

Class, neoliberalism and New Zealand

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Abstract

This article contends that 'neoliberal' New Zealand is primarily a neo-colonial social-space, and that sociological, human geographic and policy-centric accounts have tended to miss this vital aspect of what Jane Kelsey calls the 'New Zealand experiment' (Kelsey 1995). New Zealand was an early adopter of neoliberalism and as such has enjoyed a relatively high profile as a case study of restructuring, specifically in international debates critical of neoliberal policies and consequences. New Zealand scholars have contributed to developing international debates in part because of this early adopter status. Overall, the critique of neoliberalism has been a fruitful site for interdisciplinarity, however the neo-colonial aspects of neoliberalism in New Zealand, and internationally, is underplayed, it is argued, largely because of an underdeveloped conception of class. On the one hand, the contingency of class reflects a more generalised rejection of the agency of the working class; on the other, Marxist conceptions of class, or at least their operationalisation, are problematic. It is argued that a way forward is to vivify class analysis, to chart a path between a theoretically-rich but empirically frustrated Marxism, and a data driven nominalism. Recent developments by M. Savage, et al. (2013) and earlier by P. Bourdieu (1984) are illuminating. Austerity presents as the latest phase of neoliberalism. In other words, as the casualties of neoliberalism and neo-colonialism mount, and the 'inequalities' of this international order become sharper and more apparent, it become harder for fruitful scholarship to avoid class. Class analysis is back on the scholarly agenda. For it to be theoretically-rich and empirically grounded a number of conditions have to be met, which transcend the conventional measures of social class.

Keywords: Neoliberal, neo-colonial, class, class fractions, socio-spatial

1. Introduction: Neoliberalism as neo-colonial social-space

The balance of class forces and powers within any regional class alliance and its state apparatus obviously varies greatly from place to place depending upon forms of organisation, levels of class consciousness, collective memories and traditions, and the like. Equally important, however, are struggles that arrive around rationality directly: the geography of infrastructural investments, territorialisation of administration and collective action, class alliance formation, and struggles for geopolitical advantage (Harvey 2006: 112).

This article contends that neoliberal New Zealand is primarily a neo-colonial social-space, and that the prevailing interdisciplinary accounts, drawn from sociology, human geography and policy studies, have tended to miss this vital aspect of what Jane Kelsey calls the 'New Zealand experiment' (Kelsey 1995). There is an element of critique in this observation, that most scholars have misjudged neoliberalism, which is drawn from Marxist scholarship that, in its turn, has its origins in the study of imperialism (Lenin 1934). Alongside any polemic, there is also an aspirational element insofar as developing a class analysis is concerned. The focus is contemporary and intends an interdisciplinarity, especially the integration of spatial relationships. It is contended that a robust class analysis is intrinsically socio-spatial. Specifically, it is attested that, the neo-colonial aspects of neoliberalism in New Zealand, as well as internationally, are underplayed largely because of an underdeveloped conception of class analysis. Class analysis is used in this sense as shorthand for a Marxist approach which focuses on the 'balance of class forces' as well as its geopolitical context. Indeed, any ambition for a class analysis must acknowledge the need to decompose the category; to focus on class fractions and their play across the international order. David Harvey suggests that while such relational struggles are omnipresent to a Marxist approach an even greater appreciation of geography would, nevertheless, be worthwhile. Conversely, the absence of class analysis is problematic, because it renders much of social- and spatial-, or socio-spatial struggle contingent.

The failure to recognise the link between neoliberalism and neo-colonialism in the case of New Zealand, is the case in point.

The case of New Zealand highlights the realities of neoliberalism, in the implementation of neoliberal policies as a neo-colonizing double movement. Double movement suggests the Polanyian fantasy that the liberalisation of markets evokes its own protective counter (Polanyi 1944). This is hardly the case. Rather, the neoliberal 'double movement' is more of a one-two combo, a flurry of punches that overwhelms protection. Thus, neoliberalism has meant the delivery of state-owned assets and concretised social capital in the form of services to 'markets', and the almost immediate monopolisation of these markets by the largest of capitals (firms). This one-two combo - to continually privatise and to immediately monopolise - is not at all peculiar to New Zealand; it is a global phenomenon. Largely unacknowledged, yet it forms the realities, the socio-spatial manifestations of 'uneven global development' (Harvey 2004, 2006).

