

Creating Commons: Divided Governance, Participatory Management, and Struggles Against Enclosure in the University

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It has been widely recognized that the contemporary University is now, maybe more than ever, integrated into capitalist circuits of production.¹ Critics often characterize this development in terms of “the corporatization of the University” and identify the rapidly expanding administrative class as capital’s key facilitator in the colonization of higher education.² This narrative of the University as a “public good” besieged by corporate capital and its administrative handmaiden is a fairly common way of describing the contemporary state of higher education. While the claim that “the Administration” is directly complicit with the corporatization of higher education carries a lot of weight, these arguments—and the political struggles drawn from them—often ignore the ways in which capital’s management of the University has diversified far beyond the administration. Today, the project of transforming the University for the purposes of capitalist accumulation does not rest solely on the shoulders of university administration but increasingly depends upon the active participation of undergraduate and graduate students, tenured, non-tenured and adjunct faculty, and staff. Failure to recognize the participatory management of the University means that anti-capitalist, pro-labor and social justice activists often ignore the frontline of capital’s takeover of the University—namely, where University becomes integrated with capital’s value practices. We argue that political analyses and strategies focusing on “the Administration” as the fixed, identifiable location of capital’s intensification in higher education have allowed anti-capitalist struggles within the University to be outflanked by capital’s strategies of participatory management.

Our paper moves away from the narrative of a struggle

between “the Administration” and a group of students, faculty, and staff defending the University against the corporations. Such a narrative not only presents the administration as the sole transformative force within higher education but also entrusts the resistance to corporatization to a besieged group of campus activists. While it might be a useful short-term mobilizing strategy, the “corporatization of the University” narrative can only conceptualize anti-capitalist struggles within the University as defensive.

This paper, in contrast, recasts the corporatization narrative (and its resistances) as an ongoing struggle between productions of *enclosure* and *commons*. Commons are those things held collectively and used according to the non-capitalist value practices of a given group. Enclosure, contradistinctly, is a strategy of forcibly incorporating the commons into capitalist production and circulation. Enclosure of the University takes place when the living laborers who organize themselves in groups that teach, learn, research, administer, clean, service, and organize are denied control of, and are separated from, the resources necessary for their activity. Today the separation of living labor from control over production is not simply imposed by the administration on behalf of corporate interests but is co-produced through a strategy of enclosure called *participatory management*. This strategy is deployed at a time when the University is becoming an increasingly important site of immaterial production.

Recasting the corporatization of the University in terms of a struggle between enclosure and the production of commons has two main benefits. First, instead of describing capital’s hold on the University in teleological (and often depoliticizing) terms, the theory of enclosure and commons highlights the ways in which capital’s involvement in the University operates through constant feedback cycles that shift between phases of conflict, struggle, co-optation, and disciplinary integration. Furthermore, since capital continually faces opposition, the contemporary University should be thought of as taking its form from both capital and resistances to capital. Second, the framings of enclosure and commons make visible the utopian moments already existing across the University; commons already exist in classrooms, departments, research groups, labor unions, and student organizations. We identify these already existing commons in order to suggest that, to avoid co-optation, these points of resistance and struggle need to be organized into common projects that deliberately confront capital. We see this article as a contribution towards the development of a political strategy aimed at building commons within the University.

We have chosen to draw heavily from our experiences at the University of Minnesota, not only because we have knowledge and investment in this particular site but also, theoretically, because we recognize that every site of struggle is singular. While a large and critical literature on “the University” already exists, we believe it is politically important to hold the abstraction of “the University” and the singularity of the University of Minnesota in productive tension. Abstractions like “the University” are important in formulating a general critique but must be modified when used to politically engage within particular struggles containing particular dynamics and difficulties. Therefore, in this paper, we treat the University of Minnesota not as a “case”

but as a particular site of struggle that might offer useful insights to anti-capitalist struggles on other campuses. Therefore, in referring to “the University,” we let the reader decide whether this term refers to the University of Minnesota in particular, or whether these arguments resonate with their own experiences. We also recognize that there exist many differences between universities, private colleges, state colleges, for-profit universities, community colleges, professional schools, and other institutions of post-secondary education. We hope that the abstraction of “the University” can highlight general tendencies across these different post-secondary institutions, while recognizing the uniqueness of each site of struggle.

This paper has four sections. First, we develop a general theory of commons and enclosures. We then use the concepts of commons and enclosure to describe two strategies used by capital to colonize the University: divided governance and participatory management. We then offer examples of how, at the University of Minnesota, participatory management has reinforced divided governance through an institutional restructuring with the cooperation of students, faculty, staff, and administrators. And, finally, we conclude with two examples of how a theory of commons and enclosure might help develop more effective strategies for anti-capitalist struggles within the University.

Commons and Enclosures

The concepts of *commons* and *enclosure* have a long tradition in Marxist theory. Marx uses “the commons” to refer to land over which people, the commoners, exercise certain rights such as farming and cattle grazing.³ The enclosure of these commons took place by feudal lords’ “forcible driving of the peasantry from the land ... and by the usurpation of the common lands” legitimated by parliamentary “Acts for enclosure of the Commons.”⁴ These enclosures created a population of “free workers” separated “from the objective conditions of [their labor’s] realization – from the means of labor and the material of labor.”⁵ While some interpreters of Marx view this process as a historical stage between feudalism and capitalism, others have argued that capital perpetuates enclosure in order to continually destroy insurgent non-capitalist ways of life thereby constituting its subjects through “its inscription in laws, codes of behavior, and habits.”⁶ Massimo de Angelis, for example, argues that the enclosure of the commons is not simply a historical stage but a continual precondition for capitalist accumulation which needs to “forcibly separate people from whatever access to social wealth they have which is not mediated by competitive markets and money as capital.”⁷

Commons

The term “commons” describes things existing in associations of regulated use by groups of human actors—such as anarchist collectives, classroom communities, listserves, class-based networks, and place- and kinship-based communities. The term—adopted by social movements from the Zapatistas in Mexico and Landless Workers’ Movement in Brazil, to advocates of free education, open source computing, and open genetic codes—can potentially include anything from the objective

conditions for human existence (such as land, food, water, and housing) to embodied skills, knowledge, and affective relationships. There are two defining features of commons: first, they are in a relationship of *availability for use* by any member of the human group that defines them, and second, their use is regulated by the group's *value practices*. Following Massimo de Angelis, we understand “value practices” as:

those actions and processes, as well as correspondent webs of relations, that are both predicated on a given value system and in turn (re)produce it. These are, in other words, social practices and correspondent relations that articulate individual bodies and the wholes of social bodies *in particular ways*. This articulation is produced by individual singularities discursively selecting what is ‘good’ and ‘bad’ within a value system and actually *acting upon this selection*. This action in turn goes through feedback mechanisms across the social body in such a way as to articulate social practices and *constitute* anew these ‘goods’ and ‘bads’ or, given the nature of the feedback mechanisms, to set a limit to these ‘goods’ and ‘bads’.⁸

Through complex, feedback-looping processes the singular members of the group collectively decide how the commons should be used.⁹

The commons are distributed differently than things organized under capitalist logic where all things are potential property whose value is determined by the market. A key distinction exists between the commons and private or public property. Commons are things under general collective ownership by a group whose value practices regulate their use. While not necessarily regulated by the logic of the market, public property differs from the commons because it is subsumed under the laws of a State, i.e., a hierarchical, centralized power with a claim to a monopoly on legitimate violence within its territory. Furthermore, public property—such as parks, roads, welfare programs and public schooling—is often developed by the State to foster the accumulation of capital, to address various crises of capital, or in response to organized political demands. Private property also depends upon the State which mediates potential conflicts between subjects, including the conflicts over the regulation of things. The State-capitalist order relies on narratives of property, law, and labor to short-circuit individuals’ participation in political controversies over how humans and things are organized. Assertions of commons can reopen debates over which entities should be included in the collective and according to which value practices.

