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**Employability and the Rise of the No-Wage
Economy: resistance to unpaid work in the
United Kingdom.**

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Abstract:

Employability has become a new buzzword of the 21st century. It advocates that to keep oneself attractive – through lifelong learning and the continuous acquisition of skills – protects oneself from the vulnerabilities of the labour market. The purpose of this PhD project is twofold: First, I investigate in what ways the employability agenda recreates neoliberal hegemony. Second, I analyse through what type of collective agency people contest the concept of employability. It is a comparative project of two main employability sectors, namely welfare to work programmes and higher education. In particular, I elaborate on the link between employability and the rise of unpaid labour in form of work-experiences. In line with neo-Gramscian theory and my critique of it this PhD research looks at the material structures, institutions and ideology which have shaped the political economy of employability through processes of class contestation. Participatory Action Research methodology is used to provide insights into the formations, dynamics, and outcomes of the main social forces resisting employability outside of established trade unions. This PhD, thereby, feeds into broader discussions on the decline and future of trade unionism and new ways of organising around work, which go beyond the workplace and might demand new workers institutions as well as a greater engagement with other actors in the community.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	3
Table of Content.....	5
1. Introduction	
1.1 Locating the issue: employability, internships and workfare.....	8
1.2 Relevancy of the study.....	9
1.3 Research aims.....	12
1.4 Defining key terms.....	13
1.4.1 Neoliberal hegemony.....	13
1.4.2 Employability and flexicurity.....	15
1.5 Chapter outline.....	17
2. Research Design: Methodology and Methods	
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Ontological and epistemological underpinnings.....	24
2.3 Participatory Action Research Methodology.....	27
2.4 Methods.....	33
2.4.1 Auto-Ethnography.....	33
2.4.2 Institutional mapping.....	36
2.4.3 Participant Observation.....	41
2.4.4 Secondary material the groups produced themselves.....	42
2.4.5 Focus Groups.....	44
2.4.6 Interviews.....	47
2.5 Data Analysis	50
2.6 Research relationships and Researcher's subjectivity.....	53
2.7 Ethical considerations.....	53
2.8 Conclusion.....	54
3. Critical Political Economy of Work	
3.1 Introduction.....	57
3.2.1 The neoliberal approach to International Political Economy.....	58
3.2.2 A neoliberal approach to employability.....	61
3.3.1 Critical approaches to International Political Economy.....	64
3.3.2 State formation processes through a critical International Political Economy lens.....	66
3.3.3 Employability revisited. A neo-Gramscian International Political Economy approach.....	71
3.4. Critical Political Economy of Work	77
3.5 Conclusion.....	82

4. Work, Class Struggle and Progressive Social Change

4.1 Introduction	86
4.2 The precariat.....	88
4.3 The social factory.....	91
4.4 The multiplicity of class relations	94
4.5 Multiple agents of social change - within and outside the social factory.....	100
4.5.1 Agency and structure.....	101
4.5.2 resistance.....	103
4.5.3 Commoning.....	107
4.5.4 Solidarity.....	111
4.6 Conclusion.....	114

5. Policies behind the Employability Agenda

5. 1 Introduction.....	117
5.2 Employability in the UK.....	118
5.2.1 The ThatcherEra.....	118
5.2.2 NewLabour.....	124
5.2.3 Cameron's Big Society.....	133
5.3 Employability and the EU.....	137
5.4 Conclusion.....	146

6. Putting Employability into Practice: Shadow State Institutions and the Making of (Un)Employable Subjects

6.1 Introduction	150
6.2 Employability in universities.....	153
6.2.1 Marketisation of higher education and the employability carrot.....	153
6.2.2 Implementing employability at universities.....	155
6.2.3 Work-experiences: the making or breaking of employable subjects?.....	160
6.2.4 Resume: the employability carrot.....	164
6.3 Employability and the workfare regime.....	166
6.3.1 The workfare stick: punitive conditionality	166
6.3.2 Implementing workfare.....	170
6.3.3 Community work placements: tracing the employability supply chain.....	175
6.3.4 Resume: the workfare stick.....	178
6.4 Conclusion.....	180

7. Resisting Employability: Organising in the No-Wage economy

7.1 Introduction.....	184
7.2 The emergence of the groups	188
7.3 Structuring conditions of neoliberal globalisation.....	191
7.4 Strategies of resistance and beyond.....	195

7.4.1 Naming and shaming.....	195
7.4.2 Challenging the neoliberal common sense.....	202
7.4.3 The power of collective advocacy.....	206
7.4.4 Beyond resistance: commoning.....	209
7.4.5 Beyond work: the demand for an unconditional income.....	211
7.6 Conclusion.....	213

8. Solidarity and the Emergence of Social Forces

8.1 Introduction.....	216
8.2 Relations to trade unions.....	219
8.2.1 Disregarding the unemployed.....	219
8.2.2 Solidarity with (other) workers.....	221
8.2.3 Workfare and conditionality.....	225
8.2.4 A culture clash.....	227
8.3 Solidarity relations that go beyond work.....	228
8.3.1 The inter-group relations.....	228
8.3.2 The joint struggle against austerity and for basic needs.....	230
8.3.3 Solidarity through personal bonds.....	233
8.4 Internal dynamics of the groups.....	234
8.4.1 The importance of participatory democracy.....	234
8.4.2 Oppositional consciousness and affective solidarity.....	237
8.4.3 Commoning the life-blood of struggle	238
8.5 Conclusion.....	241

9. Conclusion: taking practice back to theory

9.1 Summary of the research.....	245
9.2 Research contributions.....	251
9.4 Recommendations for future research.....	260

Bibliography.....	262
Appendix 1.....	289
Appendix 2.....	291

– Chapter 1 –

Introduction

1.1 Locating the issue: employability, internships and workfare

In many European countries the 2008 economic crisis led to a spike in unemployment and a heightened sense of insecurity for those in employment. In these uncertain times the normative concept of employability - understood as the individual's ability to adapt to a flexible labour market principally through the continuous acquisition of attributes and skills – promised and continues to promise employment security (Rovio-Johansson and Tengblad 2007: 3). Most scholars welcome the European turn towards employability presenting it, in part, as a skill-based solution to economic recessions, and a work-based solution to social deprivation (see for example Lindsay and McQuaid 2004; Harvey 2005; Wiepcke 2009). It is often argued that unemployment and social exclusion are best addressed through the creation and promotion of each individual's employability. This is because enhancing ones' employability is considered an important step towards gaining access to employment, especially for disadvantaged groups (Lindsay and McQuaid 2004: 202). As such, improving ones' employability became increasingly seen not only as an opportunity but also as an obligation for the unemployed and a conditional element in ones' eligibility to receive social welfare.

Contrary to such a positive depiction of employability, Moore (2010: 39, 40) has argued employability is insidious in that it requires workers to subordinate themselves to capital even before they before being employed. In this way, employability is viewed as a set of discourses and practices that help to extend capital's control into the private sphere by 'managing workers everyday lives' (Ibid). Following Moore's understanding of employability, the purpose of this PhD study is to examine how employability actually works in practice and in what way it can be, and is, resisted.

Demonstrating employability can be achieved through various means, principal among them being securing work-experiences such as internships and participating in workfare programmes. These work-experiences are considered essential tools to enhance the employability of workless people. Internships are seen as a smooth transition into the life of work since they: (a) enable students and graduates to apply their theoretical knowledge; (b) provide them with a time of self-reflection; (c) allow students and

graduates to acclimatise to a career-orientated setting and; (d) provide them with opportunities to network (Good and Hurst 2010:178). Workfare programmes - understood as work-experiences undertaken by people in receipt of benefits from the welfare system as a condition of continuing to receive benefits - aim to improve ones' employability by breaking the seeming 'worklessness' of people who are believed to be work-shy and have chosen a life on benefits instead. In this way workfare claims to help the participants to develop relevant 'work habits' in order to prepare them for a life of work (Crisp and Fletcher 2008: 3).

Other scholars have reached less optimistic conclusions about work-experiences. Internships have been identified as 'cheap and dead-end work' and part of an 'end-less rat-race' which never leads to a secure job, creating, in turn, a youth 'precariat' (Perlin 2012: XiV; Standing 2011: 76; Schultheis 2009: 76). Moreover, certain sectors require prospective employees to have undertaken an internship first which excludes anyone who cannot afford to work for free from that sector thus perpetuating labour market inequalities. As such, internships function as a "filtering site" where wealthy graduates, principally with middle class norms, are almost exclusively selected for certain positions (Allen et al. 2012: 445). Therefore, undermining the opportunities provided to people from less wealthy backgrounds through mass higher education, internships generate a re-elitisation of traditionally privileged sectors such as the creative industry, the fashion industry, publishing, journalism and charities. Workfare is also recognised as precarious labour in that the jobs on the programmes are temporary and unpaid. Moreover, it makes benefits deliberately unattractive to deter people from signing on for unemployment benefit, and it also increases unemployment by replacing paid jobs (Standing 2011: 144, 145).

1.2 Relevance of the study

These two opposing views on work-experiences constitute my entry point into the analysis of employability. I approach the subject matter in two ways. First, I look at the political economy of the employability agenda, and then I analyse people's resistance to unpaid labour and to their increasing subordination to capital enforced by employability discourses and practices.

I reject the dominant analysis of employability because it presumes that employment levels and labour market outcomes, such as productivity and wage levels and the quality

of jobs, are solely contingent on workers' individual skill sets rather than the socio-political and economic context. For example, on the most basic level, it ignores the gap between the number of jobs which are actually advertised at any given time and the number of jobseekers. It also neglects how social inequalities through, for example, social class, gender, age and race shape one's employment prospects and therefore the structure of the labour market.

Instead, I position myself within the critical scholarship of employability much of which has outlined that the concept constitutes a significant transformation in the power relations between employers and workers to the benefit of the former (Baruch 2001: 547; Boden and Nedeva 2010: 37; Moore 2010: 13). Employability shifts responsibility for one's employment prospects and career success onto the individual and creates a template of an 'ideal worker', namely one who constantly adapts to the demands of a flexible labour market. In this way, unemployment becomes a personal failing (Appeldoorn 2003: 131). Training obligations are taken away from employers and shifted onto workers and turn (future)-employees into self-promoters in an increasingly competitive labour market (Leathwood and Moreau 2006:305; Schultheis 2009: 81; Fejes 2010:89). Consequently, it is argued that the employability agenda deflects attention from the state's role in social, political and economic reform and job creation (Coffield 1999; Apeldoorn 2003; Overbeek 2003; Moore 2010). From a neo-Gramscian perspective, it is argued that the employability agenda thus re-creates acceptance of a neoliberal hegemony (Apeldoorn 2003; Overbeek 2003; Moore 2011). Taking this neo-Gramscian thesis as the starting point I ask in this PhD research:

In what way does the employability agenda maintain and re-create neoliberal hegemony?

As Morton (2007: 133) has pointed out, the majority of neo-Gramscian scholarship has the tendency to focus on elite agencies and thus to over-emphasise the coherence of neoliberal hegemony, by often ignoring the agency of those who resist its logic (see for example Van der Pijl 1984; Overbeek 1993; Sklair 2001; Robinson 2001). This writing out of resistance is particularly the case for the neo-Gramscian research on employment (see for example Overbeek 2003; Appeldoorn 2003; Jessop 2003). However, in recent years more neo-Gramscian research on resistance has been carried out (see for example Santos 2003; Patterson 2006; Bieler 2011 and Patel 2014). Bailey et al. (2015: 729,730) have highlighted that such research has usually narrowly focused on the counter-hegemonic potential of agency through political parties and large social and

labour movements. Through this prism, the everyday activity and dissent of workers is neglected. Bailey et al. therefore encourage more research that focuses on 'autonomous, creative and ongoing instances of contestation, disruption and struggle' (Ibid: 730, 745). Building on Morton's criticism of the neo-Gramscian literature I will show that the employability discourses and practices emerged from structural changes of neoliberal capitalism through processes of class contestations. It is, however, Bailey et al's research call that brings me to my second angle from which I explore the employability agenda namely the way in which it is resisted. I thereby pay particular attention to the aspect of work-experiences, which, as I have shown above, have been identified as forms of precarious labour (Standing 2011).

My analysis therefore feeds into a much bigger and expanding debate on the potential of precarious workers' resistance to neoliberal restructuring processes. In brief, neoliberal restructuring has led to an increasing informalisation and flexibilisation of labour, which has led to a phenomenon often described as a 'dual labour market', or 'two-tiered labour market' (Barbieri 2009: 622; see section 2.2.3). The 'formal', 'typical', 'traditional' labour market is identified with higher wages, more job and employment security, more rights and union representation; while the 'informal', 'atypical', or 'precarious' labour market lacks all of the above (Ibid.; Gumbrell-McCormick 2011: 294). This 'atypical', or 'precarious' work, which has previously been understood as a phenomenon of the global South, is also becoming prevalent in the global North (Standing 2011: 5, 61). The literature is, however, not only divided on what this means for resistance, but it is also over-simplified. Much has been written about the decline of trade union memberships and the failure of trade unions to organise precarious workers (for example, Kelly and Hamann 2010; Checchi and Nunziata 2011). Some scholars paint a very passive picture of those workers identified as precarious and call for the need to restructure trade unions to actively recruit them (for example Gumbrell-McCormick 2011: 293). In contrast, Standing sees the 'Precariat' as a "'dangerous" class-in-the-making', which will, through its large numbers, be the major agent of resistance to the neoliberal agenda, and it will organise outside of established trade unions (Standing 2011: 1, 7; see section 4.2).

My research differs from both approaches. In contrast to the former, I do not analyse what *is not* there, but what *is* there, by looking at actual existing struggles of unemployed, precarious and disabled workers – which are often overlooked by researchers sympathetic to trade unions, as they mostly take place outside of

established trade unions. Nonetheless, I disagree with Standing's conclusion of precarious workers becoming a 'class-for-itself' - the precariat - which will be the major force of resistance to neoliberal restructuring (Standing 2011:7, 169). By defining the precariat as a separate class from workers, Standing automatically writes off trade unions as agents of resistance to neoliberal restructuring (Bieler 2012). Instead, I adopt Cleaver's holistic concept of the social factory, as the realm where the working class works which includes the home and the community (Cleaver 1979: 70, see also section 4.3). This concept sees all workers, regardless of if they are precarious, unpaid, unemployed or work in the household, as part of the working class. The debate above led to the second research question of this PhD study:

In what ways and through what type of collective organisation do people contest the concept of employability?

1.3 Research aims

I aim with this PhD project to make several contributions to the disciplines of Industrial Relations (IR) and International Political Economy (IPE)

1. I seek to add to the neo-Gramscian IPE literature concerned with welfare state transformations by a) analysing in what way the social policies behind employability were a product of class contestations and b) going beyond social policies by analysing how state restructuring plays out in practice.
2. I aim to contribute to the literature concerning the structural change of global capitalism and workers resistance by analysing a) work related activism outside of traditional trade unions and b) in what way unwaged workers organise.
3. I attempt to create knowledge that is useful for the struggle of no-waged workers who actively participated in this research, but also beyond that to other and possibly future groups.

1.4 Defining Key terms

1.4.1 Neoliberal Hegemony

The notion of hegemony goes back to the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) who argued that leadership of a ruling group cannot be built on coercion alone. Force might be necessary but is not sufficient to maintain hegemony, which has to be built on consensus (Gramsci 1971: 203;205). Hegemony is embedded in the habits and thoughts of people, thus constantly reproducing itself in daily life (Habermann 2008: 43). In this way hegemony is 'a dynamic process constantly constructed as well as contested through different forms of class struggle or "counter" hegemonic initiatives' (Morton 2007: 78).

Gramsci's concept of the state is crucial for understanding hegemony. He distinguished between political society and civil society, which in fusion are the 'extended' state (Gramsci in Forgacs 2000: 262). Political society is understood as institutionalised political, judicial and military power, while civil society contains the cultural and religious institutions mirroring society. The integral state is thus a combination of dictatorship and hegemony (Gramsci 1971: 239). However, even though analytically distinguishable, the two spheres are inseparable in every day practice (Gramsci 1995: 385, 386) and both correspond to hegemony and direct domination (Morton 2007: 89).

According to Cox (1983: 164), who picked up on Gramsci's theoretical endeavours, hegemony is when one socioeconomic model is accepted by the majority of society. To analyse hegemony within certain historical structures, Cox developed a conceptual triangle of *state-civil society complex*, *social relations of production*, and *world order* (Deckwirth 2010: 25). Rooted in the historical materialist framework advocated by Gramsci (see section 3.2), the *social relations of production*, meaning the material production as well as 'the production and reproduction of knowledge and of the social relations, morals and institutions that are prerequisites to the production of physical goods' (Cox 1989: 39), are the starting point of Coxian analysis. Of particular importance to the analysis are the everyday patterns of behaviour concerning the production and consumption of goods and services, and the discursive and institutional strategies to ensure the hegemony (Bieler and Morton 2001: 24). Cox argues that the transformation of *social relations of production* leads to new configurations of social forces. These configurations rest on the state, which is intertwined with civil society. It is a *state-civil society complex* which encompasses a broad set of actors. Therefore, the state is not seen as a distinct institutional category, but part of the social relations through which hegemony functions (Bieler and Morton 2004: 92). By *world order* Cox

refers to particular historical configurations of material power relations, collective perceptions, and international organisations (Cox 1981: 138). *World order* is largely shaped by the strategies and conceptions of powerful transnational and national actors, such as nation states and corporations and international organisations. A hegemonic *world order* is based on the *state-civil society complex*, transformed by a global mode of production where classes of different spaces are interlinked (Bieling 2006: 425).

Cox refers to a neoliberal hegemonic *world order* from the 1970s onwards, characterised by an internationalisation of production and finance managed by an emerging 'transnational managerial class' (Cox 1981: 147, see section 3.2.1). However, while it is important to trace the emergence of neoliberal ideas, neoliberalism cannot be reduced to a 'master plan' plotted by this new transnational managerial class. There is no one type of 'pure' neoliberalism (Peck 2013: 145). Firstly, neoliberalism is always agnostically intertwined with other ideologies. Even where neoliberalism is hegemonic it never has a complete monopoly on ideology as it always co-exists with other ideas and forces. Secondly, there is a gap between the theory and the actual practices of neoliberalism which are not static but flexible and adjustable in dialogue with other practices (Ibid.). Thirdly, there are various kinds of neoliberalism not only across the EU but worldwide. It is therefore more accurate to talk about different uneven spatial developments of neoliberalisations whereby all "local" neoliberalisations exist in relation to global neoliberal dynamics and cannot be analysed out of context and in isolation. In turn, local developments need to be taken into consideration as neoliberalism should not only be reduced to an overarching global logic (Ibid.: 150). In this spirit, the analysis of processes of neoliberalisation need to go beyond a list of neoliberal attributes (Peck 2013: 146).

Nonetheless, for the purpose of this PhD study it is important to remember the common features of all neoliberalisation processes, namely a) the absolute priority of low inflation and the fiscal policies in line with it, which are prioritised over social policies, such as policies aiming for social security and full employment, and b) they follow policies of flexibilisation, deregulation and privatisation to extend the influence of the market and to promote exchange across borders (Bieling 2003: 54). Thus, while classical liberalism represents a negative conception of state power, neoliberalism gives a positive account of state power to impose (financial) market imperatives, by providing the conditions, laws and institutions for its operation (Olssen and Peters 2005: 315; Johnston and Saad-Filho 2005: 3). In this spirit, Johnson and Saad-Filho characterised neoliberalism as a

'particular organisation of capitalism, which has evolved to protect capital(ism) and reduce the power of labour' (Johnston and Saad-Filho 2005: 3). All neoliberalisation processes have to be understood as political projects, which restore class power at the expense of labour (Harvey 2005: 76). By promoting the ideals of freedom and individualism neoliberalisation processes managed to gain a certain degree of consent across different countries (Harvey 2005: 76). That responsibility for social and economic outcomes transferred from the state onto the individual can be identified as another core feature of neoliberalism. And it is the latter aspect for which the employability agenda is especially important.

In sum, due to its influence of both neoliberal thought and practice on a global scale neoliberalism has been identified as the current hegemonic system (Johnson and Saad-Filho 2005: 5).

1.4.2 Employability and flexicurity

The meaning of employability has changed considerably over the last century. As Garsten and Jaccobson (2004: 8) have pointed out, in the 1890s one was either available for employment and thus employable, or not. In the mid-20th century employability became a commonly used term referring to one's capacity of obtaining and keeping employment. Three varieties of employability terminology can be identified (Ibid.). First, the 'socio-medical' notion of employability, which puts functional tests of work capacity at the centre. In the 1950s and 1960s a second understanding of employability became popular, known as the American version, which measures the distance between an individual's attributes and the conditions of the labour market. The third, which was predominantly used in France in the 1960s, refers to 'unemployability' rather than employability by highlighting the probability of a certain group at a specific time finding employment (Ibid.; Moore 2010: 37). It is the second notion of employability – the American version – which also became popular in Europe and dominates the current employability discourse in Western welfare states (Garsten and Jaccobson (2004: 8). The following analysis will refer to the American understanding of employability only.

Two threads run through the discourse of employability. The first, is the theoretical assumptions of the human capital approach (see chapter 3), and the second is the aim of labour market flexibility. In other words, employability became increasingly understood as an individual's ability to adapt to a flexible labour market. It is closely

tied to the idea of life-long learning, which shifted the responsibility for learning from the state and the employer onto the individual. Moreover, the nature of learning changed, as it was no longer seen as training in job specific tasks, but related to a more holistic preparation for the job market (Moore 2010: 38).

The employability agenda has to be seen as part of a bigger systemic shift in Western European welfare states (see chapter 3). In the 1950s and 1960s, values such as equality, security of choice, and security of income, were most heavily emphasised. This changed with the inflation and the unemployment crisis in the 1970s. Supply side theories which prioritised low inflation and pushed for labour market flexibilisation replaced the Keynesian consensus (see chapter 3). The emphasis was then set on various measures to increase work incentives to get people into employment (Garsten and Jacobsson 2005). In other words, a transition took place from demand management orientated policies to promote full employment to supply orientated policies to promote full employability (Ibid.). While in the Keynesian era unemployment was seen as a social risk and thus the responsibility of the state, the risk management is now expected to be the responsibility of the individual worker. As such, '[e]mployability presents a one-size-fits all escape clause from insecurities of the market' (Moore 2010: 50).

Generally, the neoliberal claim is that in time where other markets (goods and services especially financial services) are increasingly liberalised, the labour market needs to follow suit (Auer and Gazier 2011: 31). Flexibilisation means the adaption to market needs, thus fostering the 'culture of competitiveness' (Garsten and Jacobsson 2004). As such, the labour market flexibility agenda is a process of commodification, treating exchange on the labour market like exchange of goods, whereby the workers' security, welfare and wage distribution are not the main concerns (Auer and Gazier 2011: 31). However, in Europe there remained scepticism towards the pure benefits of flexibility, as there was a widespread concern that flexibility comes with social risks. In this context, the flexicurity agenda, which dominates the debates in Europe, aims to reconcile the seemingly conflicting objectives of flexibility and security. The idea of flexicurity was developed in Denmark, where it aimed to combine a flexible labour market with high social security (large unemployment benefits and other welfare services), active labour market policies and lifelong learning (Ibid.; Gwiazda 2011: 548). In other words, employability is the security aspect of flexicurity.

However, Heyes' research has shown that the flexicurity agenda does not hold what it promises – flexibility and security. Instead, the trend in Europe generally, and in the UK

in particular, is towards more flexibility and less security (2011: 650, 651, see chapter 5). For example, the tremendous growth of non-standard employment has led to lower levels of investment in training by employers compared with standard employment (Ibid.: 648). As such, the loss of job security is not compensated with opportunities to enhance employability (Ibid.). Moreover, the examples of Denmark and the Netherlands, which had been showcases of flexicurity, have not been followed. In fact, it was the other way around; Denmark and the Netherlands followed other European countries by weakening the security aspect of labour market flexibilisation. Both countries have been drastically cutting the unemployment support in terms of both monthly allowances and the length of benefit entitlement (Ibid.). As such, European countries increasingly follow the US's flexible labour market example, which according to the IMF, increases growth and decreases unemployment (IMF 2013). However, according to the OECD, countries with high levels of employment protection face less severe unemployment rates (Ibid.).

In sum, employability is the security side in flexicurity. Through it labour market flexibilisation is presented in a positive light as individual-risk management is provided through employability enhancement. It can thereby be argued that the main purpose behind the employability agenda were and are twofold. One, to manage workers everyday lives by extending capital's control into the private sphere, and two, to veil the unemployment problem, by transferring the responsibility for one's employment status away from the state and onto the individual, and by using activating welfare policies as a means to mask unemployment rates.

1.5 Chapter outline

This PhD dissertation is structured as follows.

Chapter 2 outlines the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the PhD and the methodological procedures followed. It also explores the methods chosen to address the research questions and explains how the data is analysed. This PhD is based on a dialectical historical materialist approach that views knowledge as historically constituted. This approach is then matched and enhanced by explaining how a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology will be applied in this PhD that not only recognises that knowledge comes from action but also highlights the transformative nature of research. This is very much in line with Marx (2000: 173), who famously argued that 'philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it'. Acknowledging that 'research is always for a specific purpose' (Cox

1981: 128) I outlined above that in this PhD study I attempt to create knowledge that is useful for the struggle of no-waged workers. Chapter 2 also explains how this aim is met. In this chapter I also reflect on my own subjectivities and how they influenced the research project. Lastly, the chapter outlines the ethical considerations for the research.

The thesis then develops by addressing both research questions in all chapters, while each chapter pays particular attention to one of them. Chapter 3 provides the conceptual basis for the first research question - *to what degree does the employability agenda maintain and re-create neo-liberal hegemony?*. This question will then be empirically addressed in chapters 5 and 6. The second research question - *in what ways and through what type of collective organisations do people contest the concept of employability?* - is conceptually addressed in chapter 4 and empirically in chapters 7 and 8.

In chapter 3 I will develop a Critical Political Economy of Work (CPEW) approach, which is located in the broader field of International Political Economy (IPE). I will demonstrate in this chapter that employability needs to be analysed against the backdrop of neoliberal globalisation, which can be identified as a current hegemonic system. Specifically, I will draw on neo-Gramscian IPE scholars to conceptualise the state, as a complex of political and civil society through which hegemony functions and as a space in which different classes and group fractions are unified and also transformed. Particularly useful for this PhD is Jessop's system transformation framework, that captures a shift in most Western countries from a "Keynesian Welfare National State" to different forms of "Schumpeterian Workfare Post-National Regimes" (Jessop 2006: 141), as it shows that the rise of the employability agenda is situated within wider neoliberal state transformation processes. However, as already mentioned above, Jessop's analysis focuses too much on elite agency and top-down processes behind welfare and employment policies and neglects how the struggle for hegemony is one of class contestations. In chapter 3 I will therefore also build on scholars, who urged to go back to the roots of a Marxian Political Economy analysis by putting labour back in its centre and therefore suggested to unite the study of IPE with the study of Industrial Relations (Harrod 2002, Amoore 2002; Moore 2010). I will expand their framework by linking it to Cleaver's (1979: 75) reading of Marx's *Capital* as a political tool of class struggle which aims to increase workers power. Drawing on Cleaver also allows me to conceptualise work as a social relation which is not only key but also unique to capitalism. Such an understanding of work rejects a narrow focus on waged work and instead takes

into account the unwaged labour on which capital accumulation is premised. By merging the study of neo-Gramscian IPE with Cleaver's class struggle approach into a Critical Political Economy of Work framework I develop an analysis that, a) captures the capitalist forces behind the historical specificities of capitalism that increasingly impose work, and b) visualises opportunities of resistance to work. The CPEW framework serves as the foundation for the entire thesis but it will in particular guide my analysis in chapter 5, where I look at the policies behind the employability agenda on the European and UK national level which were forged in processes of class contestation. It is also of particular importance for chapter 6, where I look at how employability is implemented in practice by mapping out the ways in which shadow-state institutions encourage and enforce employability.

Chapter 4 is devoted to taking the *political* in the Critical Political Economy of Work approach seriously, namely to take it as an analysis of working class power with the aim of strengthening this power. I will therefore examine three different class struggle theories in more detail, namely Standing's thesis of the precariat, Cleaver's concept of the social factory and Resnick, Wolff and Gibson-Graham's framework of multiple class and non-class processes. These different entry points to a conceptualisation of class and class struggle all have something to offer in regard to interns, workfare workers and the unemployed. Standing's (2011) theory of the precariat sees the possibility for interns and workfare workers to unite with other precarious workers on the basis on shared position of insecurity. In contrast to Standings fragmented approach to class, Cleaver's concept of the 'social factory' provides a useful framework to overcome divisions within the working class as all workers struggle against capital and for more wealth. However, Cleaver's conceptualisation allows for only a very limited understanding of differences within the working class. He categorises workers' power differences as wage differences and argues that also identity related power disparities essentially boil down to wage divisions (Ibid.: 113,160). To enable a more nuanced understanding of class formations I will draw on the works of Resnick et al. (1987) who show that individuals participate in various class and non-class processes and thus there are multiple options of self-identification. Subsequently, class identities cannot, apriori, be understood as the fulcrum around which people organise. Proposing a fruitful dialogue between the theories I specifically elaborate on their contribution to class struggle but widen the analysis in regard to four of its features, namely agency and structure, resistance, solidarity and the creation of commons, spaces outside capitalism.

The framework developed will then serve as the foundation for the empirical analysis the practices of resistance to employability in chapter 7 and the solidarity relations which underpin this resistance in chapter 8.

Chapter 5 focuses on the policies behind the employability agenda on the European Union and UK national level. I demonstrate there that through the employability agenda neoliberal restructuring was advanced on a multi-scalar level. In particular, I look at welfare and higher education policies. I will show that at the UK national level, all governments, since Thatcher came to power in 1979, have continuously intensified the workfare approach to welfare and, with it, deepened neoliberal restructuring. The discourses and practices of the governments varied in their emphasis on consent of coercion. While New Labour (1997-2010) was more in tune with the human capital approach, stressing the consensual aspect of employability by highlighting the self-responsibility of the empowered individual, the Conservative-Liberal Democrats Coalition government accentuated a coercive approach of disciplining the unemployed into work. Likewise, the marketisation of higher education has been continuously advanced under consecutive UK governments since 2010. As such, welfare and higher education policies demonstrate the cross-party consensus of advancing neoliberal restructuring. On the European level, the trade unions have been major agents in pushing for European social policies. However, these policies became major vehicles of fostering neoliberal restructuring by pushing for more employability and flexibility. The European Roundtable of Industrialists was particularly influential in the European Employment Strategy and the Bologna process advocating the knowledge economy paradigm to which employability was key.

In chapter 6 I engage with Peck's (2003) research call on bottom-up processes of state formation. I will ask in what ways shadow-state institutions encourage and force people to become employable subjects. In particular, I focus on work-experiences. Through the practice of institutional mapping I give an in-depth account on the workings of two employability institutions, universities and an activating welfare-to-work supply chain. Within the universities the delivery of employability services has become a complicated conglomerate, where not only career and employability centres have been created and extended but moreover various employability modules, extra-curriculum activities and employability advisors and the student union encourage students to become employable subjects. A complex and re-regulated marketisation extended the state mechanism behind the welfare provision. This stands in contrast to the Coalition government's

rhetoric, which stressed a welfare system simplification. The UK benefit system is now coined by an entanglement of public and private institutions. While jobcentres still play a role in the welfare service provision the majority of activating welfare-to-work programmes are outsourced to prime contractors – mostly multi-national companies – of which some deliver a part of the services themselves, but the majority of employability practices are again outsourced to subcontractors. I will show that this not only caused an inflated but also a highly non-transparent system of welfare provision. By mapping the practices of activated welfare provision, I intend to visualise how employability is actually implemented in practice.

In chapter 7 I then elaborate in what ways and through what type of collective agency people challenge the concept of employability. Specifically, I look at the possibilities and obstacles of resistance. I demonstrate that the practices of resistance against employability are very creative and diverse and, in fact, they need to be so as the workers withdrawal of their labour, to strike, is not possible when it comes to employability. This is important as so far, in the Industrial Relations literature workers resistance is still often equated with strikes, yet the increasing precariousness of work means that strikes are not a realistic vehicle for resistance for many groups of workers. By looking at practices of resistance to employability I hope to offer a contribution to the broader discussion of the changing nature of work under neoliberalism and what it means for worker organisation. In this chapter I also look at existing practices of commoning and demands for alternative modes of production. In so doing, I acknowledge that an analysis of resistance is always trapped in a capitalonormative framework that is limited to reactionary practices. I argue that practices of commoning are intrinsically interlinked with resistances against capitalism, as they not only constitute two sides of the same path towards post-capitalist worlds but also as they create each other.

In Chapter 8 I focus on solidarity relations that underpin the resistance against employability and processes of commoning. There is very little attention paid to solidarity within the Industrial Relations literature. This is surprising, as solidarity is a key dynamic behind the emergence of social forces from below, which seeks to challenge forms of oppression and to bring about social change. This chapter therefore aims to feed into the broader discussions on the decline and future of trade unionism and new ways of organising around work, which go beyond the workplace and might demand new workers institutions as well as a greater engagement with other actors in

the community (Bieler 2014: 123, Holgate 2015^a: 451). The research to date predominantly comes from a trade union perspective. In contrast, I will analyse existing struggles of unemployed, precariously employed and disabled workers outside of traditional trade unions (see section 7.2 for an overview) and then ask in what ways they seek to engage with trade unions as well as other activist groups. I will show in chapter 8 that it is necessary to go beyond the solidaristic inter-relationships between groups and/or to trade unions by demonstrating that the internal relationships of the groups influence the power and the sustainability of their resistance.

Lastly, in chapter 9 I will summarise the PhD and highlight my major research contributions before I conclude by recommending aspects for future research.

Research Design: Methodology and Methods

2.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present the methodological framework of this PhD. The ontological and epistemological foundations of this PhD are based on Gramsci's historical materialist approach. Gramsci's approach is dialectical in that it recognises that individual and collective agencies are both constrained by, and constituted within, prevailing social structures, whilst structures themselves are transformed by agency (Gill 1993: 22). In acknowledgment of this dialectical dynamic this PhD analyses the employability agenda by looking at: a) the historical structures that gave rise to employability, and through which the employability doctrine re-creates neoliberal hegemony; and b) the collective agency through which employability is resisted.

The UK was chosen as a case study for this PhD for three reasons. Firstly, it actively constructed and promoted the employability agenda within the EU. To that end the Bologna process for higher education and the European Employment Strategy (EES) were key policy processes (see section 5.3). The Bologna process, in particular, explicitly promotes internships as a key tool to increase graduates' employment prospects. Furthermore, whilst Welfare-to-Work policies, which are the coercive branch of the employability agenda, derive from the US, at a European level the UK was a pioneer (Peck 2001; 454; Oakley 2011: 285) and actively promoted them throughout Europe (see the sections under 5.2). Secondly, the UK's 'carrot and stick' approach to employability (Lee 2015: 461), namely by persuasion and coercion, enables me to look at two different employability practices: higher education and welfare-to-work. Thirdly, and most importantly, this is a praxis-driven project, which emerged out my own experiences of organising with other unpaid interns for a wage in the UK (see section 2.3.1). In line with the latter, Participatory Action Research (PAR) is my main methodology (see section 2.3).

The structure of this chapter is as follows: I first outline the ontological and epistemological foundations of this PhD in greater detail. I then explain the methodological approach of PAR and how I apply PAR in this PhD, which includes an illustration my research design in Figure 1 (see section 2.3). I then proceed by introducing the methods used in this PhD under section 2.4, and subsequently explain

my approach to data analysis in 2.5. In section 2.6 I reflect on the ways in which my own subjectivity influences the research. I then discuss the ethical considerations of the PhD in section 2.7, while section 2.8 concludes.

2.2 Ontological and epistemological underpinnings

Building on Marx, Gramsci adapted a historical materialist approach which sees capitalism as a specific historic social relation rather than seeing it as a self-evident and natural manifestation of ahistorical social relations. In their view, the presumption of a first, absolute knowledge is absolute anti-historicism (Haug 2001: 73). In contrast, Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis' is based on absolute historicism (Ibid.). It is *historical knowledge*, as knowledge is always historically constituted. As a particular ontology is by no means self-evident, it must therefore be theorised, as the researchers understanding of the social dynamics is founded upon certain sociological assumptions (Gill 1993: 30). As Robert Cox argues 'there is always an ontological starting point', as one cannot define a problem in global politics without presupposing a certain basic structure (1996: 144). In other words, all social science research is built on foundational assumptions, no matter if the scholar makes this explicit or not. In this PhD chapter 3 and 4 outline the theoretical foundations of this study.

According to a (neo)-Gramscian epistemology, knowledge is constructed within specific historical relations and it is, therefore, enabled and constrained by specific historical structures, which represent human actions as natural and objective. However, this does not mean that a Gramscian framework is deterministic. On the contrary, Gramsci's historical materialism opposes the abstract structuralism as advocated, for example, by Louis Althusser (Gill 1993: 22). In this way Gramsci challenged fatalistic evolutionism, objectivism and the false guarantees of philosophy of history, which was prominent of the Marxian thinking of his time (Haug 2001: 73). Gramsci's historical materialism is dialectical, as it explains that the structures of the social world are made through agency but at the same time historical structures confront people (Bieler and Morton 2001: 17). As such, social and political institutions are not taken for granted but understood as the outcome of collective human action over time. In other words, they are made by people. Chapter 5 therefore explores the specific historical processes that led to the employability agenda while highlighting that these were not linear and deterministic developments, but processes shaped by class contestations. Situated within this historical context, chapter 6 then explores in what way the employability agenda is put

into practice by looking at two specific institutional complexes in the UK: universities as well as jobcentres and their outsourced sub-institutions.

By taking historical social structures as the fundamental unit of analysis, a Gramscian historical materialist approach not only challenges structuralism and methodological reductionism but by placing emphasis on social relations it also stands in contrast to empiricists, who move towards the understanding of social reality from a perspective of methodological individualism (Gill 1993: 22). Instead, Gramsci gave “precedence to practice” and the real history of changes in social relations’ (Gramsci 1995: 385-6). This means that every historical phenomenon has to be studied within the context of its own peculiar characteristics rather than confused with other forms of historical phenomena (Gramsci 1977: 330, 331) or by ignoring its historical context. As such, knowledge is created through an interpretative and hermeneutic process in which the researchers mind enters into the historical process. Consequently, ‘observer and observed, agent and structure, become intertwined’ (Cox and Sinclair 1996: 29).

From a neo-Gramscian angle the central task of social science is to explain social action, social structures and social change (Gill 1993: 21). Social sciences are historicist as they confront a ‘second-order reality’, instead of a first order reality, as everything has already been logically pre-ordered, and is constantly re-shaped by its participants (Gill 1993). As Gramsci argued in the Prison Notebooks:

The ‘objective’ social world of ‘abstract natural forces’ or ‘intractable natural laws’ that confronts people ‘does not exist on its own, in and for itself, but only in an historical relationship with men [and women] who modify it’ (Gramsci 1971: 34, 346, 467).

This quote shows that Gramsci challenged a subject/object dichotomy upheld in positivist epistemology and instead puts forward a dialectical approach to knowledge. In that way, a (neo)-Gramscian epistemology acknowledges that although social action is constrained by, and constituted within, prevailing social structures, structures are also transformed by agency (Gill 1993: 21). Gramsci saw the intellectual process as part of this historical and dialectical process – and not as something that stands outside of it. Gramsci’s concept of the ‘organic intellectual’ is key here, which depicts the process of intellectual production itself in the dialectical process of historical change (see also section 3.3.1 and 7.4.2). In this way, theory is always for someone and for a specific purpose (Cox 1996: 870).

The purpose of this PhD is not only to understand the historical restructuring processes that led to the employability agenda and through it to a re-creation of neoliberalism in

the UK, but also to generate knowledge that is useful for the struggle of no-waged workers. In other words, as outlined above, the purpose of this PhD is an emancipatory one: to analyse the power of the researched groups with the aim to strengthen their power (see chapters 7 and 8). This positioning is consistent with the normative aspect of the Gramscian approach which has the notion of justice and morality at the heart of its analysis (Gill 1993: 24). With this purpose in mind, I will now outline in more detail the Participatory Action Research (PAR) epistemology which, I argue, is compatible with and enhances the Gramscian take on historical knowledge.

The origin of PAR goes back to Marx's famous quote that 'philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it' (Marx 2000: 173; Reason and Bradbury 2001: 3). From this derives the notion of *reflective knowledge*, which has been an important feature of PAR, and states that meaningful knowledge must be normative, and action orientated. PAR assumes that the full realisation of human life in society requires the mobilisation of rationality that includes knowledge of moral values relevant in every-day life (Park 2001: 86). Reflective knowledge depicts people as knowledgeable subjects that can critically analyse and evaluate questions of morality and can act accordingly (Ibid). The term reflective knowledge is based on the assumption that 'concerted engagement in change-producing activity requires conscious reflection on the part of the actors involved' (Ibid.). This directly builds on the Marxian take on historical knowledge and the relationship between theory and praxis, in which human activity shapes history (see section above). Action thus plays an important part in the knowledge generation in the course of bringing about material changes. It is through action that reflective knowledge about historical structures is created. As Park explains further: 'in dealing with social forces that stand in the way of change ... the actors come to understand at the visceral and emotive level the workings and intransigence of social arrangements' (Ibid.). In other words, reflective knowledge is created within class struggle when agency meets structure.

The aim of PAR is to produce 'practical knowledge that is useful for people' and therefore to create new forms of *understanding* (Reason and Bradbury 2001: 2). This is in line with Gramsci's take on knowledge, who also emphasised that, in the social sciences, *understanding* is integral to the knowledge producing process

'the intellectual's error consists in believing that one can know without understanding and even more without feeling and being impassioned . . . in other words that the intellectual can be an intellectual (and not a pure pedant) if distinct and separate from the nation-people, that is, without feeling the elementary passions of the people, understanding them and therefore explaining and justifying them in the particular

historical situation and connecting them dialectically to the laws of history and to a superior conception of the world, scientifically and coherently elaborated—i.e. knowledge’ (Gramsci 1971: 418).

Similarly, Fals-Borda, one of the founders of PAR, called for ‘reason enriched with sentiment and feeling’ (2001: 29). In other words, he argued for a ‘holistic epistemology’ in which ‘head and heart would have to work together’ (Ibid). It includes *relational knowledge* based on affect, which is created when people come together in empathy, which makes it possible for them to know each other (Park 2001: 83). In this way, PAR adds to the Gramscian epistemology by highlighting the collective process of knowledge creation. People are seen as agents who act in the world on the basis of their own ‘sensemaking’ and human community involves ‘mutual sensemaking and collective action’. In this way, PAR is only possible *with, for and by* persons and communities (Reason and Bradbury 2001: 2).

This section outlined the epistemological and ontological framework of this PhD. Its starting point is that all knowledge is socially and therefore historically constituted. A particular ontology is not self-evident and must consequently be theorised (see chapter 3 and 4 for the theoretical framework of this study). Social science is understood as creating *historical knowledge* through dialectical processes, as knowledge is shaped by historical structures, which are, in turn, made by human agency. The intellectual production is itself part of the dialectical process of historical change. In this way, no matter if explicit or not, theory is always for someone and for a specific purpose (Cox 1996: 870). The purpose of this PhD is to understand the historical processes that led to the employability agenda as well as to generate knowledge that is useful for the struggle of no-waged workers. I deepened the epistemological ground of this PhD study by linking Gramsci’s understanding of *historical knowledge* to *reflective knowledge* and *relational knowledge* as outlined in PAR. By emphasising agency within historical materialism, it is therefore assumed that *reflective knowledge* comes from action and that knowledge creation in the social sciences is a collective endeavour that entails more than rational logic but an understanding of the social relations, *relational knowledge*.

2.3 Participatory Action Research Methodology

Methodologically, PAR stands in contrast to a linear notion of research, where one specific theoretical framework determines the research questions and the ways data is collected. Instead, PAR has been understood as a constant feedback loop between

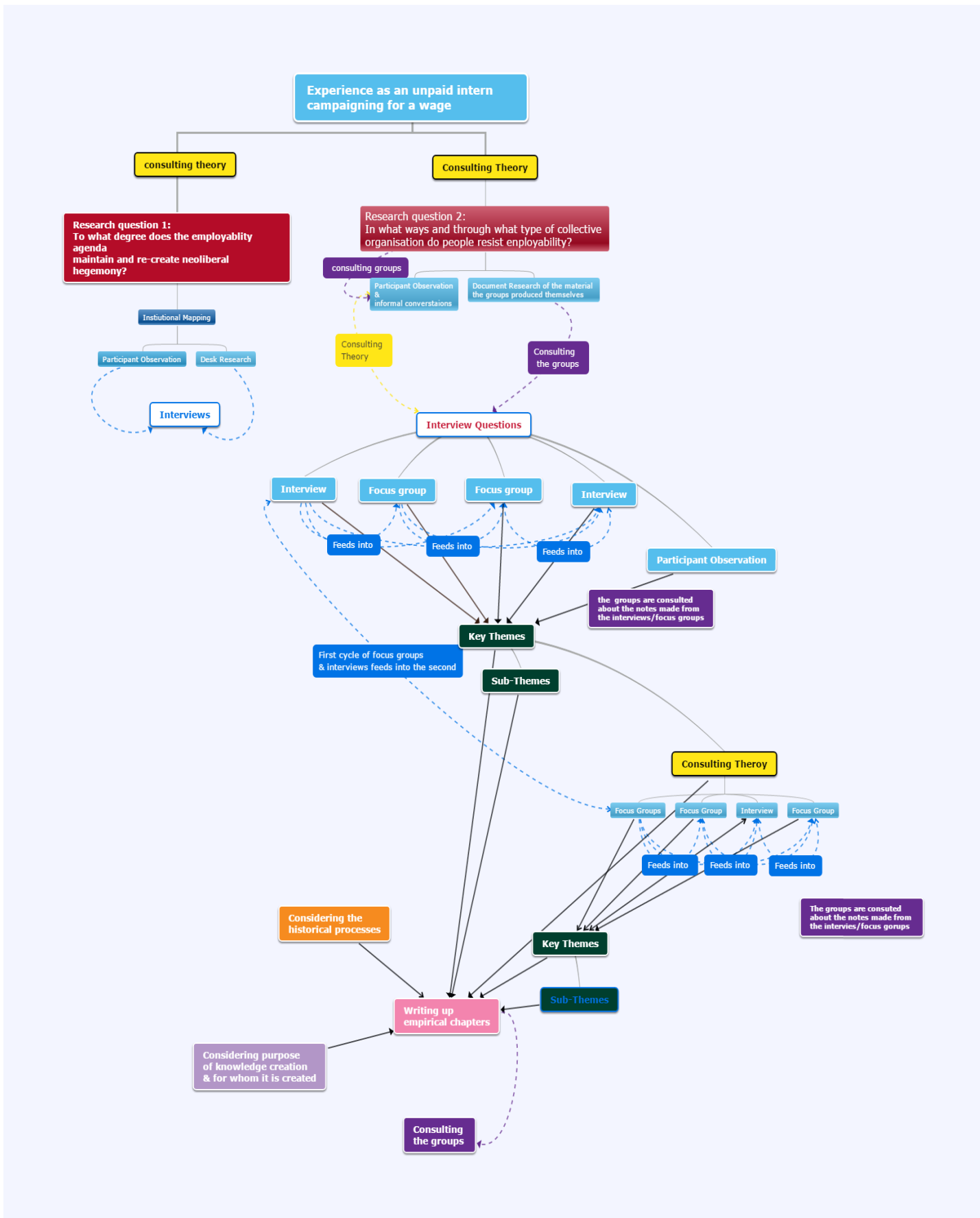
theory and practice (Bradbury and Reason 2008: 390). This is based on the idea that action without reflection is blind and theory without action is meaningless (Reason and Bradbury 2001: 2). In this way, PAR breaks away from the dichotomy in social science, where it is conventionally distinguished between theoretical work on the one hand, and applied work on the other (Greenwood 2008: 323). When applying a PAR methodology, the starting point is practice. It is intended that the research question emerges from the community of interest (Bradbury and Reason 2008: 2; Walter 2009: 260). In my case, the idea to research unpaid labour and how it can be resisted came from my own experiences as an unpaid intern. Together with others I started organising at my own work-experience-place in 2012 and involved myself in various campaigns around the issue of work-experience (see section 2.4.1). Thereby, two burning questions came to the fore: firstly, why is it that (young) people today must *experience* work. In other words, why must they work unpaid in order to work for pay one day? Secondly, how could we organise around the issue of work, if we weren't even recognised as workers? These questions inspired me to pursue this PhD.

Approaching theory (see chapter 3 and 4) with these questions in mind helped me to better understand the enquiry itself, and the dialogue between theory and practice translated in to the two research questions I already mentioned above, namely:

- *To what degree does the employability agenda maintain and re-create neo-liberal hegemony?*
- *In what ways and through what type of collective organisations do people contest the concept of employability?*

The knowledge gained in cooperation with the groups informed my theoretical analysis and led me to re-address the conceptualisation of class struggle and social change. It thus guided me towards my own theoretical conceptualisations (see the sections 3.4 and 4.5) by drawing on a range of thinkers, all of whom resonated with particular aspects of this PhD. In sum, in this PhD theory and practice inform one another (see Figure 1 on the research design below).

Figure 1 Research Design:



However, to conduct PAR within a university setting is problematic. In fact, the origins

of PAR were established by researchers that broke away from the universities and set up alternative institutions. As Fals-Borda recalls:

'... we could not find answers of support from universities ... Therefore, as we became more and more unsatisfied with our training and our teaching, many of us broke the shackles and left the academies' (2001: 27).

Moreover, the founders of PAR 'rejected the academic tradition of using – and often exploiting – research and fieldwork mainly for career advancement' (Ibid.: 29). Also, the way academic life is structured in universities often makes it incompatible with PAR, especially as research time is usually limited and/or contained within the academic teaching cycle (Greenwood 2008: 333,334). The relative freedom and flexibility of a PhD made it possible for me to conduct PAR within a university context, as the data collection phase could be spread over many years which provided me with the necessary time to go back and forth between theory and practice. However, despite these relevant freedoms and flexibilities, I argue that PAR will always be challenged by the individualised, hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of most academic institutions. I will, therefore, now outline my approach to PAR, which diverts in some respects from the 'ideal' or 'pure' PAR, by taking the institutional context of this PhD research into account.

The democratic principle of PAR is its most problematic element as a research methodology for a PhD study. Within PAR the researcher is considered to be only the facilitator of the research, not the owner of it. The research participants are understood as 'co-researchers' (eg. Bradbury and Reason 2008: 12; Walter 2009: 263). I argue that such an approach, while admirable, is difficult to achieve in university-based research, in general, and impossible in a single-authored PhD study. Even if, like in this PhD study, every effort is made to constantly consider and reflect on the researched groups and feedback is continuously sought and subsequently integrated, which occasionally even leads to an alteration of the research objective, the researcher remains the principal decision maker although the power of veto remains with the groups. I, therefore, argue that it is important to be honest and reflective not only about the research outcomes but also the research processes, and in particular, the power dynamics which are always one-sided in a single-authored text. In the PAR literature, the democratic nature of PAR is too easily romanticised and power dynamics are consequently side lined.

In this PhD research I was conscious to hand power and influence over to the researched

groups wherever possible, but I also encountered two particular obstacles: firstly, groups' members can have different opinions which can lead to differences within the processes of knowledge creation. As such the researcher ultimately needs to make decisions about what to include and what to exclude when the research is documented (see section 2.5). Secondly, being a 'co-researcher' demands time and energy, which not everyone in the researched community might be able to contribute. For example, in my case, the capacity of the people I did research with is relatively low, due to the precarious nature of their lives (see also section 7.3). This is related to the general question of material remuneration, which is mostly unaddressed in the PAR literature to date. The PAR principle of 'equal and collaborative involvement of the "community of interest"' (Walter 2009: 263) stands in contrast to academic researchers, presumably on good salaries, leading/facilitating a research project that requires unpaid labour of the 'co-researchers'. Whilst I was unable to remunerate any of the groups' members for their participation in the research I addressed this inequality as far as possible by openly talking about my income with the groups. When we debated these inequalities prior to the data collection, none of the groups saw it as an obstacle to the research. This was, however, also influenced by the fact that as a PhD student on a small scholarship the material inequalities were not very high.

When engaging with the groups I also emphasises that PAR is committed to producing practical knowledge that may be useful to the groups' members and contributes to transformative action (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003: 14; Bradbury and Reason 2008: 375). In dialogue with the researched groups, I identified three aspects through which this research could be of use to them:

- It provides a space in which struggles can be linked and groups can learn from each other;
- It is an opportunity of self-reflection. Resistance can be very demanding, time consuming and at times overwhelming. The research hopes to aid personal reflection on the struggles and people's involvement in the groups. It can therefore assist the participants in developing clear standpoints;
- By documenting social processes from below the research might potentially be useful and inspirational for other groups and future struggles. I see this research as part of a collective learning process across struggles.

Moreover, as Chatterton et al. (2007: 2016) stress, PAR researchers should not forget

the A in PAR and suggest a subject position of an 'academic activist'. In agreement with this and within my means, I offered to actively engage in the struggles of the researched groups (see section 2.6). Additionally, I also contributed the knowledge I gained through this PhD to the existing struggles. For example, some of my research findings of chapter 6 became part of the book *Training for Exploitation: Politicising Employability and Reclaiming Education* by the Precarious Workers Brigade (2017). The book provides teaching tools to enable educators to use the space provided by employability training in universities to facilitate critical thinking and learning about work. Moreover, I often functioned as a "bridger", by encouraging the forging of links between different struggles (see sections 2.6 and 8.3).

In total I did PAR research with 18 groups broadly classified as claimant's unions, welfare activist groups, precarious workers groups, disability activists' groups and anti-workfare campaigns, as well as the community branch of the trade union Unite, called Unite Community (see appendix 1). I gained knowledge through a qualitative mixed methods approach (see section 2.4). In line with the aim of PAR to make the research as inclusive as possible, the methods were discussed and chosen together with the researched groups and thus the methods used varied from group to group.

I deliberately did not make any reference to the sizes of the groups throughout the text principally because they fluctuated with time. Nonetheless, the most accurate estimation of the group's core membership varies from 6-30 people. However, most of the groups have a much wider network of people loosely connected to them. These people join in actions or other tasks but might not necessarily come to meetings.

There are two research limitations in this PhD study. Firstly, I was unable to give equal weight to both examples, namely resistance to workfare and unpaid internships. This was principally because when I started the project there were more groups actively campaigning against unpaid internships. However, these campaigns decelerated while the struggles around workfare and benefits conditionality accelerated. My research reflects these developments. Secondly, my research suffers from a London-bias. As I live, work and am politically active in London, it was easier for me to learn about and gain access to London based groups. I was, however, conscious of this bias throughout the project and managed to include the experiences of groups in Brighton, Norwich, Leeds and Dundee.

Finally, regarding the language, I sought to keep this text as reader friendly as possible

and therefore decided to avoid, for example, acronyms for the 18 groups. Instead I refer to the groups by stating the full name of the groups in italic. I also tried to use a gender-neutral language throughout the text by using 'they' when referring to an individual of whom the gender is not known.

2.4 Methods

2.4.1 Auto-Ethnography

As outlined in section 2.3 the starting point of this PhD was my lived experience as an unpaid intern and the knowledge gained while organising together with my fellow interns against this unpaid labour. Immediately prior to this PhD I conducted a 6 months unpaid internship at a charity in London. In contrast to my fellow interns I had the benefit of receiving a small monthly scholarship from the European Union, which allowed me to sustain myself. During the time of my internship, I actively tried to organise other interns. Together with interns at other charities in London we initiated a campaign group, called *NoPayNoWay*, which campaigned against unpaid internships and for their replacement with paid, entry-level positions. We were partially successful. After six months, we had managed to stop the use of unpaid internships in two charities. During my time as an intern and our campaign I kept a diary in which I reflected on our daily struggle. We also set up our own website and we produced several internal policy documents to influence the charities stand on unpaid interns. I later wrote up these experiences for an activist article which was published in TripleC (see Weghmann 2015) and as a guest blog post on Andreas Bieler's website 'Trade Unions and Global Restructuring'.

I applied an auto-ethnographic method, which created the foundation for this PhD. The aim of auto-ethnography is to gain insights into the larger culture of which the researcher is part (Patton 2002). In my case, I was part of the culture of unpaid labour through internships. As Ellis and Bochner (1996: 739) argue, through the auto-ethnographic reflection processes multiple layers of consciousness can be created by connecting the personal with the cultural. At the time of the internship, I felt that it was necessary to document my experiences as an unpaid intern. In the beginning I started by documenting how long I worked each day, the tasks I was doing and the other interns were doing, how I was treated and the context of the organisation. My emerging personal struggle against this unpaid labour is documented in this diary and so is the frustration I felt at the time about that there was no trade union to turn to. In this sense,

I claim that I practised what McIlveen describes as the defining feature of auto-ethnography, which entails a 'practitioner performing narrative analysis pertaining to himself or herself as intimately related to a particular phenomenon.' (McIlveen 2008: 2). As such, it is a practice of 'writing about oneself as a researcher-practitioner ... but it is not simply the telling of a life'. Instead, auto-ethnography can be better described as a specific form of critical enquiry that has potential for application as a methodological vehicle for reflexivity in research and practice (McIlveen 2008: 7). For example, Eliis and Bochner (2000: 737) describe their method as the following:

'I start with my personal life. I pay attention to my physical feelings, thoughts, and emotions. I use what I call systematic, sociological introspection and emotional recall to try to understand an experience I've lived through. Then I write my experience as a story. By exploring a particular life, I hope to understand a way of life.'

It is important to highlight here that auto-ethnography was an important preliminary research method, which shaped the research idea and the research proposal but was not used as a method during the PhD. I was writing my research proposal for a PhD during the time of my internship. Initially I wanted to research a very different topic but my own experiences and my increased awareness about the phenomenon of unpaid internships and my frustration about how little was written about this topic in the academic literature made me change my mind. I decided to submit a research project about employability and resistance against unpaid work-experiences.

The methodological importance of auto-ethnography lies in its attempt to break away from the 'othering'. As Alcoff (1991: 21) explains, researchers 'sometimes seem to want to study everybody's social and cultural construction but their own'. Auto-ethnography takes a critical approach necessitating a privileged speaker, who does not speak for others routinely, but rather also self-interrogates (Denshire 2014: 834). In this way Lionnet (1990: 391) argues auto-ethnography 'opens up a space of resistance between the individual (auto-) and the collective (-ethno-) where the writing (-graphy) of singularity cannot be foreclosed' (Lionnet 1990: 391). I can identify the following self-interrogations in the cultural and institutional context of work-experiences as entry points into the exploration of employability, the rise of unpaid labour and how it can be resisted. My personal experience as an unpaid intern made me become aware of the changing nature of employment practices. During my MSc degree we were told that the work-experiences gained as part of an unpaid internship would increase our employability and hence our job chances. In my case, it quickly became clear to me that my hopes

for paid employment were, at least in this charity, unlikely to be fulfilled. During my internship I discovered that paid entry-level jobs used to be a part of the charity's organizational structure and that the former entry-level job descriptions (which were leaked to me) were identical with the description of my voluntary internship position. Shocked by this revelation, I started to investigate further and learnt that cutting costs by replacing paid staff with unpaid interns is a common phenomenon among charities. In fact, the Charity Commission (2009: 3) suggested that charities should deal with funding difficulties invoked by the economic crisis by using volunteers "efficiently." As part of our campaign we researched further and found that according to the Charity Commission there were 2,588,847 volunteers working for UK charities in that year (NoPayNoWay 2012). We also observed that on www.charityjobs.co.uk, the main website for advertised jobs in the charity sector, usually advertised around 800 unpaid internships and only up to 7 paid internships. A category for entry level positions did not even exist on this platform (Ibid.). The culture of replacing of paid entry-level positions with unpaid volunteers not only made me question the notion of employability but I also asked myself if volunteering might add to unemployment and job insecurity rather than decreasing it (Weghmann 2015). Consequently, I decided to start this PhD by analysing the historical and institutional context of employability (see chapters 5 and 6).

A second entry-point into the debate of unpaid work-experience, was my increasing knowledge of the institutional distribution of funds. During our campaign to stop unpaid internships, we learnt that, while the economic recession had indeed burdened the charity with less funding and more work, it was not the case that the charity lacked sufficient funds to pay its interns. Rather, the charity's internal wage distribution had changed dramatically over the years. Initially, the charity had a flat pay scale under which everyone was paid the same. But at the time of my internship it had a hierarchical pay structure, with an executive director earning £59,000 per annum, department directors £43,000 per annum, senior officers £34,000 per annum, and officers £32,000 per annum (figures 2012 until March 2013). Clearly, senior officials saw generous increases in their own pay as more important than providing paid, entry-level positions (Weghmann 2015). As part of our campaign, *NoPayNoWay*, we also learnt more about the large wage discrepancy, especially in large charities. For example, Oxfam had at that time an annual income of over £365 million, and the director, Barbara Stocking, took home more than £100,000 per year. We saw that Oxfam advertised for numerous in-

ternships but did not pay a wage (NoPayNoWay: 2012). We therefore argued that “charities have a duty, and indeed a vested interest, in training up the young people that want to work in the sector, but they need to pay them instead of exploiting them” (NoPayNoWay 2012). This knowledge urged me to further explore Marx’s concept of exploitation which formed my theoretical conceptualisations for this PhD (see section 4.4). In this way, my auto-ethnographic methodological approach mirrors McLlveen, who argues that auto-ethnography needs to be embedded in theory and practice (2008: 2).

Importantly, our experience of being an unpaid intern made me question how to resist this type of unpaid work if we are not even considered to be a worker. We felt we were working but we were told we were just *experiencing* work. Our work was considered as an education and therefore unpaid. We wanted to organise but felt unheard by established trade unions. Consequently, we turned to the grass-roots collective *Precarious Workers Brigade*, which supported our struggle.

Internally we encountered many structural barriers to our resistance. For example, our campaign was challenged by our invisibility, the temporality of our work and our fear of ruining our career chances if we were to protest for a wage (see in more detail section 7.3). These experiences translated into the second research question of this PhD, I already outlined above, namely: *in what ways and through what type of collective organisations do people contest the concept of employability?*

2.4.2 Institutional mapping

This method was used for chapter 6 which explores in what ways shadow-state institutions encourage and compel people to become employable subjects. In particular, I focus on universities and institutional conglomerates around jobcentres. Both institutions are examples of how employability is put into practice. Chapter 6 builds on chapter 5, which emphasises the historical development of the policies that shaped the two institutions. As I outlined in section 2.2, this PhD study follows a Gramscian historical epistemology, which is a dialectical approach that recognises that social and political institutions are made by people through historical processes.

The method applied here follows Peck (2003: 222), who argued that the processes of

welfare state transformation are complex and multifaceted and that, therefore, analysis needs to go beyond policy shifts and new forms of governance. Specifically, he called for more research that engages with 'careful mapping of emergent state forms' to figure out what 'the state is actually doing - why and with what political, social and economic implications' (Ibid.). However, Peck did not specify what exactly such a mapping exercise might look like, and he also did not suggest a specific approach. In this PhD I proceeded by mapping the supply-chains behind the delivering of employability services. My aim here was not to sketch out a general picture, but to generate in-depth knowledge of how the employability agenda is implemented in two universities and in one welfare services supply chain. In the paragraphs below, I will explain my approach in more detail.

I chose to look at the University of Kingston, a post-1992 university, and Goldsmiths University, an old college, which is one of the world's top art universities. These two universities were chosen because of their art profiles and because work-experiences in the art world are particularly wide spread. I proceeded by mapping the different institutional levels concerned with employability training to draw a clear picture of the complex institutional setting through which employability is delivered. For this purpose, I used a mixed qualitative method approach. Semi-structured interviews enabled me to gain insights in the meanings career centre staff and academics attribute to employability and their experiences of delivering employability trainings (Glassner and Miller 1997: 100). I interviewed staff from the career centres, teaching staff facilitating placements at Goldsmiths and staff from the student union at Kingston. I should note here that I did not interview staff from the student union at Goldsmiths as it does not offer volunteering opportunities. I did not interview academic employability staff at Kingston because I could not find any academic in charge of employability training who was willing to be interviewed. I complemented the interviews with participant observation to gain knowledge about the everyday narratives around employability trainings by observing the implementation of employability in its real environment (De Walt and De Walt 2010: 19). I attended a career fair in each university and at Goldsmiths I also attended an industry panel. However, while this was very helpful for me to gain general knowledge about how the employability discourse translates into daily life practices I used these observations only indirectly to get a feel for the field and to gain inspirations for what questions to ask and what aspects of employability I should be aware of. Moreover, I used desk research by predominately analysing the websites of

the different sub-institutions, i.e. the career centres and the student unions, and the umbrella organisations concerned with employability training. This allowed me to draw out common employability narratives and to gain knowledge about how the employability trainings are publicly presented. The combination of methods enabled me to gain a holistic understanding on the workings of employability in higher education.