In practice neoliberalism secures the advance of monopoly capital into new domains; spheres that had become, in the mid-twentieth century - the ambit of the tax-funded, social democratic, state. The end of the 'Long Boom' jeopardised this social compromise and opened the space for 'neoliberalism'. In practice, neoliberalism belies its rhetoric, claims by the manifold protagonists of neoliberalism, from Milton Friedman to Roger Douglas (New Zealand Minister of Finance, 1984-1989) to Tony Blair, that privatizing state-owned assets and services would, somehow, reduce rent-seeking on the part of state employees acting as bureaucrats, and hence deliver greater efficiencies (Pusey 1993). Instead rent-seeking is fostered through privatisation and monopolisation. And, in a semi-colony like New Zealand (see, 'Introduction' in: Baran, Sweezy, 1966), monopoly capital is one-and-the-same as foreign or transnational capital (Bedggood 1977, 1980). As a dynamic trend this means that neoliberalism qua monopolisation is also indistinguishable from neo-colonialism (i.e., economic ownership and control is moved 'offshore', with the obvious pressures this shift then places on the local polity to realign their local efforts at administration (Bedggood 1977, 1980)). In the case of New Zealand, as elsewhere, the monopoly capitals that have purchased or are purchasing the ruins of the social democratic state are transnational capitals. Interestingly, James Meek (2014) has identified the

same 'neo-colonizing' phenomena in Britain, supposedly the first of the imperialist nations. In short, the neo-colonial, socio-spatial interpolation of neoliberal, more-market polices that New Zealand was putatively the first of the free democracies in the OECD to embrace, are now (some thirty years after their manifestation) best understood as transnational in their causes and global in their effects.

It is unsurprising then that New Zealand has been an important scholarly case study of neoliberalism, and has demonstrated the socio-spatial consequences of these policies in terms of neo-colonialism. Furthermore, the significance of this particular nation-state as a scholarly example is likely to continue for the time being, most likely well in excess of its share of international trade or even of research-active social scientists (Curtis 2016). At the same time, the nation-state as case study is insufficient to capture either the global or local moments of neoliberal transformation. David Harvey (2006) highlights the potential for (or perhaps, rediscovery of) Marxist class analysis as a way forward. Such a class analysis operates at a level of abstraction above and below the nation-state. It does so best in terms of class fractions.

Through this lens, neoliberalism in New Zealand is not simply – or necessarily – the victory of finance capital over productive capital; rather it is the victory of that fraction of the capitalist class who are invested in transnational forms of capital accumulation over that fraction invested in autonomous (local) growth (see Cronin 2008). The return to centre-stage in New Zealand's political life of actors, called in the classical Marxist literature a 'comprador bourgeoisie' reverses long-standing accommodations and alters the prevailing, social democratic balance of class forces (Walsh, Fougere, 1987). A focus on class fractions is therefore both a more concrete and a more theoretically sophisticated account than the prevalent class schemas on offer (which for all their rich description can be said to suffer from a Weberian fascination with nominal, or descriptive data, and an enduring anti-Marxism – see Jane Kelsey 1995).

However class analysis, and the full recovery of a Marxist perspective, is still problematic and partial. There is not room here to fully discuss the contributing factors. Part of the problem, no doubt, is the legacy of cultural Marxism and its even more reactionary post-existential philosophizing. Part of the problem may be a seeming reliance on and return to a discarded and discredited Marxist analytical grammar

(Curtis 2015). Part of the problem may also be an anti-Marxist reaction in scholarly forms of criticism (Callinicos 1990; Jameson 1991). In the case of New Zealand, the rise of neoliberalism, the deployment of neoliberal policies, is rightly pilloried for its negative impacts on the lives of the poor, vulnerable and Maori (see Bell 2014; Humpage 2014), but almost no mention is made of class and this is thusly a major step back from a Marxist, emancipatory discourse (Edwards, Moore, 2009). At the same time, in the absence of an analytical criticism, the reconfiguration of the economy in the face of neoliberal drivers is more readily taken as an economic given – including the decline of manufacturing, increased reliance on a narrowing of range exports, rise of agriculture (especially dairying for Chinese export markets) and low value-added processing. There is a gulf between scholarly and popular accounts, in which the former suffers by comparison. The price of milk solids in global auctions, the link between quantitative easing in Pacific Rim economies and the local housing market, the position of US presidential candidates on the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (a ‘free trade’ deal) are literally headline news in New Zealand. But, the commonplace, popular, acceptance that neoliberalism has made New Zealand neo-colonial, with an agrarian, extractive economy, increasingly owned and its polity administered by foreign interests has not much figured in scholarly work. This lacunae in local, academic research would be baffling if it was not compensated by other fruitful research outputs.