In a liberal schema, *the political* is reduced to the ready-made grouping of the State while *the social* is reduced to civil society and the economy. On the other hand, *the natural* is displaced to a realm of Nature outside of these boxes, and is incorporated into the social sphere through labor and commodification for circulation on the market. *Commons* cuts across this so-called “modern” division of entities into “political,” “natural,” and “social” worlds, because it raises controversies about how humans and non-humans should be associated with each other.¹⁰ Within the framework of commons, actors are given opportunities to use the value practices of

the group to grapple with those controversies concerning how best to live together. Yet, with the State, this opportunity is alienated from the actors and relegated to the reduced political space of a “representative” State.

Enclosure

State violence short-circuits the political task of composing the collective, thereby enabling the “enclosure of the commons.” Marx saw the violence of primitive accumulation as taking two intertwined forms: first, the violence of expropriation, i.e., ripping producers away from the means of production, particularly the land, and second, the violence of the “bloody legislation,” i.e., legal acts and penal regimes that dealt with the newly property-less, “free workers” by criminalizing and controlling their attempts to survive as vagabonds, robbers, and beggars, thereby, forcing them into productive work in the new factories as part of a controlled and contained “working class.”¹¹ Primitive accumulation is a transformed kind of violence, “from the sporadic and excessive feudal forms into the universality of law and the bourgeois state,” and it “disappears into the silent compulsion of economic relations,” such as in the order and discipline of the factory.¹² From the perspective of the value practices of the commons the violence of expropriation of land and criminalization of vagabondage appears as violent, but from the perspective of the new order of expanding wage relations it disappears into the “normal” working of institutions, states, and markets. Enclosure begins when commons are identified as a *limit* to capitalist accumulation. The group’s value practices are then destabilized through violent means, leading to a conflict over the re-stabilization of capitalist and non-capitalist value practices.

Commons exist as limits to capital in two main ways. First, commons can be a “limit as frontier,” things enmeshed in relations of “social life that are still relatively uncolonized by capitalist relations of production and modes of doing.”¹³ In the University, many academics create commons as frontiers through intra- and interdisciplinary research groups that facilitate the “sharing of experience, of knowledge.”¹⁴ Some classrooms are designed to create a setting of common ownership over the learning experience. Other groups create web-based teaching resources, participate in online forums, and produce open-access journals. All of these commons are mediated by communities’ value practices and are qualitatively different than the “public goods” regulated by the laws of the hierarchical University Administration. Public goods—such as infrastructure, internet access, and classroom space—can provide the *conditions* for communities to create commons, but the Administration’s State-form mediation distinguishes them from commons. Increasingly, various commons within the University have been identified as frontiers to capital and therefore have been targeted by strategies to enclose them, thereby opening the University for capitalist accumulation. In response, groups form to fend off the enclosure of the University by rejecting capitalist value practices and actively creating *anti-capitalist commons*. This second form of commons poses a limit through the “political recomposition” of groups into collectives around their own value practices and against capital.¹⁵

When commons emerge as limits to capital—either as frontiers or as “political

recompositions”—subjects of the capitalist State seek to *destabilize* the value practices that regulate the commons. At the University, groups that do not operate according to the logic of capitalist accumulation are often targeted as undermining the University’s pursuit of the illusive norm of “excellence” or as failing to recognize the need to make sacrifices during times of “budget crisis.” Graduate workers and faculty who prioritize activism, quality teaching, and/or politically engaged scholarship are often called out as “not serious” scholars. Graduate students who take longer than five years to finish are represented as deviant, lazy, or parasitic. At the University of Minnesota, state money has been rerouted to the salaries of administration and marquee faculty at the expense of unionized workers who were deemed unnecessary to the University’s quest for higher rankings. These acts of enclosure through the “silent compulsion of economic relations”¹⁶ are often accompanied by visible acts of violence used to further destabilize those groups actively opposing the enclosure of the University. At the University of Minnesota, for example, nine students opposing the closure of General College were arrested and charged with grand misdemeanors that carry a \$1,000 fine and 90 days in jail, and students observing these arrests were maced by campus police.¹⁷

The destabilization of group formations can make actors’ worlds appear controversial to them.¹⁸ Such destabilizations can draw actors’ attention to questions about the composition of their groups, questions that form the basis for resistance and struggle. By making a group’s composition once again controversial, the group’s boundaries, identities, purposes, anti-groups, and spokespersons can potentially be recomposed in ways that create new kinds of groups and commons.¹⁹ The forms that define groups can themselves be commons, such as the common articulations of identities, values, relationships, dispositions, and knowledges necessary for the group to work together on collective projects. In enclosure, destabilization of these group formations occurs through both State violence, such as the structural violence inherent in the University administration’s denial of resources for objective conditions of living (e.g., low wages and high tuition), and its perpetuation of discourses that make this violence appear legitimate.

One example of how capital has destabilized commons within the University is the “outsourcing” of teaching, i.e., shifting from tenure-track to contingent positions.²⁰ Billed as an “opportunity” and as a “necessary cost-cutting measure,” the creation of contingent labor pools of teachers further separates academics from the means of production. Justified using the language of “budget crisis,” the administration has expanded differences between tenured, non-tenured and contingent faculty, not to mention graduate workers and the ambiguously categorized Teaching Specialists, thereby posing limits to the creation of open and thriving research and departmental commons. The professoriate is further destabilized by the elevation of some tenured faculty—often those who produce profitable and “useful” research—to the status of research “superstars,” while relegating the great majority of academics to teaching and administrative workhorses. However, while this enclosure of the professoriate as an intellectual commons is destructive in many ways, it also opens

up possibilities for political recomposition of academics as working-class through the struggle for more militant adjunct and graduate student unions.²¹

Another dimension of enclosure is the *struggle over re-stabilization* of a group's relationships with regard to those things once constituted as commons. Once existing commons are destabilized, the formation of capital relations requires the re-stabilization of a *separation* between producers and means of production. For example, in response to discontent concerning lower pay, declining quality of education, increasing tuition, and lack of public input in the administrative process, the administration re-stabilizes the University's identity through an emphasis on rankings, branding, school spirit, and success at sports. These discourses of "competition" stabilize the University as an already-unified collective, thereby neutralizing struggles between groups over composing the University. The identity of the University is re-stabilized as a single body of people working together for the same goal of prestige while competing with each other for limited resources to do their work. Financial insecurity brought about by increased debt means that students increasingly invest in the University's identity as a ticket to security through a lucrative career.²² Likewise, for academics, the insecurity of a precarious job market leads them to value the prestige of their university as a form of academic capital. Through competitive rankings, the University's "peers" become other universities and the value of the University is measured by its "global" status. The University becomes one firm in competition with other firms. This serves to further re-stabilize the University as an uncontroversial group formation by distancing it from the needs of those who live in proximity to campus.

