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# Reflections on Urban Crises, the Science-Policy Interface and the Importance of “Tiny Revolts”

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## ABSTRACT

There is barely a field of academic research not subject to crisis claims. Many urban crises span careers and take significant emotional tolls. This is not due to a lack of effort. Academic productivity, as it is typically measured, is rapidly increasing and success claims commonplace. This article reflects critically upon the science-policy interface and interprets the work of Julia Kristeva to discuss the importance of creating “tiny revolts” able to rescale and reframe inquiry, and to problematise success. I argue these revolts hold potential in sustaining ourselves and others, as well as in creating new acts of critical thinking.

## 摘要

几乎没有一个学术研究领域不受危机的影响。许多城市危机跨越了职业生涯，并造成了巨大的情感损失。这并不是因为缺乏努力。正如通常所衡量的那样，学术生产力正在迅速提高，成功的要求也很普遍。这篇文章批判性地反思了科学与政策的关系，并解释了Julia Kristeva的工作，讨论了创造“微小反抗”的重要性，这些反抗能够重新调整规模和重塑调查，并将成功问题化。我认为这些反抗有可能维持我们自己和他人，以及创造新的批判性思维行为。

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## 1. Considering Crises, Science, and Academic Hope

How did crisis, once a signifier for a critical, decisive moment, come to be construed as a protracted historical and experiential condition? The very idea of crisis as a condition suggests an ongoing state of affairs. But can one speak of a state of enduring crisis? Is this not an oxymoron? (Roitman 2014, p. 2).

I recently had the rather depressing realisation that everything I have ever researched has been deemed to be: (a) in a state of “crisis”; (b) arguably deteriorating; and (c) my experience to date suggests there is a scant chance of this changing before my retirement. While there may be a valid critique on the easy nature of crisis claims to jostle for political attention or resources, and acknowledging there are always examples of progress, issues such as housing affordability, inequality, and other fields central to the interests of this journal could clearly make similar claims. This is despite significant scientific effort and knowledge production. I suspect I am not alone in experiencing frustration at the inability of evidence to influence politics and policy and a sense of multiple missed opportunities. How many reading this work in areas that are not only deemed to be in “crisis”, but are crises that have resisted resolution? And how do we cope with this depressing political reality, adapt, and maintain hope through our careers?

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This paper is a provocation, aiming to stimulate introspection amongst researchers, policy-makers and practitioners regarding how science is typically structured and conducted, its ability to influence society, and the importance of curating spaces for academic hope. I utilise and interpret the notion of Intimate Revolts (Kristeva 2002a) as a lens to challenge existing notions of success and to highlight aspects of practice that may need to be challenged by those interested in pursuing more disruptive or transformational agendas. The latter part of the paper draws upon examples of what Kristeva refers to as “tiny revolts”; research that seeks to disrupt the typical rhythm of academic productivity, or which are more personal, emotional pieces that demand a pause; each exploring issues around knowledge and inaction, mainstream and disruption, hope and failure. In simple terms, I aim to bring urban crises, and the difficulties in addressing these, in conversation with individual aspects concerning what it means to be an academic right here, right now.

The approach draws inspiration from a reflexive research tradition that has long been positioned as fundamental for effective practice and professional development (Schön 1983). I adopt a critical reflexivity perspective, which emphasises that “thought is permeated by power relations that are socially and historically constituted” and seeks to uncover and interrupt the tacit hegemonic assumptions that infuse cultures, condition lived experiences, and reproduce systems of oppression (Mortati 2015, 4). I also acknowledge that I write this perspective from a position of privilege, being white, male, able-bodied and with continuing employment in a sector that is subject to bias and precarity.

It has two key messages. First, just as crises are often posited as creating opportunity, their normalisation should also stimulate reflection, particularly on the nature of the science-policy interface, the academy, and our own activities. Second, it outlines a conceptualisation of activism that may be: (a) well suited to the academy due to its relationship with language, texts and critical thinking; (b) resonate with academics who are centrally concerned and emotionally invested with societal change, and; (c) which offers potential in sustaining ourselves, making new connections, and creating new disruptive imaginaries.

