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Critical Engagements: Knowledge-work as Political Practice

As I noted in Chapter 1, one of the inspirations for this book came from encounters with young scholars bringing activist commitments into their PhD studies and research projects. My conversations with them led to a broader engagement with ‘knowledge-work’ as a form of political practice in the professions, in development work, in teaching and training, and in policy communities. Across these categories the interviews showed how the acquisition of knowledge enabled participants to negotiate with and perform effectively within dominant ruling relations (see Chapters 3, 4 and 5). But the interviews also show how knowledge-work was viewed as means of *transforming* those same ruling relations. Such practices drew – implicitly or explicitly – on feminist scholarship:

[F]eminist scholarship, like most other forms of scholarship, is not the mere production of knowledge about a certain subject. It is a directly political and discursive practice in that it is purposeful and ideological. It is best seen as a mode of intervention into particular hegemonic discourses..... It is a political praxis that counters and resists the totalising imperative of age-old ‘legitimate’ and ‘scientific’ bodies of knowledge. Thus, feminist scholarly practices... are inscribed in relations of power – relations that they counter, resist or even perhaps implicitly support. There can, of course, be no apolitical scholarship. (Mohanty 2003: 19)

This chapter traces a number of different interventions that sought to transform ‘legitimate’ and ‘scientific’ bodies of knowledge. It begins by tracing how some of the younger participants that were introduced in Chapter 2 saw research as a form of political engagement. Their accounts generate questions that are pursued in later sections, where I widen the generational and occupational focus. In the section titled ‘The politics of recognition’, I show how some participants sought to elicit experiential, affective and emotional ‘ways of knowing’ that traditionally had little place in the public sphere, in professional practice or in the academy. ‘Close encounters’ assesses knowledge-work at the interface between research, policy and practice. Finally, ‘In and beyond the cultural turn’ shows how participants engaged with post-structuralist forms of theory that drew attention to the generative power of knowledge-work: its power to constitute and perform what Gibson-Graham¹ term ‘other worlds’ (Gibson-Graham 1996b).

Knowledge-work as political practice

Your research has to make a difference to more than yourself and your own life.
(Alessandra Marino)

I'm doing a PhD that, because of the experience of politics I bring to it, I hope can be an inspiration for other women. (Stella Semino)

Despite such commitments, many young scholars were ambivalent about the relationship between activism and research:

I've always seen studying as part of my activism – gaining the knowledge to support what I do. But there are lots of people doing politics through theory, but without caring about how to present it – how to make their thinking meaningful to others. So I had a five-year gap, a break in my studies, following a crisis. The crisis was about modes of academic talking, their detached mode of presentation, with them not wanting to communicate with people who didn't talk the same language. (P.G. Maciotti)

[Doing a PhD] I'm worried about being disconnected from reality because I read a lot of pieces by people that on a theoretical level make a lot of sense but at the level of actually reflecting reality in local neighbourhoods, really reflecting political trajectories and the things that have happened, or the problems of doing politics, and the kinds of decisions that you have to make doing politics, I don't find that reflected in much material. (Sukhwant Dhaliwal)

I'm not a good activist, and I'm not sure I'm a good academic, and I'm certainly not sure how they go together. In particular, I'm not sure that being an academic is useful. When I did the PhD I wanted it to be useful, to be politically relevant. But I'm not sure it was. Then I got the scholarship to come to England to study more. Personally benefitting from my research made me really uncomfortable. (Susan Pell)

Each of these extracts refers to concerns about how to make research meaningful and useful to the movements to which participants were committed. One response was to use research to give voice to groups experiencing marginalization and exploitation:

The role of many people in the academy is to change the ordering of knowledge. Our main point [in research on sex work and migration] is to ask: why don't you ask sex workers what their experience is? Why do feminist abolitionists or policymakers always think they know better? That's a very feminist point. (P.G. Maciotti)

The focus on experiential knowledge was closely linked to forms of activist engagement with voluntary and/or political organizations. Participants attempted to use research to raise awareness about the issues at stake, and to try to 'give something back' to the movements or groups that they studied. For example, P.G.'s research draws on x:talk, a sex-worker led project providing free English classes to migrant workers, and mobilizing migrant sex workers to

claim rights; Sarah Lamble's research on prisons drew on her activist work connecting LGBT prisoners to the wider queer and transgender communities through a pen-pal scheme (the Bent Bars project, <http://www.bentbarsproject.org>); Susan Pell's postdoctoral research centred on the study of how social movements create their own archives and collective social memory. The latter raised difficult methodological and ethical issues. Susan recounted how:

When I was doing my PhD I kept having the problem – what kind of stories do I want to tell? Where is it fair to make them open to public analysis? As a researcher I feel like a bit of a voyeur; I thought that people might look at me as though I had an ulterior motive. So as an academic I now feel like I have got to be an advocate for a particular kind of methodological approach concerned with questions of who do we study and how, and what should we make 'public'. (Susan Pell)

Political commitments influenced not only methodological choices but also modes of engagement with different audiences:

There is something about the academy that is different from activism; activism has to be much more responsive. I want to combine both; without some form of activist engagement, being an academic doesn't make sense. So I want to write for activist groups – like I did a report for the Women's Coalition for Peace back in Israel, called 'Who profits?' about the industry of the [Israeli] occupation. (Dana Rubin)

Similarly P.G. recounted how she had worked on a report on the impact of anti-trafficking laws on sex workers. But Sarah Lamble spoke of the 'perennial problem' of linking activism and academic work: '*academics will find it too activist and activists will find it too conceptual*':

I go back and forth on that. Sometimes I think that when I come to publishing I probably won't try to speak to both audiences at once, but will try to use the same material and publish it in different forms. Because as much as I want to say those two things can come together, if you are going to make it acceptable to non-academics it's probably not going to count in research terms given all the pressures of impact and stuff. I mean, I do want my research to make an impact but certainly not in the way that government envisages impact. So you have to make choices. (Sarah Lamble)

Some participants who had set out on the PhD route did not continue, for a range of reasons. Lisa Harker, whom we met in Chapter 4, became impatient with the academic route and moved to other spaces of knowledge-work – NGOs and think-tanks – where the temporal cycle of research, policy and impact was shorter. And Cecilia Wee, who went on to become an independent arts curator, told how:

When I was younger I wanted to do a PhD but when I started I realized I didn't want to only do one thing. The academic life was too abstracted from what I was interested in – that is how audiences and artists meet and confront each other, encouraging processes of reflection and questioning. (Cecilia Wee)