Table 1 – Interviews, Higher Education

Interviewee	Date of Interview	Place	Length	Referenced in Text
University of Kingston, KU Talent (Career Centre), Employability Consultant Practitioner, Kingston University	15/12/2015	Kingston University, cafe	55 min	Interview 21
University of Kingston, Student Union	20/01/2016	n/a (Email)	n/a	Interview 24
University of Goldsmith, Careers (Career Centre)	16/12/2015	Goldsmith Career centre	1.05 hrs	Interview 22
University of Goldsmith, academic staff	10/01/2016	Goldsmith Canteen	1.23 hrs	Interview 25
University of Goldsmith, academic staff	16/12/2016	Goldsmith University café,	1.09 hrs	Interview 23

Table 2 - Secondary Sources, Higher Education.

Source	Material	Referenced in Text
University of Kingston, KU Talent (Career Centre)	Website (www.kingston.ac.uk/careers)	(KU Talent n.d.)
University of Goldsmith, Careers (Career Centre)	Website (http://www.gold.ac.uk/careers)	(Goldsmiths Careers n.d.)
University of Kingston, Student Union	Volunteering leaflet	(KUSU n.d)
Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services	Website (www.agcas.org.uk)	(AGCAS n. d.)
The Work Based Placement Learning Association	Website (www.asetonline.org)	(ASET n.d.)
House of Commons Library	Student Loan Statistics	(Bolton 2015)
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development	Over-qualification and Skills mismatch in the graduate labour market	(CIPD 2015 August)
Guardian	Guardian university league table 2015: Cambridge underscores its dominance	(Raticliffe 2 June 2014)

It was harder to gain information regarding activating welfare services. The welfare to work programmes are sub-contracted and, in fact, mostly sub-sub-contracted. Moreover, as I show in section 6.3, the outsourced welfare-to-work provision is deliberately non-

transparent. A certain hostility towards research was, therefore, to be expected. I nonetheless contacted all 18 prime contractors of the work-programme and over 200 subcontractors but no one was willing to be interviewed. I am not the only one who has faced this research obstacle. Mead (2016) also reported problems with gaining permission to interview staff over what exactly welfare-to-work services contain. Likewise, I also was unable to gain access to the employability trainings conducted throughout the welfare-to-work programmes. My research thus relies on desk research only. I gathered information through Freedom of Information Requests (FIR), government reports, court records, whistle-blowers testimonies, non-governmental reports and research done by trade unions, charities, churches and investigative journalists as well as testimonies of people who participated in activating welfare programmes. In other words, this part of the research entirely relied on secondary data. Where possible I always referenced the source with its exact date in order for the reader to better follow the course of events. While this material can also be found in the bibliography, I have listed it in Table 3 below for ease of reference.

Table 3 – Secondary Sources, Welfare to Work

Source	Title	Referenced in Text as	Comments
Governmental data, sorted by date			
Department for Work and Pensions	Mandatory Work Activity – Equality Impact Assessment	(DWP 2011)	None
House of Commons Library	Work Programme: background and statistics	(Dar 2011)	None
Work and Pension Committee	Managing performance of prime contractors	(Work and Pension Committee 2011)	None
Department for Work and Pensions	Evaluation of Mandatory Work Activity	(DWP 2012)	None
National Audit Office	The role of major contractors in the delivery of public services. National Audit Office	(National Audit Office 2013)	None
Freedom of Information Request	JSA sanction statistics by length of claim	(FIR 2014 - 4134)	None
Department for Work and Pensions	Mandatory Work Experience. FAQ.	(DWP 26 March 2015)	None
House of Commons Library	Help to Work: post-Work Programme provision for the long-	(Dar 2015)	None

	term unemployed		
Department for Work and Pensions	Help to Work Statistics	(DWP 28 March 2016)	None
House of Commons Library	Work Programme: background and statistics	(Dar 2016)	None
Non-Governmental Organisations, sorted by date			
Mind	Welfare reform anxiety making people ill	(Mind 3 April 2011)	None
Third Sector Research Centre	Support for all in the UK Work Programme? Differential payments, same old problem....	(Carter, Rees and Witworth 2013)	None
Citizens Advice Bureau	Punishing Poverty? A review of benefits sanctions and their impacts on clients and claimants.	(CAB 2013)	None
Inquest	Briefing on the death of Jimmy Mubenga	(Inquest 2013)	None
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	Help to Work Contracts – What to Consider?	(NCVO 4 December 2013)	None
War on Want	G4S securing profits, globalising injustice	(War on Want 2014)	None
The Trussell Trust	Low income and welfare problems see foodbank numbers rise by 38% despite economic recovery	(Trussell Trust 23 November 2014)	None
The Methodist Church	New data: More than 100 people per day with mental health problems are having their benefits sanctioned	(Methodist Church 20 January 2015)	Information obtained via a Freedom of Information Request.
News and Newspapers, sorted by date			
Guardian	Rising unemployment puts Cameron's work programme in the spotlight	(Gentleman 31 January 2012)	Includes observations at the practices of the Work programme and an interview with a member of staff.
Guardian	Unemployed bussed in to steward river pageant	(Malik 4 June 2012)	Includes interviews with jobseekers on work-experience as part of the Work Programme
Guardian	Back to the Workhouse	(Harris 8 June 2012)	Includes interviews with jobseekers on work-experience as part of the Work Programme
Guardian	Scope quits mandatory work scheme	(Malik 12 December 2012)	Includes a direct quotes from the chief executive of Scope.
Channel 4	G4S accused of	(Channel 4 13 July	None

	massive fraud over electronic tagging	2013)	
Politics	George Osborne's conference speech in full	(Osborne 30 September 2013)	None
The Telegraph	Atos, G4S paid no corporation tax last year despite carrying out £2billion of taxpayer-funded work	(Hope 12 November 2013)	None
The Guardian	Jobcentre 'hit squads' set up benefit claimants to fail, says former official	(Butler 20 January 2015)	None
BBC	G4S repays UK government £108.9m after tagging scandal	(BBC 12 March 2014)	None
The Times	G4S back in favour at Whitehall	Plimmer 28 April 2014)	None
The Guardian	Unpaid community warden scheme triggers north London protest	(Gani 17 June 2015)	None
BBC	UK unemployment falls to 1.6 million	(BBC 18 January 2017)	None
Companies, sorted by date			
G4S	Community Work Placements	(G4S 29 April 2014)	None
Urban Future	Welfare to Work Services	(Urban Future 2014)	None
Blogs, sorted by date			
Keep Volunteering Voluntary	Gary's Story	(Keep Volunteering Voluntary 27 March 2015)	Testimony of a claimant's experience with Urban Future
Kate Belgrave	30 hours a week at all kinds of jobs on workfare. Your job is next	(Balgrave 6 November 2016)	Based on an interview with an JSA claimant who is on a Community Work Placement
Digital Action Lab and Birmingham Against the Cuts	A Selection of Especially Stupid Benefit Tales	(Digital Action Lab and Birmingham Against the Cuts n.d.)	A collection of online testimonies

2.4.3 Participant observation

Laurier claims that researchers often underestimate the importance of the participatory element of the participant observation research. By comparing the research to a sports commentator, he argues that real understanding comes from doing (Laurier 2010: 118). For the empirical analysis in chapter 7 and 8 the participation was my main emphasis, yet direct participant *observation* played only a minor role in the knowledge production.

It thus resembles what Chatterton et al. (2007: 2016) called the 'academic activists' (see section 2.3). I mainly used the observations, numerous informal conversations and the experiences I gained by participating in actions or meetings to stimulate the interviews and focus group discussions by drawing on concrete examples and asking the participants to analyse these examples together (see sections 2.4.5 and 2.4.6). Apart from one group, *Dundee Against Austerity*, I managed to participate in at least one meeting and/or protest of all of the researched groups before the interview or focus group discussion. This way I could refer to some shared experiences during the interview or focus group discussion.

However, some groups specifically asked me not to conduct direct participatory observation as it made some group members uncomfortable and led to fears of potential non-transparency about the information I intended to gather. However, the same groups warmly welcomed me to participate as an activist. As such, participatory observation was mainly used as an *indirect* method which helped me to focus the research questions and served as an initial tool to sharpen my awareness about relevant issues. With these groups I only used data collected during the interview, focus groups or documents research, and did not include my own observations in the analysis in the empirical chapters 7 and 8. Two groups, however, explicitly welcomed participatory observation, namely the *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* and *Newham Claimants Union*, so I *directly* included some observation in the analysis. In both cases I attended their meetings and events as often as possible during a time period of four and five months in 2015 during which time I kept a field diary.

2.4.4 Secondary material the groups produced themselves

Given the emphasis in PAR methodology on democratising research and in recognising the knowledge creation of participants, it is surprising that existing literature only focuses on primary research methods. I draw on Motta (2014: 35) who urged the researcher to recognise their role as a "storyteller" who is "weaving together subjects, practices and stories of agency, dignity and survival" rather than assuming to be a sort of "external liberated knower" who seeks "to educate and speak for the unfree masses" (Ibid.: 38). In line with this, I made the conscious decision to build on the material the groups already created themselves as much as possible. As such, using secondary material the groups produced themselves was a very important method of data collection for this PhD.

Several groups have analysed their own actions and their context and at times also their organising strategies and subjectivities on regular blog posts. These groups included: *Precarious Workers Brigade*, *Boycott Workfare*¹, *Haringey Solidarity Group*, *Keep Volunteering Voluntary*, *Disabled People Against the Cuts* and *Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty*. I carefully reviewed and mapped all their posts to cluster them under reoccurring themes (see section 2.3 and 2.5). I referred to their analysis in the text by stating the name of the group and the specific date of the blog posts. A whole list of the blog posts sorted by date can be found in Appendix 2. Moreover, two groups also published their own books and journal articles, which I have listed in Table 4 below. The *Precarious Workers Brigade* have put a lot of effort in to collective and anonymous analyses, which constitute a far deeper knowledge-creation than could be produced in a single focus group discussion or interview. As such, due to the wealth of the existing material and due to the time constraints of the members of the *Precarious Workers Brigade* I only used already produced data for the analysis in this PhD. Aside from having co-written the book *Training for Exploitation: Politicising Employability and Reclaiming Education* I have not been involved in any of the other publications or blog-posts of the *Precarious Workers Brigade*.

Table 4 – Secondary Material the groups produced themselves

Group	Material	Description of material	Referenced in text
Carrot Workers Collective	Surviving Internships. A Counter Guide to Free Labour in the Arts.	Own publication/Book	Carrot Workers Collective 2009
Carrot Workers Collective and Precarious Workers Brigade	Free Labour Syndrome. Volunteer Work and Unpaid Overtime in the Creative and Cultural Sector	Book chapter in: Joy Forever: The Political Economy of Social Creativity	Carrot Workers Collective and Precarious Workers Brigade 2012
Precarious Workers Brigade	Not to defer our politics to somewhere else - Precarious Workers Brigade on precarity	Interview with the Precarious Workers Brigade	Kleinhamplová, Stejskalová, and members of the Precarious Workers Brigade, 2014
Precarious Workers Brigade	Life after Work	Collective interview discussion with Nina power	Littler and Power 2014
Precarious Workers Brigade	Training for Exploitation? Politicising Employability and Reclaiming Education.	Own publication/Book	Precarious Workers Brigade 2017
Scottish Unemployed Workers Network	Righting Welfare Wrongs	Own publication/Book	Scottish Unemployed

¹ Boycott Workfare recently launched a new website which means that some of the blog posts were lost or reappeared under a new date. I am still referring to the original published date in the text to not confuse the reader with its chronological order.

2.4.5 Focus groups

The unit of analysis is the group in focus groups. It is neither a 'natural' discussion nor a constrained group interview but it entails elements of both. The focus groups are moderated by the researcher and revolve around specific themes. One of the particular strengths of this method is that it captures both individual and collective experiences (Simthson 2008: 364). Moreover, focus groups are an ideal method to uncover what 'influences the opinion, behaviour and motivation of people' (Casey and Kruger 2015: 507) and thus to reveal in what way people contest employability. In this PhD focus groups were my preferred method for the empirical analysis in the chapters 7 and 8 because knowledge is created through a collective process in focus groups. Therefore, focus groups are a well-suited method for a PAR study, which aims to be as inclusive as possible (see section 2.3). Unlike in interviews, participants are not just answering questions, but they can ask each other questions, seek clarification, challenge each other on contradictions, comment on what they have heard and prompt others to reveal more (Finch and Lewis 2003: 71). In other words, in a sense the participants take over some of the interviewing role and are thus considered as active co-researchers (Simthson 2008: 362). The interactions between participants are key for the knowledge creation in focus groups and in this way more depth can be gained than in interviews.

Focus groups are usually advised to be groups of 4 to 12 people (Simthson 2008: 362). However, as Brannen et al (2002: 17) argue smaller groups with even just two people often yield more relevant and richer data as it allows all participants to talk and to go into more depth. In this PhD study the groups size varied between 2 and 6 people. As outlined above, PAR aims to hand over power and influence over the research design to the researched groups wherever possible (see section 2.3). As such, the decision on how many people and who participated in the discussions was made by the groups themselves, and was largely based on the time, availability and interest of the group members. In two groups, the interested group members preferred to be interviewed together but we were unable to find a convenient time for everyone and so I conducted two separate interviews. All focus groups lasted around 1 ½ to 2 hours except one which lasted over 2 ½ hours.

Focus groups can be an ideal method to mitigate power-inequalities because, for example, they can be less intimidating than being alone with an interviewer (Simthson 2008: 366). However, it is crucial that focus group discussions are conducted in a non-judgemental safe space in which participants feel comfortable to talk freely. Usually, it is advised that focus group participants are homogenous, for example of the same gender, age and in the same situation, such as students studying the same course or people with the same medical conditions (Simthson 2008: 359). In this PhD study I decided to build on pre-existing activist groups. Methodologically, pre-existing groups can be advantageous as their familiarity creates trust among participants and enables them to talk about sensitive issues (Finch and Lewis 2003: 192). Participants might also find it easier to challenge someone they know, rather than a stranger (Ibid.). However, in order to enable an open discussion, it is important that hierarchical differences between participants are avoided as much as possible (Finch and Lewis 2003: 192). In this sense focus group discussions with participants who are active in the pre-existing groups are an ideal method in this PhD study, as the researched groups were already committed to non-hierarchical organising (see section 8.4.1). But most importantly for the knowledge creation was that reflections were triggered and deepened by memories of shared situations. The benefit of pre-existing groups is that participants can analyse these experiences together and explore the meanings and contexts of the actions they did together (Kitzinger 1994: 105; Finch and Lewis 2003: 192). To build on pre-existing relationships matches with PAR methodology, in which the researcher aims to co-create knowledge with the participants as much as possible. Due to our collective efforts the atmosphere in the group discussions was welcoming, warm and energetic which created an interactive process of knowledge production.

It is important that focus group discussions are carefully facilitated (Finch and Lewis 2003: 172). In the focus groups I encouraged an open and interactive discussion whereby I welcomed spontaneous topics whilst ensuring that the discussion remained focused and all key points were covered. A particularly useful feature of focus groups is that groups sometimes pick up themes that were unanticipated by the researcher (Simthson 2008: 362) and so it is important that discussions are not too tightly structured. In this PhD study the key theme of solidarity was, for example, a topic which emerged out of the group discussions without me identifying it as a key theme prior to the focus group discussions. As the facilitator I also ensured that everyone in the group

freely contributed and interactions between participants were kept respectful and without interruption. In line with the idea of knowledge co-production I was careful to balance my role as an active listener with more active engagement in which I would encourage deeper thinking by referring to an action or event and suggested to collectively analyse it (see section 2.4.3). Simthson (2008: 362) points out that while the literature at times gives the impression that the ideal facilitator is neutral this is not possible in practice. Instead, the researcher should aim for reflexivity and awareness of the way in which their characteristics and behaviour might influence the group dynamic and discussion (Ibid.).

When drawing on the data created in focus groups, it is important not to automatically assume consensus even if participants do not openly disagree with each other (Simthson 2008: 364). Consequently, I analysed the data on an individual level to ensure the opinions of the participants were not automatically accepted as the voice of the groups' consensus (see section 2.5). However, if a point made by one participant was agreed with by other people – either verbally or gesturally – I noted that down. I also prompted participants to express disagreement or agreement on particular points. I then identified the particular point of consensus as a theme which I then fed into the following focus group or interview, if appropriate.

Lastly, it is important to stress that focus groups are more than a means of knowledge creation. They are often reported to be a creative process that benefits the participants (Simthson 2008: 362). In this PhD, the focus group method was often appreciated by the groups because it reflected their collective identity and collective processes and allowed group members to hear the opinions and ideas of their peers. Through the focus group discussion reflection was stimulated between group members which helped to clarify the standpoints of the individual activists. The participants appreciated this method as it directly benefitted them and their struggles. The focus group method is therefore directly connected to the third research aim of this PhD, namely to create knowledge that is useful for the struggle of no-waged workers who actively participated in this research.

Table 5 – Focus Groups

Group	Area	Date of interview	Place of interview	Number of people interviewed	Length of interview	Interview referenced in text	Recording method
Scottish Unemployed Workers Network	Dundee & (Scotland)	03/10/2016	Dundee, café in the city centre	4	1.25 h	12	Digital and notes
Job-de-Centre	London	17/11/2016	The Field, South London	4	1.33 h	15	Digital and notes
Norwich Claimant's Union	Norwich	11/04/2015	Norwich, café city centre	6	1.50 h	6	Digital and notes
Keep on Volunteering Voluntary	London & (Manchester)	04/11/2016	One of the participants house	2	1.34 h	14	Digital and notes
Dundee Against Austerity	Dundee	04.10.2016	Dundee library	2	0.58 h	13	Digital and notes
Brighton Benefits Campaign	Brighton	01.07.2015	Brighton Unemployed Centre, Hollingdean, Brighton	3	2.35 h	9	Digital and notes
Boycott Workfare	London	12.07.2016	Café, Haringey, North London	2	1.27 h	10	Digital and notes
Haringey Solidarity Group	London	29.09.2015	Phoenix Millennium Centre, Haringey, North London	4	1.52 h	8	Digital and notes

2.4.6 Semi-structured interviews

Focus groups were not always possible due to time or accessibility constraints or because no other person of the group wanted to participate in a focus group discussion. At these times, interviews with one person were the chosen method, as semi-structured interviews have the significant advantage that the individual participant can choose the place and time most suitable for them (Lewis 2013: 59). Similar to focus groups semi-structured interviews are an ideal method for grasping the views of the participants (Legard et al. 2003: 138). Therefore, many scholars have argued that interviews are compatible with and indeed complementary to focus groups (see for example Pollack 2003: 462). In interviews the individual participants can express themselves without being influenced by others. This is especially important if internal power hierarchies in the group make a focus group method impossible, which was, however, not the case in this PhD study. Another important difference to the focus group method is that the

individual is the focus of interviewing, which gives the opportunity to explore the experiences of the individual in more depth. However, as the collective agency of the groups was the focal point of this PhD, less emphasis was placed on the individual and only explored from the angle of how their experiences and behaviour influence the group dynamic. In this way data on the personal characteristics of the interviewee, which are typically collected in interviews (e.g. age and gender), were also not the focus of this study. Two important individual variables were, however, of importance for this study, namely if the participants had previous experience of activism either inside or outside of trade unions, and if they were unwaged (claimant, pensioner, student) or waged. It was recognised that the bridge between waged and unwaged is fluid and can change frequently.

Similar to focus group discussions semi-structured interviews also unfold in a conversational and informal manner. The researcher's role is to be an attentive listener (Longhurst 2010: 105). To that end I asked open, non-leading questions and avoided closed and/or leading questions. As with the focus groups I occasionally drew on my knowledge gained through participant observation during the interview by referring to past actions and memories in order to assist participants in clarifying their ideas. In this way new thoughts were created during the interview process (Legard et al. 2003: 142). The interviews lasted between 1 hour and 1 ½ hours. I usually invited the groups and not individual members of the groups to participate in the research. After consent was given, individual members of the group volunteered to be interviewed. Most of the interviews were conducted before the focus groups but this was without intent.

Learning from feminist approaches to interviewing I started from the premise that our society is unequal and riddled by power imbalances and that reproduction of these imbalances must be actively avoided in the research (Doucet and Mauthner 2008: 328-330). This is not only because such research perpetuates power hierarchies but also because it negatively effects the process of knowledge creation. Graham's (1983) famously summed up her dissatisfaction about (survey)-research design in her essay entitled "Do her answers fit his question?". The same question can be asked about interviews. In her classic article Ann Oakley argued for the importance of 'non-hierarchical' relationships between (female) interviewer and the interviewees (Oakley 1981). In her view a non-hierarchical relationship would be achieved if the interviewer was 'prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship' (Ibid.: 41). Similarly, Mies argued that it is crucial to develop mutually reciprocal relationships during the

interviewing stage (Mies 1983: 123). Such an approach has later been highly criticised, especially from a de-colonising research angle, as due to socio-economic and global inequalities, some research relationships are intrinsically hierarchical (Patai 1991). As such, while a non-hierarchical relationship might be hard to establish, if interviewer and interviewees share an identity, there is a reduced likelihood of unequal, exploitative or unethical behaviour in research (Doucet and Mauthner 2008: 333). In my research the important subject positions were that of being an activist and having experienced unpaid labour in a commercial environment. I shared both of these identities in common with my interviewees. However, on the other hand, I had never been a claimant in the UK and therefore never experienced the brutality of the workfarist approach towards claimants. This resonates with the findings of some feminist researchers, who argued that being an “insider” was riddled with contradictions, as one could be an insider and an outsider in the same time. This begs the question of how to present oneself or in other words ‘which parts of our identity we choose to emphasise’ (Doucet and Mauthner 2008: 334). However, Doucet and Mauthner continue to argue that these feminist reflections on the inevitability of power hierarchies and differences in interviews does not mean that the method should be abandoned but that the researcher needs to be reflective about their research practices by being aware of and work with these power differentials (2008: 333).

In my research practice, being aware of the power imbalances meant that I openly discussed them with the participants. Before the interview was arranged I ensured that the participants had a clear idea about the research project. I gave my interviewees a preliminary chapter outline and a brief abstract of the research project. I also explained what I would use the interview for and I committed to transparency and to not publish anything from this data if the participants objected. Moreover, I also gave them the opportunity to see my suggested interview questions before the interview and I gave them the opportunity to change them. I also highlighted before and during the interview that they do not need to answer any question and should only answer if they feel comfortable doing so. Additionally, I sent my interview notes after the interview to the participant with the opportunity to change them and I also sent the finished PhD to the participants, again giving them the opportunity to amend it. Additionally, I paid attention to the participants needs and tried to accommodate them as much as possible. For example, I let them choose the place and time of the interview. As mentioned above, I was also transparent about my income and about the fact that the research is for a

PhD, and therefore for potential career advancement. Recognising the power imbalances also meant that the whole project was designed to be a two-way street in which the participants benefit from the research (see section 2.3).

Table 6 – individual interviews

Group	Area	Date of interview	Place of interview	Length of interview	Interview reference d in text	Recording method	Previous activist	Waged vs unwaged
Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group	London	16.03.2015	Persons home	1.27 h	3	notes	Yes	claimant
Leeds Welfare Fightback	Leeds	03.02.2015	Leeds city centre, cafe	1.28h	1	notes	Yes	waged
Newham Claimant's Union	London	07.04.2015	Newham, East London, cafe	1.17h	4	notes	Yes	pensioner
Newham Claimant's Union	London	27.03.2015	Newham, East London, cafe	1.03 h	5	notes	Yes	claimant
Unite Community	National	16.04.2015	Unite, headquarter, London	1.25 h	7	notes	n/a	waged
Future Interns	London	12.02.15	Café, Bethnal Green, East London	1.14 h	2	notes	Yes	student
Disabled People Against the Cuts	London & National	26.04.2017	Café, Westminster, London	1.10m	16	Digital	Yes	claimant
Boycott Workfare	London	18.07.2016	Persons home	1.36m	11	digital	yes	waged

2.5 Data analysis

Reflexivity is not only of importance during the planning and data collection stage of the research but also crucial when it comes to data analysis (Mauthner and Doucet 2002: 417). Often data analysis is presented as a series of neutral, mechanical and decontextualized procedures. Also the aid of computer programmes is often emphasised in a way that adds to the appearance of scientific objectivity. In other words, the data analysis stage of the research appears to take place in a 'social vacuum' (Ibid.: 414). In this way, even in critical studies, the positivistic model of the neutral researcher is again re-enforced. However, as Doucent and Mauther show, by sharing their own experiences of data analysis, the researchers own bibliography affects the choice of academic texts and consequently the particular ways of "seeing" and "hearing" the data during the analysis process (2002: 4). In my case, the process of data analysis of unwaged workers organising outside of trade unions was affected by my own experiences of being part of the creation of an independent trade union that

predominately organises migrant workers outside of the established trade unions (see also section 2.6). Due to my own experiences I was particularly receptive to the problems the unwaged workers groups had with trade unions. It was also an issue the participants wanted to discuss with me in particular because of our shared experiences. Nonetheless, being reflective about how the researchers personal biographies might affect the interpretation of the data and thus potentially emphasise some voices over others, does not mean that the voices of the research participants cannot be captured (Ibid.). Instead, it means that reflexivity is constituted between the researcher and the research participants and that articulated experiences of the participants can be grasped in an interpretative manner by the researcher. It is therefore necessary that the research is located within a theoretical framework, and that the researcher makes their theoretical framework and the way in which it influences the data analysis transparent. As Doucet and Mauthner (2002) have it:

'research which relies on the interpretation of subject accounts can only make sense with a high degree of reflexivity and awareness about the epistemological, theoretical and ontological conceptions and subjects and subjectivities that bear on our research practice and analytic processes.'

The constant feedback between theory and practice shaped the research design of the whole PhD, and it was a crucial part of analysing the data (see also section 2.3). I subscribe to the view that analysing data is not limited to a certain stage of the research (Bryman and Burgess 1994: 218) but continues throughout the research. As the Figure 1 in section 2.3 shows, analysis has already taken place prior to the data collection through focus groups and interviews by drawing on auto-ethnography, participant observation and document research, but also by consulting theory and considering the historical processes at stake. This earlier part of the analysis enabled me to come up with interview and focus group questions that were fit for purpose.

However, my approach to writing the last two empirical chapters of this PhD can be broken down as follows: I digitally recorded and/or took notes of interviews and focus group discussions. With the focus groups I mostly relied on digital recordings but I additionally made notes to record particular agreement or disagreement in the group. The group discussions were analysed according to a 'participant based group' approach 'where the contributions of individual participants are separately analysed within the context of the discussion as a whole' (O'Conner et al. 2003: 258). I took notes from the discussions which I then sent back to the participants giving them the opportunity to consider them and make amendments.

I then re-read the notes very carefully and several times to identify themes. I thereby applied a non-cross-sectional approach to organise the data as suggested by Spencer, Ritchie and O'Conner (2003: 203), which means that I looked at each interview/focus group in isolation in order to organise the data into themes. Through such an approach the themes identified in this research do not necessarily appear in all parts of the data. I endeavoured to use the participants own themes and continued the labelling throughout the fieldwork process. Patterns and reoccurring themes and sub-themes were identified through mapping processes (Ibid.). This means that the data collected in each interview was left as a whole and not cut apart in the clustering process, as some scholars suggest to do (see for example Ritchie and Spencer 1994) in order to make sure that the data is not taken out of its original context. The identified themes were then, whenever it was felt appropriate, fed into the consecutive interviews and focus groups. This enabled me to draw out commonalities and differences between groups and also to deepen my understanding of these themes. In order for this to be possible, I ensured that I was very familiar with the previous interviews and focus groups, when conducting further interviews and focus groups.

This process allowed me to identify key themes which I then used to revisit my theoretical chapters to refine by conceptualisations (see in particular the sections 4.5). As such, I reject an inductive empiricist approach in which concepts are seen as the extension of codes, as suggested, for example, by Bryman and Burgess (1994: 219). Instead, I adopt the methodological approach of political theorists, in which concepts are categorised by their defining conditions, which consequently helps to understand the different 'kinds' and variations of the concept (List and Valentini 2016: 531, 532). These concepts then guided my empirical analysis on resistance to employability undertaken in chapters 7 and 8. In other words, the approach of my analysis was to move from the concrete to the abstract and then back to the concrete (see also figure 1 under section 2.3). I thereby proceeded in a historical materialistic manner by recognising that all knowledge is historically constituted and therefore already pre-ordered, while at the same time recognising that knowledge is always produced for someone and for a specific purpose and that the knowledge creation in this PhD aimed to be useful for the resistance of current and future unwaged workers (see section 2.2 and 2.3).

2.6 Research relationships and researcher subjectivity

As outlined above, this research comes from my experience as an unpaid intern and my joint attempt with other interns to organise for a wage. This means that I was already participating in some of the groups, namely the *Precarious Workers Brigade* and *NoPayNoWay*, before the start of this PhD project. As such I have never been an anonymous researcher entering from the outside but someone inside the activist network which fortunately put me in a position of trust. Gaining “access” to the activist groups was relatively easy for me due to my long-term commitment to activism. In particular, I was an active participant in grass-roots trade unions. In the beginning of my PhD, I was involved with the Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB), and later in 2014 became a founding member of United Voices of the World (UVW), a trade union in which predominantly low paid, migrant workers organise.

My engagement with various groups of this research and UVW made it possible for me to often function as a “bridger”, by encouraging the forging of links between different struggles. This was done, for example, by helping to organise a joint action between UVW union and *Boycott Workfare*, as well as between the UVW union and the *Precarious Workers Brigade* (see section 8.2.2). This shows the potential of PAR to forge links between different groups and thereby strengthen their respective struggles. This proved particularly useful in these cases as the division between the low pay and no pay economy is still persistent (see section 5.2.3 and 8.2.1), in part because of success of the discourse surrounding 'strivers versus scroungers' which has pitted waged and un-waged workers against each other.

2.7 Ethical considerations

As Hale (2008: 12) points out it is especially important that activist research is carried out with great 'rigour' and care as 'getting it wrong means not only unfavourable reviews from academic peers ... but, much more seriously, data and analysis that could harm or mislead our allies'. This is why feedback from the participants, active listening and careful systematic reflection are crucial elements throughout the whole research process, including the data analysis, the choice of methods and the cycle between theory and practice (see also sections 2.3 and 2.5).

It is important that power hierarchies and privileges are acknowledged and made transparent. As such, when discussing the research project with participants I always explained how the data was intended to be used, and how the research was funded. In this way, the participants knew exactly what they were consenting to. Specifically, I assured participants that their voices would be used anonymously, and that the research would not be published without their prior consent. I also explained that my scholarship from the Rosa Luxembourg Foundation in Germany was not contingent on any particular research outcomes or recommendations. After the preliminary introductory discussions and before commencing the research proper the participants were invited to ask further questions about the research, following which a consent form was signed.

My main difficulty during this PhD was in trying to balance my academic and activist commitments. This is a common problem among activist researchers (Hale 2008: 14). There is a constant pressure to publish in order to improve one's employability in academia. This pressure was particularly acute for me as the special ethical care and accuracy required in PAR makes publishing an even slower and more difficult procedure than it anyway is for academics in the early stages of their career. Likewise, activism itself can be very demanding often to the point of burnout. I was often so engaged in different campaigns, mostly with the trade unions Independent Workers of Great Britain and United Voices of the World (see section 2.6), that I often lacked the time and the headspace I needed for academic writing. As my scholarship was insufficient to meet the cost of living in London, I also had to find an additional source of income through tutoring. Consequently, in order to manage my commitments and avoid burnout, I decided to go part time with this PhD and reduce my trade union activities. I can therefore relate to what Motta called the 'triple burden' of activists who juggle 'paid, domestic [in my case academic] and political work' (2013: 14). In that vein, I would like to conclude with a word of caution for my fellow activist scholars that the care that research requires is also required for ourselves. In the words of an activist from the *Disabled People Against the Cuts*, quoting a striking minor in a scene from the film *Pride*: 'don't give it all to the struggle, save some for home'.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the epistemological and methodological assumptions underpinning my PhD research, and the methods I applied throughout the inquiry. Gramsci's historical materialist approach marks the ontological and epistemological

foundation of this PhD. It assumes that all knowledge is historical as social science research builds on pre-existing knowledge. As such, by rejecting a perspective of theoretical emptiness, a Gramscian approach sees a particular ontology by no means as self-evident and it therefore needs to be theorised. According to a neo-Gramscian epistemology knowledge is created within specific historical social relations and therefore enabled and constrained by historical structures, which are shaped by human agency. A neo-Gramscian framework assumes that knowledge production is itself part of the dialectical process of historical change. Therefore, all theory is for someone and for a specific purpose, no matter if the scholar makes it explicit or not.

I outlined in this chapter that in this PhD I combined and enhanced the Gramscian take of historical knowledge with the epistemological foundations of PAR. In particular, PAR gives emphasis to agency within historical materialism and it is therefore assumed that *reflective knowledge* comes from action. Moreover, a PAR epistemology stresses the collective nature of knowledge production that entails not only rational logic but also an understanding of the social relations, *relational knowledge*.

I then outlined the methodological approach of PAR, which starts with practice. In PAR it is intended that the research question emerges from the community of interest. PAR then proceeds in a feedback loop between theory and practice. In Figure 1 (see page 29) I illustrated in what way theory and practice informed each other in this PhD. I also outlined the special characteristics of PAR, namely that it aims to produce knowledge that is useful for the researched groups and to democratise research.

However, caution is required when applying PAR in an university context. Academic life is usually structured in a way that makes it largely incompatible with PAR. As a PhD student though I was fortunate to have the freedom and flexibility required to conduct PAR as my research was neither limited by the academic teaching cycle nor contained to a short (field) research period. Despite these advantages I argue that it is problematic to conduct PAR within a university setting. This is because in the aim of democratising research PAR sees research participants as 'co-researchers', while the researcher has only the role of facilitating the research but doesn't 'own' the research. While these principles are admirable, I argue that being a 'co-researcher' demands time and energy, which not everyone in the researched community might be able to contribute. I also pointed out that the issue of material remunerations is side-lined in the PAR literature to date. This is, in my view, highly problematic as the PAR principle of 'equal and collaborative involvement of the "community of interest"' (Walter 2009: 263) can easily

translate in unpaid labour of the 'co-researchers'.

This PhD draws on a mixed qualitative methods approach, consisting of auto-ethnography, institutional mapping, participant observation, document research, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. In this chapter I explained how each of these methods were applied and how the data was analysed. I highlighted here that the data analysis is not contained to a certain research stage but is integral to the whole research process and embedded it the feedback cycle of theory and praxis. I also highlighted that the analysis does not take place in a social vacuum and that therefore careful reflexivity needs to be applied throughout the research. In this chapter, I therefore also reflected on the ways in which my own identity influenced the research practice. Lastly, I outlined the necessary ethical considerations.

– Chapter 3 –

Critical Political Economy of Work

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide the theoretical and conceptual framework for this PhD dissertation. For this purpose, I draw out a Critical Political Economy of Work approach (CPEW), which is located in the broader study of critical International Political Economy (IPE). In particular, I show here that the concept of employability needs to be analysed against the backdrop of neoliberal globalisation and the state extension processes which come along with it. I suggest in this chapter that a CPEW framework can serve as an important first step for the analysis of employability and how it can be resisted. This is because, 'resistance can only be successfully mounted if one understands what precisely needs to be resisted' (Morton 2007: 134). An IPEW analysis equips the researcher with a toolkit to identify the capitalist forces that increasingly impose work and visualises opportunities to resist exploitation. However, I argue in this chapter, that due to its top-down nature a study of IPE and by extension also CPEW is very limited in its conceptualisation of working class self-activity, and can also only assess this agency negatively in a reactionary way. The pro-active agency of building alternatives to capitalism cannot be assessed through an IPEW lens. This is problematic as the building of a counter-hegemony relies on the development of alternative social relations of production and also alternative norms, values and institutions (see section 1.4.1). As such, I will take the development of a CPEW framework as a theoretical foundation on which the next chapter, chapter 3, will build through a conceptualisation of class struggles against capitalism and for commoning processes that enable counter-hegemonic activities.

IPE is the interdisciplinary study of politics and economics at a trans-national level, with a particular focus on the power dynamics of international economic relations (Bieling 2008: 12). However, it is not ideologically predisposed in that the 'Political' in IPE is open to various ontological, epistemological and methodological paradigms. In other words, the cohesion of the IPE discipline lies more in what to study rather than how to study it (Amoore 2002: 40). For reasons of simplicity, I have divided the discipline of IPE into the 'neoliberal' and 'critical' schools, even though there are clearly more than

these two approaches. The neoliberal approach² to IPE has been identified as orthodox with a tendency of becoming 'monoculture' (Wade 2009; McNamara 2010: 67; Phillips 2010: 81). The chapter will, therefore, start by outlining the neoliberal approach to IPE and then outline in particular how employability is understood through a neoliberal IPE framework. Next, I outline critical approaches to IPE which stand in opposition to a neoliberal version of IPE and place an emphasis on existing power structures. Locating this PhD within the latter IPE field I then draw on one particular critical IPE strand, namely the works of neo-Gramscian IPE scholars. These scholars put forward a historical materialist approach to IPE, which shows that international politics are path-dependent and historically embedded in capitalist social relations. This means that historical structures, which are the outcome of human actions over time, enable and constrain agency (Rupert 1993: 84; Bieler and Morton 2001; 17, 25). I then pay particular emphasis to the extended state formation processes, which are subject to class struggle and are the space through which and within the struggle over hegemony is contended (Bieler and Morton 2013: 38). These theoretical endeavours allow me to then revisit the concept of employability by applying a critical neo-Gramscian IPE approach. However, as the existing neo-Gramscian scholarship on employability has a tendency to focus on top-down policies, legislation and elite agency it creates little knowledge on how employability is actually implemented in practice. Moreover, as the neo-Gramscian IPE scholarship on employability over-emphasises the coherence of capitalism it misses out on the opportunity to visualise and analyse resistance to employability. Hence, in the last section of this chapter I sketch a Critical Political Economy of Work (CPEW) framework, which puts forward an analysis of working class power with the aim of strengthening this power, and suggest that such a framework would serve as a good starting point for analysing employability and the resistance to it.

3.2.1 The Neoliberal Approach to IPE

There are various approaches within neoliberal IPE, such as new institutionalism, public choice and regime theory (Bieling 2007: 39). Broadly speaking they all establish a set of principles for organising and managing the market economy in order to achieve

² Some prefer to call this approach neoclassical (Gilpin 1987.) some call it 'quantitative-liberalism' (Wade 2009) some refer to it as the American approach to IPE (Malinak and Terney 2009) and others title it the orthodox approach to IPE (Amoore 2002). Like Apeldoorn (2004) I choose to call it neoliberal IPE to highlight that this school of thought seeks to create consensus of the ruling class by promoting neoliberalism as a political project.

maximum efficiency, economic growth and individual welfare (Giplin 1987: 27). In this sense, politics and economics are understood as separate spheres, following their own independent logics – the economy strives for efficiency and politics for power, which is merely understood as state power (Bieling 2007: 38). In other words, the market is the structure and states are the agent (Amoore 2002: 41), and the United States being the principal agent (Phillips 2010: 80). However, the state should generally aim for as little intervention in the market economy as possible (Apeldoorn 2004: 150).

Neoliberalism goes back to classical economic liberalism founded by Adam Smith, author of the *The Wealth of Nations*, in which he famously argued that people can only prosper in society through the pursuit of their 'self-interest', preferably done by responding to the interests of others motivated by 'self-love' (Smith 1976: 27). He thus advised that we should not talk to others about our 'own necessities, but of their advantages' (Ibid.). Smith's focus is set on individual independence rather than people's interdependency. Despite a gradual shift away from Smith's paradigm up to and immediately following World War II, these ideas were revitalised by the Chicago school of economics from the 1960s onwards. There it was argued that self-maximising behaviour in a competitive market, without limited government intervention, leads to efficiency and innovation, which in turn leads to economic growth, employment and prosperity (Bieling 2007: 34). In this vein, Milton Friedman argued

'there is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it ... engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud' (Friedman 1962: 133).

In other words, the neoliberal approach to IPE promotes 'perfect' competition as the ideal social arrangement. From this point of view, wealth and income distribution are decided by natural market forces (and not by political and/or economic power) and ought to be accepted as just and efficient (Wade 2009: 115). Since the market is understood as a neutral terrain, in which power is 'strangely absent', economic motives have seemingly replaced political ones (McNamara 2011: 67). It thus offers a perfect 'apologia for the pliant consensus of the ruling class, under the banner of "objective" knowledge' (Wade 2009: 115).

The rise to prominence of neoliberal IPE must be historically and politically contextualised. Already during the Keynesian golden age of capitalism neoliberal ideas were promoted. In 1938 Hayek and Eucken presented the free market, at a conference

in Paris, as the only alternative to Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. A little later Hayek published his seminal book *The Road to Serfdom*, in which he argued that the pursuit of equality would come at the expense of certain freedoms, and that economic freedom was an imperative precondition of political freedom (1944: 13). Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia were equated with just such pursuits (Ibid: 3). Yet neoliberal ideas remained marginal. In the beginning of the 1970s US President Richard Nixon was still able to declare 'we are all Keynesian now' (Altwater 2007: 347). Most Western states pursued a demand-side capitalist accumulation regime aiming for full employment. Then, in 1971, the Bretton Woods system collapsed leading to the deregulation of capital and financial markets. Moreover, the world economic crisis in 1974-5, coupled with rising unemployment challenged the effectiveness of the Keynesian model and paved the way for neoliberal transformation. In this context, Milton Friedman's call for the neoliberal counter revolution as the only alternative fell on fertile ground. First, Chile pioneered by authoritatively imposing a systematic programme of neoliberal restructuring (Taylor 2006: 20). In a military coup Chile's Augusto Pinochet overthrew the socialist president Salvador Allende in 1973 and launched a neoliberal model of development based on individualism and market liberalisation, which was introduced with close technocratic support of the neo-liberal Chicago-School to which Friedman belonged (Silva 1991: 386). A little later, also the West, Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) in the US and Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) in the UK based their political programmes on neoliberal ideas promoted by Friedman and others from the Chicago school.

In this political climate, the then prevailing school of critical IPE gave way to neoliberal IPE, in some measure due to individual scholar's own fears over their job prospects (Wade 2009:10; Resnick and Wolff 2010: 171, 172). As such, neoliberal IPE gained a 'competitive advantage' in academia (Wade 2009: 111). Through this process a dramatic shift of social values attached to economics took place, namely the focus on 'material well-being' was replaced by an emphasis on the 'choice process' (Ibid.: 112). Neoliberal economics claimed scientific objectivity through more and more complicated modelling. Malinak and Terney (2009:19) show that in 1985 only 20 per cent of the articles in the top twelve International Relations (IR) journals used quantitative methods, increasing to 90 percent by 2006. As such, quantitative methods have sharply risen to prominence since the 1980s (Ibid.). This in turn led to an elitisation of economics as only some experts were perceived to be able to understand the highly mathematical models in use (Ibid.). Economics became a prestige profession. Considering the above

Wade concludes:

'The combination of formalization, quantification and neoclassicism gripped the discipline like a creed. Convinced there was only one true approach, economists gave little value to the intellectual equivalent of biodiversity' (2009: 113).

In this section I have firstly highlighted the rise to prominence and popularity of the neoliberal approach to IPE. This section also demonstrated that the roots of neoliberal IPE are located in classical liberal economics. While there are diverse approaches within the neoliberal IPE school they are nonetheless united by their shared aims of achieving maximum efficiency, economic growth and individual welfare. This section also demonstrated that the roots of neoliberal IPE are located in classical liberal economics. While some academics already advertised neoliberal standpoints during the Keynesian era, it was only from the mid-1970s onwards that the neo-liberal school of thought gained prominence and eventually became hegemonic.

3.2.2 A neo-liberal approach to employability

Regarding labour, the neoliberal school of thought assumes the market ensures that labourers (factors of production) are paid what they are worth. A little deviation might, however, occur as, whilst wages are determined by the labour market, the market itself lacks perfect information, therefore 'costs of coordinating' (Becker and Murphy 1992: 1157) or 'costs of search' influence wage rates (Stigler 1962: 104). In other words, the market, almost, perfectly and neutrally mediates wages. Interestingly, this stands in contrast to Adam Smith, who understood that wages depend on a power battle between employers (masters in Smith's term) and workers (workmen in Smith's term), 'whose interests are by no means the same' (Smith 1976: 84). This is because 'the workmen desire to get as much, the masters to give as little as possible' (Ibid.). Moreover, Smith also had an understanding that wages are set through the collective struggle of workmen and masters. As Smith argues 'masters are always and everywhere in a sort of tacit, but constant and uniform combination, not to raise the wages of labour above their actual rate' and they 'sometimes enter into particular combinations to sink the wages of labour even below this rate' (Ibid.). Smith continues to argue that 'such combinations, however, are frequently resisted by a contrary defensive combination of the workmen' (Ibid.). It is the desperation of the workmen, 'who must either starve, or frighten their masters into an immediate compliance with their demands', which makes their voice heard (ibid.). Smith sees the masters as 'advantage[d] in this dispute' as the law is on their side they can "force the other [the workmen] into compliance with

their terms (*ibid.*). This passage shows, that Smith that did not necessarily see wages as invisibly regulated by the market, as some neoliberal scholars might like to interpret it, but also depicted them as outcomes of struggles.

Through a neoliberal lens unemployment is explained in two ways: firstly, by rigidities in the labour market, the solution for which is more flexibility in terms of an employer's right to hire and fire and to lower wages (Wade 2009: 114; see also chapter 5). In line with this argument, all institutions of social protection and trade unions are not only redundant but hinder prosperity and growth (Palley 2005: 21). Secondly, and more importantly for this PhD thesis, the Chicago School brought human capital theory into prominence. Human capital is defined as activities that influence future real income through investing resources in people (Becker 1962: 9). The human capital theory added to the 'fixed market' theory as an explanation for unequal income distribution. As human capital theory pointed out 'abler' people have invested in themselves more than others (*Ibid.*: 49). This also explains why unemployment among unskilled workers is higher (Becker 1962: 49).

The employability agenda is basically a rebranding of the human capital theory presented by the Chicago school and other neoliberal economists. Employability presents itself as a skill based solution to economic competition and a work based solution to social deprivation. First and foremost, it is argued that employability is a necessary aspect of strategies addressing unemployment and social exclusion. This is because enhancing one's employability is an important step to gain access to employment especially for disadvantaged groups (Lindsay and McQuaid 2004: 202). As such, improving one's employability became not only an opportunity but moreover an obligation for the unemployed and hence conditional for receiving benefits. Work-experiences are thereby understood as a crucial tool to enhance the employability of workless people (unemployed and students). In this respect, internships are seen as a smooth transition into the life of work since they: (a) enable students and graduates to apply their theoretical knowledge; (b) provide them with a time of self-reflection; (c) allow students and graduates to get used to a career- orientated setting; (d) provide them with opportunities to network (Good and Hurst 2010:178).

Later, in the early 1990s another neo-liberal approach explaining unemployment became popular, namely the 'underclass' and 'welfare dependency' theories of the American sociologists Charles Murray (1990) and Lawrence Mead (1989). Murray defines the underclass as

'a subset of poor people who chronically live off mainstream society (directly through welfare or indirectly through crime) without participating in it. They characteristically take jobs sporadically if at all, do not share the social burdens of the neighbourhoods in which they live, shirk the responsibilities of fatherhood and are indifferent (or often simply incompetent) mothers' (1990: 5).

'Voluntary unemployment' served for Murray as the 'definite proof that an underclass has arrived' as according to him 'large numbers of young, healthy, low income males choose not to take on jobs' (Ibid.: 17). While he therefore made the case for abolishing the benefit system all together (Ibid. 26), Lawrence Mead favoured an approach that would enforce the work-ethic. Mead was one of the main architects behind the American welfare reform towards workfarism (see section 5.2.2). For him, the problem was not that there aren't enough jobs but that people were not motivated to take them (1989: 164). He therefore argued that 'work by the poor must be enforced' (Ibid :162, 164), whereby 'workfare programs, linked to welfare, show the most promise but still only reach only a minority of employable recipients. Welfare reform should, above all, raise participation in these programs' (Ibid.: 156). From this point of view, workfare programmes – work undertaken by welfare receivers in return for benefits – aim to improve employability by breaking the habits of 'worklessness' of people who chose a life on benefits and to build 'work habits' of participants who think of themselves unable to work (Crisp and Fletcher 2008: 3).³

In this section, I have outlined the neoliberal view on labour, which argues that the market neutrally mediates wages so that every worker is paid what they is worth. Interestingly enough, this standpoint, which was most prominently argued by the Chicago school, deviated from Adam Smith's understanding of how wages are determinates. Despite his faith in the invisible hand of the market Smith saw that wages are set in a power battle between workers and employers, whereby both groups organise collectively to increase their power. In line with the neoliberal school of thought I showed that employability is rooted in and is a rebranding of the human capital

³ On a side note, it should also briefly be mentioned that Murray and Mead specifically problematised 'illegitimacy' and the 'welfare-dependency' of single mothers. As such for example Murray claims, that single young woman get pregnant because 'sex is fun and babies are endearing' but while society in the past was 'punishing single woman to have a baby' ...'a serious of changes in the benefit rates ... [meant that] having and keeping a baby became economically feasible' (Murray 1990: 25, 26). He therefore suggests that these benefits should be cut so that the 'illegitimacy ratio' would drop (Ibid.). Mead also identifies that the 'culture of poverty' is particularly high among 'welfare mothers' and thus suggest workfare as he argues that the problem as that 'they do not feel they actually *can* work' (Mead 1989:162, emphasis in original). Their theories were specifically influential in Australia's Jobs, Education and Training (JET) programme for lone parents and the New Deal for Lone Parents in the UK (see section 4.2.2). While intersectionality is not a theoretical lens taken in this PhD study, the specific target of workfare policies to lone mothers is a striking example of how gender and class inequality intersect.

approach, which argues that the “abler” have invested in themselves more and are thus paid higher wages and are less prone to unemployment. Likewise, employability suggests that the lifelong learning and the continuous acquisition of skills protects oneself from the vulnerabilities of the labour market.

3.3.1 Critical approaches to International Political Economy

While there is no one singular critical IPE approach, but rather many diverse perspectives, they all share a common dissatisfaction with the neoliberal IPE model (Apeldoorn et al. 2010: 215; Amoore 2002: 42). Thus, being critical is not attached to a specific political programme. Critical IPE approaches reject the positivist epistemology of objectivity and neutral rationality as put forward by neoliberal IPE (see section 2.2).

I locate this PhD study within critical IPE, whereby I pursue a historical materialist IPE approach. The historical materialist approach developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels has been further developed by various schools, such as dependency, world-system and neo-Gramscian theory. This research stands in the tradition of the latter. From a historical materialist perspective it is argued that ‘[p]roduction creates the material basis for all forms of social existence and the ways in which human efforts are combined in productive processes affect all other aspects in social life ...’ (Cox 1987:1). Thereby, production refers not only to the material production but also to ‘the production and reproduction of knowledge and of the social relations, morals and institutions that are prerequisites to the production of physical goods’ (Cox 1989: 39). The relationship between power and production is understood as reciprocal, as production generates the capacity to exercise power but also power determines the way in which production takes place (Cox 1987:1). Historical structures are understood as persistent social practices made by collective human activities and also changes by human activity (Ibid.: 4). In other words, historical structures are shaped by human agency linked to class power. Also, conversely, economic structures may prevent, constrain or enable collective agency thus economic structures have political and social constitutive power, yet they do not determine agency (Bieler 2015b: 8). By historicising economic structures this approach aims to understand how they are shaped by social relations – rather than viewing them as neutral phenomena (ibid: 145). Methodologically historical materialist IPE thus follows an interpretative historical sociological approach of moving from the concrete to the abstract and back to the social relations behind the concrete forms, predominantly by using qualitative methods. This approach is therefore consisted with

the feedback cycle of theory and praxis of PAR methodologically (see section 2.3).

The historical materialist approach gives precedence to the social organisation of production and wider institutional reproduction (Bieler and Morton 2008: 25, 28). In this sense it starts with the assumption that (international) politics are historically embedded in, and internally related to capitalist social relations (Rupert 1993: 84). Capitalist social relations of production are defined by the dichotomy of private ownership and wage labour, in which the constant drive for increasing profits allows for the extraction of surplus value by the property owners and thus exploitation of labour. The state is not viewed as a single actor but, instead the neo-Gramscian historical materialist approach highlights the social origin of state power.

'[S]tate and civil society, the political and the economic, are not understood as given or discursively constructed, separate entities, which are then externally related to each other, but as two expressions of the same configuration of capitalist social relations of production' (Bieler and Morton 2008: 26).

In this sense, the state does not merely refer to the institutional structure of governance. Instead the state is understood as a state-civil society nexus, an extended social framework, which is constantly constructed and contested through class interests, and thus through which hegemony is organised. Given the importance of the extended state in a neo-Gramscian critical IPE approach the next section will conceptualise the state in more detail.

However, Jessop and Sum (2008) have criticised most historical materialist approaches of IPE for emphasizing materiality while neglecting discourse. They argue, discourse is not only crucial because it helps to interpret events and processes as well as their emergence, but moreover because they can in part be explained by discourse (Jessop and Sum 2008: 158, 159). Yet, Bieler and Morton warn that we must not reduce everything to discourse as 'discourse does not simply act upon people, rather people act through discourse' (2008: 36). They understand discourse as a material social practice, which is part of the general social struggle for hegemony (see section 1.4.1). While Jessop places more emphasis on discursive power in shaping structure Bieler and Morton highlight that production is a determining factor by preventing some strategies and discourses and enabling others. Despite the differences, these two approaches to the relation between the discursive and the material have many crucial points in common, which might be unsurprising as they draw on the same classical scholars, namely Marx, Gramsci and Poulanzas. Firstly, both approaches explain why certain discourses and struggles are selected over others by historic structures. Secondly, both

refer to the role of intellectuals⁴ as being to transcend their own social class and to bring its interests in harmony with dominated social classes and to incorporate other interests into one ideology expressed in universal terms (Bieler and Morton 2008: 34). While in this PhD study the formations and resistance to discourses on employability are an integral part (see chapter 6 and 7). Bieler and Mortons' call to not reduce everything to discourse especially at the expense of agency and structure is taken seriously. Following Bieler and Morton (2008: 38) this research explores why the employability idea dominates in this particular historical period by acknowledging the location of actors within the social relations of production, i.e. the underlying power structures of the employability agenda.

In this section I first introduced the core characteristics of the critical IPE approach, which stands in opposition to the neoliberal IPE model. I then put forward a neo-Gramscian historical materialist IPE perspective as one of many other critical IPE approaches and the one used in this PhD study. Particular emphasis was placed on agency and structure in (international) politics and the state-civil society complex as the terrain on which the struggle over hegemony takes place. Given the importance of the extended state mechanism in the neo-Gramscian IPE school this is what the next section will turn to. Lastly, I referred in this section to Jessop's critique of historical materialist approaches that neglect the importance of discourses. This has been countered by Bieler and Mortons' response that people also act through discourses. In chapter 5 and 6 I will pay specific attention to the use of discourse in constructing and challenging the concept of employability and through it maintaining and resisting neoliberal hegemony.

3.3.2 State formation processes through a Critical International Political Economy lens

Gramsci's concept of the integral/extended state is taken as the starting point of my analysis. He rejects the liberal understanding of the state as an actor autonomous from capitalist power relations. For him, the state is the 'entire complex of practical and theoretical activities which maintain and justify class domination and moreover secure consent of those over whom it rules' (Gramsci 1871: 244). As such, the state is

⁴ Intellectuals should not be confused with academics, as for Gramsci everybody can act as an intellectual, not just people who obtained academic degrees.

conceptualised as a particular organisation of class forces as well as the space within and through which these social class forces struggle to achieve hegemony (Bieler and Morton 2013). Gramsci distinguished between political society and civil society, which in fusion are the 'extended' state (Gramsci 1971: 145). Political society is understood as institutionalised political, judicial and military power, while civil society contains the cultural and religious institutions mirroring society. However, these institutions are not clearly distinct but interwoven. Even though analytically distinguishable, they are inseparable in every day practice (Gramsci 1995: 385-6). Gramsci's understanding of the extended state led me to go beyond a social policy analysis of employability, instead I pay attention to how employability plays out in practice by looking at the role of higher education and private welfare to work subcontractors, two shadow-state institutional complexes that deliver employability training (see chapter 5).

Next, Poulantzas' contribution to Marxist state theory is key for the conceptualisation of the state in this PhD dissertation. Poulantzas stressed that the state organises hegemony not only by securing the consent of the dominated classes but also by unifying dominant class fractions and classes which together constitute the state. As such, the state cannot be understood as a direct instrument of the dominant classes (Poulantzas 1978: 12). Rather, the state concentrates all contradictions and divisions of class formations, thus political practices are by nature class practices and state power is the power of class domination. Social classes can, therefore, not be isolated from the state, which constitutes and reproduces social relations (Poulantzas 1978: 132). In this sense, class domination can only establish hegemony by making sacrifices and concessions to the dominated class in order to sustain their class domination long term. Poulantzas builds on Gramsci's understanding of the integral state. Political society is the term he uses for the repressive apparatuses of the state while civil society is what he calls the ideological apparatuses (1969: 77). However, he is thereby diverging from Gramsci's understanding of the state, as he is far more focused on the actual state apparatuses while the civil society aspect of the state and its institutions, which for Gramsci included the Catholic church, education and the media, are much less the focus of Poulantzas' analysis. As such, Poulantzas' conceptualisation will guide me especially in the analysis of the social policies behind employability which are expressed through class struggle and mainly fought out through formal negotiations within the repressive apparatus of the state but at times through active involvement of civil society institutions, such as trade unions (see chapter 4).

Cox's (1981) state theory is of great importance to this PhD as he carved out the relationship between the state and hegemony, by building on Gramsci's notion of the extended state. Cox argues that transformation in the *social relations of production* leads to new configurations of social forces. State power is built on these configurations. As social forces Cox defines the main collective actors operating across and within the production process (Morton 2007: 115). As such, the social relations of production needs to be taken as the starting point for analysing hegemony (Cox 1981:137). Yet, production refers not only to the material but also to the production and reproduction of knowledge, institutions, morals and discourses (Cox 1989: 39). In Cox understanding the state is based on the state-civil society nexus, and as such is not just an institutional apparatus but is also the variety of, and at times conflicting, class interests through which hegemony functions (Bieler and Morton 2004: 92). Building on Cox, Morton argues that 'hegemony is the articulation and justification of particular interests as general interests' (2007: 113). In other words, hegemony is about consent rather than pure dominance. Conceptualised in this way, the state-civil society complex encompasses a broad set of actors, such as the government, think-thanks, multilateral organisations, educational and religious bodies as well as the media. However, as Ian Bruff has pointed out, coercion does not necessarily come as brute force but can also come in authoritative forms of state reconfiguration and institutionalised power. This is especially the case when state power is used to suppress resistance (Bruff 2016: 114). In this PhD, I will draw on both conceptualisations of state power, Cox's understanding of hegemony as an opinion moulding activity and Bruff's understanding of the power of coercion, when hegemony is actively challenged.

In neo-Gramscian scholarship the analysis of the international has been a very important academic endeavour. Poulantzas already argued that the internationalisation of production (globalisation) did not lead to capital being outside the state but within different states. This has, in turn, led to a transformation of the state (and not, as often argued, to a withdrawal of the state). He, thereby highlighted, the varieties of capitalist states. While they are all defined by their general function of creating cohesion in class divided social formations, their particular functions, such as the precise form and its institutional apparatus, depend on the dominant mode of production and social formation (Jessop 1982: 158). However, capitalist societies are not only structured by the particular form of *the* state but consist of multiple national states and supra-state-complexes (Brand and Görg 2008: 571). Cox sees the national as the nodal point of

departure for analysing hegemony, which once it is consolidated domestically may expand on a global scale. In other words, 'world hegemony is in its beginning an outward expansion of the international (national) hegemony established by a ... social class' (Cox 1983: 171 in Morton 2007: 121).

Most prominent in recent years, however, has been Leslie Sklair's (2001) concept of the transnational capitalist class, which has been picked up by Robinson to develop a theory of the emergence of transnational state (TNS). Robinson (2001) argues that even though the nation state has not been made redundant it is transformed and increasingly absorbed into a wider transnational institutional structure of complicated new relations between nation states as well as supra- and transnational institutions. Like Gramsci and Poulantzas, Robinson follows in the historical-materialist tradition by identifying the state not as an agent but as a specific social relation embedded in wider social structures which are historically constituted and shaped by institutions. Robinson argues that in the historical materialist conception there is nothing which ties the extended state to nation states. In this way he claims that economic globalisation has been accompanied by transnational class formations and the emergence of the TNS from within the system of nation-states. He defines the TNS as 'a particular constellation of class forces and relations bound up with capitalist globalization and the rise of a transnational capitalist class, embodied in a diverse set of political institutions' (Robinson 2001: 165). Accordingly, he argues that the TNS has a crucial role in not only maintaining capitalist hegemony but also in imposing capitalist domination beyond borders (Ibid.: 200).

However, Bieler and Morton criticise Robinson for reducing national states to 'transmission belts of the diffusing aspect of global capitalism' (Bieler and Morton 2013: 33). As such they argue that

'the point is not to take the dominance of one spatial scale over the other [international over the national] as a given but to appreciate the manner in which capitalism operates through nodal rather than dominant points. This means appreciating states as the political nodes in the global flow of capital' (Ibid.: 34).

Likewise, Jessop and Sum, whose understanding of the state is also highly influenced by Gramsci and Poulantzas, criticise scholars such as Robinson for paying too much attention to the internationalisation of the state while neglecting the particularities of national state apparatuses (which he nonetheless views as embedded within the wider political system/systems) (Jessop and Sum 2006: 161). In this way he argues, that neoliberal globalisation does not impact on all nation states equally and likewise there is no common response of all nation states to it (Jessop 2010: 42). Especially in the

current economic crisis the nation-state proved to be the last resort to solve economic, political and social problems (Jessop 2010: 43). However, it is important to highlight that Jessop hereby overemphasises the political society aspect of state formation while paying little attention to the civil society aspect. Nonetheless, Jessop's contribution to state theory lies in his framework of the strategic-relational approach (SRA), which stresses the ways in which structures privilege some actors, some discourses, some identities and some strategies over others and in turn the interaction among these leads to state power. Thus, it places emphasis on the 'reciprocal path-dependent and path-shaping nature of hegemonic transformation'. In this sense, he refers to an 'integral world capitalist order' since the hegemonic capitalist accumulation strategy is the basis for an institutionalised compromise between opposed social forces for organising activities across different institutional orders (Jessop 2003: 30). Building on the above scholarship my analysis of employability will take the internationalisation of state mechanisms into account while appreciating the persistent power of national state apparatuses. As such, I locate this PhD in Bieler and Morton's understanding of the modern capitalist state, which operates through nodal rather than dominant points. In other words, it is not about arguing that the national state transformation processes are more important than the international or the other way around but about identifying the nodal points through which hegemony is organised. Consequently, chapter 5 pays attention to the nodal points of the political society aspect of state formations at EU level and the UK national level which led to the construction of the employability agenda. In this section I have introduced the fruitful state theories debate amongst neo-Gramscian scholars to give an account of the historical materialist conceptualisations of the state in which this PhD dissertation locates itself. All of these theories, which are partly informed by each other, reject the notion of the state as an actor or as a distinct institutional category, but view the state complex as shaped by the historical processes of class struggle through which hegemony functions. Gramsci's concept of the integral state, as the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities which maintain hegemony, provides the starting point for my analysis of the state. However, particular contributions from each of the other scholars are relevant for this PhD research, namely a) Poulantzas' notion of the state as unifying (class) fractions of society and his emphasis on the particular forms of the state while also highlighting the varieties of different national states by shaping capitalist societies; b) Robinson's focus on the internationalisation of the state highlights transnational (class-)relations which play a

key role in (re-)constructing neoliberal hegemony c) Jessop's emphasis on the importance of the national state apparatus and strategic-relational approach to analyse the particularities of state power. Regards point b) and c), the debate of the intentional versus the national aspects of state formation, I subscribe to Bieler and Morton's framework, in particular their argument that capitalism is organised through nodal rather than dominant points (international over national) of state transformation. Hence, the European and UK national state transformation processes will be taken into account when analysing the emergence of the employability agenda in chapter 5. Furthermore, d) Jessop's contribution is of high value for this PhD research, since I will be looking at how the employability discourse has been more privileged within the state- civil society complex and how this in turn has shaped precarious work relationships. However, overall I argue that most neo-Gramscian scholarship has paid too much attention to the political society aspect of state formation while neglecting its civil society side. The next section will therefore conceptualise how the state manifests itself as an agent of the labour market in the age of neoliberal globalisation and how employability can be conceptualised through a critical neo-Gramscian IPE lens.