The struggle between the stabilization of capitalist relations and the stabilization of the commons can potentially continue indefinitely, with oscillation and feedback between the different dimensions of the enclosure process. On the one hand, if the relationships of collective and commons re-stabilize around separations between the human group as "producers" and the resources as "means of production," then enclosure is complete, until challenged by groups formed in opposition to this arrangement. On the other hand, if the relationships re-stabilize around associations of the group and resources as a collective, with commons mediated by the group's own value practices, then enclosure fails, until—once again—these commons become identified as a limit to capital and are targeted for enclosure.

Class Struggle and Anti-Capitalist Commons

Commons become "anti-capitalist" when groups explicitly compose themselves in political opposition to capital, such as "class struggle,"²³ "anti-capitalist," and "commons" (when defined as "limits to capital"). The political recomposition of anti-capitalist commons takes place when group members see themselves and their actions as part of a collective working on common projects designed to create limits to capital.²⁴ This is substantially different from a *coalitional model of politics* which aspires to create coalitions among a plurality of identity groups; instead of creating temporary alliances around a shared issue, the political recomposition of anti-capitalist commons starts from the recognition that groups seeking to develop

their own value practices—be they around issues of gender, race, sexuality, kinship, shared activities, community, etc.—are all potentially threatened by the enclosure of their commons. Unions working with environmentalists, or immigrant rights movements aligning themselves with indigenous movements, might make important gains around specific issues, but these alliances face strategies of destabilization once their gains pose any significant limits to capital. Following de Angelis, we believe that unless these movements can posit themselves as being involved in a common project of creating limits to capital, and “unless the different value practices posited by these movements are able to weave themselves into self-sustaining social feedback processes that are alternative to the parametric center of capital’s value mechanism,” then there remains the very serious risk that these struggles will be “either repressed or assimilated into capitalism’s evolving forms.”²⁵ As a result, an anti-capitalist politics must create the preconditions necessary for viewing various isolated struggles from the perspective of class struggle and developing an organized movement against enclosure. Groups of workers, students, or faculty within the University, and groups outside the boundaries of the University, can connect with each other to create commons that mediate their various struggles and associate them into collectives working together on projects in line with their own value practices and against those of capital. We hope that the argument of this article can help groups collectively engage in the “immaterial” labor of producing, deploying, and circulating political frames that motivate organized resistance to capital’s de- and re-stabilizing strategies of enclosure.²⁶

Enclosure of the University

While strategies of enclosure and the resulting struggles are always historically and spatially situated, we offer two general narratives describing how the enclosure of the University has taken place. The first narrative—“divided governance”—describes how employees, students, and academics have lost their political power in the administration of the university.²⁷ The second narrative depicts the intensification of “participatory management,” i.e. the strategy for enclosing immaterial labor by turning University workers into self-managers.²⁸

Divided Governance

Divided governance—the creation of a managerial class tasked to run the University for the faculty, students and staff—is often thought of as a natural aspect of University organization. However, the creation of an autonomous University “administration” is little more than a century old and only emerged in response to anti-capitalist struggles that threatened capital’s hold over the University. Prior to the 20th century, the University faculty governed themselves, and the administration was comprised of “a few trusted ‘senior’ professors.”²⁹ The University president was drawn from the faculty and was the “single individual who [could] stand metaphorically for the University in the eyes of the world while remaining metonymically connected to the rest of the faculty.”³⁰ While the management of the University was hierarchical and highly exclusionary of women and minorities, faculty guided decisions. In other

words, the University was run according to the faculty's own value practices. The commons of University governance posed a limit for Fordist capital, which saw the University as an important training ground for the managers needed to oversee an ever complex and dynamic industrial economy.³¹

In response to business and government leaders' attempts to influence the political and economic course of the University, the faculty organized academic unions, including the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, as well as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and some disciplinary associations.³² The professional associations were easily destabilized and co-opted by the capitalist State during the red scares of the early 20th century. On the other hand, a number of unions articulated themselves as oppositional forces to capital. These movements produced a mostly fragmented, though gradually coalescing, political recomposition around anti-capitalist commons. In response to these limits, subjects of the capitalist State deployed extra-economic means in order to enclose these commons. For example, they deployed direct repression (e.g., explicit threats, firings, and blacklistings) and discourses that created a "chill effect" against professors with pro-labor and socialist public engagements.³³ Some of the destabilization was even the result of co-opted academics developing and deploying discursive strategies to convince others to abandon their struggles against capital. The enclosure of the University through the creation of divided governance occurred when leftist professors were forced to compromise with the university administration. The threat of losing their jobs and being blacklisted made a number of professors more willing to re-stabilize their relationship with the university in ways acceptable to capital.

In 1916, the majority of the AAUP's leadership, against the protests of their leftist faction, rejected unionization and pursued a different route of protection for threatened academics: the institutions of tenure and a limited form of academic freedom.³⁴ Academics were allowed power over decision-making about the knowledge production in their departmental, classroom, and disciplinary communities, i.e., to regulate decisions over curriculum, publishing, hiring, promotion, and firing. However, in exchange for these freedoms, they relinquished any claims of official power over the political and economic functioning of the University—a power they might have attained through unionization. The AAUP's leadership capitulated to the strategies of destabilization and helped re-stabilize the identity of "the academic" as a tenured faculty who produces knowledge for peer-reviewed, disciplinary forums. This professionalized identity of "academic" correlated with the development of an increasingly professionalized administrative class that now acquired the sole power to manage the University.

