

In the Wake of the Quake: Teaching the Emergency

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Abstract

The university today finds itself in a global state of emergency, at once financial, military and ecological. Teaching must assume this emergency as premise and responsibility: it must consider the grounds of the classroom, both figurative and literal, and generate emergent lines of inquiry that address the pressing global and local situation. For us, that means that teaching must take the university's grounds of supposedly universal knowledge to be constitutively unstable and to require a reflexive teaching method that puts in question disciplinary fields and discursive modalities of knowledge. And it must take in the physical grounds of the university too—because local space is increasingly articulated by technocapital interests that are fully implicated in this global state of emergency. Thus, we do not seek stability amidst such turbulence, but rather a seismic overturning of the grounds of the university or, rather, a returning to its ground, through the deepened sense of purpose and place that 'teaching the emergency' provides.

Keywords: pedagogy, state of emergency, liveability, settlement, destructive plasticity

Biographical notes

Sean Sturm teaches academics. Stephen Turner teaches communication. Together, they write about universities, writing and the digital humanities, and settler-colonialism in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Accidentology

Our starting point is the expensive brochure for Auckland City's 'Learning Quarter,' the *Learning Quarter Plan 2009* (Auckland City, 2009). Progress, potential, openness, discovery: these are the four 'key platforms' that mark the strategy outlined in the *Plan* for this so-called 'place of enlightenment' (Auckland City, 2009, pp. 4, 1) that comprises AUT University, the University of Auckland, and environs. The *Plan* is a statement of what we have called elsewhere 'built pedagogy' (Sturm & Turner, 2011). It represents the 'entrepreneurial ecosystem' (Barton, 2008) of the University of Auckland's Business School writ large in order to teach all those who visit the Quarter, physically or virtually, the value(s) of entrepreneurial education, of innovation in action.¹ The Learning Quarter thus aspires to both urban and economic renewal, to 'sustainable'—if not liveable—transformation (Auckland City, 2009, p. 19). Sustainability, of course, tends to mean 'securitization' (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998, p. 23): the development of projects that aim not only to beautify city spaces in the guise of environmental sustainability, but also to secure a risk-free return on investment in the name of economic sustainability (existential security seldom comes into its calculations). It is securitization that drives the aesthetic transformation of built spaces under global techno-capitalism, or 'transcendental capitalism' (de Caeter, 2002, p. 273).²

What the *Learning Quarter Plan* does not do, because it is thoroughly 'probabilist,' or risk-averse, is help its inhabitants develop a sense of the larger problems at hand, of which the banking sector's implication in the global financial crisis was not the least example. We would argue that the university must be a place where this kind of catastrophe is contemplated, not a place that simply extends the 'disaster' economics of financialisation through its design, operation and management (Klein, 2007). To begin to comprehend such an event, the university must grasp the role of 'accidents' (chance, error, encounter, adversity,

turbulence) in learning: to experience small accidents can help learners to understand the nature of larger ones and to develop the resources to cope with their effects. We thus wish to relate learning, or innovation, to the constitutive instability of grounds of knowledge and of the grounds of place in a country like ours, where, since the earthquakes that rocked Christchurch, Aotearoa/New Zealand in 2010–11, the most feared kind of ‘accident’ is an earthquake.

