4

INVISIBLE KNOWLEDGES

Activism, Volunteering and Work

This chapter argues that formal education does not generate new forms of power and knowledge, it replicates norms and is organised around the view of a human as a fixed subject that can be perfected by education. It is often the end point where radical lessons which have been learnt elsewhere are disseminated. This chapter discusses how invisible knowledges are created through activism, volunteering and work. It will draw on research with long-term activists about their learning lives. It will show how activism creates trails of invisible education throughout lives and how activism rather than being ephemeral continues to live on in multiple ways. It will also reflect on how women engage in invisible education in contexts of conflict. The chapter will also consider studies of volunteering as a form of invisible education and discuss how volunteering may produce either knowledge that reproduces hierarchies or deconstructive knowledge that challenges and unpicks inequalities. Finally, the chapter will consider how the world of work is changing and how knowledges created by marginalised young people in their daily lives are being used. It will ask whether invisible education is becoming a valuable resource that only those with resources can capitalise on. Learning how to work without being officially a worker is a pervasive trend in invisible education.

Introduction

This chapter will consider how invisible education generates alternative forms of knowledge through activism, volunteering or work. Although the term lifelong learning has been co-opted by the neoliberal agenda, as being always ready to be retrained to serve the needs of capital, it can also mean always being open to the

possibilities of learning something new throughout life. Thus, such activities may be an important strand in the lifelong invisible education of participants:

> As a young woman developing a feminist consciousness there was no formal schooling in feminist theory, even though at the time I was also a student. I learnt from weekly discussion meetings, from demonstrations, from social life in pubs and clubs, from texts both fictional and non-fictional that seemed to be around, although there was never any directive to read them. Eventually this knowledge filtered through to formal educational contexts, but this invisible education was the grounding and the catalyst. In a more recent era the Metoo# movement surprised me with its successful infiltration of popular culture, even though the breakthrough debates on violence against women, rape and patriarchy had been well-rehearsed long ago. Young people are learning to define and understand domestic abuse or sexual harassment through personal testimonies shared on social media, through music, TV, film and not in the classroom. Seeing sexual harassment or violence against women becoming newsworthy and feminism as trendy is profoundly disconcerting to those like myself with a history of marginalised activism in those fields. It provokes the question what is the relation between our activism of the past and its current manifestations: what is the aftermath of activism and how does activism function as invisible education?
>
> *(JQ diary)*

Invisible education through activism

There appears to be a surge of public activism, as well as concerted efforts by governments across the world to reduce the right to protest. It is happening on the streets in Extinction Rebellion, women's marches and Black Lives Matter (BLM); on social media in the Metoo# and TimesUp# campaigns, in universities with strikes and accompanying teach-outs and in myriad local campaigns. All these protests have an educational element, whether explicit or implicit, and bodies and emotions are on the line in the hope that society will learn to change. The BLM movement, for example, has helped to direct understanding to the dailiness of violence and its normalisation as part of a fundamental culture of anti-blackness. It has performed shifts not just in what people say or think but in what they do; whether it be premier league footballers taking the knee or young people pulling statues down. Activism is not necessarily a possession of the left, indeed it could be argued that the right has recently dominated public spaces of protest. If activism is a coming together publicly to protest and campaign against injustice; its legitimacy depends on how valid the claims of injustice are. Today it may take place on social media without ever setting foot on a pavement. This can be heroic in contexts of extreme repression such as the women's protests in Iran following

the murder of Jin Jiyan Azadi, or dangerously deluded, as in the protests of incels (see Ging and Siapera, 2019). Being an activist can also be seen as a form of peer learning, learning from one another how to analyse, understand and resist. The Metoo# movement might be seen as social media peer learning, each story of rape and harassment adding to a communal 'fund of knowledge'. However, peer learning as in the sharing of misinformation with peers can be very problematic. In the incel 'movement' misogynists share their hatred of women and justify this through narratives of feminist domination and rejection. Ging and Siapera (2019) show how this feeds inadequacy whilst offering tales of 'heroic' incel fightback that culminate in real life violence and murder of women.

Educational spaces have often been shaped by activism, as in women's studies, critical race studies, disability studies and queer studies. Many academics have always explicitly positioned their work as having political ends in mind. Currently there is a focus on the strategic role and effective tactics of 'academic activists', for example suggesting taking lessons in impact from feminist eco-activist groups (see Weatherall, 2023). In adult education community activism is placed in a central position (see Clancy, Harman and Jones, 2022). Research on what has been conceptualised as 'social movement learning' is well-established (see Hall, Clover, Crowther and Scandrett, 2012). Fitzsimons (2022), for example, considers the history of reproductive rights campaigning in Ireland as a form of adult education. However, research which specifically explores relationships between activism and invisible education across lives from a posthuman perspective is hard to find.

