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## TAXI PROFESSORS: ACADEMIC LABOUR IN CHILE, A CRITICAL-PRACTICAL RESPONSE TO THE POLITICS OF WORKER IDENTITY

**Abstract:** This paper discusses the organisation of academic labour as an expression of contemporary capitalism in Chile. The focus of our analysis is on so called ‘taxi professors’, hourly paid academics that carry out the majority of teaching at Chilean universities. Drawing on 23 qualitative interviews, we discuss the daily work routines of taxi professors, focussing on travel to work, gender, the labour process, academic freedom, self-management and the organisation of collective struggle among hourly paid workers. In contrast to the mainstream literature on academic identity, the discourses of hourly paid academics are not shaped merely by their sense of ‘precarity’, their belonging to a disciplinary subject or professional expertise, but fundamentally by the alienating and exploitative conditions of work to which they are exposed. This understanding of hourly paid academic labour in terms of an alienated form of capitalist work will be linked to academic writing that suggests a critical-practical activity that seeks to counteract the sense of ‘helplessness’ reflected in the discourses about academic identity. The practical aspect of this activity is presented as the possibilities of platform co-operativism, expressed in this context as co-operative forms of higher education, grounded in a critical reading of Karl Marx’s labour theory of value where value rather than labour is the focus of critical analysis.

**Keywords:** Academic Labour; Chile; Hourly Paid Academics; Identity; Marxist Social Theory; Labour Theory of Value; Precarity; Resistance

### Introduction

Based on ongoing research about the production of neoliberal discourses and academic work in Chile<sup>1</sup>, this article discusses the organisation of academic labour as an expression of contemporary capitalism. The focus of our analysis will be on so called ‘taxi professors’, hourly paid academics that carry out the majority of teaching at Chilean universities (Rodriguez and Tello 2012). The metaphor ‘taxi’ refers to them being ‘on call’ like taxi drivers, moving between different teaching sites across cities in Chile. Drawing on qualitative interviews with 23 taxi professors in Chile we show how in contrast to the mainstream literature on academic identity (Billot 2010; Clegg 2008; Henkel 2000), the discourses of the hourly paid academics we interviewed are not shaped merely by their sense of belonging to their

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disciplinary subject (Lucas 2006), or professional expertise (Tight 2000) or sense of ‘precarity’ (Standing 2011) or dysfunctionality between the core roles of teaching and research (Lucas 2006), but fundamentally by the exploitative conditions of work to which they are exposed. This understanding of hourly paid academic labour in terms of an alienated form of capitalist work will be linked to academic writing that suggests a critical-practical activity that seeks to counteract the sense of ‘helplessness’ reflected in the discourses about academic identity (Winn 2015c). This writing does not seek to affirm academic labour through an appeal to workerist identity politics (Neilson and Rossiter 2008; Roggero 2011) but, rather, deconstructs labour as the organising principle of society through a critique of political economy grounded in Karl Marx’s labour theory of value (Postone 1991; Winn 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Neary and Winn 2016b; Hall 2014; Elson 2015; Harney and Moten 2013). The critical-practical activity derived from this labour theory of value are co-operative forms of higher education based on democratic academic-student ownership and control supported by the radical use of platform technologies (Hall, 2014; Winn 2013; Neary and Winn 2015; Hall 2015; University of Utopia n.d.; Kleiner 2014). This use of platform technologies to support co-operative models for higher education counteracts the way in which they are currently being used to intensify precarious forms of work, in particular by taxi-service companies (Pasquale and Vaidhyanathan 2015). The optimism generated in this literature for a radical transformation of higher education needs to be tempered with an awareness of the capacity of the capitalist state to violently suppress such changes (Neary 2015), with the history of the Chilean dictatorship’s brutal campaign against leftist academics and radical intellectual thought (1973 - 1990) a constant reminder of the forms such repression can take (Simbürger and Neary 2015; Simbürger et al. 2017).

### ***Changes in academic labour***

It is undoubtedly the case that the massification and marketisation of higher education, as well as the arrival of human resource management at universities, have substantially changed the nature of academic work (Deem and Brehony 2005; Shore and Wright 2000; Ball 2003). The intensification of work, the auditing of research outputs, and a career oriented transfer market have transformed the institutional climate of professional academic labour (Chandler, Barry and Clark 2001). The implementation of managerialism puts more emphasis on administrative functions leaving less time for research, while at the same time exerting more pressure to publish in leading international journals (Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1996; Henkel 2000). Academics are not only compelled to prioritise research over teaching, but are forced to balance between their research interests with the demands of funding bodies (Sparkes 2007; Willmott 2003).

While academics face increasing workloads (Ogbonna and Harris 2004), less stable modes of employment such as hourly paid work, fixed-term contracts, and probationary periods of work have been on the rise (Smith 2010). Academic labour has been increasingly outsourced to short-term researchers or teachers (Allen-Collinson 2004; Dominelli and Hoogvelt 1995; Miller 1996; Smith 2010) as witnessed by the emergence of zero hours contracts in the UK (Lopes and Dewan 2014), the growth of adjunct faculty in the US (Feldman and Turnley 2004) and the phenomena of “taxi professors” in Chile (Berrios 2015; Sisto 2005). All of these contractual arrangements are variations of the same phenomenon, the casualisation of academic labour where the precarity of university teachers is no longer the exception but seems to have become a new standard, characterised as a ‘precarious labour’ (Standing 2011). Precarious labour is usually presented as a deviation from a Fordist full-time work model (Kalleberg 2009; Standing 2011) that initially affected the creative industries but has gained substantial ground in the academic sector (Ross 2008). Taken together these developments involving ‘knowledge workers’ are often considered as an element of the ‘knowledge society’, in which knowledge is perceived as a key production factor (Stehr 1999) and as a form of ‘academic capitalism’ (Slaughter and Leslie 1997).

Gigi Roggero has provided a valuable contribution to the debates surrounding the politics of knowledge production with his book, ‘The Production of Living Knowledge’ (Roggero 2011). According to Roggero, ‘it is impossible to grasp the contemporary transformation of the university without considering the

equally seismic shifts that are occurring in the condition of labor' (Roggero 2011, vii). Paying attention to the modes of work that sustain current universities, Roggero points out that students and academics find themselves in increasingly similar positions, with a higher education degree no longer being a guarantee for a highly paid and permanent job (Roggero 2011). Roggero is writing within the tradition of autonomous Marxism where the subjectivity of labour is considered to contain within itself the capacity for self-valorisation against the dominant logic of capitalist social relations. As a result, his concept of 'living knowledge' is full of radical intent, situating the university as the site 'where conflicts within the production of knowledge are a central battlefield of class struggle through power relations, and productive relations' (Roggero 2011, 3). At the centre of the process of production is co-research, challenging 'the borders between research and politics, knowledge and conflicts, the university and the social context, work and militancy' (Roggero 2011, 5). The principle of 'co-research' involves students and academics working together as a form of political praxis, so that the production of knowledge becomes a key principle of self-constitution and radical subjectivity and new forms of autonomous institutionality (Roggero 2011).

The perspective of radical intent can also be applied to the concept of precarity, which was originally coined by social movements and trade unions in Europe in the 1990s (Neilson and Rossiter 2008). Critiquing the common use of precarity as a merely descriptive concept that fails to capture the increasingly blurred boundaries between permanent and non-permanent work, Neilson and Rossiter frame precarity as a political idea (Neilson and Rossiter 2008). They demonstrate that Fordism and permanent full time employment are an exception in the history of labour markets and political economy rather than the norm as it is commonly represented (Neilson and Rossiter 2008). Nevertheless, Neilson and Rossiter consider precarious forms of employment as a basis for an effective type of organising against capitalist work and as part of a radical political project. They cite a strike by Indian taxi drivers in Australia, many of whom were international university students, as being very difficult for the state authorities to suppress because of the highly contingent nature of this precarious labour force and, therefore, the possible basis for successful worker resistance in future.