## 2. Producing Knowledge, but Reproducing Crises?

While an initial urban crisis positioning may suggest the scientific community has failed, by the measures typically associated with knowledge production, and Universities more generally, we have been spectacularly successful. Academic bibliometrics demonstrate a level of productivity that private sector businesses would look on with envy, with the number of scientific papers published per annum increasing by between 8 and 9% over the last few decades (Landhuis 2016). While this broad figure may mask significant unevenness between fields and countries, a search in SciVal<sup>1</sup> of “Geography, Planning and Development” – the subject area closest to the interests of this journal – reveals publication numbers have more than doubled, from 22,611 outputs in 2011–53,986 in 2020. While there may be valid and even positive reasons to explain such an increase, such as the imperative to be more collaborative and a possible growth in multi-authored papers, what is inescapable is the growing difficulty in finding time to locate, read, and reflect upon the volume of research produced by others.

The problems raised go beyond mere knowledge exchange, however. While it may be assumed that more research equals more competition of novel ideas and more opportunities to influence crises, research also provides a counterview. Analysis reveals a rising trend in collaboration, but researchers also observe that larger teams tend to generate fewer ideas and focus on developing established fields, rather than taking risks, which hold more potential for “failure” as well as to disrupt those same fields (Wu *et al.* 2019). Chu and Evans (2021, p. 1) shed further light by analysing millions of papers across hundreds of subjects. They found that, rather than a rapid turnover of ideas and better ideas rising to prominence, the growing number of papers led to an *ossification* of the canon of knowledge. They argued the sheer volume of papers and limited time to read

entrenched existing approaches and framings and the: “deluge of new papers may deprive reviewers and readers the cognitive slack required to fully recognize and understand novel ideas”.

This point may also help explain the observed increase in citation concentration amongst papers generated by elite scientists as time pressured academics focus attention on highly cited articles, which further reinforces their power and, as a corollary, existing hierarchies of status (Neilsen and Andersen 2021). This is a phenomena that has long received critique, with the practice of routinely positioning articles into the existing canon and traditions via touchstone papers that may “produce sects rather than open intellectual communities” (Stinchcombe 1982, p. 7) and further embed gendered citation practices (Dion *et al.* 2018).

As such, while there are benefits, the trend towards an increased quantity of outputs and larger teams may not just foster a crystallisation that hinders scientific progress more broadly, but also underpin “citation inequality” and preclude new work, particularly those adopting more radical or marginalised perspectives, from garnering attention, rising into the most-cited group and exerting influence. Therefore, just as the canon of knowledge may be stagnated by the growing imbalance between time allocated for outputs and reflection, so might the policy realm, as the potential for disruption is diminished and established fields developed.

This argument directs our gaze towards the structures that shape academic activity and science-policy relations, define success, and distribute rewards, in particular the powerful influence of quantitative metrics. The highest profile are the National Research Assessment exercises that periodically distribute governmental funding to the sector, but there is no part of the academy that is untouched. These calculations and indicators do not just shape academic rationality, productivity, and career progression, but enable comparison via a claimed quality hierarchy – from an individual paper or promotion application, to the international ranking of a journal, institution, or department.

Grant success is one such important metric, and an enormous amount of time is spent developing bids in competitive processes, the vast majority of which are unfunded. A US study estimated that grant writing activities took up on average 4 and a half hours a week for each faculty member (Link *et al.* 2008), while an Australian survey suggested it took an average of 34 working days to submit to the National Health and Medical Research Council (Herbert *et al.* 2013). Success rates differ, but to give a few examples, in New Zealand the Marsden Fund has a success rate of about 10% (Royal Society Te Apārangi 2020), the European Commission flagship Horizon 2020 reported a success rate of 14% (Sohn 2019), and the Australian Research Council Future Fellowships scheme was only slightly higher at 15% (Sinclair 2021). While some unsuccessful proposals may be reshaped or stimulate further reflections, not all of this time can be claimed to be useful, particularly given the resources needed for peer review. While there is no perfect system to allocate research funding, research has estimated that for some funds the time spent writing proposals may be economically comparable to total funding awarded (e.g. Gross and Bergstrom 2019).

