INTERNATIONAL STUDIES IN WIDENING PARTICIPATION

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Subverting the Enterprise University: The Case of the Alternative Campus Tour at York University, Toronto, Canada

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For the enterprise university, the campus tour is less of a student recruitment strategy and orientation event than a marketing exercise to enhance the university's brand in the competition for world class ranking status and private donor money. The premise of this article is that the campus tour can also be a teaching device or subversive moment where the enterprise university is subject to critical analysis on the basis of its history, day-to-day operations and educational mandate. The Alternative Campus Tour at York University, Toronto, Canada, is an example that seeks to uncover the colonial and patriarchal legacies of the campus; that embodies learning through walking; and that contains a community outreach component. It shows that the enterprise university is a project in the making that is not always impenetrable to subversion or unsympathetic to messages that run counter to its basic premise.

Key words: Enterprise University; campus tour; equity; colonialism; patriarchy; subversion

"It seems to me that the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the workings of institutions, which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize and attack them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them." Michel Foucault (Chomsky and Foucault 1971, p. 171)

Introduction

Many universities conduct campus tours. The purpose of these tours range from a recruitment strategy, where prospective students and their parents are invited to see the unique properties of the university, to orientation events to show incoming students where to access various facilities, such as the libraries, the gym, the student centre, or eating establishments. University-employed recruitment staff and students that are trained as guides typically operate these campus tours. At the neoliberal or enterprise university, the campus tour has taken on even greater significance, being part of a professional recruitment and retention infrastructure in a climate where universities increasingly market themselves as brands that compete for world class ranking status, private donor money and students' tuition fees to make up for declining state funds (Magolda, 2000; 2001).

The premise of this article is that the campus tour can also be a teaching device or subversive moment where the enterprise university is subject to critical analysis on the basis of its history, day-to-day operations and educational mandate. The best example I have confronted is at the University of Cape Town, where its campus heritage trail problematises the institution's

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past with respect to, amongst other things, "biological heritage and the heritage determined by language, landscape and trauma" (heritage@uct, 2014). Some of the stations on the trail openly address apartheid, gender and class issues on campus. My premise is also that the enterprise university does not constitute a complete break with a perfect or ideal predecessor, but instead accentuates past situations and trends (Saunders, 2010). As Michel Foucault suggests in the quotation above, the university is by no means a neutral and independent institution, but a place that can exercise and certainly has exercised political, economic and discursive power and violence on communities, a process that needs to be interrogated and challenged in order to make the institution more inclusive and welcoming.

The neoliberal university is caught up in a series of contradictions. On the one hand, many universities have signed on to environmental sustainability agendas, such as the Talloires Declaration, claiming to be innovators in their day to day operations with regards to building maintenance, recycling, grounds keeping, stormwater management, and food provision (Foster, 2012; Vaughter et al., 2013).

But, on the other hand, universities are less prone to confront social sustainability and equity issues (Foster, 2012). True, there have been key policy initiatives in certain western contexts to widen access and participation of students from marginalised communities. However, Burke (2013, p. 118) argues that such measures have been largely unsuccessful because they still embed such students in "problematic deficit and individualistic discourses" that fail to address the larger structural forces responsible for their marginality in the first place. At the same time, many universities have increased tuition fees, increased class sizes, cut services, and now employ more and more part-time sessional instructors (Bauder, 2006; Wood, 2014). There are also fewer and fewer quality-paying and rewarding jobs available to university graduates. The reason is that as the social welfare state is being dismantled, there are fewer and fewer public sector jobs or public money available to support jobs with a social mission (Tannock, 2006). In this situation, some argue that the enterprise university has become less of a place of public purpose and more of an agency of personal advantage (Zemsky et al., 2005).