The risky encounter of bodies, both natural and human, and the unforeseen forms of living that it generates, is the very condition of the classroom as a living laboratory for what we call the ‘plastic arts’ (from the Greek *plastikos*, ‘formative, able to be formed’),³ namely, the development of resources for living in a state of emergency. To acknowledge what Catherine Malabou (2012) calls the ‘destructive plasticity’ (p. 11) of accidents induces a reflexive anti-anthropocentrism that is denied by the extractive economics of transcendental capitalism that inform the university. What interests us, first of all, is the design-drive by means of which the affective gamut of the entrepreneurial ecosystem—its collective ‘conatus,’ to borrow Spinoza’s (2006, p. 66) term—is narrowed into an unconditional positivity, never to reach the extremes of joy and sorrow that, for Spinoza, mark bodily encounter (see Deleuze, 1988, p. 19; Deleuze, 1997, pp. 140–141). As a result, the Learning Quarter seems to be a world without accident, a world of ‘constructive plastic[ity]’ (Malabou, 2012, p. 38), that is, of gradual, superficial transformation to the mantra of ‘change.’ Yet what we teach for—and what we can sense all around us in the Learning Quarter—is ‘destructive plasticity’ (Malabou, 2012, p. 11), namely, the accidents, ‘happy’ (Virilio, 2007, p. 4) or otherwise but all-but-invisible to the entrepreneurial university, that suddenly and deeply transform the university as a collective body of affects (Sturm & Turner, 2014). As Virilio (2007) puts it, ‘the accident is an unconscious oeuvre, an invention in the sense of uncovering what was hidden, just waiting to happen’ (p. 9). What such accidents reveal is that we ‘cannot be

without being affected' (Malabou, 2012, p. 22), or, rather, that the university cannot 'be a university' without being affected (Barnett, 2011).

Elsewhere, Virilio (2010) goes further: he imagines a 'university of disaster,' a term at first glance attractive to us. However, he imagines the 'university' to be a kind of hospital to treat the accidents of a world imperilled by the unbridled development of science, as a 'general hospital of science and its technologies, to deal with accident of success of technoscience—an uncontrollable success' (Virilio, 2007, p. 117). Instead, we think of our university as a hospitable one, a place of many worlds and of experimentation with a view to producing other ways of thinking and being. It is a place that accommodates accidents. In our work on 'erratology' (Sturm & Turner, 2014), we consider accidents, or error, to be the basis of world-making. In the first instance, a mis-taking of natural phenomena—a tree for shelter, and so a 'house,' or rock for a tool, and so a 'knife'—creates recognisable human worlds. However, in the very same 'accident' of technology, there lies a danger that the precarity of the human being in the natural world (Gehlen, 1988) will be occluded by the development of technology itself, from which 'human being' is in the first instance inseparable and in which the distinctiveness of the species resides (Deacon, 1997). We would argue that, unlike humans, nature cannot be said to be in error. It is an anthropocentric—not to mention, Eurocentric—category error to extend the accident of technology to nature and see it as a disaster of technology, as Virilio (2007) does in his 'accidentology' (p. 10).⁴ Nature, not as a standalone entity of any sort but as a would-be 'non-place' (Augé, 1995), needs to be imagined without humans in it, if the emergency of our times is to be grasped. The evacuated spaces of a destroyed city like Christchurch, the central business district of which is only now being resettled, suggest a 'natural' 'non-place'—and the formative potential of destructive plasticity.

In the context of global emergency, a ‘university of disaster’ might embrace the word ‘emergency’ in three senses. Firstly, it could assume crisis as a starting point, an immediate and pressing emergency that requires new imaginings to address imperilled peoples and places, and indeed the planet itself. The classroom may itself need to be unsettled to generate a sense of the instability of the grounds, and to generate the radical resourcefulness this broader sense of crisis demands. Secondly, it could take the ‘state of emergency’ to refer to the emergence of new ways of thinking and being, that is, the development of philosophies, and not just technologies, that will alter our circumstances by getting people to think about emergency as a consequence of behaviours. Thirdly, it could understand emergency in the French sense of urgency (*l’urgence*).⁵ The human condition, Virilio (2007) would say, is accelerated, or ‘dromological’ (from the Greek, *dromos*, ‘race’), a consequence of the speed of contemporary telecommunication, which has obliterated the depth, presence and intimacy of former lifeworlds.