The criteria and assessments of quality that determine what is fundable also have an influence on the nature of proposals, as do more overtly political priorities. For instance, in Australia we have seen a recent Ministerial recommendation that the Australian Research Council should align funding towards projects that support greater collaboration with industry and the Government’s research commercialisation agenda (Robert 2021). While a clear example of politicisation, applications for large research funds have long expected the presence of industry partners, pathways to impact statements, or a focus on “decision-support tools” or “best practices”. Funding which focuses on practical “translation” can, however, serve to reproduce existing science-society relations and neoliberal modes of operation, as well as constrain possibilities for alternative or critical discourses (Machen 2018).

The links between Universities, corporate interests, and the State are also visible in the predilection for “Grand Challenges” within national research portfolios, where large pots of funding are concentrated in a small number of large thematic “problems” that are designed to bring interdisciplinary researchers and wider stakeholders together in multi-year projects that are typically

encouraged to leverage private sector partners. While this framing does centre crises, it has also been criticised for eroding the independent academic framing of research problems and facilitating a more insidious compliance and responsabilisation of academics. To participate in the potential for prestigious grant capture in many cases you must accept the predesigned problem-solution frame of the Grand Challenges, which are typically positioned as a knowledge or scientific deficit, rather than one related to, say, capitalism, political inaction, or power (Macfarlane 2021). Equally, distributing significant funding via time limited challenges like these also necessitates the ready employment of fixed term staff, which, unless allied to strategies of retention and mentorship, can fuel rising precarity in the sector.

### 3. Critical Reflections

And so we find ourselves considering possible paradoxes of the contemporary neoliberal university: where we may produce so many outputs that we influence and disrupt less. Where we spend so much time bidding for competitive funding, or producing research that aligns with sectoral or government goals, that we have less time to be aware of, and reflect upon, more radical work or to elevate existing marginalised voices. Directed to develop established fields and knowledge, rather than reflect upon or disrupt the slow violence reproduced by current global capitalist relations.

I have discussed the situation so far from a sector perspective, but we should acknowledge the individual emotional toll this situation fosters. Everyone hears stories of burnout, stress, chronic illness, and depression. This toll, however, stretches beyond workload pressures, such as related to grant writing, paper rejections, or the neoliberal nature of the sector (e.g. Herbert *et al.* 2014), to those associated with being a researcher in fields subject to crisis claims. For example, a recent survey of IPCC authors revealed little faith in substantive political action on climate change, with 6 out of 10 expecting the world to warm by more than 3 degrees by the end of the century. The same percentage of researchers said they experience anxiety, grief or other distress as a consequence, and 17% said the crisis even influenced their decision to have children (Tollefson 2021). Emotional effects can also be intensified for those at earlier career stages who typically suffer from compounding effects of job insecurity and understand the importance of mainstream performance metrics in changing that situation. It will be unsurprising to some to hear there is a higher prevalence of mental health problems in PhD students than in comparable highly educated populations (Levecque *et al.* 2017).

It is important to note that while this reflection may appear a thoroughly dispiriting story, it is not my intention to position it as such. The focus is on bringing into light the structures in order to reflect upon the agency. From my own perspective, the growing sense of frustration with the acceptance of crises, despite much scientific knowledge, has gradually become tempered with something more hopeful and activist. It has raised new, critical questions regarding the nature of the science-policy interface and the sheer taken-for-grantedness of crises. In particular, why do some of the structures and norms of academia produce knowledge, but reproduce crises? And, how can we use the scarce research time we have in ways that can exert a positive influence?

More broadly this reflection underscores the academy as a core site of contestation and seeks to connect the experience of individual academics, particularly those who pursue more activist oriented research, and the more corporate setting within which careers progress, research is conducted, and how this is influenced by political-economy relations, such as between Universities and Governments. It also highlights two questions the next section will seek to explore. First, how could we create conditions for research that can reframe success and foster the kind of work that could potentially disrupt existing crises? And second, how do we foreground practices of care and restoration, which recognise the emotional toll in pursuing progressive change and can be sustaining in the context of a long-term struggle.

