without thinking about the material grip this complex system takes on different bodies, in different material places?

Step 5: Designing 'foodscape' zines

Now that we have all had the chance to learn about zines in a tactile way, Carly and I whisper to each other 'I think we should talk about the details of the assignment.' And so it is in this slightly more relaxed environment that I introduce the concept of foodscape, which will inform the zine projects. I write a definition of foodscapes on the chalkboard:

Foodscapes emphasizes the social, relational, and political construction of food and thus highlights not simply food provision but also questions of existing power structures and potentialities for future change (Miewald & McCann, 2014).

¹¹ PDF available here: <http://www.booklyn.org/education/pamphlet.pdf>

¹² As feminist geographers have often pointed out, the role of engaged pedagogies, like theatre (Pratt and Kirby E, 2003) and community-based learning (Pain and Kesby 2007) can play a powerful role in bringing the mind, body spirit into the classroom.

Calling upon hooks (1994), who encourages theoretical teaching rooted in practice and place, I mention that geographers Christina Miewald and Eugene McCann live nearby, in Vancouver. In their work they use a foodscape analysis to map and call into question the gentrification processes that threaten accessible food in the city—a city consistently named one of Canada’s most unaffordable, a city I cannot afford to live on a sessional salary (Walia, 2012). In particular they map out food resources in Vancouver’s Downtown East Side’s (DTES), one of Canada’s poorest urban neighbourhoods, in an effort to demonstrate exclusions to food provision and to build alternative strategies for urban food justice (2015).

I ask the students to consider: how does the foodscape concept relate to other food analysis we have explored? One student points out that this is similar to ‘foodways’ analysis that critiques a quantitative, supply-side approach.

In an effort to draw this important point out, we refer to the assigned reading. Foodways, like foodscape examines the ‘the cultural and social practices that affect food consumption, including how and what communities eat, where and how they shop and what motivates their food preferences’ (Alkon et al., 2013, 127, see also Cannuscio et al., 2010). Drawing on Appadurai’s notion of ‘-scape’ the foodscape adds to this social an explicitly spatial dimension.¹³ To do a foodscape analysis one must be *situated* in a particular place and focus on the relationships that a particular community has with food. Deploying foodscape in this situated, relational way necessitates a qualitative approach that values interviewees’ personal narratives to explain the complex, enacted, changing, and political food landscape of a particular urban neighbourhood, or in our case – campus.¹⁴ Through the notion of a foodscape, Miewald and McCann suggest that researchers can ‘go beyond descriptions of where people can access food to narrate the experiences and strategies of finding food and unpack the political implications of its very provision’ (2014).

‘How does this look in practice,’ I ask? I refer to an example that Miewald and McCann cite, a group of activists living in the DTES who are mapping out the food contours of this space using a technique akin to ‘foodscaping’. Much like our own assignment today, their analysis takes the form of a zine, called ‘Right to Food’ (<http://rtfzine.org>). This zine is brimming with stories, art and poetry which document experiences of living and eating in the DTES. One student notes how this challenges Vancouver’s oft-celebrated foodie scene. Revered as ‘the best food city’ Vancouver is supposedly known for its deliciously ‘ethical’ and ‘sustainable’

¹³ The suffix recalls Appadurai’s (1996, 33) relational use of ‘-scapes’: ‘which are not objectively given relations ... [but] deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors.’ Offers a language for thinking through food-place relations in terms of geographies of politics and urban poverty and survival. Its conceptual value can also be enhanced by focusing on the mutually constitutive relationships among various aspects of a food system, rather than on its separate, quantifiable, or mappable attributes (e.g., existence and number of food outlets)

¹⁴ Miewald and McCann explore these intersections of food, survival, and politics – specifically the social, material, institutional, and classed contexts in which low-income people access and interact around food in cities.

food options.¹⁵ As the zine points out, however, while Vancouver may be home to Canada's biggest food festival and is 'drowning in microbreweries' it is also an occupied city with extreme poverty, hunger, especially in the DTES. The aim of this zine is to interrupt the dominant narrative of Vancouver's 'thriving' food scene so as to stimulate conversation and action about how to promote more healthy, affordable and dignified food:

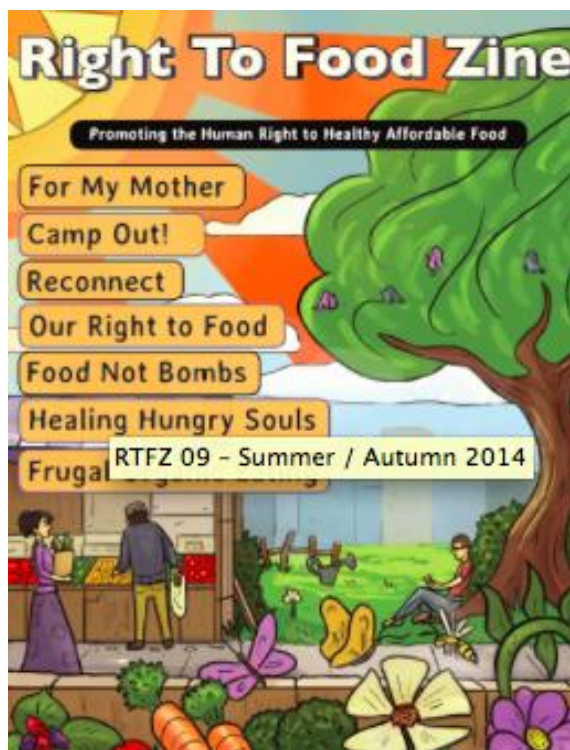


Figure 3. Downtown EastSide Right to Food Zine

After exploring this example I suggest that the feminist zine and foodscape analysis share a similar desire to account for experiences – bringing these modes together allows a very spatial and social way to 'follow' food: it's geography in practice! (Cook et al, 2004). I ask, how might our zines provide a similar critical intervention into the campus food scene?¹⁶

To sink into this question we begin by collectively mind-mapping some experiences on campus. One student says: 'I can never find a compost' and 'all I can ever find to eat quickly as a snack between class is so expensive so I usually eat Cheez Whiz and crackers from home.' A number of nodding heads concur. Another student notes that she works at a main cafeteria where untouched meals that don't sell often end up on the tops of garbage cans. Some point to the redeemable aspects of the campus foodscape such as the delicious soups that the

¹⁵ See: <http://www.theloop.ca/5-reasons-why-vancouver-is-the-best-food-destination-in-canada/>

¹⁶ Students encouraged to 'make a scene with their zine': take photos of food practices that you think are troubling. Ask questions. Collect receipts. Incorporate email correspondences...

student-run group Community Cabbage make from rescued food. Engaging disagreements also emerge. One student mentions how they love the diversity of food on campus, an international student from Japan protests: ‘you call that stuff that they serve in the ‘Mystic Market’ sushi?’ I can see the other ‘domestic’ students defend this ‘multicultural food’ but then pause when the student retorts that this is ‘bland food, bland multiculturalism.’ This leads to one group writing a zine with this title.

Then, one of the students says that we hear all the time how Victoria is a pretty city, pretty campus. She points to the Princeton Review to illustrate how this place can be very self-congratulatory about its so-called ‘perfect’ food practices (<http://bit.ly/1Uk62nT>). She says ‘so it’s local, so what? What does this mean?’ This is Wendy, a student who identifies as having mixed Mohawk and Scandinavian heritage.¹⁷ She asks, while the campus might be committed to planting indigenous plants on campus (as Princeton documents) ‘how many Indigenous people can actually access them?’ And what about the modes of preparing food? She points out that she cannot find food that resembles her peoples’ own diet on campus. She introduces the practice of pitcooking to the class – a process of steaming food (usually salmon and root vegetables collected on traditional territory). She says, wouldn’t it be powerful if the university had a pitcook on campus instead of just the standard cafes? Her group decides to base their project on this vision.

An (un)finished product: the camus-campus

A number of themes emerge in the (un)finished zine projects. I say (un)finished because, as it will become clear, these documents continue to have life even after they are graded. The food zines explore intersecting political issues ranging from the lack of composting, to lack of affordable food options to the food purchasing practices which still rely heavily on commercial chains like Coke. Below I specifically explore ‘Pitcooks in UVIC’s Foodscape’ created by a group of three students which directly questions the colonial legacies of their campus (Parks et al., 2015):

¹⁷ Sincere thanks go to Wendy Parks for providing feedback on this paper, and for inviting me to invasive pulls in Beacon Hill Park.