As a result, the approach taken in the balance of this article is threefold. First, to discuss New Zealand as an early adopter of neoliberalism, and to provide a critique of the local literature. It is argued that class appears only as a contingent category in this fairly substantial body of work. This contingency is regarded as an analytical deficit, in terms of both neoliberalism and neo-colonialism. Second, a critical focus is continued to be deployed on the prevailing operationalisations of class. These tend to be nominal and descriptive in character. Third, a rationale is sketched for moving beyond descriptive, nominal class schemas.

2. New Zealand as early adopter of neoliberalism: a case study of restructuring

New Zealand was an early adopter of neoliberalism and, because of this, has enjoyed a relatively high profile as a case study of restructuring, specifically in international debates critical of neoliberal policies. New Zealand scholars, 'locals' in this account, have contributed to unfolding international debates in part because of this early adopter status. More specifically, New Zealand became, after Chile, an early adopter of neoliberal policies and, what-is-more, these policies were first implemented by a democratically elected Labour Government (1984-1990) rather than 'at the point of a gun' (Richards 2003). Neoliberal policies, involving an emphasis on market solutions and a down-sizing of state-intervention predicated on progressive taxation and counter-cyclic borrowing, have been pursued by all successive Governments and even inscribed in law to limit the capacity for future administrations to easily reverse these decision (e.g., Fiscal Responsibility Act, State Owned Enterprises Act, State Sector Act, Public Finance Act, Reserve Bank Act). Such, democratically administered, albeit unanticipated, early adopter status made, and still makes New Zealand interesting as a case study or, more often, as a comparative for international audiences; providing a relevance for New Zealand-themed scholarship that, arguably, might otherwise be absent. As a result, discussion of neoliberalism in New Zealand has provided a fruitful topic for 'local' (that is, New Zealand) academics to enter into international debates. In the humanities and social sciences, at least, this scholarly output constitutes a critique of the manifold drivers and consequences of neoliberalism.

In this globalising context, both in terms of neoliberalism and the critique of these policies, interactions between human geography and sociological approaches have been particularly significant and robust. The synergy is best expressed in the analysis of the impacts of neoliberalism on core, export-oriented sectors of New Zealand's open economy. Indeed, human geography, or more properly - human geographers, have proven particularly nimble in a developing an open-ended interdisciplinarity. This may reflect that a geographic appreciation of food and fibre production predated or overlapped with neoliberalism, restructuring and its scholarly critique (Le Heron 1988; Le Heron et al., 1989).

Two export-oriented sectors have received considerable attention, albeit for different reasons. Most prominent are the food and fibre sector (which is overwhelm-

ingly export-oriented) and also the university sector. Food and fibre production and processing (milk, meat, logs, fruit, fish and wine) constitutes around 90% of New Zealand exports and more than a quarter of its GDP. The university sector is also a significant export earner, from the fees of international students, as well as central to successive Government rhetoric about progress and New Zealand's continued status as a developed nation (Curtis 2016). It should also be noted that the university sector is - unsurprisingly - of particular interest to university-based scholars, and that concerns about the restructuring of long-standing arrangements in funding, research and teaching under the neoliberal rubric are not limited to New Zealand academics.

The study of agriculture has probably benefitted more than any other sectoral analysis from interdisciplinarity, particularly sociology and human geography interaction, which from the mid-1980s, resulted in a sustained engagement with the sociology of agriculture on the one hand, and the analysis of commodity chains on the other (Stringer, Le Heron, 2008). The overarching narrative to this interaction was of political economy, albeit one where local, socio-spatial class relations are highly contingent. Such contingency, however, sustained a revitalisation of rurality (marginalised by the earlier political economy, and sociology of agriculture) and the rise of identity politics, which in turn provided important openings for concerns around food and sustainability (Curtis 2004; Campbell, Dixon, 2009; Curtis 2012; Mackay et al., 2009). Discussions of the university sector followed a similar trajectory of interdisciplinarity, albeit somewhat later, as neoliberal policies and the re-making of long-standing institutional arrangements stimulated local (New Zealand focussed) and international scholarship. Some of this scholarship involved many of the earlier protagonists, especially among the human geographers (Le Heron, Lewis, 2007) and sociologists (Curtis 2016), but incorporated new disciplinary framings, including education (Roberts 2009) and social anthropology (Shore, McLauchlan, 2012).