#### 4. The Case for More Intimate Revolts

... we may have reached the point of no return, from which we will have to return to the little things, tiny revolts, in order to preserve the life and mind of the species ... revolt, that is, the questioning and displacement of the past. The future, if it exists, depends on it. (Kristeva 2002a, p. 5)

Theorising revolts is core to the work of philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva who highlights throughout her writings that if the nature of modern crises is that they are a fundamental, ongoing part of life, then so should the need to rebel be an ever-present condition. Kristeva was herself a product of the famous 1968 Paris student uprisings, but a central theme of her work laments the lack of revolt, and wonders whether revolution is still possible in contemporary society.

Revolt acquired its political meaning from the French Revolution and is understood as “a protest against already established norms, values, and powers” (Kristeva 2002a, p. 3). Importantly, Kristeva argues historical notions of large “revolutions” like these and their promise of future emancipation are not politically useful for change and seeks to reclaim revolt from this “overly narrow political sense it has taken in our time” (Kristeva 2000, p. 3). It is a compelling argument. If a succession of “once-in-a-generation” events like the Global Financial Crisis or COVID-19, or powerful international movements for climate or social justice fail to elicit substantive change, perhaps the promise of a silver bullet to be found in future significant global, or even national, events is misleading. There is no doubt that tumultuous events do have disruptive and transformative potential, but accompanying these is the siren call for stability against shock, and under conditions of urgency it is too easy to centre the influence of actors and agencies who are already privileged under existing power relations. This initial argument provides a route to appreciate Kristeva’s broad perspective: rather than put faith in a periodic large “revolutions”, perhaps what is needed is a more “intimate revolt” (Kristeva 2002a). One that is more constant, smaller, and involves internal reflection and critical thinking directed at changing existing values, as well as more overt, outward rebellion.

Kristeva outlines a few reasons for this, but the most significant here are connected to power, values, and reflection. She explains the frustration some hold regarding the inability to influence is due, in part, to the structural causes and intertwined relations, which are very difficult to revolt against as they are so diffuse and taken-for-granted. One initial question she highlights is consequently connected to the nature of power and authority: how can you conceive of revolt if it is not clear who you should revolt against? This view has similarities to what Hannah Arendt (1969, p. 38, 81) termed as “rule by Nobody”; the tendencies for bureaucracies to resist accountability and responsibility, which she argues is the most tyrannical form of governing, “since there is no one left who could even be asked to answer for what is being done ... the rule by Nobody is not no-rule, and where all are equally powerless we have a tyranny without a tyrant”. This point emphasises how power is intertwined between networks of actors, agencies, and institutions, including academia, that not only have long established relations and ways of working, but which may resist scrutiny and disruption. In this regard, Kristeva probes us to consider questions such as where does power lie? And just who are the authorities to be challenged?

Kristeva extends her theorising to bring to light the intertwined values of these authorities, which not only define and underpin the current framing of “problems”, but she argues some of these institutions are corruptible, scandal laden, and “political revolt is mired in compromise between parties whose differences are less and less obvious” (Kristeva 2002a, p. 4). Her definition of revolt strongly links to practices of critical thinking and reflection as: “permanent questioning: revolt, as return/turning back/displacement/change” (Kristeva 2017, p. 26). It emphasises an analytical discourse focused on “questioning, [and] putting into question (which has nothing to do with asking questions or responding to them)” (Kristeva 2002a, p. 236). She explains further, arguing “nihilism is not revolt” and rather than a politics of refusal she advocates a critical thinking perspective that seeks to open up areas where thought is suspended. It is a constant questioning based on the etymology of revolt referring to “return, returning, discovering, uncovering, and renovating [with] potential for making gaps, rupturing, renewing... a state of permanent questioning, of

transformation, change, an endless probing of appearances” (Kristeva 2002b, p. 85, 120). The research agendas this raises are connected to framing, language and power, and resonate strongly with critical urbanist perspectives that seek to challenge the taken-for-grantedness of existing problem-solution frames or the homogenisation of mainstream politics.