As a strategy of enclosure, divided governance creates separations, of students (as consumers) from graduate students, tenured faculty from non-tenured faculty, and of all of them from the decision-making apparatus of the administration, now solely responsible for the political-economic functioning of the University (as means of production). While faculty gained greater decision-making powers over teaching and knowledge production, they also forfeited any claim to the political-economic powers now held exclusively by the university president, professional administrators,

and trustees. Faculty's political activity was limited to their role as professionals and as participants in marginalized political spaces like university senates. Furthermore, the administration uses its control over the University's economic resources to create both a situation of artificial scarcity for faculty, legitimated periodically with narratives of "economic crisis," and a disciplinary market of rewards (tenure, promotion, course releases, etc.) and punishments that created competition over scarce resources within, and between, departments. The organization of faculty labor into disciplinarily-defined departments allowed academic works to be seamlessly integrated with capital's disciplinary markets. Teaching and research now take place within a thoroughly circumscribed sphere of freedom in which academic workers are free to produce knowledge but simultaneously limited in the conditions to do so. The production of non- and anti-capitalist commons within this sphere if threatening enough, can incur punishment from the administration.³⁵

While tenure and limited academic freedom ostensibly provide the protection of professors' public speech—allowing Marxists to freely write about Marx, for example—they also entangle academics within a system of disciplinary integration that is functional for capital. Hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions tend to value disciplinary research much higher than other forms of academic activity, including teaching, administrative service, and public engagement.³⁶ While there is some variation across schools, few schools consider politically engaged public activism in tenure decisions. Academics' fears regarding job security—now tied to tenure—demand that their time be spent almost exclusively on publishable research as opposed to engaging in political struggles. Such fears, and desires for academic capital, serve to continually re-stabilize the relationships that constitute the enclosure of divided governance. The fear and competitive pressure become even more intense and pervasive as the failure to secure tenure often results in one falling into academia's increasingly precarious labor force.³⁷ As academics are disciplined—both internally and externally—to be knowledge producers, they come to see themselves as *autonomous professionals*, authors of their own work, for whom the failure to produce means a likelihood of low wages, long hours, and diminished professional respect. The continual enforcement of divided governance hobbles the possibility for solidarity across the professoriate and with political movements both inside and outside of the university.

Participatory Management

However, attempts to enclose the University have not been entirely successful. Various communities have challenged divided governance by resisting the enclosure of their commons and actively creating new commons that articulate collectives across struggles. For example, throughout the 1960s, "student groups and radical staff successfully demanded seats on university governing bodies" and won demands to have "courses in women's studies, black studies, [and] Marxism" taught.³⁸ While these victories involved subjecting the radical politics of the 1960s to the "professionalism" of the University, they were nonetheless countered by the administration's reaffirmation of divided governance by relocating "real power...away from

university committees, instead coming to be based upon research performance.”³⁹ Throughout the 1990s, sweatshop and anti-apartheid divestment activists struggled to redirect administrative policies in ways that articulated the University as part of a new transnational commons. Employee, faculty, and graduate student unionization efforts have, in a number of cases, successfully demanded a greater role for workers in the administration of the University.

These isolated struggles, however, failed to constitute a coordinated attack against the enclosure of the University and, as a result, never provided a serious threat to divided governance. During this same period, however, the traditional hierarchical form of university administration and the organization of knowledge into disciplines became identified as a limit to accumulation. It became apparent that greater value could be extracted from academic labor that is flexible, autonomous, and interdisciplinary. Paradoxically, encouraging inter-disciplinarity also created the space to research and teach in ways that challenged capital’s measures, thereby opening the possibility for the creation of commons. In response to this threat to capital, academic (not just administrative) labor has been harnessed for managing the university. We call this trend *participatory management*.

Participatory management within the University is an instance of a general trend within capitalist production to place increased importance on so-called “immaterial labor.”⁴⁰ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that the “scene of labor and production” is rapidly becoming “transformed under the hegemony of immaterial labor, that is, labor that produces immaterial products, such as information, knowledge, ideas, images, relationships, and affects.”⁴¹ Unlike understandings of capital that focus on the production and circulation of commodities, the theory of immaterial production describes the creation of new forms of social life. Immaterial labor involves “the general production and reproduction of society as a whole,” and is therefore not only an economic force but also “becomes immediately a social, cultural, and political force.”⁴² While the University has long been a site of immaterial production, the emerging hegemony of immaterial labor has meant that the University is becoming an evermore important site for capitalist production. In addition to training and disciplining people in the ideologies, skills, and dispositions needed for immaterial labor and management, the University also trains consumers and designs commercial knowledge.

Capital seeks to enclose and disciplinarily integrate immaterial labor for a number of reasons. First, the hegemony of immaterial labor makes post-Fordist production vastly more productive than Fordist production because it contains the possibility of transforming all activities of human life into moments of production. In the case of academic work, Massimo de Angelis and David Harvie argue that immaterial labor is:

a form of directly social work, in which the form of social cooperation is crucial in defining the ‘output’, a form of doing that is necessarily grounded on relational awareness, and that produces affects (our students are, after all, our ‘customers’ and they will be compiling a ‘customer satisfaction’ ques-

tionnaire at the end of their course with us). It goes without saying that academic work is also a context for the production of ideas, research papers and books; moreover that this production is 'biopolitical' and can occur at any moment of the 24/7 span: we both have experience waking up in the middle of the night with the solution to a problem insoluble during 9 to 5, or have reached an insight that will find its way into a paper while playing with a child.⁴³

Immaterial labor also opens up new, dynamic terrains for capitalist expansion. Nigel Thrift argues that while, on the one hand, "a considerable area of the globe is being ravaged by force, dispossession and enclosure" there is, on the other hand, a need for capital to "squeeze every last drop of value out of the system by increasing the rate of innovation and invention through the acceleration of connective mutation."⁴⁴ The extraction of such value is realized by transforming the ways knowledge is produced. Instead of knowledge serving as a "passive store" to be tapped as needed, capital seeks to transform knowledge itself into "a set of continuously operating machines" which are constantly innovating, creating new commodities, affects, and spaces for future innovation. Within the University, value is captured in new ways by combining scholars and disciplinary knowledges in inventive inter-disciplinary, transdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, interscholastic, and cooperative research.

However, these new modes of academic production prove incredibly difficult to govern. Whereas divided governance erects disciplinary stratification, immaterial labor's productivity depends upon "active subjects" who work "in the coordination of the various functions of production" as opposed to "being subjected to" the functions of production by "simple command"; in other words, "a collective learning process becomes the heart of productivity."⁴⁵ For immaterial labor to produce value, it must be free, spontaneous, and creative and cannot successfully occur under conditions of hierarchical oversight. There develops what Lazzarato calls a "double problem" for capital, such that employers are "on one hand...forced to recognize the autonomy and freedom of labor as the only possible form of cooperation in production, but on the other hand...they are obliged (a life-and-death necessity for the capitalist) not to 'redistribute' the power that the new quality of labor and its organization imply."⁴⁶

This "double problem," however, can be resolved in the interest of capital by harnessing immaterial labor for the project of managing itself. Lazzarato argues that immaterial labor is defined "by its ability to 'manage' its own activity and act as the coordinator of the immaterial labor of others," through participatory management. Such management is not hierarchically controlled as under divided governance but is instead free, collaborative, and collective labor. Despite appearing to be free, the labor of participatory management produces processes of enclosure. Participatory managers produce metrics of "quality" and "excellence" as benchmarks for the University's value practices.⁴⁷ Creating metrics to measure student achievement, departmental success, or intellectual contribution serves to stimulate competition between students, scholars, departments, and programs and, in so doing, ascribes "value" in ways that guide the distribution of disciplinary rewards and punishments. In addition to

stabilizing capitalist value practices within the University, the sport-like rankings between Universities stimulate national and international competition that organizes the flow of money into the University.⁴⁸ While the administration plays a significant role in propagating these value standards, their success depends upon students, academics, politicians, and other actors to create, circulate, and reinforce these measures. Through participatory management each subject becomes an agent for producing and deploying extra-economic means of enclosure, often through the discourses of competition, metrics, and rankings. These discourses have the legitimating effect of masking the structural violence endured by students, faculty, and workers. Overwork, debt, precariousness, and alienation become simply the necessary requirements for participating in a “top ranked” institution. The University of Minnesota’s Strategic Positioning Initiative is a particularly good example of how participatory management operates as a strategy of enclosure within the University.