The afterlife of Occupy

I am using posthumanism to consider the afterlife of activism and how activism constitutes part of ongoing lifelong invisible education. *The Significance and Survival of Tent City University* project was interested to see whether Occupy Tent City university still lived on in the form of what I have called 'imagined social capital' (Quinn, 2010). Here benefits accrue from symbolic and imagined networks, including with those we do not know or fictional and imagined characters; or in this case from networks that no longer exist. Using longitudinal research, the study considered the part that Occupy London has played over time. Occupy has been explored by others as an example of radical pedagogy (see Earle, 2014). My work has another purpose in exploring the ways such activism creates and draws on epistemological, symbolic and material 'trails' or waves across life, which constitute invisible education. Rather than unique 'lines of flight', they are both pathways that might be followed by others and vapours that disappear in an instant. Originally conceptualised as life history research in the qualitative tradition, the research became postqualitative in its move from the focus on an individualised human subject, as I shall discuss.

Occupy has been critiqued by many as having no fixed objectives and not having transformed society; in the words of one of my research

participants: 'Occupy wasn't Jesus'. It generated many brilliant ideas which were left undeveloped, which was to another participant 'rather tragic'. However, it served an effective ideological purpose to highlight the inequality between the 1% who control global resources and the majority who do not. The international Occupy movement has attracted much sociological debate about issues such as leadership and public space (see, e.g. Gamson and Sifry, 2015; Schmidt and Babits, 2014). Attention has been paid to the use of social media networks in such movements and how far they have really been central (Lovink, 2016). Others have emphasised the role Occupy has played in generating more organised movements for rights and equality (see Jaffe, 2016). Those particularly interested in education have placed Occupy within the sphere of what has been termed 'social movement learning' (see Hall et al., 2012). Some have undertaken action research with Occupy with the explicit aim of generating and spreading critical pedagogy (see Earle, 2014; Hall, 2012; Neary and Amsler, 2012). Tent City University has been seen as part of the tradition of alternative universities and radical adult education, and as demonstrating the continuing power of democratic forms of education. In actively engaging and reflecting back to participants such researchers often aimed to help them to develop and improve their pedagogical practice. Whilst this is admirable in its intent, I would be uncomfortable advocating such an action research model. I do not see Occupy as something that needs to be improved or myself as an improver. Here I rather take a posthuman approach with a retrospective perspective on the aftermath of activism and in focusing on activism's relationship with lifelong learning.

A posthuman approach to activism

I conducted a series of long in-depth interviews over 2 years with six men and two women who had been involved in Occupy London. Three of the men and the two women were interviewed twice. They were aged from early 20s to late 70s, all white from both working-class and middle-class backgrounds. All but two were originally from the UK, but there was a lot of international mobility within the sample. There was no aim to gain a representative sample, but the sample was purposive in enabling age diversity to be explored and was somewhat typical of the white male domination of Occupy. Interviews were taped and transcribed. The project also explored their ongoing activities via attending physical meetings, tracking websites and blogs, studying campaigning activities internationally and nationally and reading academic publications, curricula, reports and policy documents provided by the participants. All participants were given pseudonyms and assured anonymity for ethical reasons, but most would have been very happy to have their own names used, both because they were proud of their actions and because they assumed they were already on the files of the police or CIA. The project generated a broad range of data acts: full transcripts of 20 hours of interviews, email exchanges, field notes from meetings, analysis of websites and

blogs and of curricula documents, academic articles and papers. The multiplicity and diversity of the data helped to perform a shift from the anticipated life-history research model to one where networks, flows and distributions were much more important:

> JQ: Do you see yourself as part of a web of people that are trying to do things?
>   Oh totally, totally. I mean a lot of that web is completely disorganized and doesn't know itself or its members.
>
> *(Noel, interview 1)*

It was no longer possible or desirable to take an individualistic approach. Indeed, I came to see certain forms of life history as neoliberal and inimical to the spirit of Occupy, which at a basic level was about the commonality of the 99% in only having 1% of the world's wealth. So, I charted the waves and flows and weaves generated by Occupy, their movements forwards and backwards. Rather than taking a humanistic approach which focuses on the individual and their personal bounded experience, the research identifies a number of different, winding 'trails'. These trails were not fixed, were affective and symbolic as well as physical, and every participant might pass along them at different moments. Each trail was associated with different ways of thinking about learning and knowledge. The concept of trail here differs somewhat from Deleuze and Guattari's 'line of flight'. As Brian Massumi (1987) argues in his Introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, line of flight is not about fleeing or flying but about flowing and acting against dominant forms: 'Be quick, even when standing still! Line of chance, line of hips, line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 27). In this sense it is about a disposition and each line of flight can never be replicated by another. Trails however are pathways others might follow exhibiting 'the concrete historical and geographical details of everyday lives' (Smith, 1987, p. 1), but are also vapours: elusive, transitory and symbolic. I also draw on the metaphor of the wave which does some powerful work. According to one Occupy participant her opportunities for activism keep coming in waves and she responds.