However, while a state of emergency is also a state of great urgency, it is not, according to Elaine Scarry in *Thinking in an Emergency* (2011), a situation that should induce unthinking behaviour toward authorities that would act ‘quickly’ on our behalf (p. 5). She discovers ‘deep principles of mutual protection’, or ‘habits,’ in ‘our ability to think and to act in an emergency,’ as against the now normal view that emergencies demand ‘unconstrained executive power’ (Scarry, 2011, pp. xv, 5). On this view, emergency requires ‘setting aside distributional mechanisms in favour of centralised ones, setting aside democratic arrangements in favour of monarchic ones, [and] setting aside constitutional provisions for nonconstitutional ones’ (Scarry, 2011, pp. 5–6). That is, we tend to believe that we should stop thinking in order to act more quickly, and to devalue the thinking that we do as merely habitual, not rational. Scarry responds with the legal principle *quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus decideretur* (literally, ‘that which touches everything requires everyone’s agreement’), that is,

that in an emergency ‘we need to reacquire our responsibility for our own governance’ (p. 7). She draws on Aristotle’s sense of deliberative thinking as *phronesis* (practical wisdom) and offers a range of examples of wise action in emergencies, from the Swiss shelter system to applying CPR. She thus argues that ‘people in emergencies ... are neither asocial nor anarchic’ (Scarry, 2011, p. 12); instead, they are social and lawful—albeit vulnerable to being convinced otherwise.

Scarry’s stress on the resourceful deliberation of a human assembly in situations of emergency appeals to us. However, she doesn’t acknowledge the ‘negative possibility’ of accident (Malabou, 2012, p. 65), which is the possibility that habit might not supply a rational basis for decision-making in a situation that has been thoroughly transformed by emergency. Nor does she consider the role of non-human actors in the crises of human assemblies in situations of emergency, as Bruno Latour (2005) might. In such emergencies, the habits that formerly provided a resource for deliberative decision-making might not serve the community well because the community might not be recognisable as such in the transformed situation, and also might not recognise the role that non-human actors formerly played in their decision-making. The injury to community, then, might be irreparable in the same way that patients who have suffered a brain injury can fail to recognise their former selves or even to perceive that they have suffered an injury (Malabou, 2012, p. 29). Malabou (2012, p. 65) suggests that this ‘negative possibility’ can be formative, but the grounds of the new formation will be utterly different from before, making void the habits that formerly constituted a basis of community action. Plasticity thus demands and generates a radical resourcefulness. It does not imply a return to what was before, in the way skin might regain its former texture after a superficial injury, but a new form, to which the injured party must now accommodate themselves in a way that generates new habits, or, we prefer, new strategies for living—even a new self. When the emergency involves an ‘accident’ of nature,

such an accommodation also changes the constituency of the deliberative assembly: in the case of an earthquake, for instance, non-human ‘actants,’ or agents, must be considered parties to the assembly.⁶ Not to acknowledge their agency is to disavow the destructive plasticity of accident.

Seismotics

In 2010, Christchurch was hit by a devastating earthquake. In the following year, it suffered more than one thousand aftershocks, which continued to unsettle the ground and traumatise local residents, putting their very future in the province of Canterbury in question. In the case of such ‘natural disasters,’ it is often said that nature has played a cruel joke, that the rules that formerly organised human life have been rendered redundant or inoperative by forces beyond human control. The link to jokes is not trivial. Analysing the role of jokes in everyday life, Paulo Virno (2008) draws on Wittgenstein’s sense of a pre-existing consensus, or ‘anthropological bedrock’ (p. 115), that stabilises the normative operation of language.⁷ Human beings accept the norm that governs the application of a rule because they have agreed not to ask after the basis of the norm itself ... which is the result of the application of a rule according to a prior norm, and so on. Jokes open up an infinite regress that exposes the operation of a norm, as well as the structure of forces and the disposition of agents, in any given situation. For example, to make a joke about a meeting in a meeting could produce this kind of reflexivity, exposing its real agenda and making too obvious the power relations among its participants. In our ‘erratology’ (Sturm & Turner, 2014), we draw on Virno’s analysis to stimulate reflexive deliberation on the unstable grounds of a teaching situation—and, in turn, of the university and its disciplines and location. We did not have events in Christchurch in mind when we called this procedure a ‘seismotics’ (Sturm & Turner, 2014).⁸ However, the event of the earthquake made us reconsider the nature and appropriateness of

our method, and ask whether its provenance might be natural phenomena. What if the ‘error’ is an accident of nature?