Participatory Management at the University of Minnesota

The University of Minnesota’s Strategic Positioning Initiative is a corporate-style institutional reorganization begun in 2004 with the explicit goal of transforming the University into “one of the world’s top three public research universities.”⁴⁹ Strategic Positioning starts from the premise that University of Minnesota exists in a competitive relationship with other institutions: “We live today in a global, multicultural, highly competitive society and marketplace. We are judged by world-class standards. Unless the University meets and exceeds these standards we risk losing our leadership role as one of the leading public research universities.”⁵⁰ To determine whether the University has achieved these goals, Strategic Positioning has created an institutional self-audit which ranks the University of Minnesota against its “10 competitor institutions”⁵¹ along four pillars of Exceptional Students, Exceptional Faculty and Staff, Exceptional Innovation, and Exceptional Organization. In each case “exceptional” is defined by a set of quantifiable attributes.⁵² The administration commissioned 34 taskforces to research and compile reports on everything from institutional design (i.e. the closing, merging, expanding, and creating of programs, departments, and colleges), the creation of diversity, civic engagement, and internationalization initiatives, to administrative streamlining, and the creation of metrics used to judge how the University fares in competition with other top research institutions.⁵³ While Strategic Positioning has many window-dressings, it is obviously a full-fledged attempt to make the University a more competitive site for immaterial production. President Bruininks, for example, contends that Strategic Positioning is about “trying to change the long-term culture and long-term trajectory of the University” by “thinking about the future, when the generation of ideas will be the very currency of our economy.”⁵⁴ One of the major ways this is done is through the prioritizing of interdisciplinary research at the University.⁵⁵

In addition to emphasizing competition between institutions, Strategic Positioning has also fostered greater competition *within* the University. Those areas identified by the administration and the various taskforces as “strategic initiatives” have received a considerable boost in resources, while those areas deemed unneces-

sary to the University's "global competition" have seen their funding cut. For example, in 2007 American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) workers went on strike when they saw the money appropriated by the legislature for their cost of living raises redirected toward administrative and faculty salaries. The administration and many "pro-labor" allies alike, found it necessary to reallocate funds away from the lowest paid workers in order to boost the University's competitiveness.⁵⁶

Strategic Positioning has redefined the University of Minnesota according to the logic of competition by prioritizing the value practices of markets—with metrics of "excellence"—over the value practices of those groups comprising the University. However, these capitalist value practices are not single-handedly imposed by the administration but have been co-produced and disseminated by thousands of actors across the University—often people with progressive intentions and strong dedication to the University. The Strategic Positioning taskforces were composed of people from all over the University, including administrators, faculty, and students, who helped circulate the language of academic competitiveness. The various taskforce groups collectively produced ideas, vernaculars, documents, and brands all predicated on "global competitiveness" and "institutional competition." In other words, immaterial labor was harnessed to create the discourses needed to legitimate and normalize the enclosure of a number of commons. Even though Strategic Positioning has many dissenters, it has been (temporarily?) successful at re-stabilizing capitalist value practices such that the value of the University of Minnesota is now framed in relation to its rank vis-à-vis other institutions. Measuring the value of the University only in terms of metrics such as "10th in terms of students with incoming ACT scores," makes it increasingly difficult for staff, students, graduate workers, and faculty to demand that the University be evaluated by non- and anti-capitalist value practices that promote common goals such as accessibility, democracy, intellectual vibrancy, and fair wages. The participatory management of Strategic Positioning has effectively preempted the political recomposition of anti-capitalist groups by making it difficult to challenge the image of the University as a unified whole existing in competition with other Universities. Yet, some groups, such as the Living Wage Avengers,⁵⁷ continue to struggle for re-stabilization around anti-capitalist commons.

Contra-Strategic Positioning or, The Activity of Managing in Common

Struggling against the enclosure of the University requires the deployment of many strategies including, most importantly, the building of organizational power in autonomous, directly democratic workplace associations. These networks span the education industry, politically recomposing themselves against the capitalist, State-forms of University administration. However, divided governance is only strengthened when students, academics, and staff participate in their own management thereby reasserting the administration's monopoly over the mode of academic production. Participatory management also co-opts languages, images, symbols, relationships, labor-time and subjectivities for purposes of enclosure, resources that could otherwise be devoted toward the creation of anti-capitalist commons. In those

Universities without a history of strong unions and workplace governance—and within those institutions where such organizations are under threat—it is important to identify and reject capital’s strategy of participatory management, choosing instead to invest one’s labor in politically recomposing groups and producing commons in ways that demand workers’ control of the means of production. Our conclusion is an attempt think of some strategies of counter-enclosure. Raising these questions may help various groups in the University deploy strategies for creating durable anti-capitalist commons.

“We Are UofM Workers”

The collective project of reframing the University of Minnesota as a “globally competitive university” has helped define groups within the University as discrete differentiated bodies. Various groups—departments, research labs, colleges, staff units, classrooms, etc.—are now valued in terms of how they help the University become one of the “top three public research institutions in the world.” Instead of viewing the University as a collective of groups with potentially common value practices, the University has been redefined as a complex productive machine composed of different, specialized populations. The value practices collectively produced through Strategic Positioning made some of these groups indispensable and others utterly disposable, as measured in terms of how they contribute to the “global” competitiveness of the University.⁵⁸

One of the only organized oppositions to Strategic Positioning came during the 2007 American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) strike. While this strike was a fight for fair wages and benefits, it also provided an organized forum to critique Strategic Positioning. Widely felt discontent was finally able to be publicly expressed by those who bore the brunt of the institution’s now commonly accepted goal of becoming one of the “top three.” During the 2007 strike, as during the 2003 strike, the phrase “We support UofM workers” was the identifying symbol for students, faculty, staff, and members of the community rallying behind striking workers. Signs were posted everywhere—in offices, hallways, at rallies, on cars, and in the windows of nearby businesses. Buttons bearing this slogan were visible everywhere, and can still be seen on occasion throughout the Twin Cities.