The strength of the work of Roggero and Neilson and Rossiter is that they recognise the issue of precarious academic work as a political matter based on workers' struggle. However, these authors do not move beyond the limits of identity politics. Instead, they substitute the specificity of academic identity with the generality of workerist identity: as a particular form of radical subjectivity or as the radical composition of a particular kind of workforce and, therefore, do not transcend the social relationship through which forms of workerist identity are imposed. In other words, the character of capitalist labour is celebrated even while the imposition of capitalist work is being denounced. Not even Roggero's notion of self-valorisation captures the negative aspect of Marx's critique of labour. Roggero over estimates the capacity of autonomous institutions in capitalist society while underestimating the extent to which the identity of workers is fabricated by capitalist work (Neary 2012). In what follows we intend to develop a critical-practical response to the predicament of academic labour not based on the politics of identity or even self-valorisation, but rather a critique of academic work based on a labour theory of value. And, rather than attempt to re-imagine a new form of radical institutionality, we make a claim for co-operative organisations through which to develop this critique of work.

But first we need to examine the way in which the precarity of work has been explored in the mainstream academic literature before going on to discuss the real nature of precarious academic work in Chile through the way in which it is experienced by hourly paid lecturers: 'taxi academics'.

### **Academic work as academic identity**

As demonstrated above, the increase of workloads, the flexibilisation and precarisation of academic work and the implementation of performance measurement provides evidence of the fundamental changes in academic employment. All of this has transformed the traditional self-understanding of academics about what lies at the core of the academic profession, the academic ethos and the status of subject disciplines

(Evans 2002; Henkel 2000; Parker and Jary 1995; Simbürger 2009). Yet, despite the global transformation of work in the context of capitalism, the academic discussion around academic work has not been dominated by a critical understanding of academic work. Quite the contrary, according to Clegg (2008) and Henkel (2000), notions about the academic profession, its aspirations and practices have been replaced by a more flexible framing of the academic profession, usually embodied in the notion of academic identities (Clegg 2008; Henkel 2000).

In the international literature, academics' identities and their self-understanding have mostly been understood as being shaped by disciplinary affiliation (Becher and Trowler 2001; Malcolm and Zukas 2009) working contracts and academic positions (Parker and Jary 1995) and the institutional context (Henkel, 2000). The rising popularity of the notion of academic identity can be seen in the context of postmodernity and professional reflexivity where a stronger emphasis on individual subjectivity as a unit of analysis puts broader concerns that may underpin social structures into the background (Calhoun 1994). Yet, more importantly, studying academics in a way that merely focuses on the subject discipline may also be an indication for how the structural changes in higher education and the move towards the entrepreneurial university as a key reference point have left its traces on how academics perceive themselves, as well as on the intellectual framing of the topic of academic work and the academic profession.

This means understanding academic identity as both distinctively 'individual and embedded in the communities of primary importance to them' (Henkel 2000, 251). In the context of academia an individual develops their sense of 'academic self' through their imaginings of what comprises 'the academic', their past experiences, and their understanding of the current circumstances. Taking this further, the meaning of academic identity is continually changing and depends on academics' subjective interpretation of themselves in the context of academic practice and institutional structures (Henkel 2000). While institutions have changed in response to external influences, their strategic directions have not always developed in alignment with an academic's notion of their professional self (Billott 2010). The revised institutional focus appears to clash with academics' identity and that prescribed by their employing organisation (Briggs 2007). The biggest challenge for contemporary academics seems to be negotiating their academic identities with interpretations of what constitutes academic work made by human resource and quality assurance managers. Reconciling this disconnect is part of the challenge for academics, who are now seeking to understand and manage their changing identity.

In a similar vein, there is an understanding that academic identity needs to be understood in a dynamic and multiple mode rather than as a one-dimensional and static concept (Churchman 2006; Clegg 2008). In this case, academic identity has to be seen as one form of describing a person's identity, alongside other aspects of how people describe themselves in terms of class, gender and the significance of family (Clegg 2008). Identity then is not a fixed property, but is part of the lived complexity of a person's academic life (Clegg, 2008), with a focus on the 'fluidity of identity' (Clegg 2008, 332; Archer 2003). This account pays attention to the spaces of agency that individuals seemingly carve out in a performance-oriented higher education landscape. Despite the pressure of performativity, individuals still create spaces for the exercise of principled personal autonomy and agency (Clegg 2008). While paying attention to how the neoliberal transformation of universities has effected the academic profession, the main focus of this work is the complexities in which academic identity evolves at the level of the individual and the local (Clegg 2008, 332). In a similar view academic identity is not so much an ascribed concept as the result of a constant process of making sense of who we are, our academic aspirations and practices and how they relate to the past, present and future (Geijsel and Meijers 2005).

There is a recognition in the literature that academics engage with structural changes in quite different ways through an exploration of how neoliberalism has effected younger academics' constructions of professional identity (Archer 2008). While academics from older birth cohorts may have been socialized into a far more traditional system where they could proceed on the career ladder without a PhD and high quality publications, younger academics have never known anything other than a performance oriented higher education system. Neoliberalism has deeply influenced the self-understanding of early career

academics, which is reflected in the business-like and output-oriented way they speak about academic work. While there is still space for agency and resistance on the micro-level, the conclusions from this research are more negative with regard to the spaces that academics have in order to negotiate their identities (Archer 2008).

Furthermore, publications on academic identity foreground a discussion on the changing identity of full-time and permanently employed academics, with less attention paid to part-time academic work and hourly paid labour. This raises the fundamental question as to whether ‘identity’ as a concept adequately captures what is happening to precarious academic workers. Another absence in the literature on academic identity is the sense in which the condition of precarity might be resisted, to avoid what has been referred to as a condition of ‘helplessness’ in response to the imposition of neoliberal regulations in general (Postone 2006) and more specifically in relation to academic work (Winn 2015c; Neary and Winn 2016b).

In the following, we undertake an analysis that considers academic labour in Chile, a country that pioneered neoliberalism (Taylor 2006; 2002), with specific reference to the hourly paid work of ‘taxi professors’. At the centre of our analysis is the extent to which such a condition might be resisted, which is discussed in the final part of the paper with reference to the possibilities of creating co-operative enterprises based around new technological platforms for higher education.

### **Capitalism and academic labour in Chile**

In Chile, the precarisation of academic labour is particularly pertinent (Sisto 2005). Academics who are paid on an hourly basis, teach at several universities and rush from one site of work to the next are labelled as ‘profesores taxi’ (Reyes León and Santos 2011). At its extremes, this notion embodies the devalued and exploited facets of contemporary academic work. According to Berrios, in 2005 67% of all academic staff were hourly paid academics, whereas in 2011 the percentage of hourly paid academics has risen to 75% (Berrios 2015, 359). The percentage of hourly paid academics is particularly high in private universities: between 2008 and 2013, 70% of all staff at private universities worked part-time, working up to 22 hours. In 2008, 56% (17.372) of staff in private universities were employed for 11 hours or less and in 2013 the number of hourly paid teachers, working up to 11 hours, at private universities had risen to 24.710. The percentage of hourly paid academics in public universities is slightly lower, 35%, working 11 hours or less, in 2008 and 29% in 2013 (Berrios 2015, 364).

Studying the working conditions of academics in a public and a private university in Chile based on 40 qualitative interviews with mostly full-time employed academics, Guzmán and Barnett distinguish between two types of academic “fragilities” (Guzmán and Barnett 2013). In the case of the public university where full time employment was more common than in the private university, the authors describe the challenges that academics face with the label of “ontological fragilities”. This group of academics confronts similar difficulties as academics on full time contracts in other parts of the world, juggling research, teaching and administration and dealing with more intense requirements with regard to the acquisition of external research funds and international publications. In the case of the private university with a higher percentage of academics on hourly paid contracts, Guzmán and Barnett speak of “contractual fragilities”. Whereas these academics would like to be involved in activities other than teaching, they are excluded from the research culture of the institution. In light of the data presented above on the statistical development of academics in Chile, one can say that Chilean higher education is dominated by “contractual fragilities” and that full-time employment (“ontological fragilities”) are the exception.