These participants all clearly wanted to create productive relationships between research and politics. As such they had to negotiate a series of dilemmas. One was how to re-imagine the relationship between researcher and research subject (as in P.G.'s comment on involving sex workers in the research process and enabling them to give voice to their experience). A second was that of how to find a theoretical basis for work that could not easily be situated in existing academic hierarchies and disciplinary repertoires. If your research is on India, the West Bank, Argentina or China, how can you do this within western traditions of liberal theory? If you are working on questions of culture and identity, how can this be accommodated in modernist social science? Most of the young scholars I spoke to were working beyond the cultural, linguistic and post-colonial 'turns' in social theory. But this led directly to a third dilemma, highlighted in the comments from both P.G. and Dana: how to overcome the limitations of academic styles of presentation, and respond to the imperative to make research meaningful and useful to those for whom the outcome might matter. Finally, the extracts show young researchers wondering how to engage in research as a form of collective practice that, in Alessandra and Stella's terms, made a difference to more than yourself. This was extremely difficult in an academic climate that valued and rewarded individual achievement, which viewed PhD study, in particular, as a singular and lonely endeavour, and in which research directed towards policy and practice tended to be valued less highly than 'critical' and theoretical work within the academy.

These concerns speak to each of the questions that structure the chapter. They reference wider debates about the transformations of knowledge and power that have been addressed in other literatures on the ethics and practices of research (Edwards and Mauthner 2002; Hollway and Jefferson 2000; Lather 1991); on the relationships between social science and government (Bevir 2010); on changing professional practice (Bondi, Carr, Clarke and Clegg 2011; Dent and Whitehead 2002); and on the neoliberalization of the academy (Cannan and Shumar 2008). My aim in the rest of this chapter is more modest. I want to draw on the accounts of participants to show how knowledge-work and politics are differently and multiply entangled in individual working lives.

The politics of recognition

Nancy Fraser famously argued that, 'The struggle for recognition is fast becoming the paradigmatic form of political conflict' (Fraser 1997: 11). Her analysis was situated in a feminist critique of political economy, but speaks to a range of claims for recognition that challenged the prevailing knowledge-power orthodoxies across the professions, organizational management, political practice and the academy. However, the recognition of diverse personal experiences and forms of voice potentially brings more of the 'person'

into the governmental domain. I want to illustrate this paradox by drawing on examples of the reordering of knowledge and power within the professions, in development work and in the academy.

The social movements of the 1960s and 1970s challenged the professional monopoly of expertise, seeking to appropriate, translate and construct knowledge in ways that spoke to people's experience and which could be used in projects of social change. This was most marked, perhaps, in challenges to the orthodoxies of a powerful and male-dominated medical profession, which exercised control over reproduction, sexuality and bodily and mental health. This was a key focus of the burgeoning women's health groups of the 1970s and of AIDS activism in the 1990s (Maskovsky 2009). *Our Bodies Ourselves* (<http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org>) – a feminist self-help resource first published in 1970 – emerged from one women's health collective and was widely circulated and used by women's groups. Ann McPherson (G2) was one of those involved in the *Our Bodies Ourselves* (OBOS) collective, and in her later role as a doctor in general practice she continued her interest in democratizing knowledge:

Well, I've always been interested in patient experience because, for example, the book on miscarriage I wrote was based on interviewing people about their own experiences. This began when I had breast cancer, which was fifteen years ago, and I met up with a colleague who had a new knee and we both wanted to know other people's experiences. And rather than have just the heroic or someone who has done something extraordinary we wanted to have this wide range. We started by doing a questionnaire, but a questionnaire isn't a really good way of doing it because people tend not to write lots about their experience. So then we came round to realize that we had to go and talk to them, and later we started to video them. We always used to interview between forty and fifty people from all over the country, different backgrounds, different experiences, and we've now done this for fifty-two different diseases. We managed to get a bit of funding from the Department of Health and also set up a charity. We found some very supportive people at the Department of Health and we set up DIPE [Database of Individual Patient Experiences]. (Ann McPherson)

Ann later developed a resource for young people (Teenage Health Talk On Line) that prefigured the more general turn to the internet and the use of new social media as research platforms; but more importantly, for my purposes, it was a pioneer of emerging models of practice in health and well-being based on co-production, peer-based support (for example, in the Expert Patient scheme in the UK) and personal experience, though Ann herself was highly critical of current health policy. She saw herself as a campaigner and policy actor;² she pioneered the generation of online resources through which groups – including young people – could share experiences of ill-health and learn from their peers; and had an influential policy role through participation in Department of Health innovations. But the extract above also demonstrates other political dynamics of knowledge-work: the significance of research methods (only some of which would enable a focus on surfacing experience); the evolution of research projects (from tiny and particular to major programmes) in a parlous

funding environment; and the links between personal experience and publicly focused research (it all began with ‘a friend’s new knee’).

Recognition, this suggests, is not simply a matter of a cultural acceptance of voices and experiences that had been hidden or marginalized, and adding them to the available stock of knowledge. It can also be transformative of ‘mainstream’ knowledge. This takes me to a second example, this time from international development work. In Chapter 5 I discussed how Marion Macalpine and others developed new forms of leadership and organizational development that privileged participative and ‘distributed’ notions of power. Here, Marion describes her work on an international programme that brought African women with expertise in gender and development together with UK practitioners of management and leadership education:

It was a fantastic education for all of us really. But there were lots of dilemmas around being a white person going out with big suitcases of books and ideas from the West, and I spent an awful lot of time thinking about it. And I think we developed a way of providing frameworks so that people could create their own content. Our role was enabling and facilitating; we tried to tackle the kind of power involved. I think the kind of development stuff fed directly into all the work that we did with British managers, so there was always a global context. We wrote a paper called ‘Choosing the Knowledge We Carry’ about contesting the hegemony of managerialism.³ And we did quite a lot of work looking at individual managers’ responses to the legacies of colonialism, the role of the World Bank and so on, which was all hugely powerful. (Marion Macalpine)

Interestingly both sets of innovations were taken up by academic, governmental and charitable bodies. But the process of valuing experience was not without its own difficulties. Marion and Ann’s work highlights the significance of mediating practices through which experience was elicited, codified and communicated. This suggests something of the power dynamics at stake between facilitators /researchers/teachers and those whose experience is elicited: in Ann’s work, the power dynamics of professionals/clients and between generations, both of which she was trying to unravel; and in Marion’s case the legacy of colonial power.