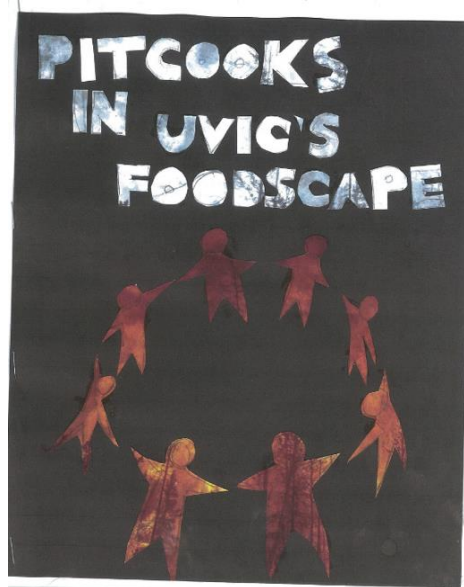


Figure 4. Cover of student zine

This zine opens up to a map, one that is familiar to most visitors of UVic. It is the official university map, distinguished by its 1.96 km circular ‘Ring Road’ speckled with key landmarks: library buildings, artificial ponds, and connecting city roads. Yet, in this zine the official map is layered in unfamiliar ways. It is interrupted with blooming purple flowers of Kwetlal (Camus):

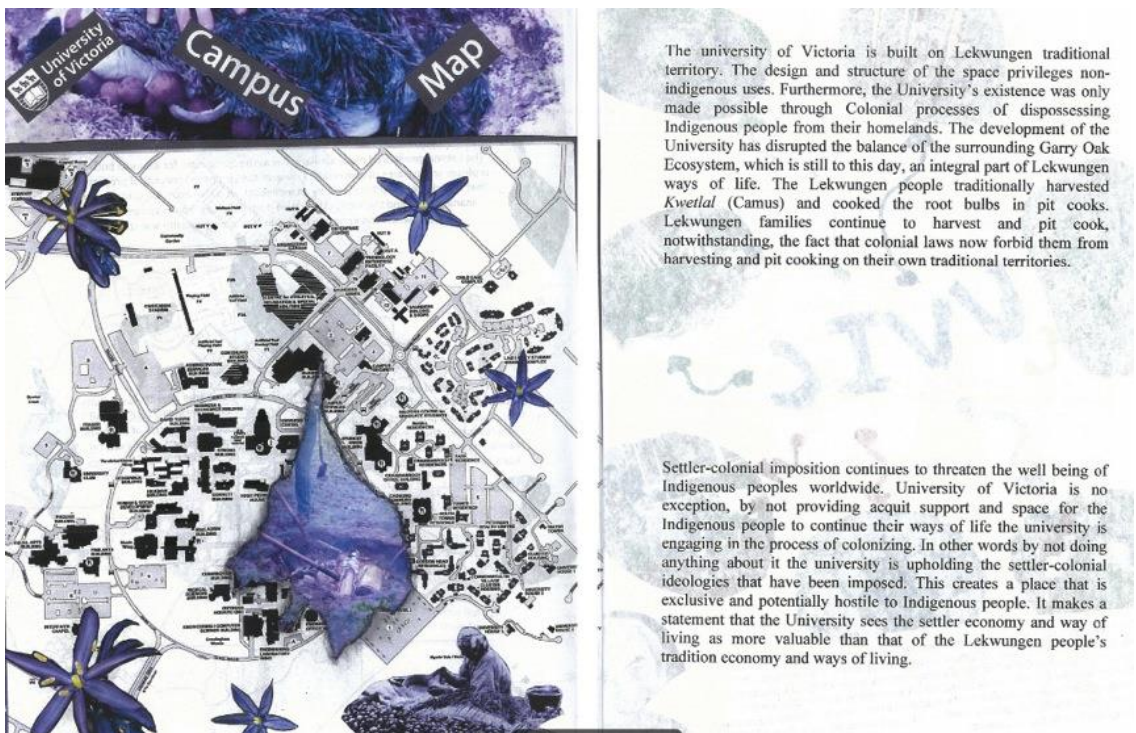


Figure 5. Two-fold from ‘Pitcooks in UVIC’s Foodscape’

The placement of this Indigenous plant serves to remind readers what is missing from official campus cartography: namely, pre-existing Indigenous plants and uses of this land. This image serves to illustrate that absencing such plants by extension absents Indigenous peoples whose way of life is intimately entangled still today with these life-giving systems.