This, perhaps, is what is untenable from a human point of view: that it is not ‘nature’ that is in error; rather, that it is *the* human error to think that settlements are constitutively stable. Christchurch is a graphic example. We became aware, during one presentation of our method, that members of the audience had actually experienced the Christchurch earthquake (as Aucklanders, we are from the North, not the South Island). Their experience prompted the question: how could something so traumatically seismic be in any way positive? Or, to put it differently, did they as residents of Christchurch dare to hope that their city could be liveable again? They responded somewhat unexpectedly that the earthquake had caused most of the stone buildings of the city and the colonial heritage they represented to crumble. Their city, they thought, would have to be built on different foundations, which, notwithstanding the devastation, could be considered positive. Though not every Christchurch resident—nor, perhaps, even very many—might think this way, this response suggests to us the radical resourcefulness that can be occasioned by destructive plasticity. The earthquake demanded that the residents rethink the city, long considered the epitome of Pākehā (non-Māori) settlement in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the ‘most *settled* of settlements,’ according to Chris Prentice (2013, p. 55). Further, it demanded that all residents of Aotearoa/New Zealand consider the country’s constitutive instability, lying as it does on the fault line of the Pacific and Indo-Australian tectonic plates. How they might do so with relative equanimity is a question of the non-human ethics of destructive plasticity.

In his exquisitely detailed account of living through the earthquakes, ‘On Tenuous Grounds’ (2011), Philip Armstrong reconstructs Scarry’s notion of an emergent assembly in a way that acknowledges non-human energies and forces. Drawing on Jane Bennett’s (2010) discussion of ‘vibrant matter,’ he (2011) notes the ‘false distinction between “dull matter” (it/things) and

“vibrant life” (us/human beings)’ (p. 16, quoting Bennett, 2010, p. vii). To see human and non-human beings or things as ‘actants,’ or ‘source[s] of action’ (Bennett, 2010, p. viii), makes it possible to talk about non-human entities ‘in a way that doesn’t assume that non-human matter needs consciousness, intentionality or decision-making power in order to make things happen’ (Armstrong, 2011, p. 16). An actant is anything that ‘makes a difference,’ including an earthquake (Armstrong, 2011, p. 17). Further, all actants are in some sense ‘conative,’ that is, agentic (Bennett, 2010, p. 2; see Spinoza, 2006, pp. 66–67), including a piece of earthquake debris (Armstrong, 2011, p. 17). And actants are not atomic entities but ‘intra-active’ assemblies (Barad, 2007, p. 151), as is clear in the case of an earthquake, which is ‘not a single thing but a complex of divergent effects, proximate events, subjective experiences’ (Armstrong, 2011, p. 11). For example, when Armstrong finds his lecture interrupted by an aftershock, he finds himself thinking *with* the movement of grounds, as part of a formative assembly of which the human is just one element (2011, p. 8). Finally, actants are processual; hence, an earthquake is a ‘seismic flux’ that unsettles the forms of everyday life (Armstrong, 2011, p. 16). Interestingly, says Armstrong, the most ‘demoralising manifestation’ of the Christchurch earthquakes was liquefaction, the ‘volumes of liquefied silt, neither fluid nor solid [that] erupt[ed] through roads, lawns, floors and walls’ (p. 16). In an evocative passage that evokes Malabou’s (2012) discussion of destructive plasticity in terms of brain injury (pp. 2–3), he describes liquefaction as ‘earth’s grey matter; like brain tissue ... a substance whose appearance signifies an irreparable injury’ (p. 16). For Malabou, the destructive plasticity is unsettling because it involves the ‘dissociation of essence [being] and form,’ to create ‘a new form ... a new person, a novel form of life, without anything in common with a preceding form,’ thus heralding the emergence of ‘a new form of being, a stranger to the one before’ (pp. 17–18). In this transient and motile assembly, however unsettling, lies the ‘negative possibility’ of accident.