I make the point here that university educators can run campus tours without the overlay of a branding and recruitment mission but instead carve it out as a space to engage with students in a critical (not purely economic) way. The campus tour can in fact produce a meeting ground for common problems that affect both the university and the outside community. It is particularly relevant in the case of my own university, a university that purports to take social justice issues seriously and that is neighbouring a marginalised and racialised community. It is also relevant for me, writing as a professor in a Faculty of Environmental Studies where environmental justice issues figure centrally. York University is also known as a diverse community where faculty, staff and student labour unions take stands to defend or advance study and working conditions. Some of these struggles are featured in an ethnographic study and a recent labour strike on the campus (Van Esterik & Baker, 2014; Podur, 2015). The tour is also a way of promoting an embodied form of learning, not only digging where one stands, but also walking, seeing, and sensing the place explored, activities that may speak to students with different abilities than those based on reading and writing (Cheng, 2004). It is also an honest way of articulating what a university education is about and what it may or may not yield.

The Alternative Campus Tour as a subversive event

At York University, I have, along with other faculty colleagues, staff members, and

students, run an Alternative Campus Tour for close to a decade. The term "alternative" sets the tour up against the enterprise image and practice of the neoliberal university. It started and continues as an activity in a first-year environmental studies class (Bardekjian et al., 2013). But it has also become a broader university and public event attended by a variety of groups and individuals. The Tour also has a website that is populated with written stories and photos of a variety of sites on campus (Alternative Campus Tour, 2015). These stories address a range of topics and sites, from stormwater and woodlot management, safety issues, and invasive species to the role of the library and public spaces on the campus. In this paper, I will cover the colonial and patriarchal legacies of the campus and also gesture towards the community outreach aspects of the tour, what we have achieved and what we still hope to do.

At one station of the Alternative Campus Tour, we tackle the colonial legacy of the university in relation to First Nations peoples and seek to problematise, celebrate and acknowledge their past and current presences on the campus. We do so by visiting an archaeological site south of the campus (van Nierop, 2013). Named the Parsons site after a settler who once owned the land, we talk about the colonial relationship to the site over the years. The site was once occupied by the Wendat who established a successive number of villages at the site. These consisted of a series of long houses that were palisaded for protection. Outside the palisades the Wendat grew the three sisters, corn, bean and squash, and hunted and fished for game. These activities were subsequently displaced beginning with the settlers who occupied the site, the apartment buildings built on top of it, the hydro-corridor that runs above it, and the pipelines that pierce it.

At the same site, a recreational path was recently built which acknowledges the presence of the First Nations at the site, labeling it the Huron-Wendat Trail (Huron was a nickname given the Wendat by the French) and including several plaques that tell the history of the Wendat in the region and at the site. The naming of the trail and the plaques is a long-overdue acknowledgement of the Wendat at the site but it also grounds the First Nations in the past with no visibility in the present.

We then move to a couple of sites on the campus where First Nations have erected a teepee and created a circle where teachings and ceremonies are conducted. We also talk about the presence of First Nations faculty, students and institutions on campus that work to decolonise methodologies to establish a First Nations presence in the present and future.

A second set of sites on the campus we visit relate to the farming community that preceded the establishment of the university (North York Historical Society, 1986). The settler and farming economy imposed a rigid gridiron pattern on the landscape with survey lines, concession roads, and hedgerows. These landscape features are still visible in the landscape and attributions of names of the settlers to various places are common (as the Parsons site). The references to the surveys of the lands allow us to make reference to and problematise the individual private property regime imposed on the landscape. It allowed the farmers to see their lands as exclusive, exchangeable and profitable, conditions that permitted them to sell their lands to the university and to have their names memorialised in various landscape features, such as ponds, creeks, residences, colleges, houses, woodlots, roads, and lanes. Few name references exist for the First Nations past presences in the landscape.

A third set of sites relates to the gendered and racialised history of the campus. We begin this session in a parking lot contemplating the history of the planning of the university. These

plans conceived of the campus as separate from the surrounding community. This was part of the planning conventions at the time but university administrators also reinforced the situation feeling it was inappropriate to integrate the campus community with the surrounding public housing complex (Munn, 1991).

From the parking lot, we look at several apartment towers in the distance. Known as the Jane and Finch community, these buildings are part of a public housing complex established in the 1960s, a time when it was common to plan such complexes in the suburbs in the Toronto region (James, 2013). The complex is separated from the university by a river valley and a hydro-corridor. It is also a place of low-income and racialised residents that is often stigmatised and labeled as an undesirable place to live in popular discourse. This image contrasts with a narrative describing a vibrant multi-cultural community with a thriving small business sector housed in three major malls and a plethora of cultural and social support organisations working in and for the community (James, 2013; Sandberg, 2013). This includes a small satellite university campus at one of the malls.