For the purpose of the political recomposition of collectives around anti-capitalist commons, however, the strategy of articulating groups with “support” for “UofM workers” has a number of blind spots. This coalitional articulation (a “we” which supports another community, i.e., “UofM workers”) reworks a narrative of the University as comprised of discrete groups, some of which are natural allies (i.e. workers, faculty, and students) against another group (the administration), thereby neglecting the blurring of this distinction with participatory management. This coalition produces an anti-capitalist commons, but a weak one because it runs into the problem of prioritizing difference over commonality. For example, during the 2007 AFSCME strike there was an effort to move classes off-campus in support of striking workers. However, for logistical and pedagogical reasons, numerous pro-labor faculty and graduate instructors were unable or unwilling to move class off-campus,

let alone to halt all classes. They feared that doing so would disrupt instruction—an equally important political project. In a number of instances considerable animosity emerged between those faculty and graduate students who took their classes off campus and those who chose to stay on campus. Groups of administrators, faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, workers, and local community members who did not see themselves in competition with each other—and even recognized their common goal—had already been re-stabilized as different and competing groups through the participatory management of Strategic Positioning.⁵⁹ These groups could have been organized around commons that articulated shared value practices as a common basis for resolving their tactical conflict over where and whether or not to hold classes. Yet, such a potential collective had been preemptively de-stabilized and then re-stabilized into groups organized around competitive identities, producing separate and disciplinarily integrated commons through Strategic Positioning's metrics. The creation of a coalition based solely on shared support of UofM workers was not strong enough to overcome these differential separations.

Rather than expressing “support” for workers, it might be more strategically effective to deploy strategies of political recomposition that articulate *all* groups around the project of class struggle and the production of anti-capitalist commons. Switching the slogan to read “*We are UofM Workers*,” for example, foregrounds the recognition that living labor—including employees, students, faculty, administrators, researchers, community members, etc.—are all active participants in the creation of the University of Minnesota. This slogan could potentially provide the basis for the production of more durable anti-capitalist commons through which groups see themselves as united in struggles for their value practices and against enclosure, rather than re-stabilizing group identities along hierarchical divisions. Doing so might also highlight the conflicts between workers and managers, as well as conflicts across the boundaries of the University's constituted identity. Seeing oneself as part of a collective of “UofM workers” not only creates the potential for politically recomposing an anti-capitalist commons, it also invites people to examine the roles they play in University management. Such a slogan would highlight the fact that many students, graduate workers, and faculty have no real control over the conditions within which they work and, as a result, are pitted against each other for the profit of a few and the precarity of most.

Refuse Participatory Management!

Another organized opposition to the Strategic Positioning Initiative was carried out by the General College Truth Movement and the Equal Access Coalition, who fought to stop the closing of General College (GC) in 2005. GC was the major conduit for inner-city, rural, and first-generation students to attend the University of Minnesota. At General College students received intensive counseling and academic tutoring, and if they maintained standing, could transfer as a full student to the University of Minnesota after two years.⁶⁰

The closure of General College—framed as a merger into the new College of Education and Human Development—was taken up by one of the 34 Strategic

Positioning taskforces.⁶¹ While previous restructuring initiatives such as “U 2000” were stymied in their efforts to close General College, Strategic Positioning was successful despite considerable protest, including an occupation of the president’s office, the arrest of five students, and a subsequent weeklong encampment on Northrop Mall. Unlike previous attempts, the 2005 closure of General College was successful because it took place within the legitimating discourses of the Strategic Positioning Initiative which was widely supported by the University community. Ideally, a powerful, organized group of workers, students, and faculty would have already existed to mobilize an effective counter-enclosure strategy. Instead, the defense of General College fell to an *ad hoc* group which, because of the widely disseminated and commonly produced discourse of “global competitiveness,” was largely viewed as against the times.

During the closure of General College, members of the General College Truth Movement and the Equal Access Coalition boycotted the Strategic Positioning public forums responsible for deciding the fate of General College. Jonneke Koomen wrote in the campus newspaper:

We have refused to meet with these committees...We believe that Minnesotans must be able to make real decisions on access and equality. The task force process does not provide this opportunity...The only power of the task force is to make recommendations on issues other than the closure of General College...When the task force releases its proposals, these will be debated during a 30-day period for public comment. This month is scheduled to coincide with finals week and winter break. The task force will be disbanded after it makes its proposals. No democratic bodies have been created to implement these proposals...Where are the students? Where is the community? No one really knows how or why people are appointed to the task force. The task force does not represent the interests of current and future General College students, staff or faculty members. There is only one student representative. The task force has had closed door meetings all semester.⁶²

Even stirring up discontent at a taskforce meeting only reinforces the illusion that the University operates democratically—an illusion that requires participatory management to mask the enclosure of divided governance. In addition to boycotting advisory service work, it is important to use the time saved from avoiding dead-end committees to create anti-capitalist commons.

In order to free up even more time, it is important to create alternative techniques of management. For example, those on search committees can choose to develop departmental and university practices which value service other than participatory management. Many of us have sat on dead-end university committees, taskforces, and “representative governing bodies” simply to signal to employers and tenure committees that we have participated in the governance of our institution. This bureaucratic laundering of time and labor is not just an innocent waste of time; it helps

stabilize the image of the University as a democratic and collectively managed institution. By encouraging “service” to labor unions, militant student groups, and social movements, not only is time made available for the production of anti-capitalist commons, but our labor is also no longer co-opted on University committees.

We recognize that the struggle to create anti-capitalist University commons will take many fronts and will be fought within particular locations and over specific issues and demands. That being said, we believe that framing activity within the University as potentially productive of anti-capitalist commons—and therefore a political challenge to capital’s strategies of enclosures—offers conceptual tools which may facilitate organization across differences. The narrative of enclosure and commons may help us link our isolated struggles and commons into a collective project of fashioning a University that embodies *our* value practices and not those of capital. This is a worthwhile fight because, as reads a CUNY faculty and graduate employee picket-sign: “Another University is Possible.”⁶³ ■

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- 1 See, for example: Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie, *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997). Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State and Higher Education* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004). Cary Nelson, *Will Teach for Food: Academic Labor in Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1996). Jennifer Washburn, *University Inc.: The Corporate Corruption of American Higher Education* (New York: Basic Books, 2005). Stanley Aronowitz, *The Knowledge Factory: Dismantling the Corporate University and Creating True Higher Learning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000). Jeffrey T. Nealon, “The Associate Vice provost in the Gray Flannel Suit: Administrative Labor and the Corporate University,” *Rethinking Marxism* 19.1 (2007).
- 2 Stanley Aronowitz, for example, argues that university administrations “have responded to the economic and cultural uncertainties” by “constructing their institutions on the model of the modern corporation” on which universities come to be judged by “how well they deliver knowledge and qualified labor to the corporate economy and how well the