Alongside this map covered in camus, the zine documents interviews with Cheryl Bryce, member of Lekwungen community, who states:

The Lekwungen people traditionally harvested Kwetlal (camus) and cooked the root bulbs in pit cooks. Lekwungen families continue to harvest and pit cook, notwithstanding the fact that colonial laws now forbid them from harvesting and pitcooking on their own traditional territories (Parks et al., p.2).

This weaving of text and visuals tells an intricate, often unheard, story of campus: one of camus. This story is a vibrant one of resilience – one that continues to grow – it is also a story of colonialization. The zine recounts how ‘the University of Victoria is built on Lekwungen traditional territory.’ The design and structure of the space privileges non-Indigenous uses. As the zine states ‘the University’s existence was made possible only by colonial processes of dispossessing Indigenous peoples’ (Parks et al., 2015). These words interrupt dominant narratives like the one produced by the Princeton Review that ranks this campus as a ‘perfect’ green sanctuary. These words illuminate how the campus is not typified by perfection, but struggles of decolonization that involve reinstating plants such as camus – a process that cannot be confined within colonial territorial lines that have delimited the campus in the first place. This process cannot be ranked and certainly cannot be given a score of 99% (as in Princeton’s review) but rather is an ongoing process, one riddled with failures along the way.

The very layout of the zine itself attempts to shift the narrative about the campus foodsystem. ‘Official’ data (maps, graphs) are re-assembled in this zine: cut up, glued over, and cast into question. Images from the Princeton Review are collaged and interspersed with images and words that speak to particular Lekwungen traditions:



Figure 6. Two-fold from 'Pitcook in UVIC's Foodscape'

Vitally, the zine layout positions Indigenous knowledge as central – not secondary. Here art and theory live side-by-side. The above image of a pastiche fish surrounded in waves of text is resonant of Paulo Friere's words, 'practice needs theory and theory needs practice, just like fish need clean water.' (Freire, 1996, 107). hooks, who was inspired by Friere, similarly suggests that such rejoining of theory and practice embodies an important step towards challenging the extractive and colonial modes of learning that so often evade practice, lived experience and subjugated knowledges (2010). Through the process of zine-making Indigenous knowledges are not simply embedded into existing curricula, but begin to shape the pedagogical lens through which we can see, feel and learn.¹⁸ In this zine, for instance, the words offered by Cheryl are not merely incorporated into an existing map but interrupts and reworks the map itself, in artful ways. As pictured above, the zine is a partial step towards re-shaping (and re-theorizing) food systems on campus from Lekwungen worldviews.¹⁹ In contrast to the form of representation that Ananya Roy (2011) and other postcolonial geographers have critiqued –whereby subjugated peoples feature as nameless 'case studies' or

¹⁸ Mapping the campus foodscape requires a critical questioning of the inward geographies that approach the campus as an isolated foodsystem. A foodscape analysis insists on tracing what food practices are denied through that spatialization, such as Indigenous food that cannot be contained within the strictures of the campus' territorial lines. As Wendy's comments imply, to do a campus foodscape, students must bump up against the various ways that this campus always-already functions as a colonial construction.

¹⁹ Community Tool Shed led by Indigenous people and allies working together to reinstate Kwetlal (camas) food systems (Garry Oak Ecosystem).

‘ethnographic vignette’—here the people stewarding practices of revitalization are championed.²⁰

It is not only how knowledge is placed in the zine but also how it is acquired in the first place that is significant. In keeping with the zine-foodscape method, students established connections: with community members, campus officials, and custodial staff alike. They asked questions and through this process even established relations for future collective work. For instance one of the zine artists, Wendy, continues to work alongside Cheryl who was interviewed as part of the zine creation (2015). A number of the zine students also participate with Cheryl on the ‘Lekwungen Community Tool Shed’ project. This is on-going work that creates space for Indigenous people and allies to establish a network of ‘tool sheds’ where participants can access the appropriate equipment to continue the restoration of Kwetlal food systems, which are today less than 5% of its Indigenous state prior to colonial contact.²¹ Part of this project involves pulling invasive species, such as Scotch Broom, which threaten this remaining 5%. I believe that this active way of being together on the land is a step on the path towards what Simpson calls ‘reclaiming land as pedagogy’ (2014). Simpson argues that connecting theory to practice is not enough. Revitalizing learning relationships with the land is also vital if we are to interrupt the extractive forms of education that perpetuate colonialism (also see Wildcat et al, 2014). Learning with and ‘reclaiming land as pedagogy’ is vital, she argues, in creating a ‘radical break from state education systems’ (Simpson, 2014). The embodied act of zine-making does not constitute a radical break, but it does perhaps enact a fracture.