3.3.3 Employability revisited. A neo-Gramscian IPE approach

Andreas Bieler (2012: 368) refers to three main transformations that have occurred in the period of neoliberalism related to labour. Firstly, neoliberal globalisation has increasingly led to the transnationalisation of production along global supply chains – meaning that different parts of one good are produced in different countries. The fear companies could relocate their production elsewhere puts workers from different countries into direct competition with each other. Secondly, along with the transnationalisation of production goes the decentralisation of production through processes of outsourcing. Thirdly, an increasing casualisation and informalisation of the economy has taken place, which abandoned many labour related securities (such as permanent employment, sick pay, holiday pay and pensions). This precarious labour has previously been classified as atypical labour, however, it is in fact 'typical' labour for a great share of the global workforce who are employed in the informal sector. Bieler concludes that these three developments of (neoliberal) globalisation have intensified exploitation of the workforce (see chapter 4). Moreover, as a fourth main transformation that has occurred through neoliberalism related to labour one can identify the redefinition of unemployment from a (temporary) structural problem to a problem one

of the individual (Overbeek 2003: 27). While I also pay attention to the practice of outsourcing, which is crucial in the institutional set-up of the employability regime (see chapter five), the latter two developments, the precarisation of work and the redefinition of unemployment, are the main concerns addressed in this PhD. I will now elaborate in more detail in what way they relate to employability.

Precarious labour in contemporary capitalism cannot be understood without taking the state into account. Doogan (2009) views the state (political society in Gramsci's terminology) as an agent of the labour market in its own right. This is due to the facts, that (a) the welfare regime change and the diminishment of the public protection system are a major factor in the rise of social insecurity and (b) as many people are working in the public sector the state is a major employer and its decision to outsource services to private companies has fostered insecurity (Doogan 2009: 9). In this spirit, Doogan argues that the state actively creates precariousness (Doogan 2009: 116, 212). Yet, through the concept of employability, the responsibility to successfully live and work in these uncertain circumstances is, however, shifted from the state on to the individual. This responsibility transfer is promoted through the image of free and empowered individuals who have the opportunity to make choices for themselves. As Fleetwood has successfully shown, in the 1980s and 1990s flexible labour market practices were employee unfriendly with arrangements such as involuntary part time work (with loss of pay), zero hour contracts, work at unsocial hours eg. 24-7, stand-by and call out arrangements (Fleetwood 2007: 389). The discourse around flexible labour has represented these negative changes for employees. In the late 1990s, however, the employee unfriendly flexible labour practices remained but was joined by some (supposedly) employee friendly flexible labour arrangements, such as flexible start and finish time, job share, shift swapping, voluntary part time and sabbatical. Notably, the discourse represented entirely the positive flexible labour arrangements and supplanted the discourse on the negative flexible labour arrangements (Ibid.). This shift towards the positive discourse around employability and flexibility (re)creates popular consent for a neoliberal response to labour. This is in line with Cox's (1983) understanding of the creation of hegemony as an opinion moulding activity as hegemony is embedded in people's daily lives.

Weeks' (2011) analysis of the work-ethos is relevant here. She argues the work-ethos has two functions: a) 'passing off the values and interests of one class as the values and interests of all'; and b) to 'deliver workers to their exploitation, not just by

manufacturing subjects' consent to exploitation, but by constituting both exploiting and exploitable subjects' (2011: 53). She identifies a neoliberal work-ethos that puts 'the willingness of workers to dedicate themselves to work as the centre of their live' (Ibid. 69). Under neoliberalism the work-ethos became about 'commitment' in terms of adaptability, flexibility and 'continual reinvention' as such it is about loving your job rather than obedience and loyalty that were valued under Keynesianism. In other words, under a neoliberal work-ethos work has become 'self-actualisation' and thus an 'end in itself' (Ibid. 76). In chapter 6, by looking at universities and welfare to work programmes, I demonstrate in what ways employability practices, teach people to subordinate themselves to work and to embrace exploitation.

This is in line with neo-Gramscian scholars, who argue that the employability agenda creates consensus for neoliberal hegemony (see for example Apeldoorn 2003; Overbeck 2003; Moore 2011). The skill expectations in employment and education policies constitute a significant transformation in the power relations between employers and workers, which has been identified as a hegemonic struggle which transcends borders and cultures (Moore 2011: 3). Not only does it take training obligations away from the employers by shifting it onto the individual, but most importantly, the employability agenda: a) creates acceptance of low wages, unsocial and insecure working hours (for example zero hours contracts), this is facilitated by a culture of blaming the unemployed and an unattractive benefits system – in other words, unemployment and employability fulfil important disciplinary functions; b) despite the fact that employers are reducing their workforces for financial gain, the employability agenda places the blame on unemployment squarely on the shoulders of individuals (Appeldorn 2003: 131). Moreover, research has shown that the employability paradigm is (re-)produced through, *inter alia*, the education system which leaves students reproducing and reinforcing themselves as neoliberal subjects (Morely 2001; Brown and Hesketh 2004; Leathwood and Moreau 2006; Tomlinson 2008; Leathwood and O'Connell 2010; Allen et. al. 2012). As such the employability agenda creates acceptance for the neoliberal hegemony in the daily life.

Moore (2010: 67) suggests that the employability rhetoric reflects the UK government's fear of mass resistance, as was seen in the 1980s in response to Thatcher's dismantling of the manufacturing sector, which caused mass unemployment and financial hardship for many (see section 4.2.1). High unemployment became one of the most pressing social issues to policy makers from the mid-1990s onwards (Overbeek 2003: 13). A

"solution" for this structural economic problem was needed as industries feared a re-regulation of the economy (Apeldoorn 2003: 123). 'Active labour market policies' became the response to high unemployment in most OECD countries. In this spirit, unemployment was redefined from a structural issue to a personal defect of the people without work, as they are either unable or unwilling to work. Fundamental causes of unemployment, such as the destruction of the manufacturing base in Britain, privatisation and outsourcing tight to strict (labour)-cost cutting regimes, the short-termism of British financial institutions which denies manufacture the long-term investment it depends on and a stop to job creation initiatives, were translated into educational projects of skills development (Ibid.). In other words, employability deflected attention away from the need for economic and social reforms (Coffield 1999: 486). However, the restructuring of the welfare state also included punitive mechanisms, such as sanctions, fit-to-work assessments for the disabled and workfare, to activate the unemployed into work. In sum, employability not only recreates neoliberalism not only through consent but also through coercion. Thus, it confirms Ian Bruff's claim that especially in times of dissent to neoliberalism it is defended in authoritative ways and increased coercion.

Jessop sees the developments described above within a general transformation of most western countries from 'Keynesian Welfare National States' to different forms of 'Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national Regimes' (Jessop 2006: 141). The Keynesian Welfare National States were characterised by their explicit aim to secure full employment in relatively closed national economies. The Keynesian Welfare National States shared a welfarist approach to social policy to promote mass consumption to facilitate economic demand (Ibid.). In contrast, a Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national Regime is understood as replacing the welfarist orientation of social policies with a workfarist approach of human resource management. In line with this, it subordinates social policy to the demands of the labour market by promoting innovation, flexibility and employability to increase competitiveness in a supply-orientated economy (Ibid: 145-146). The focus on competition in economic policies has led scholars to refer to the 'competition state' (Cerny 1997). However, as Jessop argues, these accounts often do not take into consideration the states' agency in facilitating competition. For Jessop, the EU has 'distinctive capacities that enable it to be a co-director in the complex and open process of coordination of European economic and social policies in an emerging Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national Regime' (2006:

157).

Yet Jessop's concept of the transformations from Keynesian Welfare National States to the emerging Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national Regime bears two crucial pitfalls:

- 1) It has the tendency to over-generalise the logics and to over-emphasise the coherence of the neoliberal project. He stresses that the path dependent legacies of each nation-state undergoing such a development need to be considered. Developments of particular nation-states can only be fully understood, when analysed in their interlacement with the struggles shaping the internationalisation of the state in the interest of the ruling class within national and inter-state forms (Bieler and Morton 2013: 44). The case study of this PhD, the UK, is an EU country which makes it important to consider the internal relationship with the EU as an 'emerging state form' (Bieler and Morton *Ibid.*). Bieler and Morton argue that considering this relationship the question is not in what ways this inter-state system has restructured nation-states and absorbed them into transnational institutions let alone a TNS as foreseen by Robinson. Rather, the focus of the analysis should be 'the form of European integration, the policy-making procedures, the supranational institutional set-up and the way these interact with national forms of state and related institutional set-ups' (*Ibid.*). Moreover, the struggles shaping the internationalisation of the state in the interest of the ruling class within national and inter-state forms should be considered (*Ibid.*). In chapter 5 I will, therefore, look at the interlacement of employment and welfare policies and legislations at the British national and European levels. But moreover I show that they are the product of class contestations, where different social forces struggle within given structures to influence the political agenda.
- 2) Secondly, Jessop's approach focuses on the political society aspect of the state while ignoring its civil society dimension. Jessop's research on the transition from a Keynesian Welfare National States to a Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national Regime on the UK's national state level and the European level provides great insights on 'top-down' policies and legislation as well as elite agency. However, he a) neglects the neoliberal state restructuring through the creation of 'shadow-state' institutions to which state services are contracted out. Thus a marketisation is taking place on the local level. And b) Jessop ignores the civil society aspect of state formation through which hegemony functions. Therefore, his approach emphasises the control behind the creation of the neoliberal Schumpeterian

Workfare Post-national Regime but gives a negative account of labour in resisting neoliberalism (Morton 2007: 133). As such the questions of how the change in welfare regime is anchored in society and if there is resistance to it remain unanswered. In contrast, in chapter 6, I will look at local state-formation process by analysing the outsourced workfare and employability services in the UK. In chapter six I will then look at the resistance to the employability agenda.

Before I conclude, it should, however, be recognised that the analysis presented above is applicable to the countries of advanced capitalism and thus is western centric. It is nonetheless justified as the UK, the case study of this PhD, is a Western country. The idea of precariousness is tightly connected to nostalgia of losing the welfare state (Munck 2013:751). Comparisons are made, always in relation to the golden era of capitalism (where unions were strong, active labour market policies for job creation were dominating and people were protected by the welfare state) (Ibid.). However, the majority of the world did not share this experience: most of the countries in the global South never had a welfare state; their experience is shaped by the colonial state and the developmental/post-colonial state (Ibid.: 752). It goes without saying that all countries of the South are unique and shaped by the contradictions of uneven development through various in neoliberal restructuring processes and divergent state formation processes (Morton 2007: 147). Moreover, Munk (2013: 760) who is a profound critic of Standing's (2011) precariat thesis (see chapter three) also highlights the complexity of the contemporary labour movement. While Standing declares that trade unions are not more than relics of old labour which do not represent precarious workers Munk stresses the revitalisation of the labour movement to which he not only counts national unions but also transnational unions social movements and grassroots organisations (Ibid.; Standing 2011: 168). Notably, in their different approaches both authors point at labour activism outside trade unions.

In this section, I first outlined four main transformations that have occurred through neoliberalism with regards to labour. The informalisation/precarisation and the redefinition of unemployment from a structural problem to one of the individual have been identified as the most important changes for this PhD study. I then looked at these transformations in more detail by revisiting the concept of employability through a neo-Gramscian IPE lens. I, thereby, showed how the rhetorics of flexibility and employability sugarcoat the neoliberal attack on labour and create consensus for neoliberalism by creating an image of the free and empowered individual who can choose from multiple

opportunities. However, I also pointed out that employability also works through coercion by forcing the unemployed (through the threat of sanctions) to work for free or to become work-ready through fit to work assessments and mandatory training courses. By drawing on Jessop, I then outlined that these welfare state restructuring processes can be seen as part of a wider welfare regime change of Western states from a Keynesian Welfare National States to Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national Regime. In Jessop's view the European Union can be seen as a 'co-director' in this transformation. However, Jessop's analysis has two main pitfalls: 1) it tends to over-state the coherence of neo-liberalism as a political project and ignores resistance. To address this shortcoming, I will in the next section sketch out a Critical Political Economy of Work framework that puts workers resistance at the centre of its analysis. 2) It is policy focused and thereby ignores the civil society aspect of state formation. Consequently, through Jessop's framework it is not possible to analyse how employability is implemented in practice. As such I argue that more attention needs to be paid to the discourses and practices which mediate between the state apparatus (political society) and people's daily lives (civil society). In this sense, in chapter 6, I will analyse the marketisation of state services, which did not lead to a decreasing of the state, as it is commonly argued through a neoliberal lens, but on the contrary it inflated the state through processes of outsourcing and institution building. The shadow-state institutions at the cross road between political and civil society that are tasked with implementing employability will be the focus of my analysis there.

In the next section I will now sketch out a Critical Political Economy of Work (CPEW) framework which has the aim to put work and workers agency back into the front line of the study of IPE. It will do so, by integrating a bottom up approach that depicts state formation processes as shaped through struggles rather than by portraying them as a top-down impositions of power through policies, legislation and elite agencies only.

3.4 Critical Political Economy of Work

The study of labour has been a focal point of critical IPE since its inception. Marx pointed out that the value of labour is appropriated by those who control the means of production – as such they are active agents of exploitation. Harrod (2002: 52) argues, however, that despite putting labour at the centre of human existence, the agency of workers in resisting or maintaining capitalist exploitation – outside of revolution – were not the focus of Marx's analysis. He points to Marx's scepticism with regards to trade

unions as he saw their role as one of wringing concessions from capitalists rather than changing the overall system (Ibid.). In contrast, Cleaver argues that this view focuses too much on the dynamics of capitalist exploitation and that Marx's *Capital* is better understood as a political tool (Cleaver 1979: 75). *Capital* portrays the workers' interest as antithetical to capital's, and that workers have the power to challenge capital. Moreover, Cleaver emphasises Marx's own participation in workers struggles (for example the 1848 revolutions and the Paris Commune of 1871) and the examples of workers struggle referred to in *Capital* (eg. the struggle for shortening the working day) (Ibid.: 58). As such, he argues *Capital* needs to be read politically: as an analysis of working class power and of how this power can be improved (Ibid.: 75). This PhD study commits itself to Cleaver's political reading of Marx's labour theory of value (see chapter 3.2).

However, in contrast, to the origins of IPE the study of labour plays only a minor role in current IPE. Very few articles in the UK's leading IPE journals have been about work (Moore 2011: 5). In this way, some scholars have called for the need to incorporate elements from the subject of Industrial Relations (UK)/Labour Relations (US) – which studies employment relations, the subject of work and workers organisation, usually trade unions, into IPE (for example Harrod and O'Brien 2002; Haworth and Huges 2002; Moore 2011). They point out that the study of Industrial Relations is concerned with power relations in the hierarchy of production processes and therefore enhances our understanding of society and politics (Harrod 2002: 55). As such, a merger of disciplines, referred to as the International Political Economy of Labour (IPEL), would contribute to a better understanding between the workplace and the world. The fundamental aim of IPEL is 'to place labour, or producers, and work, or production at the centre of social, political and historical discourses and to see it as the prime dynamic of human history' (Harrod 2002: 49). IPEL would explain the global developments of labour as well as the ways in which labour struggles shape global historical structures (Ibid.). As stated above, labour relations are essentially power relations. Yet as power is ubiquitous, dynamic and multi-formed power relations are in all forms of production and at all levels. In this way, the power relations of production do not only refer to organised labour but to the entire labour force, which Harrod defines as those who are 'capable of expending energy for production'. It thus includes waged, unwaged and the unemployed; established and casual workers and workers of all sectors (Harrod 2002: 50). Likewise, Amoore stresses that looking at labour solely in relation to production is too narrow and needs to go

beyond the bargaining power of trade unions. In this way, Amoore suggests that it would be more appropriate to label the discipline IPE of *Work* (IPEW) (Amoore 2002: 162).

The debate above already suggests that it might be crucial to distinguish between labour and work. As such, it is necessary to clarify the terms. Marx, for example, distinguished between productive and unproductive labour (Marx 1887: 559-560). In doing so, his endeavour was not to make a moral judgement but to understand the rationale of capitalism. According to Marx, productive labour is the process which leads to the production of a commodity which, in turn, directly valorises capital, or produces surplus value, expanding capitalism. In this sense, the service sector is seen as unproductive because, for example, the labour of a doctor does not directly contribute to the production or expansion of capital. In a similar vein Standing (2006: 7) differentiates between labour and work. He argues labour and employment have little sense of personal freedom, since labour is about maximising efficiency and competition and therefore 'the economic imperative rules' (Ibid.). In contrast, work 'captures the activities of necessity, surviving, reproducing and personal development'. In this sense, people have agency and self-determination when they perform work as it is self-chosen activity performed for its use value. In contrast, a worker who is told to do labour lacks agency.

However, Gibson-Graham et al. (2006: 13) have problematised these discourses on the binary of productive/unproductive labour and labour/work for enforcing 'capitalonormativity', as unproductive labour and work are seen as 'less significant, less productive, less world-shaping, less real'. Moreover, Marxist feminists such as Silvia Federici have long pointed out that capitalism is built on an immense amount of unpaid reproductive labour (2006: 6). When only paying attention to wage labour, the unpaid work upon which capital accumulation is premised is hidden. As the more unpaid work is done at home or in the community the lower the wages need to be so that the worker can sustain themselves. As such, low waged employment and unemployment lead to an increase in unwaged work, as what can no longer be paid for needs to be done at home often through more work intensive processes and longer hours (Cleaver 2002: 145). As such, these distinctions between labour versus work and productive versus unproductive work are unhelpful for an understanding of the material structures of current capitalist relations (see section 3.2.3 for an outline of the transformation of labour through neoliberalism). In this PhD study work and labour will therefore be used synonymously.

Cleaver also points to another conceptual error in Marx and, in particular, Engels analysis of work, namely their distinction between work generally and the specific work under capitalism. Engels argues that the term work describes work in general while the term labour refers to work under capitalism (Cleaver 2002: 148). Similarly, Marx differentiates alienated work under capitalism from other kinds of non-alienated work. However, Cleaver challenges such a distinction by applying Marx own method outlined in what is now the introduction to the Grundrisse, where Marx I) argues that modern concepts can provide 'insights' into previous social relations and II) warned against just applying concepts developed in one specific period to another. Cleaver makes the argument that Marx did, however, do exactly the latter himself in regards to his concept of work. Also, in the introduction to the Grundrisse Marx identified work as an 'measurably ancient relation' without giving any evidence for it (Cleaver 2002: 150). Cleaver, in contrast, argues that work (and labour) is a social relation specific to capitalism. As 'prior to capitalism people in most societies had no generic concept of work' (Ibid.) Instead they were engaged in all sorts of activities, such as farming or boat building etcetera but 'it never occurred to anyone to refer to all these activities collectively as 'work' (Ibid.). Work is thus a social relation unique to capitalism (Ibid. 152). As only under capitalism

[i]t does not matter what people are put to doing as long as they produce commodities that make possible the realisation of a profit that can be used to put them to work all over again, preferably on an expanded scale. Under such circumstances it is possible to refer to all of these diverse activities under one rubric: work' (Cleaver 2002: 150).

Subsequently, Cleaver warns that one should avoid using concepts appropriate to describe capitalism to analyse new forms of activities and relationships (Ibid.: 156). He thus concludes that in order to understand the diverse spaces outside-capitalism, which are happening now – and not later in some trajectory of communism or socialism – we need new concepts which enable us 'to talk about the new realities we create' (Ibid. 157). I argue in section 5.3.5 that commoning is such a concept.

The way we conceptualise work has significant implications for the theoretical framework of a Critical Political Economy of Work approach. If, as it has been suggested above, we take the *political in* CPEW seriously, namely as an analysis of working class power and of how this power can be improved (Ibid.: 75) then a CPEW is an important tool for an analysis of class struggle as it allows us a) to capture the capitalist forces that increasingly impose work and to b) visualise opportunities to resist exploitation. However, a CPEW analysis can only explain people's reactive self-activity, as it conceptualises the negative: what people do not want. CPEW is therefore inadequate to

analyse the proactive self-activity of people to build alternative futures to capitalism in the here and now. Yet, these spaces of non-capitalistic relations are equally important for challenging the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. This is because, hegemony, according to Gramsci, entails 'not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity ... on a "universal" plane" (1971:181-182). As such, any counter-hegemony needs to be built not only on alternative material capabilities but also on alternative norms, values and institutions. In the next chapter, chapter 4, I will therefore explore how an analysis of working class power that visualises opportunities to resist exploitation looks like exactly and I will also draw out conceptualisations that allow to go beyond reactionary resistance to visualise and analyse proactive agency building alternatives to capitalist relations.

To summarise, I have shown in this section, that from the origins of IPE labour has been placed at the centre of analysis but recent IPE studies have neglected labour. I suggest here that work needs to be put back into the front line of the study of IPE and thereby follow Cleaver's approach to reading *Capital* politically, which starts with the examination of workers' struggles. I thereby follow in the footsteps of various IPE scholars, who have argued that labour, work and production should be placed at the centre of IPE, creating a discipline of IPE of Labour or IPE of Work.

However, by building on Cleaver I subsequently showed that the distinction between labour versus work and productive versus unproductive, such as that outlined by Marx and Engels as well as Standing, is not only capitalonormative as Gibson-Graham suggest but also unhelpful for a conceptualisation of class struggle. Cleaver builds on Marxist-feminist's such as Federici, who highlight that capitalist exploitation is built on an immense amount of unpaid labour in the first place. Cleaver argues that work (and labour) is a category unique to the exploitative relations under capitalism and thus is only useful to analyse capitalism and resistance to it. New concepts are, however, needed to describe alternative social relations which are taking place in non-capitalistic spaces.

Hence, this leads me to the conclusion that a CPEW framework is therefore particularly helpful for a) understanding the historical specificity of neoliberal capitalism and pinpointing the forces that maintain its rule; and b) identifying the concrete opportunities for resistance and emancipatory potentials for changing the prevailing order while also visualising the structural obstacles that for such social change. Both parts of the analysis are of equal importance for a framework that seeks to strengthen

workers power as 'resistance can only be successfully mounted if one understands what precisely needs to be resisted' (Bieler and Morton 2006: 26). However, what the CPEW lens does not allow for is the analysis of non-capitalistic spaces and the future we are trying to build, yet post-capitalist imaginaries and practices - which are happening now and not in the distant future - are equally important for challenging neoliberal hegemony and progressive social change. Hence the following chapter is devoted to conceptualising class struggle and progressive social change by specifically distinguishing between and demonstrating the interconnectivity of resistance and commoning.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have first sketched out two broad schools of IPE, the neoliberal and the critical IPE schools. I identified the former as the mainstream approach, in opposition to this approach I located this research in the critical tradition. In particular, this PhD study draws on a neo-Gramscian IPE framework, which I subsequently outlined in more detail in the present chapter. After introducing each school I applied their analytical framework to conceptualise employability. Unsurprisingly, two very different notions of employability came to the fore. The neoliberal school portrays employability as an upgrade of the workers labour. It is understood as an investment in the labouring self, which protects the worker from unemployment as they remains competitive on the labour market through the continuous acquisition of skills and attributes. By contrast, through a neo-Gramscian IPE lens, employability is understood as a set of discourses and practices that create consensus for neoliberal hegemony (see for example Apeldoorn 2003; Overbeck 2003; Moore 2011). While the neoliberal state actively produces precariousness and unemployment, for example by dismantling the safety net of the welfare state, by enabling insecure working conditions (for example zero hour contracts, no sick pay etc.) and by cutting public sector staff, the employability concept nonetheless shifts the responsibility for one's employment onto the individual. In other words, employability deflects criticism from the government and/or the current capitalist system and instead nurtures a culture of self-blame. Yet employability is more than the construction of consent. The concept also entails the restructuring of the welfare state to actively force the unemployed to become work-ready, through trainings on work habits, workfare and fit-to-work assessments which declare many sick people as able to work. This punitive aspect of employability can thus be understood through

a neo-Gramscian lens as the application of coercion rather than the creation of consent (Bruff 2016: 114).

In neo-Gramscian IPE the conceptualisation of the state is especially important as it is the space in which hegemony is organised and also contested (Gramsci 1971: 145, 244; Bieler and Morton 2013: 38). A narrow notion of the state as an actor of governance is rejected and instead the school builds on Gramsci's conceptualisation of the integral state, as the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities which maintain hegemony. As such, particular emphasis is paid to the extended state formation processes, which are subject to class struggle and are the space through which and within the struggle over hegemony is contested (Bieler and Morton 2013: 38, 39). Among neo-Gramscian IPE scholars the relation between the national and the international state formation processes has been a much debated topic. Robinson's (2001) framework of the transnational state is important for this PhD study as it highlights the international class relations shaping state formation processes. However, Jessop warned that the particularities of the national state apparatuses should not be neglected as the internationalisation of state formation does not shape all nation states equally and especially in the aftermath of the post-2008 economic crisis it was often at nation-state level that economic, political and social problems were addressed (Jessop 2010: 43). Taking Robinson's and Jessop's analysis of state formation into account I follow Bieler and Morton's analytical framework, who suggest that the developments of particular nation-states can only be fully understood, when analysed in their interlacement with the struggles shaping the internationalisation of the state (Bieler and Morton 2013:33). I, therefore, ask in this PhD what state transformation processes at the national and international level led to the employability agenda? (see chapter 5).

In this present chapter, I subsequently outlined Jessop's (2003, 2006) welfare regime change analysis. He argues that most Western states undergo transitions from Keynesian Welfare National States, which promoted a demand-oriented economy of full employment and mass consumption to Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national Regimes, which follow supply orientated principles and thus promote flexibility and employability. While Jessop's framework is very useful for analysing both general and particular state transformation processes and it also explains the rise of the employability agenda as part of wider neoliberal state formation processes (see chapter 5), it nonetheless bears two shortcomings: 1) it is concerned with a top-down approach to state functions and is thus too focused on social policies and legislations. In Gramscian terms, Jessop

focuses on the political society aspect of state formation. but neglects the civil society dimension of the state, and thus fails to create insights on the practicalities of these state transformation processes. Drawing on Gramsci's understanding of the extended state, I argue that a bottom up approach to conceptualise the capitalist state is, however, crucial as hegemony is created in people's daily lives (Buttigieg 1995: 6, 7). Taking this shortcoming as a starting point, I look in chapter 6 in what way employability is implemented and in what way employability practices are used to influence people's daily lives by looking at shadow-state institutions at the crossroad of political and civil society. And II) Jessop over-emphasises the coherence of the neoliberal project by overlooking that state formation processes are shaped by class contestation.

Taking the second critique of Jessop's welfare state transformation studies as a point of departure, I developed, in the present chapter, a Critical Political Economy of Work (CPEW) framework, that puts workers' agency at the centre of the analysis. I thereby built on scholars that suggested a merger between the disciplines of International Political Economy and Industrial Relations (Harrod and O'Brien 2002; Haworth and Huges 2002; Amoore 2002; Moore 2011). Such an approach starts with the premise that work is the prime dynamic of capitalism and explains global developments of labour while also analysing the ways in which labour struggles shape global historical structures (Harrod 2002: 49). I expanded their approach by integrating Cleaver's take on Marx's Political Economy as a political tool to analyse working class power with the aim of strengthening this power. This directly links back to the recognition of critical IPE that knowledge is always created for a certain purpose and for the benefit of a certain group (Cox 1996: 87) and its emancipatory purpose, which aims to facilitate social change. Moreover, Cleaver's analysis is of particular use for this PhD in two ways a) he points out that capitalism is built on an immense amount of unpaid and reproductive labour and hence overcomes the pitfall of equating work with paid employment. His analysis which is devoted to increasing the power of the working class therefore also includes unemployed and unpaid workers. And b) Cleaver points to the limitations of an IPE of Work framework, namely that it can only explain people's self-activity reactively. As such, Cleaver's class analysis is central to this PhD and will be explored in more detail in section 4.3)

In sum, a CPEW framework puts forward a useful analysis of working class power with the aim of increasing this power as it enables the researcher a) to capture the capitalist forces that increasingly impose work and b) to visualise opportunities to resist

exploitation. However, in looking solely through an IPE of Work lens the researcher cannot visualise the proactive agencies that build alternatives to capitalism and which are actually existing in the present moment and are not just the vision of a distant future. These alternatives are crucial in the struggle against capitalism as any counter-hegemony needs to be built on not only alternative materialist capabilities but also on alternative norms, values and institutions. By building on Cleaver I suggest here that while it holds true that 'resistance can only be successfully mounted if one understands what precisely needs to be resisted' (Morton 2007: 134), it also works the other way around: a precise understanding of resistance not only enables the researcher to capture the limits and weaknesses of capitalism but also to visualise the spaces outside capitalism in which counter-hegemonic practices, discourses and norms can flourish. With this in mind, the next chapter will conceptualise the agency of class struggle and the commoning processes for alternatives to capitalism in more detail.

– Chapter 4 –

Class, Class Struggle and Progressive Social Change

4.1 Introduction

The need for this chapter emerged out of the conceptual framework developed in chapter 3, namely an IPE of Work approach. I outlined there, that the existing neo-Gramscian IPE of Employment literature is very useful for understanding the top-down state transformation processes taking place in the political society terrain of the state but it neglects the bottom-up dynamics of social change shaped through class struggle. However, capitalism is a social relation historically shaped by class struggle, which means that it is important to not only understand the forces imposing and maintaining capitalist social relations but also the forces which are resisting it. The purpose of this chapter is thus to take the *political* in IPE seriously, namely to take it as an analysis of working class power with the aim of strengthening this power (Cleaver 1979: 75). Hence, this chapter is concerned with the conceptualisation of class and the ways in which class struggle brings about social change. Moreover, in this chapter I also engage with the limits of a class struggle framework, which is that working class power can only be understood reactively as the struggle opposing work. Proactive, counter-hegemonic activities are, however, equally important to replace the existing neoliberal hegemony. As work is not only the key dynamic of capitalism but also unique to it (see section 3.1.3), Cleaver has argued that new concepts are needed which enable an analysis of the 'new realists we create', hence I draw on the concept of commoning put forward by Silvia Federici to analyse proactive agency for alternative social relations (see section 4.5.3).

There are diverse class definitions in Marxist theory. The class position and/or association of people undertaking work-experiences, and consequently their potential role and agency in class struggle, varies from theory to theory. In this chapter I critically discuss three different class theories which all offer a useful perspective to conceptualise interns, workfare and unemployed workers:

The first theory is that of Guy Standing, who identifies both interns and workfare workers as part of the 'precariat'. The precariat he defines as a new 'class-in-the-making',

which differs significantly from other classes such as the working class due to the insecure nature of its work relations. He argues that the precariat will, through sheer strength of numbers, be the major agent of resistance to neoliberal globalisation (Standing 2011: 1, 7). However, Keven Doogan and Andreas Bieler point out that all workers (including unpaid interns and workfare workers) do not own the means of production and are therefore forced to sell their labour power. They therefore reject the polarisation of the working class.

This leads me to a second definition of class, namely Cleaver's concept of the "social factory", which I have already introduced in section 3.1.3. This concept provides a broad definition of the working class as capital needs the reproduction of the working class, which thus includes community, household and unpaid work. Hence, interns and workfare workers are here conceptualised as part of the working class. This broad definition highlights the possibility that all workers unite in one struggle as they all struggle against capital for more wealth. However, this perspective has two shortcomings. Firstly, it provides a limited understanding of the differences between different groups of workers, as for Cleaver all differences come pack to wage disparities. Secondly, analyses such as Cleaver's have been criticised by J.K. Gibson-Graham for being *capitalonormative* as they are solely focused on the control of capitalism without highlighting spaces outside capitalism. A point, which Cleaver has himself acknowledged elsewhere (Cleaver 2002: 157; see section 3.1.3). I thus introduce, as a third approach, the class process theory put forward by Resnick and Wolff. The class process theory visualises multiple class and non-class positions of people by highlighting the production, appropriation and distribution of surplus labour and their connection to non-class processes. Through their participation in multiple class and non-class relations interns and workfare workers have various options for self-identification and hence class cannot automatically be assumed as the fulcrum around which people organise.

Subsequently, I suggest that all the different class theories introduced above can learn from each other. Drawing on their conceptualisations of class and social change as well as on their critiques will enable me to sketch out my own framework for an analysis of class and class struggle clustered around four key aspects, namely agency, resistance,commoning and solidarity. This framework will guide my empirical analysis of agencies of social change and resistance to employability in chapter 7 and 8.

4.2. The precariat

In his book *The Precariat* Guy Standing expounds on a new class analysis, whereby he identifies people in precarious employment as a class-in-the-making, which could become a class-for-itself, called the 'precariat' (Standing 2011: 7). He defines precarious work as the lack of seven forms of labour related social securities: (1) Labour market security: sufficient labour market opportunities secured by a governments commitment to full employment; (2) Employment security: protection against arbitrary dismissal, regulation on hiring and firing etc.; (3) Job security: ability for upward mobility; (4) Work security: health and safety protection and working time regulations; (5) Skill reproduction security: the opportunity to gain skills; (6) Income security: the security of a stable and adequate income; (7) Representation security: a collective voice in the labour market, for example, through trade unions (Standing 2011:10). Standing stresses that it is not the case that precarious labour necessarily lacks all of these securities but the great share of them (Ibid.: 2011: 11).

As such, the precariat has a very different nature to the traditional working class (proletariat) as well as to a group identified by Standing as the middle class (salariat). He defines the former, the proletariat, as people in stable, long term and fixed hour jobs with career potential and mostly unionised (Ibid.: 06). The proletariat are afforded these securities on the condition of loyal subordination. Standing describes the latter, the salariat, as full time employed people close to the elite with high wages and other benefits. The salariat is concentrated in large corporations, government agencies and public administration and has strong trust relationships with capital and the state. In sum, it is the precariat's lack of both – securities in exchange for subordination as well as trust in capital and the state – which makes it different from the other workers and thus gives the precariat 'class characteristics' (Ibid.: 8).

According to Standing, people undertaking work-experiences are part of the precariat. At the very least unpaid interns lack two of the labour related securities identified above: labour market security (number 1) and income security (number 6). While the fact that unpaid internships violate income security in rather obvious ways, the issue of labour market security deserves further examination. Under the premise of the 'knowledge driven economy', the UK government is applying a supply side strategy which aims to restructure the UK labour market through individual skill development (Morely 2001: 132) (see chapter 3 and 5). Consequently, the number of university students nearly doubled between 1991 and 2001 (Moreau and Leathwood 2006: 306). However, this

“educationalisation” of the workforce did not go along with job creation. This resulted in a rise of graduate unemployment and over-qualification of graduates in jobs (Andrews and McGowan 2013: 4), with 58 per cent of graduates ending up in non-graduate jobs (CIPD 2015: 15). In the hope for a job graduates are often taking on several un- and underpaid work-experiences (see section 6.2.1). Taking advantage of graduate insecurities, employers are often only offering (unpaid) internships, rather than paid entry level jobs. As such, Standing concludes that internships are a 'new kind of precariat work specially designed for youth which is spreading' (Standing 2011: 75).

Likewise, Standing identifies an expansion of the precariat through workfare, as it a) 'puts hundreds of thousands into temporary jobs', b) makes benefits deliberately unattractive to deter people from signing on, and c) provides competition with other low paid jobs, thus workfare fosters unemployment by replacing paid jobs (Standing 2011: 144, 145). As such people undertaking workfare are especially deprived of their job security (number 3) and income security (number 6). Regarding job security the first figures released by the DWP on the 12 November 2012 on the workfare programme's success rate show that only 1 in 28 people referred to the programme have found employment. As such, job security is undermined as there is no upwards mobility generated through workfare programmes. Regarding income security, research shows that in the year of 2013 the number of JSA sanctions were 870,785. The highest number of sanctions given since the Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) was introduced in 1996 (Webster 2014: 2). This means 5.41 per cent of job seekers had their payment suspended (Ibid.). 'Failing to participate in employment programmes (including the work programme)' was one of the main reasons why people were sanctioned. As such, rather than helping people into work, workfare simply serves as a means through which to potentially lower the number of welfare recipients. However, workfare workers do not fit neatly into only one of Standing's seven class strata. They should rather be considered both the unemployed and the precariat, which poses a challenge in conceptualising their class position (Standing 2011: 7,8).

Standing argues that the precariat is becoming 'a new dangerous class' which due to its numbers will be the major agent of change to neoliberal globalisation (Standing 2011: 1). He predicts two potential scenarios. One is the “good precariat”, most likely driven by the youth which aims 'to confront the insecurities with policies and institutions to redistribute security and opportunities for all to develop their talents and skills' (Ibid.: 156). The “bad precariat” on the other hand is 'fuelled by the nostalgia for an imagined

golden age' of capitalism and 'drawn to populist neo-fascism' (Ibid.). Standing sees his book as a contribution to the former. He calls for the precariat to develop from 'theatre ... to a set of demands' (Ibid.:3) put forward by a collective voice (Ibid.: 167). In other words, he advocates for the precariat to become a class-for-itself (Ibid. 159). However, Standing is very pessimistic about the trade unions' ability to represent the precariat. Instead he calls 'for a new type of collective body', which would not only focus on its bargaining power with employers but also on labour brokers, agencies, state bodies (especially those dealing with social services), and other classes of workers whose interests differ from those of the precariat (Ibid. 168).

Standing's concept of the precariat is important for this PhD thesis, as it a) locates interns and workfare participants in a broader group of precarious workers; b) highlights the increase of precariousness in the global North; and c) pays attention to labour activism outside conventional trade unions. The latter aspect is especially important in guiding for my PhD study as it led to the second research question of this PhD, namely: *in what way and through what type of collective agency do people resist employability?*

However, Standing's analysis suffers from several pitfalls. First of all, Standing has not conducted any primary research and his analysis thus lacks empirical data. Standing's assertions are therefore heavily dependent on speculative assertions such as 'the precariat does not feel part of the solidaristic labour community' (Standing 2011: 20). Secondly, the analysis is prone to simplifications as it ignores how the boundaries of the precariat are fluent. For example, interns are classified as the precariat even though many of them are likely to be part of the salariat one day and workfare workers are simultaneously classified as the unemployed. People switch between groups or can even belong to two groups simultaneously which makes it impossible for Standing to enumerate the precariat (Conley 2012: 687). Thirdly, considering the diversity of the precariat, consisting of the highly educated but underemployed youth in the global North, migrants in China, environmental refugees and many more it is not clear why the precariat would unite around the common identity of insecurity rather than bonding with other non-precarious groups on the basis, for example, of nationality or gender. This brings me to my last criticism that Standing seems to be trapped in economic reductionism, as he suggests that economic hardship and the loss of securities will automatically make the precariat the (major) agent of resistance to neoliberal globalisation (Standing 2011: 1, 7). The agency of resistance is thus only insufficiently explained.

4.3 The social factory

Standing's class analysis has been criticised by Andreas Bieler and Keven Doogan who reject Standing's polarisation of the working class. They understand class as being defined by a distinction between those that only own their labour power and those that own the means of production. It is the interaction between these social relations of production that shape capitalism. Their analysis stems from Marx and Engels' claim in the Communist Manifesto that 'society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other — Bourgeoisie and Proletariat' (Marx and Engels 1970: 32). As such all workers, no matter if in precarious or secure working conditions, fall under the latter category. Moreover, Bieler and Doogan highlight that neoliberal restructuring in general and the current post-2008 recession in particular have increased insecurities across the working class (Choonara, Doogan and Standing 2012, 17min; Bieler 2012). High unemployment rates and the simultaneous dismantling of the welfare state's safety net have led to (a sense of) uncertainty, including for those who were previously (or still are) in relatively secure positions.

Bieler argues that it is indeed of analytical importance to understand the specificities of different labour groups. However, rather than dividing the working class into new classes he argues that a definition of the working class is required, which goes beyond direct employment relations (Bieler 2014: 125). In this vein, Harry Cleaver's concept of the 'social factory' is of high value. He starts by recognising that capital includes the working class itself, which means that 'the equation of capital with the 'factory', characteristic for Marxist political economy, [is] clearly inadequate' (Cleaver 1979: 70). This is because the reproduction of the working class involves more than work in the factory, such as work at home and in the community. For example, the more unwaged household work is done at home, the less wage workers must receive in order to reproduce themselves (Ibid.: 123). Or the more students learn and become disciplined in school/university, the less value needs to be invested in them by their employer to train and discipline them (Ibid.). Cleaver therefore concludes that 'the factory where the working class work[s] [is] the society as a whole, a social factory' (Ibid.: 70). His definition of the working class thus includes household and community workers as well as the unemployed.

However, this does not mean that for Cleaver all workers are the same. On the contrary, he argues, that it is important to acknowledge the differences between them, as these differences are used by capital to maintain its control over the working class. He argues that the wage hierarchy is crucial in pitting one group of workers against the other (Cleaver 1979: 113). Higher waged workers are used to mediate the relations with low paid workers, unpaid workers are used to discipline the waged workers and so on (Ibid.: 113, 160). Likewise, to Cleaver 'non-economic divisions, such as racial, sexual, or national divisions, are also hierarchical divisions and basically wage divisions' (Ibid. 114). The centrality of these divisions in capital's control over labour means that it is necessary to a) examine the structure of the social factory through which it controls labour power, and b) face the challenge of addressing and overcoming them in working class struggle (Cleaver 1979: 160, Bieler 2014: 128).

Even though none of the scholars referred to above specifically engage with the work-experience workers, it is nonetheless clear from their conceptualisations that they would see them as part of the working class. Interns and workfare workers do not own the means of production and have to sell their labour power. However, they differ from other (precarious and secure) workers as well as from unpaid household workers at home. Contrary to the latter, both, workfare workers and interns, deliver unpaid work in companies, charities or factories. In other words, in places where a) surplus value is produced and b) their colleagues receive a wage in exchange for at least some of their labour power (while some of their labour power is unpaid and thus surplus value extracted by the employer) (see section 4.3). As interns and workfare workers do not earn a wage in exchange for their value creation their employer can extract maximum surplus value. However, different to their wage-earning colleagues the means of their livelihood is not maintained by their employer but, in the case of interns, by their parents or their second job or, in the case of workfare, by the state. Moreover, in the case of workfare, through the system of outsourcing several parties profit from this work relationships (the prime and subcontractor brokering the workfare placement as well as the workfare host).

As part of the social factory both internships and workfare programmes benefit capital in their own ways. Firstly, internships reduce the training costs for employers as they assure that workers already possess the necessary experience and skills before they even start their first paid job. Secondly, internships maintain capital's control by dividing

the (future) workforce, as internships are preserved for the lucky few, who a) can afford to work for free, and b) possess the right 'fit', norms and values (Allen, Hollingworth et Al. 2012). In the case of workfare, the discourse on the undeserving poor pits paid workers, portrayed as hard working tax payers, against the 'undeserving poor', who are seen as 'scroungers' choosing to live on the back of others rather than contributing to society (Ibid.). And thirdly, they fulfil a crucial disciplinary role in that they maintain the illusion that one day all the unpaid work will be rewarded with a paid job. Through work-experiences students learn to get the right 'work-habit', which essentially means to accept any job on offer no matter if and how it is paid and its conditions (see section 6.2.3). Workfare programmes also fulfil a disciplinary role, the impact of which goes far beyond the actual workfare participants. Not only does workfare hit vulnerable people the hardest and threatens through sanctions to push them off the welfare safety net but the fear of being unemployed increased for those in employment and thus creates acceptance of low wages and insecure work conditions in order to avoid benefits by all means.

In sum, Cleaver's broad definition of the working class highlights the possibility that all workers could unite in class struggle as they all fight against capitalism. His concept of the social factory shows that capitalism is based on the reproduction of the working class. Therefore society as a whole – not just the factory – is the realm where the working class produces surplus for capitalism. Such a broad framework is especially important as capital uses wage differences to pit groups of workers against each other. In turn, it is of practical importance to overcome these divisions in class struggle (see chapter 8 on solidarity). Cleaver's concept of the social factory thus stands in contrast to Standing's polarised definition of class, which ignores the fact that all workers have to sell their labour power for their livelihood and that all workers face neoliberal restructuring pressures, which create insecurities across the working class. Cleaver's approach to class is thus in line, with Doogan and Bieler's critique of Standing, by which they argue that the precariat should not be understood as a separate group of workers. Rather there are processes of precarisation, which affect all workers and create more power for capital at the expense of labour (see section 3.2.1)

However, Cleaver's social factory approach has two limitations. 1) It does not offer an analysis of difference between groups of workers other than by wage divisions. 2) The concept of the social factory has the tendency to analyse all activities in light of benefits for capital. Yet, while it is important to recognise that the reproduction of the working

class benefits capital, Cleaver neglects the mechanisms in which class struggle might be (re)produced outside capitalist dynamics. Alternative education and activist work for example are activities of labour power used to cultivate class struggle. As discussed in section 3.1.3 Cleaver is very aware of his neglect and pointed out himself elsewhere that a new framework of analyse is needed, which creates 'new words' for analysing 'new worlds' (Cleaver 2002: 157; see section 4.5.3 on commoning).

4.4 The multiplicity of class relations

Cleaver's appeal for the analysis of alternatives to capitalism has been at the centre of Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff's academic endeavour, who have criticised analyses which 'place capitalism at the defining centre of economic identity' for being 'capitalonormative' or 'capitalocentric' (2000: 13). Thinking of Cleaver's appeal that an analysis of alternatives to capitalism needs to go beyond work (see section 3.1.3) it might come to a surprise that Resnick and Wolff's (and following their class theory Gibson-Graham and others) put work at the centre of their analysis, by conceptualising a class theory that (1) builds their analysis on the 'labouring body' (Ibid.: 1) – in other words workers; and (2) calls for a 'political discourse' which speaks the '*language of economy*' by 'producing (or fostering) a discourse of class' not in its '*social* distinction but in the more restricted *economic* sense of Marx' (Ibid.: 2, emphasis in original). So, in what ways does Resnick and Wolff's non-essentialist understanding of capitalism differ from the capitalonormative account put forward by Cleaver? Gibson-Graham argue that the hegemony of capitalism never reaches full concreteness (2006:15) and as such they propose that in order to analyse the particular expressions and non-expressions of capitalism one must start from a point of theoretical 'emptiness' (Gibson-Graham/Resnick and Wolff 2000: 7; Gibson-Graham 2006: 15). They do so by recognising that capitalist class processes are distinct processes among many that shape social life. By building on Althusser's theory of overdetermination they see the non-essentialist goal of Marxist theory to explore in what ways the social relations between these processes overdetermine each other (Ibid. 116). In other words, capitalist-class processes are conditioned by various non-class processes and visa versa. As such, there are always multiple class and non-class processes which, in relation to each other, constitute social life.

Resnick and Wolff's analysis of class processes starts with Marx's distinction between necessary and surplus labour (Marx 1887: 220). Necessary labour comprises the labour

time necessary to produce the means of livelihood for the direct producer, so that she or he can keep working. As surplus labour Marx understands the extra labour time of the direct producer beyond the necessary labour. It is therefore unpaid labour. Exploitation means that this unpaid labour (or its products) is appropriated by someone else other than the direct producer as she or he has 'its fruit taken away from her or him without receiving anything in return' (1987: 116). Resnick and Wolff refer to exploitation as the fundamental class process. The social formation of capitalism encompasses various fundamental class processes which are non-static, or in their words seen 'as an ever-changing structure of different forms of the fundamental class process' (Ibid.: 118). Additionally, by turning to *Capital* Vol. 2 and 3, Resnick and Wolff pay attention to another capitalist class process, the subsumed class process, which 'refers to the distribution of already appropriated surplus labour or its products' (Resnick and Wolff: 1987: 118). For example, all managers hold a subsumed class position, as they sell their labour power and receive in exchange a subsumed class distribution. Both fundamental and subsumed capitalist-class processes are equally important in shaping social structure and its change. Moreover, both class processes are 'conditions for each other's existence' (Ibid.). Thus, not only fundamental but also subsumed class structures shape capitalist social formations (Ibid.: 122).

It is therefore logical that people can, and often do, hold multiple class positions, both fundamental and subsumed as well as non-class-positions (Ibid.: 124). Class is merely the personification of class processes; in other words, the position people hold within the class process (Resnick and Wolff: 1987: 117). Class thus has to be understood as an adjective and not as a noun (Ibid.: 159,160): a worker is both part of and can be described by various class and non-class processes but not labelled 'the working class' (Ibid.). It becomes apparent that with the multiplicity of class relations (and non-class relations) individuals and groups can have multiple options for self-identification, so a certain class-interest cannot be assumed from the outset. Resnick, Wolff and Gibson-Graham declare that '... class can no longer be understood as the organizing centre of individual and collective identity' (2000: 9). As the positions of wage earners cannot be seen as a singular and common identity. Therefore, 'unity among wage earners cannot be presumed from their status as wage earners' (Resnick and Wolff 1987: 154, 155).

Before their applying their conceptualisation to the unpaid labour of interns, workfare workers and the employability work on the self, I would like to engage with what I believe marks a contradiction within Resnick and Wolffs' own class, and class struggle

theory. For this purpose, it is crucial to bear in mind that their aim is to '*enlarge* the domain of class narrative and *widen* the affective register of class politics (Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff 2000: 15, emphasises added). Moreover, they claim that using '[a] language of economic difference [which] presents a heterogeneously classed landscape' suggests and offers '*hitherto unglimped opportunities* for projects of change' (Ibid.: 14, emphasis added). In their dealings with class struggle I see two proceedings which contradict with this general aim:

Firstly, in Resnick and Wolffs' view it is only possible to talk about class struggle when fundamental and subsumed class processes are contested (Resnick and Wolff 1987: 161). Yet they see that the goal of their theoretical endeavour lies in the assessment of 'whether and how the relationships and hence the group and hence its struggles may influence the *fundamental class process* in the society' (Ibid., emphasis added). As such they diminish their analysis of class struggle solely to its impact on fundamental class processes – the production and appropriation of surplus labour. This goes directly against their own claim that '[t]he traditional Marxian focus on fundamental class struggle has been ... too narrow' (Ibid: 159). This leads me to question in what ways their class theory is really 'enlarged' or 'widened' in comparison to conventional Marxist analysis.

Secondly, and more importantly for this PhD study, according to Resnick and Wolffs' theory it is not important who is struggling ('the subjects doing the struggling') rather what they are struggling about (the object of groups struggling) (Ibid.). It thus puts forward a 'anti-essential' understanding of class, where one does not need to be working class to be part of transformative struggles against capitalism (Pero 2014: 5) However, their theoretical framework seeks to analyse the 'class processes involved in the relationships that *define the group* doing the struggling' (Ibid. emphasises added). This means that even though not the people (subjects) but their objects (aims of struggle) define class struggle, class relationships are analysed by looking at the class processes of the people struggling (subjects) and their relation to other class and non-class processes. It seems to me, that Resnick and Wolff follow here the pre-mature conclusion that the objects of struggle are solely predetermined by the class (and non-class) processes of the people engaged. This leaves very little room for agency of the people who resist (see section 4.5.1).

Nonetheless, new opportunities of understanding class come to the fore when applying the notion of multiple class and non-class processes to unpaid interns and workfare

workers. First and foremost they are undertaking a fundamental class process which does not include necessary labour but only surplus labour. In other words, it is a form of hyper-exploitation (see section 4.1.2). In this way the necessary labour is separated from the surplus labour. In order to understand the class-processes of interns and workfare workers it is therefore important to reconnect necessary labour with surplus labour. Interns commonly either get supported by their parents or they have a second job. It is therefore crucial to link an understanding of the intern's non-class and class processes with the one's of her or his parents or with the class process(es) in her or his second job. To understand the processes of workfare workers we need to analyse the class and non-class processes of the state, which provides the conditions for the appropriation of the surplus labour by the employer of the workfare worker. Moreover, workfare programmes often take place in charities. It is the same with unpaid internships, as if taking place in the private sector they violate the UK's minimum wage legislation. The charity sector, however, is exempted from paying the minimum wage to interns in the UK. In this case surplus value is donated for a good cause and therefore it appears to be a non-class process according to Resnick and Wolff, as the employer neither appropriates the surplus value nor does s/he provide conditions of existence to any appropriator of surplus value.

Workfare programme workers are forced to take on work experience in exchange for welfare payments and thus workfare can be conceptualised as a split fundamental class processes. The workfare worker is producing surplus labour for the workfare host. Moreover, subsumed class processes are at stake as through the multiple outsourcing processes the large multinational companies get paid for the brokering of workfare placements (see section 6.3.2). The case of interns is more complicated. To gain a better understanding of the various class and non-class processes it is crucial to ask why interns work unpaid? Internships are seen as a stepping stone between education and the life of work. Through internships young people are meant to gain new experiences which will influence and enhance their career choices and they might be introduced to their future employer through networking. In other words, interns work for their reference/'their own good name' in the hope that one day someone will regard them as ready for a 'real', paid job (see section 6.2.1). Thus internships are seen as a method to make oneself more attractive in the labour market. Resnick and Wolff would thereby argue that interns have a negative wage as their labour power is exchanged for the opportunities to enter the labour market. By drawing on Marx they understand wage as

a particular commodity exchange, typically in the form of money exchanged for labour power. If 'the supply of productive labour power succeeds the demand' the labourer has to 'pay for the opportunity to sell their labour power' (1987: 153). They therefore understand this as a non-class process as it is not a commodity exchange since the labourer 'gets no equivalent value for the payment he makes' (Ibid.).

This would mean that in the extreme case of internship auctions (where internships are offered to the highest bidder), there are also negative subsumed class processes at stake, where people exchange money for labour market experiences. Through agencies such as Charitybuzz one can boost their network through internships and 'coffee dates' for thousands of dollars/pounds, whereby some of the money gets donated to charities. For example the highest bid for a six weeks internship at the UN-NGO committee on human rights was \$22,000 and a coffee date with the Apple CEO Tim Cook was sold for \$600,000 (Kim 3 August 2013). People who spend so much money to work for free are obviously not under the compulsion to sell their labour power. So, these types of internships would better be classified as a luxury experience than free labour. Therefore, this non-class-process is very different from the non-class-process described above, where labour power is exchanged for labour market entry opportunities.

However, the non-class processes of the exchange of labour power for labour market opportunities, are often assumed rather than real. The idea that internships enhance one's employability does not necessarily reflect reality. Research in the US has pointed out that unpaid internships do very little for one's employment prospects or could even harm them. While paid internships or other paid jobs increase one's job chances. Perlin's research showed that most internships are in fact not educative as most employers simply use internships as a buzzword looking for free, temporary help in the office (Perlin 2012: 24). Employers usually have no training ambition for their interns as they care about productivity rather than personal development (Ibid.:25). Moreover, the success of an internship is bound to many social inequalities, such as gender and background discrimination. Growing research has been done on the difficulties in obtaining internships for students with traditional working class and/or migrant backgrounds from post-1992 universities (Russell, Simmons et al. 2011: 496; Allen, Hollingworth and Rose 2013: 439; Leathwood and O'Connell 2010:449). They are often concerned about not having the right social and ethnic 'fit' for internships, which causes a feeling of inferiority and a 'stick to their own mentality' (Keane 2011). Research in Germany and the US also shows that more women than men take up unpaid internships.

Both studies explain this as a means of compensation for women's higher entry barriers into certain sectors (Hecht and Schmid, 2011: 17; Perlin 2012: 27). Furthermore, Gracia has pointed out that internships are shaped by pre-existing gender patterns that underpin role allocation (for example female interns are far more likely to do clerical work) (2009: 314). Considering these circumstances, I suggest that unpaid internships need to be understood as a fundamental class process of extreme exploitation, which is fostered by the false promise of employability, and mediated on the back of existing social inequalities, and not as a non-class processes as Resnick and Wolff have argued.

In sum, three aspects of Resnick and Wolffs' class analysis are guiding my class conceptualisation in this PhD thesis. Firstly and most importantly their theory goes beyond class, thus capitalist relations, by taking non-class processes into consideration. Analysing the productive power of non-class processes also enables the researcher to explore the activities outside of capitalism, where people create communities that are socially and environmentally just (see section 4.4.1 and 4.4.3). Secondly, their analysis enables us to see how other non-class and class processes determine the specific class process in question. In the case of work-experiences this means that looking at the class processes of interns or workfare workers alone is not enough, but it is necessary to reconnect these processes with those which provide their necessary labour, namely the class-processes of the intern's parents, their second jobs and the welfare regime in the case of workfare participants. And thirdly, their class analysis does not only include the fundamental class processes of exploitation but also subsumed class processes of the distribution of surplus value which in turn provides the conditions for fundamental class processes. Due to these three aspects their class theory offers to see the diversity of work relations while simultaneously visualising their interconnection with other social relations. In the case of work experiences, especially internships, their analysis shows that not all interns have the same class, as they, depending on the circumstances, can participate in very different class and non-class processes.

However, by applying Resnick and Wolff's class analysis to workfare programme workers and especially interns I noticed two limitations. Firstly, it justifies the unpaid labour of interns as a means to get job opportunities as the taking advantage of the interns labour power is not understood as exploitation but as a negative payment. As such, while claiming the opposite, their theory gives a very narrow account of class as shown on the case of work-experiences. Interns are not regarded as being exploited, as their labour power is exchanged for (assumed) labour market opportunities. This stands in

stark contrast to both Standing's theory, who sees interns as part of the most exploited workers, the precariat, and Cleaver's class approach where interns are part of the social factory. Moreover, it hides the social inequalities of internships, through which internships function as a filtering site rather than an employability booster. I have thus suggested that it would be more appropriated to understand internships as fundamental class processes of extreme exploitation where the employer extracts 100 percent surplus labour made possible by hopes for future employment and financial parental support. Secondly, I have pointed to two theoretical contradictions in their theory as they fall short of their aim to offer a 'widened' class analysis even by their own standard. This is because (a) despite claiming the opposite they focus solely on fundamental class process when it comes to their analysis of class struggle and (b) their theory allows almost no room for agency. In particular, the latter is a concern for the class struggle framework, which I develop in the following section and which will guide my empirical analysis laid out in chapter 7 & 8.

4.5 Multiple agents of social change – within and outside the social factory

In this section I suggest, that all of the three class theories discussed in section 4.1-4.3 can learn from each other. One theory's weakness is another's strength, and together they guide my own conceptualisations of class and class struggle which I will use to analyse in what form the concept of employability and thereby a particular aspect of neoliberal capitalism is challenged and resisted (see chapter 7 and 8). In line with Doogan and Bieler, my starting point is a rejection of Standing's polarisation of the working class, based on an affirmation that workers, regardless of their employment status, do not own the means of production. Moreover, all workers are exposed to some uncertainties due to neoliberal restructuring processes. Instead I adapt Cleaver's concept of the social factory, which is theoretically informed by the assumption that capital includes the working class and thus the production and reproduction of the working class. Practically his broad definition provides a useful framework to overcome divisions within the working class, as all workers struggle for more wealth. This is especially important as capitalism maintains its rule by pitting one group of workers against another (see section 4.2).

However, Cleaver's approach has two major limitations: While Cleaver acknowledges differences within the working class, he does not develop a framework to analyse these differences other than through wage differences. Standing's analysis is useful here as

it shows in what ways labour related securities divide the workforce. He identifies the lack of securities as the common ground for workers organisation of a diverse group of workers, outside trade unions. It is, however, Resnick and Wolff's conceptualisation that allows for an analysis of the variations within the working class by analysing the multiple class and non-class processes that individuals and groups participate in and possibly identify with, and thus class interests cannot automatically be assumed from the outside. Hence, their class theory points out that class cannot be *a priori* understood as the fulcrum around which individuals and groups organise.

Secondly, Cleaver is aware that his class concept of the social factory does not allow for an analysis that goes beyond theorising struggles *against* capital by including autonomous activities *for* community economics. Coming from a different angle these counter-hegemonic activities for an alternative future, which are taking place in the present are equally important in breaking the hegemony of capitalism as they show that another world is possible.

Taking this fruitful dialogue of the theories as a point of departure I will now set out my own framework which guides my analysis of the agencies of progressive social change in regard to employability (see chapter 7 and 8). Specifically I engage with (and broaden) the conceptualisations of class struggle and social change addressed above in conjunction with some of its key features, namely a) agency and structure, b) resistance, c) commoning and d) solidarity.

4.5.1 Agency and structure

Cleaver argues that most Marxists have focused too narrowly on capitalist exploitation while neglecting worker agency. For Cleaver this is not just a matter of moral principle but he argues that the 'inability to theorise working class self-activity' means 'failing to understand capital itself' (Cleaver 1979: 14). I locate this PhD study in line with Cleaver, who suggests an analysis which starts with an 'examination of workers' actual struggle' (content, how they developed and where they are heading) (Ibid.: 58). It is thus a strategic analysis of working class power and how to increase that power, thus it rejects an objective science approach and instead aims to be useful for working class struggles (Ibid.: 75) (see chapter 2 for a detailed outline of my methodological approach).

Despite their shared commitment to social change through action research Gibson-Graham opposes Cleaver's view on power. Together with Resnick and Wolff she criticises

Marxist scholars for a priori inscribing the ability to dominate, as it is assumed that capitalists have structural power and the working class, which is lacking structural power, is subordinated (2000: 11). Instead of focusing on power conceived as a purely 'negative force' Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff prefer to highlight 'the enactment of power' (Ibid.: 11, 12). They thereby aim to 'differentiate and disaggregate power in a heterogeneous economic field, and to discover novel and productive powers where power-as-domination once reigned' (Ibid.:12) (see section 4.4.3). As an example of these *productive powers* Gibson-Graham et Al. point to communities who are 'taking economic matters into their own hands to help create worlds that are socially and environmentally just' (2013: xii). As such, she puts forward a non-defensive account of power, which goes beyond protecting workers from what capitalism is taking away from them. Instead she focuses on the building of non-capitalistic spaces within capitalism which reclaim the economy for the community (see section 4.4.3).

However, Resnick, Wolff and Gibson-Graham's take on agency bears two pitfalls. Firstly, they reject *structural power* as a useful concept, as they generate an idea of social change 'in the absence of any ultimate forces' (Glassman 2003: 682). By stressing the 'over-determination' of processes they refer to a fluidity of processes in which almost everything seems possible but there are 'no crucial centres of power' (Ibid.: 695). Glassman therefore warns us not to neglect the 'over-determination' aspect of over-determination – the focus on 'the crystallisation of force/structural power' (Ibid.). He argues that by not taking the latter into account Gibson-Graham fails to recognise that structural power is not always repressive but it can also be progressive power – an example of the latter is the empowerment of workers by refusing to work (Ibid.: 682). Both, Gibson-Graham's conceptualisations of power and their critique, will guide my analysis of agency in this thesis and I will thus distinguish between *productive power* (commoning) and *structural power* (*resistance*) (see section 4.4.2 and 4.4.3).

Secondly, Resnick, Wolff and Gibson-Graham's understanding of agency is limited as it ignores historical structures. As they put it:

'In rethinking the economic totality ... we might also *abandon the narrative of History* as a succession of hegemonic structures, each of which has won a war of survival and adaptation' (Gibson-Graham 1996: 116, emphasis added).

In contrast to Gibson-Graham, neo-Gramscian scholars have pointed out that historical structures are themselves the outcome of human actions over time (Bieler and Morton 2001: 17). The neo-Gramscian historical materialist approach provides a useful way to address the issue of agency and structure. It does not deny that other actions/processes

(outside these structures) are possible but rather 'develops explanations of regularities in human activity with particular historical limits' (Ibid.: 21). However, its embedment in historical structures does not mean that agency is pre-determined. Rather 'structures shape, constrain and even enable social forces [the main collective actors], who always have several different possible courses of action at their disposal' (Ibid.: 25). The benefit of Bieler and Morton's approach is that on the one hand it explains the general persistence of capitalism, while on the other hand it highlights the changing processes of capital accumulation by paying attention to the agency of social forces (Ibid.). As such, as outlined in chapter two, this PhD study is informed by a neo-Gramscian understanding of structure and agency. Hence, my analysis of agency does not take place in a vacuum but in section 6.3 I specifically engage with the structuring conditions of neoliberal capitalism on the resistance against employability.

4.5.2 Resistance

The purpose of this section is to outline the progressive structural powers conceptualised as resistance in this PhD study in general and specifically to the notion of employability, which creates consent for and enhances neoliberal capitalism. In the previous chapter I sketched out a critical IPE of Work approach which provides the researcher with the analytical means to a) capture the forces that increasingly impose work and b) to visualise opportunities for resistance. On its flip-side, I concluded chapter 3 by suggesting that resistance can also only be really understood if there is clarity of what resistance entails, as sympathetic researchers otherwise find themselves in the danger of romanticising all sorts of activities as resistance.

However, resistance is a vague and under-theorised concept. As Caygill observes in the introduction of his book "*On Resistance. A Philosophy of Defiance*":

Resistance was one of the most important and enduring expressions of twentieth-century political imagination and action and one ever more important in the struggles of the present century. And yet, despite the proliferation of texts dedicated to provoking, sustaining or repressing it, resistance remains strangely unanalysed and indeed resistant to philosophical analysis (2013: 6).

Unfortunately, this also holds true for all the three theories introduced above. Despite their extensive references to class struggle and their frequent use of the term resistance, the concept of resistance remains undefined. In particular, none of these theories offer a conceptualisation of resistance, which allows for an analysis of *what activities* constitute resistance and *why* the agents of resistance chose these particular strategies

of resistance over others or even *why* they chose to resist in the first place. When reading Standing's works, one gets the impression that if the working conditions are bad enough – and they are the worst for the precariat – resistance will automatically emerge outside of established trade unions (this resistance might be progressive or neo-fascist) (see section 4.2). As such, Standing's focus on class struggle, is not only prone to economic reductionism but also remains trapped in its focus on *who* is doing the struggling (the precariat); and *where* the struggle is *not* taking place (in trade unions). In section 4.3, I outlined Cleaver's thoughts on *who* are the potential agents of class struggle, namely all workers of the social factory. Cleaver also covers the *where* in class struggle as it takes place in the 'society as a whole' - the workplace, the community, the home. I showed in the section 4.4 that despite claiming the opposite Resnick and Wolff's understanding of class struggle leaves very little room for agencies of resistance while Gibson-Graham's focus on productive power enables them to sideline the concept of resistance as a whole.