> I've seen a lot of waves of life … I see that people do resist at a certain point. I mean sometimes you wonder why they don't resist sooner, but and I don't want to be Pollyanna, I think the world is in absolutely dreadful shape but on the other hand you can't just say it's in dreadful shape and then just not do anything … the dreadfulness will just carry on … And I suppose I've seen that things don't go in a straight line.
>
> *(Anna, interview 1)*

Talk of first, second or third wave feminism is common, but tends to be used to fix women in place. (When positioned by another researcher as a 'second wave

feminist' I responded that I hoped I was still riding the wave.) In posthuman writing, seas and wave abound (see Alaimo, 2010; Neimanis, 2017) both because of their materiality as actors in the world, and their capacity to evoke the fluidity and flow of existence; including that of humans. In tracing my own use of poetry in research I found a line of waves and sea: from Sylvia Plath's *Medusa* to Elizabeth Bishops *At the Fishhouses* to D.H. Lawrence's *The Mana of the Sea* (Quinn, 2016b). Poetry collapsed supposed boundaries between material (outside) and thought (inside) in ways that are especially useful for posthumanism. Thinking with water and waves especially in global contexts, and with a postcolonial eye on the colonisation of water as a resource, also raises the kinds of knowledge questions Occupy activists were concerned with:

> The relationship between knowledge and water, … is not that simple. Understanding this relationship seems also to be a question of distinguishing between kinds of knowledge—knowledge that commoditizes and colonizes, knowledge that generates necessary anger and action, knowledge that heals. Knowledge that builds communities or knowledge that fractures them. Knowledge that responds or knowledge that masters.
>
> *(Neimanis, 2017, p. 57)*

What kinds of knowledge did Occupy create? The chapter will draw out and discuss different waves and trails generated by Occupy and Tent City University as they emerged in my study.

Formalised activist classrooms: 'throwing bricks'

Although Occupy itself was chaotic and multiplicitous, it seemed that it had created one trail that was straight and narrow. Occupy had a catalytic effect which prompted some participants to organise ongoing weekly meetings, discussion fora and expositions of economic and social theories:

> We've built this sort of model of the economy, and we think we can interpret any problem in the world.
>   It's radical activism throwing bricks at people's worldview.
>
> *(Colin, interview 1)*

In turn this influenced and engaged a wider audience via constant blogs and emails. The tone was libertarian, and I finally withdrew from the email list when messages became virulently anti-vaxxing. This sense of a capacious alternative world-view, albeit with a small number of adherents, was quite masculinised: not a wave but a 'brick'. Here Colin took on the role of pedagogue/seer. Although this was not formal education, my observation of meetings suggested that

it proceeded in quite a top-down and didactic way: a teacher had the 'what works' model which could solve any problem and others learnt how to apply it: what Neimanis calls 'knowledge that masters'. Other participants in my study encountered these classrooms and some found them inspirational and some uncongenial. It was an interesting corrective to idealised visions of invisible education to note that it might set up its own formal classrooms, even if they took place above a pub.

Activism as a way of life/lifelong learning as everyday practice: 'part of my history'

This was a trail most participants seemed to follow, at least some of the time. In this trail Occupy was simply part of a lifetime's engagement with activism and protest and an example of bringing that knowledge and sharing it. It is 'community building knowledge' in Neimanis's terms. Activism is embodied in daily choices and personal relationships, which in turn influence future actions.

> It's part of my history and what I learnt as a child to have a social conscience and it's also my reality … what I learnt was that these movements connect to each other through human beings not abstractly … even though I kind of joke that I am 'Anna revolutionary (failed)' but you know we learn a lot from failure, so I see myself as one of those connecting points across the generations … I think things are still popping up, so I'll pop along with them.
>
> *(Anna, interview 1)*

The repeated use of 'learning' here suggests that activism is inherently a knowledge project. It is a knowledge born of failure and repetition with its own (failed) degree classification but is also indefatigable. The comic image of everyday 'popping up' (like a whack-a-mole endlessly waiting to be hit and to bounce back) contrasts with the heavy brick wielded in the first trail. In terms of gender there are some competing and converging narratives happening for Anna. One is that her most profound learning experience was to be a child brought up to have a social conscience 'made to think' of herself as an actor for good in the world, but her narrative of service, which women still internalise, was not to the nuclear family but to others, the wider family of society. Activism also taught her to speak out, to demand that she be heard, including in protest meetings dominated by men. She had learnt how to make meetings inclusive and dialogical, and she insisted that this replace male pontifications. Being one of a multitude of 'connecting points' across generations seems to speak to a way of thinking and being that are not individualistic but networked and relational. For Anna, her invisible education of activism fed into her work in formal education where she tried to transmit the lessons she had learned through action. 'We learn a lot from failure' is not a mantra

suitable for formal education, where the emphasis is on achieving and performing success, but essential in activism where many protests do not immediately produce the desired result. It is a language of persistence adapted because the only other option would be to stop living and being altogether. The knowledge engendered in activism is about time as a spiral and history as waves, is counter-memory of how history can be understood. In counter-memory Occupy was not a failure that ended totally. Tent City University did not die when it came down. Rather the ideas carried on in the bodies of activists. We could argue that activism is both material and immaterial. As previously suggested it is a bodily affair, but it also existed in a realm that could not be quantified of hope, commitment and connection.