What is distinctive about the Chilean case is that, unlike in other countries, the precarisation and casualisation of academic work is not a recent phenomenon, dismantling a stable body of academic staff on permanent full time contracts. Rather, quite the opposite is the case. According to Bernasconi, hourly paid teachers have constituted the majority of the academic workforce in Latin America since the origins of the Latin American university (Bernasconi 2008). A distinctive feature of hourly paid academics in

Latin America is that they often are successful professionals and only teach one or two classes per week in order to stay connected to the university sector (Berrios 2015, 360). In this case, hourly paid teaching is considered as a prestigious activity, giving status to professionals who maintain links with universities. With the Chilean university reforms from 1967-1973, the number of registered students increased rapidly alongside a growing demand of academics. However only 37% of academics at that time had a full time contract (Pelczar, 1977; Berrios 2015, 348). Between 1970 and 1973 the investment in Chilean Higher Education doubled with a substantial percentage being used to hire new full time academics (Bernasconi and Rojas, cited in Berrios, 2015). However, the professionalisation of academic work in Chile only started fifteen years ago with the massification of universities. While there is an overall rise of full-time employed academics in Chile in recent years, this has not changed the general picture of hourly paid academics still representing the majority of academic staff in Chilean universities (Berrios 2015, 365). In public universities, the number of hourly paid teachers (between 0 and 22 hours) has slightly decreased from 55% (2008) to 51 % (2013), whereas in private universities the percentage of hourly paid teachers is particularly high (between 0 and 22 hours); 72 % in 2008 and 70 % in 2013. These teachers have a very marginalised status in universities and could be compared to adjunct faculty in the US due to their poor working conditions (Berrios 2015, 362). This trend is also confirmed by the interview data discussed in this article.

Whereas we can explain the casualisation of academic labour referring to the origins of the Latin American university and, more recently, in a global context of the massification of higher education, we cannot do justice to an analysis of the Chilean case without paying close attention to the Pinochet dictatorship between 1973 and 1990. Chile is known as one of the most neoliberal countries on the globe with a high level of social segregation and difference between social classes (Undurraga 2014). This goes back to the forceful implementation of neoliberal measures designed by the so called ‘Chicago Boys’ during the Pinochet dictatorship in all areas of life - work, education, health, pensions (Gárate 2012; Taylor 2008; 2002). The military regime had a tremendous impact on Chilean society with extreme violations of human rights (Stern 2006). It is estimated that about 1 million people were forced to leave Chile in order to avoid this repression during the period of the dictatorship (Bayle 2010). With regard to higher education, the ‘reforms’ of Pinochet involve going against the policy to establish a system of free higher education proposed by the Marxist President Allende (1970-1973) while, at the same time, establishing an unregulated market system for private higher education with no public subsidies, transferring the cost of state financed institutions to students, thus forcing public universities to acquire funding from sources than the state (Brunner 1997, 226).

Under the military dictatorship leftist academics were regarded as enemies of the state: ‘rats to be exterminated’ and Marxism described as ‘a cancer’ (Stern 2006). There was a repressive campaign against the critical social sciences: sociology, anthropology educational studies, philosophy as well the arts and humanities (Garretón et al. 2005). The intensity of the campaign can be explained by the significance that the social sciences, arts and humanities had for the Allende government in conceptualising a democratic socialist society in the years prior to the coup (Brunner 2009). One of the most telling events in this terror campaign against left wing intellectuals was the burning of books taken from private homes and universities (on the 23rd of September in 1973) that were seen to constitute an ideological threat to the dictatorship (Agosin and Molloy 1987; Sanders 1974).<sup>2</sup> Conversely, given the emphasis placed on neoliberal economics by the Pinochet regime the discipline of economics went through a period of growth during the dictatorship.

This system remained unchallenged by the social democratic government after the end of the dictatorship in 1990. The importance that is attributed to economics in comparison to other social sciences is still

visible in the amounts of funding that are allocated to economics up to this day (Garretón 2005). Legislation enacted by post dictatorship governments has favoured these neoliberal conditions and Chilean higher education has seen a tremendous rise in private universities (Rama 2005). Chile currently has 60 universities, of which 16 are public and 44 private. In no other Latin American country have private universities grown as rapidly as in Chile between 1970 and 2006 – from 34% of all registered students in private universities in 1970 to 74% in 2006 (CINDA 2007).

### Research Methodology

Chile has been and remains at the forefront of the neoliberalisation of higher education and is, therefore, an important site to explore the impact on academic staff. The 23 qualitative interviews with hourly paid academics discussed in this paper form part of a three-year research project on academic labour in Chile, funded by the Chilean Science Foundation, that encompassed theoretical research and a total of 69 semi-structured interviews with both permanent and hourly paid staff in different types of universities all over Chile. The research looked at academic working conditions and the epistemological transformation of disciplines as a result of a neoliberal working environment. One of the key features of hourly paid teachers is that they have to teach far beyond their disciplines of origin. For this reason, disciplinary identity takes a back seat for hourly paid academics. As the research project aimed to capture the epistemological transformation of the disciplines of sociology, education, and biology in a neoliberal context, the main focus was on full-time academics with permanent contracts (46 academics with permanent contracts vs. 23 academics on hourly paid contracts), thereby not representing the real distribution between academics and hourly paid academics in the general population in the selection of qualitative interviews.

The 23 interviewees who work on an hourly basis teach at one or more universities in Santiago or in other cities in Chile. Since hourly paid teachers are hardly ever included in the webpages of university departments, they were mostly contacted through a snowball system of acquaintances and friends. The interviews with hourly paid academics aimed to identify their daily working routines and working conditions as well as the implications of working at various universities. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. All the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed and anonymised. Ethical approval was sought from the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Diego Portales prior to undertaking the research. Participants were provided with an information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. All the interview material was analysed by means of discourse analysis (Keller, 2005). Prior to that, the interviews were transcribed and coded, thereafter leading to more overarching categories such as contractual and economic insecurity, mobility, no means of labour, lack of work space, exclusion from departmental planning and staff development.

### Three types of hourly paid academic workers:

From the 23 interviews with hourly paid academics we can distinguish three different types of workers.

	Male (age)	Female (age)	
<b>Group 1</b> Young people in transition and with plans to do a postgraduate degree	3 (25, 27, 31)	1 (27)	<b>4</b>
<b>Group 2</b> Professionals – teaching one or two courses a year and staying in touch with the university	9 (30,31, 31 38, 48, 53, 63, 65, 71)	2 (33, 35)	<b>11</b>
<b>Group 3</b> Making a living with hourly paid teaching (combined with consultancy work)	2 (30, 35)	6 (32, 33, 33, 36, 37, 43)	<b>8</b>
	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>23</b>

*Group 1: Young people in transition and with plans to do a postgraduate degree*

The first group of interviewees were young people in their late twenties and early thirties that intend to do a postgraduate degree. Hourly paid teaching tends to be transitory for them, with many moving on to postgraduate education after a few years. Although their actual living situation quite often is precarious, they perceive hourly paid teaching as one step towards an academic career. As they hope to move on to an academic career as permanent full time academics, for many of them hourly paid teaching allows them to gain more experience in teaching and thus fulfils one of the requirements for a more permanent academic post.

Oscar, a trained economist, is soon leaving for the UK to do a PhD in neuroscience. The last few years of his life have mostly consisted of teaching and consultancy work. He knows that obtaining a PhD may be the only chance to get a more permanent job:

*'I am 31. I have been teaching as an hourly paid academic teacher since I am 27. I have been teaching courses and I have also done consultancy work for the Economics Department so as to have a little bit more income. I have always done consultancy work on top of the teaching because if I didn't do this I would have to teach 15 courses and then I wouldn't have any time left for other things. Last year I taught 7 courses at the Universidad Central, Universidad de las Americas and in the Universidad de Santiago.'* (Oscar, 31, Economist)

Interviewees of this group know that in better ranked public and private universities a PhD is a prerequisite for teaching, even as an hourly paid academic. At the same time there is evidence that a PhD no longer guarantees a fulltime job on a permanent basis:

*'Lately, I have seen many PhDs coming back to Chile after their studies and looking for jobs and they are taxi professors. With increasing levels of specialisation one has to be very clear about the path of specialisation one wants to take and even with a PhD there is no guarantee to get a job.'* (Pedro, 25, Literature Studies)

*Group 2: Professionals – teaching one course and staying in touch with the university*

The second group of hourly paid teachers are professionals who only teach one course per term or year. Teaching is not their main source of income. Rather, they often work in prestigious and well-paid professions and consider teaching one course a year as a way of maintaining links with universities.