- administration fulfills the recruitment and funding goals needed to maintain the institution.” Stanley Aronowitz, *The Knowledge Factory*, 158.
- 3 Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 671.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 672-8.
- 5 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of a Critique of Political Economy*, trans. M. Nicolaus, (New York: Penguin, 1973), 471.
- 6 Jason Read. “Primitive Accumulation: The Aleatory Foundation of Capitalism,” *Rethinking Marxism* 14.2 (2002): 46.
- 7 Massimo de Angelis, *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capital* (London & Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2007), 144.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 24.
- 9 For us, “groups” are an analytical category, useful for conceptualizing a unit of associated entities. A human group can be a company, a sports team, a dinner-club, etc. Groups can intersect and overlap, and people often identify themselves as members of multiple groups. Groups are not fixed by nature, but expand, contract and change their form over time and, as such, their stability must continually be produced.
- 10 Bruno Latour argues, in *Reassembling the Social*, “what the two collectors, nature and society, have in common: they are both premature attempts to collect in two opposite assemblies the one common world.” He redefines “politics” as “the progressive composition of the common world,” and he argues that this definition should “be applied to the former assemblages of society as well as to the former assemblages of nature.” Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 254.
- 11 Read, “Primitive Accumulation,” 33.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 39.
- 13 Massimo de Angelis, *The Beginning of History*, 143.
- 14 David Harvie, “Commons and Communities in the University: Some Notes and Some Examples” (The Commoner #8, (Autumn/Winter 2004) - http://www.le.ac.uk/ulsm/doc/dharvie_commons.pdf), 4.
- 15 Massimo de Angelis, *The Beginning of History*, 142-3.
- 16 Read, “Primitive Accumulation,” 39.
- 17 Elizabeth Cook and Bryce Haugen, “U police arrest 9 at sit-in: General College supporters staged a sit-in for eight hours at Morrill Hall on Wednesday,” *Minnesota Daily*, May 5, 2005. Editors, “U overly harsh on GC protestors: The case against the protestors is deterring dissent,” *Minnesota Daily*, September 12, 2005. Similarly, in September 2007 four community members and a student were arrested and charged with grand misdemeanor trespass for participating in a sit-in during a Regents meeting protesting the failure on behalf of the administration to end the AFSCME strike which was then underway. Mike Rose and Betsy Graca, “Protesters disrupt regents meeting,” *Minnesota Daily*, September 10, 2007. The administration building is kept under 24-hour lock down during strikes and the administration has used the court system to retaliate against dissenters, including one particularly vocal union president.
- 18 On controversies over group formations and how they are stabilized and destabilized, see Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.
- 19 Grappling with these controversies, actors can ask such questions as: Who are the members of the group? What are the norms and identities of the group? What resources constitute the commons? Who creates the commons? What are the boundaries and connections

between the members of the group and the commons? How is the members' access to the commons regulated? What groups oppose or threaten the group and the commons? Who defines who the groups are, what they should be, where they have been? What spokespersons define the groups' boundaries and render them fixed by making them appear the object of an unproblematic definition? What professionals' highly specialized discourses are often mobilized for this purpose? See: Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 31-4. Of course, causes other than capital can motivate actors to raise these controversial questions about their group formations. By using autonomist Marxist theories, such as the one we elaborate in this paper, actors can preempt capital's destabilization by making such controversy-raising-and-addressing an integral part of the everyday practice of the collective self-governance of their groups.

- 20 Jeffrey T. Nealon, "The Associate Vice provost in the Gray Flannel Suit"; Marc Bousquet, *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation* (New York: NYU Press, 2008); Frank Donoghue, *The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).
- 21 Joe Berry, *Organizing Adjuncts to Change Higher Education* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2005).
- 22 See: Morgan Adamson, "Financialization of Student Life: Five Propositions on Student Debt" in this issue of *Polygraph*; Jeffrey J. Williams, "Student Debt and the Spirit of Indenture," *Dissent* (Summer 2008): 35-40.
- 23 We take the concept of "class struggle" in the Marxist sense as a frame to compose a group formation that defines itself in relation to the collective labor of its members and that defines its politically opposed anti-group as the capitalists who enclose the group's commons and co-opt or replace their value practices for capital accumulation and exploitation.
- 24 Group formations created through "political recomposition" result from "the emergence of common articulations, affects, desires, needs, communicational forms, and so on, that allow the heterogeneous social body of doers to recognize that their 'production in common' in so far as shaped by capital's value practices is not what they desire." de Angelis, *The Beginning of History*, 170.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 191.
- 26 The perspective of class struggle is diametrically opposed to the perspective of capital's disciplinary competition, in that "class struggle and competition (qua process and mode of social cooperation) are ways of seeing the same thing from two different world-views and corresponding value-guiding actions" (de Angelis, 2007: 192). While competition is "a discourse that measures social cooperation with the yardstick of monetary value deviations," the perspective of class struggle "is a discourse that measures social cooperation as a conflict between a multitude of yardsticks and the yardstick of capital's value."
- 27 Christopher Newfield, *Ivy and Industry: Business and the Making of the American University, 1880-1980* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 2003.
- 28 Maurizio Lazzarato, "General Intellect: Towards an Inquiry into Immaterial Labor" at: <http://www.geocities.com/CognitiveCapitalism/lazzarato2.html>
- 29 Christopher Newfield, *Ivy and Industry*, 79.
- 30 Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 54.
- 31 Christopher Newfield, *Ivy and Industry*, 69. See also: Clyde Barrow, *Universities and the Capitalist State: Corporate Liberalism and the Reconstruction of American Higher Education, 1894-1928* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).
- 32 The professional associations included the American Economic Association, the American Political Science Association, and the American Sociological Society. Clyde Barrow, *Universities and the Capitalist State*, 206-213.

- 33 From the 1880s to the 1910s, there were many instances of professors who were persecuted for their political activism outside of the university (e.g., Beemis, Ely, Commons, Andrews, Ross, and countless others who suffered silently) (Barrow 1990, 187-200). Their activism—often explicitly socialist—was dangerous to capital largely because they were writing and speaking for a public audience in favor of populist, progressive, trade unionist, and socialist movements that all posed concrete limits and threats to capital accumulation (199). In the face of such repression there was an active movement to unionize academics in order to constitute a basis for solidarity with, and defense of, fellow academics who faced persecution.
- 34 Clyde Barrow, *Universities and the Capitalist State*, 219.
- 35 For example, during GSOC's strike at NYU President Sexton issued an email saying that graduate workers who did not return to work would not receive teaching appointments in the following semesters. S. Asad Raza, "A Report from the NYU Strike," *The Minnesota Review*, Issue No. 65-66 (2006), 151. (See also: Monika Krause, Mary Nolan, Michael Palm, and Andrew Ross, *The University Against Itself: The NYU Strike and the Future of the Academic Workplace* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008).
- 36 David Downing, *The Knowledge Contract* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).
- 37 Some 60% or more of academics are now working in contingent, non-tenure-track jobs, and there are extreme inequalities of wages, benefits, security, and general quality of life between these and tenure-track jobs. See: Bousquet, *How the University Works*.
- 38 David Harvie, "Alienation, Class and Enclosure in UK Universities," *Capital & Class* 71, (Summer, 2000), 103-132. - http://www.le.ac.uk/ulsm/doc/dharvie_alienation.pdf, 119
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 While we adopt the concept of "immaterial labor," we diverge from Hardt and Negri's particular way of drawing the distinction between immaterial and material labor. We also question their claim that immaterial labor has necessarily positive implications for progressive left social movements from producing "the common" which they see as an unalloyed good. See: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004). Following Massimo de Angelis, we reject such a move because it neglects to account for that fact that immaterial labor is often measured and co-opted into capital's circuits. Part of the reason Hardt and Negri neglect the possibility that measurement can be used to capture immaterial labor for the purpose of capitalist accumulation is that they are operating from the faulty assumption that the products of these types of labor are "immaterial," while they are actually quite material (affects, marks on pieces of paper, images, etc.) and thus subject to value measures in terms of the "quality" of these materials. See: de Angelis, *The Beginning of History*, 189. However, we still think that the term "immaterial labor" is useful as an act of political recomposition. The term "immaterial labor" is useful in articulating students, faculty and other University actors as workers who also exert labor in ways similar to producers of more conventionally "material" products. While the term "immaterial labor" helps captures, even if problematically, some developments in post-Fordist capitalism, more importantly its deployment in political recomposition can create greater solidarity among different types of workers.
- 41 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 65.
- 42 Ibid., 66.
- 43 Massimo de Angelis and David Harvie, "Cognitive Capitalism and the Rat Race: How