While sectoral accounts are significant and attention is drawn to only two, the dominant trope in the discussion of neoliberalism and New Zealand is undoubtedly policy-centric. Policy analysis, while often being descriptively rich, tends to approach neoliberalism as a paradigm shift whose origins and processes lie somewhere between conspiracy theory and socio-technical solutions seeking problems. Even the

best of local accounts suffer from a dis-engagement with class, in particular the interactions of neoliberalism and neo-colonialism, that might have contextualised the successive hijackings of Treasury, the Labour Party (Ferguson 2014), then a newly elected Labour Government, and ultimately the state apparatus. Thus, Jesson's books are indictments of betrayal by Labour of its socialistic, social democratic roots (Jesson 1987, 1989, 1999). This melancholy is in large part a product of the rapid pace of change and its implementation by a Labour Government which swept a three-term, socially conservative National Government (1975-1984) and seemed, at the time, to promise so much. But it is also indicative of a narrow, non-class and aspatial focus. More prosaically, it is correct to say that Left-leaning, pro-Labour commentators were caught unprepared by the new policy direction (McAloon 2013; Richards 2003).

Jane Kelsey, perhaps less invested in socialist politics, or what very quickly became the history of socialist politics, was the author to bring the new 'New Zealand experiment' (a term first coined by the radical, Labour Government (1935-1949)) to international attention. Like Bruce Jesson, her oeuvre is a trenchant criticism of a political hijacking (Kelsey 1995, 2002). Following the 'Great Financial Crisis' (GFC) in which the global and structural elements of capitalist crisis are in some respects undeniable, Kelsey (2015) has focused more on income inequalities that a dominance of finance capital over productive capital (not her terms) seems to generate. Her focus on the FIRE economy – finance, insurance and real estate – is rich in narrative, offers analysis at the level of policy and its protagonists, and is concerned with income distribution; but continues to eschew the contradictory relationships of class and class fractions as an analytical key. In a sense, J. Kelsey (2015) comes closest to a class-based account, that would explain both neoliberalism and neo-colonialism, but in so doing the critical analytical deficit is most keen.

Bruce Jesson (who died in 1999) and J. Kelsey are the paramount journalistic and scholarly critics of neoliberalism in New Zealand. Overall policy-centric writing has mushroomed, wherein local (New Zealand) authors have, somewhat predictably, benefited in international forums from New Zealand's early engagement with neoliberalism. Within the policy-centric framing of neoliberalism, Antony Giddens's notion of a Third Way dominated internationally and in local expression (Chatterjee 1999; Dalziel 2001; Craig 2003; Lerner 2003), in no small part because, as was the case

in Britain, it offered an apologetic for Labour (Callinicos 2001). For Wendy Larner and David Craig (2005) at least (re)formulations of the Third Way provided the conceptual space for an academically fruitful engagement between sociology and human geography buttressed by the neologism 'glocal' and its patterning of governance. Bob Jessop (2015) notes that neoliberalism continues to reinvent itself, while Louise Humpage (2016) hints that the Third Way has run its course in the UK and New Zealand, a possible reflection that post-GFC austerity, justifications about charting some path that eschewed neoliberal excess is no longer a convincing discourse.

Whether it occur through formulations of a Third Way or through accounts of governance, or in sectoral analyses; class appears as a contingent category, if at all, in the much of the critique of neoliberalism. The relationship between the rise of neoliberalism, decline of class analysis, at least its Marxist variants, and the proliferation of approaches that invest a historic-epochal agency in anything other than the working class has been commented, internationally, by a range of authors, from Alex Callinicos (1990) to Vivek Chibber (2006). In this respect, the Third Way is one such example of a surrogate for Marxist, class analysis, wherein the interplay of class fractions across space and social relations are subordinated accounts about the socio-technical concerns around rationing and the limits of path dependency.