Sergio, a 31 year-old sociologist, has a full time job at the ministry of interior affairs and teaches two courses a year at universities. He has to make up for the hours he uses for teaching by working longer hours at the office on a regular basis:

*'I have an office job from Monday to Friday, 9 to 18: 30 hrs but I also teach a sociological theory course at the Universidad de Chile during the first term, and in the second term I teach on the MA programme at the UTEM university. ...It is a sacrifice since I am absent from my job for three or four hours because of the teaching, I have to stay at work and recover these hours. So it's a double effort I have to make. First of all, what is driving me is a personal motivation. When one works for the state in a more bureaucratic job, being involved in teaching refreshes the brain and keeps you active....Yet, what makes it complicated is that I have to work a double shift...At the office I work on topics such as crime and deviance and then, teaching at the university, I look at Weber and Parsons. So, that is tiring but what keeps me going is the wish to improve the quality of teaching for the students.'* (Sergio, 31, Sociologist)

His motivation to teach despite the fatigue and sacrifice it causes, adding more working hours to his already long days, stems from the wish to stay connected with the university and to provide good quality



teaching to the students. Teaching is more intellectually stimulating than the more bureaucratic work at the ministry.

Ernesto is a young sociologist who works at the Chilean National Statistics Institute and teaches one statistics course a year at the Universidad de Chile. His drive to teach at the university is his commitment to provide high quality education in statistics to students at the university where he studied:

*'At the moment my main job is at the National Statistics Institute (INE). I am finishing a project on the family income survey in which I am in charge of the field work and soon I will start as a director on the survey about the use of time which is carried out during 2014 and 2015. This is my main job. And then I also do some statistics consultancy work. During some periods of the year I teach the Statistics III course at the Universidad de Chile.'* (Ernesto, 30, Sociologist)

Teaching at the university, initially as a teaching assistant and then teaching his own statistics course was a way of making professional contacts, opening the doors to his current employer, the National Statistics Institute. However, the conditions for teaching at the Universidad de Chile, supposedly one of the best state universities to study sociology, are difficult. Nevertheless, he appreciates that he can teach at the university and that he can stay connected to the students:

*'This year I had 72 students in my statistics course and it was really exhausting. The course is designed for a maximum of 35 students. I try to maintain a positive state of mind but this year there will be 100 students on the course. And the payment is exactly the same. So one really has to motivate oneself, but the economic part certainly isn't motivating.'* (Ernesto, 30, Sociologist)

Ernesto's and Sergio's narratives document their genuine vocation to teach and to improve the quality of teaching in spite of adverse working conditions at the university and extra hours at their jobs, making up for the time spent teaching at the university. As this group of hourly paid academics mostly holds full time jobs in other professions and does not depend on hourly paid teaching as their main income source, they feel far less economically marginalised. Their motivation to contribute to academia and to stay connected to intellectual life still outweighs the downsides of low pay and extra working hours. In contrast to the first and third group of hourly paid academics who entirely make a living based on teaching, this group hardly tends to question the lack of social and economic security that is related to hourly academic teaching. Magdalena, an hourly paid academic teacher who teaches at several universities and one school explains why she thinks that her colleagues who only teach one course a year on top of their fulltime professional jobs are far less bothered by the harsh working conditions of hourly paid academic teachers:

*'I am one of those people who find hourly paid teaching a bit trickier. I see people who don't mind much. They have more 'normal' jobs in the sense that they go to work at a certain time and after work they go back home, they have paid annual leave and a fixed income and they know that they can count on this income. So for them, hourly paid teaching is just something extra and they don't question much.'* (Magdalena, 27, philosopher)

### *Group 3: Making a living with hourly paid teaching*

The third and most precarious group are interviewees who make a living through teaching, both at universities and at schools, sometimes combined with consultancy work to earn extra income. They can be found in all age groups. However, hourly paid academics from the age of 35 onwards are a particularly vulnerable group. Oscar sums up why this group of interviewees is in such a vulnerable position:

*'The majority of taxi professors are people who work fulltime and teach at night or people without any permanent contract. Teaching at different universities is their only source of income. And this is more dramatic because a lot of these taxi professors are over fifty and they have no chance whatsoever. Thirty years ago, when they studied they didn't think that they would need a postgraduate degree in order to teach a course. Many people started to teach at public*

*universities without any postgraduate degree but now universities are starting to get rid of them.'* (Oscar, 31, Economist)

In the absence of stable contracts and income sources, their economic and social security are non-existent and their prospects are not good. Furthermore, they remain excluded from obtaining a mortgage to buy a house.

Interviewees from this group of hourly paid academics often combine teaching at universities with teaching at schools. In addition to teaching at three different universities, Magdalena teaches at a school. The rationale of combining teaching at universities with teaching at schools often is that at schools teachers have at least a short term contract, which means that they have paid vacation and the right to be on sick leave:

*'The school where I teach is the only place where I have a contract. This means that I receive a stable income every month, including January and February (the Chilean summer holidays). I work there every Thursday for nine hours. So at the school I have a permanent contract for nine hours. However, the working conditions at the school are quite bad. For example, they haven't paid social security tax for me for the entire last year.'* (Magdalena, 27, Philosophy)

Magdalena is really unhappy with the situation at the school but in light of it being her only contract that should supposedly provide her with a minimum of social security, she feels forced to stay and to put up with the conditions of labour.

One of the key challenges for hourly paid academics who generate most of their income through teaching is to cover their cost of living during the Chilean summer months when they do not get paid by the university. Pedro explains his back-up plan to have an income in January and February:

*'I survive based on the savings from the previous months and with additional work such as proofreading. These small jobs always save my life. It is an easy job for someone who has a literature degree. They don't pay that well, but it's something.'* (Pedro, 27, Literature)

Hence, the 'entrepreneurial' challenge for hourly paid academics consists in having to find alternative income sources for the summer months, thus transforming economic and social instability into a constant pattern of their lives.

So far, we illustrated the key features of the three different types of hourly paid academics that we identified from the data. We particularly focused on the precarity of hourly paid academic work in the first and third group of interviewees, who mostly make a living based on hourly paid teaching. However, it is worth noting that precarity is not confined to those academics that are exclusively paid on an hourly basis. Rather, the careers of academics on non-permanent part-time and full-time contracts also show features of precarity. Yet, within the constraints of this article we did not include them in our analysis of precarious academics because their contractual conditions differ substantially from those of hourly paid academics. While academics on non-permanent part time and full time contracts have paid vacation, medical health care provision and social insurance, this is not the case for hourly paid academics.

### **Against identity: the burden of work for hourly paid academics in Chile**

The following analysis will focus on the first and third group of hourly paid academics due to their being in particularly vulnerable positions. The key discourses we identified in these interviews contradict the mainstream paradigm of academic identity that is so common in the academic literature on academic work. Rather, what we extracted from the discourses of hourly paid academics is that their academic activity does not constitute an identity that can be negotiated, but rather is defined by teaching in higher education as a form of academic labour.

*Teaching as labour: contractual fragilities*

From the interview material it emerges that for hourly paid academics in Chile their subject discipline is not a common denominator of their self-understanding as academics. Rather, they understand themselves as workers whose experience as teachers in higher education is shaped by their working conditions and contractual arrangements. Some of them who taught at different universities even considered themselves as labour force entrepreneurs. Despite the differences between the three groups of hourly paid academics, there are a number of elements that all hourly paid academics have in common: low salary, lack of social security, no insurance, medical leave or paid vacation and with very few resources provided by the universities for them to do their work, such as work spaces, computers and stationery.

Depending on the number of universities they work for, the challenges for hourly paid academics multiply. Their working at different universities implies spatial mobility between different sites of labour, quite often during the same day. Additionally,, they have to cope with varying organisational cultures and bureaucratic specificities.