Within the academy the focus on experience presented challenges to academic hierarchies and objectivist conceptions of knowledge. Marian Barnes’s work privileged care as a dimension of struggles for social justice; Marilyn Taylor was committed to projects of community and user empowerment; Helen Sullivan (G3) worked on public policy and local governance. Each valued experiential knowledge, and each sought to collaborate with the subjects of their research to produce frameworks and concepts that might help make sense of that experience:

I find it hard to pin down who my work is for. Much of what I do is for a practitioner audience – front-line workers who are trying to negotiate the difficult

stuff. I also work with service users themselves, finding ways of introducing some of the theory I work with in ways that enable them to make sense of what is happening in their own lives. It's working these borders that is exciting and rewarding. (Marian Barnes)

Research has taught me that life is more complicated than theory tells you. I tried to find theories that worked 'on the ground' – theories that linked governmentality to the possibility of agency. I was interested in how domination was not the end of the story, how people could still have and use power. (Marilyn Taylor)

There's something very seductive about being the expert and I strove for a long, long time to become the expert. And I realize now that's not what it's about, it's about how you approach the issue, how you work out with people what the questions are. That's how your expertise, in as much you have any, is expressed; it's not about being anything, it's about becoming. (Helen Sullivan)

Each stressed the importance of research and teaching that speaks to the experience of those with little formal power, and emphasized the value of participatory methods and action research. Each also spoke about the importance of working across the academic/practice boundary and of being able to communicate what they did:

When I write I'm always thinking of the people that I was interviewing. If they were going to read this stuff it wasn't going to be their favourite bedtime reading, but at least it had to make sense to them, and I always felt that my first accountability was to the people I'd interviewed, basically. (Marilyn Taylor)

The politics of recognition opened out a concern with democratizing knowledge; not only making it more widely available but also introducing notions of the 'co-production' of teaching and research.⁴ But it also opened up dilemmas, many of which emerged in my conversation with Catherine Durose (G4) and Liz Richardson (G3), both university-based researchers working on policy-related agendas – at the time of the interview, issues of 'community' and 'civil society'. Liz spoke about being a facilitator extracting knowledge from those she interviewed and then 'giving it back' so that they – and others – could make sense of their experience. Catherine spoke of being able to reflect on people's experience and of having:

a responsibility to sort of present their experience to the wider world because there's some bigger things you can learn from what they've done. That's why I also think I'm an advocate for people even if they haven't nominated me. (Catherine Durose)

Both spoke about the value of the 'co-production' of knowledge between researcher and researched: not only did it lead, they suggested, to better data to inform policy, but it also changed the power dynamics inherent to the research process. But both drew attention to some of the difficult power dynamics at stake.

It was, they suggested, difficult for academics to ‘unlearn their privilege’. There are also methodological issues of authenticity and representation, and of communication:

You have to ask if we restrict our ability to co-produce research because our comfort zone is text, and text isn't the comfort zone of many of the people you are researching with. (Catherine Durose)

And Liz raised the issue of how far the chosen methods of researchers working with experiential data enabled them effectively to ‘speak to power’ in a context where more ‘scientific’ methods – such as the randomized control trial – were privileged. But experience-based research and co-produced research raise questions that go beyond methodological concerns: they have deeper resonances with patterns of inequality and disadvantage, access and voice. These encounters take place in what Askins and Pain term ‘contact zones’ (Askins and Pain 2011, drawing on Pratt 1992): zones of interaction across difference that are material as well as epistemological. The interviews show participants wrestling with questions of how far to cede power and how far this might be possible. They suggest that the valorization of experience and authenticity may serve to undermine the perceived expertise of the academic and her ability to speak to power.

But there were other dilemmas and dangers at stake in the preference, by many participants, for more experiential and participative methods. Some spoke of how enabling ‘ordinary people’ to challenge the power of professionals and service-providers could feed into governmental challenges (and cuts) to the public sector. Sarah Lamble spoke about being reluctant to mix her research and her activist work because of the dangers of appropriation, either in the academy or, more importantly, by government:

A lot of the work that I do now is trying to get prisoners' voices heard. The tensions that I have are around wanting to do work that would support and assist in the kind of anti-prison organizing work, but not to do the kind of criminological research that might get used by governments in ways that I didn't want it to be used, or to kind of advance my own career on the backs of prisoners. (Sarah Lamble)

Tess Ridge, a social policy academic who works in ways that seeks to get children’s voices heard on issues that are problematic for them, also expressed concern about how her research might be used:

I have to be very careful about my research. I think that's true of all of us who work with people who are vulnerable. I know that's totally the wrong term because they're not vulnerable but actually tremendously resilient. But if you say they're resilient then people think, 'Oh, poverty is not a bad thing, people are so resilient.' What I've tried to say all the time is 'children are really activated, they're imaginative, they're sparky, they're clever, they're smart, low income kids really try to get a lot of stuff solved'. But if you take that into a policy perspective it is assumed that they can have agency to overcome their problems. But they can't, poverty is so constraining. (Tess Ridge)

Bringing personal experience into the public and policy domains, then, is double-edged: it, too, is vulnerable to forms of appropriation in which research results are detached from the complexity and ambiguity of the findings, and in which policymakers can appropriate them to legitimate policies that are antithetical to the intentions and commitments of researchers. It also, by bringing more of the personal into the public and policy domains, opens up governmental projects of improvement and responsabilization. But collaborative teaching and research also opened up powerful alliances and vocabularies through which activist struggles could be pursued.

Close encounters: research, policy and practice

These dilemmas and ambiguities were intensified as researchers brought commitments to practitioners into the research process and were drawn into a series of close encounters with government. Many crossed the practice/policy/political boundaries in the course of their own working lives and brought a commitment to conducting research across those boundaries. For example, Helen Sullivan had worked for local government before becoming an academic, while Sue Richards worked in the Civil Service, a consultancy organization, a school of public policy and the think-tank, Institute for Government. Ruth Lister, who had worked in the voluntary sector before becoming an academic, spoke about how *'I never wanted to do abstract stuff, I always wanted my work to be grounded'*. But I want to begin the discussion with the work of Davina Cooper, who had served as a local politician before becoming an academic. Davina spoke of trying to work across the boundary of academic theory and those engaged in 'practical politics' – often as gay and lesbian workers inside local government but also a wider audience of social movements. But this presented difficulties:

My academic writing comes out of my political commitments. I wanted to explore what the radical potential of the state might be. I got very interested in the mid 1980s about how these limits were being tested; many people [with radical backgrounds] were entering local government and doing what, theoretically, shouldn't have been possible within a capitalist state. My book, Sexing the City, came out of that experience. And I wanted it to be practically useful to those who had also been involved. But engagement in more practical politics often means tackling different problems and questions to those that can animate work as an academic. I have always been looking for crossover spaces where debates across these differences can happen. (Davina Cooper)

Sue Brownill, speaking from a different history, spoke of how:

Always as an academic I try to engage with wherever I am [living/working]. This started with my work in Docklands, where I used my experience to write my thesis on popular planning. But ever since I have tried to keep my feet on

the ground, especially being involved in policy and planning stuff. So I have always been involved locally – working with community organizations, housing associations and so on. Academically one of my areas of research has been public participation in planning and regeneration. I've done research for ODPM, the Royal Town Planning Institute, the GLA [Greater London Authority], etc., on this as well. That's where the Big Society comes in. I started with an interest in neighbourhood plans – there was a pilot not far from where I lived. But it was really low key, not much happened. But what was developing was a campaign around cuts which showed up many of the issues, so I followed that. (Sue Brownill)

There are important resonances between these experiences and those of the women cited in the previous section. But the desire to make research 'grounded' and meaningful to those engaged with 'practical politics' can be disappointing. This takes us back to Dana's and Susan's comments, in the first section of this chapter, about the different temporalities and languages associated with academic work and activism, and their experience of the difficulties of 'working across' the research/activist boundary. This is especially the case, Davina acknowledged, where theoretical work is involved:

With others, I tried to shape the Centre (the AHRC-funded Centre for Law, Gender and Sexuality) in ways that enabled it to do work that was intellectually and theoretically innovative, that was critical and interdisciplinary, but that would also engage with policy and with community activists. So it would look outwards and would cross over the academic/non-academic divide. But it wouldn't do that at the expense of theoretical innovation. (Davina Cooper)

I asked Davina how she managed that tension.

I think it was the hardest thing. We tried to do crossover work, and looked at different formats for discussion, for expressing our views, different modes of communication, and started to build up networks. But a lot of our work didn't translate easily into community activist interest, and it was too critical for many public policy makers, and that's the difficulty. It was the same with Sexing the City. There's always that problem of how, if you do more critical and theoretical academic work, the problem isn't necessarily the accessibility of what you're saying, it's about the interest of what you're saying. Often the questions and the problems you're addressing are different ones. (Davina Cooper)

Helen Sullivan's 'crossover' work was rather different. She began her working life in local government, and developed a strong commitment to addressing issues of poverty and disadvantage in particular local communities and in enhancing local democracy. After becoming an academic she worked in – and later led – teams engaged in evaluating large government programmes, including Health Action Zones, Local Government Modernisation, Local Strategic Partnerships and Neighbourhood Regeneration/Management. These programmes were situated in shifts in both government and the academy. The New Labour governments of the 1990s funded a number of large-scale

evaluation studies as part of the ‘What works?’ agenda in public policy, seeking to find objective methods and evidence, and to embed a more ‘scientific’ approach to policymaking (Bevir 2010; Nutley, Walter, and Davies 2007; Newman 2011a). This movement towards evaluation supported the growth of new academic units, often located in business schools or schools of health or public policy (some of the very few areas of expansion in higher education in that period).

When we did the evaluation of the local government modernization agenda government was in the grip of its ‘What works?’ phase; it was ‘This is a policy, does it work or not?’, and the question that never got asked was ‘Is this the right policy?’, and to what extent are you constructing the evidence on the basis of the policy that you’ve already set in train. In the earlier evaluation of Health Action Zones, which Marian [Barnes] led, that was more open in the sense that the policies for service modernization were still trying to address inequalities. This was back in the days when those sorts of things were still cared about. I think as the New Labour emphasis became much more on modernizing services, and choice, and empowerment, then evaluation became less about whether policies could have anything to do with the most disadvantaged people in society, or whether they were going to make any difference to structural inequality. (Helen Sullivan)

But evaluation programmes, she suggested, could also be bent to address wider questions. Marian Barnes made a similar point:

There are spaces; you can make spaces in doing contract work, you can develop more critical spaces; you can both deliver what’s expected and open up more critical perspectives. For example, in doing the Children’s Fund Evaluation [for which she was co-director of the national evaluation] prevention was already a mainstream policy and practice discourse so we said, ‘Let’s take that seriously, push it, interrogate what that might mean.’ In evaluation projects there’s something about recognizing the impossibility of achieving the objectives that officials want but of highlighting what can actually be accomplished. For example, the National Children’s Fund created important spaces that enabled practitioners to do creative work with children and families. But it didn’t prevent social exclusion, which was its primary goal. (Marian Barnes)

As well as conducting government commissioned research and evaluation studies, academic participants were also often invited to offer informal responses to policy proposals or to attend government sponsored ‘round tables’. Here, I return to my conversation with Liz Richardson and Catherine Durose, one focus of which was the ethical and normative dilemmas raised in such ‘close encounters’ with government:

Recently we had an opportunity to talk to the new coalition government and me and a bunch of colleagues decided that we would. Other colleagues criticised us for doing that, and it does make you wonder whether to say, ‘Oh well, it’s better to be in than out’, or whether you should just stand on the outside and criticize. (Liz Richardson)

I think that's a really interesting point because I think being in a [university] department that is increasingly going towards a critical perspective, there's an ethos of 'do not get your hands dirty' [by talking to government]. At the same time they really kind of look down on doing something, anything, that is kind of policy relevant. And I really struggle with that. (Catherine Durose)

These and other extracts raise questions about what sources of expertise such academics carry and the ordering of legitimacy attached to different sources of expertise. Such issues have been debated elsewhere:⁵ much of the literature focuses on encounters between the relatively fixed institutional positions of government and university. However, what I think we can see happening is that the spaces of power that academics and other researchers mobilized shifted as both the academy and government itself were remade in accordance with 'modernizing' logics. The concerns of Helen, Catherine and Liz were not those of academics more securely placed in 'traditional' departments or in more 'critical' spaces (such as that occupied by Davina). The institutional field of policymaking had also become more complex and diverse, traversed by what I term 'policy entrepreneurs' and 'knowledge brokers' who worked across boundaries and who generated and mobilized new spaces of power. As well as creating knowledge through research they sought out knowledge from 'elsewhere', repackaged it, transformed it, translated it, publicized it and mobilized its use. Several participants engaged in such work were discussed earlier in the book: for example, Kate Oliver, Jane Foot and Tricia Zipfel, all of whom have had complex working lives in which 'knowledge brokering' became progressively more important. All had conducted research commissioned by government bodies and organizations such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation; all had worked on major policy programmes; and some had gone on to work with think-tanks such as the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), Demos and the Young Foundation.