In the quest to investigate *what* defines resistance it is useful, as it is frequently referred to, to outline why Foucault's theorising of resistance is unhelpful for a conceptualisation of resistance against capitalism. Foucault famously claimed that '[t]here where there is power, there is resistance'. In one of his last interviews in 1984 he explains this claim in more detail:

'Look, if there was no resistance there would be no relations of power. Because everything would be simply a question of obedience. From the moment an individual is in the situation of not doing what they want, they must use relations of power. Resistance thus comes first, it remains above all the forces of the process, under its effect it obliges relations of power to change. I thus consider the term 'resistance' to be the most important word, the key word of this dynamic.' (Foucault 2001, 1559–60, in Caygill 2013: 8)

This understanding of resistance has at least two pitfalls when thinking of resistance against neoliberal capitalism. First, if neoliberal capitalism is thought of as the current hegemonic system and if 'hegemony is understood as 'an opinion-moulding activity' rather than a brute force or dominance' (Cox 1996; 151) then not every act of domination is met with resistance but, on the contrary, it can also be met with consent and or even a desire for and celebration of it. Rather than opposing it, people might use their agency to thrive in capitalism, to be part of it and to profit from it (see section 6.2.3 for an elaboration of employability and the creation of neoliberal subjectivities). Secondly, Cindi Katz has argued that '[w]e cannot understand oppositional practice or its possible effects if we consider every autonomous act to be an instance of resistance' (Katz 2004: 242). As such, she concludes, and I agree, that a post-structural notion of

finding resistance in every scheme of domination needs to be avoided, as 'almost anything can be constructed as an "oppositional practice"' (2004: 242).

The same point has been made by labour process theorists Paul Thompson (2016), who criticised scholars participating in "'the resistance debate" among labour process, organization, and management studies' for either seeing resistance nowhere or everywhere. Instead he calls for 'analytical and practical vocabulary' that understands and captures the diversity of oppositional practices while engaging with some 'boundary drawing' (Thompson 2016: 2). He thus comes back to his earlier work on organisational misbehaviour in the workplace (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999). Misbehaviour is broader than resistance and encompasses 'things you are not supposed to do, think, or be' (Thompson 2016: 13). While resistance is understood as 'an intentional, active, upwardly-directed response to managerial controls and appropriation of material and symbolic resources' (Ibid.). He argues that these distinctions would lead to 'a more realistic assessment of the possibilities for mobilization and linkages between different types and spheres of action' (Ibid: 1). While these conceptualisations are helpful for reminding the researcher that a) the absence of resistance is not equal to total submission and compliance at the workplace and b) that misbehaviour and dissent might also link to resistance, these conceptualisations are nonetheless of little use for this PhD thesis as they suffer from two significant limitations: firstly, their context of the labour and employment relationship is very narrow as it capture resistance at the workplace only. Secondly, they only cover waged work relations and thus ignore the unpaid labour taking place at the workplace.

For the purpose of this PhD study, I draw on a clearer conceptualisation of oppositional practices outlined by Katz, who distinguishes between the practices of resilience, reworking and resistance as strategies that people use to stay afloat in and to reformulate capitalism. Doing so she aims 'to burst the romance with "resistance"' (Ibid.: x; 241). Her nuanced understanding of resistance will guide my empirical analyses in chapter 7 and 8. Under *resilience* she understands the 'small acts of getting by' by finding new, creative ways of surviving. *Reworking* in turn entails a consciousness of the oppression and is occupied with creating a space that betters the conditions of existence. These are both different from *resistance* which entails activities that I) involve 'a direct challenge to capitalist social relations and attempts to regain control of labour time and its use in the sphere of social production and reproduction' and II) invoke an oppositional consciousness building (Katz: 2004: 251). Taking the first

characteristic of resistance seriously, namely its aim to challenge the capitalist social relation of production, I argue that resistance needs to be collective, as no individual alone has the power to challenge capitalist social relations. Regarding the second characteristic, the oppositional consciousness, the distinction between a class-in-itself and a class-for-itself becomes relevant here. While the former identifies how production is organised the latter includes a class consciousness. Bieler emphasises that consciousness is not a prerequisite of class struggle but that it grows organically in the process of struggle. As he explains:

'Class struggle is the moment when agency meets structure, when labour meets the structural conditions of the capitalist social relations of production. Class struggle is the process in which labour identities are formed and transformed. It is the moment when structural conditions are confirmed or changed (Bieler 2014: 24).

For Katz practices of resistance 'produce a critical consciousness' but they also draw on an already existing consciousness (Katz 2004:251). With this in mind, I argue that critical consciousness links previous struggles with future struggles across time, especially through the individual agency of some experienced activists (see section 8.4.2).

However, while it is helpful to distinguish between resilience, reworking and resistance to gain a clearer understanding of the latter it is nonetheless crucial to bear in mind that these practices are frequently overlapping. Moreover the distinctions between these different practices of opposition help to expose the contradictions which run through agency. As for example acts of resilience not only do little to challenge capitalism but they may even reinforce it, despite it leading to an immediate relief from the experience of capitalist oppression. While the practices of reworking 'attempt to recalibrate power relations and redistribute resources' they might not support the ruling hegemony but they are also unable to challenge it (Cumbers, Helms and Swanson 2010; 60). Similarly, Cleaver's understanding of resistance to capitalism (class struggle) indicates its contradictory nature. For example, he points out, that we see people struggling for more, waged work instead of resisting work in general and as such 'we find waged workers fighting for longer hours to make up for wage reductions' (Cleaver 2002: 147). Similarly, the fight for a waged job by interns or workfare workers is a demand for the inclusion in the capitalist system of work relations. Furthermore, Bieler shows that resistance is full of contradictions as for example "trade unions have frequently dropped their originally more radical demands and become reformist in ideological outlook" (Bieler 2014:24) and thereby the protection of their members has harmed workers outside of

traditional unions trade unions. Hence, the emergence of the new, radical trade unions was a result of the perceived accommodationist position of established trade unions vis-à-vis neo-liberal restructuring in Europe (Bieler and Morton 2006: 205). I argue in this study that solidarity is the social relation, through which people overcome divisions and contradictions of collective agency and enable and shape the emergence of social forces, hence in section 4.5.4 I will conceptualise solidarity in more detail.

However, to better understand what resistance is, it is important to consider what it is not. Cleaver's conceptualisation gives insights into the limitations of class struggle. In section 3.1.3, I outlined that work – the commodity producing activity where surplus value gets directly or indirectly extracted by the employers – is not only the fundamental social relation behind capitalism but it is also unique to it (Cleaver 2002: 156). As such, the term social class struggle refers to the resistance to the subordination of our lives to work (Cleaver 2002: 155). Whereby Cleaver's concept of the social factory captures a broad definition of work (including waged and unwaged labour). Nonetheless, regardless of how wide the concept of class struggle is stretched, it always only captures the agents activities negatively in terms of what is not wanted and thus in a purely reactionary way against the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. Cleaver therefore argues that the term class struggle only refers to the resistance *against* work (and thus capitalism, as work is its key underlying social relation). And he concludes that

'Marxian categories [in particular the category of work] are appropriate to understanding the forces ranged against us, they are not adequate for thinking about the future that we are trying to build.' For "our needs to articulate the character of our self-valorising efforts, to develop new languages for new worlds, the Marxian categories are not enough' (Cleaver 2002: 154,155).

However, while the self-valorising struggles for alternative modes of production and ways of being need to be understood as distinct from resistances against capitalism the two are nonetheless intrinsically interlinked. Not only as they are the two sides of the same path of the struggle towards post-capitalist/post-work worlds but also as resistance can open spaces for alternative, non-commodified relations. And this is precisely what the next section will now turn to.

4.5.3 Commoning

Gibson-Graham's analysis is very useful for visualising the proactive power of 'community economics', where people 'create worlds that are socially and environmentally just' (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013: xiii). In their book *Take Back the Economy* they challenge capitalocentric conceptions of the economy by focusing on

alternative economic practices that show that Capitalism is not an all-encompassing system, instead it has many holes (Böhm 2014: 1055). Their showcases for community economics include “alternative market relations, such as fair trade, cooperatively run factories and community supported agriculture and business, as well as a range of non-market economic practices, such as household flows, gift-giving, hunting, fishing and gathering” (Böhm 2014: 1055). The transition town movement, solidarity economy movement and community gardening are other prominent cases in point, where across the world people transform their neighbourhoods into more sustainable and just communities through grass-roots activism. Based on these examples Gibson-Graham et al. construct tools for community economies that are based on ethical considerations such as: ‘*surviving* together well and equitably’, ‘*distributing surplus*’, ‘*encountering others*’, ‘*consuming sustainably*’, ‘*caring for*’ the commons; and ‘*investing our wealth in future generations*’ (De Angelis 2014).

However, Glassman has criticised them for focusing one-sidedly on the struggles outside formal capitalist labour without clarifying how and why they are more important than the struggles within it (2003: 682). In fact, while Gibson-Graham et al. show that community economies can exist next to capitalism it is not clear how these alternatives can challenge and overcome Capitalism as the dominating economic system at all. As Böhm reminds us ‘food projects and other alternative economic practices ... do not change the exploitative and unsustainable logics of the global food system, driven by for-profit interests and financial markets’ (2014: 156). Likewise, Harvey (2012: 69,70) points towards the “scale problem”. He argues that it cannot be automatically assumed that small-scale examples – such as the ones showcased by Gibson-Graham et al. – “translate into global solutions”. On the contrary small-scale capitalist free oases can quite happily exist within capitalism without challenging it and can even help to sustain it, as they reproduce the working class and might even make the need to struggle against capitalism less urgent. As such, it reminds us of the practices, which Katz termed resilience and reworking (see section 4.4.2).

Federici and De Angelis conceptualisation of commons highlight what Gibson-Graham et al. have missed by elaborating in more depth the complicated relationship between commons, as autonomous spaces outside of capitalism, and struggles against capitalism. Their understanding of commons is very similar to Gibson-Graham's understanding of community economics as it becomes obvious in De Angelis definition of commons:

‘Commons suggest alternative, non-commodified means to fulfil social needs, e.g. to obtain

social wealth and to organise social production. Commons are necessarily created and sustained by "communities" i.e. by social networks of mutual aid, solidarity, and practices of human exchange that are not reduced to the market form.' (2007: 1).

Federici and Caffentzis point out that 'anti-capitalist commons are not the end point of anti-capitalist struggle, but its means' (2013: 98). This is because 'all struggles, in one way or in another, to a degree, are forms of commoning' (De Angelis 2014:i78). The common is not a static entity but a social relation – and thus as much a verb as a noun (Chatterton 2010: 626). As Harvey describes in detail:

'At the heart of the practice of commoning lies the principle that the relation between the social group and that aspect of the environment being treated as a common shall be both collective and non-commodified-off-limits to the logic of market exchange and market valuations' (Harvey 2012: 73).

As such, according to autonomous Marxists, such as Federici and De Angelis commons are both necessary ingredients to any struggle against capitalism and 'seeds of an alternative mode of production in the make' (Caffentzis and Federici 2013: 98). In section 7.4.4 I therefore pay attention to the commoning processes which are part of the resistance to employability.

Caffentzis and Federici go on to argue that, at a time of permanent crisis and constant assaults on our jobs, wages, social spaces, the construction of commons is becoming a necessary means of survival (2013: 87,88). It thus reminds of Katz concepts of resilience and reworking and leads me to address the question in what ways commons then differ from charities? I outlined earlier that Resnick and Wolff would classify charity work as a non-class process, as no surplus value is extracted by the employer. Cleaver, however, would see it as part of the social factory, as charity is part of the recreation of capitalism (Livingstone 2013: 348). Poverty and inequality are inseparable from the capitalist mode of production. Through charity peoples discontent can be channelled into social action for capital rather than against it. In other words, 'charity is ... the struggle to displace struggle' (Ibid.: 351). All of the above can be argued about commons, were no surplus labour is extracted by a third party but which are places of reproduction for labour power (Böhm 2014: 156). Moreover, in an ideological break with Thatcher, who famously argued that there is no such thing as society Cameron is building on the jargon of commons to recruit unpaid labour. The voluntary sector has been promoted and marketed as part of Cameron's "Big Society" and used to to compensate for the cuts in social services and a reduction of welfare services (see chapter 4) (Ibid.; Walker 2013; Caffentzis and Federici 2013: 89). In other words, it becomes obvious that both charities and commons are in danger of being co-opted by the ruling class. As such Caffentzis and Federici (2013: 93) warn that therefore

commons need to not only be autonomous spaces of reproduction and to provide resources on the basis of sharing and equal access but they also need to be a base from which to challenge capitalism.

However, there are also charities which challenge capitalism. For example, the charity War on Want is supporting anti-capitalist struggles in the Global South and the think tank the New Economics Foundation (NEF) researches alternatives to neoliberalism by promoting social, economic and environmentally just policies. Portrayed in this light unpaid work through work-experience in organisations such as War on Want or NEF would then be classified as part of the workers struggle of the social factory against capitalism, and for community economics beyond the social factory. Therefore, from this point of view these types of charities are nothing other than the institutionalisation of class struggle and unpaid internships in these circumstances should be classified as non-exploitative.

Yet there is a profound difference between anti-capitalist commons and anti-capitalist charities: wage-relations. Resnick, Wolffs and Gibson-Graham's analysis of non-class processes and their potential of overdetermining other class and non-class processes is very useful to conceptualise difference and it becomes especially visible when thinking about my case studies of unpaid work-experiences. I outlined in section 4.3 that the motives of people undertaking unpaid internships and workfare programmes are crucial for understanding the class-processes at stake. As such both an intern seeking to enhance her or his career chances and a workfare worker sustaining his or her benefits through unpaid work, differ from an activist acting out of altruism and dedication to class struggle. If charities take advantage of the 'reserve army of labour' readily available through the false promise of employability, while at the same time also justifying wages far beyond the living wage for other employees they a) use some of the surplus value created by the labour power of the unpaid staff to boost the wages of the employees higher up in the wage hierarchy and b) divide the working class by wage hierarchies and the future workforce as only people from a wealthier background can afford to undertake unpaid internships. Under these circumstances unpaid internships and workfare in anti-capitalistic charities need to be understood as both 1) a fundamental class process, as the labour power of the unpaid intern is exploited by the other workers and 2) the reproduction of capitalist rule as it sustains the division of the current and future workforce. In sum, wage-relations in charities are most likely to be based on exploitation while in commons work is non-exploitative.

4.5.4 Solidarity

Solidarity stems from the latin adjective in *solidum* – for the whole. While first used in France as a conservative concept to assert the power of the monarch the concept of solidarity became prominent on the Left through the work of the French socialist Pierre Leroux. He pointed to a natural law of solidarity – a right of existential protection by the community, not based on kinship or emotional ties, but on the idea of equality (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012: 48). However, despite today's common use of the term and its implied universal meaning Scholz has pointed out that solidarity is in fact a varied concept (2014: 206). She thus distinguishes between *social solidarity*, bonds which inform the day-to-day moral behaviour on the part of fellow participants in a community; *civic solidarity* which she associates with the obligation of the state and its citizens as a whole to each individual citizen; and *political solidarity*, which is linked to social movements and revolutionary practice with the aim to bring about social change. All solidarity relations stand in direct contrast to the capitalist logic of individualism and rational calculation of self-interests (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012: 49) but it is specifically the latter one, the political solidarity, which concerns me in this thesis.

As I have outlined above, while Cleaver acknowledges difference between workers, he nonetheless sees the possibility that all struggles are united as they have one crucial aspect in common: they all struggle against capital. The common goal of the working class struggle is for less work and more access to wealth. He points out that to increase the power of struggle there is a need to overcome the divisions of different segments of the working class. Despite his call for unity Cleaver nonetheless sees the need for the less powerful, for example the unwaged, to organise autonomously. As otherwise, there is the danger that power hierarchies get reproduced in the organisations of class struggle (Cleaver 1979: 160). This position reinforces the importance of my second research question of this PhD, which is: *in what way and through what type of collective agency do people resist employability?* However, Cleaver argues, that unity can still be achieved through alliance building, whereby 'each group organises around its need and makes alliances with other groups based on *mutual benefit*' (Ibid., emphasis added). As such he appeals for solidarity between struggles based on sameness but warns against the subsuming of one struggle into the other.

Similarly, Bieler observes on a practical level that it has been difficult for trade unions in Western countries to incorporate workers of the informal economy. He thus advocates for new ways of organising which go beyond the workplaces and might even demand

new workers institutions (Bieler 2014: 123). By drawing on Lindberg (2014), he sees this new way of organising as based on a form of solidarity which is characterised by a *shared identity* resulting from a *common position in the production process* and the experience of collective class struggle (Bieler 2014: 119). In this way, Standing's analysis of the precariat is particularly useful, in that it emphasises a new, shared identity of being in insecure working relations. He thus creates a practical framework in which very different groups of workers can unite on the grounds of sameness. Like Cleaver, Standing thereby calls on the non-unionised workforce to organise separately from trade unions by creating a new type of collective body, which goes beyond conventional employment relations (see section 4.2). However, Bieler adds, that non-economic identities, such as ethnicity and gender, might also be important for organising class struggle (Ibid.: 123). For example, Pero's (2014) study provides an account of how low wage workers in London unite not only on the basis of their aim for higher wages, their position in the production process or for dignity and respect at work, but most importantly their unity was achieved through bonds of ethnicity. Yet, Bieler warns that organising around identities such as ethnicity and gender alone is not enough. Instead it always needs to be connected to material struggles as racism and sexism are not conditions of capitalism and their end would not mean that exploitation is overcome (Bieler 2014: 123).

As such, Cleaver, Standing and Bieler provide an excellent understanding of solidarity which is based on sameness but their frameworks do not allow to conceptualise differences and oppositions within social forces of class struggle. However, as Featherstone (2012: 22) points out a solidarity understanding based on sameness has two limitations: a) it is trapped within a reductive binary of similarity and dissimilarity and b) it is portrayed as a purely rational dynamic. In practice this means that internal dynamics of the struggles – such as power-hierarchies, inter-personal conflicts and/or bonds – are often overlooked. Yet, as I show in section 8.4, the internal dynamics impact the power and capacity of the struggle significantly. Moreover, a rational approach to solidarity fails to capture solidarity relations based on altruism and a common understanding of justice. In this regard there is a lot to learn from the feminist literature which reflected on racial conflicts and power dynamics between white women and women of colour. A lot of thinking has been done on what these power hierarchies mean for feminist struggles/movements across borders which does not eradicate difference but acknowledges and respects it and thereby goes beyond it (eg Mohanty

2003; Hooks 1986). These examples point to an understanding of solidarity which is not based on a common identity or mutual benefit but on a reflective understanding of injustice and the joint wish to overcome it.

Here, Resnick, Wolff and Gibson-Graham's framework of the various social processes which constitute class struggle is useful for the understanding of difference in relation to solidarity. As I pointed out earlier they argue that solidarity is based on a 'growing recognition that the other is what makes self-possible' – a 'being-in-common' rather than 'sameness' (Gibson-Graham 2006: 20, 86). In other words, it means to ask: how am I being made by others? What are the consequences of my being on others? This reflection on "being" places attention on material conditions and highlights inequality as the basis of present agencies rather than as a purely structural condition (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012: 53). From this point of view solidarity is seen as a relation and thus it is a verb – *solidarizarse* (which is more common in romance languages) – as well as a noun. As Paulo Freire defines solidarity:

'Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidarity; it is a radical posture... true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these "being for another.'" (1970: 49).

The relational solidarity which is based on difference and interdependency is also non-essentialist as one does not need to be 'oppressed' or 'working class' to be involved in transformative practices which aim to improve the conditions of socio-economically disadvantaged groups (Pero 2014: 5). This is precisely so because the essence of solidarity is not a shared identity but a "desire for transformation out of the experience of discomfort, and against the odds" (Hemmings 2012: 158). In this way Hemmings suggests a concept of affective solidarity which draws on emotions such as "rage, frustration and the desire for connection", as necessary for (feminist) politics of transformation" (Hemmings 2012: 148). However, she also points out that 'affects do not only draw us together, whatever our intentions; they also force us apart' (Hemmings 2012: 152) and thus causing divisions and splits within political struggles. As such solidarity is always an achievement as it is the praxis of active political struggles and the basis for relationships among diverse communities/struggling groups (Mohanty 2003: 7).

Solidarity relations do not come automatically on the basis of identity but are active practices which create unity within and between diverse groups and movements of struggle. Solidarity is therefore crucial for the emergence of social forces.

4.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to continue to develop a conceptual framework for the purpose of analysing working class power with the aim to increase this power which guides the empirical analysis of this PhD. My conceptualisations started in chapter 3, where I developed a critical International Political Economy of Work approach. I outlined there that an IPEW facilitates an understanding of what needs to be resisted as it captures the specific transformations of capitalism that intensify work and how consensus for the changing capitalist social relations is constructed. This precise understanding of global capitalism thus helps to identify opportunities of resistance. The need of the present chapter, however, emerged from the theoretical limitations identified in chapter 3, namely I) that it does not allow a precise understanding of the bottom up processes of class struggle and consequently the agencies of resistance can only be identified at the end of the theoretical endeavour but are not the starting point of its analysis and II) the proactive agencies that build alternatives to capitalism – and which are thus equally important to challenge the neoliberal hegemony – cannot be captured through an IPE of Work framework.

I therefore used the space of this chapter to critically discuss and build on three different class theories which all offer a useful perspective to conceptualise interns, workfare and unemployed workers to develop a conceptual framework to analyse the collective agencies resisting employability and thereby challenge an important element in the recreation of neoliberal capitalism. All the three theories of class and class struggle have their strength but also their weaknesses and together provide a fruitful starting point for my own conceptualisations of class and social change. Like Bieler and Doogan I start with the rejection of the separation of the working class as proposed by Standing. Instead, I adapt Cleaver's concept of the social factory, as the realm of where the working class works which is not just the factory, but also the home and the community. All workers share in common that they struggle against capital for more wealth. I argued earlier that resistance can only be fully understood if it is clear what resistance entails. Cleaver's analysis is thereby also of importance as it conceptualises class struggle as resistance to work and thus to capitalism as work is its key dynamic. However, this conceptualisation is very broad and is thus prone to the risk that almost anything can be analysed as resistance to work. I therefore build on his conceptualisation by bringing in Katz differentiations between resilience, reworking and resistance. While the former two help to survive and redistribute resources within the capitalist system, only

practices that I) challenge capitalism and II) invoke oppositional consciousness can be conceptualised as resistance. Cleaver and Katz's ideas will thus guide my empirical analysis in chapter 7 where I ask in what way employability is resisted.

However, Cleaver's approach has two limitations: firstly, Cleaver's conceptual framework does not allow to analyse differences between workers other than through wage differences. Stressing the general possibility that all workers unite in their struggle against capitalism he nonetheless sees the need for less powerful workers, for example the unwaged, to organise separately in order to avoid a reproduction of power hierarchies. He then advocates alliance building between different struggling groups on the basis of *mutual interests*. Empirical analysis showed that trade unions did indeed not manage to organise the informal economy in most Western countries, which has led to trade union decline and consequently to three decades of research on union renewal (Murray 2017). Bieler therefore calls for a new way of organising which goes beyond the workplace but is based on a *shared identity resulting from a common position in the production process*. Standing's concept of the precariat is useful here, which emphasises the common identity of insecurity as a starting point for collective organising. However, Bieler also points out that other non-material identities, such as gender and ethnicity, can be crucial in organising against capitalism, if they aim to transform the material structures. The conceptualisations above lead me to ask in this research through *what type of collective agency people challenge employability?* (see chapter 7).

Together Cleaver, Bieler and Standing give an excellent account of solidarity relations based on sameness. However, their conceptualisations are less useful for analysing the difference and oppositions within social forces. Gibson-Graham's concept of solidarity is useful here as it emphasises a "being in common" and interdependency rather than sameness. I drew on the work of feminist, anti-colonial and critical pedagogy scholars to expand Gibson-Graham's understanding of solidarity. The emphasis on "being" aims to provoke reflection about inequalities in present agencies (rather than seeing power structures as just shaped in the past). It thus encourages not only to ask how am I being made by others? But also, to reflect on one's own consequences of being on others. It is a non-essentialist stand which allows for difference, as one does not need to be oppressed or working class to be engaged in transformative practices. Instead solidarity is based on a shared desire for social change and a shared anger about injustices. As such, solidarity is a social relation based on reflection but also affect. Yet, scholars such as Hemmings have pointed out that emotions can also draw us apart and thus cause

splits within political struggles. Solidarity is thus an active political praxis which creates relationship between diverse struggling groups/communities – it does not happen automatically but is always an achievement. While capitalist relations continuously divide struggles by pitting one group of workers against another, solidarity needs to be understood as the active practice which unites different struggles. The analysis of solidarity is therefore crucial to understand the emergence of social forces. Hence, in chapter 8 I explore on what type of solidarity understanding the resistance to employability is based.

However, both understandings of solidarity stand in direct contrast to the capitalist logic of individualism and rational calculation of self-interests and as such bring me to my second limitation of Cleaver's social factory concept: It solely focuses on workers struggle *against* capitalism and does not include struggles *for* autonomous spaces outside capitalism, which are also important for challenging the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. Gibson-Graham's analysis of "community economics" is useful here for visualising spaces autonomous from capitalism, where people reclaim the economy for the community. However, I showed that it does not become clear from her analysis how community economics can challenge or even overcome capitalism. Harvey points to the "scale problem", namely that small-scale showcases not automatically translate into global solutions. I addressed this limitation of Gibson-Graham's concept by drawing on the work of autonomous Marxists such as Federici and De Angelis, who argue that commons – autonomous spaces outside capitalism – are not the end point of anti-capitalist struggles but its means. This is precisely so as the common, or better commoning, is not a static entity but a social relation, which is collective and non-commodified. As such, it is both the social relation on which all struggles against capitalism are based and a learning ground for an alternative means of production in the making. Their conceptualisations on commoning importantly point out that productive agency for alternatives to capitalism cannot be analysed separately from the resistance to capitalism but need to be understood as interlinked with it. With this in mind I will specifically focus on the commoning processes the groups resisting employability engage in (see section 7.4.4).

– Chapter 5 –

Policies behind the Employability Agenda

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore what state formation processes at the international and national level led to the employability agenda. In particular, I will set out to show that the employability agenda plays a key part in the deepening of neoliberal state restructuring processes not only in Britain but also in Europe. This chapter, therefore, directly addresses the first research question of this PhD, namely *to what degree does the employability agenda maintain neoliberal hegemony?*

The conceptualisations made in chapter 3 will guide my analysis here. In particular this chapter builds on Jessop's work, who identification of a general transformation of most western countries from a Keynesian Welfare National State to different forms of Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national Regimes. Within the latter social policies promote innovation, flexibility and employability (see section 3.2.3). Taking Jessop's analysis as a starting point I also engage with one of its limitations, namely that it has overemphasised the hegemony of transnational capital and thus reinforced a negative account of labour's potential ability to resist neoliberal restructuring (Morton 2007: 133). I will thus pay attention to the ways in which social policies and legislation are the product of class contestation, where different social forces struggle within given structures to influence state power.

To understand in what ways the employability agenda maintains the neoliberal hegemony it is important to remember that hegemony in a Gramscian sense cannot be built on coercion alone. It is thus only possible to speak of hegemony when a socioeconomic model is accepted by the majority of society (see section 1.4.1 for a more detailed conceptualisation of hegemony). Nonetheless, coercion is also an important tool in the maintenance of a particular order especially when the consensus for it is trembling. Bruff points out that coercion is thereby not necessarily understood as brute force but can also come in form of state reconfiguration and institutionalised power (2016: 114).

I outlined in chapter 3 that within the neo-Gramscian scholarship the relationship between national and international state formation processes has been the subject of much debate (see section 3.2.2). Cox identified the national as the nodal point of

departure for analysing the organisation of hegemony, which once established on the national level expands internationally (Cox 1986: 171). In contrast Robinson argues that the national state gets increasingly absorbed into a wider transnational institutional structure of complicated new relations between nation states and supra-national institutions, such as the European Union. He consequently argued that we see the emergence of a transnational capitalist state (Robinson 2001: 165). However, Bieler and Morton have argued that the truth lies somewhere in the middle, between these opposing positions. They suggest, that instead of pointing to the dominance of the international over the national or the other way around, the hegemony of capitalism operates through nodal and not dominant points (2013: 34). As such, the state formation of particular nation states can only be fully understood if seen the context of their interlacement with international state transformation processes (Bieler and Morton 2013: 34). Hence in this chapter I will focus on the state formation processes that led to the employability agenda by paying particular attention to the inter-connection between the UK at the national state level and the EU supra-national state level.

5.2 Employability in the UK

5.2.1 The Thatcher era

At the UK's national level neoliberal employment and welfare policies were at the forefront of the state transformation processes, which Jessop described as the systemic shift from the Keynesian Welfare National State to a Schumpeterian Workfare Post-National Regime (see chapter 3.3.3). The Keynesian era was perceived as the 'golden age of Capitalism in which high wages were seen as a tool to keep demand high, trade unions occupied a privileged position and were consulted by the state and three-quarters of the labour force was covered in collective bargaining agreements (McIlroy 2009: 27). However, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system and with it the end of fixed exchange rates, the OPEC oil embargo shock, the unprecedented combination of stagnation and inflation, the growing unemployment and the falling levels of profitability led to the crisis of Keynesianism. The first reaction of the British state apparatus was to strengthen the role of trade unions to save the social democratic state. New employment legislation in the mid 1970s was established, namely the Labour Relations Act in 1974 and 1976, the Health and Safety Act of 1974 and the Employment Protection Act of 1975 as well as anti-discrimination legislation (Ibid.). Yet, the economic situation continued to decline and the currency crisis of 1976 led to an IMF bailout and with it a

commitment to reduce state expenditure (Gallas 2016: 115). Consequently, the Labour government under James Callaghan initiated a move away from the Keynesian orthodoxy 'of spend(ing) your way out of recession' (Beynon 2014: 214/215). The government enforced cuts in public expenditure and the welfare state and put pressure on wages by implementing ongoing wage caps. Workers experienced a fall in real wages not seen since the Great Depression (Gallas 2016: 115). Simultaneously, the government took a more hostile approach to the TUC and weakened the established channels of communication with union leaders (Ibid.). The lack of social consensus for such drastic transformative measures towards neoliberal state restructuring resulted in widespread resistance. The winter of 1978-1979 became known as the "winter of discontent" due to the high level of public sector strikes all over the country. This provided the ground for the end of the Callaghan government through a vote of no confidence on the 28th of March 1979 and prepared the ground for Thatcherism (Beynon 2014: 214, 215; Gallas 2016: 115). This period of social conflict shows that the systemic transformation from a Keynesian National State to a Schumpeterian Post-National Workfare Regime as observed by Jessop (see section 3.2.3) was not a smooth transition but a contested process.

The election of Margaret Thatcher's conservative government in 1979 marked the defeat of the Keynesian hegemony (see sections 1.3.1 and 3.2.2). The Conservative Party came into power with the campaign slogan "Labour isn't working" which was based on the claim that organised labour was destructive, while articulating such claims by building on the fear of a Soviet style authoritarian socialism (Gallas 2016: 116; see section 3.2.1). Thatcher pursued a neoliberal accumulation strategy by openly embracing monetarism but simultaneously building on a strong state. Jessop therefore identified Thatcher's economic-political order as Ricardian rather than Schumpeterian (Jessop 2003: 140). The reconfiguration of the state apparatus was achieved through the application of coercive force. Specifically concerning labour, Jessop (ibid.: 143) pointed to five main features of Thatcher's neoliberal regime: 1) de-industrialisation, which had the consequence of weakening trade unions; 2) legislations to weaken trade unions capacities to engage in strike actions, collective bargaining etc.; 3) delegitimisation of corporatism and tripartism; 4) flexibilisation and deregulation of labour markets; and 5) the development of welfare-to-work strategies. I will now briefly explain points 1-4 in the successive paragraphs to then focus on point five, the welfare-to-work policies and legislations, which are the main concern of this PhD study.

Thatcher's agenda of de-industrialisation can best be illustrated through the example of the coal industry, which was then still in national ownership. In the beginning of the 1980s the National Coal Board (NCB) operated 219 coal mines, which had been reduced to 169 by 1984. The response was the yearlong miner's strike in 1984-5. Thatcher responded to the strike through increased coercion: employment laws were changed and so were social security rules related to the benefit payments to miners and their families (Ibid.: 217). Large scale police power was used and over 10,000 miners were arrested – depleting the National Union of the Miners (NUM) of its key organisers (Ibid.: 218). The union was defeated and the process of deindustrialisation continued causing large scale redundancies and sharp rising unemployment. Due to closures and privatisation the coal mines operated by the NCB had fallen to 16 by 1994. The trade union movement was injured and demoralised which limited its capacity to act and think strategically (Ibid.: 231). This was in line with Thatcher's general strategy to attack organised labour. Gallas (2016: 167) therefore concluded that 'the miners' strike was the centrepiece of the offensive against the working class orchestrated by the Thatcher government'. This confirms Bruff's point that in times of increased resistance, neoliberalism has been sustained through coercive rather than consensual mechanisms (Bruff 2016: 114, see section 3.2.2).

Regarding Jessop's second point, under Thatcher labour law was no longer used as a tool for economic distribution but it became part of an economic policy designed to foster competitiveness (Dakin and Morris 2012:30, 31) and to clear up the rigidities of the market. This was done through a) the limitation of union power by removing statutory immunities which protected the right to strike and organise (see above); b) the lessening of social security benefits as it was assumed that these would raise the reservation wage – the lowest wage an (unemployed) worker would accept; c) the weakening and individualisation of employment protection legislation in order to generate insecurity and maximise flexibility (Ibid.: 32). Examples of the latter include the Employment Act of 1989 which cut legal protection for specific groups, such as young workers and the low paid, as well as changes to the unfair dismissal protection period from six months in 1979 to two years by 1989. This again shows how neoliberalism was enforced through coercive state restructuring that produced precarity and unemployment on a large scale, rather than by the creation of a neoliberal consensus.

Coming to the third point, it already became clear above that the Conservative government led by Thatcher was openly repressive to trade union activities and thus forced the trade unions to retreat (Marsh 1991: 293). By incapacitating the trade unions Thatcher broke the established post-war consensus (MacIlroy 2009: 37). While trade unions had previously enjoyed privileged access to the state apparatus their policy influence became non-existent under the Thatcher government. Moreover, mass unemployment brought insecurity to the trade unions. Diverting from Keynesianism full employment was no longer the priority of the government, which, in line with the neoliberal principles adopted a strict primitive monetarism (MacIlroy 2009: 32; see sections 1.4.1 and 3.2.1). The flexibilisation processes of the 1980s and the 1990s did not decrease unemployment. On the contrary, in the context of the world recession the ambitious neoliberal reform programme led to a doubling of unemployment figures between 1979-1981. Also, privatisation together with outsourcing, work intensification and the downward pressure on wages weakened unions in public sector bargaining (Ibid.). After many years of wage stability, wage inequality was skyrocketing in the 1980s and 1990s, resulting in higher differentials than at any other time during the twentieth century (Dakin and Morris 2012: 40/41). Deprived of the power the unions enjoyed under in the Keynesian era and faced with an increasingly hostile government they were forced to retreat (Marsh 1991: 293). The then TUC general secretary Len Murray advocated for a "new realism", meaning an attitude of lowering expectations and a return to the 'down-to-earth' trade unionism of the 1950s when unions cooperated with Conservative governments (MacIlroy 2009: 35). This defeat changed the balance of class forces, which was crucial to the hegemony of neoliberalism in Britain (MacIlroy 2009: 34).

Jessop's last point, the workfare-to-work strategies represent a fundamental shift in policies concerning the unemployed. Unemployment was no longer seen as the outcome of job shortages but as a lack of job-readiness and a lack of employability, which could only be improved through forcing people to work. In the 1985 White Paper *Employment: The challenge for the nation* the workfare-to-work policy was announced. It began with the 'soft workfare' of the Restart Programmes in 1986, which 'invited' people to look for work and undertake training in return for benefits (Ibid.). It quickly turned into 'hard' workfare with the Social Security Act of 1989, which forced people to look for work and to accept any job even if it was extremely low paid, seasonal work or of excessive hours

(Jessop 2003: 144). With its approach of forcing unemployed people to accept any job it was not only the toughest workfare model in Europe but also more demanding than the US version it was copying (Ibid.)⁵.

John Major, who served as prime minister from 1990-1997, was in fact the first to advocate the shift from welfare to workfare during the Thatcher regime (Jessop 2003: 144). He followed Thatcher's neoliberal accumulation strategy at the expense of labour and developed workfare even further. With the Jobseekers Allowance scheme of 1994 and the 1995 Jobseeker's Act unemployment and income support were combined and turned into Jobseeker's benefits. With it the qualifications to access benefits became more restricted and it emphasised the conditionality of benefit receipts. This approach was taken even further with the introduction of the Project Work Pilot schemes which were based on the US model of workfare programmes. These schemes specifically targeted the long term unemployed, offering them 13 weeks of intensive training in job searching which were followed by mandatory participation in three month work-experiences (Ibid., Pierson 2001: 7). The increased disciplining of (unwaged) workers shows that the UK's welfare policies became more and more coercive.

The unemployment crisis and the rise of the coercive workfarism regime lead to the question in what ways were these processes resisted (or not resisted) by collective action amongst the unemployed. I showed in chapter 3 that while Jessop's analysis of the emerging workfare state is insightful, it nonetheless follows a top down analytical process, which ignores the dynamics of the social forces from below. The crucial aspect to consider at this point is the problematic relationship between trade unions and the unemployed⁶, which is reflected in the way the TUCs responded to the Unemployed Workers Centres (UWC). The first UWC was established in Newcastle in 1977 to resist local redundancies and to construct an 'unemployed workers union' (Richards 2012: 95). In just a few years the number of UWCs grew to over 200 and widespread 'Peoples Marches for Jobs' were organised in 1981 and 1983 (Cianilli 2012: 184). In the 1980s the TUC started to support the UWC, which caused concern for a part of the movement,

⁵ Historically punitive conditionality is nothing new. As Fletcher (2015) points to the use of sanctions and workfare in the inter-war period. Like today it was a time of economic crisis following a financial crash. Unemployment rose: from 1920 onwards, unemployment was never below 10% and mounting to 23% in 1932/33. In this climate local authorities in their "search for scroungers" sanctioned tens of thousands every week who could not prove that they were making every effort to work. In April 1929 the first labour camp was opened and up to 1938 19,000 men were sent to these camps, whereby non-attendance led to the loss of benefits.

⁶ The history of the relationship between the trade unions and the unemployed in Britain are well researched by Richards (2012) *Trade Unions and the Unemployed in the Interwar Period and the 1980s* and Cianilli (2012) *The Mobilization of the Unemployed in Britain: Unemployment Politics vs the Politics of the Unemployed*. In this PhD it is however not possible to cover a more detailed history of this relationship, due to space constraints.

who argued that grassroots campaigning should not be co-opted by the TUC (Richards 2012: 95). The TUC's strategy was twofold a) to recruit the unemployed and b) to facilitate the development of services to the unemployed. Indeed, due to the financial dependence of the centres on the unions, the unions were in a position to impose their leadership. Rather than a space for mobilising the unemployed, many UWCs became places for service provision which was funded by the state through the Manpower Service Commission (MSC). Consequently, the unemployed themselves became marginalised as the UWC were run by local trade unionists and local authority appointees (Ibid.: 96). Their dependency on trade unions and government funding also meant that with the local government restructuring in the mid 1990s the UWC disappeared abruptly (Cianalli 2012: 185). As such, the unemployment movement was seriously weakened. This bears an interesting historical parallel with today, as the relationship between claimant's groups and trade unions and in particular Unite Community is overshadowed by the claimants' groups fear of becoming co-opted by the trade unions (see section 8.2).

Lastly, moving away from Thatcher's legacy on labour, it is important to highlight in this section that also the social contract between universities and society was changed dramatically under the Conservative governments of the 1980s and early 1990s. Public university funding was not only substantially cut but became organised as a bidding process where universities and polytechnics had to compete for student teaching funds from their respective funding councils (Le Grand and Bartlett 1993: 30; Boden and Dedevas 2010: 39). To balance this loss of income universities had to seek additional funding elsewhere for example through private research and consultancy contracts, the renting out of space, the outsourcing of non-core activities and the recruitment of fee-paying international students (Williams 1997: 275). These changes were part of a general trend of the Conservative government to a market-orientated delivery of public services. Also, the student maintenance grants were abolished. While from 1962-1990 first degree students received a 100 percent grant to meet living costs they have since been progressively replaced by loans (Wilson 1997:5). The Higher Education Acts of 1988 and 1992 led to the doubling of student numbers. The latter doubled number of students going to university overnight by turning the Polytechnics into universities (Roberston 2010: 194). However, the rising student numbers were not backed by increased finances. On the contrary, the treasury imposed annual efficiency cuts of one percent in real terms, consequently leaving the higher education sector in a funding

crisis. As such, the Conservative government also paved the way for the further massification and marketisation of higher education under New Labour (see section 5.2.2).

This section has traced the roots of workfare back to the Thatcher and Major Conservative governments. It is more the 'underclass' and 'welfare dependency' theories of Charles Murray and Lawrence Mead (see chapter 3.2.1) and not so much the human capital approach which influenced the welfare regime of the Conservative governments. The aim was to break people's worklessness by forcing them to work rather than emphasising the need of skill development, this shows the coerciveness of the imposition of neoliberalism by the Conservative government. Labour market flexibility came along with the marginalisation of trade unions and moreover the determination to break union power, which was seen as obstructing the market and thus holding back the country. A point often ignored in the literature concerning the rise of neoliberalism under Thatcher, is that trade unions themselves, however, hindered grass roots uprising of the unemployed. The TUC facilitated the move of the UWCs away from a space where the unemployed organise to an institution of service provision *for* the unemployed. By the time of the introduction of JSA and the Project Work Pilot schemes the movement of the unemployed was seriously weakened. I pointed out in this section, that these developments are of historic importance as they bear parallels with today's labour movement, where the trade union movement, at least partly due to their decline in membership, has once again shown renewed interest in the recruitment of the unemployed. And thereby invokes the fear of co-optation in some claimant's groups (see chapter 8.2). Finally, I showed in this section that the Conservative governments of the 1980s and early 1990s also paved the way for the massification and marketisation of higher education.

5.2.2 New Labour

The New Deal

The welfare-to-work approach became popular under Tony Blair's New Labour government. "Work for those who can, security for those who cannot" was Blair's welfare mantra reflecting his "rights and responsibility" approach (Pierson 2001: 7). It rebranded workfare as a component of a new left-of-centre politics by building on the positive rhetoric of social inclusion, empowerment and employability – it was during the

Blair period that the term employability became widely used.

When Labour came to power in 1997, after nearly eighteen years of Conservative government, some believed it would reverse the socio-economic transformation of the Thatcher and Major governments. Instead, however, Labour abandoned its traditional Keynesian commitment to full employment in favour of advocating labour market flexibilisation, employability and deepening of neoliberal restructuring. Rebranded as New Labour, it agreed with the bulk of the Conservatives' fiscal and monetary policies and the priority of combatting inflation. New Labour's version of neoliberalism was reflected in the change of clause IV of the Labour Party's constitution, which sets out the aims and values of the party (MacIlroy 2009: 45). Before the clause referred to the aim of achieving the "most equal distribution possible" and the "common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange". In the making of New Labour clause IV was changed to "to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential" and stated a vision of a society "where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe". The language of "rights and responsibility" together with this new understanding of social justice based on equality of opportunities was thus ingrained in the constitution. The constitutional change was built on a new political discourse that mixed elements from Thatcherite Conservatism with social democratic discourses (Fairclough 2000: 7). This rebranding exercise of New Labour confirms Jessop and Sums' claim of the importance of considering discursive power as part of any political economy analysis (see section 3.2.1).

The discourse shaped practice and vice versa: rather than rejecting workfare New Labour made it their flagship policy as part of the New Deal. The New Deal was an active labour market programme where the unemployed were forced to accept job offers and training, as they otherwise faced sanctions – the loss of their benefits (Anderson and Etherington 2005: 9). In other words, the New Deal builds on the previous Conservative governments' welfare transformations by stressing conditionality. As Walker and Wiseman (2003: 10) put it:

"The ease with which the Blair government could build on Conservative initiatives illustrates the cross-party consensus that had evolved concerning the need for proactive policy and the legitimacy of enforcing conditionality".

Originally, New Labour started with two New Deal programmes. The New Deal for Young People (NDYP) (aged 18-24) and New Deal for the long term unemployed which was later known as New Deal 25+. Both were mandatory programmes. This was followed by the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) which was voluntary at first but later became

compulsory. As well as the New Deal for Partners (NDP), the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) and the New Deal 50+ which all functioned on a voluntary basis.

However, in line with New Labour's positive rhetoric of social inclusion, the New Deal emphasised education, life-long learning and the "knowledge-economy" as well as supply side instruments to stimulate growth (MacIlroy 2009: 47-48). Thus, while programmes to push people into low wage jobs had previously been seen as 'coercive' with New Labour they were embraced as 'enabling' (Pierson 2001: 7). Employability was seen by New Labour as the means to diminish social disadvantages through the labour market rather than the welfare state. But moreover, Blair argued that human capital was the key to corporate success and thus the country's success (McIlroy 2008: 286). In other words, the central economic idea was that social justice and economic efficiency go together constituting a 'third way' (Ibid.). In this vein, Moore (2010: 50, 67) suggests that, in times of high unemployment, the positive rhetoric of employability and its emphasis on ones' personal responsibility for employment created consensus for a neoliberal hegemony. Her analysis is based on Gramsci's definition of hegemony, which cannot be based on pure force but needs to be based popular consent (see sections 1.3.1 and 3.2.2).

New Labour's employability agenda did not occur in isolation, instead it must be seen as part of an international trend towards welfare restructuring, which Jessop described as the shift from Keynesian Welfare National States to various forms of Schumpeterian Workfare Post-National Regimes (see section 3.2.3). In particular the New Deal component was both influenced by and influential in international politics. New Labour "Americanised" their welfare policies by following in the footsteps of Clinton's "Welfare to Work" approach (Peck and Theodore 2001: 228). Bill Clinton and Tony Blair "shared problems" and had "common solutions" (Ibid.). First the New Democrats then New Labour adopted the principle of mandatory participation in work programmes. Most distinctive, however, was the way the Clinton government and then Blair presented labour market flexibilisation and welfare to work policies as positive, justice orientated left-of-centre politics (Pierson 2001: 7). Britain's welfare-to-work policies were additionally influenced by Australia's policies. Australia's Jobs, Education and Training (JET) programme was established in 1989 and aimed to advise and offer practical help for lone parents benefit recipients. Britain's New Labour thought of JET as one of the "world's best practices" and it was heavily influential in its strategy paper *Getting Welfare to Work* in the run up to the 1997 elections (Pierson 2001: 10). As shown above,

the New Deal welfare-to-work programmes was one of the first actions taken by New Labour, to which the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) was key (see below).

In turn, New Labour actively promoted neoliberalism in Europe through the expansion of the single market project and the building of the knowledge economy to maintain the UK's dominance in exporting services, especially financial services (Jessop 2003: 141; see section 5.3). It also actively promoted New Deal policies with its workfarist rights and responsibility approach throughout Europe. As such Jessop warned at the time, that through Blair's New Labour the 'Third Way' which is in fact the 'American Way' could become a 'Trojan Horse through which a transatlantic neo-liberal project penetrates further into the European Union' (2003: 2). And indeed, New Labour pushed for a minimalist social chapter in the EU. It vehemently resisted against France and Germany's proposals on job creation and advocated for EU policies in line with its New Deal policies. And indeed labour market activation policies gained in popularity throughout Europe (Heyes 2011; see section 4.3). Thereby, Blair's New Labour was especially influential on Gerhard Schröder's Hartz reforms in Germany (Fleckenstein and Seeleib-Kaiser 2007: 431). The Schröder-Blair manifesto in 1999, shortly before the European elections, promoted 'the third way' policies of welfare reforms and labour market flexibilisation in Europe (Bruttel and Kemmerling 2005: 2). These examples demonstrate the interlacement of national and international state restructuring and thus confirm Bieler and Morton's argument that the modern capitalist state, operates through nodal rather than dominant points, and that therefore both the national and the international processes of state restructuring need to be considered in an analysis of state restructuring (Bieler and Morton 2013: 33; see sections 3.3.2 and section 5.3).

Lastly, to understand the link with workfare programmes and internships it is crucial to look at the New Deal policies for Young People (NDYP) in more detail. The NDYP is divided into three phases. The first one, known as gateway, is a period of at least four months of intensive job search to which young people are referred automatically if unemployed for over six months. If they are still unemployed the second phase begins, in which they need to participate in one of four options, namely a) subsidized work, b) self-employment, c) voluntary work (participants continue to receive benefits plus a small subsidy) or d) full time education/training which includes at least four weeks work-experience. All options typically last for six months. After these options participants enter the 'follow through' phase, which is similar to gateway. Two crucial aspects for this PhD study became obvious here. Firstly, the NDYP translated easily into both

internships and workfare programmes. Young people were encouraged to volunteer for up to six months by participating in the third NDYP option. It was thereby possible to be an intern and receive benefits. The fourth option of the NDYP, the education/training path, includes a mandatory work-experience. This latter option was also part of the New Deal 25+. As such, New Labour's NDYP (and the 25+) represents a move towards work-experiences in the form of internships and workfare, and thus builds an acceptance of free labour under the banner of employability. Secondly, work-experiences go beyond the public sector community work but were also carried out in the voluntary and for-profit sector.

Unifying class fractions and extending the state apparatus

Two interrelated aspects became distinctive in New Labour's approach towards employability and workfare, which mark a discontinuity from the Conservative government, namely a) their eagerness for institution building and b) their relationship with trade unions. Regarding the former, New Labour pushed for additional institutions facilitating the *life-long learning*. These institutions were guided by neoliberal principles and were designed to increase the voice of employers (McIlroy 2008: 287, 288). In 1999 the Learning and Skill Council (LSC) and 47 Local Learning and Skill Councils (LLSCs) were introduced, which were financed and answerable to the government (Ibid.: 287). They were in charge of all post-16 provisions outside higher education and oversaw a voluntary system of national learning targets (ONS (n.d.)). The purpose of these initiatives was to improve the standards and range of training opportunities for individuals, businesses and communities. In practice, the LSC and LLSCs increased employers' influence in workers education. From the 15 members of the LSC there was only one trade union representative, the TUC Deputy General Secretary, while there were seven from the business sector with the rest being from the voluntary sector or local government (ibid.: 292). Moreover, a Skills for Business (SfB) network was established as an umbrella organisation for 25 Sector Skills Councils (SSC), which were supported and directed by the Skills and Development Agency (SSDA). The aim of the SfB is to give employers a greater role in expressing their skills needs and 'delivering skills based productivity improvements'. This shows that New Labour actively extended the state apparatus through institution building, whereby the TUC's influence became undermined by New Labour's preference for employer-led institutions.

Regarding the latter, through its historic links with and financial dependency on the unions New Labour was faced with the problem of what to do with them (McIlroy 2008: 286). Blair was convinced that the trade unions should no longer enjoy a special relationship with the Labour government. Instead New Labour would need support from capital (McIlroy 2009: 46). Under New Labour the trade unions role was therefore redefined from agents of the interests of organised labour to facilitators and service providers of labour market flexibility (McIlroy 2008: 286). The trade unions saw New Labour as the lesser of two evils. While they did not agree with New Labour's neoliberal path it was considered to be a more desirable option than the Conservatives (McIlroy 2009: 52). The TUC thus aimed for a strong representation at the skills institutions to influence state policy (McIlroy 2008: 290). While the origins of the unions role as service providers goes back to the mid 1990s when John Monks, then TUC General Secretary, relaunched the TUC as a campaigning organisation (McIlroy 2009: 52), the unions responsibilities in workplace learning and employability training was a completely new development.

As such, while the TUC gained very little power to influence policies it became an active agent in delivering them. For example the TUC's persistent demand for a statutory obligation for employers to train was ignored – training remained voluntary (McIlroy 2008: 305). As part of their partnership with capital and the state in fostering employability the TUC established the TUC learning service which was relaunched in 2006 as Unionlearn. Unionlearn is a learning and skills organisation which aims 'to provide an ongoing framework to support union led learning in England' (Unionlearn n.d.). Moreover, "Union Learning Representatives" (ULRs) at workplaces were introduced. Unlike shop stewards they have no negotiation rights but their function is merely understood as advisors for employers and employees training needs (McIlroy 2008: 296). Both Unionlearn and the ULRs were to a large extent funded through the Union Learning Fund (ULF). The ULF was created in 1998 to sponsor the unions interest in workplace learning. While the ULF was initially comprised of £2m annually by 2003 the annual allocation had grown to £11m and in 2008 to £22m (Ibid). In 2006 the TUC were handed control over the ULF, while the state continued to finance it. This relates back to Gramsci's notion of the entanglement of the political and civil society aspect of the state and also to Peck's argument that neoliberal project has been concerned with the building of shadow state institutions, that remain close to the state apparatus and are designed to maintain, reproduce and extend "market rule" (2003: 224) (see

sections 1.4.1 and 3.3.2). Unionlearn can be identified as a shadow-state institution tasked with the implementation of employability (see chapter 6 for two current shadow-state institutional complexes that deliver employability).

In the belief that learning and skill development facilitates organising, the TUC also put a substantial amount of its own resources into the employability development of its members, while at the same time direct organising funds are insufficient (McIlroy 2013: 3). In 2011 ten percent of the TUC's union officers were responsible for skills and learning, half of which were funded by the TUC directly. However, the unions' role in workplace training concerns employee's *individual* skill development and employability training was very different from empowering education which fosters collective organising (Croucher and McIlroy 2013: 3). Moreover, it cannot be assumed that learning and skill development actually helped organising the wider workforce. Unionlearn engages where unions are already strong: in high skilled sectors with high salaries. One might question if money is well spent, when large amount of union resources are put into skill development for professionals and other skilled workers (Ibid.). As such, the TUC's current engagement in workplace learning has neither developed alternative and empowering education to the mainstream employability agenda and/or fostered union organising (see section 6.2.2 on the absence of trade unions in the learning about work in higher education). Nor did it help to expand union density. On the contrary, unions have lost 480.000 members since 2008; 75 percent of the labour force and 85 per cent of private sector workers remain unorganised (Ibid. 1). In short, employability did not revitalise the labour movement. Two conclusions can therefore be drawn from the trade unions new role in delivering employability trainings: 1) it contributed to defanging the trade unions collective power by turning a great chunk of the labour movement into another service delivering institutional complex that aimed to strengthen people's individual competitiveness on the labour market; and 2) it unified class interests as the trade unions believed to expand their influence through employability training and thereby promoted and implemented Blair's knowledge economy. The way the unions role became redefined as deliverers of the government's agenda resonates, with Poulantzas' argument, who developed Gramsci's theory of the state by pointing out that that state organises hegemony not only by securing consent but also by unifying dominant class fractions, which together constitute the state (see section 3.3.2).

Massification and further marketisation of Higher Education

While the Conservative governments had already begun the procedures to marketise the universities and to increase student enrolments (see section 5.2.1), these trends became drastically advanced under New Labour. The fact that the Dearing Report *Higher education in the learning society*, which decisively shaped New Labour's higher education agenda, was commissioned by the Conservatives in 1997, gives yet further evidence to the seamless transition of policies from the Conservatives to the New Labour government. Tasked with the reviewing of the Higher Education funding crisis, Dearing not only suggested in this report the need to widen students enrolment but also to introduce student fees that would be equivalent to around 25 percent of the average cost of a degree (Dearing 1997: 101, 295). The Dearing report also promoted the idea of lifelong learning. Building on the findings of the Dearing report, New Labour identified higher education as the key sector for its aim of becoming a "knowledge-economy" as part of an effort to improve the UK's competitiveness in the global market (Robertson 2010: 196). Within month of coming to power Labour published its White Paper *Our competitive future: Building the knowledge driven economy* which identified universities as the central engine for the knowledge paradigm, as it was believed that a knowledge-based economy would require more highly qualified employees. Hence, it was suggested that the transformation of higher education would kill two birds with one stone: it would increase Britain's standing in the global economy and increase people's employability and thus combat unemployment. Consequently, Tony Blair famously announced his goal of 50 percent of all 30 year olds to attend university by 2010 (Blair 23 May 2001). In the context of global competitiveness, education and in particular higher education was no longer seen as a public good that was vital for independent, critical thinking in a democratic society, but instead it became increasingly seen as a private good and subordinate to capital, as its whole purpose of education became to increase the individual's and the nation's competitiveness. It is in this setting that the employability teachings in higher education need to be assessed (see the sections under 6.2).

In 1998 Labour introduced tuition fees of £1000 annually. While Dearing suggested fees in addition to public funding, the Blair government cut public funding to almost the same sums as brought in through the fees (Ryan 2005: 91). This had two important effects. Firstly, as universities needed to seek finances elsewhere it fostered the commercialisation of research, the establishment of branch campuses in other parts of

the world and the increasing enrolment of international students, who paid higher fees. By 2007–2008 UK universities had 235,000 students enrolled (Foskett 2011: 34). Secondly, as universities were still lacking funding the Education Act of 2005 set out a further increase of the fees of up to £3000 from 2006 onwards. The marketisation of higher education is thereby very much in line with New Labour's approach to creating education responsive to industry's demand to increase global competition. Such an approach to education is strongly linked to the flexibilisation of labour markets, as the purpose of education is to make the individual more attractive to increase labour market participation. It is argued that the cost of the benefits of education should be carried by the individuals as they are expected to benefit from it. The employability approach to education and the introduction and increase of the tuition fees are thus very much in line with the human capital approach I outlined in section 3.2.2.

This section introduced the employability agenda as a characteristic of New Labour's version of neoliberalism. Workfare was the flagship policy in the party's transition from Old to New Labour, in which it was highly influenced by the experiences of the Clinton regime in the US and the Australian Labour party. Once in power New Labour actively promoted its New Deal in Europe. This illustrates Bieler and Morton's argument that the national and the international state restructuring processes are interlaced and operates through nodal points (see section 3.3.2). Blair's agency in promoting New Labour is crucial in the extension of neoliberal hegemony. In contrast to the previous Conservative government which emphasised coercion to bring about market rule, New Labour created consensus for punitive workfare policies. In line with the human capital theories, the New Deal rhetoric was one of emancipation, employability, and personal responsibility and social inclusion. Packaged in a new social justice discourse, where everyone gets the opportunity to be the architect of his or her own fortune, the provision of social security was found in the labour market and not in the welfare system. Unpaid work in the form of both internships and workfare programmes was promoted and enforced through the New Deal for Young People under the umbrella of skill development, a trend which continued under the new Coalition government which came to power in 2010 (see section 5.2.3). But moreover, the employability agenda created consensus and unified class interests for New Labour's version of neoliberalism in times of continuous high unemployment by transforming trade unions into employability delivering shadow-state institutions and thus deflating their agency of resistance to it. The employability approach was also applied to higher education and consequently fostered the

marketisation of higher education. Education was transformed from a public good that benefits society through independent critical research and teaching and that is therefore vital to democracy to a private good that boosts the individual's and the nation's competitiveness. Hence, the beneficiary – the student – should pay for the education they receive and research should be commercialised to meet the industries demand. In chapter 6 I show, in what way these policies designed to foster competitiveness and employability translate into employability practices.

5.2.3 Cameron's Big Society

Rebranded as the idea of the “Big Society” the Conservative and Liberal Democrats coalition government (2010-2015) continued and intensified New Labour's welfare reform. According to Prime Minister David Cameron the Big Society is a society where the leading force of progress is social responsibility and not state control (Smith 2010: 828, 829). Such discourse, cleverly united the idea of a welfare state with austerity politics and thus created consensus for budget cuts. The Big Society stands for a public sector reform of greater voluntarism and an opening of the public service provision to the market and thereby extending the state apparatus through the creation of shadow state institutions. The Coalition government's Work Programme is symbolic of that strategy. The Work Programmes target is to move more people off benefits into work, to avoid 'benefit-dependency' and to simplify the welfare system. Through it the Coalition has outsourced the majority of activation programmes to (mainly private sector) prime contractors, which are themselves divided into subcontractors, to generate a more employer-led approach to active labour market policies. The prime contractors are paid according to how successful they are in shifting unemployed people into jobs and keeping them there for a year (Newman 2011: 92). In section 6.3.1 I explore the mechanisms of the extended state structure behind the Work Programme in more detail.

Despite its resemblance to New Labour's New Deal, the Work Programme differs in three crucial ways (Daguerre and Etherington 2014: 45). Firstly, it marks the revival of the underclass discourse (instead of the human capital approach presented by New Labour) (see section 3.2.2 on the origins of the underclass discourse). The underclass discourse presents unemployment as the result of individual problems, such as alcohol and drug addiction, chaotic lifestyles and listlessness, and thus deflects the attention away from structural causes of unemployment (Daguerre and Etherington 2014: 47). The

individual is blamed for their own unemployment. A major agent in promoting this revitalisation of the underclass discourse (see section 3.2.2) was Ian Duncan Smith, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the former leader of the Conservative Party. In 2004 he founded the right-wing think-tank Centre for Social Justice (CSJ). Cameron instructed the CSJ in 2006 to issue a report on poverty in the UK. The report *Breakdown Britain* blames an underclass culture of addictions, breakdown of marriages and fatherless families for welfare-dependency and poverty. Moreover, the “skivers” narrative is put forward, which assumes that there is a minority of people who are playing out or defrauding the benefits system (Daguerre and Etherington 2014: 49). In other words, there is a strong disciplinary component in this discourse which accuses benefit-recipients of either abusing the system or being benefit-dependent due to their inability to manage their own lives.

Secondly, the increased coerciveness is combined with efforts to establish popular consent, through the creation of a new social justice agenda which portrays benefit claimants as enjoying an unfair advantage. A 'we' versus 'them' rhetoric is cultivated; which argues that hard working taxpayers who abide by the rules are made to pay for people who choose a life on benefits (Newman 2011: 95; in section 8.2 I demonstrate that this rhetoric is very powerful in pitting waged workers against unwaged workers). The welfare as a lifestyle choice argument was the main justification for the need of a stricter benefit regime based on disciplining the unemployed. It was argued that the job search should be activated to resemble life in employment as much as possible. For example individuals should spend 35 hours per week – the average working week in the UK – job searching (Daguerre and Etherington 2014: 50). Moreover, the government substantially tightened the rules around eligibility to disability and long term sickness assistance. It imposed severe medical tests for Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants as it was assumed that people wrongfully claim IB when they are in fact 'fit for work' (Heyes 2013: 7). Between 2010 and 2014 1.5 million IB claimants have been reassessed. Out of the first 600,000 people who undertook the medical test 30 percent were declared 'fit for work', 41 percent were allocated to the work related activity group and only 27 percent were left in the unconditional support group (Daguerre and Etherington 2014: 42). Needless to say, this caused much distress to IB claimants. A study by the charity Mind found that the medical tests put 51 percent of the mental health IB claimants in such a degree of distress that they subsequently suffered from suicidal thoughts Mind (3 April 2011). In fact, later in response to a Freedom of Information Request the figures

released by the government showed that between December 2011 and February 2014 2,380 people died after they were declared fit for work (DWP 2015: 8).

And thirdly a more aggressive political narrative argued for the necessity of tougher benefit sanctions (Daguerre and Etherington 2014: 45). Although a stringent sanction regime was already introduced under the New Labour government, the use of sanctions (the cut or total withholding of benefits) has been dramatically increased under the Coalition government. The sanction regime was presented as a tool which would only affect a small minority of claimants and is mainly a political message for those falsely taking advantage of the benefit system (Daguerre and Etherington 2014: 57). However, the Department of Work and Pension (DWP) own figures which became public on the 2 December 2014 again in a response to a Freedom of Information Request, showed that over 900,000 Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants have been subject to sanctions between April 2013 and March 2014 (FIR 2014-4134). This must be seen in light of a study conducted by the Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB), based on a sample survey of 376 people between July and September 2013, that finds that JSA claimants sanctions only amount to 60,3 percent of those benefit recipients who are sanctioned (2013: 10). It must therefore be assumed that the real figure of sanctification is likely to be much higher than 9000,000.