Camilo is a 37 year-old psychologist who now holds a permanent half time position at a private university. Prior to getting this position, for several years he exclusively made a living based on hourly paid teaching. Remembering his years as an hourly paid academic he elaborates on the empirical reality of ‘contractual fragilities’ (Guzman and Barnett 2013) and the consequences for his quality of life and academic career prospects:

*‘It really suited me because I was young, I was not married, and I repeated teaching the same course at different universities. So, that way I could teach five courses a week without a problem because I just had to repeat the same course all the time. After a while I started to get tired of moving constantly from one university to the next. And being on a bus or a taxi all day is very tiring. But the other thing that started to make me tired was that I could not progress, I could not produce anything new. I always repeated the same thing and I got fed up with this situation. I had tons of ideas that I wanted to develop with my writing and research, but being a taxi professor you can’t do any of that. And the other aspect that really started to trouble me was that working as a taxi professor is economically really unstable. In general, I could not get ill because if I got ill I would not be able to go on sick leave. They did not pay me while being sick. So I really started to dislike my situation. And when I got married, this instability really became more and more complicated for me.’ (Camilo, 37, Psychologist)*

*Gender*

Gender is an important category that runs through all the interviews even when it is not explicitly mentioned. Once many hourly paid academics start to think about having a family and getting married they may have to make decisions about leaving academia or by combining hourly paid academic work with teaching at schools which often provides them with a little more social and economic security. This is the case for our interviewee Camilo who worked as an hourly paid academic for many years. For him, a life time event such as getting married and founding a family made him reflect on hourly paid teaching as an income source:

*‘And when I got married, this instability really became more and more complicated for me. (Camilo, Psychologist, 37).*

Camilo was able to finally find an academic half time position that gave him some economic and social stability. On top of it, he carried on with hourly paid teaching, yet teaching fewer courses. Hence, while Camilo moved from a very precarious work situation to a less precarious setting, having obtained a half time post allowed him to start a family. However, quite often the possibility to opt out of hourly paid teaching does not come up, making it more difficult for hourly paid academics to plan their personal lives, to get a mortgage and buy a house, to buy a car and to have a family. In many cases, academics have to

postpone their personal lives. This is the case of Magdalena, a young hourly paid academic from the region of Valparaíso:

*'In the first place I am bored of not knowing how much money I will make every month. ....I don't have the freedom to buy a car for example.... Actually, yesterday I was really sad because they had not paid me and I have no idea what will happen to my life in the future. At the moment I have these jobs. Everyone tells me once you have your MA things will be better. That's fine, I will finish it but I will give myself a deadline of two or three years to see what is gonna happen with my life. I would not want to turn forty at this pace of life that I currently have. I couldn't. So, I say, fuck, will I be a mum one day? One day I would love to be a mum but right now I can't. Whilst I don't have economic stability I can't do it.'* (Magdalena, 27, philosopher)

*Taylorism and teaching: 'It's like producing cars on a Taylorist assembly line.'*

The type of academic work carried out by 'taxi professors' needs to be done according to very rigid guidelines and following an already established course programme, particularly in less prestigious universities. Some interviewees compared this situation with the production of cars on a Taylorist assembly line. Courses have to be reproduced in exactly the same way in other branches of this university all over the country. The fragmentation of the work process – leaving aside the expertise of the academic – has serious implications for academic freedom:

*'I taught a course on psychopathology at INACAP for social work students. They provided me with a course programme and I had to teach exactly the same programme. It was like a handbook. So it didn't matter at all what my perspective was about the topic. I have a special take on psychopathology from the perspective of psychoanalysis. But that didn't matter. The only thing that mattered was to teach them the programme. As a consequence, academic freedom in teaching really suffers. At the Universidad de Desarrollo similar things happen. There is a lot of monitoring so that the course programme you teach at the Universidad de Desarrollo in Santiago is exactly the same as in Concepción. This really limits academic freedom. I think the Universidad Alberto Hurtado really respects academic freedom and the Universidad Diego Portales as well. But in universities like INACAP, that are actually professional institutes that call themselves universities, they tend to standardise a lot. It's like serial production. It is like producing cars on a Taylorist assembly line. Let's produce psychologists for the market and so we have to do a course programme that is printed for all students and that's it. One becomes a mere executor of teaching within that organisational process.'* (Mauro, Communication Studies, 35).

Mauro indicates that academic freedom is at risk of being violated in the light of Taylorist modes of production in teaching. The rigid regulation of course outlines and how courses have to be taught are frequently found at private universities. Some interviewees who worked at private universities reported that their critique of already set course outlines were points of tension with permanent staff and led in the case of two interviewees to them not carrying on teaching in these universities. As Cecilia put it:

*"My experience has always been that staff give me a readymade course programme, which I have not been involved with developing and which, to me, does not have any coherence with the curriculum of the degree programme. Of course it is really difficult to teach a course programme that doesn't make sense to you and to teach it in a way so that it makes sense to the students.'* (Cecilia, 37, Psychologist)

This extends to being given instructions about how a particular course is to be taught. In one case Cecilia was told by the coordinator of a course in community studies that there would be certain restrictions with respect to how she was supposed to teach:

*'She said: 'There are a lot of kids whose parents work for the army, a lot of families with power and connections, don't talk about politics.'* Yet, the course was about mental health and health

*reforms in Latin America and about communities. 'Don't talk about politics, don't talk about the 70s, don't talk about the military regime, don't talk about abortion.' This is how I was threatened from the beginning onwards. 'You don't know who the father of your student is', I was told. And this was before I even had set a foot into a classroom. Teaching a course about social psychology one has to talk about politics and this was part of the programme. They set the agenda for the course and the topics. It wasn't me. How could I not talk about politics in such a course? It is impossible.'* (Cecilia, 37, Psychologist)

Whereas rigid course outlines are very common in private universities, public universities have gradually moved into this direction in recent years, adjusting their curriculum to a competence based curriculum, thereby following the instructions of the Chilean university accreditation agency.

In addition to strict course outlines, swipe machines that control the entry and leaving times of hourly paid academics are another indicator for a Taylorist mode of production in teaching. Several respondents mentioned that they have to swipe in and out with a card in within a time frame of twenty minutes prior to the beginning of their class in order to get paid:

*'For example the Universidad Cárdenal Silva Henríquez exerts a lot of control in the university. One has to swipe in with a card every time you teach a class. If you don't do this they don't pay you. Besides you have to swipe in within a time window of twenty minutes prior to the beginning of the class. If the machine doesn't have a register of you by the beginning of the class, it is as if you had not taught it.'* (Cecilia, Psychologist, Social Worker, 36)

This requirement for recording attendance by using a swipe card does not consider the time that hourly paid academics invest outside of the classroom doing course preparation, emailing students and meeting up with them, correcting course work and marking exams.

#### *No means of labour, no space*

In this context, it comes as no surprise that workspace provided for hourly paid academics is very limited or does not exist. In general, public and private universities that are accredited by the National Accreditation agency are more likely to offer shared workspaces. However, space is mostly scarce and it is very difficult for hourly paid academics to work in a concentrated way in these spaces or to arrange meetings with their students. In private universities without accreditation, workspace sometimes does not exist at all:

*'There isn't even a small space where you can sit down to read the newspaper. Nothing. One is expected to teach and to leave straight after class. I once asked the academic coordinator whether we could have a small work space and she told me that the idea is that the academic comes to teach his class and leaves and does not spend more time at the university.'* (Magdalena, 27, Philosopher)

#### *Mobile labour*

The lack of shared workspaces at universities implies that hourly paid academics have to leave as soon as their class finishes. They have to find other work places where they can prepare classes, correct course work, and contact their students. For many hourly paid academics who work at more than one university, moving from one teaching site to the next and working on the move is a key feature of their working life:

*'A typical day. Well, getting up early because I had to travel to a university in Maipú (a suburb of Santiago). Lunch always as a take-away and in between classes, having a sandwich, sometimes I didn't even manage to have breakfast. I was always running. I didn't have an office and that is why I spent so much money at Starbucks. I installed myself there with my computer, having a coffee, marking papers or preparing classes. My work was like a person living in the street. One*

*spends money, one has to buy lunch and whatever else. One has to work in a coffee house and consume. After a while I started to develop a backache. All the time I was on the road with my mobile office. Walking all the time with your rucksack and the computer on your back is tiring. After a while I realised that I started to have back problems.’ (Camilo, 37, Psychologist)*

Another interviewee reconstructs her journey to one of the upper class private universities at the foot of the Andes mountains in Santiago:

*‘I don’t have a car and the university is based in San Carlos de Apoquindo. So I took the metro, the collective taxi, and sometimes I went by bus. I had to go very early because I had classes at 8:30 and took the bus at 7. So I was on the bus with all the housekeepers and gardeners that work in the district of the well-off people. I was with my textbooks and paperwork for my classes and with all the housekeepers and gardeners, on my way up to the rich district close to the mountains, to teach. And after that, I took the same way back, once again with all the workers. The students of this university don’t go there by bus. They go there by car.’ (Cecilia, 36, Psychologist, Social Worker)*

Cecilia’s experience of travelling on the same bus with gardeners and housekeepers, while students go to university by car is symptomatic of the spatial and social segregation that marks Chile as a country and the low status of hourly paid academics.