A further argument links this broad context to how the power of the “spectacle” in media, entertainment and consumer culture in society damages the culture of revolt (Kristeva 2002a). In particular, she emphasises how those in power create representations of reality that suppress new imaginaries, mediate social relations, and supply meaning for more passive consumers. In this context you can appreciate how revolt would have to be more “intimate”, involving individuals seeking emancipation from pre-existing frames provided by those in authority and becoming active agents in meaning making. Kristeva (2002a, p. 13) explains that while rebellions may be suppressed, “by keeping our intimacy in revolt we can preserve the possibility of their appearance”. This perspective draws our gaze to consider what are the existing values and ideas that should be brought into the light for reflection? Who decided these? And how could these be challenged or disentangled?

Resistance from a Kristevian perspective is positioned in relation to power, authority, values, and framing, but importantly for this article, Kristeva argues revolt in this more intimate manner can contribute to a healthy psyche, and perhaps help address those feelings of frustration or disconnection that may be associated with being a researcher of urban crises. An “intimate” revolt speaks directly to our own emotional experiences, vulnerabilities, and need for reconnection, as well as a desire for sense making that has explanatory power. She argues it is not just about “revolution”, it is about humanism. About social belonging, healing and restoration of what she terms “maladies of the soul” (Kristeva 1995). A key message is that these ideas need to be nurtured and space deliberately made for activities that may not be part of the typical rhythm of life, but which have potential to forge new connections, create new politics, and displace authority from its current position in making meaning. More generally, by focusing on the “intimate” it also helps unsettle the tendency to consider crises at the scale of national or international policies and politics, which, while may bring government inaction to light, may foster a sense of powerlessness.

While aspects of this argument may be compelling in an academic sector where much focus is on texts, critical thinking, and reflection, we also need to be cognisant of the critique associated with framing revolt in this manner (e.g. Nouri 2004). For instance, to what extent is Kristeva’s conceptualisation of revolt Eurocentric and accessible to those who possess neither the time nor the educational knowledge that it speaks to? The existence of, and reliance upon, texts is also uneven, such as in postcolonial settings or Indigenous cultures which may not just be less literary-centric, but which have been, and continue to be, subject to wider historical oppressions (Ruiz 2017). Similarly, the focus on the individual may not appear to centre solidaristic forms of resistance or structural aspects of crises. However, others argue that advocating humanism, self-interrogation, and questioning existing meanings holds new analytical potential (Hansen and Tuvel 2017). Kristeva (2002a) also emphasises that taking more time to read the work of others fosters intertextuality approaches that may elevate their work and stimulate new connections, solidaristic communities and disruptive possibilities. Given the difficulties she outlines with regard to identifying power and authority, what she advocates is: “not a retreat from the political, but rather a forceful articulation of the need to retreat differently the political in terms other than those on offer from the ideologies of modernity” (Gratton 2007, p. 3).

While persuasive, the theoretical framing of revolt as intimate also needs to become something less so for those interested in progressive change. Put differently, what is the value of taking time to appreciate the work of others, reflect, and hone critical thinking without subsequently applying that knowledge in ways that are more obviously political? Two questions stand out here: how does an individual tiny revolt become something more substantive and public? And what kinds of urban research may embody the ideas behind this philosophical argument?

## 5. Revolt via Rescaling, Reframing, and the Reclaiming the Right to Fail

So far I have sought to weave together more structural issues relating to crises, academia, and the production of knowledge, and to consider these within a more individual perspective that acknowledges the emotional toll and pressures that underpin much academic activity. It has also drawn upon the work of Julia Kristeva as a sense making device and to provide a framing that directs us to reflect upon our own practice. I now develop this line of thought, relating core themes of Kristeva's thinking to a research perspective and agenda relating to *rescaling*, *reframing*, and *reclaiming the right to fail*. I also highlight work that while not explicitly designed in this context provide examples of those tiny revolts that are sustaining and can provoke disruptive possibilities.