Importantly, both Armstrong and Prentice remark on the quake's exposure of Māori burial swamps beneath Christchurch, revealing a Māori place and history that the building of the city had worked to occlude from the consciousness of Pākehā settlers (see Armstrong, 2011, pp. 11–12 and Prentice, 2013, p. 57). This Māori place includes 'creation myths' (*pūrākau*) that accommodate the 'shaky isles' that they settled as First peoples. Armstrong (2011) cites one such story: for Māori, 'Earthquakes occur when Rūaumoko,' unborn son of Rangi, sky-father, and Papa, earth-mother, 'moves resentfully within the womb of the earth' (p. 11).

Thus, the anthropological bedrock of the Māori way of being, articulated in the self-sovereign assemblies of tribal meetings known as *hui*, acknowledge the entwined 'nature' of human and more-than-human agencies in a way that Pākehā 'settlement, structures and practices of governance, do not. A Māori 'consensus' embraces entities like mountains, rivers, trees, birds and fish, as well as the living and the dead, as animate and effective agencies in everyday life (Barclay, 2005; Mikaere, 2011). European myths (gods), philosophy, traditions and practices do not lack a sense of fate and chance, and of the agential role of non-humans, in terms of which the experience of earthquakes might also be fielded; however, the governance of Pākehā settlement, including the taking and making over of land and the building of towns and cities, has established a constitution, and consensus, that excludes a First law of prior settlement that makes explicit more-than-human forces. For Pākehā, when the earthquake throws up both new *and* old forms that scramble the order of settlement, it exhibits the danger to their sense of place of destructive plasticity: that 'a natural catastrophe, a brutal, sudden, blind event cannot be reintegrated retrospectively into experience' (Malabou, 2012, p. 29).

But if the new cannot be reintegrated into the old, or even recognised because it is non-human, then how can the 'new' apparently Pākehā place be reintegrated into the 'old' Māori place thrown up by the quake?

Both Armstrong and Prentice remark that (Pākehā) language seems inadequate to represent the grounds of settlement: for example, the earthquake can be represented only in the quantitative terms of magnitudes on the ‘Richter Scale,’ ‘PGA’ (Peak Ground Acceleration) or ‘MMI’ (Modified Mercalli Intensity) (Armstrong, 2011, pp. 10–11). As a result, the human assembly that is the Pākehā community of Christchurch finds itself undermined by non-human forces—or, we would say, actants—and without the means to articulate a new form of life. For Prentice (2013), this makes the disaster ‘an event of critique’ (p. 55). All such disasters teach us about human settlement, it is tempting to say, is that natural disasters, or ‘acts of God,’ happen; for Prentice, however, the earthquake demands that the environment be seen not as a static backdrop for human action, but as a dynamic assembly of actants. For her, then, ‘[i]mbalance and upheaval rather than stability and harmony constitute the starting point for [an] ecocritical ontology’ (Prentice, 2013, p. 56)—and for an accommodation of Pākehā and Māori. Whereas the Pākehā ‘cultural nationalists’ telos’ (Prentice, 2013, p. 59), as voiced by poet Allen Curnow in his ‘The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch’ (c. 1943), was ‘to learn the trick of standing upright here’ (Curnow, 2007, p. 220), settlers must learn to move with the ground, with the constitutionally unstable ground of settlement in Aotearoa/New Zealand. To do so might begin to heal Pākehā settlers’ rift with Aotearoa as a Māori place with a long, ‘broken’ history (Turner, 2002, p. 63), a history that includes the disaster of settler invasion, a ‘hurt,’ as Māori film-maker and thinker Barry Barclay (2005) puts it, ‘that tells you that your very existence on this planet, in this life, counts for nought’ (p. 150). But what if to move with the ground meant something different: the possibility of new-old forms of life attendant upon accident, forms that called to mind a ‘parliament of things’ (Latour, 1993, p. 142) that registered the true lie of the land, namely, the community of actants that are its inhabitants, living and dead?