Lisa Harker, at the time of the interview, had just left her post as deputy director of the New Labour-oriented think-tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research, to take up a post at Demos. As noted earlier, she had earlier embarked on a PhD but:

I got more and more interested in how you change policy and how you change things quite quickly. I mean I very quickly learnt that I wasn't suited to academia because I was so impatient. I wanted to put my research findings on 'Women's Hour', and I wasn't really interested in academic journals. I wanted something that could be more immediate. (Lisa Harker)

Think-tanks and other spaces of knowledge brokerage were ambiguously positioned in the governance shifts of the 1990s that brought an increased focus on evidence-based policy. This brought academics into new contractual relationships with government, securing funds to research policy agendas and to evaluate policy programmes. Research Councils also began to fund a number of cross-disciplinary research centres (such as the centre led by Davina

Cooper discussed earlier) that might, it was hoped, generate innovation and inform policy and practice. Such developments generated a number of tensions. First, academics had to 'work the borders' with government, negotiating the objectives and terms of the contract in order to conduct credible research. Second, they had to face in (at least) two directions, both fulfilling the terms of contracts to deliver 'practice-oriented' recommendations and engaging in more theoretically driven and critical work that would enable them to publish the kinds of papers that would meet 'academic' criteria of success. Third, they had to manage the relationship between their own agendas – often highly critical of whatever the current ideology or policy might be – and those of government.

But academics and researchers also generated new spaces of influence and promoted new 'public conversations'. We saw in Chapter 4 how a number of academics (Hilary Land, Ruth Lister, Sue Himmelweit and others associated with the Women's Budget Group) and researchers (working in think-tanks and NGOs) sought to influence social, economic and development policy. But academics also worked on local policy agendas and local struggles. Jane Wills linked her work with London Citizens to her teaching role, developing an MA in Community Organizing and teaching research methods in ways that enable students to engage with community politics. She also offered an image of the university itself as a civic institution: *'We have become agents of the state, often becoming quite isolated from the communities in which we are located; and our academic labour has become so individualized.'* Instead, she offers an image of the university *'working in partnership with people in the production of knowledge'*; and on this basis, she argues, we *'may be able to renegotiate our relationship with the state'*.

A different conception of the public role of the university is represented in the formation of the Birmingham Policy Commission. Launched at the Conservative Party Conference in 2010, supported by Demos and led by Helen Sullivan, this brought together commissioners from the academy, policy and practice, and worked with young people from the National Youth Forum. The first commission focused on the coalition government's formal commitments to localism and the Big Society.

For me the point about doing a Policy Commission was that, yes, you had some academics but you principally had people from policy and practice. And one of the things that I tried to do was to get as many kinds of radical people into this process as possible, although it's harder than you might think. The aim was to find the questions that weren't being asked and what might be the consequences of not asking those questions, and how you bring them into debates about whether this or that policy is working or not. And I suppose that's what I've tried to do although not as successfully as I would like. Because very early on I realized, and this is just my naivety I suppose, but very early on I realized that I had a fundamental disagreement with the body of people, most of whom I respect enormously, that I had a fundamental disagreement with what they were advising, and that fundamental disagreement is ... and it's so difficult to write the report ... the fundamental disagreement I have is that they do not ... and

this is people from both the private sector and the public sector, the voluntary sector, people who were politicians – the view they came to very quickly was that it doesn't matter who delivers public services, they could be delivered by the public, private or third sectors or some combination. What mattered was the outcome, what mattered was that there's accountability, what mattered was that there's value for money, but it did not matter whether services remained within the public sector or not. But it does matter to me. And the dilemma is that I had to write the report. When it comes to representing what it is they think they're doing, that's been my job, so the paths that I have trod or tried to tread have been very tricky. (Helen Sullivan; her emphasis)

Unlike other extracts I have here retained Helen's hesitations about putting this experience into words, of pinning down the issue of which, at the time of the interview, she was still trying to make sense. The extract also hints at broader dilemmas about the independence of researchers operating in such ambiguous spaces of power, spaces that are cross-cut by competing rationalities and logics – but that have eventually to be at least temporarily resolved in a particular text (the report). It speaks to issues of political agency: is this concerned simply with bringing people together, of facilitating and enabling, or should academics have a view? And, if so, what is the basis of legitimacy for such a view? The contested nature of knowledge at stake in 'close encounters' was an issue developed in my conversation with Catherine and Liz, who discussed how far the evidence they presented to funders and policymakers should be experience-based; cumulative across years of study and engagement; or based on more 'objective' and experimental methods of research. Finally the Policy Commission raises issues of accountability: issues which have been debated in Helen's own work (Sullivan 2003). Interestingly, the Commission was supported by Demos, taking us back to the beginning of this section and raising questions about the different spaces of power in which knowledge-work is conducted and the possible tensions between them.

The spaces discussed in this section are specifically British. Different traditions of the role of the academy are represented in forms of 'engaged' or 'activist' anthropology, principally in the United States, in which research and political action are deeply entangled (see also Maskovsky 2011). Ida Susser is an excellent example of the possibilities opened up in such work. She is an anthropologist whose work is as informed by feminism, and which concentrates on the understanding of gender in relation to class inequalities, colonialism and empire since the 1970s. She sees her work as part of an overall political engagement and has been active in the past decade in helping to form and working with Athena: Advancing Gender Equity and Human Rights in the Global Response to HIV/AIDS. The embedding of research within and for activist communities is illustrated in her work on HIV prevention among homeless men and women in New York, in community mobilization around HIV in Puerto Rico and in South Africa. She also developed a training programme within South Africa attended by students, NGO workers, civil servants and academics, creating, like Jane, a

new cadre of 'expert' activists. The spaces of power she generated and occupied, then, are both global and profoundly local; and they connect the broad roles of what she terms the 'public intellectual', opening debates and intervening in the wider public culture, with specific and embedded research-activism.