3. Limits to class analysis

The "occupy" movements that took place across the globe and in New Zealand brought class issues back to fore. Indeed, from the police violence against recent student protests at Auckland University, to the dock workers losing their jobs at the Ports of Auckland and Tauranga, or the thousands of families struggling to find accommodation after the devastating Christchurch earthquakes, while large insurance companies involved capitalise on the reconstruction (see Klein 2007) – New Zealanders it seems are increasingly surrounded by the effects of class. Class it seems is the pressing issue in New Zealand, yet it is rarely discussed by politicians, the media, or in disciplines outside of the social sciences (Haddon 2012: 2).

The above quote from Edward Haddon's Masters Thesis, *Class identification in New Zealand: an analysis of the relationship between class position and subjective social loca-*

tion, is cited to demonstrate the marginality of class analysis as well as the need for it. Indeed, the notion that the marginalisation of class analysis is a vital component in the ideological as well as political victory of neoliberalism is a compelling one (Callinicos 2001; Edwards, Moore, 2009), and will be revisited as part of some concluding remarks. In the sections above, it is argued that the critique of neoliberalism has been a fruitful site for interdisciplinarity and an important mechanism for local scholars to go global, however – as noted – the neo-colonial aspects of neoliberalism in New Zealand are understated largely because of an underdeveloped conception of class. On the one hand, the contingency of class reflects a more generalised rejection of the agency of the working class; on the other, Marxist conceptions of class, or at least their operationalisation, are problematic. E. Haddon (2012) and Penny Hayes (2003) demonstrate that while class has been marginal to an analysis of neoliberalism, it was not extinguished. They identify champions of a Marxist perspective in the New Zealand neoliberalizing context: Geof Pearce (1986); Bruce Cronin (2001, 2008); David Neilson (2007, 2011); Brian Roper (1991, 1997, 2011); and Chris Wilkes (1994). These writers kept the Marxist flame flickering in their accounts of neoliberal New Zealand, but each also demonstrated a problematic at the core of contemporary class analysis that makes claims to being empirical.

The problematic is manifold. It has a theoretic element, in that Karl Marx did not develop a theory of class that was in anyway analogous to his proof of the labour theory of value and its role in the accumulation of capital. This theoretic element is implicated in issues of data. Marx infamously, or is it apocryphally, tried and then rejected a survey of class and surplus value. He instead relied on published reports and statistics to refine and demonstrate the labour theory of value and its operation within capitalism. Updating Marx's conception of the logic of capitalism, especially in accounting for counter-tendencies that have disrupted the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, is a centre piece of Marxist scholarship. Ernest Mandel gives an account of this in his magisterial *Late capitalism* (Mandel 1978).

New Zealand Marxist scholars were inspired to do the same: David Bedgood (1977, 1980); Geoff Pearce (1986) draws directly from E. Mandel; D. Roper (1991) recycles G. Pearce's unpublished PhD; Cronin (2001, 2008) draws from Anwar Shaikh and E. Ahmet Tonak (1997). The data they use is the same as Marx; effectively, the

published annual reports of companies – intended for shareholders and to meet legislated reporting criteria, and published Governmental reports. B. Cronin surveyed New Zealand's 'National Accounts' for the period 1975-1995; Pearce used a series of reports representing a 'Census of manufacturing' for the period of 1923-1973. This theoretically-informed empirical work is impressive. It can be thought of as directly extending the core thesis of Marxist scholarship, the tendency for the rate of profit to fall (Kliman 2007). This stands in contrast to class, both in that K. Marx did not produce a 'class schema' in any meaningful sense (capitalism unadulterated has two classes, proletariat and bourgeoisie, and in process the petty-bourgeoisie are brought into existence and simultaneously destroyed, while the 'old middle class' is a vanishing pre-capitalist rump), and in contemporary work. K. Marx certainly did not develop a 'class schema' nor a methodology to link class fractions to capitalist production (let alone, cultural consumption) in an empirically grounded manner.

It is reasonable to argue that K. Marx focused his analytical energies on the accumulation of capital and can hardly be criticised for the writing he did not attempt. Class, especially the elucidation of class fractions with the capitalist production process is probably his biggest lacunae. As noted this theoretic deficit is implicated with data. Mike Savage and Roger Burrows (2007) touched on this, as an emergent issue, in their discussion of the impending redundancy of traditional sociological method in the face of 'knowing capitalism':

Fifty years ago, academic social scientists might be seen as occupying the apex of the – generally limited – social science research 'apparatus'. Now they occupy an increasingly marginal position in the huge research infrastructure that forms an integral feature of what Thrift (2005) characterises as knowing capitalism; where circuits of information proliferate and are embedded in numerous kinds of information technologies (Savage, Burrows, 2007: 886).

