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**INTERROGATING
THE ACCELERATED
ACADEMY**

In modernity, academia as the central site of science production and transmission remains attached to multiple and often contradictory forces, which reflect broader societal development. Readers of *Theory of Science* arguably need little convincing that scientific knowledge production is socially embedded, historically conditioned and technologically shaped. The production process itself is not only inseparable from its sites but also from the scientists/academics who produce it and the circumstances – being it epochal, institutional or ideological – under which they work. One of the major, if not constitutive, forces co-shaping scientific production and by extension scientific labour has been that of direct and indirect economic influence of capital. As David Harvey has consistently reminded us through his decades of influential work,¹ acceleration

of social change and the logic of capital accumulation and expansion, i.e. appropriation of different spheres of society and culture by capital, are at the basis of capitalism’s reproduction. This indeed holds for academia, too. In somewhat unusually Marxian fashion, it was Max Weber who, at the outset of 20th century, identified this significant aspect of scientific production:

The large institutes of medicine or natural science are “state capitalist” enterprises, which cannot be managed without very considerable funds. Here we encounter the same condition that is found wherever capitalist enterprise comes into operation: the “separation of the worker from his means of production.” The worker, that is, the assistant, is dependent upon the implements that the state puts at his disposal; hence he is just as dependent upon the head of the institute as is the employee in a factory upon the management. For, subjectively and in good faith, the director believes that this institute is “his,” and he manages its affairs. Thus the assistant’s position is often as precarious as is that of any “quasi-proletarian” existence and just as precarious as the position

¹ See for example David HARVEY, *The Limits of Capital*. London: Verso 2006; David HARVEY, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism*. London: Profile Books 2010.

of the assistant in the American university.²

In an important sense, Weber's observation of Germany and the US continues to hold and even deepen in 21st century academia. Academic labour is increasingly precarious (particularly for junior scholars) and academic capitalism³ flourishes the world over with a semblance to the "state capitalist" enterprises Weber noted with the references to early modernity. The spirit of academic capitalism, we may say, has thus always been inherent to academia and is hardly a new phenomenon.⁴ Yet in recent decades new trends and trajectories have emerged that profoundly co-shape knowledge production regimes and the institutional life of academia, and account for qualitatively new aspects of academic environments. As Milena Kremakova writes in

this special issue, such shift manifests as the "new spirit of academic capitalism" and not only does it accompany concrete socio-economic higher education and science policy interventions, but it also reshuffles, as Kremakova argues, the notion and purchase of social critique. Similarly, Ingrid Hoofd's philosophically grounded contribution to this special issue captures the ubiquity of transparency regimes in academic work and its ramifications for knowledge (re)production.

Countless technologies and instruments approximating academia to capitalist enterprise now characterize, if not dominate, academic and scientific institutions. Governance by audit,⁵ quantification of scholarship (and recently even teaching) and the reinforcement of market-driven fashions in academic management are commonplace. Indeed ideologies and practices originating from business discourse,⁶ are not only implemented by external state/public agencies, but are

² Max WEBER, "Science as a Vocation." In: GERETH H. H. – MILLS C. W. (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press 1946, p. 131 (129–156).

³ Sheila SLAUGHTER – Larry L. LESLIE, *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies and the Entrepreneurial University*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1997; Sheila SLAUGHTER – Gary RHOADES, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2004.

⁴ Thorstein VEBLÉN, *Higher Learning in America*. Gloucester: Dodo Press 2009 [1918].

⁵ John HOLMWOOD, "Sociology's Misfortune: Disciplines, Interdisciplinarity and the Impact of Audit Culture." *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 61, 2010, no. 4, pp. 640–642 (639–658).