Sometimes this everyday learning solidified and branched off into taking many classes in community contexts or teaching alternative courses, being an educator as well as a learner:

> I always was taking these open-access courses cheap or free following my own nose … You never know what the meeting of one other person is going to lead to, you know, it's a magic thing and who is going to connect.
>
> *(Anna, interview 1)*

These trails have peaks and dips, places and scenes where activism seemed to make a difference such as San Francisco in the 1970s, followed by more barren periods:

> But you know that moment ended.
>
> JQ: Why do you think the moment ended?
>
> Oh, just history. Things will come around again in a different form.
>
> *(Anna, interview 2)*

Being always active and always involved in protest, the older participants in my study stayed connected to the world to younger people and to their own histories. After Occupy, Anna continued to act up and out protesting disability rights, active in local housing campaigns following up all the anti-poverty offshoots and connections from Occupy. She is responding to learning affects generated by everyday problems and a sense of being uncomfortable. What does it feel like when your disabled sister cannot get benefits, or your son afford a home in London? These are the everyday questions that provoke her learning and activism and bind them together. Intergenerational ties also shape this trail for younger people. Noel's love of his working-class family and desire to see them recognised and respected were learning affects for him, indivisible from his academic analysis. Activism was an alternative and potent source of learning, forming how they understood themselves as constituted in relation to the world. This immersion in

the world in messy, cold, tiring, dangerous material conditions was not a mere backdrop to activism it was an intrinsic part of living an activist life.

Academic activism/intellectual engagement: 'never looked back'

Many academics took part in Occupy and several of those interviewed were involved in academia at different levels either as early career or very late. In this trail, Occupy was a key part of academic life: shaping decisions made regarding academic research and areas of study: 'the politicization I experienced around the Tent City University has translated into the rest of my academic career'. This in turn links to campaigning and attempts to influence policy in more mainstream contexts. Here being involved in Occupy acts as a kind of seed bed and the visible/invisible education are two sides of the same coin.

> And now I'm an academic at a European university and my political activism is still educational in a certain sense. … I do, I guess what would be called 'organic' intellectual stuff. I've set up a sort of open democracy, I've set up a section with a number of other academics, trying to put, essentially, what we do into the public domain and generate scholarly public dialogues.
>
> *(Noel, interview 2)*

Academics always face a struggle in intervening in 'the public domain', but Occupy was already squarely there, very much under the feet of Londoners as they crossed the city. Its message about the 1% was a blunt one, but it carried that message internationally. In a sense post Occupy academics who had been involved were left trying to recapture the clarity of that 'public dialogue'. They wanted to practice what Neimanis calls 'knowledge that responds', so that a critical dialogue could continue to challenge and influence policy. The dialogue is 'scholarly', so being involved in invisible education through activism has not discredited academic work, rather helped to build it.

> JQ: I'm just very interested to see the way your work is permeating in lots of different sectors and places and spaces. If you look back over the few years to Tent City from this position now, what do you think are the connections between now and then?
>
> In terms of my life?
>
> JQ: Yeah, your life and your work and where it's going.
>
> Yeah, it's pretty direct. I never looked back from that point
>
> JQ: You never looked back?
>
> I never looked back you know as in like it was a watershed moment for me.
>
> *(Noel, interview 2)*

Activism as a philosophical practice: 'towards a wiser world'

Occupy also acted as a philosophical provocation. One trail it enacted was the expression of ethical thinking. For some this had developed over a long lifetime. This included much concern about the nature of knowing and learning.

> I'd been arguing for decades that we need to transform universities so that they become rationally devoted to seeking and promoting wisdom, not just acquiring knowledge—wisdom being the capacity to see what's of value to solve problems … and help us progress towards a wiser world.
>
> *(Max, interview 1)*

Tent City University was a moment in an ongoing debate on of how universities should develop as public institutions and offered an opportunity for 'intellectual life'. In contrast to the deadening weight of the contemporary university, 'people engaged in serious issues in a kind of lively and imaginative and passionate way'. This passion was driven by visions of what the world should and could be like:

> If universities are on behalf of humanity and having as their fundamental purpose to help humanity towards as good a world as possible then they need to be activists. That's sort of basic, I mean rational activists, committed … and that's why one needs to be open about what is of value, what kind of society, what kind of world should we be trying to make progress towards.
>
> *(Max, interview 2)*

The discourse here is one of 'value' of 'progress 'towards the right kind of world'. Activism such as Occupy helps because it helps build shared values and is a fora for working them out. Its very existence posits the central question: what kind of world so we want to live in? Potentially it generates 'knowledge that heals'. Max explicitly connected Occupy and the opportunities for learning there to what children experience in their everyday activities before they begin their formal education. The images he uses evoke invisible education, although he would not use the term. His suggestion of learning from animals also suggests that this ethical trail is posthuman in its orientation as it faces the world not just the humans within it.

> Children have this massive curiosity which gets kind of squashed when they go to school, you know 'shut up, we know, listen to us'. Children achieve, do these amazing things … if you think what a three year old has done, you know they've somehow picked up a whole view of the universe, a sense of life, other people, themselves, they've learnt to speak and understand … and this isn't done by formal education it's just sort of you know rubs off … But I think we should learn from that and I think we should also learn from the way animals learn, you know through play.

For all the participants, Occupy forms part of an ongoing search for meaning in life and for making their own lives meaningful. The search for meaning seems to supersede the notion of responsibility, they are part of the churn of life not separate from it.

> JQ: Do you feel you have a responsibility?