The intention here is not to engage directly in the debate about any crisis of empirical sociology, rather it is to note that capitalism has always been, in some sense, knowing. The data capitalism collects, and circulates and publishes is always for its own benefit, and the opportunities this provides to scholars and especially 'critical'

scholars (as opposed to capitalists and their functionaries) is decidedly marginal and typically unintended. When it comes to comparing the data Karl Marx had access to, about capitalist accumulation and class fractions, not much has changed. The data on capital accumulation, profitability and, hence, exploitation is of common interest to bourgeois and Marxist scholars alike. Indeed, G. Pearce (1986) regularly describes his methodology determining the rate of profit and accumulation in terms of ‘cleaning’ the dataset. There is no such commonality between bourgeois and (Marxist) scholars when it comes to class. What Marxists scholars would reveal, capitalism is bent on hiding. The result is that data on class is not collected by firms or by agencies of Government. The data that is collected is nominal, primarily measures of occupation or income, and often from official censuses.

Both Edward Haddon (2012, 2015) and Penny Hayes (2005) note that, in New Zealand, empirical studies of class rely greatly on the reporting of incomes and occupational statuses from the New Zealand Census. These authors also are reliant on this material, although P. Hayes (2005) sees her contribution as neo-Marxist, seeking to operationalise E. O. Wright’s notions of contradictory class positions (Wright 1979). E. Haddon is more sanguine, although he sees his own contribution as Weberian rather than Marxist in terms of his efforts to contrast objective and subjective understanding of class. His other opening remarks are also very pertinent:

‘[I]t is worth noting the confluence of supposedly Marxist and Weberian inspired empirical work: in terms of establishing a measurement of class, the two “approaches” are practically indistinguishable. However, this poses an immediate dilemma for Marxists, regarding the extent to which a Weberian approach can reveal the social relations of capitalism’ (Haddon 2011: 1).

Thus, C. Wilkes (1994) refers to a limited empirical study based on New Zealand Census data (Wilkes et al., 1986); while E. Haddon uses a dataset drawn from the New Zealand Census data that is effectively an amalgam of the, purportedly contesting, class schemas developed by E. O. Wright (1979) and J. Goldthorpe et al., (1970), R. Erikson and J. Goldthorpe (1992). Perhaps most tellingly, Savage, et al.,

(2013) hint that divisions between Marxist and Weberian scholarship in the class schemas or typologies developed from census data is itself problematic.

4. Vivifying class analysis

Hayes (2005) and especially Haddon (2012) identify a technical confluence or convergence around the collection and use of data in discussion of class. This meeting of approaches is, effectively, around Weberian, nominal schemas of class. However, beyond this empirical confluence there is something of an analytical blurring, in other words – a revelatory problem. It is argued here that Marxist, class analysis is problematic as a theoretically-informed empirical endeavour in ways that Marxist investigations of surplus value and accumulation are not. This because the latter overlaps part of the canon of bourgeois scholarship (for example, through economics and business studies); while the latter – class divisions – are obscured in bourgeois ‘empirical’ accounts. Nevertheless, a way forward is to vivify class analysis, to chart a path between a theoretically-rich but empirically frustrated Marxism, and a data driven, Weberian, nominalism. Recent developments by M. Savage, et al. (2013) and earlier by P. Bourdieu (1984) are illuminating.

Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) famous study, *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* provided, for some statistically-minded scholars at least, a basis for a methodology to advance Marxist class analysis, and to open up a discussion of class beyond binary opposition. A statistical turn to what in effect is a form of factor analysis, looking for patterns in data beyond the level of correlation and linear regression, is perhaps not so surprising given the otherwise unquantifiable character of Bourdieu’s oeuvre; which is synthetic in its relationship to classical sociology and yet philosophic in its conclusions, as noted by Simon Susen and Bryan S. Turner (2013). Sean Phelan (2014), perhaps unintentionally, demonstrates the limits of Bourdieu to an analysis of neoliberalism and class that is empirical, both in New Zealand and global contexts. Nevertheless, correspondence analysis and the CAMSIS scale are two interrelated techniques that have gained some traction from some of P. Bourdieu’s insights into cultural consumption (Bottero et al., 2009). Although, it must be stressed that the statistical sophistication required in multivariate analysis to simulate hierarchical rankings from nominal categories – based in censuses or sur-

veys of occupation – is a decidedly self-limiting factor in terms of uptake. For example, arguably because of the statistical demands as much as the reliance on nominal datasets, both approaches appeared to have foundered in New Zealand (ibid).