#### *Labour force-entrepreneurs and self-management*

Managing oneself as a form of precarious labour involves the development of human resource management skills. Many interviewees indicated that doing their work well involves multiple organisational challenges, including being efficient, having the capacity to manage oneself and responding to the bureaucratic demands of various universities, so that they become a self-entrepreneur of the teaching sector:

*‘I made myself an excel file and marked the dates when I had to send an invoice and an email. So I put an alarm on my phone and on the respective day I started to fill in all the documents. For example, on the 5th of each month, I know that I have to pay the rent and that I have to send invoices to universities etc. So, all of this paperwork will take me one and a half hours. Besides, as I teach in various universities, I always left a note on my phone with which topic I had finished during the last class, so I could remember what was the last thing I had talked about.’ (Camilo, 37, Psychologist)*

#### *The challenges of organised protest by hourly paid academics*

While these interviews describe the conditions of academic labour for ‘taxi professors’, the strategy to deal with the harsh working conditions that was most mentioned by the respondents was leaving academia. In fact, one of the distinctive features of the student protest movement in Chile against neoliberalism has been the comparative absence of academics demonstrating solidarity with the students and campaigning for reforms to higher education policy (Simbürger and Neary 2015). However, at the height of the students’ movement in 2011 and 2012 hourly paid academic teachers started to organise themselves as a group. According to our interviewee Mauro, the students’ movement triggered a more general process of questioning the neoliberal education system and the working conditions of hourly paid academics. Mauro has been a central figure in an association of hourly paid academics that has a Facebook group online – *Agrupación Académicos a Honorarios*. One of the aims of the group was to make the conditions of hourly paid academics more visible:

*‘Together with many other taxi professor we said we have to found a group. There was a reality of work that is absolutely invisible and one has to pretend to be part of an academic community and*

*at the end one isn't part of it. And this is how I started to identify with a group, in other words with those without a group.'* (Mauro, 35, *Communication Studies*)

Mónica, another interviewee who has been active in the group, recalls the early days of the group:

*'I think things started moving when we realised that there was a large community of academics, a lot of them with PhDs, with very high levels of education who all worked as hourly paid academics. For me, this was really impressive. At this point I had only taught for four years but there were many people who had taught for twenty years under these conditions as taxi professors. It was important to understand the dimensions of the problem. That we were so many, like taxi drivers, with a lot of uncertainties, with no workers' rights whatsoever. We realised that in some universities the conditions were extremely bad, for example at UNIACC, if you can't teach one class you don't get paid for it. This really is a taximeter.'* (Mónica, 33, *Psychologist*)

Despite its success, with more than 700 members the group is comparatively small, given that Chile currently has more than 33,000 hourly paid academics. Mónica explains that the difficulty of joining forces politically is that hourly paid academics have very little time or space where they can meet up:

*'The challenge that the movement of hourly paid academics faces are the working conditions of the academics: the lack of time, the difficulty to find a good time to meet up as many also work at night. At the end we have very little time to think, to reflect on these conditions so this has made it more difficult to have a more coherent movement.'* (Mónica, 33, *Psychologist*)

Mauro describes the difficulty of organising collective struggle for workers who find themselves in very precarious working conditions:

*'It's like the chicken and the egg. How can I improve the situation of taxi professors if I don't have the chance to meet up with them? On the other hand, if it is so difficult to organise meetings, there is no way to improve the conditions. It is like the egg or the chicken, which is ideal for the capitalist owner of a university, which is the organising principle of anything in Chile, not just education. Creating as many obstacles as possible so that workers cannot organise themselves. So, starting the movement on Facebook has worked. If it had not been for the students' movement we would have never met up. This was a starting point for many people to do something.'* (Mauro, 35, *Communication Studies*)

However, the comparatively small number of people who have been involved in the movement cannot merely be explained by a lack of time of hourly paid academics due to very long working days. An important factor undermining the development of a larger movement is the fear of sanctions by their institutions so that they lose their hourly paid positions:

*'There is a lot of fear. They think if they participate in this they won't be offered a course anymore. And there is an army of other academic workers waiting to teach their class. Quite often they are told 'If you make any problems I can have a young graduate student teach this course.' There is in fact a lot of rotation. This is why the digital platforms are a good medium. Sometimes I receive emails from people who don't want to appear on Facebook and others who don't even have Facebook. There are a lot of hourly paid academics from the older generation and these are people who experienced the dictatorship and they are very scared of social media, they are scared of exposing themselves.'* (Mauro, 35, *Communication Studies*)

Finally, the fear to participate in collective action is particularly widespread amongst those who experienced the Pinochet dictatorship.

These interviews reveal in a very stark way the everyday life of a taxi-professor in the Chilean higher education system. What is very noticeable is the extent to which they are beginning to organise into online support networks to counteract some of the alienating effects of this type of academic labour. In the next section we consider critical-practical ways in which these support networks might be further substantiated.

### **Neoliberal Academic Labour: a critical-practical response**

While the mainstream literature surrounding the degradations of academic life are considered in terms of academic identity, the evidence from these interviews shows how academic labour is experienced as waged work in capitalist universities. By considering this work as academic labour it is possible to conceive a critical-practical response that might alleviate the conditions of employment experienced by these taxi professors. In this section we set out a possible alternative scenario to the taxi professors' predicament by establishing a critical theoretical framework through which to reconsider the nature of academic labour, as well as suggesting a practical institutional framework, based on the critical theory, as to how an alternative form of academic labour might be realised in practice. The suggested model is 'platform co-operativism', offering an alternative to the way in which capitalist work might be re-organised giving workers democratic ownership and control by making use of new technologies, adding an effective organisational dimension to the worker-co-operative model.

While the model suggested may seem a long way from the current condition of hourly paid lecturers in Chile we feel it serves a useful purpose as a concrete thought experiment.

Given that the hourly paid academics refer to themselves as 'taxi-professors', it might be possible to consider the current condition of the Chilean 'taxi professors' through a concept and practice that has recently emerged from out of the taxi industry: the 'uberfication' of work - new ways in which work is arranged through the use of digital technologies and data analytics to create 'platform capitalism', taking its name from a taxi company: Uber, that was one of the early adopters (Pasquale and Vaidhyathan 2015). Founded in 2009, Uber, operates a mobile app so people with smart phones can request a ride in taxi cars driven by their owners. By April 2016 the practice had spread to 60 countries and 404 cities world ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uber\\_\(company\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uber_(company))). One of the features of the development of this technology is the way in which Uber has made links with academic computer science departments for research and development. However, the key issue is not simply the technology but the employment contractual relations. Workers are not employees but self-employed drivers, unlicensed and untrained, operating outside existing regulatory frameworks, leading to a situation of unregulated competition in the car hire sector. These practices are underpinned by a libertarian politics, which works on the principle of 'corporate nullification' (Pasquale and Vaidhyathan 2015), and 'permissionless innovation' based on the so called 'open internet'. Uber is much more than a technological fix but has its own version of political economy based on free market fundamentalism, expressed through a 'cyberlibertarian rhetoric' described as 'a licence to harm' (Golumbia 2013). Uberfication is regarded as a threat to the rule of law and civil rights, undermining a commitment to democracy, indeed, the very opposite of engaged political left activism (Golumbia 2013, Pasquale and Vaidhyathan 2015).