> I try and work hard working out what I really understand by that term. I honestly don't know. I live as if I do but I can see quite how damaging living with this responsibility to save the world can be for anyone that thinks that way, so I don't know about responsibility. I have certain capabilities that allow me to do certain things and I think they are potentially useful they certainly allow me to derive some kind of meaning, and a large part of it is also enjoyable probably because it's what gives me meaning.
>
> *(Noel, interview 2)*

Disillusioned retreat from activism/painful lessons: 'naïve ignorance'

The aftermath of activism is not necessarily a happy one. The final trail the research uncovered leads away from activism altogether and from an engagement in the potential of invisible learning. Here Occupy has taught negative lessons: one is that activism is beside the point in a world where nothing changes for the better and activist movements can be readily unravelled:

> I can't say I left the experience of Occupy particularly happily. I realise there was a relentless campaign to destroy, disrupt and discredit the people involved in Occupy, but given the depth and the profundity of the crisis, I was very depressed that the networks and communities generated by the Occupy universities were so easily dispersed.
>
> *(Harry, email)*

At the extreme there was a sense that activism itself is corrupt: it is 'knowledge that fractures'. Commitment to Occupy is matched by some despair when the values it espouses seem to have been betrayed. This prompts retreat and alienation, including alienation from education. Kim had been full of enthusiasm and dedication to Occupy when we first met. She contrasted Tent City University's opportunity for educational intervention with negative experiences of traditional universities and had thrown herself into it without hesitation. Our final exchange showed her deliberately turning her back on everything that had so inspired and enthused her, including withdrawing from any activism or education at all:

> I learned that the revolution is not what it says on the tin, even for those who felt they produced it. It is impossible not to be complicit. Those years were me living in naive ignorance.

I seek a peaceful life and take pleasure from long walks in nature.

I once believed anything was possible. This might still be true, but is a longer game than I neither have the resources for, nor imagined.

I'm sorry.

<div style="text-align: right">(Kim, email)</div>

The 'long game' of activism, the knowledge that the next wave may take so long to come becomes simply too much to bear. Activism, like any love affair, requires emotional investment, but that investment is what will make you vulnerable.

Living on

The research fills a gap in our understanding of the afterlife of activism and the role activism plays in invisible education. By taking a posthuman, rather than a critical realist, approach it provides new perspectives on activism and learning. It generates a new way of understanding activism and learning as enmeshed together in diverse trails. It does not argue, as Earle (2014), for example, has done, that Occupy disappeared because of the lack of a dedicated critical pedagogue. The findings suggest that the relationship between activism and learning is more diffuse and complex. Although the associated trails are not always fruitful ones, in multiple ways Occupy does live on and continues to be an agent in the world. It is commonly assumed that when activism is over, associated learning stops and fades. One of the questions the research addressed was whether Tent City University still survived as a form of imagined social capital. The research shows the way that Occupy is being mobilised not only as imagined social capital but as other forms of capital too. It demonstrates the ways that activism provokes and protects ongoing learning; whilst learning holds up and inspires activism.

> Maybe we can say the methods and the one percent all these things have permeated through individual activists into other expressions and that's real and that's important whatever you want to call it. It doesn't need to be branded Occupy but people learn things and will take them and are taking them forward into other areas. People say oh well Occupy just disappeared and it never meant anything. Well, no they're really wrong. Nuit debout is clearly related to Occupy, Occupy was connected to the indignados—things aren't just separate. The Occupy I was involved with here wasn't just its own thing that had no relation … so I do feel the global connections definitely.

<div style="text-align: right">(Noel, interview 2)</div>

> I don't think Occupy died, it's compost. Political compost.
>
> People got something out of it and taken it forward in some way, but we don't know those ways because it's all a bit underground.

<div style="text-align: right">(Anna, interview 2)</div>

Occupy continued to work in invisible ways, providing fertile soil and lessons for other movements internationally. These global links are interesting in terms of invisible education. Ingold (2015, pp. 89–90) argues that knowledge is integrated not 'from point to point across the world'; rather it 'builds up, from an array of points and the materials collected from them, into an integrated assembly'. Social media facilitates such networking, but there have always been global movements, which suggests that the affective, the atmospheric plays its part in spreading movement for change. It is the shared learning affect of everyday problems of climate change that is propelling many into activism today. It is those indigenous activists such as the Guardiões da Floresta in Brazil who are the most inspiring, the most impacted by colonial practices of devastation and the most vulnerable to violence. Activism is a deadly game in most countries of the world, and invisible education is gained at a harsh price.

Pedagogies of pain: art and activism in zones of conflict

> how something unknown can emerge from what we thought we knew, how one thing can be swallowed up by another, very different thing—how it can be inverted, transformed into something monstrous, no longer controllable—or sometimes into beauty, new life, new form.
>
> *(Erpenbeck, 2020, Not a Novel, p. 150)*