For the first of these, I find rescaling revolt to be more “intimate” hopeful in reclaiming agency given the difficulties in achieving systemic change. If the scale of revolution feels too significant, it suggests the issue is less that of searching for a viable, powerful agent, such as an occasional “event”, and more related to the need to continuously raise questions on what is normal, why, and who supports this tacitly or otherwise? Kristeva highlights these themes of scale, frequency, and focus, arguing: “It is no longer sufficient to demonstrate on the streets if you want to protest about something. These people tried that, and realised that it wasn't enough. Real revolt is an effort of memory and analysis, which may appear insignificant but which in the long term alters our way of thinking” (cited in Zournazi 2002, p. 73). This rescaling positions hope as about the continuous fostering of small, localised disruptions, rather than something utopian, or a singular end goal. Revolt is altogether more constant, a part of routine analytical activity. This quote (Lingis, cited in Zournazi 2002, p. 38) sums up a rescaling stance: “... change is temporary, here is a revolution, seven years later it is ossified into a bureaucracy ... we have to free the notion of liberation and revolution from the idea of permanence, revolutions are continuous, not once and for all”.

A good example of research that has synergies with this argument is provided by the Quiet Activism agenda and framework developed by Wendy Steele *et al.* (2021). The emphasis here is on the value of local, everyday practices that, while small in scale, through their collective, continual, and regenerative nature hold the potential for wider innovation, disruption, and collaboration. Given the difficulty in achieving transformation via more “loud” and high-profile national and international politics and policies, this perspective raises important questions on what it means to “do activism”. It provokes reflections on how the local scale offers hope in providing meaningful responses or challenging existing hierarchies of power, as well as centring the need for an ethics of care and reciprocity that is vital in facilitating change over longer periods.

This leads onto the potential for reframing. The repositioning of revolt as small and continuous redirect our gaze inwards, to our own research and disciplines, as a means to then influence outwards. From this perspective, Kristeva argues tiny revolts should be seen as a core reflexive practice that questions the effectiveness of underlying framings, approaches, and interpretations. An ongoing process of critical thinking to both oppose power and provide valuable connection via texts or language to others involved in similar struggles. Arndt (2021, p. 535) explains that tiny revolts in this sense would mean

[taking] the time to re-read policy in diverse, diffractive ways, revolt enables us to unplan, redevelop, unknow, policy and practice through an evolving sense of what to do, try, change, in the face of uncertainty. Such a re-reading may take time ...

A recent example of research that showcases this point is the arguments Tom Slater (2012) recently made, which emphasised the value of epistemic reflexivity and the need to critically re-examine the taken-for-grantedness of some scholarly and policy debates core to the interests of this journal.

Works by indigenous scholars provide further examples of reframing. Important work by Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) highlights the links between science and imperialism, emphasising how the methodologies and practices of science need to be rendered visible and decolonised in order to pursue social justice. Similarly Tahu Kukutai *et al.* (2021) argue a rethink is needed of the

interface between science and policymaking, such as mainstream perceptions of the value of scientific objectivity and universality, to better recognise and include diverse knowledges and to produce more equitable outcomes for communities. A final illustration in what is an area of growing resonance, focuses on disruption of the academy itself. Both Tara McAllister *et al.* (2019) and Sereana Naepi (2019) reveal and interrogate the poor representation of indigenous academics within New Zealand Universities in their papers respectively entitled “Why isn’t my Professor Māori?” and “Why isn’t my Professor Pasifika?”. These studies highlight important questions on long-standing structural issues of colonisation, science, and the ways that value and success has been determined and embedded in global academia. These tiny revolts, whose critical gaze is directed internally to the researcher and externally to the sector hold disruptive and reflective potential.

The third example of tiny revolts I identify is related to success. While there is value in success claims and stories, given the difficulties in progressing change we also need to find hope in failure. There is an understandable desire to package most research as a “success”, particularly given the prevalence of metrics or competitive nature of academia. This is partly as a result of the growing influence of business, industry and managerialism norms in the sector, however, failure offers very interesting opportunities for critical thinking and disruption. Put differently, there is a “dark side” to success claims, which can mask important questions concerning success for whom, where, when, and why. Success suggests a continuation rather than a pause – a signal of effectiveness, rather than a need for reflection or resistance. As such, a tiny revolt can involve individuals, and academia more generally finding value in reclaiming the “right to fail” (Chambers *et al.* 2021). This goes beyond what is frequently termed as providing a “safe-fail” culture, to instead use failure as an explicit means for disruption. Failure fosters a desire to refuse and reset, to challenge the framing of success, to assign accountability for failure, and to take a breath before deciding to continue or discontinue.