According to the study conducted by CAB on sanctions almost 30 percent were sanctioned for not doing enough to find work, while over 20 percent had no idea why they had been sanctioned and almost 20 percent got sanctions for failing to attend or were late for an appointment at the jobcentre (2013: 11). These figures resonate with information made public by whistleblowers, such as the former jobcentre official John Longden (Longden n.d.) and former job-centre advisor Ian Wright (Wright n.d.), who both revealed that jobcentre staff had to meet sanction targets and if they failed the targets then they would be threatened with disciplinary action by management. This was confirmed by the PCS union, which represents jobcentre staff. PCS did a poll of its own members and found that almost 'two thirds had experienced pressure to refer claimants for a sanction inappropriately' (Butler 20 January 2015). Longden says that managers order 'to set them [benefit claimants] up from the start' and that several tricks are common practice. For example, jobcentre staff purposefully booked appointments without informing the claimant, thus ensuring they would be sanctioned as they failed to attend. This shows, that sanctions are in fact not merely a message to the benefit recipients allegedly abusing the system but a mechanism to a) make the

benefit system as unattractive as possible and b) force people off benefits into poverty in order to cut welfare expenditure and polish unemployment figures. But moreover, it also demonstrates on a very practical level, Cleaver's argument that capitalism works by pitching one group of workers against another (1979:113, 160), in this case it is claimants versus waged workers.

Also, with regards to higher education the Coalition government drastically intensified New Labour's approach to marketisation. Most important was the rise of tuition fees to a maximum of £9000 annually for undergraduates. As with the increase in 2006 up to £3000 it meant that the maximum quickly became the norm (Hillman 2016: 337). The announcement of the fees increase led to a wave of student protests and University occupations all over England (Cini and Guzman-Concha 2017: 4). The anger was especially high after many voted for the Liberal Democrats because of their election campaign promise not to increase tuition fees. Also, retired academics launched a Council for the Defence of British Universities (CDBU) to oppose policymakers (Hillman 2016: 337). The government reacted to the student movement with police repression and violence especially using a tactic called 'kettling,' 'the proactive, enforced corralling of protesters', which meant containing protesters against their will for several hours in a tightly defined space in the freezing cold, without allowing them access to the toilet, food or water (Ibrahim 2011: 417). The student protest did not stop the increase of tuition fees. On the 9th of December 2010 the bill was passed by the House of Commons to increase the tuition fees to a maximum £9000 annually. However, the drastic rise in tuition fees did not stop or even reverse the widening of participation in higher education. In contrast, after the introduction of the fee increase the application rate for English 18 year olds to go to university reached a new high (Hillman 2016: 334). But the increased enrolment was only made possible by skyrocketing student indebtedness. And this transformed Higher Education significantly, as she who pays the piper calls the tune. The indebted students became the main funders of the universities and demanded a return for their investment: employability. In the sections under 6.2 I show how the implementation of employability within the universities works in practice and in what way it transformed higher education.

In sum, I have showed in this section that different sets of overlapping discourses and practices paved the way for an even much more coercive workfare regime during the Coalition government than that introduced by New Labour ever was. In contrast to the Conservative governments of the 1980s and early 1990s the government was much

more concerned about creating popular consent for its workfarist welfare restructuring. The renewal of the underclass theory was united with a new idea of social justice, which portrayed benefit receivers as unfairly advantaged and as abusing the system to the detriment of the hard working tax payer, who pays for it all. As such consensus for a punitive workfare system was created by pitting one group of workers against another. This divide and rule strategy was also enforced on a very practical level with jobcentre Staff being disciplined if they do not sanction claimants enough. Moreover, the Coalition government's Welfare to Work approach outsourced the welfare provision and the employability training to private companies (see the sections under 6.3 for the practicalities of this outsourced welfare provision). I also showed in this section that the Coalition government advanced the marketisation of higher education, a process initiated and steadily enhanced by successive governments since the 1980s. The Coalition government's decision to increase tuition fees to up to £9000 broke, however, a new record and transformed higher education substantially as the students, who now paid for the bulk of their degrees themselves, demanded employability in return for their investment. The smooth transition in welfare and education policies from the Conservative government in the 1980s and early 1990s to New Labour and back to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government of 2010 demonstrates the neoliberal cross-party consensus. While the discourse around the welfare and education policies changed, overall the practices were shaped by a "more of the same" approach, that continuously intensified a workfare approach to welfare and an employability approach to education. In chapter 6 I will look in more detail at the extended state apparatus tasked with implementing employability by asking in what way employability is enforced and encouraged by shadow-state institutions. To answer this quest, I look at the supply chain of employability trainings in both sectors: welfare-to-work and higher education.

5.3 Employability and the EU

Employability is a term that has been increasingly dominant in international policy discourses (Moore 2010: 45). There are various international organisations which continue to influence social policy making and promote the employability agenda, such as the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Most importantly, however, for the emergence of the employability agenda in Europe has been the

European Union, which shall subsequently be the subject of my analysis.

Before coming to the analysis of employability within the EU it is important to remember that the European Single Market Act of 1986 came into being in a time when the political complexion of the Union was right to centre-right, with seven out of the ten prime ministers being either Conservative or Christian Democrat – Thatcher being one of them (Watson 2014: 43). It thus reflected a convergence within Europe of growing support for market integration guided by neoliberal principles of intensified competition and more flexible markets for goods, capital, services and labour (Bieling 2003:52). Its inherent system of "competitive deregulation" created pressure to deregulate industrial relations and the welfare state (Ibid.).

There was little resistance to the neoliberal advances on the European level. Most trade unions, were weakened by the deregulation and liberalisation of national economies and by the recession in Europe in the early 1990s (see section 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 for the trade unions in the UK). Encouraged by the then European Commission (EC) President Jacques Delors the trade unions hoped that economic integration would be followed by a political integration which included social policy (Ibid.). Most trade unions therefore supported the Internal Market Programme (Bieler 2008: 5) and accepted the Maastricht Treaty, which created the European Union (EU) in 1993. Being aware that by the time of the Maastricht Treaty the EU was already an established institutional context in favour of neoliberalism (Jessop 2003: 42), the trade unions demanded additional social policy measures (Bieler 2008: 5). From the beginning different social forces tried to influence European employment and social policies. The European Trade Union Congress (ETUC), which is comprised of national trade union confederations, developed close links with the European Parliament (EP) and the European Commission (EC) in the aim to influence social policy (Johansson 1999: 89). It was also part of the European Employment Initiative (EEI), which was set up by the Party of European Socialists (PES) likewise with the aim to influence EU social policy. Their demands were picked up by the European Council, when the Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen was its president, who pushed to make employment top priority and followed by EC's white paper *Growth, Competition and Employment* (Ibid.: 90).

While the trade unions succeeded in bringing social policies onto the EU's agenda these policies were often used to advance neoliberal restructuring (Bieler 2008: 4). The European Round Table of Industry (ERT) thereby significantly shaped the neo-

liberalisation of European welfare and employment policies. The ERT is an elite organisation which consists of 50 chief executives of major multinational companies in Europe with a combined turnover of EURO 1,300 billion and enormous political influence, which transcends corporate lobbying in the EU (Apeldoorn 2003: 120). Several scholars have therefore argued that the ERT is 'a primary platform for the collective strategy of ... European TCC [Transnational Capitalist Class]' (van Apeldoorn and Hager 2010: 214; see section 3.3.2 on the conceptualisation of the TCC). Similarly, Carrol (2010: 157) defines the ERT as 'the key policy-making vehicle for the capitalist class's collective agency in the project of European Integration'. Regarding employment the ERT identified "institutional rigidities", such as "social protection" and "rigid wages" as well as individual behaviour and attitudes to work as the main causes of unemployment (ERT 1990: 3,18 cited in Apeldoorn 2003: 122). Thus, the ERT called for "an agenda for action" to combat unemployment in which they suggest the need to '[i]ncrease the awareness of ... individual responsibility for unemployment (Ibid.: 41 cited in Apeldoorn 2003: 123). The above mentioned European Commission's white paper *Growth, Competition and Employment* (1993), which was the first sign of the emerging workfare orientated employment policy of the EU and actively promoted employability and flexibility in the labour market, was in fact rubber stamped by ERT (Apeldoorn 2003: 126; Jessop 2003: 42; Jaccobson 2003: 46).

The ETUC's and ERT's efforts towards influencing social policy demonstrates that this was a conflict-ridden process of class struggle and thus confirms the argument I presented in section 3.3.2, namely that the EU cannot simply be seen as a supra-state instrument of the dominant classes as its state formation is coined by class contestations. Jessop's framework of the strategic-relational-approach (see section 3.3.2) is helpful here, as it allows us to see how structures privilege some actors over others and that the interaction among these leads to state power. Through such a lens, it becomes clear that a neoliberal policy framework privileges the voice of industry and in turn that the interaction between the ERT and the European Commission organises state power to path-shape and to advance a hegemonic neoliberal accumulation strategy. In contrast, the trade unions, were privileged actors under Keynesian structures but their ability to shape state power became increasingly marginalised with neoliberalism asserting itself.

Since the European Commission's white paper *Growth, Competition and Employment* (1993), the general neo-liberal direction for the employment agenda was set and this

would guide the strategies for its implementation in the years to come. In the treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 social policy finally emerged from being peripheral and the European Employment Strategy (EES) came into being at the Luxembourg Job summit in 1997. Britain's newly elected Prime Minister Tony Blair was an influential agent in the development of the EES, where he promoted New Labour's "third way" of combining social justice with competitiveness and market policies (see section 4.2.2) as the solution to combat the persistent high unemployment in Europe (Walsh 2001: 20). He thereby profoundly disagreed with the newly elected French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, who favoured an EU wide expansion of Keynesian policies (Johansson and Tallberg 2008: 1235). This gives evidence to Peck's argument that there is no such thing as a "pure" neoliberalism and that neoliberalism is always intertwined with other ideologies and thus in an adjustable dialogue with other practices (see section 1.4.1). Eventually, flexicurity (see section 1.4.2 for the definition of flexicurity) became the leitmotif of the EES through which it aimed to cure long term unemployment. Thereby, employability was one of its four key 'pillars' (next to entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities). This marked a shift in labour market policies whereby the focus is no longer to increase actual employment but to make employees more attractive to employers by enhancing their employability (Rovio-Johansson and Tengblad 2007: 20, Heyes 2001: 645). In sum, the EES played a crucial part in fostering neoliberalism through the employability agenda and the ERT's as well as Tony Blair's agencies were key in forming the development of the EES. As such, the EES can be seen as a nodal point of neoliberal state restructuring at which the national and European level merged, thereby confirming Bieler and Morton's argument that it is not simply the case that a transnational capitalist class acts through an emerging transnational state but that capitalism operates through nodal points on different spatial scales (see section 3.3.2).

Closely linked to the development regarding employment were the European efforts regarding higher education. Again, the ERT was agenda setting. Already in the 1980s, before the EU was officially established in 1993, the ERT promoted the idea that (higher) education should be a key policy area within the EU (Kauppinen 2014: 8). It thereby aimed to influence higher education and in particular the form and content of education (Levidow 2002: 8). The ERT contentiously problematised the weak links between industry and universities (for example see ERT 1985; ERT 1989). In 1989 it published an official policy document to give 'practical recommendations ... on how education could be improved ... in a changing competitive environment' (ERT 1989: 5). The

document stressed the need to create a closer co-operation between business and universities to produce a more skilled and well educated workforce as well as research in accordance with industry's demands (Kauppinen 2014: 11). Interestingly, when elaborating on the need for closer links between industry and universities, the report highlighted in particular that

'new attitudes have to be developed as well as *new models and contents for teaching*. Industry on its part could provide an environment which is supportive of education and needs to provide co-operation between university and industry (ERT 1989: 28, emphasis added).

Two aspects should be emphasised here which are of particular interest for my analysis on the practices of employability in chapter 6: Firstly, already 30 years ago the ERT promoted closer links between the university and industry and in extension influence over the 'contents for teaching' in order to produce a workforce that has the skills industry demands; and secondly it created an idea of employability that goes beyond skills as it also requires the right 'attitudes' [to work].

Beyond that the ERT also criticised the mismatch between the economic integration of the member states and the lack of educational integration urging to make education in Europe more compatible (ERT 1989: 5). This has led Sultana (1995:126) to argue that "the ERT has pressured the EU 'to bring about convergence in European education systems in the project of the formation and reproduction of labour power that is responsive to new economic needs'. In line with this, it is not far-fetched to claim that the ERT significantly influenced the Bologna Process the 'creation of the European area of higher education as a key way to promote citizens mobility and employability and the Continent's overall development' (Bologna Declaration 1999: 1-2). The Bologna process not only standardised the higher education sector in Europe and thereby also made its products (the graduates) more comparable, it also aimed to create a European workforce which were educated in line with a work-ethos that valued flexibility (for example the readiness to move to another European country to work or study) and life-long-learning (the constant learning that also includes the readiness to for work-experiences – the learning of how working is in real life) (see the sections under 6.2). Conclusively, Kauppinen argues that the ERT 'essentially developed and participated in the dissemination of knowledge-based economy discourse in a broad sense' (Kauppinen 2014: 5).

Simultaneously to the Bologna process, the Lisbon Agenda (2000- 2010) put employability at the heart of the EU's activity making as a strategic goal of its employment and social policy. The goal of the Lisbon Agenda was for Europe to become the most competitive and dynamic, knowledge based economy in the world. Confirming the interlaces of national and European restructuring, Robin Cook who was the UK foreign secretary at the time, argued that the 'Lisbon Process of economic reform was a product of Tony Blair's advocacy for a knowledge-based economy' (Cook 2003: 131). And indeed the Lisbon Agenda identified four key areas to give new impetus for national employment plans: 1) improving employability and reducing the skills gap; 2) giving priority to life-long learning; 3) increasing employment in the service sector; 4) equal opportunities. In other words, the Lisbon Agenda played an important role in advocating individualistic risk management strategies in place of collective ones (Dannreuther 2014: 335). With the Lisbon treaty in 2000 the principles of the EES were generalised through the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC). The aim of the OMC is to influence member states policies by setting common objectives and targets for employment to be reached through the co-ordination of national employment policies. In sum, within the Lisbon Agenda employability was identified as a key aspect in advancing global capitalism and, in line with the OMC also became a mechanism to promote the further neoliberalisation of national member states.

However, the fabrication of the EES in line with flexicurity and employability did not go uncontested. The EES was revised in 2003 and again in 2005 to bring in more explicit references to flexicurity. At the European Council summit in 2006 the council called on the commission to formulate a series of common flexicurity principles to be incorporated into the EES (Mailand 2010: 244). An expert group on flexicurity was created with the aim of translating the common principles (flexible and reliable contractual agreements; effective active labour market policies; comprehensive life-long learning strategies and social security) into "pathways" that countries should follow. Members of the expert group included five professors and three representatives from DG Employment, ETUC and BusinessEurope. The latter is, next to the ERT, the most powerful business lobby group in Europe. Its members are national business federations of European countries and it sees its role to 'ensure that the voice of business is heard in European policy-making' (BusinessEurope n.d.). The process of the flexicurity expert group was long and conflict ridden. The ETUC representative argued that the pathways were too focused on hire and fire flexibility and a weakening of employment protection and refused to

sign the report. This resulted in the decision to include both social partners (BusinessEurope and the ETUC) as advisors and not members as they originally had been. Hence the ETUC's concerns were rejected and the report accepted (Ibid.: 246). In this case it was not a matter of unifying different class interests to gain consensus as Poulantzas has argued (see section 3.3.2) but rather the case that the dominant agent of the capitalist class asserted itself.

However, I should mention here, that the neoliberal policy doctrine of flexicurity was not embraced by all EU member states equally. Mainly Southern and Central European members remained sceptical, however, most member states gradually changed their position. The change of government in France in 2007 and the weakening of the German presidency's scepticism were major turns in favour of flexicurity. The EC's four dimensions of flexicurity and the expert groups flexicurity pathways were accepted and incorporated into the EES in 2007 (Ibid.: 246). BusinessEurope was largely satisfied as they saw flexicurity as a shift from job protection to the facilitation of job creation (Ibid.). The ETUC however was not only highly disappointed with the attack on job security (Mailand 2010: 247) but was continually marginalised in discussions of economic governance (Milner 2012: 3). In July 2007 Portugal, which was highly sceptical of flexibility, took over the EU presidency and trade unions organised large demonstrations against flexicurity in Lisbon and Brussels (Ibid.: 248). With the developing financial and economic crisis in 2007 the ETUC became ever more disappointed, arguing that the position of the EC had become more extreme in the imbalance towards flexibility neglecting the security aspect of flexicurity (Milner 2012: 3). As such the history of the social chapter in Europe is shaped by class conflict where the dominant class fractions continuously gained in influence and counter-hegemonic principles and values were side-tracked, fostering neo-liberal advancement through social and labour market policies.

The Europe 2020 strategy (2010-2020) the successor of the Lisbon strategy not only followed the trend of labour market flexibilisation and individual risk management through employability but moreover it increased the EU's influence over national policies, as the process of OMC got intensified through the new practices of the European Semester (Watson 2014: 51; CEO 2014). The aim of the European Semester is to harmonise European policies in order to improve competitiveness. It is not a democratically elected institution but the European Commission which sets the agenda of the European Semester with its annual growth strategy (AGS), which also guides the

EES. Later in the process it is the European Council and the European Commission that take decisions, while the European Parliament is side-lined. This undemocratic process eases the influence of businesses on European policy making. The AGS often copies the agendas set by BusinessEurope's Reform Barometer (CEO 2013). For example in 2012 BusinessEurope's policy suggestion was to "reform employment protection legislation in consultation with social partners [i.e. BusinessEurope themselves] with a view to reducing the excessive rigidities of permanent contracts" and to cut wages and indirect employer costs, such as contributions to social welfare (BusinessEurope 2012 quoted in CEO 2013).

And indeed, a reform of or the European legislation is under way with the Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT). REFIT is an annually rolling programme, which means that every year the EU screens its entire body of law to reduce the "unnecessary regulatory burdens". In the process of simplifying, scrapping and weakening the legislation it first and foremost relates to labour and environmental protection legislations (CEO 2014: 1). European trade unions reacted with outrage to REFIT as they feared REFIT would tear apart many EU health and safety regulations (Van den Abeele 2014). This is because REFIT aims to exempt all SMEs from regulations. SMEs are defined by REFIT as businesses with up to €50 million annual turnover and 250 employees – it thus comprises 99% of all European Business (CEO 2014: 5). David Cameron was very influential in the process that led to REFIT. The report published by his business taskforce (six of UK's business leaders) *Cut EU Red Tape* significantly shaped the REFIT process. REFIT promoted for example the introduction of a competitive test, that means to ensure that order for a proposal for a new legislation to pass it must show that it boosts European competitiveness. As such, REFIT deepens neoliberal restructuring by shaping EU legislation towards an emphasis on less security and more flexibility in the labour market. This is especially significant as European laws take priority over domestic laws.

Moreover, it is the EU's role to foster active cooperation between member states national employment policies by formulating Country Specific Recommendations (CSR). Thereby, it has encouraged EU member states to increase labour market flexibility while maintaining security through the promotion of employability (Heyes 2011: 644). The outcome has been a deepening of neoliberal restructuring through the flexibilisation of the labour market and weakening of social security. However, in practice the EC has little power to impose its CSR. But BusinessEurope and the EC are pushing for

contractual arrangements between the EC and the member states so that at least parts of the CSR become binding (CEO 2013). In November 2014 BusinessEurope published its agenda for European Semester 2015 with its report entitled *Future of Social Europe*. Where it argues that the priority should be 'a European framework for national labour market reforms' for which the 'the common principles on flexicurity of 2007 are a good basis' and that more has to be done to ensure the implementation of the CSR as the 'EU should act as a catalyst for action at national level' (BusinessesEurope 2014: 13,14). This shows how class interests are formulated on the European level with the aim of influencing national policy making, this confirms Bieler and Morton's argument that when analysing state formation processes the concern should not be if national or international transformations are more dominant but how they interlace with each other in enhancing or challenging the hegemonic system (see section 3.3.2).

In this section I have focused on the struggle over different employment policies. While originally the responsibility for social policies was left to the member states alone, in the last three decades the EU has become increasingly influential in this regard. Initially, the push for a social dimension of European integration came most notably from the trade unions. And indeed more attention was paid to the social side. However the 'EU used social and employment policies to even further neo-liberal restructuring' (Bieler 2008: 4). Given its benefits for employers it might be unsurprising that key business figures played a significant role in influencing and promoting labour market flexibility and individual risk management through employability. With the financial and economic crisis starting in 2007 European businesses received even more attention. Influenced by business lobbies the EC's policy proposals were more aggressively pushing for labour market flexibilisation while the security aspect of flexicurity got increasingly neglected. In contrast, the trade unions were unsuccessful in influencing the flexicurity process by including employment protection measures and policy guidelines to reduce the gulf of labour market insiders and outsiders. This is not necessarily because the trade unions became co-opted to embrace neoliberal restructuring and thus different class fractions were unified around a neoliberal consensus. But rather it was due to their weakened negotiating position and an increasing marginalisation in the economic decision making process of the EU. This gives credit to Jessop's framework of the strategic-relational-approach, which argues that certain structures privilege certain actors (see section 3.3.2). As such, the neoliberal approach to policy-making enables and amplifies the voice of businesses and with the increasing neoliberalisation this voice got louder and

louder; constituting a circle in which: business forums such as the ERT and BusinessesEurope promote neoliberal policies which in turn extend the influence of businesses. Education is another good example where the ERT's agenda setting of the knowledge economy that stresses the value of employability and flexibility led to a greater influence of businesses in the universities for example by giving them a say over the content of teaching and to the creation of a skilled and flexible workforce that is subordinated to business demands (see the sections under 6.2). The undemocratic procedures of the European Unions also serve as a structure which eases the domination of capitalist class fractions, which thus aim to use this their influence within the EU to promote or even enforce neoliberal transformations at the national level. However, this also works the other way around, as I showed in what ways the British prime ministers, especially Blair and Cameron, influenced European policy making. This confirms Bieler and Morton's argument that different scalars of state formation interlace with each other. Hence, it is not so much that the national becomes increasingly obsolete as state power operates through a transnational capitalist state as Robinson as argued (see section 3.3.2) but that state power operates through nodal points.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that through the employability agenda neo-liberal restructuring is advanced on a multi-scalar level, through international policy transfers; the UK's national developments of workfare and education policies and the increasing power of the EU to influence national legislations as well as member states policies. Through the interlacement of these levels the employability agenda became a major drive for deepening neoliberalisation.

Nationally, it was through a mix of consent and coercion that the employability rhetoric and practices were used to stabilise the neo-liberal hegemony. Through employability, unemployment was no longer seen as a governmental failure to create full employment. Instead, a) the individual was made responsible for its own (un)employment. This strategy was most present in New Labour's version of neoliberalism based on the human capital theory. Or b) the unemployed are blamed for their inability to manage their lives or for choosing a life on benefits. This approach was characteristic of the Conservative governments, especially of the Coalition government which came to power in 2010, which revitalised an underclass approach to welfare. The change of discourse significantly shaped practice, this can be seen for example in New Labour's efforts

towards institution building, which deliver employer-led workers' education in line with the demands of industry and the Coalition governments increased use of sanctions. As such, it confirms Jessop and Sums' argument that a Political Economy framework needs to take the power of discourse seriously (see section 3.2.1). In sum, New Labour's version of neoliberalism stressed the consensual aspect of employability by highlighting the individuals self-responsibility for inclusion in the labour market, the Conservatives focused on coercion by disciplining the unemployed into work. Yet, despite the change of discourse and the emphasis on either coercion or consent all governments since the 1980s continuously intensified their workfare approach to welfare and with it deepened neoliberal restructuring.

Also regarding higher education the marketisation and with it the implementation of tuition fees was continued and advanced under consecutive governments. Not even the vibrant student movement which emerged in 2010, when the fees were tripled by the Coalition government, could prevent this increase. The fees essentially led to a dramatic change in the universities, as – often highly indebted (see section 6.2.1) – students became the universities main funders. I show in the sections under 6.2 that this led to an acceleration of the employability agenda as students demanded employability in return for their investment. What needs to be highlighted here is, that the easiness with which not only the workfarist welfare policies but also the marketisation of higher education were not only continued but intensified by consecutive governments demonstrates the cross-party consensus of advancing neoliberal state restructuring.

The advancement of neoliberal restructuring through coercive workfare and individualised employability training was not completely uncontested but the resistance was weak and quickly became co-opted. During the Thatcher period and in response to mass unemployment, Unemployed Workers Centres and Claimant's groups emerged (see also section 7.2) but the unemployment movement suffered from the co-option by trade unions, as with their influence the workers centres soon turned into service providers rather than organising centres. This provides an interesting historical parallel, as the fear of co-option by trade union is a common concern among the contemporary groups resisting employability (see section 8.2). During New Labour trade unions, which were fundamentally weakened during the Thatcher and Major regimes, tried to use the employability agenda to regain political and policy setting influence. As such, through a Poulantzian lens, it can be argued that the employability agenda served as a method to unify class interests. Trade unions became major agents of delivering the

employability agenda through the workplace learning institution "Unionlearn", which is largely state funded. They offered individual training to enhance members skill sets to be more flexible (and thus more secure) on the labour market and this type of education should therefore not be confused with an empowering one that fosters collective action. As such, building on Peck (2003) I argue that Unionlearn became a shadow-state institutions that through delivering employability recreated acceptance for and extended market rule. The next chapter, chapter 6, will look at shadow-state institutions that currently play major roles in delivering the employability agenda.

Within the EU, trade unions were the major driver behind the implementation of employment policies and legislations on the European level. However, rather than strengthening the power of trade unions these policies favoured a business orientated approach of deepening neoliberal restructuring and led to the marginalisation of trade unions in policy setting. Jessop's strategic-relational-approach (see section 3.3.2) offers a useful analytical perspective here, as it demonstrates the relation between structure and agency. The structures of neoliberalism privilege the voice of industry as much as Keynesian policy structures favoured the influence of trade unions. Consequently, while structures do not determine certain outcomes, they ease or constrain the agency of certain actors. The EU was established right from the start around neoliberal principles of intensified competition and more flexible markets for goods, capital, services and labour. Consequently, the agency of the business forums such as the ERT and BusinessesEurope were very influential and often agenda setting. This leads to a circle of structure and agency, where dominant agencies shape the structures in their favour and in a way that expands their agency still further. This does not mean that their agency becomes unstoppable but it certainly becomes more powerful. As such, we see for example that the ERT significantly influenced the concept of the knowledge-economy, which a) shaped the Bologna process of standardising higher education in Europe along competitive principles and therefore facilitated the education of the future workforce in line with a neoliberal work-ethos of flexibility and employability and b) promoted closer cooperation between universities and industry encouraging greater agency of businesses in determining the content of teaching. Another example is the class struggle that played out over the agenda setting of the European Employment Strategy (EES), which both the European Trade Union Congress (ETUC) and BusinessesEurope tried to influence. While the former emphasised the security aspect of flexicurity the latter emphasised flexibility. During the consultation process regards flexicurity, the ETUC

became increasingly marginalised and its proposals for employment protection were ignored, while the BusinessesEurope enjoyed greater agenda setting power. In this case, we see not so much a Poulantzian unification of class fractions but, that favoured by neoliberal structures, the dominant class fraction managed to assert itself.

The domination of capitalist class interests in Europe created an eagerness to use the EU to extend their influence to promote the enhanced neoliberalisation in national policy. Several EU mechanisms were facilitating this process. Firstly, specifically to employment, was the Open Method of Co-ordination, through which member states set common objectives and targets and hence the coordination of employment policies. The OMC got intensified under Europe 2020 through the new practice of the European Semester, in which the EC closely follows suggestions of BusinessesEurope. Lately, BusinessesEurope called for the reformation of the Employment Protection legislations. This prompted the Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT), an annual programme designed to reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens. David Cameron together with his business task-force (six UK business leaders) significantly shaped REFIT through their report *Cut the Red Tape*. As such, it is not just the case that in line with the arguments around Sklair's Transnational Capitalist Class and Robinson's emerging Transnational Capitalist State the European state formation processes dominate national ones but it works also the other way around with national processes influencing national ones. This therefore confirms Bieler and Morton's argument that state restructuring operates through nodal points and thus causes an interlacement of national and international state restructuring processes (see section 3.3.3).

The next chapter, will now move from the political society aspect of state formation to explore how the employability agenda is actually implemented in praxis and thus looks at shadow-state institutions located at the crossway between the political and civil society domain of state formation.

– Chapter 6 –
Putting Employability into Practice:
Shadow State Institutions

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to create an understanding of the concrete ways in which the employability agenda is implemented through shadow state institutions. Looking at two specific aspects of the employability agenda I will proceed by mapping the institutional complexity of the employability services in higher education and welfare to work services. My intention here is not to give a fully comprehensive account of the role of shadow state institutions in the employability agenda, but to generate interpretations based on in-depth analyses of employability by mapping the supply chain of employability services in two universities in the UK, and the UK's current welfare to work programme. The particular question asked here is: what is the role of shadow state institutions in the making of employable subjects?

The conceptualisations of chapter two guide my analysis here. My starting point is Gramsci's understanding of the extended state. For Gramsci the state is the 'entire complex of practical and theoretical activities which maintain and justify class domination and moreover secure consent of those over whom it rules' (Gramsci 1871: 244, see section 3.3.2). State functions thus not only refer to executive, legislature and judicature powers (political society, as Gramsci terms it), but also include the cultural and religious aspects mirroring society (what Gramsci calls the civil society). Even though analytically distinguishable, political and civil society are inseparable in every day practice (Gramsci 1995: 385-6). Together political and civil society form the state which is conceived as a form of social relations through which a social hegemony is maintained (Bieler and Morton 2003: 483).

Gramsci's conceptualisation of the state was used by the Critical Political Economy of Employment scholarship (Apeldoorn 2003, Bieling, 2003 Overbeek 2003). Of particular conceptual importance for this chapter is Jessop's notion of a wider system transformation in Western Welfare states from Keynesian Welfare National States (KWNS) to Schumpeterian Workfare Post-National Regimes (SWPR) (for a detailed discussion see section 3.3.2). He characterised the Keynesian Welfare National States

by their explicit aim to secure full employment in relatively closed national economies. The Keynesian Welfare National States shared a welfarist approach to social policy to promote mass consumption to facilitate economic demand (Ibid.). In contrast, a Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national Regime is understood as replacing the welfarist orientation of social policies with a workfarist approach of human resource management. In line with this, it subordinates social policy to the demands of the labour market by promoting innovation, flexibility and employability to increase competitiveness in a supply-orientated economy (Ibid: 145-146).

However, as I pointed out in chapter 3, the neo-Gramscian state transformation analysis bears two shortcomings: a) it over-emphasises the coherence of the neoliberal project, and b) it pays too much attention to the political society aspect of state formation while neglecting its civil society dimension. This is problematic because if hegemony is understood as an 'opinion-moulding-activity' rather than pure domination, then the analysis has to turn to how a hegemonic social order is based on values, ideas and practices that maintain the nature of that current order (Cox 1996: 151). And as Buttigieg (2005 :43) has it:

'it is within...the sphere of civil society that ideas circulate and world views are formed "freely", so that when these views and ideas reaffirm or endorse the basic principles underlying the existing social, economic and political arrangements, they do so (or are seen as doing so) more or less spontaneously and thus legitimize them'

In other words, it is in the civil society level of state formation that hegemony is (re)created in the daily lives of people. The present chapter, thus, links back to the first main research question of this PhD, which is: to what degree does the employability agenda maintain and re-create neo-liberal hegemony?

Moreover, as Dingeldey (2007: 841) points out, the top-down analyses of the system transformation scholarship leave little room for an analysis of how they are actually implemented in practice and what social and political consequences they might have. The concrete delivery systems of the employability policies, situated in the transition between political and civil society, are very much neglected in the literature concerning activating labour markets and employability and it is precisely that what this chapter is devoted to. In line with Peck, I am thereby arguing that the UK's transition from a welfarist to a workfarist state actually fostered an expansion of the state and not its withdrawal. Peck (2003: 224) stresses that the 'neoliberal project has been ... concerned, among other things, with the construction of new institutional forms and

regulatory conventions, designed to secure the extension, maintenance and reproduction of "market rule". In the UK, the role back of public service provisions under the banner of 'austerity' was enabled by the simultaneous creation of shadow state institutions and quasi markets which take over state functions and remain closely linked to the state apparatus. The marketisation of welfare and higher education are two examples for that. The welfare provision is outsourced to private companies, which again subcontract some employability services to other companies. The UK's largest welfare programme, the work programme, consists of 18 prime providers and 858 subcontractors. Moreover, the marketisation of higher education and the introduction of £9,000 tuition fees in 2011 (see the sections under 4.2) triggered an explosion of employability services on campuses, as the student's choice of university became heavily influenced by a sense of "value for money" in terms of the return on their investment, and the likelihood of future earnings (HEFCE 2010: 49).

This indicates that the processes of welfare state transformation are complex and multifaceted and so in order to understand underlying patterns of state restructuring, the analysis needs to go beyond policy shifts and new forms of governance (Peck 2003). This chapter offers a contribution to the literature on welfare state transformation by following Peck's research call, who suggested a 'careful mapping of emergent state forms' to figure out what 'the state is actually doing - why and with what political, social and economic implications' (Ibid.: 222). By mapping two employability sectors, activating welfare services and universities' employability services, I ask how the employability agenda actually works. I used semi structured interviews, participatory observation and desk research to gain knowledge about the concrete workings of employability along the two supply chains (see a detailed explanation of the method in section 2.4.2).

The structure of the chapter is as follows: I will first look at the socio-economic context of the institutions to then specifically analyse their role in delivering employability. As such, section 6.2 is concerned with the employability training in higher education, and section 6.3 looks at the welfare-to-work infrastructure and specifically workfare schemes. Subsequently, section 6.4 concludes.

6.2 Employability in universities

6.2.1 Marketisation of higher education and the employability carrot

In this section I show the ways in which the massification and marketisation of higher education provided fertile ground for the explosion of employability services at universities. Employability came to challenge the core essence of higher education in which universities are no longer solely a place of critical thinking but re-valued as institutions where future workers invest in their human capital. In this way, universities became considered the backbone of a striving knowledge economy.

A vast and growing amount of research has documented the marketisation trend of UK universities (see for example Molesworth et al. (eds) 2011; Brown and Carasso 2013; Radice 2013). While this has been a general trend world-wide (Canaan and Shumar 2008) the UK has been at the forefront of the neoliberalisation of universities in Europe (Fairclough and Wodak 2010). I showed in chapter 5 that the marketisation of the UK's universities began in the 1980s with public funding for universities being allocated through a bidding process, and non-core services such as student accommodation, catering, security and cleaning being outsourced to a highly competitive subcontractor market (see section 5.2.1). But the marketisation of higher education was accelerated by the knowledge economy paradigm, which pressurised universities to adopt more commercial models of knowledge and teaching and boosted the massification of higher education in the UK (see section 5.2.2). Consequently, university fees – which are now universities main income (see section 5.2.3) - were introduced in 1998 by the then Prime Minister Tony Blair, and since then they have increased twice and currently stand at £9000 annually per student.

The introduction and rise of tuition fees, and the debt that burdened students with (Bolton 2015: 3), has changed their attitudes towards universities. In 2015 more than £10 billion was loaned to students and this figure is likely to grow. The government expects the outstanding loans to reach over £100 billion in 2018 (calculated on 2014-2015 tuition fee rates) (Ibid.). Some lecturers reported that since the introduction of fees students have started to behave more like costumers, who are paying for certain services. In this context, it seems, that 'learning has shifted ... from an intellectual achievement to a commodity' (Anonymous Academics 18 December 2015). Also, the Goldsmith's career centre staff experienced a change of students' expectations:

'The introduction of university fees does not seem to have had an impact on students wanting to come to university but it *has* had an impact on what they think they should be *getting* from an university education; not just an education but also ... a job at the end of it (Interview 22).

Haywood et al. study, however, shows how students consumerist 'daydreams' and expectations are also promoted in part by universities. As these authors note there has been a 'business approach to higher education recruitment which leads to students shopping around to match courses and institutions with daydreams for the future' (2011:193).

The customer narrative above portrays the student as a naïve and, indeed, passive service receiver, yet Hope and Figiel argue that the student is not merely a passive consumer of education but an active speculator in different educative and experience stocks (2015: 361). It is a speculative rather than a secure investment as the student is not guaranteed to benefit from their expensive education. The massification of higher education led to soaring graduate un- and underemployment as well as a growing disconnect between the qualification of graduates and the number and type of jobs available (Brown and Hesketh 2004: 63; Interview 22). With some research suggesting that 58.8 percent of graduates are in non-graduate jobs it is clear that the graduate labour market has not expanded in line with the increase in the number of graduates (CIPD 2015: 15). Student satisfaction surveys now reflect the importance students ascribe to employability. Bath university, for example, scored the highest in terms of student satisfaction which is, so argues its vice-chancellor Dame Glynis Breakwell, due to its focus on employability (Ratcliffe, 2 June 2014). As such, the high fees have provided a fertile ground for a dramatic expansion of the employability doctrine, as students are very aware of the competitive job market awaiting them after graduation.

The graduate's pre-occupation with work rather than education needs to be seen in the context of a labour market which no longer guarantees employment for those with good marks and degrees. As such, internships, placements and volunteering have become common strategies to gain experience, which is considered by some to be a necessary precursor to paid employment (Ball et al. 2010: 11). According to the Sutton Trust (22 November 2014) there are up to 70,000 interns at any given time in the UK and 21 percent of businesses reported that they do not pay their interns. Additionally, it is estimated that 23 percent of all charities in the UK – which are legally exempt from having to pay the National Minimum Wage - use interns with another 12 percent planning to do so (Carter et al. 2013; Bruce et al. 2015: 6). Kuehen and Corrigan have termed this unpaid work as the 'labour of hope' defined as 'un- or under-compensated work carried out in the present, often for experience or exposure, in the hope that future employment opportunities may follow' (2013 :21). Their analysis of free digital content

production, for example unpaid publishing and filming, points to another growing sector of free labour in the name of self-realisation and the hope for better future employment positions. As such, while this PhD focuses on internships and volunteering it is important to remember that these are only a fraction of the 'labour of hope' economy.

In such a competitive environment for graduate level jobs a collective panic has emerged to outperform and out compete your peers. To that end it seems necessary not only to have the necessary education but also to demonstrate one's commitment, potential and ability to work hard which is often done during an internship. From the employer's point of view an internship is essentially a long job interview where the best graduates get cherry-picked (Allen et al. 2013: 433). This work culture with the endless drive for more – more education, more experience, more work, more passion can even have fatal consequences as seen in the tragic death of Moritz Erhardt. He was an intern at a financial institution in London who was so determined to demonstrate his passion and commitment in the hope of a job after graduation that he worked 21 hours for 3 days straight which caused him to have an epileptic seizure triggered by a prolonged lack of sleep. The seizure killed him (Costea and Watt 2015: 377). All-nighters, also known as 'the magic-roundabout', are not uncommon for City interns and are often 'worn as a badge of honour' showing that 'they have what it takes to succeed in an industry which demands stamina' (Malik 2013 in Costea and Watt 2015: 378). Costea and Watt see what happened to Moritz Erhardt as indicative of a working culture which is guided by the 'principle of potentiality': 'the representation of the human subjects as capable of becoming always more than she or he is' (Ibid.). As such, 'the intern' does not stand in isolation but becomes a figure which represents the work ethos of our times (ibid., see section 3.3.3 for a more detailed discussion of the work ethos).

6.2.2 Implementing employability at universities

University career centres deliver frontline services in response to the employability agenda, offering skill development, guidance and information on careers and employment prospects, with the aim of boosting student's self-promotion through CV building and interview training (Foster et al. 2013: 33). Given the pervasiveness of the employability agenda through career services in universities in the UK, it is surprising that there has been scant academic consideration on the matter. Therefore, in this section I look in detail at the practices of two universities and their career centres in general, while the next section looks specifically at employability training in regard to

unpaid work-experience. The aim of these two sections is to provide an in-depth understanding of employability teachings in higher education rather than quantifying the precise extent of employability training in the UK.

Although this in-depth analysis is limited to two universities, it is indicative of the growth of the employability agenda in higher education in general as there are strong inter-institutional collaborations between the career centres of universities across the UK. Joint efforts to increase the effectiveness of career centres through research, knowledge sharing, collective resources, training opportunities and lobbying are mediated by several umbrella organisations of which universities and their career centres are members. The Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) was created and supports graduate employability (HECSU n. d.). Part of HESCU is the National Council for Work-Experiences (NCWE), which aims to encourage more employers to provide placement opportunities (NCWE n.d.). HESCU is largely funded by its 'commercial arm', Graduate Prospects, the 'UK's official graduate careers support service' which researches and publishes information on graduate career services (Graduate Prospects n.d.). Next, there is the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), which is another membership organisation for career centres which pursues the aim of lobbying on behalf of its members and to pool expert information (AGCAS n.d.). HESCU and Graduate Prospects work in close partnership with AGCAS. The Work Based Learning Association (ASET) develops guidelines for employability and work-placement staff, promotes best practice and lobbies for the interest of its members – 119 university career centres (Charity Commission 15 August 2016). In sum, the practices of career centres cannot be seen in isolation but as part of an extensive and growing network of shadow state institutions which a) produces and promotes employability blue prints for universities and their career centres, and b) also aims to influence policies in the interests of the employability sector.

Both aspects resonate with Gramsci's concept of the extended state and specifically with the two scholars I introduced above. Through Buttigieg's lens (2005:43; see section 6.1) we can identify this extended network of career and employability institutions as a civil society complex occupied with the circulation of ideas and 'worldviews' that endorse the basic principles underlying the existing social, economic and political arrangements and thus (re)create hegemony. Through Peck's (2003: 224) suggested framework of 'mapping the extended state', looking at these umbrella organisations and their members, the universities and the career centres, offers insights

into what the 'state is actually doing', as he suggested. But we also see that it is not so much only a top-down processes of simple policy implementation, as it was framed by Peck. It is also a bottom-up state formation process, located at the crossway between civil and political society, as these umbrella organisations also seek to influence the political society terrain of the state. While further research on the role of career centre umbrella organisations in promoting employability would be very insightful, in the coming section I will only focus on the in-depth intra-institutional landscape of universities and specifically career centres.

It should be noted though that university career centres are nothing new and pre-date the employability agenda. The first career centre can be traced back to Oxford's appointment board which was founded in 1892. By the mid 1950s all universities had appointment boards and in the 1950s and 1960s they were transformed into career centres. However, there has been a dramatic spike in their numbers since the trebling of tuition fees in 2011. This can be seen in both of universities investigated in this PhD research. At Kingston the career centre grew from 7 people in 2013 to 25 people in 2015 (Interview 21), whilst at Goldsmiths the career centre quadrupled its members of staff from 4 in September 2011 to 16 in November 2015 (Interview 22). However, as explained by a member of staff at Goldsmith's career centre the employability services do not reach out to all 9,000 students. They argue that it would be better to make employability learning '*compulsory*' for all students and to subsequently expand the career centre (Ibid.). This person called for 'a more top-down approach in which academic departments are required to work with their careers and employability services' which, it is claimed, would be beneficial to all students who would then be involved with the careers service right from the beginning (Interview 22). However, while not strictly enforced this is already the case as each department has to have an employability plan. While the career centre at Goldsmith doubts if they are actually followed (Interview 22) academic staff faces a lot of pressure to deliver employability teaching (Interview 23). At both universities the career centres stressed their aim to better integrate employability education into the curriculum and to work closer with the academics (Interview 21, 22). Kingston even placed one career consultant at each department in order to work better with the academics on incorporating employability into the curriculum (Interview 21).

Established practices of career centres to prepare students for the world of work are:

a) Career/recruitment fairs that allow 'employers, to raise [their] brand awareness on

campus and to promote internships, placements, graduate schemes and entry-level roles' (KU Talent n.d.) and give students the ability to network with future employers (Interview 21). Goldsmiths has six and Kingston has eight career fairs throughout the year, which boils down to almost one career fair per month during term time;

b) Career and employability events such as Goldsmiths monthly 'industry panels' where students get employability advice from potential future employers. The industry panel is 'followed by networking opportunities over refreshments' (Goldsmiths Careers n.d.);

c) Employability awards, which seem to be a relatively new activity to boost students employability. Kingston university started with the KU Talent Award in 2013 and Goldsmiths has had the Gold Award since 2014 (Interview 21, 22). The purpose of the award is 'to reflect on your [the students'] experiences and develop the skills you [the students] are gaining from your [the students] co-curricular activities' (Goldsmiths Careers n.d.). Outstanding employability performances are rewarded with a certificate. In addition to the employability awards of universities there are national 'undergraduate of the year awards' whereby the participants are judged by a global businesses panel and the winners are rewarded with an internship (Targetjobs n.d);

d) Workshops and one to one sessions in which students are coached on how to become more employable (Interview 21, 22);

e) Encouraging students to take on work-experiences, such as volunteering, internships and work-placements (Interview 21, 22).

A quick look at these activities reveals what lies at the core of all employability teaching, namely how to please employers by i) learning what employers want and ii) helping the students to *become* what employers want them to *be*. Employers, therefore, have an immense presence and influence in the universities. This links directly back to the demand of businesses, as I showed in chapter 5 that the European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT), lobbied for decades for greater employer influence within universities (see section 5.3). At the practical level, a professional development manager at IMB describes their involvement with Kingston University like this:

'We are engaged with Kingston University in a variety of different ways. I am a member of the careers employability panel with other employers. We are involved in shaping new initiatives, with the business school, including its accreditation. And we regularly attend events, present to students, offer CV advice and placement opportunities' (Hayward, n.d.).

This employer seems to not only deliver employability training but also influences how employability learning is institutionalised and even has a say in who enrolls in Kingston's

business school. Corporate interests play a more powerful role in a higher education system, which produces new workers in accordance with industry demands. Most importantly, the employability activities do not prepare students for the world of work by teaching them their rights nor by familiarising them with the concept of collective bargaining and the functions of industrial actions. Trade unions are completely absent from employability teachings at higher education. In sum, future workers are educated at the universities to subordinate themselves to capital and not to challenge it.

To understand in what ways these students and workers-to-be are being shaped, it is useful to analyse in more detail the kind of training and workshops career centres provide. The trainings and workshops are mostly tailored to make the individual student more attractive on the labour market through advice on application writing and preparation for interviews but also by encouraging the students to develop an employability-personality. Again, we see a link here with the industries' demand to promote a change of 'attitude' within universities that is more in line with business interests (ERT 1989: 28; see section 5.3). Cases in point are workshops offered by Kingston's career centre on body language, in which students learn to 'adapt your [the student's] body language to not only appeal more to an employer, but to increase your [the student's] confidence too!'. And on networking, in which students 'learn how to break into conversations (and leave them) and the rules of engagement when it comes to networking' (KU Talent n.d). As such, the employability-personality embodies stereotypical masculine gender norms of the confident alpha-male, who has learned to dominate conversations by interrupting and leaving them in accordance to his interest. However, presented as a neutral set of skills, attributes and attitudes the employability discourse encourages individuals to see their personal identities, such as class, gender, race and age as irrelevant thus concealing the institutional and systemic inequalities which generally determine ones outcomes (Hesketh 2003: 10). Additionally, employability training is based around the individual and nurtures a culture of competitiveness. This is most explicit in the awards available for best employability performance which creates a hyper-individualised and competitive environment. In contrast, there is not much focus on team work, collective project development and cooperation (Interview 21 and 22).

6.2.3 Work-experiences: the making or breaking of employable subjects?

I now take a closer look at activity e), work-experiences, as it is through the idea of work-experiences that universities are directly and indirectly encouraging students to take on unpaid or low paid work.

While both career centres do not advertise unpaid internships in the private sector they both encourage unpaid work. For example the Kingston Career Centre flags on their website that 'unpaid work experience can often be a really great way to gain experience of the sector or environment you [the student] are interested in' (Kingston n.d.). It thereby almost does not matter what one does as '*any* work experience will be useful in helping you [the student] develop skills and contacts' (Kingston n.d. emphasis added). Likewise, students at Goldsmiths are advised that *any* work experience improves one's employability as 'even modest jobs like bar work or shelf stacking can demonstrate to employers that you [the student] have a responsible attitude to work' (Goldsmiths Careers n.d.). This shows that the employability agenda is not only tightly linked to unpaid labour but also entails a disciplinary function as the student is encouraged to develop a 'work-habit' of subordination by gratefully accepting any job on offer no matter its conditions or pay.

Broadly, there are three types of work-experiences: placements, internships and volunteering. Placements are work-experiences that are part of a degree course and are assessed by academics and/or the university career centre. At Goldsmiths the number of placements is increasing dramatically and currently stands at approximately 1,400 each year. Their duration varies from 10-16 days to one year (Interview 26). Internships, by contrast, take part outside of the universities, so they are either conducted after graduating or during the summer break. Conscious that unpaid internships in the private sector are not only illegal but also a highly controversial topic, both career centres only promote paid internships as well as unpaid internships in the voluntary sector (where unpaid internships are legal). The brokering of unpaid internships happens much more behind the scenes through personal contacts of academic staff or even directly with the intern and through networking at career fairs and other events (Interview 22). With volunteering there is no contract, no set hours of duty and the students will offer their time freely for a wide range of reasons. It is the student unions role to promote volunteering. While Goldsmiths' student union is relatively inactive in this realm at Kingston University the student union is very engaged with volunteering. On the Kingston student union volunteering leaflet the reasons given why students should volunteer are

to 'develop your skills & get some real-life experience' and to 'improve your CV and employability'. This is followed by making a difference and making new friends (KUSU n. d.). As one student union officer explains in more detail:

'Volunteering is hugely important to [the university] and something that the university is investing more and more in. ... Ensuring that students are leaving Kingston with more than just a degree is incredibly important here and volunteering is a perfect example of doing something that is fun, rewarding and skill developing.' (Interview 24)

To make it easier for students to find volunteering positions the Kingston student union operates a database, with hundreds of volunteer opportunities, mostly comprised of around 16 hours a week and mostly in need of several volunteers for doing the same task on different days of the week. A timetable shows potential volunteers which time slots are still free. It is easy to see that those number of volunteers together would amount to a full time position. In times of austerity, where public services and charities are suffering from tremendous cuts replacing paid staff with volunteers is an easy cost saving option.

The pressure to undertake work-experiences is also intensified by people's peers. For example, as one participant of the Gold Award expressed it:

'The gold award encourages you to do things you need to do anyway. You *need* to volunteer, you need to get things on your CV anyway. The gold award gives you the push, the time limit to get things done' (Goldsmiths Careers n.d.)

Also, all of the student's employability testimonies on the Kingston Career centre website recommend other students to gain work-experience through volunteering and internships (Goldsmith Careers n.d.). This is in line with several studies, which have shown that students embrace the discourse of experience in relation to their employability. Fidgel and Hope (2015) have shown that the magazine *Intern* is a space where interns promote work-experiences to future interns and hence showcase the benefits of unpaid internships. Brown and Hesketh argue that in a competitive graduate labour market students use 'the 'economy of experience' [which] has to be packaged as a *narrative* of employability that must be sold to employers' (2004: 220, emphasis in original). Brown and Heskeths' findings have been confirmed by large qualitative studies with pre-1992 university graduates (Tomlinson 2008) and post-1992 graduates (Moreau and Leathwood 2006). Both studies showed that graduates placed a heavy emphasis on the need to gain experiences and achievements outside university in order to be employable. Similarly, studies which looked at recent graduates in work-experiences confirmed that work-experiences – especially in some sectors such as the

charity sector – have become a 'third degree', which is viewed as necessary in order to secure paid work (Christie 2008; Bruce et al. 2015). In some areas, such as the charity sector, the application process of internships is so competitive that it is often necessary to volunteer somewhere first in order to then move on to an unpaid internship (Bruce et al. 2015: 6; Christie 2008: 6). It is a spiral of free labour where one unpaid position leads to the next and eventually – at times – leads to a paid internship or a temporary position. These studies are also confirmed by my own experience. When I was an unpaid intern at a charity I organised a meeting with over 30 other other unpaid interns in the charity sector, all of whom had done at least one unpaid internship while many were undertaking their third, fourth, or even seventh (Weghmann 2015; see section 2.4.1). In this way it appears that entry-level positions have more and more been replaced by voluntary work and internships.

Employability is not uniformly experienced. Some studies found that working-class students had greater difficulty in securing 'good' work-experiences and thus experienced employability more as a burden than their middle-class peers (Allen et al. 2013: 439; Bruce 2015). Allen et al. (2013: 439) therefore conclude that the discursive construction of the employable student and future creative worker is located within systems of classification that work in the interest of the privileged. Hence, work-experiences nullify the gains of the massification of higher education in making university accessible to all, and contradict the rhetoric of equality of opportunities, as unpaid internships create an entry barrier into certain sectors for people who cannot afford to work for free.

The employability pressure also creates a culture of anxiety and self-blame. As 'students feel that you will 'fail your career' if you do not seek work-experience' (Allen et al. 2013: 438). As such the student – the future worker – learns to become responsible for maintaining their own employability (Hope and Figiel 2015: 362). Moreau and Leathwood (2006) find in their research that students have a limited awareness of the wider social and economic inequality which shapes their employment prospects (2006: 319). Similarly, as Kelly (2013: 110) points out, students take absolute responsibility and blame themselves in the case of failure. In the 'Soul at Work' Beradi (2009: 100) links an overburdening sense of responsibility and self-blame to 'mass depression'. Similarly, Marc Fisher argues that the 'responsibilisation' of society, the idea that the individual is responsible for its own employment fate, combined with what Smail calls 'magical wishfulness' (2015: 200), the belief that it is within every individuals power to make themselves whatever they want to be, causes depression (19 March Fisher 2014).

In line with Beradi and Fischer recent studies found a stark increase in depression, anxiety and other mental health problems among students, especially due to rising academic and financial pressures (Wilding 2004; Bewick and Barkham et. al 2010; Macaskill 2012). To counteract the behavioural pressures on young people to 'project an image of success in the working world' students at Goldsmiths created a project called *To Be Honest*, and gathered confessions about failure from almost 300 18-34 year olds. Over a quarter of these confessions were about careers and the 'most common theme was personal inadequacy or feeling like a fraud' (10 December Cox 2015). The project organisers argue that expectation for young people 'to always maintain an appearance of confidence' creates 'the need to fake it' (Ibid.). In other words, the pressure to succeed in a competitive graduate job market creates a culture of affectation and dishonesty, where people pretend to be what they feel they are not. As such, the employability discourse and practices at universities are not uncontested. Projects such as *To Be Honest* also show that to argue that all students are brainwashed into becoming employable subjects would be an unacceptable generalisation. This is demonstrated by Fidgel and Hope's analysis of the Ragpickers collection – an online archive of anonymous intern testimonies which attempts to de-myth internships by exposing some of their working realities. The interns who testified on the Ragpickers webpage reflected not only on the exploitative nature of internships, but also on the pointlessness and absurdity of some of their tasks. This highlights that to follow orders without question is part of the employability development through interning (2015: 371). However, despite being critical about their internship these people continue to intern (Ibid.: 365) and Fidgel and Hope therefore ask how this increased awareness and 'creative capabilities inherent in the intern can be understood, developed and exercised in a form of solidarity that benefits others?' (Ibid. 373).

At Goldsmiths it was especially notable that employability 'is not an institutional belief', as someone from the career centre has it. The person goes on to describe this scepticism of some academics towards employability as the following:

'some in the academic community, who still say things like, "students are not here to do that [employability training], they are here to learn, to study", who think that "the employability agenda is something which will use up the academic teaching and learning time/intrude upon it/take it away' (Interview 22).

This is confirmed by Foster et al. (2014) findings in their research on the implementation of employability at universities that many academics 'expressed concern with what they saw as the neoliberal agenda underpinning the expression of employability within higher

education'. In the battle of ideas against the employability doctrine academics have come up with counter-activities, sometimes even by using the resources of the career centre and/or by re-branding employability critical activities as employability learning. For example, one department developed a placement scheme, as part of their employability plan, which requires students to do their own critical action research at their placement. This placement scheme is inspired by and learned from the experiences of the Artist Placement Groups (APG), which was founded in 1966. The aim of the APG was – according to its pamphlet – to 'persuade industrialists to take [artists] into their organisations and pay them as licensed opposition to currency dictatorship' (Graham 10 December 2012). Some of the APG projects were echoing popular education movements by 'replacing the autonomy of the singular artist with that of the artists working in solidarity with others' (Ibid.). The career services were also challenged by some academics who successfully convinced them to officially take a stand against unpaid internships due to their exploitative and exclusive nature by not advertising them and by writing to all the departments to do the same (Interview 23, 25). Moreover, at Goldsmiths academics have created paid positions for students so that students can boost their experiences through paid work (Ibid.).

6.2.4 Résumé: the employability carrot

I showed above that the massification and marketisation of higher education led to an inflation of the employability ethos. Students became the main funder of universities (made possible by the skyrocketing of student loans) and demanded employability in return for the high fees. According to the logic of marketisation the consumer is always right, and universities are thus under pressure to deliver in order to remain competitive in the higher education sector. Yet universities as part of their student recruitment strategy are also actively perpetuated student's consumerist demands and hopes for a well-paid graduate job. Consequently, universities have become places which are increasingly pre-occupied with moulding students as employable subjects in line with the demands of a flexible labour market. However, it would be narrow minded to see students as passive and naive consumers of higher education. Instead, they are better understood as active speculators in education investing in a degree in the hope of the return of an ideal graduate job. As graduate jobs are scarce the speculative student is thus forced to continuously do more, to perform better and to show passion and commitment to demonstrate their (employ)ability. As such, employability is, in practise,

an acceleration of the human capital approach which sees (lacking) education and skills as reasons for (un)employment (see section 3.2.2). Through an employability lens, also your performance, your enthusiasm, your drive and your positive attitude are factors determining your job prospects. The logic is nonetheless the same: everyone is the architect of their own future, and employment is the responsibility of the individual. In other words, the employability discourse promotes the neo-liberal work-ethos (see section 3.3.3) and invites students and graduates to embrace a neo-liberal subjectivity.

This becomes especially clear when taking a closer look at the implementation of the employability agenda. In the two universities which are the subject of my study, employability trainings are carried out across campus through career centres, the curriculum and also through the student union, which is in charge of facilitating volunteering. Through employability education corporate interests became much more prevalent and influential within the universities. Employers are firmly embedded in the employability programmes on various levels, ranging from frequent career fairs, career events such as lectures, panel discussions, workshops, and also placements. This feeds back to my analysis in chapter 5 where I showed that greater business influence in universities and, in particular, regarding the content of education is exactly what European multinational companies via the ERT recommend (see section 5.3).

The present chapter demonstrated that to learn what employers want and to consequently make students *become* what employers desire, lies at the core of employability teachings. Essentially, employability is much more than skills and experiences as it confiscates the whole being. Students are encouraged to develop an employability-personality which includes a body-language that appeals to employers and networking manners which are constructed along stereotypical male gender norms. Again, we see that this resonates with the business orientated attitude that was advocated by the ERT already 30 years ago as part of the knowledge-economy package (see section 5.3). In contrast, employability trainings do not mean that students learn about their rights, the power of collective bargaining and collective organising for better pay and conditions. Trade Unions are plainly absent from the preparation of students for the 'world of work'. This leads me to two concludes a) employability teachings mean that students – future workers – learn how to subordinate themselves to capital, and not to challenge it, even before they start with their working lives; b) through the marketisation of higher education the voice of business became very influential within higher education, thus confirming again Jessop's strategic-relational approach (see

section 3.3.2), that allows us to visualise that certain structures privilege certain agencies. This is in line with my analysis of the political state apparatuses on the UK national level and EU supra-national level, where I also demonstrated a privileging of business-agency through neo-liberal structures of state formation (see section 5.4).

A large aspect of the employability education is work-experiences, namely placements, volunteering and internships. While the career centres at both of the studied universities do not officially promote unpaid internships they nonetheless encourage students to take on *any* work-experience regardless of pay and conditions to prove to employers that they have the right 'work-habit'. In other words, the employability education glorifies work and any critical engagement with work is avoided. These, mostly unpaid, work-experiences can be seen as the carrot luring students along from one unpaid job to the next – from volunteering, to placements to several unpaid internships – in the *hope* for a paid graduate job. My findings thus concur with Kuehen and Corrigan who have identified a growing "labour of hope" economy; defined as "un- or under-compensated work carried out in the present, often for experience or exposure, in the hope that future employment opportunities may follow" (2013 :21). However, I also showed in this section that employability teachings do not necessarily prevail in the university without being contested. At Goldsmiths, some students spoke out about the fear of failure created through the employability pressure in a project they called 'To Be Honest'. Also, some academics are actively trying to dilute employability teachings by successfully lobbying the career centre to come out against unpaid internships and by creating paid positions. But beyond that, some academics managed to use the space employability-education provides to facilitate critical thinking and practices about work, for example through popular education methods and action research projects.

6.3 Employability and the workfare regime

6.3.1 The workfare stick: punitive conditionality and its implication

In the following sections I will map the institutional landscape of welfare services with a particular emphasis on compulsory employability trainings of the former Conservative-Liberal Democrats Coalition government which came to power in 2010. In the previous chapter, chapter 5, I outlined the policies which gradually intensified the restructuring of the welfare state into a workfare state in the UK. To recap, I argued that the Coalition government aimed to create consent for its workfarist welfare restructuring by revitalising the underclass theory (see also section 3.3.3 on the underclass theory) and

by merging it with a new idea of social justice. Benefit receivers were portrayed as enjoying an unfair advantage by choosing a life on benefits paid for by the hard working tax payer. In other words, consensus for a punitive workfare system was created by pitting one group of workers against another. The aim of this present chapter is to analyse how employability practices, and in particular mandatory work experiences, are implemented. I will first address in detail the practices and discourses of activating and conditioning welfare support to then map out the outsourced extension of the state by looking at the various programmes and an example of one workfare supply chains in the next two sections.

The Coalition government argued that punitive conditionality of welfare is necessary to generate reciprocity by forcing the claimant to give something in return for their benefits and overcome benefit dependency by disciplining claimants and by making the receiving of benefits deliberately unattractive. Conditionality means that claimants' entitlement to benefits is dependent on expanding the range of job searches, trainings, work preparation and workfare. Failure to carry out these tasks can lead to sanctions – the partial or complete withdrawal of benefits from between one month and three years. As the DWP explains: 'Having strong and clear sanctions are critical to incentivise benefit recipients to meet their responsibilities' (DWP 2010: 28). I showed in section 4.2.3 that the use of sanctions rose significantly under the Coalition government and that according to a Freedom of Information Requests almost one million people were subject to sanctions between April 2013 and March 2014 (FIR 2014-4134). The real figure is, however, likely to be much higher as this number only included JSA claimants (CAB 2013: 10).

Sanctions nullify the idea of collective protection for those who need social security. Social hardships are the consequence whereby, for example, people who were sanctioned become dependent on food banks. The number of people using food banks exploded in 2013-14 seeing nearly one million people (913,138) - 45 percent of whom rely on them due to problems with their benefits. This number represented a threefold increase on the previous year (Butler 19 November 2014). Yet, these figures relate to the Trussell Trust alone, which operates around half of the existing food banks (Trussell Trust 23 November 2014). As such the real number of food bank users is likely to be much higher. A report commissioned by the homeless charity Crisis showed that sanctions also cause fuel poverty, debt and lead to survival crimes as well as mental and physical health problems, family and relationship tensions and a disengagement

with the system (Beatty et al. 2015). Additionally the report warned that sanctions may increase homelessness. Moreover, sanctions are not effecting everyone equally but are highly gendered: in 2013/14 nearly 72 percent of all JSA sanctions were applied to men. Also sanctions disproportionately hit homeless people with some research suggesting that 1/3 of homeless people have been sanctioned (Ibid.). Likewise, people who are suffering from mental health issues are also disproportionately often subject to sanctions, with claimants with long term mental health problems being sanctioned at a rate of more than 100 per day (Methodist Church 20 January 2015).

In light of its clear social harm it is relevant to ask what is actually achieved through sanctions. The government presents sanctions as a political message for those falsely taking advantage of the benefit system (Daguerre and Etherington 2014: 57). However, according to the study conducted by Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) on sanctions almost 30 percent were sanctioned for not doing enough to find work, while over 20 percent had no idea why they had been sanctioned, and almost another 20 percent failed to attend or were late for an appointment at the jobcentre (2013: 11). But there is also increasing evidence that sanctions are arbitrarily and even falsely given, with people being sanctioned because they were at a funeral, in hospital or in a job interview but also for being misinformed by the jobcentre (Digital Action Lab and Birmingham Against the Cuts n.d). This is unsurprising, when taking into account the reports of whistleblowers' of job-centre staff and PCS's survey of their job-centre staff members, which give evidence that there have been sanction targets (see section 4.2.3). Yet whatever the official justification or intentions behind sanctions, a study conducted by Loopsta et al. (2015) found that there is no correlation between sanctions and employment creation. However, the study showed that from 2011 onwards an estimated 43 percent of people who were sanctioned stopped receiving JSA altogether which means that rather than gaining a job, they merely lost their benefits. This is also evidenced in the unemployment figures from early 2017, which reported that unemployment, measured in terms of the claimant count, went down, whilst there was no reported simultaneously increase in the number of people in work (BBC 18 January 2017). In short, sanctions primp unemployment figures and push people away from social services.