Disasters like the Christchurch earthquakes demand that we ‘think representation through ... earthquakes, and not ... earthquakes through representation’ (Prentice, 2013, p. 56), that we reconstruct representation, including the representativity of human assemblies, on the basis of a wider community of actants, but not with a view to reconstructing former communities or identities. Earthquakes are natural signs that dissolve signs; they are de-signifying ur-signs into which our assemblies, our homes and our very ability to signify disappear as if into a fissure. They render we human beings—as the ‘symbolic species’ (Deacon, 1992)—seemingly no longer at home in the world. But if earthquakes are ‘normal,’ as Prentice proposes (2013, p. 65), then the fundamental error of humans is their disavowal of destructive plasticity, their inability to make accidents signify. As Prentice (2013) writes, in a sentence that echoes Malabou, ‘the post-quake or post-loss project is not to know who we are, either to return to some pre-loss image of stability or to forge definitive new individual or collective identities’ (p. 65).

The Plastic Classroom

If the lesson of destructive plasticity, then, is that the grounds of our settlements are constitutively unstable, in both a social and a linguistic sense (in their ‘forms of life’ and ‘language games’ respectively),⁹ can nothing be learnt from the power of destructive plasticity—except that it is destructive? Can nothing be said about an earthquake—except that it happened? Language, as the grammar, syntax and style of social organisation, seems to fail in such a state of emergency. But with the after-shocks comes an ‘afterlife’ (Armstrong, 2011, p. 18). The forms of life that arise from such an emergency beg the question of the strategies that must have been adopted to live through it. As Malabou (2012, pp. 77, 17) notes, ‘negative possibility, the existential possibility opened by destructive plasticity’ is not

nothing; it gives rise to ‘new form[s]’—and new ways of thinking and being, or forms of life—that ‘move with the ground.’

Armstrong’s descriptions of post-quake forms of life both involve transformations of human and non-human actants through their ‘intra-actions’ (Barad, 2007, p. x). Firstly, he describes earthquake rubble being recycled, and ‘transformed once again into human structures’: ‘the buildings we shopped and worked and lived in will be crushed into aggregate, which will be used for new buildings and shops, new workplaces and homes’ (Armstrong, 2011, p. 18). Secondly, he envisages the ‘active afterlife’ of sewage from chemical toilets and broken sewers that cycles the ‘remains of our meals, spiced with pesticides and preservatives, mixed with cells shed from our guts ... seasoned with oestrogen from our contraceptives and serotonergic agents from our antidepressants [and] the chemical brew used in portable dunnies’ back to us:

Leaching from disposal sites and ruptured pipes, it will travel through capillaries under the earth’s thin skin; will flow into groundwater and culverts and creeks; will resurface through liquefied silt; will enter root-systems, fill the veins of plants, nourish leaves and fruit. And so, in time, be consumed by insects and birds and animals, including humans. (Armstrong, 2011, p. 18)

While both cycles produce new-old forms, and the second, possibly wholly new ones, they also give rise to a new way of thinking and being based on the intra-action of the human and non-human, on an extended ecology.

Prentice’s description of a post-quake form of life involves a different kind of transformation. To find your way through the streets of Christchurch as a returning visitor is to be confronted not only by its ‘post-quake “moonscape” of collapsed buildings and empty sites’ (Prentice, 2013, p. 64)—or, latterly, by its monoscape of glass and concrete buildings—but also by the

realisation that memories are so much ‘bricolage and montage’ (Prentice, 2013, p. 67). Your ‘mental map’ (Tuan, 1975) of the city, with its visual and spatial navigational schemata of anchor-points and paths, does not fit the place you knew: the once very solid and familiar city is now fluid and unfamiliar. When you try to imagine how old landmarks fit with what you are now seeing or to navigate the city, despite the dissonance between your interior and exterior sense of the landscape, the experience is ‘uncanny’ (Prentice, 2013, p. 64). Your eyes seem to swim—or the city to deliquesce before your eyes. You become aware, as Māori have always been aware, of how the ‘new’ occludes the ‘old’ and how even the most solid of human artefacts are transitory. These ‘modes of unsettlement’ (Prentice, 2013, p. 66) open up the present to the past and unsettle settled ways of thinking and being. Here, then, are innovations that do not reduce to technology or the changes that human beings have wrought. It is such strategies for living that destructive plasticity can teach us.