Thinking about global movements and how they are linked to invisible education, there is a great deal to say: the following is a small contribution. I conducted research in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) from 2014 to 2016, funded by the Council of Europe. This research was an in-depth study of widening participation and inclusion in their system of higher education. I have also conducted a small study in Beirut in 2018 which explored initiatives to provide informal learning for marginalised children. Critical posthumanism helps conceptualise power in different ways, as communal and relational and knowledge as shared and productive rather than the possession of a privileged group. Sometimes this knowledge is the product of suffering and conflict. Having conducted this research in BiH and in Beirut I became aware of how this knowledge permeates in unofficial and hidden ways outside of the formal educational sphere. Neither of these studies were of invisible education as such, but through them I gained glimpses of how women use invisible education to survive at times and in spaces of conflict. BiH still struggles to survive the war which happened in the 1990s but left the country structurally and culturally divided. There was deep concern about the levels of formal education available, which our study demonstrated in detail. Despite the legacies of shame and horror that still exist from the rape camps of the war, and the fact that many women who have experienced this cannot speak about it, women in BiH have campaigned together for international recognition of rape as a weapon of war. It was in BiH that Women for Women International was

FIGURE 5   Women for Women International.

formed, which specifically focuses on women abused through war (Figure 5). It is they who have brought this narrative into global consciousness.

This photo from Women for Women International highlights the Bosnian tradition of weaving and uses it as an expression of resistance. Posthuman thinkers draw attention to the importance of craft and challenge a humanist hierarchy where fine arts are at the top, as practiced by white male individuals and communal crafts practiced by women at the bottom. Braidotti talks about 'how to have a dynamic vision of pain' (as cited by Strom, 2018, p. 4). Invisible education can be a pedagogy of pain with its own powerful materials.

In Beirut an already chaotic and unstable society was thrown into further collapse by the massive explosion in the port in 2020. My research had been conducted in a context where formal education was fragmented with very little collaboration across public bodies and confusion about qualifications and training, plus huge numbers of refugees and children and families living in extreme poverty. Even those with only a slight knowledge of the country, such as myself, could see that the explosion was the culmination of decades of corruption. At the same time no-one visiting Beirut could fail to notice the vibrancy of public art, graffiti and the music scene. Women are keeping the sphere of everyday art alive, for example, through the Beirut Artists Residency. Everyday creativity in graffiti still blooms. The intra-activity of Beiruti and graffiti cuts through the torpor of the corrupt state and produces a new world and a new being (Figure 6). The conditions of possibility are learnt out on the street, even when everything seems to conspire against them.

Even though an outsider like myself cannot read it properly, this image seems a sign and an expression of hope; acknowledging that the wall itself is ephemeral, but while it stands it can express potentia. Even before the explosion, walls were marked with bullet holes and both Sarajevo and Beirut are balanced on a knife edge. One could argue that for BiH and Beirut the fact that invisible education

FIGURE 6   Beirut graffiti.

still happens, that new worlds are generated in everyday living is immaterial in the face of so much disaster. Yet these green shoots of hope are still precious. It allows women to persist as agents and indeed as teachers (Figure 7).

> Thinking about the global war on women, how to show solidarity and how to learn and what with. The most potent image of this year is the flag made from long black hair, cut as protest by women in Iran after the murder of Jin Jiyan Azadi. The danger is that it becomes a fetishistic object for the West. We have our own morality police on social media, out to shame girls and women even to suicide. We have incels, we have policemen who rape and kill women walking home at night. How to acknowledge the extreme danger that women face in Iran or Afghanistan without suggesting that women in the West are free, or that Western society is civilized and blameless? It was very moving to listen to the Kurdish academic Farangis Ghaderi last night, at the meeting in remembrance of Jin Jivan Avadi, explaining how the protests in Iran were not a flashpoint of rage, but built on years of resistance and everyday cultural activity by Kurdish women: invisible education in motion. Visiting the *Above us the Milky Way* exhibition in Derry this summer at the Void modern art gallery I saw how Afghani women resisted and protested gender discrimination and injustice through their powerful works of art and inserted them into the everyday.

FIGURE 7   'Armor' 2015 Kubra Khademi photograph.

> Walking silently in her armored breastplate, through the streets of Kabul, surrounded by jeering men, performance artist Kubra Khademi sent a global signal that must not be ignored. This is the visceral visual aspect of activism, taking everyday violence, condensing it and making it visible.
>
> *(JQ, diary)*

Invisible education through volunteering

Volunteering is another sphere where invisible knowledge is generated, and learning happens. Activism and volunteering have common aspects, as volunteering may connect with social justice goals. Culturally shaped, where and how people volunteer responds to the philosophical questions of values and visions as well as to material demands. Ukrainian novelist Andrey Kurkov (2022) explains that in Ukrainian, 'toloka', community work for the common good, is a strong tradition.

Volunteering, as in helping those you do not know, was less established, but was now an essential part of Ukraine's survival during the war with Russia, including offering internally displaced people new forms of learning. As he muses, both sardonically and sincerely:

> Can war be a time for self-improvement, for self-education? Of course it can. At any age and in any situation, even in wartime. You can discover new aspects of life, new knowledge and new opportunities. You can learn to bake Easter bread in a damaged stove. You can get a tattoo for the first time of your life at the age of 80. You can start learning Hungarian or Polish. You can even start learning Ukrainian if you didn't know it before.
>
> *(2022, p. 4)*

He shows that volunteering is indeed a political act. However, volunteering has tended to be depoliticised and seen as both a virtuous activity and one which can accrue certain benefits such as employability or social networks. Students for example are exhorted to volunteer to enhance their CVs and bolster the impact narrative of their universities, older people are encouraged to volunteer to enhance their own wellbeing as productive citizens. In Holdsworth and Quinn (2012), we turned a critical eye on community engagement and volunteering amongst students. We charted how it can be reproductive of existing power relations, reaffirming ideas that inequalities were 'natural' and that the volunteer had a neutral yet bountiful role to play within them. To achieve what we termed 'deconstructive volunteering' the experience needed to dislodge existing assumptions and contribute to a critical understanding of systems of inequality. Our conclusions were that in and of itself volunteering would not produce this deconstructive mode. For students it needed to be combined with access to knowledge and critique that the university should provide. For volunteers who are not students this critique could also be provided by other sources of knowledge, such as radical movements like Occupy or volunteer agencies themselves. Thus, volunteering can become a fertile source of invisible education.