White, male, able-bodied, straight (and, if not straight, certainly closeted) professionals formulated the plans for the university campus in the late 1950s and 1960s (Horn, 2008). As we stand in a parking lot outside the ring-road that surrounds the campus, we conceive of such bodies moving with ease and without safety concerns to their offices where they remain for the most part of the day.

Students, female students in particular, find such a geographic layout problematic, both for safety reasons, and because of the difficulties moving between classes and seminars located in different buildings across campus (Munn, 1991).

At the same site, we are standing beside a recently built housing subdivision built on land sold to a private developer by the university. It represents a case of the University as part of the urban growth machine (Ross, 2012). It is built on new regionalist principles, with higher densities than the conventional suburb, frontages close to the street, and parking in laneways behind the houses. The subdivision was built and marketed for single families with the added attraction of membership in the university community. It therefore carries on the tradition of a campus suburbanism, something that is also reflected in some of the streets named after the founders of the university.

The establishment of the new campus suburb did not pass without controversy. Though cleared by an "independent" review, the city's major newspaper accused the university administration of selling off the lands to an individual with close relationships with the board of governors (Donovan, 2005; Saunders, 2005). And once developed, landlords bought many of the homes and converted them into rooming houses for students. The rents for these units are relatively low and the terms of tenancy flexible but the units are often crowded, unsafe, and not subject to by-law regulations (Robson, 2012). A couple of fires have occurred in two of the rooming houses, women students have been assaulted, and, in 2011, a Chinese student, Qian Liu, was sexually assaulted and murdered in a basement apartment (Robson, 2011).

Once on the campus proper we stop by one of the many safety phones on the campus. These are part of a set of technologies that fall into a security narrative on student safety on campus. Following a series of widely-publicised sexual assaults on campus, the security narrative focuses on the victim, and his or her ability to contact security personnel or take action

to defend her- or himself. The question of focusing on the perpetrator, or why, for example, men rape, is less of an issue, and the university has refused efforts to incorporate mandatory introductory courses that deal with such issues (Ikeda & Rosser, 2010).

At an additional couple of stations we stop to consider the concept of native and exotic species. Most of our tour participants entertain the common view that native species are good and often threatened while exotic or foreign species are bad and invasive. At the Health, Nursing and Environmental Studies Native Species Garden and the Founders College Quadrangle we complicate this picture (Foster & Sandberg, 2004). We do speak to the threat of exotics as invasive and the importance of protecting and conserving native species and we celebrate the efforts of our colleagues and students who are involved in such efforts. But we also speak to the colonial enterprise of categorising and naming species according to the universal Linnaean taxonomy, a practice that now obscures First Nations' names and associations with these plants (Pratt, 1992). We also question the static and categorical uses of the words "native" and "invasive." We invite the tourists to contemplate that First Nations adopted "invasive" species in their homelands and that species migrations are a continuous process as old as life on earth itself. We also invite participants to entertain various questions, such as: Why isn't poison ivy, a native species, welcome in the native species garden? Why aren't the Japanese Sakura cherry trees, an exotic but non-invasive species, planted as a friendship gesture on campus, and a mere stone's throw away, welcome in the native species garden? Why is the Norway maple, which came to Canada in the mid-nineteenth century, not considered a Canadian citizen when Norwegians who arrived at the same time are (Larson, 2015)?

We end our journey at the Founders College, a college named after the white, straight, middle-aged men who founded the university. Here, in its garden quadrangle, we point to the prospective presence, as indicated by a tree inventory of the campus, of a specimen of the Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*). The Tree of Heaven is typically seen as an aggressive and undesirable Asian tree species that is particularly adept at invading spaces and soils in marginalised and othered places, such as abandoned factories and back laneways. These areas may then become a host for marginalised people, like the homeless and rebellious teens and allegedly illicit activities, like gay cruising and drug use (Patrick, 2015).