Actually engaging and contributing to existing community projects (rather than imposing new ones) created opportunities for the type of Participatory Action Research that Rachel Pain describes as ‘empathic and interactive rather than extractive and objective’ (2003). Importantly, this interactive process stimulates moments for meaningful relationship building and responsibility that extends beyond the classroom and after the class has completed (Pain, 2003; Jazeel and McFarlane 2007; Simpson, 2014). The ‘Pitcooks in Uvic Foodscape’ zine ends stating that if the campus hopes to actually decolonize its foodsystem, one step would be to build a pit cook that enables students to ‘physically take part in a cultural valuable first nations tradition.’ Vitaly the process of making zines, which involved engaging community, establishes some of the groundwork for this type of ongoing work. Through the process of zine-making students developed working relationships with Cheryl’s Community Tool Shed project. So too, Cheryl and I developed curricula for a follow-up course ‘Edible Geographies’ wherein students helped to map invasive species (here is a story featuring this collaborative work: <http://focusonline.ca/node/1011>).

²⁰ Throughout the course of term I often call upon Kulnieks, Longboat and Young’s piece *Re-Indigenizing learning* to establish an expectation that we engage with and learn from Indigenous ways of knowing (2010).

²¹ See project details here: <http://lekwungenfoodsystems.org/portfolio/community-tool-shed/>

Marking and feeding forward

In the face of digital the physical zines may be seen as a dying form (Biel, 2008). As a teaching device, however, it managed to bring a lot of life to the classroom. Especially in the context of an increasingly digital academic landscape, demanding more online interaction (Mountz, 2014), the affective geography of these texts, filled with handwritten poetry, enchanted me. Perhaps I am romanticising analog, but quite simply – this format made marking fun:



Figure 7. Stack of student zines

Partly what made marking enjoyable is precisely what the depersonalizing neoliberal university finds dubious: it was anything but anonymous (Archer, 2008; Gahman, 2016). I delighted over reading these unique, personally motivated and hugely informative works. So often I feel numbed by the marking marathons that consist of reading repetitive answers that respond, rote-like, to a singular, pre-set question. Such repetitiveness can feel unavoidable as ‘there is incentive to standardize assignments to reduce grading time’ within a context of as ‘larger class sizes and fewer teaching assistant hours’ (Mountz et al., 2015). The single-question approach is coded as ‘productive’ in that it makes marking more straightforward and levels the playing field for everyone to answer the same question. But, as the Slow Scholarship Movement points out, this attempt to squish everyone into a ‘one size fits all model’ can also put out the ‘spark’ in a class (Mountz et al, 2015). In my experience such standardization confines each pupil to, what hooks refers to as, the ‘assembly line approach to learning’ (1994, 18). She argues such an approach dulls both student and teacher, leading to a feeling of apathy towards learning.

Alternatively, with students selecting a problem that they felt passionate about (following an inquiry-led learning approach), in turn I too was impassioned. This positive feedback-loop had another pleasant effect. Explaining that I wanted to slowly and carefully savour their unique work meant that the pressure to quickly provide feedback within ‘artificially accelerated’ timelines eased (Mountz et al., 2015). Students were proud that they had carefully designed a meaningful piece of art, rather than a ‘low-stake assignment,’ and actually acknowledged that time was necessary to ensure caring assessment of their work.²²

In speaking with students about their experiences of creating zines some noted that, as compared to conventional term papers, the visual medium of zines enabled a more fulsome opportunity for expression. An international student from China explained that this visual assignment allowed her – for the first time in her post-secondary experience – to communicate without deferring to English. In her zine this student used images alongside Mandarin to convey her story. To my mind this feedback speaks to zines as a tool for fostering diversity in teaching and learning, and a vehicle for enhancing ‘multiple literacies’ (Sellie, 2005).

Conclusions...

According to hooks a key aspect of engaged education is that it is aimed at making change. This is an ambition that both zines and the foodscape analysis share; the point is not simply to question existing power structures, but to explore ‘potentialities for future change’ (Miewald & McCann, 2014). While the holistic activity of cutting and pasting, stitching and kevetizing together felt like a wholehearted step towards thinking about interconnected problems of the campus foodsystem, as a class we also considered: what sort of intervention can the zines make?