... failure is not something to be embraced per se, but neither can it be rejected, displaced, or disavowed ... acknowledgment of failure grounds a demand for further action in concert with others; that the world be otherwise than it is ... [it] allows for a politics not focused on winning the game as it is played, but on changing (or refusing to play) the game itself. (Dilts 2017, pp. 188–189)

In a world of rampant success, failure is a deceptively powerful way to speak truth to power.

An example here is a powerful article by Natalie Osborne (2019) that openly discusses failure in multiple policy areas, how it can foster a “bleak ennui”, and the need for researchers to reflect, regroup, and go again. The brief abstract: “We lost. Now what?” provides a call for both reflection and action. Academics are becoming more open about sharing failure in our paper rejections, but there is huge value in adopting this approach with regard to our failure to have policy impact or political influence. To paraphrase Osborne, maybe from a crisis perspective we have lost in multiple areas in multiple fields over entire careers? And, now what? Admitting failure in this way can also be seen as an ethics of care. It decenters, it connects, it shows others they are not alone if they have similar frustrations. Where success is congested and mainstream, the tiny revolt of claiming the right to fail offers value in disrupting the treadmill of activity, to induce that pause that can redirect or refuse.

## 6. Beyond Academia-As-Usual?

An intimate revolt is not a political quietism. It is, rather, perhaps the primary condition for something other than the rampant political quietism that we witness in too many, but not all, places today. It is the impossible condition for the possibility of the event to come, in short, the revolt to come or future revolt. (Gratton 2007, p. 12)

There is no doubt that ever increasing productivity has produced outstanding research, new knowledge, and insights for industry and policy. Yet, a corollary is that many are time poor, pressured, and have increasing difficulty in becoming aware of the brilliant work produced elsewhere around the world. It is hard to shake the sense we are simultaneously too much and not enough; incredibly productive and pressured, yet never quite able to resolve the urban crises related to our research or practice.

Academics frequently highlight the need for particular sectors to reflect upon and change their current practices in order for societal or environmental transformation to occur. But while we often refer to “business-as-usual” or even “politics-as-usual” to highlight this necessity elsewhere, there is much less analytical attention on what we may call “academia-as-usual”. Research routinely acknowledges that radical transformation of political and economic systems are required, but academia is part of these same mainstream systems and structures too. When writing the “-as usual” suffix, it is worth reflecting upon how open academia is to fundamental structural shifts, such as a major university pursuing a business model different from international sector norms and metrics or, say, an substantial increase in researcher activism.

As ever, issues of time and pressure emerge as a central theme in academia, particularly as the approach suggests we need to create intellectual space to eventually empower socio-political space. It, therefore, provokes us to reflect on our own positionality and demands. To consider how to use the scarce research time we have – and it is scarce – to be effective and prioritise work that is purposeful and sustaining in the face of crises that resist resolution. And more broadly given the precarity of academia, to consider how the sector could be disrupted to ensure this privilege can be shared. Importantly, the agenda also emphasises that by taking the time to read others’ work we open up possibilities to create new bonds of solidarity, as well as the possibility of new internal reflections regarding culture, values and politics, and the opportunity to elevate more marginalised voices and forge new framings and connections. Academia can be isolating; reaching out and connecting through texts and language is important.

A final comment is that while I have made a case for intimate, tiny revolts to become more prevalent, I do not think it is an approach for everyone – there are differing ideas of how the science-policy interface should function, many pathways of academic activism, and indeed more types of revolt than those briefly outlined here. For some it will be more advocacy and outreach outside the halls of government, or working at the local level with communities. For others, it may be about finding space to pause, reflect, and prioritise in order to produce ideas that may stimulate new critical thinking, advocacy coalitions, or cascading tiny revolts amongst others. And I hope it is, because even if what you discover politically depresses you, it may sustain and provide hope to others.

## Note

1. SciVal is a powerful research analytics software from Elsevier. See: <https://www.scival.com/>.

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