M. Savage, et al. (2013) have reset the situation while retaining Bourdieu's focus on distinction. On the one hand, their approach to data analysis is yet another version of factor analysis (latent class analysis), in some sense operationalising P. Bourdieu, and is used to compare fresh survey data with J. Goldthorpe's schema. They attempt to link cultural consumption (that is, distinction) to class and class fractions. In the context of correspondence analysis and CAMSIS, this is essentially an evolutionary and statistical development. On the other hand, their approach has embraced the generation of 'Big Data' which M. Savage and R. Burrows (2007) had earlier identified as threatening to traditional sociological research (Burrows, Savage, 2014). This is far more problematic. M. Savage, et al. (2013) have arguably adapted to the corporatisation of Big Data – to play off Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy (1966), a 'monopoly knowing capitalism' – in their *Great British Class Survey*. However, they are certainly not unaware of the problematic in corporate sponsorship, and their benefactor is the state-owned BBC. Their research has generated considerable criticism, some of it incandescent. Mills' (2014) abstract sums it up:

Savage et al. (2013) claim they have produced a new model of the British class structure. They stress the innovative use of an internet survey, the BBC's Great British Class Survey (GBCS), but it plays no serious role in the generation of their class typology. What they do is a theory free (though Bourdieu inspired) data dredging exercise. What they derive is an arbitrary typology determined by a contingent fact – the size of their sample (Mills 2014: 1).

In terms of methodology, or method according to C. Mills (2014), there can be little doubt that M. Savage, et al, (2013) adopt a non-random, purposive survey, albeit with 161,400 web responses, a large one. However, C. Mills (2014) offers little by way of alternatives to data collection, other than a continued reliance on Government-sourced, census data. Perhaps as a colleague of J. Goldthorpe such reliance is reasonable on C. Mills part, but it does seem to trap scholarship in the nominalism

outlined above. C. Mills makes a challenge of his own to M. Savage, et al: “Do you accept that your data show that cultural consumption is related to conventional measures of social class?” (Mills 2014: 8). This challenge is absolutely pertinent to developing a theoretically-informed, empirical analysis of class and class fractions. Before addressing that issue it is simplest to record the defense:

...if the GBCS is judged purely by the criterion of orthodox social science, then it can be found wanting since it does not approximate to extensively validated and legitimated methods. However, the GBCS data allows possible repertoires of research that are not possible using orthodox methods – such as using crowdsourcing techniques to generate additional data, allowing more specific analyses of time periods, allowing much more refined and granular analysis as a result of the larger sample size, and so forth. Having said this, the GBCS is controversial in part because it is hybrid, both in its conceptual framing and partly because it uses a (small) national representative survey alongside a large web survey. In straddling both old and new modes of social scientific research, it is unsurprising that it should attract especial attention and be subject to turf warfare (Burrows, Savage, 2014: 5).

To some extent C. Mills (2014) and M. Savage, et al., (2013), R. Burrows and M. Savage (2014) talk past each other and there is an undoubted element of hyperbole in Savage and his co-authors’ claims. However the survey approach by M. Savage, et al. (2013) is intentionally pragmatic, a work-around for sociologists confronted by knowing capitalism, and its results are available to scholars in ways that Big Data are not. There is an undoubted distance between the nominal class schemas that C. Mills defends and non-random sampling like the Great British Class Survey. What is most important Savage et al., (2013) use of latent class analysis as factor analysis addresses issues of class fractions in ways that – at the least – augment established schemas and provides a contemporary fillip to Marxist theorizing: the decomposition of the middle class and the working class, the rise of the precariat, importance of class fractions based in technocratic and service work are all addressed.