These hard-won lessons also raise the prospect of a plastic classroom, one that is attentive to the shifting grounds of knowledge and place. If it is in human nature to be the butt of such cruel jokes, we ought to take the structure of jokes à la Virno as a procedural method for asking after grounds and cultivating a plasticity that acknowledges their constitutive instability. We thus take the university to be a special and necessary site of experiments in human form—or ‘anthropotechnics’ (Sloterdijk, 2013, p. 1)—that aim to produce new ways of thinking and being. But the forces of change that the university needs to address are not merely human. What does Auckland’s Learning Quarter know of its grounds: its institutional history as Māori pā, British Army fort and barracks, seat of the colonial government, home of a former college of the University of New Zealand and technical college, let alone its geology, ecology or political economy? What does it know of its ‘ground rules’ (Sturm & Turner, 2013, p. 55), its conditions of possibility, as a university precinct and outpost of transcendental capitalism? It needs shaking up if it is to be a place of ‘possibilism,’¹⁰ a place

that accommodates accidents and is open to the risk of new worlds, and not simply a(nother) home for the risk-averse ‘probabilism’ of transcendental capitalism.

We do not have the space here to enumerate ‘seismic’ practices that might destabilise the classroom, the criteria of its organisation and alignment with the university's operation, strategy and goals. Such practices, in every place, introduce risk into pedagogy and call for inventive practices that both place the university on less probable, prescribed grounds and make new ways of thinking and being possible (see Biesta, 2015). We can, at least, offer an example of an exercise we use to ‘shake up’ our writing classroom. This psychogeographical exercise in ‘diagramming’ (Deleuze, 1986) explores how the built space of our university campus and the Learning Quarter in which it sits came to take the form they do and how they prescribe, or ‘pre-script,’ social practices in that space through their built pedagogy. To set the scene, we ask students to diagram their everyday movements through the university campus by reflecting, mapping or free writing. We then undertake a nested series of diagrams as a class: we walk a street that traces the history of the building of the University of Auckland (see Sturm & Turner, 2011, p. 32); we delineate the Learning Quarter by walking its perimeter; and we rethink its place in the inner city by taking the free bus, ‘The Loop,’ that encircles it. Through this collective practice, we invite accidents by which we can better understand the prescriptive agency of built space. Of course, to invite accidents is not the same as having them, but it is to be prepared *not* to know yourself or find yourself at home. It is in this spirit that we advocate the classroom as a living laboratory for the plastic arts, for the development of resources for living in a state of emergency ... for living in the wake of a quake.

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- ¹ For educational entrepreneurship as the teaching of innovation in action, see Skogen & Sjøvoll (2010).
- ² For the authoritarian politics of ‘the global aestheticised city,’ see Hage (2005, pp. 19–20).
- ³ In our reference to the ‘plastic arts,’ we intend only a parodic allusion to Schelling’s majestic essay from 1807, ‘Concerning the Relation of the Plastic Arts to Nature’ (1984).
- ⁴ For the limitations of simply translating the North Atlantic rim theorists of risk for an Australasian context, see Dew (1999).
- ⁵ We are indebted to our dear colleague Francisc Szekely for alerting us to the significance of this suggestive bilingual pun. For dromology as the ‘science (or logic) of speed,’ see Virilio (2006).
- ⁶ For the idea of an ‘actant,’ ‘that which has efficacy, can do things, has sufficient coherence to make a difference’ (Bennett, 2010, p. 17), see Bruno Latour (2005, p. 65).
- ⁷ For such ‘rule-following,’ see Wittgenstein (1991, pp. 74–89; sections 185–243).
- ⁸ For ‘seismicity,’ albeit as a characteristic of the humanities, see Derrida (2001: 41–43).
- ⁹ For ‘forms of life,’ see Wittgenstein (1991, p. 8; section 19); for ‘language games,’ see Wittgenstein (1991, p. 101; section 300).
- ¹⁰ For possibilism as ‘the discovery of paths, however narrow, leading to an outcome that appears to be foreclosed on the basis of probabilistic reasoning alone,’ see Hirschman (1993, p. 173).