I showed in the previous chapters, in particular chapters 3 and 5, that a coercive welfare system is justified on the grounds that unemployment is caused by behavioural factors, rather than structural forces. Such behavioural explanations also allow the government

to absolve themselves of their responsibility for employment levels. Instead it is the individual who is to blame for their worklessness. Two, at times overlapping discourses linked to compulsory employability trainings can be observed. The first one is the image of the lazy scrounger, who is assumed to either defraud the system or is not trying hard enough to find work. The objective is, therefore, to end this 'something for nothing culture' – as the former Minister for Employment, Esther McVey calls it (DWP 6 November 2013). And workfare is the practical consequence. The DWP identified two sub-categories of claimants for whom Mandatory Work Activity (MWA), a workfare scheme, is designed: a) 'those for whom there was some element of 'doubt' about their commitment to finding work', and b) the 'un-motivated or de-motivated' (DWP 2012). As such, workfare is presented as a means to demonstrate that 'benefits are conditional on claimant's willingness to search for and take-up employment' as well as to 're-engage [them] with the system' by developing a 'work ethic' and to 'provide an experience' for claimants (Ibid.).

The second one, in line with the underclass narrative, portrays unemployment as the result of personal failure and/or psychological deficits. Psycho-compulsion became the answer, which points to mandatory activities to overcome psychological reasons for unemployment (Friedli and Stearn 2015: 42). On a practical level this can translate into compulsory sessions with a psychologist, training courses and motivational e-mails in order to modify the attitudes, beliefs and personality of the unemployed to make them more employable. It thus constructs a very specific idea of employable character traits (Ibid.). For example, one particular activating training called 'Engage Module' teaches how 'to develop the right mind-set which will appeal to employers' whilst other trainings stress assertiveness, confidence, motivation and positive affect (Ibid.: 45). Psychological norming practices like these manifest feelings of exclusion for those who do not identify with the employability character traits and consequently feel that there is no place for them in society (Ibid.) As such Friedli and Stearn conclude that working on psychological deficits is 'unpaid labour on the self' and as it is conditional on receiving benefits it is basically another type of workfare. This psychological labour on the self-ensures peoples subordination to employers before even being in employment. In sum, it becomes clear that both of the discourses and practices around compulsory employability trainings portrayed above endorse a neoliberal work-ethos, (see section 3.3.3), through which unemployment is explained by claimants' lack of commitment and adaptability and through which it is demanded that work becomes the centre of our

lives but also of our mind.

6.3.2 Implementing workfare

In this section I will map out the welfare-to-work supply chain of the Coalition government (2010-2015) with a specific emphasis on workfare. With this mapping exercise I aim to provide greater clarity about how employability and its coercive workfare element are actually implemented in practice. The welfare to work provision of the Coalition government operated by outsourcing the task of getting the long-term unemployed into work to a range of organisations, mostly large multinational companies. I demonstrate in this section, that the subcontracting and marketisation of welfare provision did not simplify or reduce the welfare system but, to the contrary, it led to a non-transparent extension of the state. I will first introduce the different stages of the welfare-to-work provision and then analyse a particular supply chain in more detail in the next section.

Pre-Work Programme

The Pre-Work Programme schemes were provided by jobcentre Plus before the customer was referred to the Work Programme. It entailed two experience schemes: 1) voluntary 'work-experiences' for young people as well as a mandatory placement scheme for 2-8 weeks for the 18-24 year olds called the Youth Contract, and 2) a mandatory scheme called 'Mandatory Work Activities' (MWA) for Job Seekers Allowance claimants of all ages. The MWA consisted of 30 hours per week for a four weeks period and was carried out by subcontracted organisations. As the DWP had it at the time, MWA was for 'Jobseeker's Allowance customers who have little or no understanding of *what behaviours* are required to obtain and keep work' (DWP 2011: 2). As such, it was argued that employability will be gained by 'attending on time and every day, following instructions, and working in teams' (DWP 2011: 3). This clearly confirms the behavioural explanation for unemployment outlined above which does not accept that unemployment is the consequence of a shortage of jobs despite, for example, for example, in Hull (North England), there were 58 jobseekers for each job post (Gentleman 31 January 2012). Between May 2011 and August 2014, 251,200 referrals were made to MWAs (DWP 26 March 2015) and most claimants on MWA worked in charity shops. Despite the large number of referrals, the government's own research about workfare concluded that 'MWA referral had no impact on the likelihood of being

employed compared to non-referrals' (DWP 2012: 40).

Due to successful anti-workfare campaigns (see chapter 7 for more information on the campaigns) many charities, such as the British Heart Foundation and Age UK, withdrew from the programme (Malik 12 December 2012). Consequently, the 'sourcing of placement opportunities' became a problem for the MWA scheme in part due to 'the withdrawal of placements from some charities' (DWP 2012). This already indicates that the resistance of the anti-workfare campaigns managed to threaten the sustainability of the MWA scheme. In chapter 7, I show in more detail that the naming and shaming campaigns were in fact so successful that the government did everything in its power to conceal the list of organisations involved in MWA from the public.

The Work Programme

Shortly after coming into office the Coalition government introduced a number of welfare-to-work programmes, replacing around 20 pre-existing schemes (see chapter 5). The largest programme was the Work Programme, which was designed for long term JSA claimants and ESA claimants who remained on the programme for up to two years. Depending on their category claimants were referred from the jobcentre plus to the Work Programme after a certain period of time, ranging from an immediate referral for prison leavers up to one year for JSA claimants over 25 years of age. After four and a half years of operating (June 2011 and December 2015) 1.81 million people were referred to the Work Programme (Dar 2016: 3) in which failure to participate could have resulted in sanctions. The Work Programme functioned as a 100 percent outsourced welfare-to-work scheme. There were 18 prime providers (primes) who between them held a total of 40 Work Programme contracts. The UK was divided into 18 service areas, so that at least two providers were delivering services per area. The vast majority - 15 prime providers - were from the private sector, one was from the public sector, one from the voluntary and community sector (VCS), and one was mixed private/VCS (Dar 2015: 20). This was mostly due to the fact that only organisations with minimum annual turnover of £20 million could become primes (Fuertes and McQuaid 2013: 11). The outsourcing of welfare provision thus meant that the service provision was mostly done by large, profitable multinational companies.

It is worth taking a closer look at the outsourcing system of the welfare provision to

understand how exactly employability was implemented. The great majority of the prime contractors delivered some services. However, most of the welfare-to-work services were again outsourced to 858 subcontractors (figure from September 2013). There were two categories of subcontractors, namely 'tier 1' and 'tier 2'. 'Tier 1' organisations deliver end-to-end services to claimants throughout their time in the Work Programme. 'Tier 2' providers offered specialist interventions, either directly for the prime contractor or for the tier 1 subcontractor (Carter, Rees et al. 2013: 5). Around three-quarters of the subcontractors were 'tier 2s' (Dar 2015: 22). Charities played a more important role in subcontracting with 42 percent of the contracts going to the voluntary or community sector (Ibid.). Initial research showed, however, that primes often shifted the financial risk of the Work Programme onto the subcontractors. Fuertes and McQuaid suggested that in some cases charities subsidised the work of primes as they were able to access governmental funding as well as funds from the European Social Fund which primes could not (2013: 15). In sum, under the work programme the welfare provision to claimants was often multiple-subcontracted, from the jobcentre to primes to subcontractor (tier 1) to subcontractor (tier 2).

Essentially, the Work Programme enabled primes, and to a lesser extent also the subcontractors, to make 'excessive profits' through the delivery of welfare services (Work and Pensions Committee 2011). This bore the risk that services are provided on the prospects of profitability and not on the client's needs. The DWP estimated that it would spend up to £5 billion on the Work Programme up to 2017 (Dar 2015: 15). There were different payment models for prime contractors, who were mostly paid by outcome. An initial 'attachment fee' was paid to providers at the time of the referral. Up to June 2015 the total attachment fees amounted to £510 million. Then there were the 'job outcome payments', where primes were paid when a claimant had been in a continuous or cumulative period of employment, as defined by the DWP. In total, £503 million had been paid to primes in job outcome payments in the same period. An additional 'sustainment outcome payment' was paid to primes for every four weeks a claimant is kept in employment. Up to June 2015 £992 million worth of sustained outcome payments had been paid (Dar 2015: 10, 14). Research has shown that this type of payment model, where providers' motivation for welfare services are profits, provoke the 'creaming and parking of claimants' (Carter, Rees et al. 2013; Hill 2013; Dar 2015). Creaming refers to skimming off claimants who are close to the labour market and targeting them with services so gain high outcome claimants. While claimants who are

unlikely to generate a quick return on outcome payments are 'parked' meaning they are only offered the very minimum standard of services. As such, in the Work Programme the claimants who needed the most support to gain employment were receiving the least amount of services arguably leading to a further stratification of the labour market.

What type of services were actually offered and how they were delivered during the work-programme was not transparent. Prime providers had the freedom to implement the scheme according to their liking as long as they complied with the minimum service standards (Dar 2016: 16). This was referred to as the 'black box' approach (Ibid.). During the two years a claimant was on the Work Programme no progress reports were delivered, leaving the jobcentre completely in the dark until the exit report. However, from claimants' testimonies and their advisors it is known that mandatory work-experiences (workfare) were part of the employability training of the Work Programme (31 January Gentleman 2012).

Some experiences of workfare as part of the work programme that became publicly known suggested that the non-transparent Black Box approach of the Work Programme bore risks of human rights abuses. A case in point is in 2012 during the Queen's diamond jubilee celebration. A company, Close Protection UK, brought down 30 Jobseekers from Bristol, Bath and Plymouth on the Work Programme to work (unpaid) as stewards during the ceremony. They had to sleep under London Bridge the night before the ceremony, had no access to toilets for 24 hours and had to work a 14 hour shift in the pouring rain before they were brought to a swampy campsite outside of London after their work in order to sleep (4 June Malik 2012). Two of the stewards reported to a Guardian journalist that they were originally told they would be paid (Ibid). Only when they arrived at the bus they were told that the work was unpaid and that if they did not accept it they would not be considered for well-paid work at the Olympics later in the year (Ibid.). One of the people working as a steward that day recalled her experience to another Guardian journalist in the following way: 'I was having trouble breathing. After standing up for nine hours, I had a back spasm; I could barely walk. I'd just had enough' (8 June Harris 2012). This incident brings into question in what way such work experience schemes under the Work Programme were useful to improve people's employability. Furthermore it demonstrates that the black box approach bore the danger of hiding human rights abuses.

In conclusion, a few characteristics of the Work Programme can be identified: 1) the Work Programme operated through multiple outsourcing companies; 2) as primes were paid by outcome it bore the danger of 'creaming and parking', where claimants who were considered to have little prospect of securing employment were simply ignored; 3) the black box approach - the complete freedom and flexibility for prime providers in what services they offer - made it non-transparent what type of employability services were offered to whom, but according to testimonies mandatory work-experiences were part of the employability services.

The Help to Work Programme

After the Work Programme claimants who had not found work would be referred to the Help to Work Programme. According to the government around 220,000 claimants had been referred to the programme between June 2014 and March 2016 (DWP 28 March 2017). Participants in the programme were referred to one of three Help to Work measures, namely a) attending the jobcentre every day; b) Community Work Placements (CWP) or c) intensive jobcentre support. It was intended that claimants will be equally distributed between the three options (Ibid.). Participation in the Help to Work Programme was mandatory and failure to take part in the programme could lead to sanctions (Dar 2015: 5). While option a) and b) were provided in-house by the jobcentre Plus the CWPs were outsourced to nine prime providers in 18 Contracting Packaging Areas (CPA). One provider was responsible for one CPA with some providers operating in several CPAs – for example G4S operated in six CPAs. The prime providers then subcontracted again to so called placement brokers, which then found the CWP host (see section 6.3.3).

CWP were the longest and most intense workfare scheme of Welfare-to-Work. It required claimants to work for 30 hours per week for up to six months. Additionally, claimants were obliged to spend another 4-10 hours on job searches so that their total weekly workload was 34-40 hours. Like with the Work Programme, also the Help To Work Programme providers were paid a start fee when participants began the placement, another fee when claimants stayed on the placement for 12-21 and another one if the claimant completed the placement. Additionally providers were paid a job outcome fee if claimants obtained employment for 26 weeks. As I showed above in the section on the Work Programme this type of payment scheme bore the risk that profits are put before people's need. The next section, will look in more detail at one supply chain

leading to CWPs.

6.3.3 Community Work Placements: tracing the employability supply chain

In this section I will look at one specific CWP supply chain in the North London Area to explore how exactly employability is implemented in practice. I start by looking at G4S, the prime provider in this area. Next, I look at one of its subcontractors, Urban Future. Urban Future subcontracted, among others to the Finsbury Park Business Forum, which hosted a large CWP programme called the Business and Community Warden Programme and which will be subject to my investigation here.

G4S is a British multinational that operates in 125 countries with a total company turnover of £7.4 billion in 2013 (War on Want 2014: 04). In the UK G4S took over several government services including guarding and maintaining buildings, running juvenile and adult prisons, escorting prisoners and asylum applicants, electronic tagging and monitoring of prisoners and welfare provision (Ibid.). In total it held public service contracts with a cumulative revenue in 2012-2013 of £718 million (National Audit Office 2013: 21). This was despite the fact that G4S had been known for string of well documented negligent and nefarious business practices, including the non-payment of corporation tax (Hope 12 November 2013), and human rights abuses leading to the death Jimmy Mubenga, one of its detainees in custody (Inquest 2011: 1). In 2013 G4S was banned from carrying out public sector work (BBC 2014) due to a large scale fraud falsely charging the government for offenders who were already dead or out of the country. Yet, only a few months later in early 2014, the ban on G4S to carry out public services was lifted, and three weeks after that G4S was awarded the largest number of the prime provider contracts to carry out the newly introduced Help to Work programme (Plimmer 28 April 2014). This shows that despite G4S' track record and ban, it was nonetheless entrusted to deliver welfare services for the long term unemployed which shows that the government's commitment to outsourcing has rendered it increasingly dependent on shadow-state organisations such as G4S to deliver its programmes. This demonstrates the class dynamics playing out in the extended state at the nexus between the political and civil society aspects the state.

G4S promotes (forced) work-experiences as key for people's employability, as it is assumed that they increase peoples work-confidence. In line with the behavioural explanation for unemployment G4S argues that lack of confidence is the barrier to

employment. This is seen in the following statement from G4S (29 April 2014) on becoming a key provider of the Help to Work programme:

'work experience is highly effective at helping people return to employment where it is meaningful and built around their aspirations. High quality work experience placements help increase confidence and self-esteem.'

G4S does not deliver the help-to-work services itself but outsources them to other companies. One of them is Urban Future. In their brochure they explain vaguely their approach to employability:

'We have dedicated teams of Employment Advisors throughout our London offices who work intensely with customers to get them back on track towards career development through 1-2-1 support, personal development, employability skills, vocational training, work placements and volunteering, and of course, ultimately sustainable employment' (Urban future 2014).

Urban Future's self-description stands in direct contrast to this experience of a claimant with Urban Future:

'There was a total lack of care and concern shown by the staff of Urban Futures toward the people who were entering the centre; people who were expecting support and guidance, but instead were placed into an atmosphere of fear, bullying and intimidation ... The staff were simply interested in getting you onto placements as soon as possible, and making sure your paperwork was completed for profit reasons only' (Keep Volunteering Voluntary 27 March 2015).

This statement indicates that the employability training at Urban Future might be more about profit and less about people's needs. Moreover, the claimants observe that the CWPs Urban Future sends them on are even counterproductive to enhancing claimants' employability. He explains that claimant's skills and employment desires were not properly assessed and the majority of people were just placed in charity shops, where there was often too little work for too many people. Contrary to G4S' claims, people were often unable to develop or even use their skills or even feel useful which led to a 'loss of confidence and self-esteem' (Ibid.). On the other end of the spectrum, someone else sent on a placement by Urban Future suggested that his work-experience actually replaced a real job (Balgrave 6 November 2016).

These different experiences of claimants of their CWPs can be explained by the 'creaming and parking' approach. Urban Future acknowledges it uses a 'traffic Light classification for our customers'. 'Green' are those who 'have the right *attitude and aptitude*, and have a varying but relevant set of *work ready skills* to offer employers'. 'Red' are those that 'are some way away from being placed in a work environment *due*

to personal issues which may include health related issues, addictions, extreme confidence issues and other personal barriers to employment' (Urban Future 2014, emphasis added). The statements from Urban Future emphasise once again the personal behavioural explanation for unemployment, where not only the unemployed person's skills but also their personality is seen as preventing them from being employed rather than the shortage of jobs.

The Finsbury Park 'Business and Community Warden Programme' offers a window through which the CWPs can be assessed in more detail. The programme has existed since 2008 and has been part of other workfare programmes before and was then part of the Help to Work Programme. In 2014 with the Help To Work Programme G4S became the prime provider and Urban Future and A4e were the subcontractors, which contracted the Finsbury Park Business Forum to deliver placement opportunities under the 'Business and Community Warden Programme'. Around 200 wardens were stationed around Finsbury Park tube station. There were three shifts per day so that always 30 wardens operated at the same time covering 8am-12am. Their job was to stand around the tube station with Hi-Vis vests with the aim of deterring crime and anti-social behaviour. It was not only a highly unpleasant job to stand for 6 hours outside in all kinds of weathers but its usefulness came into question as the wardens did not receive any formal police training (Gani 17 June 2015). Consequently, it appears that placements without a purpose were created purely to cream-off placement-payments.

The Work Programme did not have a high success rate in terms of finding people paid work. The DWP made only 1,670 Job Outcome Payments in its first year of operation, a few hundred below the DWP's surprisingly low forecast of 1,860 which suggests that even their expectations were minimal (DWP 2015). When George Osborne announced the initiative of the Help to Work scheme he declared that with it 'long term unemployed people who are capable of work will be required to do something in return for their benefits, and to help them find work'. Arguing that with it 'no one will get something for nothing. Help to work – and in return work for the dole.' (Osborne 30 September 2013). As such, CWP seemed to be less about increasing claimants' employability and more about punishment. This resonates with the experience of this claimant, who felt that he was blamed and indeed criminalised for being unemployed:

'I felt like I had committed a crime, but what was this crime we had supposedly committed? It is my belief that what we are witnessing in society today is the criminalization of the unemployed. There is an atmosphere now at jobcentres and training providers, that you are guilty until you can prove your innocence' (Keep Volunteering Voluntary 27 March 2015).

However, arguably, as with other workfare schemes, such as MWA, increasing public attention on workfare became a threat to the sustainability of CWP. Only around half of the people referred to the CWP actually started a placement. Of the 67,000 people who were referred to the programme up to September 2015 only 35,390 started a CWP (DWP 2015). At least in part this might be due to successful naming and shaming campaigns and because over 650 charities boycotted CWP as they believe that claimants should not be forced to work for free (see section 6.4.1). And as warned by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO 4 December 2013) brand damage is a risk that charities must consider when taking part in CWP. Consequently, the DWP announced in its autumn statement in 2015 that both CWP and MWA contracts will not be renewed and thus came to an end in 2016. This does not necessarily mean that workfare will come to an end as the Work Programme and the Help To Work Programme will be replaced by a new Work and Health Programme which is likely to include new forms of workfare in autumn 2017. Nonetheless, this shows the success of the naming and shaming of workfare hosts and the Keep Volunteering Voluntary (KVV) campaign as a result of which charities publicly pledged not to participate in workfare (see chapter 7 and 8).

6.3.4 Résumé: the workfare stick

In this section I showed how behavioural explanations for unemployment that accuse claimants of choosing a life on benefits, not trying hard enough to find work or personal failure and psychological deficits are used to justify a market orientated system of punitive welfare. Social security is thus no longer seen as the collective protection for those in need but eligibility for benefits is dependent on the claimants ability to prove their subordination to labour by participating in a wide range of mandatory activities, for example compulsory job searches, workfare and mandatory psychological treatments. As such, a hostile and divisive environment is constructed where social protection is portrayed as a generous gift from 'us' – the taxpayer – to 'them' – the claimant – who is abusing this generosity.

With this context in mind, I have mapped out the complicated mechanisms of the UK governments welfare-to-work provision which is outsourced through an extended supply chain of shadow state institutions, segmented in different programmes and packaged in different contract areas. It constructs a new statecraft which is not only

very inefficient but also purposefully non-transparent. Large multinational companies with a minimum of £20 million annual turnover operate as the prime providers. They (and respectively their subcontractors) are paid by outcomes (for example employment and placements) and the 'black box' approach ensures high flexibility of how these outcomes are achieved. This type of outsourcing provokes a familiar phenomena known as 'creaming and parking', meaning that companies provide services to the claimants closer to the labour market to cream off outcome payments while ignoring – 'parking' – those who are unlikely to deliver high returns in outcome payments. As such, services are not based on the claimant's needs but on profitability. The welfare-to-work programmes thus did not only fail to generate employment outcomes but even led to unemployability as they decreased claimants' confidence through bullying and by forcing claimants to conduct pointless tasks in workfare placements. Welfare-to-work did, however, succeed if measured against the degree to which claimants felt part of a punitive and disciplinarian system which they are accused of taking advantage of and choosing or being 'criminally responsible' for their own precarious existence. Recent figures confirm that the workfarist approach to welfare managed to deter people from claiming benefits but did not succeed in putting people into work. In January 2017 it was reported that unemployment figures fell as measured by claimant count, yet simultaneously there were no more people in work meaning merely the unemployed did not claim benefits as 'they were not looking for work' as the BBC puts it (BBC, 18 January 2017). In other words they either could not claim (sanctioned) or did not want to claim (for reasons unknown but the evidence in this chapter suggests that structural bullying and intimidation along the welfare-to-work supply chain is one of them). Further research on the experiences of welfare receivers is highly recommended (see section 9.3).

I also showed in this section that workfare has continuously been contested. The naming and shaming campaigns which targeted the organisations involved in workfare schemes challenged the sustainability of the welfare-to-work programmes. The government thus went to great length to conceal which companies and charities were involved in workfare as it fears that publishing a list of workfare providers would lead to the collapse of the schemes (see section 7.4.1). The struggle against workfare managed to achieve a historic victory. In autumn 2015 the government announced the abolishment of the two biggest workfare schemes - the Mandatory Work Activity and the Community Work Placement - in 2016. In fact, the government terminated the Work Programme and the

Help to Work scheme. Caution is required though as workfare is likely to come back in a new form as part of the governments new Work and Health Programme. This will be, however, much smaller in comparison to the Work Programme with many services previously subcontracted being brought back in house (McGuinness and Mirza-Davies 2016: 3). What is striking, however, is that this programme will be targeting disabled people more than the unemployed as the government expects that 'the majority of those referred to the scheme to be disabled' (Ibid.: 4) (see also my research recommendations at section 9.3).

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter looked at the shadow state institutions assigned with the task of increasing people's employability. Through institutional mapping I presented an in-depth account on the workings of two employability sectors, namely higher education and welfare-to-work.

The two employability practices are of a very different nature and intensity. While students are strongly encouraged (and at times pressurised) to participate in employability trainings, unemployed people are forced to attend, as non-participating can lead to sanctions (the cut or complete withdrawal of benefit sanctions for between one month and three years). As such, it can be argued that employability at universities is the carrot luring people to strive ever harder to subordinate themselves to and meet the demands of employers. The employability stick, by contrast, is found in the welfare-to-work sector where the unemployed are blamed and punished for their unemployment. However, both of the employability examples which were subject to my investigation in this chapter came as part of marketisation processes. At universities there was a surge in employability services which followed the marketisation of universities, achieved principally through the introduction of high tuition fees. Employability services are regarded as increasingly important and are delivered in-house not only by a growing career and employability services teams but also by academics and student unions. There is also an increasing tendency to include employability teaching in the curriculum. Likewise, employability trainings for the unemployed were privatised and outsourced which resulted in a complicated, non-transparent and highly inflated welfare-to-work system consisting of several programmes. Its main programme alone – the Work Programme – was comprised of 40 contracts with 18 prime providers, which then again

outsourced most (and in some cases even all) of their services to 858 subcontractors. Through the 'black box approach' prime contractors thereby enjoyed almost complete freedom of what employability trainings the Work Programme entailed.

Interestingly, both employability practices placed an emphasis on work-experiences. Both groups, graduates and unemployed people, were assumed not – yet - to be worthy of a wage as they must first must *experience* work before being able to work for pay. This creates a situation of hyper-exploitation, with 100 per cent of the labour being surplus labour extracted by the employer as the necessary labour is provided elsewhere – by the intern's parents or by the state. In the case of workfare it can even happen that two employers - the placement host and the prime provider - profit from the same hyper-exploitation-placement. The former gains from the unpaid labour of the claimant while the latter profits from placement-outcome payments.

Moreover, it is notable that while private companies are very influential in forming higher education employability training and even deliver employability services to the unemployed, trade unions are strikingly absent. Employability offers a hyper-individualised training for work and ignores structural determinants of employment prospects such as class, age, gender, and race. Employability training also does not include teachings on employment rights and collective bargaining.

At the core of both employability practices lies a behavioural explanation for unemployment, namely that the unemployed person's 'misbehaviour' is to blame for their lack of employment. Consequently, unemployment has to be treated through a process of responsabilisation in that the individual must be held responsible for their employability. In line with the human capital approach students are expected to make an investment in education in the hope of a job in return. Yet, in an environment where graduate jobs are scarce and the majority of graduates end up in non-graduate jobs this investment is rather insecure and speculative. The student is therefore under constant pressure to continuously do more in order to be more employable than everyone else. A degree is no longer enough. Experience and passion are now required. However, in this competitive environment one unpaid experience often leads to another as volunteering can be a pre-requisite of an unpaid internship which often leads to yet another unpaid internship. Experiences thus amount to a vicious spiral of unpaid labour, with some interns reporting that they have done seven unpaid internships (Weghmann 2015). Moreover, these work experiences also demand a demonstration of commitment, passion and subordination to proof oneself worthy for a paid job.

In line with the underclass theory which argues that personal failures and psychological deficits create barriers to work, the behavioural explanation of unemployment means that claimants are either blamed for not trying hard enough or for being incapable of working. The conclusion to draw from this kind of reasoning is that the unemployed need to be disciplined off benefits and into work and forced 'to do what is good for them'. For example, mandatory work experiences claim to help to overcome worklessness by creating a strong work-habit which will, in turn, render someone employable (see chapter 5). However, testimony suggests that these practices often make claimants feel like criminals whereby unemployment and dependency on benefits is their crime which need to be punished accordingly. The punishments are principally administered through structural bullying and pointless tasks during workfare placements. In this way workfare is in fact creating unemployability rather than employability, as the pointless tasks and the degrading treatment of the unemployed create a structural feeling of unworthiness and hence a reduction in people's confidence and self-esteem - two attributes considered key to peoples employability. This is also mirrored in the unemployment figures which saw a drop in the number of claimants whilst not resulting in a corresponding increase in the number of people in work. In other words, sanctions and other punitive measures helped the government to polish unemployment figures by pushing people away from welfare safety net.

The behavioural explanation and responsabilisation of unemployment further means that employability trainings for both groups aim for behavioural changes. University career centres offer workshops on networking and body language while claimants can be forced by the jobcentre plus or welfare-to-work providers to see a psychologist and/or to conduct trainings on assertiveness, positive thinking, work-motivation. As such, both groups are subject to psychological norming which assumes an ideal worker which appeals to employers. An employability blue print, constructed along stereotypical male gender norms (eg. confidence, assertiveness and dominance), is thus created which everyone is expected to strive towards. Beradi calls this 'magical voluntarism': the belief that it is within every individual's power to make themselves whatever they want to be (2009: 100). As people have no one but themselves to blame for their own lack of success, depression and anxiety are common consequences.

The examples of the two employability practices, which were subject of my investigation in this chapter, led me to re-visit the definition of employability. In the introduction I outlined that employability refers to the individual's ability to adopt to a flexible labour

market through the continuous acquisition of skills and attributes. I also addressed in the introduction that employability transforms the power relationship between employers and workers to the benefit of the former, as the employer is freed from training responsibilities and moreover because employability demands the workers' subordination to capital even before being employed. However, looking at the employability trainings in practice it becomes clear that employability goes even further: employability training is about learning what employers want and to *become* what they want you to *be*. Employability thus encompasses much more than skills and experience it is also ones' mind-set, body language, manners, attitudes, habits. Employability is part of the whole being. I argue here that employability is a powerful discourse that helps to maintain consensus for a neoliberal hegemony. As through its logic of responsabilisation 'each individual member of the subordinate class is encouraged into feeling that their poverty, lack of opportunities, or unemployment, is their fault and their fault alone' (Fischer 2014). In this way I agree with Moore (2010: 40) that employability is a powerful discourse preventing resistance against neoliberal capitalism. However, there are pockets of resistance which are worthy of examination which is where the next chapter will turn to.

- Chapter 7 -

Resisting Employability and Beyond

7. 1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the second research question of this PhD which emerged out of the theoretical analysis in chapter 3, namely: in what ways and through what type of collective organisation do people challenge the concept of employability? In particular, I look at the possibilities and difficulties of resistance against employability and thus aspects of neoliberalism as employability is understood as a particular notion which extends neoliberal capitalism and maintains consensus for it (see section 1.4.1, 3.2.3 and chapter 5 and 6).

This chapter thereby contributes to the literature on the structural changes of global capitalism and workers' resistance by analysing work related activism outside of traditional trade unions. When looking at resistance against work there is a tendency in the literature to focus on industrial action, i.e. on the workers' power to withdraw their labour – to strike. Through this lens, the fact that in the UK the annual number of recorded strike days are at their lowest since records began means that 'workers perceive themselves as ever more powerless to collectively stand up' (Gall 2016). Such an analysis is often based on a narrow definition of work and subsequently argues that 'workers' power is found, first and foremost, in the workplace' (ibid.). In contrast, based on a wider definition of work (see section 3.4 and below), I explore the agency of groups resisting employability which go beyond the workplace. I thereby show that their practices are highly diverse, and they need to be so, as in most cases a strike about employability is not possible. By looking at the practices of resistance to employability I hope to complement and contribute to the broader discussion on the changing nature of work under neoliberalism and industrial relations.

The conceptualisations made in chapter 4 guide my analysis of resistance to employability here. My starting point are three conceptual suggestions made by Cleaver:

i) I build on Cleaver`s concept of the "social factory", which is where the working class works, namely society as a whole. As such work takes place in productive and reproductive spaces and it includes unwaged work (1979.: 70). This stands in stark contrast to the common projection of class which is restricted to the sphere of material

production. Subsequently, as Andreas Bieler points out, 'the analysis of class struggle has to cover the whole factory and not just the workplace' (Bieler 2014: 123).

ii) I adopt Cleaver's approach to not only analyse the structures which maintain and reproduce capitalism but to examine worker's actual struggles (1979: 58, 75). It is thus a strategic analysis of class power with the aim of increasing this power. This analysis does not therefore claim to be 'objective' but is actively trying to contribute to the work of the researched groups (see section 1.2). However, I am careful not to romanticise resistance by reducing everything to it. Resistance is a vague and ambiguous term which is frequently used in the literature but not often defined. I argue that a clear understanding of *what* practices resistance against capitalism entails is a precondition to any analysis of it. In section 3.5.2 I therefore conceptualised resistance against capitalism in more detail, arguing that it is characterised by a) its aim to directly challenge capitalist social relations, which demands collective action as no individual can effectively challenge capitalism and b) it entails an oppositional consciousness.

iii) I use Cleaver's conceptualisation of work as a social relation, which is not only key but also unique to capitalism, and his subsequent understanding of class struggle as limited to the resistance *against* work (hence capitalism). The term resistance thus refers to reactionary practices but it cannot capture the proactive creation of alternative social relations of production. Yet post-capitalist imaginaries and practices - which are happening now and not in the distant future - are equally important for challenging neoliberal hegemony and generating progressive social change. I therefore distinguished in chapter 4 between resistance and commoning. I characterised the latter as collective and non-commodified social relations, in particular social networks of mutual aid, solidarity, and practices of human exchange that are not reduced to the market form. Commoning practices *for* alternative modes of production and ways of being are intrinsically interlinked with resistances *against* capitalism. Not only as they are the two sides of the same path of the struggle towards post-capitalist/post-work worlds, but also as they create each other: resistance can open spaces for alternatives, while the non-commodified relations of commoning are 'not the end point of anti-capitalist-struggle, but its means' (Federici and Caffentzis 2013: 98).

The distinctions between commoning and resistance are connected to the broader aim of this PhD dissertation which I outlined above, namely to produce a strategic analysis of organising in the no-wage economy with the aim to increase the power of these

struggles. When looking at the power of social class struggles, my distinctions between structural power and productive power will guide my analysis (see also section 4.5.1). Gibson-Grahams et al. conceptualise the latter as the creative power to constitute new practices and relations outside capitalism (2000: 11, 12). As such they focus on the enactment of power in a heterogeneous economic field which aims to create worlds which are socially and environmentally just. Hence productive power goes beyond the protection of workers from capitalism and becomes the power behind commoning. In contrast structural power points to the centres of power which can be progressive – the power to refuse capitalist domination, or repressive – the power to destroy workers' resistance. This detailed understanding of power will enable me in this chapter to identify concrete processes of resistance and commoning.

I reject Gibson-Graham et al's conceptualisation of power as fluid processes of resistance, whereby agency seems to take place in a free-flowing space without central power (see section 4.5.1). Instead I adopt a neo-Gramscian approach to power which emphasises the reciprocal relationship between power and production. Hence, when analysing both resistance against capitalism and commoning for alternative social relations of production, it is important to remember that all agency is shaped by historical structures. While this does not mean that agency is pre-determined by its location in the social relations of production, as social forces always can choose between different options, political actions nonetheless have particular historical limits (Bieler and Morton 2001: 25; Bieler 2015: 22).

As such, only if the structural context of work-experience organising is understood can one proceed with the analysis of resistance and commoning processes. In section 3.2.3, by building on Bieler (2012), Overbeek (2003) and Cleaver (2002), I identified five structural transformations within neoliberalism related to labour, namely: 1) the transnationalisation of production through global supply chains; 2) the decentralisation of production through outsourcing; 3) the increasing casualisation and informalisation of work and the increasing abundance of labour related securities (e.g. permanent employment, sick pay, holiday pay and pensions); 4) the intensification and imposition of ever more work, as high levels of unemployment are accompanied by increasingly unwaged work, and closely related to this is; 5) the redefinition of unemployment from a structural problem of the economy to an individual problem of personal behaviour. The latter four structural transformations are most influential in shaping the social relations of production behind employability. In this chapter I will enhance this macro

view on the structural conditions of neoliberal capitalist relations with a more detailed examination on how these structures impact on the lived realities of resistance. This allows me to sketch out the obstacles as well as the concrete opportunities for resistance and social change.

The data for this chapter has been gathered through Participatory Action Research methodology over the period from 2012-2016 (see section 2.3). Methods used were semi-structured individual and group interviews, secondary data the groups produced themselves and to a lesser extent also participatory observation (see the section 2.4). In total I worked with 18 groups (see section 7.2). As I outlined my methodological approach in detail in chapter 2, I will here merely recap its main pillars: it is an explicitly politically motivated research project which is committed to social change in the pursuit of social justice and equality. This research project accepts that all research is created through social processes and is therefore situated within particular theoretical frameworks and dependant on the subject positions of the researcher and the researched. I have reflected on my own subjectivity in section 2.5 of which two notions might be worthy of repeating here: a) this research was triggered by my own experiences of working as an unpaid intern at a charity and my attempts to organise with other interns for a wage; b) my long term commitment to social justice activism and my involvement with the grass-roots trade union United Voices of the World meant that I am in a fortunate position of trust and confidence within the activist community.

Guided by the above reflections the structure of this chapter is as follows: in the next section, 7.2, I will introduce the researched groups by giving a brief overview on how, when and why they came into being. As agents of oppositional practices cannot choose the circumstances of their struggle I will then, in section 7.3, outline some structuring conditions of global capitalism. This subsequently enables me to analyse the strategies of resistance in the sections 7.4.1-7.4.3 and then show in section 7.4.4 that the resistance to employability can only be understood in conjunction with the creation of commons. Lastly, section 7.4.5 will look at post-work-imaginaries by looking at the demands for an unconditional income, namely the universal basic income (UBI) and the unconditional claimants' income (UCI). Section 7.5 will then conclude.

6.2 The emergence of the groups (see Appendix 1):

I showed in chapters 1 and 4 that the employability agenda created a consensus for neoliberalism in times of continuous high unemployment, by ascribing responsibility to the individual for their personal employability. In particular, New Labour put forward a positive rhetoric of social inclusion, emancipation and creativity (see section 5.2.2). Free labour expanded, not only but especially in the creative industries. In 2006 the Arts Council exposed the fact that there were two unpaid interns and one freelancer for every three regular employees (Precarious Workers Brigade & Carrot Workers Collective 2015: 217). Inspired by similar initiatives in France and Italy a few people in the creative industry, who were very concerned with the rise of free labour in general, and especially with internships, created the *Carrot Workers Collective* in the mid 2000s. The carrot symbolises the false promises that are prevalent to free labour (Ibid. 215). It is the promise that unpaid labour is a meaningful experience which leads to success, stability and eventually paid work. The issue of unpaid internships was also the concern of Intern Aware (since 2012) a NGO which helps interns to claim back their money if they were in fact legally entitled to the minimum wage; as well as of *Future Interns (2013-2014)* and *NoPayNoWay (2011-2012)*, three relatively short-lived campaigns highlighting the injustices behind unpaid interns.

However, work-experiences are only one aspect of a bigger no-wage economy. Next to the obvious phenomena of internships, volunteering and workfare there are also hidden aspects such as unpaid overtime, which is especially common among part time workers (Conway and Sturges 2014) and self-exploitation, which is encouraged by the rhetoric around the "enterprising self" and the "myth of success" (see for example Wright 2017 on the digital games sector and Bennet, Strange et al. 2015 on the digital independent media sector). Both unpaid overtime and self-exploitation are often expected and interpreted as signs of ones commitment to work. As such in 2010 CWC called for the formation of a 'people's tribunal of precarity' to collect people's testimonies. Out of the tribunal a new group emerged consisting mainly of cultural and educational workers who started to organise around the broader issue of precarity, called the *Precarious Workers Brigade*.

The Coalition Government which came to power in 2010 replaced the "creativity" and "innovation" rhetoric with one of "austerity". Drawing on the spirit after the war, David Cameron's austerity mantra attempted to gain public support for the reduction or withdrawal of welfare entitlements through appeals to frugality, self-sufficiency and

fiscal prudence (MacLeavy 2011: 355). As such, a shift took place by which employability was no longer to be understood as one's own personal responsibility but, moreover, it became a social obligation. Claiming benefits was portrayed as an unfair advantage, where hard working people pay for 'scroungers' who 'choose a life on benefits' (Cameroon 2012). This aggressive political narrative stressed the need for coercion through tougher benefit sanctions (see section 5.2.3). Consequently, the change of discourse around unemployment, the stricter rules, the intimidation of claimants by the jobcentres, the rise of sanctions and compulsory work placements caused hardship and poverty as well as mental and physical illnesses. As such, jobcentres were no longer seen as helpful for putting people into work but as institutions that were criminalising people – unemployment or the inability to work seem to have become a crime (Keep Volunteering Voluntary 27/03/2015). In response, people started to organise and to fight back. This relates to Andreas Bieler's observation that 'in moments of crisis that agency of resistance becomes relevant' (2014: 28). Several groups emerged in 2010 such as *Disabled People Against the Cuts (DPAC)*, *Boycott Workfare*, *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group*, *Mental Health Resistance Network* and the *Brighton Benefits Campaign*. And others followed shortly after, such as *Scottish Unemployed Workers' Network in 2011*, *Keep Volunteering Voluntary in 2011*, *Dundee Against Welfare Sanctions in 2012* and *Boycott Workfare Manchester in 2015*.

Other groups already existed or emerged out of other pre-existing grass-roots groups. For example, *Leeds Fightback Welfare* emerged out of *Leeds Off Our Homes*. Through *Leeds Off Our Homes's* work in the community the activists started to become aware of benefits sanctions and workfare and started to organise against both (Interview 1). *WinVisible*, a group which provides a voice for women with visible and invisible disabilities through campaigning and self-help information has been around since 1984 (WinVisible n.d.). *WinVisible* is now helping women to challenge benefits sanctions and workfare. Likewise, *Haringey Solidarity Group* started initially as an Anti-Poll Tax group in the late 1980s. It then moved on to other community issues and campaigns now against workfare and sanctions in the North London area since 2011 (Interview 8).

Then there are Claimants' Unions, which emerged in response to the disinterest of trade unions in the unemployed (see section 5.2.1). The Claimants' Union Movement goes back to the late 1960s. In January 1969 the first claimants' union was established in Birmingham by four working class students who were claiming benefits (Rose 1973: 183). The claimants' unions replicated trade unions tactics in that whilst trade unions

are comprised of workers only, a claimants union is comprised of claimants only (Ibid.: 185; Yamamori 2014: 3). However, its internal organising structure followed the principles of participatory democracy, such as self-organising and empowerment. The claimants' union ideology was to work *with* the poor rather than *for* the poor like charities such as Child Poverty Action Group or the Citizen Rights Office (Rose 1973: 184). The claimants' unions enabled claimants to stand up for their rights together and facilitated a sense of solidarity and community (Yamamori 2014: 4). This attitude is reflected in its long lasting slogan 'Never meet a SS [Social Security officer] alone' (Ibid.). Soon other claimants' unions emerged, and it developed into a national claimants' union movement with 120 claimants' unions at its peak which were coordinated through the *Federation of Claimants Unions* and the *Scottish Federation of Claimants Unions* (Ibid.). However, the claimants union movement withered in the 1980s (see section 4.2.1). Only a few still exist today, namely *Newham Claimants Union* (since 1985), *Plymouth Claimants Union* (since 2009) and *Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty* (since 1983). However, the claimants' union organising principles have been picked up by newly created claimants' unions and unemployed workers groups which have established themselves since 2010, such as *Norwich Claimants Union*, *Nottingham Claimants Union*, *Birmingham Claimants Union* (2013-2014), *Hackney Claimants Union* and *Norwich Claimants Union* (since 2014) and *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group*.

In December 2011 a new player entered the scene of no-wage resistance. Unite, the largest trade union in the UK, announced a new membership scheme 'to ensure those pushed to the margins of society can benefit from collective power' (Holgate 2014). The "Community Membership" aimed at unemployed, students, pensioners and others not in work. *Unite Community* is a new strategy of trade unionism which attempts to organise outside the workplace especially as workers bargaining power has been declining over decades. The trade unions never recovered from the falling membership rate following the neoliberal policies which started in the late 1970s and continue until today (see chapter 5). This trend of falling membership worsened throughout the economic recession in the UK which followed the global financial crisis in 2008. Unions in the public sector were specially effected. Unite's membership fell ever since it was officially formed through the merger of Amicus and the Transport and General Workers' Union in 2007 (Cimorelli 2012). It recorded 1.9 million members in 2008 and only 1.4 million members in 2013 (Statistica 2017). A shift to community unionism seemed to be one logical strategy to regain lost members. Just four years after *Unite Community*

was established it had recruited 8,000 members and formed 80 groups nationally (Unite Community Leeds 03 May 2015). The campaign against sanctions is currently one of *Unite Community's* biggest campaigns.

My aim in this section is to provide an overview of the activist landscape in the UK struggling against unpaid work-experiences and work on the self. I must stress that this is just an overview and not an exhaustive list. Nor is this a static mapping of the activist landscape as new groups emerge, others cease their activities or move on to other issues and, moreover, the struggles also vary in intensity over time. Nonetheless, this overview shows that with the increased coerciveness of the benefits regime new resistance has emerged. Most of the resistance takes place in grass-roots groups outside trade unions with the exception of *Unite Community*. In this section, it also became clear that the resistance against workfare is tightly linked to other aspects of the coercive benefit regime and similarly the campaigns against unpaid internships are linked to a wider struggle against precarity.

7.3 The structuring conditions of global capitalism

As Andreas Bieler pointed out 'agency does not take place in circumstances of agents' own choosing' (Bieler 2015: 4). Agencies of resistance do not emerge in a vacuum but are enabled, shaped and constrained by structural conditions of global capitalism. As such, when analysing the struggles against unpaid labour it is crucial to regard the structural context in which the groups organise and campaign. It is here that agency meets structure as the targets of their struggle, the coercive and conditional benefit regime and precarity, are the very factors which constrain resistance. In section 2.2.3 the casualisation and informalisation were identified as a structuring condition on labour through neoliberalism, leading to a precarisation of the daily life as many labour related securities were abandoned. When interviewed by Stejskalová and Kleinhamplová the *Precarious Workers Brigade* explains in more detail how these structural conditions shape their agency:

'The thing we are fighting – precarity – produces conditions that are also the main hurdles [to organising]: a lack of time, energy, money, multiple work commitments leaving little time for meetings or even travelling to meetings, burn-out, health issues– including mental health, forced migration, visa issues, care duties all make it very difficult (Stejskalová, Kleinhamplová and Precarious Workers Brigade 2014: n.p.)'

Time was also identified by one *Boycott Workfare* activist as 'the biggest constraint for

our struggle' (Interview 10). And similarly other groups and activists reflected that the practicalities of life restrict peoples organising capacity (Interview 1, 11, 16). Time constraints effect unemployed and employed people alike because 'it is now very stressful for unemployed people [too], there are so many rules, you need to sign on so often' (Interview 3). High application targets, such as 30 applications a week, keep people very busy especially if their access to resources, for example computers and internet, are limited. This relates directly to Cleaver's observation that the current form of neoliberal capitalism is about work intensification – both for the waged and unwaged alike (see section 3.2.3). The demand for ever more work simultaneously creates a barrier to organising as it robs people of time and energy.

Different groups have different strategies in dealing with people's personal limitations. Uniquely, *Boycott Workfare* in recognition of people's time limitations spends most of its income, which they accumulate through fundraising, on remunerating participants for their activist activities (Interview 10, 11). This is organised in two different ways. Firstly, anyone who attends *Boycott Workfare's* monthly work meeting, which lasts around 2 hours, will receive £20 in addition to their travel expenses. In this way, as one activist explains, they 'recognise [peoples'] expenditures and outgoings in terms of food, energy and heating' (Interview 10). Secondly, *Boycott Workfare* introduced a system whereby people who volunteer for tasks can receive an honorarium. In accordance with their participatory democratic principles a list of tasks and how much time needs to be allocated to each was decided through consensus in one of their monthly meetings (see section 8.4.1). The honorarium can be received by anyone who works over and above two hours per week. The ideas behind this are twofold: a) it aims to prevent people from 'self-exploiting' themselves with activist labour, and b) it is a means of material distribution as 'people who have time but no other source of income have an opportunity to get some extra income' (Interview 11). It needs to be stressed though that this is an honorarium and not a wage *Boycott Workfare* is paying its participants. This is not only because *Boycott Workfare* doesn't have sufficient funding to pay themselves wages but also because wage payments would have legal implications for people who are claiming benefits from the state. In this vein, this strategy of *Boycott Workfare* relates to what Katz (2004: 251) termed as reworking, understood as practices which are conscious of structural underlying oppressions and try to recalibrate power relations and redistribute resources (see section 4.5.2 for the conceptual difference between reworking and resistance). In the case of *Boycott Workfare* practices of reworking, therefore, also

enable practices of resistance. It is only because they are remunerated for some of their energy and time they put into the struggle that some people can spend more time on it rather than using their time for alienating waged or unwaged work. This also shows that practices of resistance and reworking frequently overlap (see section 4.5.2).

Fear is another structural obstacle to organising, which cannot be underestimated. For benefits recipients the fear of sanctions - the removal of their material means of existence-from one day to the next, is very high. And, indeed, the risk of being sanctioned is indisputable as nearly 1 million people were sanctioned in 2014 (see section 5.2.3). As an activist from *Haringey Solidarity Group* explains: 'sanctions are a big threat, it is a big cloud hanging over them [people on workfare]'. He adds that 'maybe legally they [people on workfare] cannot be sanctioned if they protest, but they are not gonna take the chance' (Interview 8). Whilst interns do not risk such punitive measures, fear is also an obstacle for them to organise. They do not work for a wage but for a reference and a good network, which they hope will bring them a good job one day. Interns perform the labour of hope (see section 6.2.1). What they therefore fear is becoming outcast from their industry if they speak up and organise. I was confronted with this reality when I worked as an intern and tried to organise together with other interns. Many interns I came across felt exploited and were angry but most were too fearful to take any action (Weghmann 2015). One could also argue that interns not only perform a labour of hope (see section 6.2.1) but also a labour of love. Interns often work in companies and/or charities they particularly like and are consequently scared to do anything that might harm their images. The fear felt by both interns and benefits claimants, different as they may be, is rooted in the way work and unemployment have been redefined under neoliberal capitalism (see section 3.3.3), namely that responsibility for unemployment rests with the individual and not as a structuring condition of capitalism.

Isolation is another major obstacle to resistance. Isolation is a consequence of the way production is organised and material resources are distributed, but it is also exacerbated by the idea of individualism which is central to neoliberalism (see section 1.4.1). Interns constitute an invisible workforce - their employment is transitional, and their names do not appear in the companies' staff list. My own experience of organising as an intern was that it is extremely hard to get in touch with other interns, as their email addresses usually aren't public on the organisation's websites (Weghmann 2015). Despite writing to over 100 charities asking for their interns' contact details under the guise of social

networking, only two charities forwarded their interns' contacts to me (Ibid.). In order to make it easier for interns and precarious workers to step out of this isolation the *Carrot Workers Collective* and the *Precarious Workers Brigade* organised monthly drop-in sessions in a pub for interns to meet up (see for example Carrot Workers Collective 9 April 2012; Precarious Workers Brigade 3 April 2015).

In a different way, isolation is also a difficult hurdle for many unemployed people to organise. Many people on benefits do not have internet access at home. In 2014, 26 percent of households were still without internet in the UK. While this is mostly because they feel they do not need it or lack the skills for it, especially amongst elderly people, 23 percent of the unconnected households do not have internet, as the access and equipment costs are too high (ONS 2014). As such, for many unemployed people it is hard to get sufficient information and also to be up to speed with events and protests (Interview 3, 4). Many groups therefore have regular meetings at the same location, which are crucial for keeping the bonding of the group alive (Interview 3, 5, 9) and some groups, for example *Boycott Workfare* and *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group*, also reimburse travel costs as the lack of money 'should not be a barrier for peoples participation' (Interview 3, 10). *Brighton Benefits Campaign* is linked to an unemployed centre which is open daily and provides people with free computer and internet access (Interview 9). However, it is still hard for people to overcome their isolation especially if there is no local group, as one person from Lewisham (South East London) explained at a *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* meeting (in North West London) who travelled for more than two hours to get there (Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group meeting 14 May 2015).

In this section, I have shown that agency cannot be analysed in a vacuum as people do not act in circumstances of their own choosing but are shaped and constrained by historical structures. As such, the issues the groups aim to challenge and transform through political action, namely precarity and the coercive benefit system, are in the same time what constrains their agency of resistance. Specifically, fear, time and isolation were identified as three of the highest hurdles to organising. Therefore, a big part of the organising efforts of many groups is to lower these hurdles to make it easier for people to resist. This can be done by, for example, having regular meetings and drop-in sessions as a contact point for new members and by providing resources, such as travel costs and access to the internet, but also by remunerating people for their activities of resistance. However, despite these initiatives, the fear of sanctions in

particular, prevented people from openly resisting. In this instance though resistance is nonetheless still possible as people who are not directly impacted by the coercive sanction regime organise against it in solidarity. This directly relates to an understanding of solidarity which is not based on a shared identity resulting from a common position in the production system but instead originates from a desire of transformation and a shared anger against the injustice of workfare, which makes more privileged people fight at the side of the oppressed (see section 4.5.4). This example indicates the importance of solidarity. In chapter 8, I will thus discuss solidarity relations in more detail.

7.4 Strategies of resistance and beyond

In this section I will take a closer look at the campaigning and organising strategies of the researched groups. This has two purposes: i) it allows me to portray the possibilities and obstacles of organising outside traditional trade unions; and ii) the documentation of concrete, practical steps of resistance may be an inspiration for other and future groups of resistance and thus directly relates to the aim of this research to not only analyse workers struggles but also to try to strengthen the power of their resistance.

7.4.1 Naming and Shaming

Naming and shaming actions is an important and successful strategy of resistance against the unpaid work promoted through employability. Most frequently these tactics were used by groups such as *Boycott Workfare*, *Haringey Solidarity Group*, *Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty*, *Brighton Benefits Campaign* and *the Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* in the struggle against workfare. The groups were very aware of the importance of companies and charities' brands for their survival within a capitalistic market economy. Applying Katz's conceptualisation of resistance, I argue that naming and shaming is a vital strategy of resistance as it challenges the dynamics of capitalism (see more on Katz definition of resistance in section 4.5.2). By targeting the workfare hosts the groups are also directly challenging the logic of outsourcing, in which technically not the client (the host) but the subcontractor is the employer (see sections 6.3.2 and 6.3.3). The brand and image of the host/client is often more prominent and well known than that of the subcontractor, which operates behind the scenes. The idea of the groups was that if enough workfare hosts pull out 'workfare becomes unworkable'

(Interview 10). As part of their naming and shaming strategy the groups use protests outside the stores, letters and social media storms to raise public awareness about which companies and charities are using workfare.

The naming and shaming strategy against workfare proved very successful and as a consequence of *Boycott Workfare* companies and charities pulled out of the workfare schemes, causing a domino effect in February 2012. First, Waterstones pulled out (Boycott Workfare 03 February 2012), followed by Sainsbury's (Boycott Workfare 11 February 2012), this was soon followed by Marie Curie and Shelter (Boycott Workfare 17 February 2012), Oxfam, Maplin (Boycott Workfare 20 February 2012) and then Poundland (Rawlinson 24 February 2012). When also Greggs, Argos and TK Maxx reviewed their participation in mandatory work-experiences in February 2012, Ian Duncan Smith, the Work and Pension Secretary at the time urged the 'police to be "more pro-active" in stopping the invasion of shops that sponsor the [workfare] scheme' (Manson 26 February 2012). Following their 'mass social media campaigning' Boycott Workfare called for two days of action against workfare in March 2012, with protests in 24 locations all over the UK (Boycott Workfare 26 February 2012 and 1 March 2012). Several nationwide naming and shaming actions continued throughout the year, escalating in a week of action following the workfare scandal at the Queen's Jubilee (see section 6.3.3) and a week of action around Christmas (Boycott Workfare 29 June and 2 December 2012). *Brighton Benefits Campaign* (interview 9), *Leeds Welfare Fightback* (interview 1), the *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* (interview 3) and *Edinburgh Coalition Against poverty* (29 February 2012) and *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* (Interview 12) were a few of the other groups hosting protests during the days and weeks of action. And more success followed as more workfare providers pulled out such as, for example, Body Shop (Boycott Workfare 30 May 2012), Holland and Barrett (Boycott Workfare 2 July 2012) and Scope (Malik 12 December 2012). By the end of this intense year of campaigning against workfare the DWP admitted in its evaluation of the Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) – the most common workfare scheme at the time – that it is unable to find enough placements for everyone on the scheme as 'the high profile withdrawal of placements from a number of larger charities meant a sharp reduction in placements.' (DWP 2012: 33).

The campaigns against workfare continued in 2013 with more groups joining the struggle against workfare, for example *Haringey Solidarity Group* (6 February 2013) and *Dundee Against Austerity* (Interview 13). This continuing pressure caused more

companies to withdraw from MWA in 2013, including the Red Cross (Boycott Workfare 16 March 2013), Superdrug (Boycott Workfare 22 March 2013), Argos and Homebase (Boycott Workfare 24 May 2013) as well as Shoe Zone, Debenhams and Wetherspoons (Boycott Workfare 1 January 2014). In 2014 research conducted by *Boycott Workfare* found that several councils in the UK used workfare as a way to deal with their budget cuts - amounting to ½ million hours of unpaid labour in total. After the national press published these research findings several councils announced their immediate withdrawal from workfare schemes. A naming and shaming protest was not even necessary (Boycott Workfare 15 January 2014).

It was because of the successful nature of the naming and shaming campaign that the DWP sought to conceal the list of the organisations involved in workfare. Consequently, a member of *Boycott Workfare* filed a Freedom of Information request in order to gain a list of the organisations involved in MWA (Zola 5 January 2012). At first the government simply refused to comply with the FIR. The *Boycott Workfare* member then appealed to the Information Commissioner (IC) who ruled that the names of all organisations involved in MWA must be made public (Malik 9 November 2012). However, the government still refused to make the names public because, as leaked documents from the DWP lawyers to the Guardian revealed, they feared that a 'disclosure [of names] would have been likely to have led to the collapse of the MWA scheme' (Ibid.). Consequently, the DWP appealed against that IC's decision to release the names but the appeal was lost (Department for Work and Pensions v The Information Commissioner and Frank Zola, 17 May 2013). As the government was still unwilling to comply the information the legal battle continued. Finally, after a four and a half year long legal battle the DWP was forced in July 2016 by a Court of Appeal (CofA) ruling to comply with the FIR (*Department for Work and Pensions v The Information Commissioner and Frank Zola*, 27 July 2016) and publish the names of the companies involved in MWA (DWP Strategy Freedom of Information, 28 July 2016). Yet, by the time the list was finally published the government had already stopped the MWA programme. This legal battle is estimated to have cost the government £100,000 pounds in legal fees (Bloom 17 November 2016). However, the list only refers to the organisations participating in MWA, which is only one workfare scheme out of several and only refers to a six month period in 2011-2012. The great lengths the government went through in order to avoid publishing the names of the workfare hosts demonstrates the dominant class interests within the government in protecting the profit maximisation

practices of private firms through providing them with free labour. It also demonstrates the importance given to coercion, expressed in this case through mandatory workfare, in maintaining the employability agenda which is designed to make unemployment as unattractive as possible and to pit workers against the unemployed (see sections 5.2.3 and 6.3.1).

Prior to the cessation of the MWA programme, and despite some initial successful campaigns, the government extended their workfarist regime in 2014 by introducing Community Work Placements (CWP) as part of the Help to Work scheme (see section 6.3.3). I already showed in 5.3.3 that CWPs were a form of workfare specifically targeting the long term unemployed. The beneficiaries of CWPs were charities which would receive the free labour for up to 30 hours a week for 6 months. In response to the CWP a new campaign group *Keep Volunteering Voluntary* was launched. By highlighting the incompatibility of workfare with charitable and ethical values this group lobbied charities for them to pledge not to use workfare. In contrast to *Boycott Workfare*, for example, which primarily campaigns through direct actions intent on reputational damage, *Keep Volunteering Voluntary* functions as the “fluffy” counterpart to naming and shaming strategies by seeking to persuade charities not to take part (Interview 14). By the time of writing over 670 organisations had signed the pledge (*Keep on Volunteering Voluntary* n.d.).

Arguably the *Keep on Volunteering Voluntary* pledge together with the naming and shaming campaigns, in part, caused a delay in the introduction of the CWP scheme, due to the prime contractors’ inability to find workfare hosts (*Keep Volunteering Voluntary* 2 June 2014). For example, even before the CWPs scheme was introduced key users of other workfare schemes, such as the Salvation Army and the YMCA, announced they would not participate in it (*Boycott Workfare* 6 April 2014). Yet, I also showed in section 5.3.3 that the delay in the implementation of the CWPs might also have been caused by G4S, the largest prime provider of the Help-to-Work programme, initially being banned from government services. However, when it was eventually introduced the naming and shaming and the pledging together provided a real threat to the sustainability of CWP. When evaluating the CWP the DWP had to admit that only around half of the people referred to the CWP had actually started a placement. Of the 67,000 people who had been referred to the programme up to September 2015, only 35,390 had started a CWP (DWP 2015). As such, by targeting the weak spot in the neoliberal mode of production which is underpinning workfare, namely the importance of brand

image for workfare hosts, in joint effort with other groups *Boycott Workfare* is using structural power to make its slogan a reality: 'if you exploit us, we shut you down'. By preying on companies' susceptibility to brand damage which is arguably the Achilles heel of corporate power in the neoliberal age.

Interestingly, while the campaigns against workfare primarily targeted the workfare hosts on the high street they did, however, take the whole extensive state structure of the workfare state into account (see the section under 6.3). Already in 2011 *Boycott Workfare* targeted a conference behind the workfare sector with loud and disruptive protests which led to its cancellation (*Boycott Workfare* 7 June 2011). In 2013 *Boycott Workfare* organised a disruptive action at the Employment Related Service Association, the representative body for the employment support sector – in other words, the lobby behind workfare organisations. (thegoldengilrk8 2013). In 2014 *Boycott Workfare* and the StopG4S campaign protested at the annual general meeting of G4S, one of the work programmes prime providers (*Boycott Workfare* 1 June 2014). A little later that year *Boycott Workfare* disrupted the conference of the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, where different primes and subcontractors of the work programme came together, such as G4S, Seetec and Reed (*Boycott Workfare* 27 June 2014). Then later that year, some groups campaigning against workfare also occupied the offices of the workfare subcontractors and as part of *Boycott Workfare's* 'week of action against workfare' in October 2014. For example 15 people from *Haringey Solidarity Group* and *Boycott Workfare* occupied the offices of Urban Future, one workfare subcontractor of the North London area (*Haringey Solidarity Group* 19 October 2014). On the same day the *Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty* organised a blockade of Learn Direct, a workfare subcontractor in Scotland (*Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty* 9 October 2014). The action was supported by the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* and *Dundee Against Austerity* (Interview 12, 13). Also, in July 2015 the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* occupied Triage - the company which proudly boasts of being the largest Work Programme subcontractor in Scotland – to 'draw attention to the horrors of the workfare and sanction state, and show those who profit from inflicting distress on others that they can't expect to do this without active and public protest' (*Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* 2016: 55).

Beyond this the groups have also targeted the state apparatus behind workfare. Some groups, such as *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* and *Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty*, hold regular protests outside jobcentres in order to highlight the systematically

abusive behaviour of jobcentre staff and the cruelty of sanctions and workfare, while simultaneously informing people about their rights (Interview 3). *Unite Community*, which made the fight against sanctions one of their core campaigns, organised a nationwide 'day of actions against sanctions' in March 2015, March 2016 and March 2017. According to *Unite Community* the Day of Action was very successful in 2015 with 82 actions all over the UK (Interview 7; Unite n.d). The protests targeted local jobcentres and the DWP's office in London with similar goals as the other groups. Yet, according to an active participant in 2017 *Unite Community's* day of action seemed to have lost its momentum (Interview 16). The *Disabled People Against the Cuts* also organised several actions outside the DWP and also occupied the DWP in 2012 in protest against the work capability assessments (WCA) which often forced disabled people to carry out work related activities even if they were physically or psychologically incapable of working (interview 16). In conclusion, we see that the groups follow a multi-target strategy with organising disruptive actions targeting institutions throughout the workfare supply chain.

Naming and shaming strategies have also been used by other groups about other issues. For example the *Precarious Workers Brigade* and *Future Interns* have used naming and shaming to expose the use of unpaid internships in the art sector through letter writing, creative direct action and through the media (Interview 2). In December 2013 *Future Interns* raised awareness about the unpaid labour of interns by dressing up as Santa Clause in front of the Serpentine gallery with a sign saying 'All we want for Christmas is Pay' (Page 16 December 2013). Their protest was in response to the Serpentine galleries advertisement of an unpaid internship. *Norwich Claimants Union* used a naming and shaming strategy to raise public awareness on the food waste of supermarkets in a time when many people, and especially claimants, rely on food banks. Consequently, Sainsbury's committed to donating its left over food to food banks (Interview 6). *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* even organised a naming and shaming action in front of the TUC's headquarter in order to raise awareness of the TUC's endorsement of workfare (interview 3, see section 8.2). One very large naming and shaming campaign initiated by *Disabled People Against the Cuts* targeted Atos, the sole company carrying out the work capability assessments. Through a mix of lively and disruptive street protests and social media pressure under the hashtag 'Atos Kills' the *Disabled People Against the Cuts* aimed to 'trash Atos' reputation' (Interview 16). When Atos became a sponsor of the 2012 para-Olympics the *Disabled People Against the Cuts* hosted a week of action called the Atos games which included a spoof Para-Olympics

where medals saying 'you are found fit to work' were awarded and a memorial ceremony with a coffin filled with stories of people's experiences when assessed fit to work. After another day of action in February 2014 Atos capitulated and terminated its £500 million contract with the DWP over a year ahead of time 'following widespread public and political anger over the tests, which have been criticised by MPs and campaigners as crude and inhumane' (Siddique 27 March 2014). Yet it was only a 'small victory' as the WCA were then carried out by a new company called Maximus (Interview 16).

In summary, naming and shaming campaigns have been crucial in the resistance against workfare. Under global capitalism companies (and also charities) rely on their image to survive in a competitive market economy. Reversing the logic of outsourcing, anti-workfare protests predominately targeted workfare hosts and not the subcontractor (see chapter 6.3 on the workfare supply chain). The workfare hosts, usually shops and charities located along the high street, are much more vulnerable to reputational damage. Through the naming and shaming campaigns but also through its "fluffy" counterpart, the *Keep Volunteering Voluntary* pledge to not participate in workfare, many organisations refused to participate in the schemes. By picking the weakest operator in the workfare supply chain, namely the workfare hosts, the campaigns eventually made "workfare unworkable" as the scheme collapsed due to too few organisations being willing to take on claimants on a placement.