In and beyond the cultural turn

The shifting formations, sites and relations of knowledge-work were not only generated by institutional shifts (in the academy and government) and global/local struggles but by theoretical and epistemological contestation. While the previous section highlighted the importance of experiential knowledge, the cultural, post-colonial and post-structuralist turns in social theory challenged the links between embodied experience, identity and agency (Brown 2005). The focus of many theorists turned to how subjects were formed through language and other forms of representation; experience, then, could no longer be viewed as the expression of a coherent and essential self (Haraway 1988; Scott 1991). And post-colonial scholars argued that stories grounded in experience were in any case problematic: 'experience is not a truth that precedes culturally given representations of experience but is actually mediated by those representations' (Stone-Mediatore 2000: 111). This created problems for feminism: if women could no longer be viewed as a common embodied category how might a feminist politics be pursued? The space for critique, Eisenstein argued, shrank as feminists turned to the theories of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan: 'I read declarations of the death of the subject with considerable suspicion, given that women had only just begun to declare their right to subjectivity and agency' (Eisenstein 2006: 52). In contrast Gibson-Graham offer a more positive reading of the political possibilities opened up by the cultural turn, arguing that post-structuralism 'enabled a turn away from the dominant focus on theorizing the unfolding of structuralist logics, and an enhanced focus on theorizing the contingency of social outcomes'. This, Gibson-Graham argue, 'gave us (and the world) more room to move, enlarging the space of the ethical and the possible' (Gibson-Graham 2008: 4; see also Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

I want to trace in this section some of the ways in which participants managed the tension between the deconstruction of 'woman' as an embodied category and the pursuit of politically informed research. Some were themselves agents of these transformations; but rather than being caught in Eisenstein's 'political paralysis' they saw new forms of theory as intrinsic to the activist struggles with which they were engaged:

I still think of myself as a Black Marxist feminist, but I found that Marxist theory couldn't speak completely to the moment, couldn't do the race and gender politics of what I was looking at, couldn't unpick, make sense of it. So I turned

to post-structuralism through the feminist engagement with Foucault. It seemed to make sense, to give another kind of language that more happily aligned itself with the questions coming out of the political activism I'd been involved with. Black feminist and anti-racist organizations were struggling to try to articulate the ways in which we understood the world, how to work with experience, how to engage beyond the old Marxist categories – you sort of can't. Then suddenly there is work that says you need to think of experience not as coming out of an essential self but as figured contextually and contingently in situated contexts. And this takes you beyond any essential characteristic of the subject; you realize that experience is subject to naming and framing practices. (Gail Lewis)

Gail acknowledge that post-structuralism was not necessarily a perspective that activist groups found useful, but that for her she could find a 'good enough fit' between notions of the de-essentialized subject and the idea of the subject as embodied, feeling and potentially political. She and other participants were engaged with inequality and difference, but through different theoretical frameworks. Avtar Brah, also coming out of Black feminist politics, talked of how she was:

Still sort of thinking through the implications of gendered inequality, anti-racism, ethnicity, identity, and the whole issue of what do we do about the questions we used to subsume under socialism – inequality, oppression, exploitation – how do we think about them today? These are the things that still preoccupy me. But the framing of the questions has changed in the sense that society has changed. For instance, I used to be involved in Feminist Review and we used to call ourselves a socialist feminist journal. Now we don't specifically call ourselves that but we are still interested in issues of class inequality, and with issues we now call intersectionality, what we used to call difference. Feminism has changed obviously, people talk about post-feminism and all that – but some of the questions are still the same: questions of violence against women, employment issues, low wages. (Avtar Brah)

I asked Avtar how she situated herself within this changed framework.

It led to new opportunities in what I was writing. I became engaged with new theories, such as theories of intersectionality, and also of globalization. At a personal level I became less active in political groups but through the 1990s I became much more involved in politics through my writing. (Avtar Brah)

'Politics through writing' was a means of speaking to key issues arising in the wider political-cultural shifts of recent decades. For Gail, this was conducted through pedagogic work at the Open University and in wider political and theoretical writings. And in her book Avtar reflects that her writing is: 'in part an inscription of the effects of my involvement with certain political projects. It writes them as much as is written by them. These projects – feminism, anti-racism, socialist envisaging of democratic politics – have had a critical bearing on the intellectual and political configurations of our times' (Brah 1996: 10).

The work of Gail and Avtar speaks to new formations of politics, culture and theory in the aftermath of the struggles against the exclusions of white, western, heterosexual feminism. P.G. Macioti (G4) reflected that:

If you want to fight for the self determination of people in the face of oppressive forms of power, then post-structuralism is helpful; it deconstructs the categories that keep people in fixed positions based on classed or racialized distinctions. Of course, I struggled with the tension between being able to say, 'This is the truth, this is why I am engaged in political struggle,' on the one hand and, on the other hand, to recognize that there is no truth. You have to say this is the best politics I can do; there is no single theory that you can work with, you just have to work from the experience of the people who are struggling with what they see as their truth. (P.G. Macioti)

Sarah Lamble's account drew attention to a different set of tensions. Her activism works across the politics of violence against women and prison abolition, in both of which she used the term 'social movements' to depict axes of political engagement. The term social movement is associated with forms of politics arising from the recognition of common axes of identity as the basis for struggle, a politics that is not readily configured within post-structuralist theory. But when questioned about her use of the term social movement, she went on to recount how:

The other part of my project is that I'm really interested in a kind of post-identity politics. So I'm interested in queer, trans and feminist organizing that doesn't organize around the banner of identity politics, but still takes questions of identity seriously. So that's why I wanted to focus on queer, trans and feminist activists who are doing work not only under the banner of a gay liberation movement or whatever but doing it under the banner of anti-prison work, or anti-border work, or anti-globalization. In my project they've clashed a bit, so it's not only people who are identifiers, queer or feminist, but people who take a kind of feminist or queer ethos to organizing the work that they do. And I'm also interested in forms of organizing that are very grassroots. I mean a lot of the projects that I'm interested in are very small, have very little visibility. People would attend marches and they would organize events but would be too small to get counted as a movement in the conventional sense. (Sarah Lamble)

These extracts suggests how Sarah, P.G. and many others I talked to worked effectively across what might be termed social or political movements and the more fluid and ephemeral political performances associated with 'post-identity' politics. In many interviews participants talked about being engaged in a 'practical politics' supporting particular groups – volunteering in women's refuges, supporting 'grassroots' community struggles – while at the same time deconstructing the very categories – women, community – on which it might be assumed such a politics depended. But rather than these being viewed as practices that were in tension with each other, they were spoken of as complementary; young researchers spoke of moving towards theoretical

work in order to get deeper understandings of the very practices of violence, exclusion, oppression and injustice that they witnessed in their activism. This runs rather counter to claims that the post-structuralist turn, in deconstructing essentializing categories of identity and solidarity, has led to political paralysis. Sarah's extract also speaks to a discursive separation between feminism, gay liberation and other movements as a collective struggle based on an assumed common identity on the one hand and, on the other, the idea of feminist, queer and transgender as forms of political ethos or political performance (see Chapter 2). This puts 'experience' back into the political frame, but now from a position that acknowledges that the meaning of experience is subject, in Gail's terms, to processes of naming and framing rather than being an essential expression of an authentic self. What we can see in such work is, I think, a strategic use of categories such as class, race and ethnicity, and references to embodied women who are the subjects of domestic violence, at the same time that engagements with post-structuralism – integral to the project of rethinking difference through notions of intersectionality – deconstruct such categories.

