



Introduction

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Wendy Brown reminds us that ‘neoliberalization is generally more termite-like than lion-like... its mode of reason boring in capillary fashion into the trunks and branches of workplaces, schools, public agencies, social and political discourse, and above all, the subject’ (Brown 2015, pp. 35–36). Universities around the world have come to know the termite all too well: metrics, markets and consumers. But there are also lions (in Brown’s metaphor): the ever-insistent possibilities of authoritarian purges; the power of trustee boards and donors; explicit and implicit governmental interference; state and non-state threats of violence; and of course direct prosecutions for expressions of academic freedom. The termite and the lion both grind the university, digesting it from one thing to another.

This supplement has emerged out of a desire to take stock of this particular moment in legal education in the United Kingdom and beyond. As the university increasingly comes under attack by state and non-state forces, and from logics of neoliberal marketisation, what are the challenges and potential new paths that open up for legal education? Intimately bound to legal practice and the institutional provision of justice, legal education is inevitably shaped by the dynamics of the ‘marketplace’ of legal services. As such, the divestment of resources through austerity policies, the remoulding of citizenship rights as consumer-access privileges, the restructuring of regulatory norms, and the implicit imaginary of justice provision conveyed by these shifts have an enormous bearing on the questions of how and what to do with legal education today. The three contributions in this supplement address this rather dismal landscape and its attendant closures with a view to horizons that nevertheless linger or emerge anew for alternative and critical practices of legal education.

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