Yet, the government did everything in its power to conceal the list of workfare hosts. This shows again, that non-transparency is key to the functioning of the workfare system. I have already demonstrated in section 6.3.2 the systematic non-transparency of the welfare-to-work, which operates through multiple outsourcing and the 'black box approach, meaning the prime and subcontractors have almost complete freedom in what type of welfare services they offer (see chapter 6 on the workfare supply chain). Through the lens of class struggle, I showed in this section that the non-transparency achieved through the clutter of outsourcing is key to managing the hyper-exploitative work relations of workfare and therefore the government did everything in its power to conceal information about the workfare hosts. The groups resisting workfare revealed and challenged the secrecy of the government. It thus resonates with Cleaver, who argued that it is only through working class self-activity that the logic of capital can be understood (Cleaver 1979: 14).

While undoubtedly, the campaigns targeting the workfare hosts proved to be the most powerful, it is an interesting and unique feature of the anti-workfare struggles that they

challenged workfare at all points of the supply chain. For example, G4S, a prime provider of the work programme, was confronted at its annual gathering, and the offices of subcontractors, such as Urban future and Triage, were occupied. Outsourcing is a key dynamic of neoliberal capitalism, an increasing number of services, especially the low paid ones, are subcontracted. As such, the strategies of resistance successfully applied by anti-workfare protesters might also be useful for workers, who want to make their voice heard but are not covered by collective bargaining agreements and who are, due to outsourcing, not in a direct employer/employee relationship. In that sense, I suggest that trade unionism could learn from the struggles against workfare.

However, a word of caution is required. While the campaigns against workfare managed to bring the existing workfare schemes to a standstill, this does not mean that workfare is history. It is more likely that workfare will come back in different packaging. The government announced that the Work Programme will be replaced with a new Work and Health Programme in autumn 2017. In line with the government's current "work cures" approach (see chapter 8) it might well be that workfare comes back as a suggested healing tool for mental and physical illnesses (see section 9.3 for further research recommendations on the work-cure approach).

While the naming and shaming campaign was most publicly used by the anti-workfare struggles also other groups used naming and shaming strategies for resisting employability and for campaigning for welfare related issues. For example, the *Precarious Workers Brigade* highlighted the use of unpaid interns and volunteers in galleries, the *Disabled People Against the Cuts* forced the company carrying the work capability assessments, Atos, into resignation and *Norwich Claimants Union* achieved that supermarkets donated their vegetables to people in need rather than wasting them.

7.4.2 Challenging the neoliberal common sense

Another strategy groups use lies in reversing the (in)justice discourse of the government. The coalition government portrays the existing benefit system as unjust as it enables "scroungers" to live on the costs of hard working people and thereby legitimises the trend towards a more coercive workfare system (see chapter 5). Some activist groups such as *Disabled People Against the Cuts* and *Winvisible* worked on uncovering the brutality of the austerity regime. After years of pressurising the government to reveal the number of deaths related to fit to work assessments figures

were finally released: between 2011 and 2014, 2,380 people died after being found “fit to work” (DWP 27 August 2015: 8). In order to raise awareness about their deaths and to remember the victims of activating and conditional welfare reforms *Disabled People Against the Cuts* organised several disruptive actions. On the 23rd March 2016 they protested inside the central lobby of the Houses of Parliament during Prime Minister's Questions chanting: “No more death from benefits cuts!”. Coinciding with the opening of the paraolympics on the 7 September 2016 in Rio DPAC coordinated a disruptive “sanctions kill” protest. *Disabled People Against the Cuts* and supporters blocked Westminster Bridge (which can be seen from parliament) for three hours holding a large banner (readable from parliament) stating “NO MORE DEATH FROM BENEFITS CUTS”, the names of all who died in relation to being fit to work were read out, white flowers were handed and testimonies were given of how life is after six years of workfare reforms by the conservative government (Interview 16). With the protest they also urged the new Prime Minister Teresa May to make the findings of an UN investigation public, as the UK is the first country to be investigated for grave and systematic violation of disabled people’s rights (Butler 20 October 2015). The UN investigation was itself initiated by the *Disabled people Against the Cuts* (Ibid; Interview 16). These actions clearly demonstrate the importance of discourse and thus relate to Jessop and Sum’s argument that discourse needs to be taken more seriously within the study of Political Economy but also Bieler and Morton’s point that people act through discourses in the general struggle for hegemony (Jessop and Sum 2008: 158, 159; Bieler and Morton 2008: 36).

In their struggle against coercive employability some groups, such as *Boycott Workfare*, *Mental Health Resistance Network* and *Disabled People Against the Cuts* are also challenging the work-ethos of neoliberal capitalism. Informed by Kathy Weeks writings, I showed in chapter 3 that the work-ethos has proven to be very useful in the cultivation of exploitable subjects (Weeks 2011; see section 3.2). To recap, the neoliberal work-ethos gives emphasis to the behaviour of the whole individual rather than just its ‘productive’ behaviour. It constructs the meaning of work as self-actualisation and as the centre point of life. As such this work-ethos is very useful for managing a flexible workforce. When pilot-schemes were introduced to link therapy with job-search, disruptive actions were organised by several groups, such as *Boycott Workfare*, *Disabled People Against the Cuts* and *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Network*. The first protest took place in June 2015 in Streatham, London where the first therapists were

located in jobcentres (Gayle 26 June 2015). The second one took place in March 2016 against the piloting of “Jobs on prescription” in Islington, which places job coaches at GP surgeries, who give mental health support to get unemployed people back into work. Arguably, jobs on prescription follows the logic that unemployment is a psychological disorder for which work is the cure (Fredli and Stearn 2015; DPAC 20 February 2016). The activist fear that the unemployed will become pressurised or even forced into therapy and that non-compliance might put them at risk of sanctions. In their statement before the second protest a member from *Boycott Workfare* explains in more detail, that this type of

'support for unemployed people has little to do with helping people apply for jobs or get useful training. Increasingly, it is about making people express a positive attitude to unpaid work and short-term, low wage jobs – under threat of sanctions or other punishments' (DPAC: 20 February 2016).

Fredli and Stearn 2015 have identified the increasing move towards Psycho-compulsion, that benefits claimants are forced into psychological therapy. Positive psychology or Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) are therapy practices used in the jobcentre (Ibid). To link “healing” with the coercive regime which people fear and which is making them ill is ironic. Research conducted by the universities of Liverpool and Oxford showed that the fit-to-work test coincided with an increase in suicides, mental illness more prescriptions for antidepressants (Barr et al 2016: 339). As such, these practices designed to break people's worklessness and to “cure them from their unemployment” are achieving the opposite of making people employable: they are making them unemployable by making them ill.

Another aspect of the struggle against employability are consciousness raising and educational practices that challenge the individualised self-blame and work as self-actualisation ethics which underpin neoliberalism. For example, the *Carrot Workers Collective* published a “counter-guide to free labour” which did not only inform interns about their rights but it also suggested how to avoid being exploited as an unpaid intern but still work on ones employability by putting ones labour time in collective projects instead (Carrot Workers Collective 2009). When the *Carrot Workers Collective* relaunched as the *Precarious Workers Brigade*, the group also engaged with students and graduates through alternative employability workshops at universities. Its aim was to critically reflect on the practice of unpaid internships and encourage students that if they decide to take on an unpaid internship they could do their own militant action research at their work-experiences-place. Thereby, they would research, for example,

in what ways gender, race and personal background matter in terms of the task undertaken during the internship and in terms of their job prospects through this internship (Kleinhamplová, Stejskalová and members of the Precarious Workers Brigade 2014: 76.). Recently, the Precarious Workers Brigade (2017) also published a new guide for the educators of employability, called "Training for Exploitation? Politicising Employability and Reclaiming Education". It is a resource pack that invites "employability educators" to politicise their teaching and foster critical, practical approaches to learning and the world of work.' (Precarious Workers Brigade 2017). As such, this is a direct response to the growth of employability teachings at universities (see the sections under 6.2), which seldom reflect critically on the employability agenda.

The groups struggling against the coercive benefit regime and workfare are also engaged in wider awareness raising. As such many groups have detailed leaflets which inform benefit receivers about their rights and on what to do when they get sanctioned, raise awareness about the exploitation behind workfare and encourage people to organise against it (interview 1,3,6,8,9,10,11, 12). They frequently leaflet in front of job-centres. Cases in point are *Leeds Fightback Welfare*, *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group*, *Haringey Solidarity Group*, *Norwich Claimants Union*, *Boycott Workfare*, *Brighton Benefits Campaign* and the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network*. *Haringey Solidarity Group* also produces a quarterly newspaper to raise awareness about other political issues concerning the community. However, one person of HSG reflects that they could improve their practice of political education by integrating it into their meetings which at the moment "are a bit technical at times" (Interview 9).

The various educational and awareness raising activities of the groups confirm Katz argument that critical consciousness raising is key to practices of resistance (2004: 251). Moreover, the educational practises relate back to Gramsci's concept of the organic intellect [not to be confused with the academic idea of intellectuals as for Gramsci anybody could be an organic intellectual regardless of his or her formal education] and their role in encouraging hegemonic and counter-hegemonic activities. For Gramsci, the critical organic intellect is a "permanent persuader" of coalescing hegemony and a valuable supporter of subaltern classes (Gramsci 1971: 9-18; Morton 2007: 92; see also section 3.3.1). Thus, it becomes clear that all of the groups mentioned above function as organic intellectuals in the struggle against neoliberal hegemony.

In this section, I showed that discourse matters, as discourse is central to the

construction of hegemony. The UK government used a new concept of social justice, namely that it is unjust not to work, to justify welfare activation and conditionality (see section 5.2.3). This concept of justice stands in vivid contrast to the original idea behind the British welfare system that advocated welfare as a social security network and as a tool to alleviate poverty and inequality. In the struggle against the neoliberalisation of welfare and the individualisation of employment and welfare security the groups mobilised through discourse. Highlighting the brutality of the workfarist approach to welfare by referring to the number of death linked to “fit for work” assessment, the groups aimed to construct a common sense on the injustice of the governments activated welfare system. It is a battle of ideas that groups, such as the *Disabled People Against the Cuts*, took on the streets in the struggle for counter-hegemonic welfare provision that provides securities for those in need.

Furthermore, I have pointed out in this section that consciousness raising activities play a key part in the resistance practices of the researched groups. The various educational activities the groups engaged with can well be interpreted in accordance with Gramsci’s concept of the organic intellect (see section 3.3.1) as groups supporting and encouraging the subaltern not to fall into the neoliberal trap of self-blame but to speak and stand up for their rights and for justice. Consciousness raising is thus part of the resistance to employability, promoting counter-hegemonic practices, which have the well-being of the people and not profit maximisation at its core, hence advocating solidarity and social security instead of competition and responsabilisation.

7.4.3 The power of collective advocacy

Many of the claimant's groups engage in collective case work and advocacy. Thereby, they directly counter the individualistic practices and discourses of the coercive benefit regime which blame the unemployed for their condition (see chapters 5 and 6) with practices of solidarity and mutual support. As someone from *Newham Claimants Union* explains:

‘We help each other with benefit claims but also all kinds of other problems. So, if someone has a problem everyone gets a chance to help. The answer may come from someone who’s had to claim for a while and knows how the system really ticks. Or it might be a idea from the newest member that works’ (Interview 5).

Also, the *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* and *Norwich Claimants Union* share advice and accompany each other to the jobcentres and tribunals as witnesses (Interview 3, 6). The *Scottish Unemployment Workers’ Network* has stalls outside the jobcentre twice

a week. As such they “act as welfare workers sans frontiers, reaching people who wouldn’t make it to office-based organisations” (Scottish Unemployed Workers Network 2016: 6). They offer people advice on the spot as well as advocacy by accompanying claimants to their appointments. Doing so they put a limit to arbitrary power of the coercive benefit system (see section 6.3.1 on the arbitrary nature of sanctions). By asking every claimant coming out of the jobcentre, how the appointment went they also function as a contact point for people to declare abuse and to seek help if they got sanctioned. People also accompanied each other to the Work Capability Assessments and helped each other to renegotiate their Claimant Commitment (the record of responsibilities the claimant commits to in return for receiving benefits) and thus to counter-act the work intensification processes for claimants (Interview 12).

These daily resistances against the coercive benefit system through self-help proved to be extremely successful. In Dundee, which has become known colloquially as ‘sanctions city’ due to its disproportioned high number of sanctions in Scotland, the advocacy practices of the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* led to a 40 percent reduction in sanctions (Scottish Unemployed Workers Network 2016: 54). A ‘peace of justice is continuously regained’ (Interview 5), as for example the Claimant’s Unions in Newham and Norwich managed to claim a lot of money back for people who were entitled to it (Interview 5, 6). Some groups also managed to overturn ‘fit to work’ assessments (Interview 3, 6 and Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty 20 February 2014).

In Scotland the daily successes when representing claimants soon led to efforts to repress them, by denying people representation. Representatives were forcefully thrown out of the buildings with the help of private security guards or even via the police (Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty 25 February 2015; Scottish Unemployed Workers Network 2016: 12, 24). This is in direct contradiction to the DWP’s own rules. In its *Working with Representatives Guidance* document it reads: ‘customers [claimants] have the right to ask a representative to help them conduct their business with DWP...’ (DWP September 2015: 2). But on the 29 January 2015 an activist, Tony Cox, of the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* was arrested when representing a claimant in the jobcentre in Arbroath (Scottish Unemployed Workers Network 2016: 28,29). This triggered a national wave of solidarity protests (see for example Boycott Workfare 13 October 2015; Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty 25 February 2015). Finally later in October the charges were dropped. Yet Tony Cox was immediately arrested again in November 2015 when he was accompanying a claimant to her Work Capability

Assessment (Scottish Unemployed Workers Network 2016: 78, 97). In June 2016 he was then found guilty of 'threatening behaviour' and was sentenced to 150 hours community work (Ibid: 108). While the case of Tony Cox is the most extreme, it does not stand in isolation. Other groups also faced problems with their right to accompany claimants. As the *Edinburgh's Coalition Against Poverty* explains

'From our conversations with claimants it appears increasingly common that even friends or families accompanying someone to a Jobcentre will be refused or told to leave by threats in complete contradiction to DWP guidelines. This is a deliberate attempt to isolate claimants and leave them to the mercy of Jobcentre intimidation and bullying. Our message couldn't be clearer. All claimants have the right to be accompanied and where the Jobcentre denies this, we will not step down' (2 June 2016).

Consequently, the *Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty* hosted a series of "Advocacy is not a Crime" protests in 2015 and 2016 to insist on the right to be represented and also to resist the isolation which is thereby enforced (see for example *Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty* 25 February 2015; 2 September 2016).

The practice of advocacy resembles the collective bargaining of trade unions. It involves the learning of rights and procedures by some members of the community, who can then help others with their case work and represent them at meetings (Interview 3, 12). This strategy not only provides a barrier to the arbitrariness of capitalist exploitation due to sanction targets but moreover it enables the daily resistance of bargaining power for less work, for example by reducing the tasks in the Claimant's Commitment (the record of the responsibilities a claimant has to commit to in order to continue to receive benefits) or by preventing sick people from being declared "fit to work" (Interview 12). The practice of advocacy emerged in the context of the disregard of trade unions for the unemployed (see chapter 5 and 8). Learning from the history of the National Unemployed Workers Movement in the 1920s (Scottish Unemployed Workers Network 2016: 120, 161) and the Claimants Union Movement of the 1970s and early 1980s (Interview 3; see section 5.2.1), unemployed people organised again since 2010 onwards (see section 7.2). Groups like the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network*, *Norwich Claimants Union* and the *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* and others demonstrated what can be achieved when people, even without resources, come together and stand up for each other. Advocacy can thus be seen as a form of progressive power that enabled the unemployed to gain notable victories, such as the overcoming and reducing of sanctions, less work in terms of unreasonable responsibilities in the claimant's commitment and the right to social security when sick. Yet, this progressive power is met with regressive state power, that, in breach of its own rules, aims to enforce isolation and individualisation by preventing collective

advocacy activities through the force of private security and the police. The repressiveness of the state thus illustrate the class dynamics unfolding in the struggle over welfare.

7.4.4 Beyond resistance: commoning

In response to the brutality of the current welfare regime and in the recognition that alternatives to capitalism can be and are built in the here and now some groups are also consciously engaged in practices of kindness and the creation of commons. This relates to Federici and Caffentzis' argument that all struggles are in one way or another a forms of communing (2013: 98). Commons are thereby understood as a social relation and thus better understood as a verb and not a noun (Chatterton 2010: 626). In chapter 4, I discussed the purpose of commoning in more detail but to recap: commoning is understood as an alternative social relation to capitalism, which is collective, non-commodified and justice orientated. And especially includes practices of solidarity, mutual help and human exchange that are not reduced to the market form. As such advocacy activities and solidarity protests are a form of commoning but also the internal group dynamics are guided by the principle of commoning (see section 8.4).

But beyond that, most of the groups also link their campaigning activities to practical steps of kindness to reduce the plight of economic hardship, caused by conditional and punitive welfare reforms as well as the isolation and loneliness caused and fostered by neo-liberal policies. To name just a few examples: the *Norwich Claimants Union*, hands out fresh fruit and vegetables to people, when leafleting about welfare rights in front of the jobcentre in Norwich. This is because food banks only hand out tined and packaged food and many claimant's, who rely on food banks, therefore lack nutrition (Interview 6). Also, in Scotland the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* worked with a "Yes, We Care" team "to come to the aid of the homeless, the sanctioned, and the working poor" by giving out food parcels and collecting money for food banks (SUWN 2016: 16). *Unite Community* activists in Durham are organising a cloths banks (Interview 7). In the Unemployed Centre in Brighton, which is linked to the *Brighton Benefit Group*, people can receive free and fresh bread every morning as well as getting a hot drink for free (Interview 8). Also, in Brighton activists organised ""Love Kitchens", where people get hot food and can meet up for a meal (Interview 8). Likewise, *Norwich Claimants Union* and *Leeds Welfare Fightback* are both planning to open an unemployed cafe where people can get a cheap or free drink and have a place to hang out and meet up with a

friend (Interview 1, 6) to overcome the isolation the benefit system induces. *Unite Community* also operates community centres “which work as community hubs for people to campaign, get peer to peer benefit support and as a place for groups to gather” (Interview 7). At Boycott Workfare’s organising meetings, there is always nutritious food available, as some activist realised that some people arrive hungry and badly fed (Interview 11).

Gibson-Graham et al. (2000: 11) remind researchers of the importance of overcoming a capitalonormative analysis by acknowledging that the hegemony of capitalism never reaches full concreteness and thus to highlight the ‘enactment of power’, where people ‘create worlds that are socially and environmentally just’ (Gibson-Graham at Al. 2013: xiii). Through such a lens, we see that some of the groups were also simultaneously engaged in the building of spaces that serve as commons. For example the *Precarious Workers Brigade* was one of the groups behind the creation of the *Common House* in East London, which is

‘an experiment in building a common – by which we mean a resource that is organised and structured by our collective activity as a community and not by money or property rights ... The commons are a pre-condition for, and an experiment in, building struggles capable of winning and bringing about the world that we want: one that is collectively owned and decided.’ (Common House n.d.).

Similarly, *Job-de-Centre* is part of the field, a space in South East London, which is “a place to come together, to meet each other, to share ideas, to talk about concerns, to organise, to act... ” (New Cross Commoners n.d.). The aim of the job-de-centre is help each other “to work less” and “to heal each other from individualism, consumerism, competition and all the other illnesses capitalism brings with it, and to give mutual advice on how to counter precarity and collectivise care and local resources” (Ibid.).

In North London the *Haringey Solidarity Group* devoted most of its energy from winter 2015 onwards to *St Anns Redevelopment Trust (StART)*, which is resisting the selling of the St Ann’s Hospital in Haringey to private housing developers by organising “a community-led development with the full participation of local people, to provide genuinely affordable homes and other facilities that respond to local needs.” (StART n.d.). The *Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty* meets in and is very involved in the Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh, “a self-managed, independent social centre”, which is “trying to create a culture of resistance to the advances of neoliberal capitalism, creating structures that allow us to reorganise aspects of our lives and needs” (Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh n.d.). These examples show that groups are going

beyond reactive resistance towards the creation of commons in the here and now; as such spaces outside capitalism, which in turn enable resistance to neoliberal capitalism. This therefore links back to Katz concepts of resilience and reworking and Federici's writings on commoning, who both see these practices as springboards for resistance (see sections 4.5.2 and 4.5.3)

While I will engage with the commoning and solidarity practices in more detail in the following chapter, the aim of this section was to show that some of the groups have integrated the practice of kindness and the creation of commons in their struggle against activated and conditional welfare services.

7.4.5. Beyond work: The demand for an unconditional income

Cleaver points out that work has to be understood as a profit generating and commodity producing social relation, which is not only key but also unique to capitalism (see section 3.4). He thus argues that to move beyond capitalism is to move beyond work (Cleaver 2002 157). Similarly, the *Precarious Workers Brigade* argues that while it is important to demand a wage it "should actually be just a transitional demand" (Litter & Power 2014: 2). Most of the groups are not engaged with anti-work politics as they are far too busy resisting the current "welfare wrongs" as the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* puts it. Yet, as an activist from *Leeds Welfare Fightback* has it, there is also a need to go beyond the demand for better working conditions and a more human welfare system, and to stress that "work isn't working" (Interview 1). The activist continues to explain:

'work isn't working. Why do we put up with a system where work is virtue? Actually most work is harmful to the environment, our health, our happiness and well-being. We work because we are forced to. Yes as an immediate aim we can fight for better working conditions and better pay but we need to go beyond that with a social wage, a basic income. The crucial aspect is that we get rid of the conditionality aspect of the workfarist approach.' (Interview 1)

The most prominent demand to move at least partly beyond the wage-relation is expressed through the idea of an universal basic income (UBI) or a claimants unconditional income (CUI) – yet the terms are often used interchangeably. It only partly overcomes wage relations as paid work would still exist but workers are no longer forced to sell their labour power as their livelihood is sustained through the UBI or CUI, as such paid work becomes a choice.

The *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* most clearly expressed its demand for the UBI. While their daily activism focuses on the 'problems facing us in the here and now' (Scottish Unemployed Workers Network 2016: 8) it acknowledges the need to move beyond work through a

'basic income that not only rejects the contortions imposed by neoliberalism, but also avoids the underlying problems of means testing and other tests of eligibility, and opens up the possibility of a fairer society, where paid work is no longer our reason for existence, and people have freedom to develop other interests' (Ibid.).

The universal basic income (UBI) as advocated by SUWN would be for everyone – regardless of if one is in paid employment or not. Paid employment will exist next to the UBI and will be progressively taxed. There are different versions of the UBI. The UBI the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* is advocating would not replace the welfare systems but be an addition to it – it should exist alongside free health care and free education and in order to be truly universal it should acknowledge the people's needs are different and as such additional payments to the sick and disabled (Scottish Unemployed Workers Network 2016: 187). However, as Nina Power highlights in a discussion with the Precarious Workers Brigade, when thinking of the UBI we also need to consider who it might include: Would it only be paid to citizens? Or also include the undocumented? Moreover, a UBI introduced in historically patriarchal structures would bear the risk of solidifying the gendered nature of care and household work (Littler and Power 2014: 69).

The *Norwich Claimant's Union* strongly expresses their demand for a Universal Claimants Income (UCI), which is paid to all claimants only (Interview 6). A UCI would overcome the coercive conditionality of the current workfare regime. Like the UBI it would also free people to some extent from the wage relation as people are no longer forced to take on any job no matter the pay or the condition if they have a UCI to fall back on. As such an UCI would also increase the bargaining power of especially low paid workers immensely. The Norwich Claimant's Union thus actively advocated for an UCI at the TUC welfare conferences, urging trade unions and other claimants groups to adopt to this demand. Yet, that their advocated UCI lies beyond the current minimum wage has led to conflict between the claimant's groups and trade unions (Interview 6 and 7, see section 8.2). But eventually in September 2016 at their annual congress the TUC passed a motion for an UBI (yet it is in fact a UCI the TUC advocated as it is supposed to be for claimant's only).

In the acknowledgement that better work conditions and/or a more generous welfare system are not the answer the message is that “work isn’t working”, thus it challenges the core of capitalists relations. The immediate demands for a UBI or a UCI have in common that both break conditionality in its totality. This unconditionality is central because if the claimant's income or basic income would be coupled to the condition to make some kind of socially useful contribution, such as volunteering etc., work would maintain to be centre of our society (Weeks 2011: 139).

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the possibilities and difficulties of resistance against employability – a specific set of practices and discourses which extend neoliberal capitalism and maintain consensus for it (see section 1.4.2 for a more detailed definition of employability). In this chapter I first introduced the agents of resistance – the groups struggling against employability. Acknowledging that agency takes place within historical structures I then looked at how the resistance to employability is constrained by global capitalism. While this does not mean that resistance is impossible it is nonetheless confronted with the complex situation where the aspects the groups aim to transform through political action, namely precarity and the coercive benefit system, are at the same time the key factors that constrain their agency of resistance. Consequently, to enable a stronger resistance a lot of energy of the groups has to be spent on lowering the hurdles to engage in it. And at times, when the coercion of the extended state was so powerful that most of the people subjected to it were too afraid to resist, as is the case with workfare under the threat of sanctions, resistance was made possible through solidarity. This relates to an understanding of solidarity which is not based on a shared identity resulting from a common position in the relations of production but instead originates from a desire of transformation and a shared anger against the injustice of workfare, which makes more privileged people fight on the side of the oppressed (see section 4.5.4 for different understandings of solidarity).

As the groups always have different options of resistance at their disposal, the rest of the chapter was then focused on *what activities* of resistance the groups are choosing and why. This is important in two ways: 1) conceptually we learn a lot about the current structures of neoliberal capitalism when looking at how they are resisted and 2) practically it might be useful for other and future resistance to understand what activities of resistance were chosen over others and why and thus it might facilitate

exchange between groups across space and time.

In the following sections I showed that there are a variety of practices resisting employability. When looking at resistance against work there is a tendency in the literature to focus on industrial actions, i.e. on the workers power to withdraw their labour – to strike. However, by exploring the agency of the groups above I showed that resistance is much more diverse and it needs to be so, especially in light of the fact that a strike about employability is not possible as there is no labour power to withdraw. As such, looking at these practices of resistance might also be useful for the broader discussion of the changing nature of work under neoliberalism and what it means for workers organisation.

Broadly speaking, three tendencies of resistance practices against employability can be identified: One refers to the structural power of agency targeting weak spots in the capitalist mode of production. The naming and shaming strategies used by the groups to struggle against unpaid labour and conditionality takes advantage of the firms and charities dependence of a good branding image in order to compete and thus to succeed in a globalised capitalist system. The second set of resistance practices challenges the consensus on which the neoliberal hegemony is build. It is a battle of ideas. The government backs its coercive benefit regime with the idea that it is unjust if some people chose “a life on benefits” while the hard working tax payer is burdened with the costs. By highlighting the brutality of the workfare regime and the high number of death related to work capability assessments the groups reverse the justice agenda of the government. Moreover, some of the groups challenge the work-ethos through which the individual is to be blamed for it's unemployment and through with work is portrayed as the self-actualisation. Instead, the groups emphasise the structural conditions behind unemployment and the social inequalities perpetuating in society causing mental illnesses. Likewise, the Precarious Workers Brigade has confronted the hyper-individualised narrative of the high performing entrepreneurial self by calling for a politicisation of employability which teaches collective practices and solidarity instead. The third strategy of resistance refers to the daily resistance of advocacy, which resembles the trade union practice of collective bargaining. It provides an barrier to the arbitrariness of capitalist exploitation through sanction targets and fit-to-work assessments. As such, advocacy not only collectivises the burdens put on the individual but it is also an act of bargaining for less work – reducing the tasks people have to do according to their Claimant's Commitment form.

However, in the acknowledgement that resistance is always reactive as resistance is the use of structural power to go *against* neoliberal capitalism and that the analysis of resistance is thus always trapped in a capitalonormative framework, the last two sections of this chapter focused on the links between resistance and commoning as well as demands *for* alternative modes of production. I first looked at how the groups go beyond reactive resistance through the practice of commoning. De Angelis and Federici argue that all struggles are in one way or another forms of commoning – collective and non-commodified social relations – and thus outside capitalism. I showed how some of the groups made the deliberate choice to counteract the brutality of the welfare system with practices of kindness and care for each other. Moreover, other groups were involved in the creation of commons, spaces outside capitalism, which put the people and not profit at the centre of all social relations and which enable resistance to neoliberal capitalism. As such, I argue that commoning is intrinsically interlinked with resistances *against* capitalism. Not only as they are the two sides of the same path of the struggle towards post-capitalist/post-work worlds, which are happening in the here and now and are not just visions of a different future, but also as they create each other. Lastly, I looked at the demands of some of the groups for an unconditional income, namely the universal basic income (UBI) or unconditional claimant's income (UCI). These demands go at least partly beyond work, as people, who do not own the means of production, are no longer forced to sell their labour power in order to sustain their livelihood.

This chapter thus looked at the different strategies of resistance against employability by different groups. However, to fully grasp the emergence of social forces and the possibilities of counter-hegemonies it is necessary to understand the social relations which unite different struggles and different oppositional practices. As such the last empirical chapter of this PhD, chapter 8, is devoted to solidarity and the emergence of social forces.

– Chapter 8 –

Solidarity and the Emergence of Social Forces

8.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a detailed understanding of the solidarity relations which underpin the emergence of social forces resisting employability. Together with the previous chapter, chapter 6, this chapter is engaged with the second main research question of this PhD study, namely: in what ways and through what type of collective agency do people contest the concept of employability? In chapter 6 I looked at the specific activities of resistance against employability as well as to practices of commoning for alternative social relations and material transformations. This chapter explores the solidarity relations that underpin the resistance against employability and processes of commoning. There is very little attention paid to solidarity within the Industrial Relation literature. This is surprising as solidarity, understood as a social relation forged through, and which creates unity within, active political struggle is a key dynamic behind the emergence of social forces from below, which seeks to challenge forms of oppression and to bring about social change (see chapter 4.5.4).

This chapter, thereby, feeds into broader discussions on the decline and future of trade unionism and new ways of organising around work, which go beyond the workplace and might demand new workers institutions as well as a greater engagement with other actors in the community (Bieler 2014: 123, Holgate 2015: 451). As outlined in the chapters 1 and 4, trade unions have been mostly unable or unwilling to organise the informal economy. Most scholars have therefore painted a very passive picture of precarious workers and called for the need to restructure trade unions to actively recruit them (for example, Hamann and Kelly 2010; Gumbrell-McCormick 2011). Other Industrial Relations scholars have focused on the trend of trade unions towards community organising, which involves building coalitions with communities to go beyond the workplace and is mainly driven by the trade union's rapid membership decline and the current economic crisis (see Holgate 2009 and 2015^a, 2015^b; Holgate and Wills 2007, Tapia 2013). Such research predominantly comes from a trade union perspective, asking what a turn towards community unionism means for the trade unions involved, how trade unions can learn from community organisations (and visa versa) and what the role of the community organisation is in the employment

relationship.

This PhD study aims to complement the research above through two specific contributions: firstly, I approach the debates on the future of trade unionism and community unionism from the other way around. I start with the analysis of actual existing struggles of unemployed, precariously employed and disabled workers outside of traditional trade unions (see section 7.2 for an overview) and then ask in what ways they seek to engage with trade unions as well as other activist groups. These types of collective resistance against work are often overlooked by researchers sympathetic to trade unions. Secondly, I focus on member-led, grass-roots activism *by* and *with* (but not *for* or *on behalf of*) the people facing work related injustices. As such, I look at 'other actors' (Holgate 2015 ^a: 451) not covered by the existing research on community unionism, which so far has focused on community campaigning organisations, such as UK Citizens or on the Community branches from existing unions such as, for example, Unite Community. I thus see this PhD study in line with Holgate's research call that '[i]t is perhaps time, that we, as industrial relations academics, take a much greater step outside the arena of workplace industrial relations ...' (Holgate 2015 ^a: 451).

This chapter is theoretically influenced by the conceptualisations of solidarity (section 4.5.4), in which I portrayed two different approaches to solidarity. The first one understands solidarity as based on sameness, especially on common needs and/or a shared identity, which results from the common position in the production process. However, such an understanding does not necessarily negate difference. Cleaver, for example, suggests that wage differences between workers equate to power differences between workers and therefore the less powerful, such as the unwaged, need to organise autonomously. Yet, as all workers struggle for less work and for more wealth different struggles can be united around a common goal. Solidarity relations are thus understood as alliance building, whereby 'each group organises around its need and makes alliances with other groups based on *mutual benefit*' (Cleaver 1979: 160, emphasis added). Standing (2011), on the other hand, suggests that a new shared identity emerged, which is no longer based on the same position in the production process but on the shared feeling of insecurity that all precarious workers have in common. He thus creates a practical framework of solidarity through which very diverse groups of workers can unite on the grounds of sameness. However, such approaches are problematic in two ways: a) they conceptualise solidarity as a fixed relation within a reductive binary of similarity and dissimilarity (Featherstone 2012: 22) and b) they

understand solidarity as a purely rational dynamic, neglecting the emotional and personal bonds through which this social relation is constructed.

The second understanding of solidarity is put forward by J.K. Gibson-Graham, who rejects a conceptualisation of solidarity based on sameness, as she argues it rejects difference. Instead she suggests a focus on economic *being-in-common* which stresses people's interdependency. As such, she sees grounds for solidarity which is not based on a specific shared identity but instead on multiple possibilities of recognising our own implication in the existence of others (Gibson-Graham 2006: 86-88). Such an understanding of solidarity is based on non-essentialist subject positions as one does not need to be 'oppressed' or 'working class' to be involved in transformative politics (Pero 2014: 5). In section 4.5.4 I broadened Gibson-Graham's solidarity understanding by drawing on the work of feminists, post-colonial and critical pedagogy scholars and thus sketched a solidarity concept based on a shared desire for social change and a shared anger about injustices (Hemmings 2012: 148). I, moreover, pointed to the relational aspect of solidarity as an active political praxis which links diverse groups and communities. Such an understanding sees solidarity as a political process which is not guaranteed but actively created and which therefore is always an achievement (Mohanty 2003: 7).

However, when analysing agencies of particular groups involved in resistance it is important to recognise that not only external but also the internal relations of the social forces shape the developments and strengths of the social struggles themselves. As such, I will engage in this chapter with the internal organising structures and power dynamics of the researched groups. I thereby acknowledge that affect can not only bring people together – as reflective anger can trigger solidarity – but also tear us apart and cause splits within the struggles. Likewise, social (non-class) identities can form the basis for the unity of a particular group but also explain why specific struggles organise separately or why tensions within the group arise. With these thoughts in mind, I will analyse the internal relations of the group by paying specific attention to emotional connections as well as shared and unshared identities.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: in the next section I examine the external relationships with trade unions to better understand the solidarity relations which underpin the cooperation or non-cooperation between them. In section 8.2 I then look at solidarity relations which go beyond the identity as a worker. Next, I engage with the internal organising dynamics of the groups in section 8.3. By way of concluding, I then

illustrate in section 8.4 in what ways these solidarity relations affect the *structural power* (the power of social change achieved by collective agency in the absence of ultimate forces but within given historical structures which shape and constrain the power of social forces but never determine them, as they always have several choices to act at their disposal) and *productive power* (the power of communities to take matters in their own hand and to create worlds that are socially and environmentally just) of the groups.

8.2. Relations to trade unions

The aim of this section is to analyse the ways the researched activist groups cooperate with trade unions. Specifically, I ask here on what solidarity understanding these links are based and what opportunities and difficulties shape the relations between activist groups and trade unions. I outlined in chapter 7 that the groups emerged in different times and vary in terms of organising principles and strategies. But they also differ in terms of their self-identity and subsequently their relationships to trade unions considerably varies. There are, nonetheless, reoccurring themes which shape the way these relationships are negotiated by the researched groups, namely a) the feeling that trade unions disregard the unemployed; b) the wish for solidarity with (other) workers; c) the trade unions endorsement of workfare, and d) a culture clash constituting the bureaucratic and hierarchic nature of trade unions as well as the different starting points and tactics. In the following paragraphs I will analyse their solidarity relations with trade unions in conjunction with these themes.

8.2.1 Disregarding the unemployed

'There is a crying need for a grass-roots, bottom up trade union organisation. But in the existing trade unions, I could not have so much confidence in them, including Unite Community' (Interview 12).

This statement from an activist of the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* sums up what several people in the groups have problematised, namely that while none of the groups are "anti-union" some activists feel hurt and betrayed by the unions and therefore have little trust in them (Interview 11). Many activists in the groups pointed out that the trade unions have historically disregarded the un-waged and continue to do so, even though they could represent them (Interview 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14). In the absence of trade union representation and learning from the history of

claimants' unions (see chapter 5) un-waged activists decided that they needed to take matters into their own hands. One activist from the *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* explains, 'we think the trade unions should lead the way but if they don't do it we cannot wait for them' (Interview 3). This confirms Cleaver's point that there is a need for the unemployed to organise separately in order to avoid the reproduction of hierarchies within the organisations of class struggle (Cleaver 1979: 160). But moreover, it also resonates with Bieler's wider observation, that the 'perceived accommodationist position of established trade unions vis-a-vis neo-liberal restructuring in Europe' gave rise to new configurations of social forces (Bieler 2006: 205).

While the initiative of *Unite Community* to organise the unemployed on a larger scale is, however, mostly welcomed by activists (Interview 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16) it is also met with a lot of scepticism. On the one hand, activists see *Unite Community* as 'the big exception' in the trade union movement and as 'the big growth area of the anti-workfare and anti-sanction struggle' (Interview 10). On the other hand, some felt abandoned by *Unite Community* (Interview 12, 16) and others got the impression that *Unite Community* 'lets the activists do the leg-work' (Interview 1) and then comes in to incorporate local struggles into the *Unite Community* structure. They thus felt that their activism was quite disrespected by *Unite*, as one member of the *Haringey Solidarity Group* explains further: 'we were doing this [campaigning against sanctions and workfare] for years and then suddenly *Unite Community* pops up and asks us to join *their* action' (Interview 8). Similarly, a member of *Keep Volunteering Voluntary* points out that 'people are already on the ground and have been around for years and decades in communities in neighbourhoods and [to *Unite Community*] it was like they did not exist' (Interview 14). This perception of *Unite Community* that it is entering unorganised no(wo)mans-land is mirrored by its own press release when launching *Unite Community*, where it stated that *Unite* will create a new membership scheme 'to ensure those pushed to the margins of society can benefit from collective power' (Unite press release 2011, in Holgate 2015^a: 431).

Moreover, some activists got the impression that '*Unite Community* has been more concerned with recruiting members than supporting their struggle against sanctions and conditionality in any way' (Interview 12). This echoes the findings of Fine (2003 in Holgate 2015: 462) who reports a mismatch of what trade unions see as a success, namely membership increases, and what the community organisations value as a success, namely the winning of a campaign. Perhaps, *Unite Community's* priority of

membership recruitment was to be expected given the fact that *Unite Community* was established as a measure to combat the trend of membership decline. Yet, it nonetheless creates resentment in the activist community. One activist from *Keep Volunteering Voluntary* feels that 'Unite Community is more interested in themselves. They are more interested in creating an empire' (Interview 14). This raises the question if *Unite Community* is able to enter into solidarity relations with claimants' groups on the basis of mutual benefit or if *Unite Community* is the 'subsuming of one struggle into another' – precisely what Cleaver warned against (Cleaver 1979: 160; see section 4.5.4).

In sum, claimant's groups re-emerged in the absence of trade union representation for the unemployed and disabled. The establishment of *Unite Community* is, however, observed with scepticism, as some activists gained the impression that *Unite Community* is more about (re)-building a large trade union and thus recruiting members rather than supporting the unemployed in their struggle.

8.2.2 Solidarity with (other) workers

'We are all workers - the paid, the self-employed, the zero-hour contract person and the unemployed. We are unemployed workers. We do not own the means of the production, so we are all the working class. That is why it is so important to unite rather than buying the division between the workers and the unemployed. It is all of us against the capitalist system, the bosses (Interview 6).'

As this statement of an activist of the Norwich Claimants Union clearly indicates, the claimant groups identify as workers (Interview 3,4,5,6,8,9,12). This is also reflected in some of their names, such as *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* and *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* and it is the same with the *Precarious Workers Brigade*. In the interviews it was frequently stressed that it is important to overcome the pitting of one group of workers against another and to cease the stigmatisation of the unemployed and disabled. At the same time a great disappointment was expressed that the trade unions are buying into a populist discourse, that the unemployed are scroungers that get more than they deserve (Interview 3, 6, 11, 12). As an activist from the *Norwich Claimant Union* points out 'the real issue is *not*, however, that benefits are too high. But that wages are too low' (Interview 6). Moreover, activists of the *Norwich Claimants Union*, *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* and *Brighton Benefits Campaign* all emphasise that the workfarist benefit regime does not only impact claimants but also

employed workers, as a) workfare programmes replace low-skilled jobs and b) the coercive nature and benefit sanctions make people in work so fearful of being unemployed that they willingly accept bad working conditions and low pay. Activists of the *Norwich Claimant Union* therefore argue that rather than dividing between workers and unemployed workers it is important to unite the struggle for higher claimant's income with the struggles against low wages. Such an understanding of solidarity is clearly based on the same subject position – workers – and confirms Cleaver's conceptualisation of solidarity, which emphasises that because 'all workers struggle for less work and for more wealth different struggles can be united around a common goal' (Cleaver 1979: 160; see section 4.5.4).

Some of the claimant's groups, such as the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* and the *Norwich Claimants Union* therefore suggest that the demand of a basic income could be such a common goal, as it would benefit workers and claimant's alike (see section 6.4.5). Yet, when the claimants groups brought this up in the TUC welfare conferences and its follow ups it was not well received by the unions. Also, Unite Community is very hesitant to commit to the demand of a basic income as it would antagonise Unite's industrial branch. As someone from Unite Community has it:

'[W]orkers might not be ready to except benefits that are higher than the national living wage. So we need to pitch things which are going to unite workers – that are not necessarily that progressive – with the demands of fairly radical unemployed groups that want utopia' (Interview 7).

This type of thinking frustrates the claimants groups. For example, an activist from the *Norwich Claimants Union* argues 'trade unions are too compromising and thereby water down the demands' (Interview 6). They, therefore, stress that the demands should not be prescribed by the trade unions but that claimants themselves need to come up with their own demands and fight for it (Ibid.). However, while the trade unions do not actively organise around the demand of a basic income the TUC nonetheless passed a motion in favour of the basic income in autumn 2016 (Basic Income News 26 September 2016).

Coming from another angle, the *Precarious Workers Brigade* stresses that identities are seldom pure. For example 'many artists will be ... simultaneously working as interns and service workers' and often on short term contracts thus fluctuating between employment and unemployment (Kleinhamplová, Stejskalová and members of the Precarious Workers Brigade 2014: 74.). This understanding resonates with Gibson-Graham's argument that people are shaped by multiple class and non-class identities

(see section 4.4). The *Precarious Workers Brigade* (n.d.) therefore chose to make solidarity actions with other precarious workers one of their core activities to which they dedicated a specific working group. However, when asked about their thoughts on Standing's concept of the precariat (see section 4.2) they reject its usefulness arguing that '[precarity] cuts across so many sectors, forms of life and work that it might actually lose its usefulness if it is pinned down in this way' (Kleinhamplová, Stejskalová and members of the Precarious Workers Brigade 2014: 74.).

The *Precarious Workers Brigade* forges solidarity links not on the basis of the same position in the production process but on the creation of a wider identity of a cultural worker, as somebody working within a cultural institution such as artists as well as cleaners. Consequently, they supported many of the cleaners' industrial actions in cultural institutions. For example, in 2012 cleaners and interns coordinated a joint direct action at the Barbican Centre, Europe's largest arts centre, under the banner of 'clean up your act' (Precarious Workers Brigade 22 June 2012). In order to visually and creatively present their demands they mopped and swept inside the Barbican in order to raise awareness about the low wages at the Barbican (at time the cleaners were on the minimum wage) and the unpaid internships offered by the Barbican. The Precarious Workers Brigade later actively supported the Barbican Cleaners again in 2015 in their campaign for sick pay in the attempt to build solidarity between cultural workers (Precarious Workers Brigade 3 May 2015). The solidarity links between artists and cleaners resonate with Featherstone's depiction of solidarity as a dynamic and creative process which is not automatically given but actively generated and shaped through shared values and identifications (2012: 23).

Similarly, in 2015 the cleaning contractor at the Barbican, MITIE, was also involved with workfare and thus the cleaner's trade union United Voices of the World invited *Boycott Workfare* to carry out a joint occupation of the Barbican, during the closing performance of Shakespeare's Hamlet featuring Benedict Cumberbatch, against workfare and for sick pay for the cleaners (Interview 10). As such, a joint action of the two groups was made possible by targeting a common enemy. By shouting 'to be or not to be paid the Living Wage, to be or not to be paid sick pay' the action raised awareness about workfare and the continuing bad working conditions for cleaners, despite them having won the London living wage in a previous dispute. Closer bonds were fostered between the two groups because of this action (Interview 11). Beyond the collaboration between the two groups in an official capacity there was also a growth in the individual support shown from

members of *Boycott Workfare* with actions organised by the United Voices of the World and vice versa. Cleaners supported protests organised by *Boycott Workfare*, for example at the protest co-organised with *Disabled People Against the Cuts* and *Mental Health Resistance Network* protesting against the implementation of Job-Coaches in GP surgeries which was feared would contaminate healthcare with the punitive culture of the governments workfare programme. This reciprocal solidarity was very important to people from *Boycott Workfare* (interview 11). One activist from the group explained that 'low paid workers often think that that people should be working for their benefits' which is why some people within *Boycott Workfare* were first sceptical of forming solidarity links with the Barbican cleaners (ibid.). The same person stressed that 'solidarity also needs to be mutual', thus it was hoped and expected that the cleaners would in turn support claimants' actions. This example illustrates Mohanty's argument that 'solidarity is always an achievement' as it is the praxis of active political struggles and the basis for relationships among diverse communities (2003: 7).

Moreover, many of the unemployed workers groups, such as *Leeds Welfare Fightback*, *Norwich Claimants Union*, *Haringey Solidarity Group*, *Brighton Benefit Campaign* and *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* tried to support and work with the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), the trade union which organises the job-centre staff. There is an obvious link for solidarity, as PCS's own investigation has shown that almost two-thirds of jobcentre staff had experienced pressure to sanction claimants inappropriately and more than a third had been facing disciplinary measures for not sanctioning enough (Butler 20 January 2015). As such, some activist groups have supported the PCS strikes (Interview 1; Interview 3, Interview 6) which some recall as a positive experience, where bonds were made between job-centre staff and claimants (Interview 1). Beyond the strike, some groups tried to maintain good relationships with the union representatives at local job-centres. For example, the *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* also invited the PCS union representative at the Kilburn job-centre as a guest speaker to their meetings (Interview 3). However, the relationship between PCS and activist groups has been troubled. None of the groups felt that the solidarity relations to PCS were reciprocal. When *Keep Volunteering Voluntary* initiated talks with the policy officer it became clear that a closer cooperation would not be possible as a PCS survey showed that 1/3 of their members were in favour of workfare and conditionality (Interview 14). All in all there was a strong impression in the activist community that PCS could do more to fight against sanctions and to stand up in

solidarity with the unemployed (Interview 1,3,9; Boycott Workfare 2013). This shows that solidarity relations are not unproblematic. The unsolidaristic behaviour of PCS towards claimants shows how the exclusion of the unemployed from trade unions further marginalises them.

In summary of the above, most of the unemployed, interns and precariously employed people perceive themselves as workers. This identity makes unity with workers possible on the basis of sameness and confirms Cleaver's broad definition of the working class (see section 3.4 and 4.3). These solidarity links are, however, not automatically given but actively constructed by creating a common identity (for example the "cultural worker") or a common enemy (the subcontractor MITIE). However, the discourse of scroungers versus strivers (see chapter 5) has proved very effective in pitting one group of workers against another and thus creates a real barrier to solidarity between waged and unwaged workers. As such, trade unions by in large blocked cooperation with the claimants and anti-workfare campaign groups, as a common demand, such as an end to conditionality or the basic income, did not seem desirable for unionised workers. This confirms Cleaver's claim that the less powerful – which means, to Cleaver, the less waged – need to organise autonomously, to avoid the reproduction of the power hierarchies in the organisations of class struggle (see chapter 4.5.4).

8.2.3 Workfare and conditionality

'Trade unions seem to confuse the right to work with [the idea that], you must work' (Interview 11).

'The trade unions are basically justifying workfare, saying it can be a good thing' (Interview 10).

Most trade unions justify workfare and conditionally, which has not only prevented closer cooperation between the trade unions and local activist groups but also led to open conflict. This antagonistic relationship became most apparent on the 6th October 2014 when the *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group*, as part of *Boycott Workfare's* national week of action, organised a protest outside the Trade Union Congress (TUC) to oppose the TUC's endorsement of workfare. In August 2014 the TUC backed the traineeship programme (TUC 1 August 2014), which meant that 16-23 year olds could be compelled to perform up to five months full time unpaid work at risk of punitive sanctions. The justification for the scheme was that it would prepare young people for apprenticeships. As such traineeships can be seen as forced internships for blue-collar

workers. It is the downwards spiral of wages: young people first earn no wage to enhance their chances of getting an apprenticeship, where they earn a poverty wage as low as £3.50 an hour (as of June 2017) if under the age of 19 and in the first year of the apprenticeship. However, the TUC's backing of workfare goes even further. In their guidance for union representatives they spoke out against 'exploitative' workfare, while at the same time suggesting that there is also 'good quality' workfare which should be encouraged (TUC 2014). Such a position caused much distress in the activist community. As Jonny Void, a blogger, who was then part of *Boycott Workfare* sums it up:

'No-one expected the TUC to be much help in the struggle against welfare reforms ... But if the TUC are not prepared to back those who actually face unpaid work then the best they could do is get out of the ... way' (Void 2014).

The protest outside Congress House illustrates the problematic relationship between claimants' groups and the trade unions. But it also confirmed the need for independent organising to the *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group*. The group feared that if they would become a *Unite Community* branch then certain actions, such as this one, would no longer be possible (Interview 3). And indeed their fears may well be well-founded. When I asked *Unite Community* if such an action would be possible were *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* an *Unite Community* branch, it was apparent that such an action, whilst not completely impossible, would not be likely. It was pointed out that *Unite Community* would encourage dialogue rather than protest and that a protest would also need to be agreed by the higher authorities within Unite (Interview 7).

Moreover, the support of most trade unions for the Labour party, which introduced many neoliberal workfarist policies and favoured workfare, conditionality (see section 5.2.2), is an obstacle to the cooperation between claimants' groups and trade unions, especially *Unite Community*.⁷ Unite is the Labour Party's biggest funder. As such, by being part of *Unite Community* claimants would indirectly support the Labour party and hence their workfarist policy ideas. Whilst Unite members are able to vote on Unite's support for the Labour Party, *Unite Community* members are not. Likewise, as they are not part of the executives they cannot send delegates to policy or rules conferences (Interview 7). They are thus disenfranchised by Unite, with the exception of the vote for the position of General Secretary. But claimants also highlight that these unequal rights in terms of decision making are symbolic of the trade unions general regard and

⁷The election of Jeremy Corbyn as the leader of the Labour Party in 2015 has changed this to some extent. The trade unions backing trade union's backing of the Labour Party seems to be less problematic now.

treatment of unemployed workers who are seen as unequal to workers. Some members of the groups see this as another point which confirms the importance of being autonomous from *Unite Community* (KUWG Meeting 26 March 2015/ Interview 3, 6, 12, 16).

In sum, the Labour Party's and the trade unions' endorsement of conditionality and workfare led to great disappointment, anger and a feeling of betrayal within the activist community. This shows that solidarity relations are also contested and riddled by asymmetric power relations. The at least partial agreement of unionised workers with conditionality and workfare showed how successful the pitting of one group of waged workers against another, unwaged workers, can be and proved to be a real barrier for the formation of solidarity relations between the two groups. I therefore argue that any attempted future cooperation between trade unions and claimants groups, including *Unite Community*, needs to recognise this troubled relationship and needs to try to rehabilitate it.

8.2.3 A culture clash

'The [trade] unions function under a different culture, they are used to structured, hierarchical decision making. For example, with Unite Community I suggested to have a discussion group about the issues at stake, but this is something they just do not understand' (Interview 1).

As this statement clearly depicts, beyond the difference in substance and tactics, the cooperation between trade unions and activist groups is further complicated by the different ways of organising. It is seen as a 'culture-clash'. The trade unions are very bureaucratic and hierarchical and in their top-down manner often just announce what needs to be done (Littler, Power and PWB 2013: n.p.). While claimants' unions are grass-roots, member-led and democratically organised (Interview 6, 9, 12, 14). For example, *Unite Community* created the position of a community organiser whose job it is to 'ensure that communities are organising within *the values of our union*' (Interview 7, emphasis added). This goes directly against the principles of the claimants' groups where values and demands are discussed and democratically decided upon. Moreover, some activists feel that the unions hierarchy puts union officials 'a million miles away from the experiences of claimants at the job-centre and their experiences with sanctions' (Interview 12). This was confirmed by other groups (Interview 11, 14, 16). As such, unity between different struggles not only depends on a mutual interest but also on the

organising principles through which this interest is pursued. As one activist from *Keep Volunteering Voluntary* has it: 'what is important is not just the issue, it is also how you like to work with other people on the issue' (Interview 14). For most of the groups a non-hierarchical way of organising was key (see section 8.4). These findings are in line with Holgate's research on Community Unionism, in which she observed a tension, where different organising strategies as well as political starting points led to conflicts in the cooperation between PCS and London Citizens on a Living Wage campaign (Holgate 2015: 447, 448).

In summary, the above shows that the internal organising of the groups or trade unions influences the inter-relations and thus solidarity relationships between claimants groups and trade unions. The fourth section of this chapter will therefore take a closer look at the internal dynamics of the groups and specifically asks how internal dynamics influences participation and thus the strengths of the struggle.

8.3 Solidarity relations that go beyond work

In the section above it became clear that solidarity relationships transcend the common and contested issue, as organising principles also play an important role in the formation of solidarity relations. Hence many of the researched groups are closely linked to and/or overlap with other horizontally organised activist groups and campaigns. These relations are subject to my investigation in this section which I start by examining the solidarity relations between the researched groups themselves. Subsequently, I identify two main linkages to other activists groups and networks. Firstly, most of the groups see themselves as part of a wider activist network resisting neoliberal capitalism and austerity. And secondly, there are close ties to groups fighting for people's basic needs such as housing. I then, however, show that the links between activist groups are not just rationally formed around related themes, mutual interests and common goals but also around personal bonds and interests of the individual activists themselves.

8.3.1 The inter-group relations

According to Cleaver a strong collaboration between the researched groups is to be expected due to their mutual interests and a similar standing in terms of power. For Cleaver power differences essentially boil down to wage differences (Cleaver 1979: 113, 160). Therefore, by applying his theory the researched groups are expected to be less

powerful since they are mostly struggles of unwaged workers. While the solidarity relationships among claimants' groups and between claimants' groups and disability groups are indeed generally very strong, they vary in frequency and intensity. Roughly two different forms of cooperation can be identified (Interview 11):

I) A strategic collaboration, which is based on knowledge and experience sharing. To a large extent this happens on an informal basis with groups sharing information via social media or when meeting at protests. But the knowledge exchange is also facilitated by the National Welfare Action Gathering, a day of learning and reflection, attended by the different groups to exchange strategies in their struggle against workfare, sanctions and welfare cuts. The National Welfare Action Gathering has been coordinated by *Boycott Workfare* annually since 2014. These annual gatherings to share knowledge are especially important in light of the government's efforts to remain non-transparent in respect of the workfare practices (see section 6.3.2 and 7.4.1) and the severe consequences of the governments conditional welfare scheme (see section 6.3.1 and 7.2). As one person from *Boycott Workfare* explains:

'Sharing information is really important, particularly around welfare rights because so much is counter to the tactics of the government. Our tactic is to support people on how to get the money they are owed. Some of the information is almost impossible to find out and have a massive impact' (Interview 10).

With the campaigns against unpaid internships the strategic collaborations with other groups were of a different nature. In part because there were not so many groups campaigning/organising around this issue at the same time. The *Precarious Workers Brigade* continued to support and advise new groups which emerged. As the *Precarious Workers Brigade* (2014: 79) explains, 'rather than trying to "organise" others we try to encourage people to join us and to organise themselves'. This was indeed successful, as two groups, *NoPayNoWay* and *Future Interns* sparked off PWB. I pointed out elsewhere (Weghmann 2015) that the former was inspired by the Carrot Workers Collective (2011) 'Surviving Internships. A Counter Guide to Free Labour in the Arts'. The latter was formed after a workshop of the Precarious Workers Brigade at Goldsmiths university (Interview 2). Yet at the time the new groups emerged the *Precarious Workers Brigade* became less active in organising campaigns. Consequently, the relationship between the groups was predominantly one of knowledge sharing, advice and guidance from an older group to a newer one.

II) Then there is collaboration for an action. *Boycott workfare* coordinated a week of

action once or twice a year from 2012-2015. And the *Disabled People Against the Cuts* organised a week of action in September 2016. Many groups across the country took part in these weeks of action against workfare, sanctions and benefit cuts, ranging between 7-24 actions in one week (see for example *Boycott Workfare* 28 June 2012). Beyond this some groups maintained a very close collaboration of continuously supporting each other's protests, for example the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* with *Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty* (Interview 12), *Haringey Solidarity Group* with *Boycott Workfare* (Interview 8, 10, 11) and also the *Disabled People Against Cuts* with *Mental Health Resistance Network* and *Winvisible* (Interview 16). Moreover, some groups have come together for a specific action. The actions against psychocompulsion (see section 7.4.2) are cases in point, which were organised by *Mental Health Resistance Network*, *Disabled People Against the Cuts* and *Boycott Workfare* and supported by *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Network*, *Winvisible* and many more. This shows the varied terrains and understandings on which solidarity relations are formed, and their different intensities. It also shows that geography and mutual interests also inform the organic formation of solidarity relations.

Two preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the observations above. Firstly, the National Welfare Action Gathering and the weeks of action show that a grass-roots nation-wide collaboration of claimants' groups and anti-workfare campaigns is possible without them being incorporated in a larger umbrella organisation such as the TUC or Citizens UK. Secondly, it confirms that the groups forge links on the basis of mutual interest and common needs as suggested by Cleaver but it also shows that quite obviously geography has a massive impact when it comes to forging closer and deeper inter-group relations.

8.3.2 The joint struggle against austerity and for basic needs

Generally, many of the groups see their struggle related to other progressive struggles against austerity and for people's basic needs. As a member of *Boycott Workfare* reflects: 'workfare is absolutely imbedded in the imposition of austerity and therefore it is a massive political struggle' (Interview 10). Similarly, the *Precarious Workers Brigade* (2013: n.p.) points out that 'it has become increasingly clear that free labour in the form of voluntarism, internships, and workfare have been put at the heart of the dismantling of the welfare system'. And therefore draws the conclusion that:

'[an] informed and critical understanding of internships and voluntary work is crucial to get at the core of the current re-structuring of public services in the UK. We need to share ideas across campaigns and use our collective intelligence to find other ways to do what we want and to change the system.' (ibid)

As such, the *Precarious Workers Brigade* facilitated workshops at various university occupations especially during the 2010/11 student movement (see for example (Precarious Workers Brigade 30 November 2011) and also at Occupy London in 2011/2012 on the lived experience of precarity (Precarious Workers Brigade (9 July 2012)). Through these moments of consciousness raising the question of how to collectively organise around precarity was broached (Precarious Workers Brigade 2012). Moreover, the *Precarious Workers Brigade* also engaged in commoning processes by being one of the founding groups to initiate the Common House in 2013. The Common House is a shared space in London which different activist groups use as a meeting point and which is collectively organised (see section 7.4.4).

Many of the groups see their struggle as part of a wider struggle against austerity and neoliberal capitalism (Interview 1, 3, 6, 10, 12, 13, 16). This is unsurprising as austerity and a greater neoliberalisation of the integral state constitute the social relations of production that gave rise to the emergence of these collective agencies (see section 6.2). As such, the *Scottish Unemployed Workers' Network* organised an anti-austerity rally, joined other anti-austerity demonstrations organised by the Scottish Trade Union Centre and joined a protest against Greek austerity outside the European Commission Offices in Edinburgh (Glynn 2016). The *Disabled People Against the Cuts* have organised several direct actions, consisting most notably of an occupation inside parliament during Prime Minister's Questions. They have also engaged in road blockades and demonstrated at the Conservative Party's annual conference. The *Disabled People Against the Cuts* actively campaign against the Conservative government who they blame for the cuts to and conditionality of welfare (see section 7.4.2). Moreover, the *Disabled People Against the Cuts* frequently supported struggles against cuts to public services always drawing the link of how these cuts affect the lives of disabled people (Interview 16). For example, they were very active in joining campaigns against the closure of local libraries which are especially important for people who cannot travel far to access books or a computer (ibid.). They also were very active in supporting the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) trade union in their struggle against the planned cuts of train guards, as the guards, in part, ensure that transport is accessible for disabled people (Ibid.).

The specific issues targeted are very diverse but there are various connections between

groups and campaigns. As one activist from *Boycott Workfare* points out the 'strength of the activist community is that there are groups which specialise in certain aspects but then there is obviously a lot of cross over between them', as they share in common a desire for social transformation towards equality and justice (Interview 10). Housing can be identified as key issue, closely related to work, precarity and welfare, and around which most groups forged solidarity links. Losing their jobs and illnesses are the most common reasons for people to be faced with evictions according to the charity Shelter (Shelter September 2014). It was estimated that in September 2013-September 2014 almost half a million people were at risk of losing their homes in England alone (Ibid.). As such, the *Haringey Solidarity Group* works closely with *Haringey Housing Action Group*, which gives support on housing problems and campaigns for better housing (Interview 8). Moreover, the *Haringey Solidarity Group* is involved in creating a community run social housing project (see section 7.4.4). Likewise, *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* frequently protests to prevent evictions and also established a separate working group on housing, which specifically deals with housing benefits and other housing problems (Interview 3). Also, some activist part of the *Newham Claimants Union* campaign for social housing (Interview 5) and the *Norwich Claimants Union* made the 'need for social housing, repairs and rent caps' one of their four core demands (Interview 6). Likewise, the *Precarious Workers Brigade* (2015: 174) identifies precarity as 'a condition that is to do with work, but also housing, and our lives – how we understand our futures and so on'.

In summary, most of the groups see their struggle as intertwined with the wider struggle against austerity. This is because austerity and further neoliberal restructuring are behind the drive to conditionality, workfare and a further precarisation of the workforce (see chapter 5). It thus connects to Kees van der Pijil's argument that neoliberal capitalism is characterised by the tightening discipline of capital on the sphere of reproduction and that therefore the struggles against the commodification of social services need to be seen as class struggle (van der Pijil 1998: 46,47). Interlinked by this broader struggle the groups show a strong commitment to support groups that are closely related to their own focus of struggle, whereby housing is a key issue of contestation that is especially close to welfare and conditionality.

8.3.3 Solidarity through personal bonds

While the issues of concern and their inter-connections matter, solidarity is not just a purely rational and goal orientated social relation. Solidarity is often far more personal. Activists are people, who bring their own interests, experiences and networks into the groups. As such groups and movements are seldom stagnant but in the constant process of re-creating themselves as new people join and old people leave the groups, and new political issues emerge. Consequently, ties are formed on different personal levels, of which two seem to be most common: firstly, some of the people in the groups are active members of other activist groups or move on to other issues as personal circumstances change. Heckscher and McCarthy refer to the people who are part of multiple groups as “bridgers” (2014: 634). There are bridgers in all of the researched groups. To name just a few examples, members of *Leeds Welfare Fightback* are also active members of *Plan C* and together the groups organised the action to “strike a conversation with a striker” to link up with workers when PCS was on strike (Interview 1). Some people in *Boycott Workfare* developed links with people in the GMB in Kings Lynne. The trade unionist initiated that the Kings Lynne GMB branch supports *Boycott Workfare* also with funding. This type of solidarity is not based on a particular union policy but on personal connections (Interview 10). Moreover, through my involvement in the grass roots trade union, *United Voices of the World*, I have functioned as such a bridger, initiating closer solidarity links between migrant, low paid workers and unwaged interns and claimants. Moreover, many people have also been part of two groups simultaneously, leading to deeper connection between them. For example, there is an overlap between people in *Job-de-Centre* and *Mental Health Resistance Network* and also between people of *Boycott Workfare* and *Keep Volunteering Voluntary* (Interview 10, 11, 14, 15). Secondly, some activists were active in the claimants’ union movement in the 1970s and feel the need in the current political-economic climate to re-vitalise the claimants struggle, such as members of *Norwich Claimants Union* and *Keep Volunteering Voluntary* (Interview 6, 14).