The uberfication of work has already been applied to academic labour as a descriptive category to elaborate the precarious conditions of academic work (Hall 2015). At the same time, there is a developing academic literature on the ways in which digital technologies and data management systems can be re-engineered for workers' self-management: platform co-operativism (Orsi, Pasquale, Schneider, Mancini, and Scholz 2015) including academic peer production (Hall 2016). It might be possible to further develop these two literatures to develop an emancipatory strategy for university teachers where platform technologies framed by a co-operative organisation can be adapted for self-management by the 'taxi professors' in Chile.

It is important to emphasise that platform co-operativism goes beyond being simply a practical technological fix and offers a theoretical repudiation to the hyper-neoliberalism that characterises the version of political economy on which uberfication is based. Platform co-operativism is most compelling when it is derived from an understanding of capitalist work based on Marx's labour theory of value in which value rather than labour or workers' identity is the focus of critical analysis (Harney and Moten 2013; Hall 2014; Winn 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2013; Neary and Winn 2016b; University of Utopia n.d.). Writing on waged work from the perspective of value is markedly different from writing about academic labour in terms of identity or as a political project. Writing on academic identity tends to denounce the



conditions of the neoliberal university in order to re-moralise academic life through a competing ideological discourse, which is never fully elaborated, as a radical version of liberalism (Winn 2015a, 2015b). Writing on work as a political project seeks to replace the focus on the specificity of academic identity with the generality of worker identity without fundamentally challenging the notion that work is the organising principle of society even if it is based on the redistribution of scarce resources. Writing on waged work from the perspective of value provides an historical materialist critique of the real nature of capitalist work as a fundamental basis for revolutionary change, which seeks to establish not a redistribution of scarce resources but a new form of social wealth (Postone 1993). While a full scale account of Marx's labour theory of value is beyond the scope of this paper it is important to note it is only by uncovering the process of valorisation that the intensification of working practices and the commodification of academic work as performativity, marketisation and managerialism can be fully understood and challenged (Winn 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). Key to Marx's labour theory of value is that labour is the main source of value, together with the appropriation of nature, and that the expansion of value depends on the exploitation of labour. The pressure of competition ensures that capitalist enterprises are forced to find ways to increase productivity leading to the introduction of expensive machines which embody the latest innovations in science and technology, with commodified knowledge now recognised as key factor in the process of production. The paradox at the heart of this system is that the introduction of machinery forces out labour which, as the main source of value, results in a decline of overall profitability and a tendency for capitalism to move towards crisis and catastrophe. As the expansion of Capital is a contingent process, bound by the limitations of its own processes of valorisation and relying on the ongoing subordination of labour power to the imperatives of capitalist production, it is liable to working class resistance that contains within it the possibility of a post capitalist form of social wealth (Bonefeld 2015).

Furthermore, this form of analysis seeks to expound a materialist analysis of the production of knowledge and science grounded in an historical account of the development of the university as a capitalist institution (Winn 2013; Neary 2013) with regard to the secular crisis of higher education in which new forms of worker cooperation are grounded in a communist praxis (Hall 2014). The secular crisis of higher education can be understood as the current moment when Capital appears to have reached the limits of its capacity for valorisation (Jappe 2014; Kurz 2014). Capital seeks to recover its profitability through financialisation and marketisation of all social life, which, in the context of higher education, appears as an attack on tenured labour through short-term contracts and other exploitative arrangements, including academic entrepreneurship. These arrangements are a direct consequence of venture capital and private equity investments searching for short-term profitability through the commodification of knowledge and science (Hall 2014). However, this critique of financialisation and marketisation argues that the crisis is not amenable to monetised fixes, technological determinism, organisational change or abstract reasoning, but requires 'a refocusing on the counter-hegemonic potential of academic labour power, knowledge, skills and practices for socially-useful work or activity, which is beyond Capital's system of value' (Hall 2014, 6). At a time when 'stable forms of accumulation cannot be reinstated' (Hall 2014, 7) this opens up the possibility for academic solidarity to emerge. This solidarity can be imagined through the concept of 'mass intellectuality': socially useful knowledge forged by academics working in solidarity with each other and their students and other transnational activist groups against the asset stripping types of commodified knowledge that characterise the capitalist university. And, in this way, 'to live and tell a different, overtly political story of academic labour as it relates to human sociability' (Hall 2014, 2).

What is most distinctive about this writing based on a labour theory of value is that it develops an understanding of academic work set firmly within the social relations of capitalist production, 'as part of the service sector proletariat' (Harney and Moten 1998, 155, quoted in Winn 2015c, 9). Moreover, academic labour in this analysis, includes academics and students working in collaboration on research and teaching in the "production, circulation and realisation" of the knowledge economy' (Moten and Harney 1999, 26, quoted in Winn 2015c, 9). Based on this analysis it now becomes possible to consider the re-appropriation of knowledge and science in which the current form of academic labour would be

abolished and its capitalist conditions overcome, giving rise to new post capitalist institutional forms of higher education as an ‘emancipatory project rather than a resource for valorisation’ (Winn 2015c, 10).

An important aspect of this re-appropriation is the reconstitution of the university as a form of co-operative higher education (Winn 2015a, 2015b; Neary and Winn 2015), drawing inspiration from an already existing cooperative university in Mondragon, Spain. There is a recognition here of the way in which academic values coincide with the principles of the co-operative movement (Cook 2013), and the importance of co-operative forms of organisation to the radical workers movement (Ness and Azzellini 2011; Vieta 2010) as a form of class struggle (Egan 1990). In this way worker co-operatives can be seen as ‘the practice of immanent critique’ and as ‘a laboratory for the creation of social forms of social co-operation and subjectivities that arguably would form the basis of a post capitalist world’ (Shukaitis 2010, 62, quoted in Winn 2015a), providing the basis for a sort of academic commons: or non-alienated academic work (Winn 2015a). This approach has been substantiated by the practices of Open Co-operativism, challenging the logic of commodified knowledge through progressive and radical forms of knowledge attribution, e.g., Copyleft and Creative Commons licensing, which can be used to undermine restrictive copyright and patenting laws for non-commercial uses (Winn 2015b; Stallman 2002). This progressive forms of knowledge attribution has been further radicalised by Peer Production and Copyfarleft licences where commercial use can be made of a product protected under Copyleft or Creative Commons regulations by worker-owned organisations so they can ‘reuse the social property of co-operatives in their mutual interest in building a commons’ (Winn 2015b, 398). This type of co-operative arrangement has been described as platform communism (Bauwens 2014; Bauwens and Kostakis 2014; Kleiner 2014).

None of these arrangements in their current form replace the capitalist law of value, but they recognise the fundamental nature of the problem of capitalist work and the ways in which it can be reorganised as a radical movement towards the transition to a new form of social wealth based on human purposes (Bonefeld 2015). In that sense they offer a critical-practical response to the condition of helplessness in Chile and elsewhere that pervades not only the literature on academic identity, but the working environments of many university teachers.

### *Practical response: Co-operative Higher Education in Chile*

The question remains to what extent might it be possible to create a form of platform co-operativism in Chile among taxi professors? This can be discussed with reference to the condition of the Chilean co-operative movement in general and, more specifically, the emergence of co-operative forms of higher education in Latin America and around the world, as well as recognising the embryonic forms of platform technologies already being used by taxi professors in Chile as a form of mutual support and solidarity. Further inspiration can be found from other types of co-operatives, including taxi companies as well as co-operatives operating in the educational sector in the US and the UK. The possibility of such an arrangement in Chile must be based on an assessment by taxi professors and academic workers and students of the viability for co-operative higher education within the Chilean context,

Chile has a long history of co-operative enterprise activity, since the 1880s, codified by law in 1920, with a growth in support during the 1950s and 1960s followed by repression during the Dictatorship period. The commitment to co-operatives was reinstated by post-Dictatorship governments through refreshed legislation in 2002 to bring Chile close to international standards. There are around 500 co-operatives in Chile, with about 1 million members, mostly in the Santiago area. The co-operative sector generates approximately 100 USD million in annual profits, has consolidated assets of around 5000 USD billion and social equity of 2 USD billion. The main areas of co-operative activity are agriculture, fisheries and financial services, housing projects, electrification and water purification (Silva 2013, 317 - 327).