⁶ For example the so-called Key Performance Indicators: See Simon HEAD, "The Grim Threat to British Universities," [online]. 2010. *The New York Review of Books*. Available at: <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2011/01/13/grim-threat-british-universities/>> [cit. 31.8.2016].

often welcomed and promoted by academics themselves – either directly and openly or indirectly and through compliance. Important segments of the academic landscape are now financialized as the recent example of Thomson Reuters selling its science and intellectual property division – including the Web of Science – to two private investors for \$3.55 billion clearly demonstrates.⁷ The implications of this transaction for the scholarly community are yet to be seen. What is certain though is that the largest scientific database – that plays a significant role in many scientific evaluations, promotions and funding decisions – is now fully in the hands of private equity.⁸ Alongside this striking

example that shows the shifting political economy of the global academic (publishing and indexing) landscape, Krystian Szadkowski's article tackles the consolidation of “merchant capital” in academia and analyses the gradual co-optation of academic labour by technological means of metrics and rankings that often happen to be in the possession of private actors.

The ever-increasing rate of institutional change, intensification of scientific production and scholarly communication now seem to characterize the overall ‘acceleration’ of academic life.⁹ Acceleration here, rather than being understood literally, should be read figuratively, as an umbrella term that signifies unprecedented dynamization of diverse social processes in academia. One of the striking features of this transformation is the emergence of ‘projectification’ of science that Oili-Helena Ylijoki discusses in this issue. She focuses on broader issues related to the shifting nature of academic temporality in the regime of academic capitalism and the neoliberalization of the university. In particular she analyses how “pro-

running it at greater efficiency – the very principle of capital accumulation that was in place already with Thomson Reuters remains intact.

⁹ Filip VOSTAL, *Accelerating Academia: The Changing Structure of Academic Time*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2016.

⁷ See “Thomson Reuters Announces Definitive Agreement to Sell its Intellectual Property & Science Business to Onex and Baring Asia for \$3.55 billion,” [online]. 2016. Available at: <<http://thomsonreuters.com/en/press-releases/2016/july/thomson-reuters-announces-definitive-agreement-to-sell-its-intellectual-property-science-business.html>> [cit. 31.8. 2016].

⁸ It is, however, important to note here that Thomson Reuters is a publically traded company, listed on stock exchange and operates according to the fundamental bottom line in capitalist economy: accumulation of capital/ maximizing profits. Even if the new *type* of ownership by Onex and Baring Asia might significantly alter the internal operations of the science and intellectual property division – in terms of transparency of financial reporting, by restructuring its operations (divesting assets or employee turnover), or by streamlining the focus of the business,

ject time” increasingly colonizes the non-linear and organic “process time” integral to knowledge production.

Quantification of scholarship through metrics has emerged as navigating proxies for scientific quality, career progression and job prospects, and as parameters redrawing what it means to work as an academic in contemporary conditions. Metrics now account for an important technology interweaving academic labour and institutional surveillance. It nonetheless remains a curious fact how quickly swaths of academics have complied with the rise of metrics and how they uncritically optimized themselves in an anticipatory fashion in order to steer their careers. This indeed happens with serious discontents not only in terms of the consolidation of technologies of metrification in academia but for social and cultural environments in academia and the psychological well-being of academics.

The papers published in this special issue were first presented in different forms at the *Power, Acceleration and Metrics in Academic Life* conference (2–4 December 2015, Prague)¹⁰ organized by the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech

¹⁰ I would like to thank Mark Carrigan for his valuable support when planning and organizing this event.

Academy of Sciences and supported by the new flagship funding scheme of the Czech Academy of Sciences Strategy AV 21. It was the foundational symposium of a larger set of future projects and meetings comprising a network of scholars from the Czech Academy of Sciences, University of Warwick and Leiden University entitled *The Accelerated Academy*. The papers presented in this special issue – as well as other cognate contributions published as shorts texts at LSE Social Impact Blog¹¹ – aim to critically contribute to the on-going debate on the character and nature of the multifaceted transformation of contemporary academia.

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¹¹ See short contributions from conference presenters Fabian Cannizzo; Roger Burrows; Milena Kremakova; Alex Rushforth and Sarah de Rijcke; Philip Moriarty; Oili-Helena Ylijoki; Chris Elsdon, Sebastian Mellor and Rob Comber; Toni Pustovrh; Ruth Müller; Alexander Mitterle, Carsten Würmann, and Roland Bloch at *LSE Social Impact Blog*, *The Accelerated Academy Series*. Available at: <<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/the-accelerated-academy-series/>> [cit. 31.8.2016].