Without doubt M. Savage, et al., would respond with a resounding 'Yes' to Mills' question. Yes, cultural consumption is related to conventional measures of social class. But this is not anywhere near the issue in its totality. The statistical tests of validity and reliability that C. Mills (2014) highlights are among the least interesting aspects of class analysis. There is only room here to telegraph the reasons. First, it has to be noted that the thoroughgoing application of such measures is likely to reduce the available datasets to those that already inform 'conventional measures of social class'. In other words the census data that Goldthorpe and colleagues worked with. This does not prohibit the use of some sort of probabilistic stratified sampling based on the divisions and proportionality estimated by census results, but it does not much extend the analysis of this nominal data. Marx and Marxist scholarship is only rarely positivist in the ways Mills (2014) seems to laud. Second, the gulf between M. Savage, et al. (2013) and the conventional measures of social class that Mills champions is not really definitive. Both are inspired by the insights of Karl Marx and Max Weber (albeit in different proportions) and such inspiration is shared by P. Bourdieu, the ultimate synthesiser. Whereas P. Bourdieu was prone to philosophy, M. Savage et. al., and the protagonists of conventional class measures have tried some sort of operationalisation. The resulting limits of their research are manifestations of knowing capital, precisely the disconnect between what capitalists want to know about class and what critical, radical, Marxist researchers want. This leads to a third point: that the gulf that needs to be traversed to vivify class analysis is not between the Great British Class Survey and the 'Goldthorpe class schema' (Evans 1992), but between the prevailing nominalism of both and an approach that foregrounds the play of class fractionality across the international order. It is in this context that the Great British Class Survey can be said to offer the greater promise. In large part because it addresses the problematic of knowing capitalism and Big Data as inherent to neoliberalism and the 'new' austerity. Measures of reliability and validity are second order issues.

5. Conclusions

Elsewhere, it is discussed how New Zealand scholarship suffers from a cultural cringe, the notion that 'local' work is substandard when judged by international, that is metropolitan, standards (Curtis 2016). Len Richards (2003) extends E. Said's notion of travelling theory to show how an international 'discourse' of neoliberalism has marginalised all others. A consequence of this neoliberalism was the 'New Zealand experiment', which in turn has been fruitful to local scholars (i.e., resulted in good quality, international publications). Championing local accounts is no doubt laudable, and context always shapes the reception and potential responses to 'travelling theory' (Perry 1995). Such repackaging does not really alter the dynamic between international and local, even if many locales are implicated (Curtis 2015); and the cultural cringe is probably symptomatic of overlong referencing.

However, the principal intention of this article has been to critique local, and by extrapolation, international accounts of neoliberalism as lacking a class analysis: an analysis that links class fractions with the international order. In the New Zealand context, the case of the New Zealand experiment, neoliberalism has meant that the social-spatial realities of these policies have been decidedly neo-colonial. This aspect has been missed or avoided in most local accounts, and this is despite the early engagement of human geographers in an unfolding interdisciplinary account (the possibility that this lacunae is because of the role of human geography is not explored here). Rather, policy accounts have dominated and support Third Way apologetics for Labour (the Labour Party in the New Zealand). Of course this is all old news. Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell (2002) noted that neoliberalism had phases in their rehabilitation of Labour (the Labour Party in the United Kingdom), in so doing, perhaps, they mark the nadir of, or at least the limit to, a class-free analysis of neoliberalism. If *Hegemony and social strategy*, by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) was symbolically important in that it celebrated anti-Marxism as post-Marxism, and signalled that more popular misreadings about the potential for working class agency were to follow (Hardt, Negri, 2000; Klein 1999); then J. Peck and A. Tickell's simply anodyne contribution signalled an upturn in class analysis. In other words, as the casualties of neoliberalism and neo-colonialism mount, and the 'inequalities' of this international order become sharper and more apparent, it become harder for fruitful scholarship to avoid class.

Perhaps it has taken the 'Great Financial Crisis' to demonstrate that neoliberalism is a policy logic of late capitalism. Austerity is the new phase of neoliberalism and this recognition has both symbolic resonance and analytical import. The contributions of Guy Standing (2011) and Thomas Piketty (2014) are the foremost representations of this recognition. They are an advance on the prevailing neoliberal scholarship. Class analysis is back on the scholarly agenda. For it to be theoretically-rich and empirically grounded a number of conditions have to be met, which transcend the conventional measures of social class. M. Savage, et al., (2013) express this new agenda and in a limited way sketch a methodology that combines a theoretical revival with surveying, and highlights the benefits of corporate sponsorship to mimic Big Data. This in itself is a difficult combination, and the sponsorship issue is highly contentious. In New Zealand too, the appreciation of austerity has stimulated a revival of class analysis, both in its empirical (Cotterell, von Randow, 2014) and theoretical (Cremin 2015) moments. The challenge here is to bring these two moments together.

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