With encouragement from the class we shared the students’ work with the University of Victoria Sustainability Coordinator, Susan Kerr. After reading through the zines Kerr and her colleagues decided to feature some of these works on the university’s Campus Planning and Sustainability website so that they might be viewed more widely (available here: <http://bit.ly/1hkdpAr>).²³ The website introduces the zines as a ‘valuable resource’ which offer ‘challenges and recommendations that seek to nourish even more sustainable campus’ (Ibid). As well as digitizing their zines, students were invited by the university to present and display their work at a campus sustainability event:²⁴

²² In future I would love to experiment with more innovative modes of assessment. I did, ultimately, felt a pressure to perform my role as sovereign in the marking process. I would like to relinquish this role and ask students to find ways to self-grade or have community grade their work.

²³ Enacting zines as ‘both’ rather than either/or: analog/digital

²⁴ This event provided a space for students to explore overlapping and intersecting themes– a key feature of the ‘foodscape’ analysis that aims to glean a layered account of food as a complex system. In asking students what they wished for in the future, some mentioned that more time had been allocated to this sharing.



Figure 8. Students at Sustainability Event

Of course, the critic might identify this inclusion as a co-opting move on the part of the neoliberal university – and it might well be. Yet at the same time, the university has taken active steps to follow-up on student’s suggestions (such as expanding campus compost and recycling stations).²⁵ Perhaps more importantly, however, through the process of constructing their own zines, students developed activist networks that do not rely upon, and in fact often refuse to wait for recognition from, the university. The process of zine-making incited students to ask critical questions, become even a little irreverent towards authorities (like the Princeton Review) and nourish what is too often cut-out of the classroom: excitement! This energy extended beyond term time. One student who works at the on-campus café, Mystic Market, said that she shared her zine with her employer who has taken steps to minimize persistent waste. Yet another student became involved in the ‘break up with your paper cup’ campaign. As well, a number of students continue to work alongside Cheryl Bryce on the ‘Lekwungen Community Tool Shed’ in an effort to map and remove invasive species in the region. As I witnessed students join wider community networks to challenge very material (edible) expressions of the neoliberal-colonial university I felt a joy for learning grow in me. And, as the teaching role expanded to include family and friends I also felt the ‘ecstasy’ that hooks confesses to experiencing in the classroom (even as she contemplates leaving the academy).

hooks notes that within the classroom excitement and joy are regularly subdued because it is seen as ‘disruptive’ (1994). These feelings might disrupt the flow of knowledge, authority and the focussed mood of the room attuned to *real* learning. hooks says that we have to unlearn this risk-adverse fear of stirring things up. In a neoliberal landscape of temporary contracts and performance reviews very material concerns (i.e. the ever-present possibility of getting sacked) delimit risk-

²⁵ See: <http://www.uvic.ca/sustainability/topics/waste/index.php>

taking. As feminist geographers advancing slow scholarship point out, even for those whose jobs are ‘secure,’ the expanding academic tasks and accelerated timelines shrink possibilities for creativity and risk-taking (Mountz et al., 2015). Moreover, the task of collective action becomes increasingly difficult as standardized metrics reduce staff and students to individual units to be judged and to judge. In this alienating context there are significant power dynamics that temper hooks’ call for disruption.

In order to resist the neoliberal university the Slow Scholarship Movement suggests that scholars must intentionally take time to do caring-risk work together. I witness this work growing as colleagues take breaks together; make ‘lets-email-less’ pacts together and strike together. Working together as scholars is an important step. In this paper I add that that for this movement to become truly collective, and politically robust, we also need to take even more concrete steps towards building slow solidarity with students and broader communities. While building new bonds this also demands a deepened commitment to ‘undoing’ colonial relations that continue to shape the neoliberal university (Walia, 2013). Recalling hooks, pedagogy is a powerful tool at our disposal to do this political building and undoing work (1994). For it is through pedagogical practice – as modest as making a zine – that we actually enact modes of being together that exceed extractive relations such as producer and consumer. Together, slowly-yet-decisively engaging in crafty acts of pedagogy we might learn to take risks that cut across, reassemble and repurpose our universities into places we love.

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