However, solidarity relations are not just about actively creating similarities but also about signalling diversity. Some groups formed in frustration with, and opposition to other centralised and sexist organisations of class struggle (Interview 1, 6, 9). For example, one activist of *Leeds Welfare Fightback* was previously active within the Socialist Workers Party, but left because of allegations surrounding the alleged cover up of a rape within the Socialist Workers Party in 2013 (Cohen and Malik 9 March 2013,

interview 1). Likewise, some of the activists in *Norwich Claimant Union* were active in Left Unity but left because of their hierarchical nature and internal power dynamics (Interview 1, 6). This shows how oppression within the institutions of class struggle and asymmetries of power led to the formation of new collective agencies. And in turn, internal dynamics do matter for the sustainability and effectiveness of class struggle. Featherstone argues

'situating the left as a product of different relations, flows and circuits of political activity, is not just a project that is about producing a fuller account of political organizing ... it is something which can transform understandings of how left politics has worked and what is at stake in the activity and political cultures of different left movements' (2012: 248).

With this in mind, the next section will now turn to the internal dynamics of class struggle.

This section demonstrated two particular aspects of solidarity. Firstly, I showed that solidarity is not a purely rational and goal orientated social relation but also highly personal. As such solidarity is also created by "bridgers", people who are active in various activist groups simultaneously and construct connections between them. Secondly, I pointed out that solidarity relations are not about creating similarities while turning a blind eye to internal oppressions and negating diversity. As such, power asymmetries and sexism were reasons for activists to turn away from larger institutions of class struggle and for the formation of a smaller group. In acknowledgement of the fact that the internal dynamics of a group inform and influence that groups practices, strengths and sustainability this is what the next section will now turn to.

8.4 Internal dynamics of the groups

It became clear in section 8.2.4 that organising mechanisms influence solidarity relations and hence the power of class struggle. Hence this section starts by exploring in more detail in what ways the groups organise. Emerging from the reflections on oppositional consciousness and resistance (see section 4.5.2) I then take a closer look at people's motivation to get involved and stay involved in the groups and lastly explore in this section in what ways personal dynamics and the activists handling of conflict impact the strengths of the struggle against workfare and conditionality.

8.4.1 The importance of participatory democracy

A defining feature of most researched groups is that their organising is structured

around principles of participatory democracy, whereby task sharing, and non-hierarchical decision making are key. The latter means that hierarchies are actively avoided. For example, the *Haringey Solidarity Group* specifically highlights that they are 'a collective with no leader' (Interview 8, Haringay Solidarity Group 8 June 2015). Most of the groups have regular meetings and this is where strategies are discussed and decisions are made either by voting as in the case of, for example, *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* (Interview 3) and *Norwich Claimants Union*, or by consensus as in the case of, for example, *Boycott Workfare* and *Brighton Benefits Campaign* (Interview 6, 9, 10). However, a commitment to a non-hierarchical organising practice does not mean that power asymmetries are always avoided. As one activist from *Boycott Workfare* explains:

'it would be quite naïve to think that we can escape the social structure in the world we live in just by being in a non-hierarchical group, where people have similar aims. Even though people might be aware of the power they bring or not bring into the group it is still based around class, gender, disability, whether you have a job or not and even your confidence – all these things effect your power in the group' (Interview 11).

Such an understanding resonates with Featherstone's argument that a commitment to non-hierarchical organising is better thought of as 'ongoing attempts to negotiate and challenge uneven power relations' rather than claiming to be horizontal and thereby silencing and marginalising existing inequalities (2012: 59).

Regarding the former, most groups aim to share tasks as equally as possible. For example, *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group*, *Haringey Solidarity Group* and *Boycott Workfare* rotate the tasks of facilitating the meeting and taking minutes (Interview 3, 9,10). *Norwich Claimants Union* tries to work as collaboratively as possible and, as such, they write their weekly flyers/newsletters collectively whereby every sentence is discussed and democratically decided on. They also democratically decide which chants they will use at protests (Interview 6). Similarly, in order to be as participatory as possible, a lot of time, energy and focus is devoted to skill sharing within the groups. As one activist from the *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* explains: 'We want people to be involved and [therefore] to learn, to be a helper as well as a help receiver. So we make sure we share skills' (Interview 3). The importance of skill sharing is also recognised by most of the other activist groups (Interview 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12). For example, at *Boycott Workfare* new members are mentored to facilitate their integration in the group (Interview 10) and the *Newham Claimants Union* does most of the case work in work-sessions, which follow their fortnightly meetings. In the work-sessions more experienced people and new people go through specific cases together (Interview

4 and 5).

Most people in the groups believe that the participatory organising strategies are key to their successes (Interview 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). As one activist from the *Norwich Claimants Union* highlights: 'I really think we work because we are so democratic, inclusive and participatory. Our democratic way brings people together' (Interview 6). Their peer adds, 'we are only really limited by our imagination, that is why it is so exciting' (Ibid.). Similarly, an activist from *Boycott Workfare* argues that the way *Boycott Workfare* is organised is vital to its success. He explains:

'The way that Boycott Workfare is organised is really important, I think it is what makes it so vibrant and so effective given the small number of people involved and small resources. We do not have to train away lots of resources, in a massive organisation where it's about getting ideas past a motion etc. Consensus works really well in the group' (Interview 10).

Such statements confirm that the way groups are organised impact the strength of their struggle. Participatory organising freed up energy and enabled people to fully contribute to the group without being restricted by bureaucratic structures. As such, despite being resource poor small groups can still organise effectively and successfully (see the sections under 7.4). However, the participatory organising structure does not guarantee broad and equal participation. Nor is it a panacea for power asymmetries. For example, in many groups, there was a sense of frustration that tasks were mainly carried out by a few highly motivated people. An activist from *Leeds Welfare Fightback* commented that 'too much work is distributed on too few shoulders' (Interview 1). Other groups share the same experience (Interview 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 12, 14). However, although tasks are often performed by a few, this is understood by, for example, people in *Boycott Workfare* to principally reflect individual's time, life constraints and ability. As one member said, '[people] can give more and less in different times' and some can generally give more than others (Interview 10).

This section highlighted that in most groups participatory organising practises – such as skill sharing, task rotation, collective work and democratic decision making – helped to create vibrant and effective collective agencies. As such, participatory organising structures made it possible that big successes (see the sections under 7.4) were achieved with few resources and sometimes few people. However, the effectiveness and possibility of a participatory organising structure in these groups has only been tested on a small scale and it is yet to be seen how such structures would fare in larger organisations.

8.4.2 Oppositional consciousness and affective solidarity

I will now explore what motivates people to participate in the groups. In the claimants groups, namely *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group*, *Newham Claimants Union* and *Norwich Claimants Union* as well as the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network*, many people join who are completely new to activism. Often the motivation to come to these groups is driven by individual problems with their benefits. Therefore, case work is considered by most of the claimants groups as their 'bread and butter work' (Interview 12). And while claimants groups feel that many trade unions and other organisations on the left often dismiss case work (Interview 3, 5) as it is seen as part of the service model of organising, they view case work not as a service but as a political act as someone from the *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group* explains in more detail:

'It is not just representing people but moreover it's about learning how to defend yourself. We only call it "cases" for a want of a better word, but it is not really right to call them cases as they are not really individual people that get sanctioned etc. We have to see the bigger picture. When you bring your case to the group you see that others might have the same problem and they can help by sharing their experiences. These problems are mostly collective not individual problems.' (Interview 3)

Similarly, the *Norwich Claimants Union* sees that case work is often an emancipatory experience, 'where people who were really crushed by the system stand up [for themselves and others]' (Interview 6). As such, the benefits of being part of the group go beyond the successes of case work and campaigns. As one member of *Newham Claimants Union* reflects:

'It is people coming together. It is a form of self-help. This is what makes it so great. I learned a lot from it, we are standing up for each other and I felt I can give something back to other people, that makes me feel good too' (Interview 4).

As such, a political consciousness is created and re-created when people realise in the group that their problem is not an individual problem but one they share with others, that is not their own fault and they can do something about it. In this collectivising process agency is developed and it thus relates to Bieler's argument that an oppositional consciousness grows organically in the process of class struggle (2014: 24; see section 4.5.2).

Other mostly experienced activists joined the struggle against workfare and conditionality not because of their subject position but because they were outraged about workfare and conditionality (Interview 1, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14). As an activist from *Boycott Workfare* explains: 'this [workfare] seemed to be such an obvious injustice that I got involved' (Interview 10). Also, none of the people in the *Haringey Solidarity Group* experienced workfare themselves but they wanted to make sure that the extreme

exploitation of 'workfare does not happen locally in Haringey' (Interview 8). This resonates with the non-essentialist understanding of agency put forward by Pero (2004), where there is no need to be oppressed in order to be part of transformative politics (see section 4.4). One person from *Keep Volunteering Voluntary*, who is also not directly affected explains: 'I am just so angry. That is why I like the naming and shaming bit. Even though my personal nature does not like conflict' (Interview 14). In this case, solidarity is not created on the basis of a shared identity but draws on emotions such as anger and frustration and a shared desire for transformation and thus resonates with Hemmings' (2012) concept of "affective solidarity" (see section 4.5.4). Most of the claimants' groups, such as the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network*, *Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group*, *Newham Claimants Union* and *Norwich Claimants' Union* were initiated or coordinated by one or a few experienced activists, who have been active in trade unions or social movements before and then became either directly affected by the workfarist approach to welfare or concerned about it. They thus used what they have learnt in previous struggles to initiate new forms of collective agencies. This shows that oppositional consciousness of activists is not only continuously created within the class struggle but it also connects previous struggles with current ones.

In summary, I explored in this section the personal motivations of people getting involved in the groups, namely being either directly affected by the issue, or through Hemming's understanding of 'affective solidarity' (see section 4.5.4) which also confirms Pero's none-essentialist approach to class struggle. These motivations and their inter-relations resonate with Bieler's argument that consciousness grows organically in the process of class struggle (see section 4.5.2). I noted that often claimants' groups were initiated by more experienced activists and/or trade unionists and I therefore argued that oppositional consciousness is what connects previous struggles with current ones across time and space.

8.4.3 Commoning, the life-blood of struggle

I now explore people's experiences in the struggle and in what ways personal dynamics influence their involvement and consequently the power of the struggle. Many interviewees highlighted that they experience a different kind of interacting within the group which does not follow capitalistic principles (Interview 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15). Instead, interaction is driven by collectivity rather than competition, appreciation rather than blame, democratic decision making rather than orders and empowering rather

than charity. As one person from the *Norwich Claimants Union* explains

'Some of us are unwillingly Thatcher's children, we have become isolated and find it hard to trust in each other. Through the claimants union we can overcome that. It is in that way also self-help' (Interview 6).

This was confirmed by other activists who experienced that the supporting and empowering aspect of the groups helped them to become less cynical and less isolated (Interview 3, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15). But also that resistance can improve people's own life quality, as someone from the *Haringey Solidarity Group* has it:

'It is also about supporting people in their daily lives in their personal struggle they have, mental, social struggle. ... For some people simple tasks can be very daunting and we can support them. So it is also giving people the courage to face life' (Interview 8).

Also, the *Precarious Workers Brigade* (2013) reflects in more detail:

'We learned to work collectively. ... We learned the importance of linking our own precarious struggles to those working in other sectors ... and began to think that we were gaining an education ... [W]e saw that we needed to discover for ourselves what we actually want to learn, what we actually want to be, and what kind of society we want to live in.'

The above statements confirm Federici's argument that commoning processes are part of any resistance. As resistance is to some extent always built on ethical and just relations outside capitalism (see sections 4.5.3 and 7.4.4). These practices of solidarity and collectivity thus stand in direct contrast to the employability doctrine which promotes individualised and continuous work on the self and the total subordination to work.

It was frequently addressed in the interviews that the internal dynamics of the group influence the effectiveness of the resistance. An activist from *Keep on Volunteering Voluntary* explains: 'for me personal relationships are at the heart of it. I think a functioning group cannot be alienated from each other' (Interview 14). Some explained that feeling welcomed by the group, when first going to a meeting, was what made them become involved with the group (Interview 10, 11). Practically, the internal dynamics impact the engagement of group members as their willingness to take on responsibility for tasks is much more likely when people feel comfortable in the group (Interview 8). But moreover, other activists stressed the importance of recognition for one's efforts in the struggle: 'I think I would not be involved still, if it would not be for that' (Interview 10).

Beyond that it was stressed that it is crucial to be able to trust and rely upon one another when, for example, going on protests together, where people sometimes feel

at risk (Interview 11). This indicates, that the inter-connections between group members along bonds of trust, recognition and affinity, which are seldom taken seriously by Industrial Relations scholars, influence the agency of class struggle. I suggest here that an appreciation of the relational aspect of agency is a condition for any serious understanding of resistance and thus recommend further research on this matter (see section 9.3).

However, while affective internal relations can enable and stabilise resistance, caution is required as strong emotional bonds can also lead to the opposite. The *Precarious Workers Brigade* reflects: 'in a situation like ours, where we operate through such strong affective ties, the danger is that it also becomes very demanding, so that the core group has shrunk at different moments' (Precarious Workers Brigade and Carrot Workers Collective 2014: 225). Furthermore, they point out: 'there is a dimension of familiarity and quotidian informality among some of us that may become difficult for people to fully come into and inhabit group processes' (Ibid.). This exclusionary element of strong affective ties resonates with Ross' observations of affinity groups, which can be seen as 'reproducing a debilitating sectarian tradition: small and smaller groups are formed by those who already agree with one another' (2003: 291).

Moreover, other subjectivity, such as religious or gender ones, also inform groups affective internal relations. For example, *Newham Claimants Union* is almost entirely comprised of people in the Seek community and they meet in the Seek temple, they are thus not only bonded by their joint concerns as claimants but the intra-relations of the groups are also made and sustained through religious ties. Another example regards gender. Two of the claimants groups are almost entirely comprised of men, and while women have come to meetings they never stayed long. As one active woman in one of the groups reflects:

'There are things which I would find easier in the group if it wasn't so male dominated. I think sometimes if you have not experienced sexism, you do not know how to respond to it and I think the way people have responded to stuff about gender has been quite disappointing and perhaps that is why there are not so many women [in the group].'⁸

But also in other groups with a more balanced membership in terms of gender, conflicts arose:

'I think also Boycott Workfare is vulnerable to political jealousy and there is also a gender dynamic to it. We get a certain amount of jockeying for power positions between male members in the organisation' (Interview 11).

⁸ For reasons on anonymity I deliberately did not state in which interview this statement was made.

This reality is reflected in Mohanty's problematisation of homogeneous solidarity, by pointing out that 'the sexism of trade unions' caused women to form more democratic women's unions, and also that feminist solidarity based on the universal category of sisterhood was in fact based on white supremacy (2003: 163). Other activists referred to the power of education and (activist) experience as difficult power-imbalances in the group (Interview 5, 10). This confirms Gibson-Grahams idea that non-class processes impact on class processes (and visa-versa) (See section 4.4). Consequently, collective agency needs to integrate and not exclude difference. As one activist reflects:

'We live in a culture now, where political activism needs to be based on intersectionality. This is not like the minor strike where you all grew up together, know each other and are similar. We are working with people who are very different, who might not even have the same first language, we have different political traditions. We are riven by class differences we are trying to work across differences like gender and sexuality. We have to work together politically in very different ways, maybe this is part of globalisation' (Interview 11).

This section illustrated that the inter-relations between the organising group members influence the agency of class struggle. I showed that a commitment to participatory organising does not mean that power asymmetries do not exist but rather that there is a commitment to challenge existing inequalities. This links back to the third chapter of this PhD, where I engaged with Gibson-Graham, who argues that in order to overcome capitalist normativity we need to avoid a narrow focus on struggles *against* capitalism and instead should visualise struggles *for* community economics (see chapter 4.5.3). However, this section highlights that the two are not so clearly separated from each other. Instead, the examples above show that resistance against capitalism is often only possible because of the simultaneous creation of community economics. This confirms Federici's argument that to a greater or lesser extent there are commoning processes in every resistance (see section 4.5.3). But a word of caution is necessary. I also showed that strong personal relationships can harm solidarity bonds and weaken the capacity of resistance. For example, a close affinity between members can make it hard for new members to get involved. Moreover, the analysis showed that – in line with Gibson-Graham – non-class identities, such as gender and religion, can influence class struggle. I, for example, pointed out that sexism within the groups degraded the power of the struggle.

8.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I looked at in what ways solidarity relations and internal dynamics of the

social forces resisting employability impact the power of the struggle. To a large degree these social forces are independent from and function outside of the established trade union network. As I showed in chapter 7.2 the social forces resisting employability are best not understood as a single actor, such as one party or coalition of organisations, but instead as a flexible and loose network of non-hierarchical groups operating through strong solidarity ties. These solidarity relations were the subject of my investigation in this chapter.

I demonstrated in chapter 7 that the groups learnt from the trade unions and suggested that the large, established trade unions could in turn learn a lot from the grass-roots resistance against unpaid work, employability and conditional welfare. Exploring the links between grass-roots activist groups organising around work and trade unions in more detail I showed in the present chapter that many groups identify themselves as workers, and more precisely as unemployed, unpaid, precarious or cultural workers, and thus solidarity is created with trade unions on the basis of the construction of a shared identity as workers. This confirms Cleaver's argument, who sees the possibility that all workers struggles are united as they share in common that they all struggle for less work and more access to wealth.

However, it also became clear that solidarity relations are intermingled with asymmetric power relations. For example, the solidarity between unionised workers can further marginalise claimants as the one sided and failed attempts of claimants' groups to cooperate with PCS, the union of the jobcentre staff, demonstrates. This also shows how powerful the dynamic of pitting one group of workers against another is in debilitating resistance. The development of solidarity relations between claimants and trade unions are further complicated by their difference in tactics (negotiation versus direct action), their organising principles (hierarchical versus non-hierarchical) and their demands (better wages for unionised workers versus the basic income).

Furthermore, this chapter demonstrated that most of the groups show a strong commitment to cooperate with other non-hierarchical groups, which pursue similar aims and see themselves as part of a wider struggle against austerity. This upholds Cleaver's thesis that mutual interests matter for the formation of solidarity relations but beyond that also shows that organising practices equally matter in the construction of unity between groups. In line with van der Pijl's observations that the tightening conditions of neoliberal capitalism increasingly exhaust the reproductive sphere and that class struggle thus also extends into reproductive relations I showed here that many groups

cooperate with other non-hierarchical groups which organise resistance in the realm of reproduction, whereby the need for housing is an important issue especially in London. It goes without saying that the intensity of the solidarity relations vary from group to group, whereby geography matters especially when it comes to joint actions. But moreover, it is important to remember that groups are made out of people, so bonds to other groups are built by "bridgers" through personal connections, such as friendships and other personal interests.

This chapter also gave insights into the activists' motivation to engage in struggle. It thereby showed that people's problems with their benefits were a major drive for people to seek help from a claimant group. Political consciousness was developed and re-developed when people realised within the collective process of dealing with their cases that they are not the only ones facing these problems. Thus, by collectivising problems agency was developed. While some members have been completely new to activism others have been very experienced activists and used what they have learnt in previous struggles to initiate new groups or extend the group's power. In other words, the oppositional consciousness is what connects previous political struggles with current ones. Yet, not all members of the groups got involved due to their subject positions. Others got involved on the basis of being outraged by the injustices of workfare and conditionality, which confirms Hemmings' understanding of 'affective solidarity' and also Pero's non-essentialist understanding of agency. The emotional side of solidarity is an aspect which is completely overlooked by all of the main three class theories I engaged with in chapter three.

Lastly, this chapter illustrated on the example of the groups resisting employability and workfare that the internal dynamics of the groups influence the power of their resistance and commoning processes immensely. The supportive and collective relations provide individual activists with the emotional strength to cope with the many injustices produced through capitalist relations and grant activists the energy and courage to resist. It was frequently stressed that the commitment to challenge inequality within the groups and the welcoming and recognising atmosphere in the groups was the reason that the small groups could be so effective and vibrant. This resonates with Federici's argument that commoning processes are part of any struggle. But conversely, power asymmetries within the groups and oppressive behaviours, such as sexism and classism, can also weaken the power of the groups. This illustrates that political activism needs to be based on intersectionality, meaning to learn how to organise across difference

and not through negating and silencing difference what easily happens when focusing on an understanding of solidarity based on sameness.

What became clear throughout this chapter is that solidarity links are not inevitable but are constantly produced and shaped throughout the political struggle. Solidarity is thus a creative process through which unity between struggles is achieved and the key social dynamic through which power of class struggle is increased. It is thus surprising that solidarity relations are often ignored not only in the literature of Industrial Relations and Political Economy but also insufficiency explored in the conceptualisations of class and class struggle I engaged with in the sections 4.1-4.3.

– Chapter 9 –

Conclusion:

Taking Practice Back to Theory

9.1 Summary of the research

This PhD emerged out of my own experiences as an unpaid intern and my joint efforts with other interns to organise ourselves and campaign for a wage. This experience led me to question: where the idea came from that (young) people must *experience* work before they are considered worthy of a wage (“work-experiences”), and how unwaged workers and workers not 'recognised' as workers can successfully organise around the issue of work and wages. These initial questions and, in particular, the unpaid labour of students and the unemployed, became the core underlying concern of this research.

I decided that these initial questions would be best addressed through a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project (see section 1.5 for a detailed outline the PAR methodology used in this PhD). This is principally because a PAR methodology rejects the positivist notion of objective research and instead recognises that knowledge is historically constructed through social power relations. Moreover, PAR stands in contrast to a linear notion of research, where one specific theoretical framework determines the research questions and the way data is collected. Instead, by following a PAR methodology, this PhD developed through a constant dialogue between theory and practice which I will now make explicit in this summary of the research. After consulting theory my initial concerns referred to above translated into the following two research questions:

- *In what ways does the employability agenda maintain and re-create neoliberal hegemony?*
- *In what ways and through what type of collective organisation do people contest the concept of employability?*

The first research question is conceptually addressed in chapter 3 and empirically in chapters 5 and 6, while the second question is conceptually addressed in chapter 3 and empirically in chapters 7 and 8.

My initial interest in work-experiences introduced me to the term employability, commonly referred to as the skills and attributes that the individual worker acquires (and constantly extends through life-long learning) to remain attractive in a flexible labour market. The notion of employability today is a rebranding of the human capital approach first put forward by the neoliberal Chicago School of Economics in the 1960s. They argued that wages were determined by market forces, and that the workers who had invested the most in themselves would be paid a higher wage and would be less likely to face unemployment (see more on the human capital approach in section 3.2.2). Likewise, the concept of employability today suggests a skill based solution to tackle unemployment, arguing that employment figures are determined by each individual's efforts and not by the on the number of jobs available in relation to the number of people seeking work. This means that in an increasingly competitive labour market the individual is pressurised to constantly increase their performance to be more employable than their peers. For students, unpaid work-experiences have, therefore, become "the third degree" considered necessary to secure a graduate job. However, in reality, students often find themselves in a vortex of unpaid labour, as volunteering is often regarded as the way to get an unpaid internship, and one internship often leads to yet another (see section 6.2.3). In a similar vein, many unemployed workers have found their benefits are now contingent on them undertaking unpaid work-experience. This work-experience is supposed to boost their work-confidence and to overcome their alleged habits of worklessness (see section 6.3.2 and 6.3.3). These examples show that the concept of employability ignores the wider socio-economic context, and instead burdens the individual with the responsibility of their own employment. With no one else but oneself to blame, unemployment becomes a personal failure, and public anger is deflected away from the state and towards the individual. This has led neo-Gramscian scholars (for example Apeldoorn 2003; Moore 2010) to argue that employability creates acceptance for a neoliberal hegemony. After engaging with these scholars, I translated my original question of where the idea of work-experiences comes from into my first research question of this PhD, namely: *In what way does the employability agenda maintain and re-create neoliberal hegemony?*

To address this question, I engaged in chapter 3 with a neo-Gramscian approach to International Political Economy (IPE) (see sections 3.3.1-3.3.3). Gramsci's (1871: 244) concept of the integral state provided a useful foundation for my analysis. Gramsci the-

orised the state as the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities which maintain hegemony. He thereby distinguished between the political society, understood in terms of institutionalised political, judicial and military power, and civil society, understood as the cultural and religious institutions, which in fusion form the state (Gramsci 1995: 385,6). Developing Gramsci's state theory further Poulantzas (1978:12) argued that the state organises hegemony not only by consent but also by unifying class forces. By building on Gramsci's and Poulantzas' state conceptualisations Jessop (2003) identified a state transformation taking place in most Western states from a 'Keynesian Welfare National State' to a 'Schumpetarian Workfare Post National Regime'. While the former emphasised welfare and employment security to generate mass consumption and hence economic demand, the latter stressed the supply side approach to social policy by promoting flexibility, innovation and employability. Jessop's state transformation framework is very useful for the first research objective in this PhD as it shows that the rise of the employability agenda is situated within a wider neoliberal state transformation process and also provides a toolkit for depicting particular developments of the nation states in which he identifies the EU as the 'co-director' in these neoliberal transformations.

However, Jessop's framework in particular but also the neo-Gramscian approach to IPE in general, have a tendency to over-emphasise the coherence of the neoliberal project and to neglect resistance to it. As such a neo-Gramscian IPE framework is unhelpful for addressing the second question of this PhD mentioned above in regards of how unwaged and unrecognised workers can successfully organise. In the search for theoretical guidelines that allow for the conceptualisation of class struggle from below I developed a Critical Political Economy of Work (CPEW) framework, that puts workers' agency at the centre of the analysis. I thereby built on scholars who suggested a merger between the disciplines of International Political Economy and Industrial Relations (Harrod and O'Brien 2002; Haworth and Huges 2002; Amoore 2002; Moore 2010). Such a merger would create a framework that explains global developments of labour while also analysing the ways in which labour struggles shape global historical structures (Harrod 2002: 49). I expanded their approach by integrating Cleaver's take on Marx's Political Economy as a political tool to analyse working class power with the aim of strengthening this power. Merging the study of neo-Gramscian IPE with Cleaver's class struggle approach into a Critical Political Economy of Work framework enables an analysis that, a)

captures the capitalist forces behind the historical specificities of capitalism that increasingly impose work, and b) visualises opportunities of resistance to work. Both parts of the analysis continuously interlace and are thus addressed in every chapter. However, chapters 4 and 5 focus more on neoliberal restructuring processes, whilst chapter 7 and 8 focus more on resistance.

By drawing on Jessop's system transformation framework I showed in chapter 5 that the employability agenda not only created consensus for but also advanced neoliberal restructuring in a multi-scalar manner, nationally and on a European level, through processes of class contestation. Nationally, it came through a mix of consent and coercion. New Labour's version of neoliberalism put a lot of effort in the consensual aspect of employability by highlighting individuals' responsibility for their inclusion in the labour market. It nonetheless continued with the punitive workfare policies introduced by the previous Conservative governments – they were just more beautifully packaged in a positive and empowering discourse (see section 5.2.2). Following New Labour, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition government (2010-2015) focused on coercion by disciplining the unemployed into work (see section 5.2.3). This links back to Bruff's (2016) argument on the rise of authoritative neoliberalism, where coercion comes through institutionalised power. Yet, the Coalition government also sought popular consent for its coercive attack on the unemployed by manufacturing a new justice discourse which portrays benefit recipients as being unfairly advantaged vis-a-vis the hard working tax payer. This discourse argued that claimants should be forced to do something in return for their benefits, which is also for their own good because it would break their alleged habit of worklessness by fostering work-confidence. On the European level (see section 5.3), social policies were first pushed for by the trade unions who hoped to compensate their diminished national influence by getting their demand heard via the European union. However, the EU social and employment policies did not temper but amplify neoliberal restructuring. Business lobbies were actively pushing for more flexibilisation of the labour market and the undemocratic nature of the EU institutions facilitated their influence, while trade unions got side lined. As such at EU level it was not so much the case that class forces were unified but rather that agents of the capitalist class asserted their dominance. The examination of policies behind the employability agenda confirms Bieler and Morton's (2013) argument that neoliberal restructuring op-

erates through an interlacement of national and international (here European) processes and cannot be sufficiently accounted for by an analysis of national or international formation only.

Next, in chapter 6, I extended Jessop's state transformation framework as its focus on policies and elite agency leaves little room for an analysis of how these state transformation processes are actually implemented. I followed Peck (2003) who argued that welfare state transformations are complex and multifaceted and thus, in order to understand underlying patterns of state restructuring, the analysis needs to go beyond policy shifts and new forms of governance (Peck 2003), and take the whole state body (political society and civil society) into account. In chapter 6 I therefore mapped the activities of two shadow-state institutional complexes to establish how the employability agenda works in practice: the outsourced welfare-to-work services and universities' employability services.

Before being able to move to the second part of the analysis of the CPEW framework, namely to visualise opportunities of resistance I realised that I first needed to better understand the terms resistance and class struggle. This led me to examine three different class struggles theories in more detail. I started this journey by engaging with Standing (2011), who has famously declared the precariat as a new 'class-in the-making' and predicted it will be the major agent in resisting neoliberal globalisation. He depicts interns and workfare workers as part of the precariat, as both groups share with other precarious workers the insecurity of work relations. Standing suggested that the precariat should organise separately from workers and outside of existing trade unions, as trade unions have failed to represent the interests of the precariat. However, Standing's analysis has two pitfalls: firstly, it polarises the working class and overlooks that all workers (including unpaid interns and workfare workers) still share in common that they do not own the means of production and are therefore forced to sell their labour power (Bieler 2012). And secondly, it ignores that the boundaries between the precariat and the other classes are fluent and that people can occupy various class positions at the same time (Conley 2012: 687). For example, an intern might be part of the precariat but, if lucky, will become part of the salariat. These shortcomings of Standing's precariat thesis led me to come back to Cleaver and especially his concept of the social factory, as the realm where the working class works, namely in society as a whole (1979: 70). His concept therefore includes interns and workfare workers. Yet again, however, I saw two shortcomings with Cleaver's class theory: firstly, it does not allow for an analysis of

difference between groups of workers other than wage-difference, and thus can only offer a relatively broad and generic framework to analyse working class self-activity; secondly, the framework of the social factory only captures reactionary working class activity against capitalism while proactive agency for alternatives to neoliberal capitalism cannot be captured through this lens – this is a point Cleaver acknowledged himself (2002: 157). I therefore explored a third approach: the class process theory put forward by Resnick, Wolff and Gibson-Graham, which visualises that people occupy multiple class and non-class positions which are interconnected. Through their participation in multiple class and non-class relations interns and workfare workers have various options for self-identification and hence class cannot automatically be assumed as the fulcrum around which people organise. Additionally Gibson-Graham's framework goes beyond reactive agency by demonstrating that people might use their agency proactively by organising for community economics. These different entry points to a conceptualisation of class and class struggle in regards to interns, workfare workers and the unemployed prompted me to revisit the second initial question with which I approached this PhD in respect of how unwaged and unrecognised workers organise. This then led to the second research question for this PhD: *in what ways and through what type of collective organisations do people resist the concept of employability?*

I suggested that all class theories have something to offer the analysis of resistance to employability. However, during the more empirically focused stage of this PhD I realised that specific conceptual aspects need to be re-addressed in order to analyse organising in the no-wage economy.

Firstly, by drawing on Bieler, I showed that it is necessary to address agency in line with structure as the groups resisting employability did not create the circumstances of their own choosing. Consequently, they had to face many structural barriers in their resistance, such as the chronic lack of time and resources, the mental health stresses caused by precarious lives and the burden of employability, and poverty. As such, the groups spent a lot of energy on resilience practices, such as providing food and social places to overcome isolation, and re-distributional practices, such a remuneration of activists' activities, which in turn made resistance possible (see sections 4.5.1 and 7.3).

Secondly, I found it necessary to still better understand what can be conceptualised as resistance (see section 3.5.2) as I recognised the danger that without guidelines the sympathetic researcher is tempted to romanticise all sorts of activities as resistance. Again I took Cleaver's analysis as a starting point who identified resistance to capitalism

as resistance to work, as work is the prime dynamic of capitalism. I then used Cindi Katz's approach to generate a more precise understanding of resistance which enabled me to pinpoint different strategies of resistance chosen to resist employability in chapter 6 (see sections 7.4.1 – 7.4.3).

Thirdly, by drawing on Cleaver and Gibson-Graham I explored the proactive activities for alternative worlds to capitalism which are happening here and now, and not in the distant future, which cannot be captured through a class struggle framework. In particular, I engaged with the writings of Federici and De Angelis, who put forward the concept of the commons, understood as non-commodified means to fulfil social needs such as social networks of care and solidarity practices (see section 4.5.3). Commons are not only seeds of an alternative mode of production but also a necessary ingredient to any struggle against capitalism. Such a lens enabled me in section 7.4.4, to identify commoning processes in all the groups which enable the functioning of their struggle, such as mutual care and practices of kindness. But it further enabled me to see that several groups are involved in the building of physical commons, such as housing co-ops and collectively run spaces in London such as The Common House and The Field which are used as hatcheries of resistance.

Lastly, the empirical part of this research showed the importance of solidarity and the need to conceptualise it. I then used the last chapter, chapter 8, to explore the solidarity relations of the groups in more detail. In particular, this chapter showed that the failure to establish solidarities, in particular between trade unions and claimants' groups, harms the power of the struggle, while the successful creation of solidarities can amplify the voice of small struggles.

9.2 Research contributions

By exploring the practices of employability and the resistance to it, this PhD study made several conceptual and empirical contributions. However, first I would like to briefly draw out the methodological contribution of this PhD. Cox argued that knowledge is always created for a certain group (Cox 1996: 87). By using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology this PhD study went a step further by not only creating knowledge *for* but also *with* certain groups (see section 2.3). Such applied research is rare within the studies of Industrial Relations (IR) and International Political Economy (IPE). I argue in this PhD that a PAR methodology is particularly useful for both disciplines in two ways: firstly, in dialogue with the researched groups it is committed to create useful and

practical knowledge for transformative action. Consequently the researcher is obliged to constantly consider the feedback of the groups and must integrate this feedback in the research. In other words, PAR is praxis orientated knowledge creation on the ground. Secondly, as outlined in the summary of this PhD, PAR methodology offers unique opportunities to revise theory. As praxis is its starting point it is likely to urge the researcher to make conceptual contributions in order to establish a theoretical framework that is fit for purpose. As such, while the focus of this PhD is predominately an empirical one, conceptual contributions have also been made.

Specifically, I claim to have conceptually contributed to the studies of IPE and IR in four small but not insignificant ways. My first contribution lies in the extension of a framework developed by scholars, such as Harrod and O'Brien (2002), Amoore (2002), Harrod (2005) and Moore (2010), who suggested to go back to the roots of a Marxian Political Economy analysis by merging the disciplines of IPE and IR. This is because, they see that the current debates in Political Economy have very much neglected the issue of labour, and they urge labour to be put back in its centre. A merger of the two disciplines would enable the researcher to explain the global developments of labour as well as identifying in what ways labour struggles shape historical structures (Harrod 2002: 49). Building on their ideas I developed in section 3.4 a Critical Political Economy of Work (CPEW) framework as the conceptual basis for my PhD. This framework differs from the ones of the scholars named above, as I argue with the help of Cleaver, that they paid too much attention to the dynamics of capitalist exploitation. Instead Cleaver suggests, and I agree, that we need to read Marx's *Capital* as a political tool that enables an analysis of working class power with the aim of strengthening this power (1979:75). My CPEW framework also offers another extension concerned with the definition of work. Many scholars, including Marx himself (1887: 559-560), have distinguished between productive and unproductive labour or between labour and work (see for example Standing 2006: 7). By drawing again on Cleaver (2002) but also on Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff (2000) and Federici (2006) I suggested that these distinctions are unhelpful for an understanding of the material sources of current capitalist relations. This is because in their focus on waged labour they fail to pay attention to the unpaid work upon which capital accumulation is premised. The more that unpaid work is done at home or in the community the lower the wages need to be for the workers to be able to sustain themselves. Subsequently, in this PhD I use the terms work and labour synonymously. This is, however, not just a matter of semantics but the way we define

work/labour determines any analysis of class power, as narrow definitions of labour rule out whole sections of the working class. In sum, I argue that a CPEW framework is an important tool for the analysis of class power, as it allows the researcher to capture forces that increasingly impose work and to visualise opportunities to resist exploitation.

My commitment to a framework that seeks to strengthen working class power led to several further conceptualisations in chapter 4. As such, my second conceptual contribution lay in my attempt to provoke a clearer theorisation of resistance. By looking at different class theories I showed that the analysis of resistance is too often limited to who is doing the struggling or where the struggle is taking place (i.e. inside or outside of trade unions). As such in both literatures, IR and IPE, resistance is a subject of discussion, yet the term remains surprisingly undefined, as it is somehow assumed we all know exactly what it means. I suggested in this PhD that we can only really analyse resistance if it is clear *what* practices it entails, as otherwise the sympathetic researcher finds themselves in danger of romanticising all sorts of activities as resistance. Rejecting approaches put forward by post-structuralists and by labour process theorists, I drew on Katz's (2004) much less known distinctions between resilience, reworking and resistance. Resistance relates to practices that a) pose a direct challenge to capitalist social relations and I, therefore, argue that they need to be collective practices; and b) invoke the building of an oppositional consciousness. Katz argues that consciousness is created in the struggle but it also precedes resistance. I therefore contended that oppositional consciousness links past resistances with current ones. Lastly, I also draw on Cleaver (2002) to stress the limits of resistance, namely that resistance is always reactionary as it can only ever be *against* something.

This brings me to my third conceptual contribution: the theorisation of proactive agency for alternative modes of production. In the introduction I joined the chorus of scholars calling for more research on the agencies of resistance and disruption. However, I also argued in this PhD that we should not stop there and should move beyond such capitalonormative frameworks. To that end I extended Gibson-Graham's et al. (2013: xii) concept of 'community economics', where worlds are created that are 'socially and environmentally just', by linking it to the literature on commons. Federici and Caffentzis (2013:98) argue that commoning is a social relation on which all struggles against capitalism are based and a learning ground for an alternative means of production in the making. In line with them I claimed that the productive agency for alternatives to capitalism cannot be analysed separately from the resistance to capitalism and vice

versa, as these practices are intrinsically interlinked. This resonates with Gramsci's understanding of hegemony, as 'not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity ... on a "universal" plane" (1971:181-182). Any counter-hegemony needs to be built not only on alternative material capabilities but also on alternative norms, values and institutions. I therefore see resistance and commoning as two sides of the same path towards post-capitalists worlds, which are happening here and now and are not only a vision of the distant future.

And lastly, I made a fourth conceptual contribution in this PhD by demonstrating that the relational aspect of agency needs to be taken more seriously in the analyses of class struggle. While neo-Gramscian scholars such as Bieler and Morton (2001) have pointed to the structural dimension shaping agency, less attention has been paid to the inter- and intra-relational aspects influencing agency. Like resistance, solidarity is another vague concept often used and seldom defined. However, when it is conceptualised it is usually on a basis of sameness, by drawing on 'alliance building' on grounds of 'mutual benefits' (Cleaver 1979: 160) and a 'shared identity' resulting from 'a shared position in the organisation of production' (Lindberg 2014 : 136). Such a framing of solidarity has two shortcomings. First, it is trapped in the binary between similarity and dissimilarity and fails to recognise difference and inter-dependency. Secondly, it depicts solidarity as a purely rational relation and cannot capture solidarity relations based on altruism or the internal dynamics of struggles, such as power-hierarchies and personal relationships. I therefore suggested in this PhD that the IR and IPE literature could learn a lot from feminist and post-colonial scholars, who have done expansive thinking on solidarity relationships whilst simultaneously reflecting on inherent power disparities. Taking Gibson-Graham's (2006: 20,86) conceptualisation of solidarity as a starting point, which emphasises a 'being-in-common' rather than sameness, I then drew on Paulo Freire's (1970: 49) writings that capture solidarity as a 'radical posture'. From such a solidarity position, one does not need to be oppressed or working class to be involved in transformative struggles (Pero 2014: 5). Instead, Hemmings (2012: 148) suggests that bonds can be made through emotions, such as rage, frustration and a desire for connectivity. By taking differences across and within diverse struggles into account and by uniting despite or even because of them Mohanty (2003: 7) stresses that solidarity is always an achievement. From such a perspective solidarity is not automatically given but *actively created*. By learning from all these thinkers listed here, I contributed in this PhD to the scholarship on agency by visualising and analysing the inter and intra-

relations through which collective agency is created and recreated.

In section 1.3 I identified two empirical research aims. First, to contribute to the neo-Gramscian IPE literature concerned with welfare state transformations in order to generate a clearer understanding of the employability agenda and its implementation. Secondly, to contribute to the literature concerning the structural change of neoliberal capitalism and workers' struggles by analysing the employability agenda and the resistance to it. I achieved these research objectives by offering four contributions to the literature.

Firstly, I built on the neo-Gramscian scholarship which demonstrated that the employability agenda played a key part in deepening the neoliberal state restructuring processes on the UK national level and the European supra-national level. In particular, I engaged with Jessop's (2003) system transformation approach, through which he identified a shift in Western countries from Keynesian Welfare National States to Schumpeterian Workfare Post-national Regimes. Drawing on Morton's (2007: 133) general critique of neo-Gramscian scholars for over-emphasising neoliberal hegemony while neglecting an analysis of resistance, I broadened Jessop's framework by showing that the social policies behind the employability agenda were the product of class contestation. For example, I showed that on the UK national level under New Labour the employability agenda served as a class compromise by unifying class interests. This resonates with Poulantzas' (1978: 12) argument that the state organises hegemony not only by securing consent but also by unifying class fractions. With Labour coming to power in 1997 the trade unions saw the employability agenda as an opportunity to regain their policy influencing position, while Blair in his business orientated approach was convinced that the trade unions should no longer enjoy a privileged relationship with the Labour government. Consequently, the trade unions became active agents of promoting and implementing Blair's 'knowledge economy' through 'Union Learning Representatives' at workplaces and the newly established learning and skills organisation, Unionlearn. The trade unions embraced their new role in the belief and hope that learning and skill development would facilitate organising. Yet, to the contrary, the employability training contributed to the defanging of the trade unions by turning a large part of the labour movement into a service delivering institutional complex that promoted individualised attitudes to work.

On the European level, I showed that the trade unions actively tried to influence the development of the European Union with the aim of counter-balancing its neoliberal

direction by advocating for the introduction of social policies. Yet through Jessop's (2010: 43) strategic relational approach, that demonstrates the relationship between agency and structure, I illustrated that business forums enjoyed a privileged position within neoliberal structures of policy making, while the interests of the trade unions were increasingly marginalised. Consequently, the social and employment policies ended up even further advancing neoliberal restructuring. As such, at the European level, it was not the case that different class fractions were unified but instead dominant class fractions of business interests asserted itself. The European Roundtable of Industrialists (ERT) can be identified as a key agent promoting the knowledge economy thereby stressing the value of employability, flexibility and adaptability. The ERT managed to significantly influence the agenda of the Bologna Process and also the European Employment Strategy (and later the Lisbon strategy and then the Europe 2020 strategy). Particularly interesting for this PhD is that almost 30 years ago the ERT had already pushed for greater involvement of businesses in universities, for example through more business influence over the curriculum (ERT 1989: 28).

This brings me to my second empirical contribution which also built on the neo-Gramscian scholarship on employability and neoliberal restructuring and in particular on Jessop's system transformation framework. I followed Peck (2003: 222) who called for an analysis that goes beyond policy shifts and new forms of governance. He specifically encouraged research that engages with 'careful mapping of emergent state forms' to figure out 'what the state is actually doing' (Ibid). In chapter 6 I mapped the supply-chain of employability services in in two shadow-state institutions, namely higher education and welfare-to-work, in order to explore how employability works in practice. I demonstrated that both employability delivering shadow-state institutions encourage and even force people to develop an employable subjectivity. Yet the form and the intensity differs. I argued that for students employability comes in the form of a carrot luring them to constantly increase their performance. For the unemployed, by contrast, employability comes in form of a stick, whereby a refusal to engage in employability programmes results in sanctions. However, both shadow-state institutions share in common a commitment for the promotion of unpaid work. I showed that for students the shortage of graduate jobs means that they are under pressure to constantly do more to outperform their peers. Completion of an unpaid work-experience is not in itself deemed sufficient to boost students' employability, as they are also expected to demonstrate passion and commitment during the work-experience. In the

case of the unemployed I argued that forced work-experiences (workfare) are actually more likely to create unemployability, when judging employability by its own indicators. For example, reports by people who have experienced workfare suggest a loss of confidence and self-esteem, two attributes which are considered key to people's employability.

By mapping employability, I also showed that behavioural explanations for unemployment and responsabilisation mean that employability trainings in both shadow-state institutions aim to achieve behaviour changes in the subjects. Universities offer workshops on networking and body-languages to make students more appealing to employers. Likewise, Friedli and Stearn (2015) have shown that claimants can be forced to attend trainings on assertiveness, positive thinking and work motivation. Hence through employability services both groups are subject to psychological norming in line with a neoliberal work ethos (see section 3.3.2), which depicts work as self-actualisation and thus puts work at the very centre of our lives. Consequently, my analysis of the employability trainings in both shadow-state institutions led me to revisit the definition of employability. I argued that employability goes beyond the individual's ability to adjust to a flexible labour market. Instead, I contended that employability is better understood as the learning of what employers want and to *become* what they want you to *be*. Employability thus takes over the whole being as it encompasses not only skills but also one's mind-set, body-language, manners, attitudes and habits.

I further claim to have made a third empirical contribution to the literature of IR by looking at work related resistance outside of trade unions. When looking at resistance related to work there is a tendency in the literature to focus on industrial actions, i.e. on the workers' power to withdraw their labour – to strike. In contrast, I showed by exploring the agency of the groups resisting employability that their practices are much more diverse, and necessarily so, because in most cases a strike against employability is not possible. I identified three broad practices of resistance against employability:

- Naming and shaming strategies, which were mostly used by the groups to struggle against unpaid labour and conditionality, take advantage of companies and charities' dependency on the strength of their brand to succeed in the globalised capitalist economy. The struggle against workfare is the most successful example here as it managed to stop workfare in its current form, as the two main workfare schemes were terminated. While caution is required because workfare is likely to come back as part of the new Work and Health

Programme, it is nonetheless a great success of the anti-workfare struggle. I argue that the struggle against workfare provides an efficacious example of resistance which could provide fruitful learning ground for the collective action of many other groups of workers. This is because they deliberately targeted the whole supply chain behind workfare and strategically focused on its weakest spot: the workfare host. As such, they reversed the practice of outsourcing. Outsourcing is a key dynamic of neoliberal capitalism (see section 3.3.3) and we see an increasing number of services subcontracted and sub-sub-contracted. Often outsourcing goes hand in hand with low pay as multinational companies aim to increase profits by saving labour costs. As such, I argue that research on successful examples against outsourcing is key for engaged research that aims to strengthen workers power.

- The second set of practices challenged the justice discourse and the neoliberal work ethic on which the employability agenda is built. For example, the resistance organised by *Disabled People Against the Cuts* in cooperation with other groups demonstrates how discursive change can be achieved on moral grounds. Through creative media engagement, by involving the UN and through disruptive direct actions the group managed to raise public awareness on the brutality of the welfare regime and benefit cuts. I argue they thereby challenged the common sense on which the punitive and trimmed welfare system is based. The fact that in 2016 seventy percent of the British people opposed further cuts to disability benefits, specifically the 'Personal Independence Payment' (Stone 18 March 2016), indicates that the campaigns of the *Disabled People Against the Cuts* might have influenced public opinion.
- Thirdly, I showed that the collective organising of claimants and supporters managed to reduce the work load of the unemployed and to substantially diminish sanctions – the very mechanism on which a punitive welfare regime is built. The resistance of the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* is the most successful example here, as the group managed to reduce sanctions in Dundee by 40 percent, a city which was previously known as 'sanction city' due to its disproportionately high levels of sanctions in Scotland. But moreover, through the daily practices of representing each other at jobcentre appointments the *Scottish Unemployed Workers Network* and other claimants' groups managed to reduce the work the claimants committed to in their 'claimant's commitment'.

Analysing these practices of resistance feeds into the broader discussions on the decline and future of trade unionism and new ways of organising around work, which go beyond the workplace and might demand new workers institutions as well as a greater engagement with other actors in the community (Bieler 2014: 123, Holgate 2015: 451). As such, I believe this research directly responded to Holgate's research call that '[i]t is perhaps time, that we, as industrial relations academics, take a much greater step outside the arena of workplace industrial relations ...' (Holgate 2015: 451).

The last empirical contribution relates to solidarity, which emerged as a key theme during the data collection process and was an aspect I had not previously envisioned. As I outlined above, this urged me to theoretically explore the concept of solidarity. Cleaver convincingly argued that capitalism maintains its rule by pitting one group of workers against the other (1979: 113). I argue that, in turn, solidarity needs to be understood as the social relation which unites different groups of workers and different struggles and it is therefore a key dynamic to strengthen workers power. Surprisingly, however, very little attention has been paid to solidarity relations in the IR and IPE literature. By visualising the inter- and intra-relations of agency I contend to have made two specific contributions to the literature.

- Firstly, a lot of great research on community unionism (eg. Holgate 2009, 2015; Tapia 2012) has shown in what ways there is potential for a new unionism that includes the unwaged (i.e. pensioners, students and the unemployed). I approached the debates around the future of trade unionism from the other way around, by asking in what way existing collective agencies of the unemployed, precarious and the disabled workers seek to engage with trade unions. By analysing the opportunities and obstacles for solidarity between claimants and unionised workers I showed that the solidarity relations between the two groups are complicated by asymmetric power dynamics but also by differences in tactics, organising principles (i.e. hierarchical versus non-hierarchical) and demands. However, I also explored various successful examples, where different struggles were bonded through solidarity, yet these bonds were not naturally given but actively and creatively constructed.
- Secondly, I have argued in this PhD that the internal relationships of the groups influence the power and the sustainability of their resistance. My research showed that supportive and appreciative relationships not only provide individual activists with the strength to cope with the many injustices produced by capitalist

social relations but also give them the energy needed for resistance. Many activists I interviewed stressed that the welcoming and inclusive atmosphere of the groups made their struggle vibrant and effective. These findings give credit to Federici and Caffentzis argument that commoning processes are part of every struggle. But I also showed that it also works the other way around in that power asymmetries within the groups and oppressive behaviours, such as sexism and classism, can substantially weaken the power of collective agency.

9.3 Recommendations for future research

This PhD research project revealed practices and discourses that encourage and force people to put the subordination to work at the centre of their lives. I demonstrated through this PhD project that one's employability refers to much more than skills and experiences, as it also refers to one's mind-set, body-language, attitudes, manners and habits. Employability not only encompasses the whole being but it is also always incomplete. The self-enhancing processes of life-long-learning never end. I have therefore argued that employability can be defined as learning what employers want and subsequently *become* it (see chapter 5). Employability reveals a glorification of work, as it does not really matter what ones does, if it is useful or if it is paid, as long as one works. Work thus becomes a self-fulfilling activity, which is no longer seen as a means for something else, i.e. to earn money but an end in itself. Employability practices and discourses thus illustrate how the neoliberal work-ethos works in practice (Weeks 2011: 53; see section 3.3.3). There is so much more to explore about employability, the learning about work and the way in which the work-ethos functions. Two aspects seem to be particularly striking to me for further research:

- While this PhD examined work-experiences undertaken during and after universities, it is important to note that work-experiences have also become an integral part of schools curricula. For example, as much as 95% of pupils undertake work-experience during key stage 4 (Huddleston and Mann 2012: 67). Also, in 2004 work related learning gained statutory recognition as part of the secondary school curriculum in England (Ibid.). Huddleston (2012) show that the learning about work in schools aims to 'develop skills and enterprise employability' and is carried out through 'employer engagement'. The voice of businesses also became institutionalised in schools and college education. The Education Businesses Partnerships National (EBPN) is a network of 80

organisations which links the world of business with the world of education by providing work experience, work related learning, enterprise education and careers education by working directly with schools and colleges (EBPN n.d.). Also, last year the UK government announced its intention to extend jobcentre support into schools. Through the 'jobcentre plus support for schools initiative' 12 to 18 year old pupils will be advised about 'the world of work' and 'traineeships and apprenticeships' (DWP 14 January 2016). In further research it would be interesting to explore in what way, if any, this learning about work in schools and colleges entails education about workers' rights and the procedures of collective bargaining. If we learn from very early on in life to subordinate ourselves to work by becoming the subjects employers want us to be, without questioning it or learning about our rights and the role of trade unions then it might influence our engagement with trade unions later in life. As such, the employability education might therefore in part explain why trade union membership is especially low among young people (DBEIS 2016: 30).

- The link between employability and mental health is a research objective of increasing importance for two reasons. Firstly, we see discourses and practices of a 'work cures' approach emerging. I outlined in the section 5.3.4 and 6.4.2 pilot-schemes are already carried out that link the claiming of benefits with therapy, by having therapists located in jobcentres or job-coaches positioned in GP surgeries. At first, a groundbreaking study of Friedli and Stearn (2015) already analysed the coercive and punitive nature of many psycho-policy interventions as part of activating welfare strategies. Research like this is especially important in light of the new Health and Work Programme which will be launched in autumn 2017 and replaces the Work Programme (McGuinness and Mirza-Davis: 2016; see section 5.3.2). The Work and Health Programme specifically targets people who have been unemployed for over two years and people 'with health conditions or disabilities' (Ibid.) In the Green Paper behind this Programme the government stressed the link between 'worklessness' and poor health. The Health and Work Programme is therefore 'committed to halving the disability employment gap' (DWP and DH 2 November 2016). More research on this new emerging agenda to tackle ill health through work is recommended. Another important question to explore in future research would be in what way the practices of the Work and Health Programme are voluntary for disabled people, as claimed, or if participants feel forced to participate, for example through a real

or perceived risk of being sanctioned. Secondly, I showed in chapter 5 that some studies suggest a link between employability and anxiety, depression and self-blame. Fischer (2014) for example argues that depression is often caused by the 'underlying conviction that we are all uniquely responsible for our own misery and therefore deserve it.' A systematic analysis on the link between the increasing responsabilisation of one's own employment prospect and employability and mental health would be worth of study, especially in light of the emerging 'work-cures' agenda.

The creative ways through which work expands into various areas of our social and reproductive lives – into our homes, our schools, our health care system – demands new ways of creative thinking of how these specific types of work can be collectively resisted. A strike is in such cases not possible, as a withdrawal from the system would probably result in sanctions and drop outs from the social security system would presumably cause more social harm. Nonetheless, I showed in chapter 6 that resistance to the work intensification enforced through employability mechanisms is possible. The organising of no-wage workers is a highly under explored issue in the IR literature, however, there are indications that unwaged work is rising in various forms. To list some examples, a TUC study found that 20.3 per cent of the workforce regularly work unpaid over hours (TUC 27 February 2015); according to Citizens Advice 'wage theft' is sharply rising with cleaners and carers being most acutely affected by the deliberate underpaying of employers (Doward 12 March 2016); unpaid internships in the retail sector might gain popularity as, for example, chains like Pret A Manger are preparing for a potential recruitment crisis post-Brexit (only 2 percent of Pret a Manger's applicants are from the UK) by recruiting students for unpaid work-experiences (Butler 25 March 2017). There has also been an increase of community sentencing which went hand in hand with an increase of unpaid work. More people were sentenced to unpaid work but also the sentence can now involve longer hours of up to 16 hours of unpaid work a day (Heard 2015:3). Similar to workfare this practice is guided by the rhetoric that the offender should 'pay back' and the programme is outsourced to private companies (Ibid.: 4). There have also been reports on unpaid and underpaid migrant labour used on British farms (Lawrence 17 August 2015). As such, the rise of unpaid works and how and if they are resisted demands further research.

Finally, solidarity is a topic which was not on my research agenda at all when I started my PhD but throughout my empirical research it emerged as a key theme. While

capitalism rules by pitting one group of workers against another (Cleaver 1979), for example claimants against waged workers, solidarity is the social relations which unites different groups of workers and different struggles. I showed in this PhD that solidarity relations are not automatically given but actively created. This may be through bonds on the basis of sameness, i.e. based on a common subject position of workers, or through inter-dependence as a radical posture where supporters stand side by side with the oppressed bonded by a shared anger about injustice and common desire for social change. Regardless of how links are forged, solidarity must be seen as a key social relation for the strengthening of struggles. So, why then, I want to ask my fellow researchers, is solidarity such an under-explored topic?

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Appendix 1

	Group	Interview number	Location	Issues	Research method
1	Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group (KUWG)	3	London	Claimants' rights, welfare, housing, workfare, sanctions, advocacy	One person, as well as participatory observation, secondary material the group produced itself
2	Leeds Welfare Fightback (LFW)	1	Leeds	Claimants' rights, welfare, housing, workfare , sanctions	One person. Attended one protest
3	Newham Claimants Union	4 & 5	London	Claimants' rights, welfare, housing, workfare, sanctions, advocacy	Separate interviews with two members. As well as Participatory observation
4	Norwich Claimants Union	6	Norwich	Claimants' rights, welfare, food security, workfare, sanctions, advocacy	Group interview, attended one protest
5	Brighton Benefits Campaign	9	Brighton	Claimants' rights, welfare, food security, workfare , sanctions	Group interview
6	Keep Volunteering Voluntary	14	London (Manchester)	Lobbying charities to become workfare free	Group interview with 2 people, secondary material the group produced itself
7	Haringey Solidarity Group	8	London	Workfare	Group interview, participatory observation, secondary material the group produced itself
8	Boycott Workfare	10 & 11 online self-documentation	London	Workfare	One paired interview and one individual interview, secondary material the group produced itself
9	Future Interns	2	London	Unpaid internships	One individual interview
10	NoPayNoWay (this group no longer exists)	/	London	Unpaid internships	Participant observation
11	Unite Community	7	National	Sanctions, welfare	Individual interview
12	Carrot Workers Collective (CWC) Precarious Workers Brigade (PWB)	/	London	Unpaid internships, unpaid labour, precarious work	Secondary material the group produced itself

13	Disabled People Against the Cuts (DPAC)	16	National/London	Disability rights, Access to Work, Fit-for-work assessments, workfare, sanctions, advocacy	Individual interview, secondary material the group produced itself
14	Scotland Unemployed Network	12	Scotland/Edinburgh	Claimant's rights, welfare, housing, workfare, sanctions, advocacy	Group interview with 4 people, secondary material the group produced itself
15	Dundee Against Austerity	13	Scotland/Dundee	Claimant's rights, welfare, housing, workfare, sanctions	Paired interview
16	Job-De-Centre	15	London	Anti-work politics	Group interview 6 people
17	Winvisible	/	London	Disability Rights, Mental illnesses, workfare, disability rights, sanctions, advocacy	secondary material the group produced itself
18	Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty	/	Scotland/Edinburgh	Claimant's rights, welfare, housing, workfare, sanctions, advocacy	secondary material the group produced itself

Appendix 2

Blog posts by the groups, sorted by date		
Group	Blog post title	Referenced in text
Precarious Workers Brigade	GOOD MORNING N30! PWB gathering at Goldsmiths Occupation before joining the main march as the Precarious Workers Block	(Precarious Workers Brigade 30 November 2011)
Carrot Workers Collective	Drop-in session this Thursday	(Carrot Workers Collective 09 April 2012)
Boycott Workfare	Success! Workfare conference cancelled due to protest	(Boycott Workfare 7 June 2011)
Boycott Workfare	Take action against companies profiting from workfare!	(Boycott Workfare 10th October 2011)
Boycott Workfare	Support the public sector strikes on 30 November	(Boycott Workfare 20 November 2011)
Boycott Workfare	Good news: Waterstones ends forced unpaid work placements!	(Boycott Workfare 03 February 2012)
Boycott Workfare	Sainsbury's misleading customers over their use of workfare labour	(Boycott Workfare 11 February 2012)
Boycott Workfare	More success	(Boycott Workfare 17 February 2012)
Boycott Workfare	More success! Oxfam, Maplin and "crisis talks with the government"	(Boycott Workfare 20 February 2012)
Boycott Workfare	Forced unpaid domestic work, Emma Harrison and Burger King pull out!	(Boycott Workfare 22 February 2012)
Boycott Workfare	UK-wide day of action against workfare – Saturday 3rd March	(Boycott Workfare 26 February 2012)
Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty	Join us to demonstrate against workfare	(Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty 29 February 2012)
Boycott Workfare	Twenty four workfare protests planned this Saturday as government hides evidence	(Boycott Workfare 1 March 2012)
Trade Union Congress	Say no to workfare: a TUC Charter on work experience	(TUC 18 May 2012)
Boycott Workfare	Body Shop steps back from workfare	(Boycott Workfare 30 May 2012)
Precarious Workers Brigade	BARBICAN, CLEAN UP YOUR ACT - PAY YOUR INTERNS AND CLEANERS A LIVING WAGE!	Precarious Workers Brigade 22 June 2012
Boycott Workfare	National Week of Action Against Workfare	(Boycott Workfare 28 June 2012)
Boycott Workfare	Campaign grows, government flounders	(Boycott Workfare 29 June 2012)
Boycott Workfare	Week of action already a success! Major blow for government as Holland & Barrett pull out	(Boycott Workfare 2 July 2012)
Boycott Workfare	Week of Action against workfare – Charities stop exploiting the unemployed!	(Boycott Workfare 2 December 2012)
Haringey Solidarity Group	Stop Workfare! Protest in Wood Green on Saturday 9 th February	Haringey Solidarity Group (6 February 2013)
Boycott Workfare	Red Cross Out: "we no longer feel it is	Boycott Workfare (16 March 2013)

	appropriate"	
Boycott Workfare	Superdrug out – let's make it more! Day 4 of the Workfare Week of Action	Boycott Workfare 22 March 2013
Boycott Workfare	Two more major retailers – Argos and Homebase – out!	Boycott Workfare 24 May 2013
Boycott Workfare	Stop G4S ' Annual General Meeting	Boycott Workfare 30 May 2013
Boycott Workfare	The Facts About Boycott Workfare and the Unions	Boycott Workfare 5 June 2013
Precarious Workers Brigade	Three workshops at Occupy LSX	Precarious Workers Brigade 9 July 2012
Boycott Workfare	Take Action Against Jobcentre Plus	Boycott Workfare 25 July 2013
	Traineeships: re-branding, privatising and lengthening a workfare scheme	Boycott Workfare 29 July 2013
Boycott Workfare	Workfare, Sanctions and the PCS	Boycott Workfare 4 August 2013
Boycott Workfare	2013: Our year of spanners in the workfare!	Boycott Workfare 01 January 2014
Boycott Workfare	2014: Two weeks in and already winning!	Boycott Workfare 15 January 2014
Boycott Workfare	Week of action success as workfare users step back from new punitive scheme	Boycott Workfare 6 April 2014
Boycott Workfare	Stop G4S' Annual General Meeting this Thursday!	Boycott Workfare 1 June 2014
Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty	Beat the Work Capability Assessment!	Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty 20 February 2014
Keep Volunteering Voluntary	Flagship workfare scheme launch is delayed again following widespread voluntary sector opposition	Keep Volunteering Voluntary 2 June 2014
Boycott Workfare	Take action: CESI Festival of Workfare exploiters and apologists #intowork2014	Boycott Workfare 27 June 2014
Haringey Solidarity Group	Urban Futures occupied – six months workfare no way!	(Haringey Solidarity Group 19 October 2014)
Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty	Demonstrators shut down workfare provider Learndirect in Edinburgh	(Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty 9 October 2014)
Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty	ADVOCACY IS NOT A CRIME!	(Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty 25 February 2015)
Precarious Workers Brigade	Monthly drop-in meeting: 22 April 2015, The Palm Tree pub (near Queen Mary University)	(Precarious Workers Brigade 3 April 2015)
Unite	National Thursday 19 March 2015	(Unite n.d.)

Precarious Workers Brigade	Upcoming event: Cultural worker + cleaner solidarity. 10 May, 6.30 - 8.30pm, Common House	Precarious Workers Brigade 3 May 2015
Haringey Solidarity Group	Stop Workfare: Picket & Occupation of North London Hospice	Haringey Solidarity Group 08 June 15
Boycott Workfare	Solidarity with Tony Cox! Actions across UK on 12th and 13th October	Boycott Workfare 13 October 2015
Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty	Cox Trial - Solidarity with welfare activist arrested for accompanying a claimant	(Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty 17 October 2015)
Disabled People Against the Cuts	Why we're opposed to "jobs on prescription"	(Disabled People Against the Cuts 20 February 2016)
Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty	Advocacy is STILL NOT a crime - Solidarity with Tony Cox June 9th	Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty 2 June 2016
Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group	Support for Tony Cox, Thursday 9 June at 10am	Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group 2 June 2016
Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty	DWP AND POLICE DENY CLAIMANT'S RIGHT TO BE ACCOMPANIED - ACTION NEEDED!	Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty 02 September 2016
The Common House	Structure	Common House (n. d.)
New Cross Commoners (n.d.)	The Fields.	New Cross Commoners (n.d.)
St Ann's Redevelopment Trust.	Who We are.	StART (n.d.)