The work of these and other academics can be viewed as exemplifying Gibson-Graham's call for scholars to constitute and perform 'other worlds' rather than being satisfied with critique and deconstruction:

Critical engagement – that very term – means a continuing attempt to unpack the kinds of internal logics of whatever the field of enquiry is, and what the implications might be. The generations who have come after are still doing this. They bring different understandings, and they certainly bring different technologies. But what I now feel – and this is because of the base [for intellectual work] becoming so narrowed to the extent that it is now deeply uncomfortable – is that critique is not enough. We also need to be able to construct. We need to be able to say this is what is wrong, these are its logics, these are the rationalities by which it works, these are the agendas that are being put forward and these are the ones that are being assimilated. So what is it that might make those very things different? And I think that is the question: how do we propose something that is different? (Gail Lewis)

The attempt to 'propose something that is different' can be traced across the accounts of this chapter, from the work on recognition to the engagements with policy to reframe knowledge itself:

I suppose what's remained continuous through the whole period is that the academic writing I've done has explored questions coming out of my political commitments. Initially this very much concerned what you can do with the state, and the radical potential and possibilities for those working within the state. And then I've gone on to think about how to re-theorize key political concepts: concepts like equality, power, the state, citizenship and so on; trying to find ways of thinking about these concepts that might open up other political possibilities. More recently, my work has moved towards other sites. The British state at the current moment doesn't feel like the site where much radical political mobilization is happening, so I've been looking elsewhere, to how people configure what I term 'everyday utopias' within the confines of the present. (Davina Cooper)

Davina Cooper's current work on 'everyday utopias' (Cooper 2013; see also Cooper 2001) makes visible a range of alternative possible ways of living, working and performing politics, from women's bath houses to alternative economic exchange projects, in the process re-examining and reinflecting concepts that have been the primary currency of traditional disciplines: concepts such as the state, governance, and power. Davina's work, and Gail's comments about moving beyond critique and deconstruction to '*make something different*', resonate with Sasha Roseneil's frustration at 'paranoid readings' of the present which left no space for action, for agency. She spoke about her interest in asking questions about social change:

That's what I've always been interested in, that's the theme that runs through everything ... trying to make social change happen and also understand process of social change. All my academic work is grappling with the question of social change, that's what I think sociology is about, but I think that there are those sociologists who kind of emphasize social stasis and continuity. That's very strong, I think, amongst feminists; there's a very strong tendency to kind of argue nothing's really changing, nothing much has changed, it's always as bad as it ever has been. My tendency has always been to look for the openings, look for the fissures, look for what is changing. And I think that you can kind of prise greater social change through finding the change that's already happening. (Sasha Roseneil)

This analysis is informed by her reading of Rogoff (Rogoff 2003) and Sedgwick (Sedgwick 2003) on paranoid and reparative readings. Rogoff describes the limits of both criticism (leading to the allocation of blame) and post-structural forms of critique (which stop at deconstruction). Both of these, she suggests, leave no way out, no ground from which to act. The move to what she terms 'criticality', in contrast, focuses on the present and on how to both understand its flaws while actualizing some of its potential: 'We have that double occupation in which we are both fully armed with the knowledges of critique, able to analyse and unveil, while at the same time sharing and living out the very conditions which we are able to see through' (Rogoff 2003, cited in Roseneil 2011: 127).

Conclusion

The work of the women discussed in this chapter is not that of 'gaining' power but of challenging dominant hierarchies of knowledge and expertise in order to transform patterns of dominance and exclusion. Professional knowledges were challenged through a turn to experience, involvement and co-production. Academic hierarchies were challenged as women looked to new theoretical perspectives to understand the transformations of culture and identity they were witnessing. The chapter has also shown how participants opened up and

engaged with theoretical developments that transformed much of the social sciences in the late twentieth century. The growth of women's studies, queer studies, post-colonial studies and cultural studies offered new disciplinary homes for many women within the academy (Ristock and Taylor 1998; Griffin and Braidotti 2002). New theoretical framings of power, subjectivity and belonging offered challenges to conventional understandings of how 'politics' might be understood and performed (Mohanty 2003; Narayan and Harding 2000; Butler 1999).

However, the chapter has also demonstrated the multiplicity of the institutional locations in which such work took place, and the diversity of the forms of intervention that were pursued. And, more importantly, it has shown that there was no common understanding of the politics that informed those interventions. The different critical and performative repertoires suggest at least two lines of tension that have run through the chapter. The first was between idea of knowledge as a route to empowerment and a more post-structuralist reading of expertise as a form of governmentality. The former looked back to Freirian notions of conscientization (see Chapter 2) in which knowledge of one's own condition was viewed as the first step to taking political action to address it. Knowledge here is viewed as a form of consciousness rather than a set of facts or data, but often leads to projects of wider enquiry about how particular conditions of oppression had been produced, and thus to the building of the kind of theory than could inform political action. This resonates with the Women's Liberation Movement process of consciousness raising through which women came to politics through collective engagement with personal experiences of oppression – of a particular group of women at a particular moment. Governmentality scholars would offer a rather different reading of such practices, noting how 'personal' and experiential forms of knowledge were integral to the constitution of new forms of self-governing and reflexive subjects. However, the tension between appeals to experience as the basis of political agency and more Foucauldian readings is not absolute. While Mohanty's post-colonial scholarship challenges appeals to experience that do not examine the cultural processes that shape experience, she also traces how subjects can be 'empowered' as knowledge producers (see discussion in Stone-Mediatore 2000). Theories of intersectionality offer new routes to how politics can be pursued (Brah and Phoenix 2004; Grabham, Cooper, Krishnadas and Herman 2009). And Gail Lewis and others cited in this chapter show how tensions can be reconciled in a 'good enough' way to enable common struggles to be forged across difference.