> Thinking about volunteering I wondered why as an undergraduate student I had spent so much time volunteering and what I had gained from it. Counting the volunteering activities of my undergraduate life I realized that this had superseded many formal educational ones. Instead of morning lectures I had gone to the home of a Ugandan Asian refugee, eaten her spicy food and defended her against her husband when he claimed she couldn't possibly learn English. I had run a creche in a prison for visiting families. Instead of reading journal articles I had worked many weeks and weekends in a playgroup for inner city children, always passed over for leadership roles by men. This had been an education in many ways but also one whose full opportunities had

passed me by. What had I learned about Ugandan politics, the prison system or poverty after all? Was it a form of 're-education' or even punishment, after all my lectures on novels or poetry were more self-indulgent and purely pleasurable than volunteering was. It was certainly part of a liberal project of virtue, an enlightenment notion of the responsible citizen that would have borne little scrutiny and was certainly 'reproductive'. In comparison with being a feminist activist at a later date, where texts and resources were shared and discussed, being an undergraduate volunteer did not radically shift assumptions or introduce new ideas. All these volunteering opportunities were provided without any contextual knowledge or support: they were constituted as sufficient in and of themselves. Nevertheless, I value this time and its everyday affects and subtle influences and wish I had been given the tools to make more of it.

(JQ diary)

My research on volunteering also connects with the work on nature and matter that I discussed in the previous chapter. In further volunteering research with students conducted later and in a different context (see Quinn, 2016), I was interested to note how volunteering and the sea became intertwined. It became a small example of how volunteering may permeate everyday lives in unexpected ways and thus become a part of invisible education.

This project began with 8 focus groups involving a total of 80 students from across disciplines and stages. The research then identified issues of particular interest and ran thematic groups with local, international, rural and mature students. This was followed by interviews and 18 biographical accounts of active student volunteers and interviews with the community partners linked to those activities. Much like the research with low-waged young people, I had not expected nature to take such a prominent role. Much of this was down to the place, the 'ocean city' of Plymouth where a beautiful location meets areas of deprivation. Instead of talking about connecting with local people, volunteers had their eyes on the sea, which came up repeatedly in their accounts of living and volunteering in the Plymouth area.

They (non-local students) love it here in the sense that they love the beaches and the outdoors and they love the coast … But they never really talk about the people as such.

(Local student)

Alongside their formal studies, students were learning how to live by the sea in their everyday lives. In their volunteering the students came closer to the sea, learned to show care for it, for example, through beach cleaning. In this sense this was a form of invisible education. However, this seemed far from deconstructive

in that they saw themselves as the good, educated citizens here to teach recalcitrant locals:

> Our volunteering is focused on community engagement. The natural environment that you are looking at, getting them to see what's actually there and close to them.
>
> *(Simon, interview)*

The idea of 'getting them to see what's actually there', as if what the local people saw was 'unreal' and flawed is a telling one. It reminded me of some adult educators I have heard at conferences wanting to teach the public 'the right way' to read a museum or art gallery. Perhaps what local people saw was the poverty around them and this eclipsed the sea. In the *Power of Songs* research with older people living in care homes, discussed in Chapter 3, we found that local people had a rich heritage and knowledge of the city. This resource did not seem to attract the students who were interviewed, who sometimes preferred a young bubble.

> Everything's here I very rarely go into town if I don't have to because I hate all the people … Quite weird people sometimes! and it's nice to walk about (on campus) and see only young people and I feel kind of like this is my city.
>
> *(Tom, interview)*

Posthuman approaches 'highlight what is typically cast in the shadow: the material agency or effectivity of nonhuman or not-quite-human things' (Bennett, 2010, p. ix). In this case they make strange the stories of engagement with the sea, interrogating the focus on the sea and not on the humans that surround them. The sea operated to deconstruct and destabilise ways of seeing, thinking and being, so that the more than human superseded the human. 'I think you get a different outlook on a lot of things if you're on a coastal area.' The sea is dangerous, it is other, it literally takes you out of your depth. Alaimo (2010, p. 22) says 'sea life hovers at the very limit of what humans can comprehend', and Neimanis (2017) stresses its 'unknowability' so why did students seem to have such an affinity with it? Alaimo (2010, p. 283) posits the concept of trans-corporeality where there is in effect no division between the human and the sea: 'we dwell within and as part of a dynamic intra-active, emergent material world'. Bennett's (2020) idea of the waves and influx and efflux that shape the porous I gestures to the sea in material and symbolic ways. The sea is part of all of us and these connections are unspoken. So when D.H. Lawrence (2001) in the poem *The Mana of the Sea* claims 'I am the sea, I am the sea' as the culmination of an extended metaphor of sea/body: tracing 'the tide in my arms', 'the flat recurrent breakers of my two feet' he enacts the fact that 'the environment is not located somewhere out there but is always the very substance of ourselves' (Alaimo, 2010, p. 4). By responding so strongly to the pull of the sea, students are engaged in an invisible education about their relationality in