When we arrive in the quadrangle, however, we note the absence of the tree amongst a group of acceptable species. These include a European oak, a tree planted in memory of the Chinese student who was killed in the subdivision referred to earlier. We here challenge the students to contemplate if it would have been more appropriate to plant a Tree of Heaven. Leaving the Founders College Quadrangle, we do find the Tree of Heaven, undocumented, and in an obscure spot between two colleges. We here end our conversation with some bigger questions about both humans and non-humans and who does and does not belong on the campus.

The Tour as an alternative trajectory within the enterprise university

The neoliberal university is not always impenetrable to subversion or unsympathetic to messages that run counter to its basic premises. As scholars of neoliberalism have pointed out, neoliberalism is not a state but a process, a project in the making. The enterprise university is not a monolithic edifice but composed of individuals who support, concede and fight it at every turn. In many ways, the enlightenment university is still alive and well. Most of my colleagues and my faculty union are critical of the enterprise university. We speak and complain about it, and we live it every day. Many faculty members serve in administrative positions, feeling compelled to

make the best of a bad situation, but remaining critical academics sympathetic to a more fundamental critique. The Alternative Campus Tour aspires to bring together such individuals in an approach that Burke feels "is transformative - an 'embedded approach' – which draws together all levels of the institution including senior managers, and brings together theory and practice to challenge deep-seated inequalities and misrecognitions" (James, 2012).

Critics of the neoliberal university can play or exploit its fears and fads in order to promote their agenda (Bauder et al., 2010). At our own university, while still being critical of the enterprise university, we were able to obtain a modest grant responding to a central concern of the enterprise university: the recruitment and retention of revenue-generating undergraduate students. We were able to meet this concern by addressing the three central themes of the grant program: the first year undergraduate experience (by incorporating the campus tour in a first-year class); experiential learning (training students to be guides for the tour); and e-learning (creating a website to enhance it) (Academic Innovation Fund, 2014).

We have now conducted the Alternative Campus Tour regularly in the first-year undergraduate class, numerous other campus audiences, and off-campus community groups. The latter include the publics who come out for the now internationally operated Jane's Walks, a series of walks started in Toronto in 2007 in honour and memory of urban commentator and critic Jane Jacobs (1916-2006). In 2014, Jane's Walks occurred in over one hundred cities world-wide. Our participation in the Jane's Walk has given the Tour some cachet at the university and we have been featured in the University daily Y-file publication and soon in its prestigious *YorkU Magazine* with a circulation of more than 200,000. Yet it is difficult to evaluate the extent to which the Alternative Campus Tour has contributed to widening the participation in university education or retaining already enrolled students.

Our impression and conviction, drawing on tour members' testimonials, however, is that they appreciate a self-reflexive and critical approach to a campus tour. By addressing some of the colonial, class and patriarchal legacies of the enterprise university, tour members can be provided with an experiential and grounded experience of its workings.

This does mean, of course, that students, perhaps especially marginalised and racialised students, should be denied or discouraged from aspiring to, for example, a professional career in business or corporate law, jobs that may serve and reinforce the neoliberal economy. But a reasoned argument that puts the neoliberal economy in perspective, and develop students' abilities to be reflexive and contemplative about their own position, be it one of marginality or privilege, may provide some impetus in building a better and more empathetic world.

Conclusion

The possibilities of the campus tour as a pedagogical, recruitment, retention, and community-building tool are endless. It is not, of course, the only way to do so. It is also possible to work towards progressive change through courses and course curricula, engagement with and in student clubs and faculty, staff and student unions, political parties, and even university administrative bodies (see, for example, Meyerhoff et al., 2011; Kamola & Meyerhoff, 2009). However, the notion of digging where one stands, engaging with one's immediate surroundings and day-to-day activities, and appreciating one's immediate environment as a place of critical thinking and empirical research, adds to the educational experience. One of the participants of a recent campus tour on a hot and humid Friday afternoon in early September put it well when she

thanked us, indicated that she had suffered a minor heat stroke, but still wrote that she had thought about the Tree of Heaven and its representation of, and challenge to, the othering of both humans and non-humans on campus the whole weekend. This is critical learning that is working towards a more inclusive and just educational environment. It is also embodied learning, learning not only from text and voice, but from walking, experiencing, enjoying and enduring a place with your body.

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