The co-operative model has already been taken on by taxi companies, for example, Union Cab Madison, Wisconsin, in the US, was established in the 1970s after decades of labour disputes. Union Cab set up a

worker cooperative with 250 staff including not just drivers, but administrative staff and mechanics. In 1995, Union Cab reaffirmed their commitment to core co-operative values and principles to further define its identity. In 2012, Union Cab adopted governance structures to move staff away from being employees to owners and members with collective decision making responsibility (MacNamara 2015). This is part of a developing trend for cooperative taxis in the US (Van Slyke 2016).

In the US and the UK the co-operative model has been used in music education (Birch 2013). In the UK music education co-operatives have been set up in response to local government education authorities outsourcing their music teaching provision in a way that has downgraded employment protection, with many music teachers being placed on zero hour contracts. One of the most established is Swindon Music Co-operative, set up in 1998 after the closure of the Council's teaching provision, now working in 70 schools with 50 music teachers. In the UK the forming of music teacher co-operatives has support from the Musicians Union as a way for 'teachers to stay together and not be cast out into a competitive landscape where increased competition tends so often to lead to under cutting and a gradual erosion of teaching standards' (Musicians Union 2014). This link between the trade unions and cooperatives is important. In the US co-operatives are seen by unions as a way of protecting jobs and alleviating poverty (Palmer n.d.). Academic Trade Unions in Chile are not strong (Solimano 2014, 117) but university teachers have formed themselves into associations to protect and defend their interests within institutions, which might be extended to include taxi professors co-operatives. The taxi professors would be able to draw on the support of the cooperative movement in Chile, under the principle of co-operation among co-operatives, which is a defining aspect of the international co-operative movement (ICA 2015).

As we have seen from the interviews, the taxi professors in Chile are already beginning to organise themselves through use of online technologies as a support network: *Agrupación Académicos a Honorarios*. In the first instance this group might consolidate as a co-operative offering support and advice, training, and solidarity to its members in ways that seek to overcome some of the problems identified already by the taxi professors. Co-operatives provide a humanistic understanding of working life in a way that takes account of personal situations, including gender, the organization of finances but also their future hopes and dreams. It would allow the taxi professors to take some control over their working lives in terms of the way in which ownership of any assets, for example computers or shared office space, are distributed equally among members, and all based on the principle of self-governance where decisions about the co-operative are based on democratic decision making (ICA 2015).

In the longer term, and depending on Chilean co-operative law, the taxi professors might consider establishing their own form of social co-operative specialising in higher education. Social Co-operatives emerged in Italy in the 1970s for the provision of services of general interest, like education, and offers the possibility to include other types of members, for example students and other workers (CECOP 2016). The taxi professors can take inspiration not only from Mondragon University, but from other higher education co-operatives that are beginning to emerge elsewhere in Latin America and around the world. In Cancun, Mexico The Unicoop Universidad Cooperativa offers degrees in Local Development and Self-Managed Community, as well as Securing and Human Rights, Engineering and Echotechnology and Social Economics <http://www.unicoop.mx/u/index.cfm>. In Greece, the Co-operative Institutes for Transnational Studies (CITS) involves academics from many countries with the aim 'to resist the degradation of neoliberal education' and 'dedicated to the cause of radical social transformation' <http://www.coop-its.org/>. CITS intends to make extensive use of platform technologies for teaching transnationally supported by local face-to-face provision. In the UK work has been ongoing based around the Social Science Centre, Lincoln, established in 2011, which along with providing education programmes at the level of higher education is developing a framework to establish a co-operative university (Neary and Winn 2016a). The key issue here is that while these newly emerging institutions make use of platform technologies they are defined not by the technology but by their radical politics grounded in the desire to establish co-operative principles and practices in the context of higher education (International Co-operative Alliance 2015).

## Conclusion

Academic identity is a discourse that emerges uncritically from out of the ideology of neoliberalism, as an adaptive mechanism without any real critical intent, and resigned to a condition of helplessness. The interviews with 23 hourly paid academics show that taxi professors consider their predicament as a function of capitalist work. While their responses tend to be adaptable and descriptive the focus on teaching as a form of capitalist work provides the substantive dynamic out of which a new form of academic life can be imagined. Based on the 23 interviews with hourly paid academics, we could identify three types of taxi professors. The first group of interviewees are young people in their late twenties and early thirties that intend to do a postgraduate degree. The second group are professionals who teach one course a term on top of their jobs in order to stay in touch with the university. The third group are people who make a living with hourly paid teaching. Due to their precarious working situation, our analysis particularly focused on the first and third group of interviewees, who mostly make a living based on hourly paid teaching.

For hourly paid academics their subject discipline is not a common denominator of their self-understanding as academics. Rather, they understand themselves as workers whose experience as teachers in higher education is shaped by their working conditions and contractual arrangements. Depending on the number of universities they work for, the challenges for hourly paid academics multiply. Their working at different universities implies spatial mobility between different sites of labour, quite often during the same day. The type of academic work carried out by ‘taxi professors’ needs to be done according to very rigid guidelines and following an already established course programme, particularly in less prestigious universities. Some interviewees compared this situation with the production of cars on a Taylorist assembly line. Courses have to be reproduced in exactly the same way in other branches of this university all over the country, which has serious implications for academic freedom. Many interviewees indicated that doing their work well involves multiple organisational challenges, including being efficient, having the capacity to manage oneself and responding to the bureaucratic demands of various universities, so that they become a self-entrepreneur of the teaching sector. Gender is an important category that runs through all the interviews even when it is not explicitly mentioned. Once many hourly paid academics start to think about having a family and getting married they make have to make decisions about leaving academia or by combining hourly paid academic work with teaching at schools which often provides them with a little more social and economic security.

In light of the severe conditions of labour, we asked interviewees about the possibilities of organised protest. While taxi professors founded an online platform of hourly paid academics at the height of the Chilean students’ movement, the number of people involved is comparatively small. Some interviewees explained this with the lack of time of hourly paid academics due to very long working days. Yet, an important factor undermining the development of a larger movement is the fear of sanctions by their institutions so that they lose their hourly paid positions, as well as fear based on memories of the military dictatorship.

The turn towards regarding academic labour as a form of work, rather than identity, shows a developing self-consciousness about the real nature of university life. The turn towards a critique of labour rather than an affirmation of workerist identity show a further development of political consciousness about the real nature of capitalist work. This self-consciousness is supported by a literature that grounds the everyday life of academic labour through a labour theory of value. Taken together and by making connections with other struggles inside Chilean Universities, in particular the student movement, (Simbürger and Neary, 2015) and linked to the growing dissatisfaction among academics in Chile, these activities provides a conceptual framework to consider how to overcome the sense of helplessness experienced by hourly paid academic workers and other contracted staff, along with some practical possibilities as to the forms that resistance might take based on co-operative models of democratic ownership and control by students and academics.

This must be decided by Chilean university teachers themselves, but offered here as a concrete thought experiment, in the context of what the taxi professors are already doing in terms of developing online support networks and forms of co-operative working that are being developed in Latin America and elsewhere around the world. All of this is much more than a technological fix, or the taking advantage of new technologies, but involves a particular form of social determinism grounded in the most determining of all social relations: the organisation of capitalist work. However, any optimism about the radical future of Universities in Chile and elsewhere needs to be tempered with an awareness of the capitalist state's capacity for violent repression of radical intellectual life, of which the Pinochet military dictatorship, by its use of exile, torture, imprisonment, assassination and the burning of books stands as a chilling reminder (Simbürger et al. 2017; Simbürger and Neary 2015 ).

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