- Capital Measures Ideas and Affects in UK Higher Education” (2006) <http://www.geocities.com/immateriallabour/anglisharviepaper2006.html>
- 44 Nigel Thrift, “Re-inventing invention: new tendencies in capitalist commodification,” *Economy and Society*, 35.2 (2006): 281.
- 45 Maurizio Lazzarato, “General Intellect: Towards an Inquiry into Immaterial Labor” at: <http://www.geocities.com/CognitiveCapitalism/lazzarato2.html>
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Massimo de Angelis, *The Beginning of History*, 189.
- 48 Ibid., 190.
- 49 Provost, Office of the Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, *Accountable to U: 2007 University Plan, Performance, and Accountability Report* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Sept. 2007), 3.
- 50 Ibid., 5.
- 51 The University of Minnesota considers its “peers” to be the following: Universities: Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio State, Penn State, Texas, UC-Berkeley, UCLA, Washington, and Wisconsin. Provost, *Accountable to U*, 1.
- 52 For example, “Exceptional Faculty and Staff” is defined as the number of faculty members accepted in national academies (8th out of 11 institutions), the number of faculty awards (8th), the number of post-doctoral appointments (5th), faculty and staff diversity (not competitively ranked), faculty—and auspiciously not staff—compensation (8th), and employee satisfaction (not competitively ranked). Exceptional Students, similarly, are measured according to incoming GPA and test scores, diversity, retention, timely graduation, “international involvement,” and “student satisfaction,” etc. The data for calculating the benchmarks used in these comparisons are compiled from a number of internal and external sources. The external sources include U.S. News and World Report’s “America’s Best Colleges,” the Center for Measuring University Performance’s Top American Research Universities report, the Institute of International Education’s Open Doors Report, the National Science Foundation, as well as a National Association of College and University Business Officers study. This data was supplemented with data collected from the University of Minnesota’s Office of Institutional Research and the Human Resources Research Institute at the University’s business school. Public polling data was compiled by KRC Research.
- 53 These taskforces included: four on the Academic Health Center, one on Research Infrastructure, one on Collaborative Research, one on Faculty Culture, three on Undergraduate Reform (including student support, developing writing initiatives, and creating a honors college), seven on College Design (including one on the closing of General College), two on Graduate Reform, one on Diversity, one on PreK-12 Strategy, one on the International University, seven on Administration Services and Productivity (including “Culture,” “Administrative Culture,” and “Best Practices Management Tools”), and four Coordinate Campus reports. (See “Transforming the U: Task Forces” at http://www1.umn.edu/systemwide/strategic_positioning/implementation_taskforces.html)
- 54 Quoted in: Elena Rozwadowski, “Board Gauges Plans’ Success: President Bruinkinks gave an update on Strategic Positioning at the Meeting,” *Minnesota Daily*, March 19th, 2007.
- 55 In tandem with Strategic Positioning there has been the creation of an Assistant Vice Provost for Interdisciplinarity, the creation of the Provost’s Interdisciplinary Team, and the launching of eight new interdisciplinary initiatives “representing areas of strength and comparative advantage for the University.” (“Interdisciplinary Research and Education,” <http://www.interdisciplinary.umn.edu>). It is believed that these interdisciplinary projects “will yield significant return in intellectual quality and capital, where the University and

- the state possess a comparative advantage, and where considerable outside resources can be leveraged to build research capacity” (“Interdisciplinary Research and Education”).
- 56 For an insightful and detailed analysis of the strike, see Amy Pason, “We Are All Workers: An Analysis of the 2007 Clerical, Technical, and Health Care Worker Strike at the University of Minnesota,” *Ephemera Journal* 8.3 (2008): 331-339. One way in which University rankings are used to re-stabilize capitalist value practices can be exemplified in the following anecdote. On September 7th, 2007 student and faculty supporters of striking AFSCME workers sat-in at the Board of Regents protesting the fact that the strike was not on the agenda. After an initial adjournment due to the disruptive activities of the protestors, it was mutually agreed that the meeting could continue as long as the strike was discussed. After reconvening the meeting, the Chair called on Regent Hunter—the labor representative on the Board of Regents and Secretary/Treasurer of the Minnesota AFL-CIO. While recognizing that AFSCME workers are justified in being upset, Hunter also suggested that the Board of Regents was in a difficult position in that it needed resources to attract and retain top administrators and faculty: “We know we have a problem in competing for top faculty and administrators. . . .” He concluded that redirecting resources away from the lowest paid University employees and toward administrative and faculty salaries was justified because administrators and faculty “are the engine that drive us towards our aspirational goals. But the support staff is the oil that lets the engine run.” Regents, Board of. 2007, “Regents Meeting Streams: 09/07/07” <http://uvs.umn.edu/regents/0907/0907.html>. Even the strongest advocate of organized labor on the Board of Regents was saying that the “aspiration goals” (i.e. those of becoming one of the top three public research institutions in the world) did not require paying living wages to health, technical, and clerical workers. These goals could only be attainable by giving more money to top faculty and administrators. This language of competition was used as the major argument to challenge the anti-capitalist value practices of those who were on strike.
- 57 The Living Wage Avengers are a group of University of Minnesota labor activists that formed during the Fall 2007 AFSCME strike. They meet often to organize across job types and to work on projects for their living wage campaign, such as postcards that subvert the University’s “driven to discover” brand by changing it to “driven to deception.” See <http://www.livingwageavengers.com>
- 58 Look at the anecdote in footnote 20. Here the administration and faculty is defined as the “engine” while the AFSCME staff is described as “the oil”—namely a necessity which is disposable, replaceable, and cheap.
- 59 For example, one argument made by AFSCME and supporters during the strike was that many of those on strike were both University workers and students or had received their degrees at the University and now worked there (Conleympls. 2007. “AFSCME Strike - University of Minnesota Student Support Film” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfsmhY7nKM4>).
- 60 Jeanne L. Higbee, Dana B. Lundell and David R. Arendale, eds., *The General College Vision* (Minneapolis: Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy, 2005).
- 61 There is considerable speculation that GC was closed because it admitted students with lower than average test scores and GPAs and therefore drove down the University’s rankings.
- 62 Jonneke Koomen, “Boycott the General College task force” *Minnesota Daily*, December 8, 2005.
- 63 Monika Krause, Mary Nolan, Michael Palm, and Andrew Ross, *The University Against Itself*, 5.