the world. Volunteering gives them opportunities to materialise this relationality, to come closer, to enter into new worlds. This may be more fundamental than what they learn in university seminars and lectures; even though it may not be conscious or verbalised. They legitimise the strong pull that they feel towards the sea within a humanist discourse of active citizenship, but their invisible education is potentially posthuman. So, volunteering has unintended ineffable consequences and can be part of an important learning journey.

Devalued knowledges: marginalised young people and work

In this final section, I will consider the hidden knowledges of young people in low-status and low-waged jobs, drawing on research with young people in what was then called 'jobs without training' (Quinn, Lawy and Diment, 2008). As previously discussed in Chapter 3, this research involved longitudinal research with young people in southwest England who were working in shops, hotels, cafes, building sites and other jobs which were low paid and given very low status, even though they are frontline jobs that keep society going. They called themselves 'the thick bunch' and were those who had done very badly at school and left with few qualifications at 16. In posthuman terms the young people find their being in the now and not what might happen, they have an untethered sense of time: 'I just want to float'. School takes on a dreamlike quality, where they can barely remember what happened or what they studied. They also position themselves as somehow outside the category human: 'I'm rubbish', having failed in the educational project that defines a successful human. Many things have changed since this research, the pandemic erased many such jobs, sometimes permanently, and there has been a shift to care work as marginally better paid. Brexit has made the work context even more parochial and created ruptures and conflict. Conditions have become even more precarious with zero hours contracts becoming the norm. The category of 'jobs without training' to which our research responded has been removed now that all young people must continue into some form of education or training until the age of 18: but 'crap jobs' still await those who do not succeed in formal education. What has not changed are the negative attitudes that surround such young people. One of the most pervasive is that they hate learning, and this is especially reiterated when it comes to white working class men. The one thing that policy-makers refuse to do is admit that they are already learning; albeit in different ways and contexts outside of school or college (see Quinn, 2018). The education system does not love them, they are not socially mobile, but they still love everyday learning. Some academics find calling this: 'unrequited love', excessive and even embarrassing, and policy-makers prefer to look the other way. I count my engagement with this research as a formative moment in thinking about education, and these young people taught me valuable lessons about invisible education. Through them I learnt that hidden from the sight of policy-makers young working class people are developing and

demonstrating multiple forms of learning: whether it be digitally, learning how to DJ, in engineering, restoring cars, working with animals or even performing as a magician. The point is the surprise, the pleasure and the invisibility.

The increase in engagement with social media since the original research has been exponential and may mean that, more than ten years on, some can translate their learning pleasures into wages, or display them on Instagram; meaning that invisibility depends on whose eyes are looking. The terms of measurement about skill and qualification have radically changed in many contexts: yet as far as the dominant educational discourse is concerned, invisible working–class education does not exist. In terms of future mutabilities, invisible education that is oriented to culture or technology and persists irrespective of changes in regulations, curricula, trends or policies in the formal sphere is often where innovation happens. Just as it takes time for formal education to take up ideas generated by activists, so invisible education formed of hidden pleasures and obsessions is often ahead of the educational curve. This narrative is a pleasing one, but the terms of precarity mean that young working class people do not have the networks or resources to accrue benefits. They may generate new knowledge for others to capitalise on. This is one of the conundrums of invisible education. Linking with the thoughts on volunteering, progression in the creative industries essentially relies on volunteering, unpaid work which may be formalised as internships but still operates in a voluntary capacity. To succeed at this crucial unpaid stage and be the ideal creative worker requires flexibility, resources, transport, accommodation in the right places, ability to survive without wages as well as self–confidence and cultural capital, as we found in our research on student work placements (see Allen, Quinn, Hollingworth and Rose, 2013). Learning how to work without being officially a worker is a pervasive trend in invisible education. In some respects, such invisible education in 'employability' is regarded more highly than qualifications that may not translate into work–readiness. An invisible education graduate is well placed to succeed, but the question is who is able to get to that point? Exceptions to the rule will always be quoted: individuals who triumph against the odds are exemplars of social mobility, but very many more remain invisible in every sense.

Conclusion

Invisible education produces alternative knowledges which cannot be sourced in the formal sphere and which shape values, meaning, resistance and pleasure in fundamental ways. Activism is one form of invisible education which saturates lives and continues to shape them long after the protests themselves have stopped. In contexts of conflict, lessons learnt through violence can be used to propel transformative global movements. Everyday acts such as weaving or graffiti speak to cultural knowledges that cannot be suppressed. Volunteering may indirectly connect the volunteer to ways of understanding the world not offered in the

classroom. Those who fail the formal system may still love everyday learning, and their interests and activities potentially change the world of work.

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