The second tension that has run across the chapter concerns the role of the academy. The work of Gibson-Graham both highlights the tension between a focus on critique and the idea of knowledge-work as performative and potentially generative of new worlds. Drawing on their work, Roseneil argues that: 'our understandings of the world are constitutive of it, and bring it into being.

At the simplest level this suggests that knowledge matters profoundly and that our models, theories, and analyses grant “performative force” ... to the systems and relations we describe’ (Roseneil 2012: 18). This is situated in a wider literature on enactment and performativity (Butler 1999; Law and Urry 1994; Mol 2002; Sedgwick 2003; Strathern 1991) that points to the generative power of methods and other forms of knowledge work: their capacity to enact social worlds, to make realities through what Mol (Mol 1999) terms an ‘ontological politics’.

Such a politics has implications for the analysis of the present conjuncture. Sasha Roseneil also draws on Sedgwick’s contrast between paranoid and reparative readings of the present (Sedgwick 2003), the latter opening up space for hope, and the energies and potentials this brings:

Reparative interpretations might not always be appropriate or possible, particularly as we enter a period of massive cuts to welfare states across Europe and an assault on collective provision of public services, with profound implications in terms of gendered, class and racialized inequalities. But if our research is conducted in a paranoid register our ability to analyse and oppose that which is new and normatively worse is greatly diminished. (Roseneil 2011: 129)

Rather than such paranoid readings, the chapter has shown how knowledge-work might open up, rather than close down, alternative spaces and rationalities. But how? Here I want to adapt Gibson-Graham’s framework of reframing, rereading and creating (Gibson-Graham 2008) in ways that relate to the framework for analysing the generative labour of participants that I introduced in Chapter 1. This had three elements: ‘making visible’, ‘fostering public conversations’ and ‘creative labour’. This chapter has traced different ways of using research to make visible that which is hidden: to bring it into public view and render it the object of political critique and action. Some of this labour concerns engaging with the experience of marginalized or silenced groups, including carers, front-line workers, sex workers, prisoners, asylum-seekers, and women subject to violence and abuse. But some concern tracing potentially forgotten histories of social movements, from Sasha Roseneil’s work on Greenham (Roseneil 1995; Roseneil 2000) to Susan Pell’s work on social movement archives. These are not simply ‘academic’ pieces of research but are important political interventions.

The work of participants has also been productive of new public conversations. The capacity of the women discussed in ‘The politics of recognition’ section of this chapter to bridge the academic/policy/practice boundaries has opened up new policy conversations but has also offered new discursive repertoires in which such conversations might take place. But it is not only policy shifts that are at stake. Across the chapter we can see how researchers and activists are opening up questions about current formations of politics and culture that are far reaching: the question of women in a culture increasingly characterized by religious fundamentalism (Sukhwant Dhaliwal), the value of friendship as

a mode of sustaining care and welfare (Sasha Roseneil), the ethical as well as policy significance of care (Marian Barnes), and contested formations of citizenship and belonging (Alessandra Marino, Dana Rubin, P.G. Macioti).

This generative labour raises questions about the possible appropriations of innovative developments and new discursive repertoires. It also reopens a concern about the relationship between knowledge-work as a form of political practice and the policy shifts of the 1990s towards a focus on 'What works?' and evaluation studies. This was, of course, not simply driven by governments; as the chapter has shown, academics, professionals, knowledge brokers and others sought to find ways of influencing policy and speaking to 'practice' as forms of political engagement, while universities sought to 'modernize' in ways that brought them closer to governmental power. Together these shifts altered the spaces, sites and relations of knowledge-work. As in Chapter 4, the 'close encounters' that resulted were of different orders, but all raised questions about the proper relationship between theoretical development, personal politics and the generation of forms of knowledge that could be readily used by policymakers and practitioners. Each can be viewed as political; but across the chapter participants have given different kinds of accounts of how they sought to reconcile theoretical work and 'practical' politics.

But the possibility of finding (partial and ambiguous) resolutions was conditioned by shifts in the material conditions of those engaged in knowledge-work. Recent work on the modernization or 'neoliberalization' of the academy echoes these themes (Brown 2005; Clarke 2010b; Gill 2009). Clarke traces the progressive transformation of universities as corporate enterprises and the adaptive strategies that have followed, some of which he describes as a form of 'collective melancholia' that occludes questions about the relationship between professionalism, managerialism and politics. I asked Gail Lewis whether she thought that the space for political intervention had closed. After a long pause she replied:

I never want to say that, but I think the space has contracted hugely. Now they [the government] are saying that we really do mean that we want a culture and rationality of competition. They want it to enter into the very ways in which the institution [the university] is structured, how it is governed, its cultural forms and so on. And although its [the university's] mission is still the same, the conditions in which it tries to fulfil that mission are hugely transformed, and we are all caught up in that. We are subject to its disciplinary rules, and that matters both individually and collectively. (Gail Lewis)

These transformations have consequences for the 'young' academics quoted in the first section of this chapter, and for the forms of politics they seek to pursue. Their position in the labour market is highly precarious. Many are also implicated in the tightening of national borders that squeeze the possibilities of more mobile forms of citizenship. Those students who had travelled to the United Kingdom to study, especially those from countries with oppressive

political regimes, expressed considerable concerns about their futures. But even within the United Kingdom knowledge-work is taking place in more precarious labour market conditions, and for those that do have jobs the pressures are intensifying:

It is a massive amount of work to do that kind of stuff [making material available to activist as well as academic audiences] and I do think it also requires a certain letting go, especially when ... I mean, with all the pressures of impact and all that kind of stuff which I don't agree with. I mean, I do want my research to make an impact but certainly not the way the government envisions that impact, and so you do have to make choices. (Sarah Lamble)

This underscores the importance of the shifting institutional and material bases of knowledge-work. The academy is increasingly being subject to new performance regimes and new forms of contractual labour that circumscribe the so-called 'freedom' of the academic. But what is significant about the forms of knowledge-work discussed in this chapter is the refusal to be contained within a particular institutional location. Few of the participants have followed conventional career routes, whether inside or outside the academy. Rather, they have operated in the interstitial spaces between institutional locations, brokering and translating knowledge in ways that could be effectively used by policymakers, activists and those who were the subjects of research. They have themselves crossed institutional, sectoral, national and political boundaries, taking their experience, skills and networks with them. That is, they have engaged in different forms of 'border work', the focus of the next chapter.