

Access/Arrival: Welcoming difference

A.-Chr. Engels-Schwarzpaul
AUT University

As I was jotting down the first notes for this article, I read Doug Saunders' book *Arrival City* (2011), in which he tries to identify patterns that will determine whether "slums" (as most of us think of them; urban sociologists term them "informal settlements") will serve as platforms from which rural migrants can access the city and citizenship, or, alternatively, will be dangerous dead ends. Saunders moves between careful attention to singular details in the migrants' experiences, analyses of common configurations and scrutiny of government policies shaping the arrival cities' conditions. As the book unfolds, Saunders forms patterns out of glimpses and insights into global migration that helped me think through migrants' strategies and experiences, as well as immigration policies, from new angles and in different directions. I was surprised by the entrepreneurship, solidaric networks and self-organisation, as well as creative determination demonstrated globally by an immense number of people, who want access to a better life in the cities, during the venture of their migration. While Saunders seems to believe in the goodness of the markets a little too fervently to investigate the consequences of disproportional capitalisation in arrival cities, he not only celebrates the success stories of those who took fate into their hands, but also emphasises the importance of sustained public infrastructural support and engagement. Given mildly favourable circumstances, migrants can move from squalid circumstances to gain access to an urban middle-class, and supportive governmental engagement is rewarded by cultural and economic development of the guest society. Conversely, efforts to exclude the migrants not only fail, producing misery and violence, but damage national and regional economies. The book is all about arrival and access; not surprisingly, education surfaces again and again as one of the key factors that makes a difference.

The more I read of *Arrival City*, the more I saw connections with *ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural and Policy Studies*. An important moment in the book is Saunders' claim that "we do not know how to look [...]. We do not know where to look. We have no place, no name, for the locus of our new world" (2011: 2)—and because of this inability to look and to name we fail to understand global rural-urban migration patterns. A similar inability to make sense of patterns that are alien to us often precludes us, and our institutions, from understanding many of our "non-traditional" students.¹ For instance, what is today called the "deficit model" is a specific way of looking, in which causes for discrepancies are unambiguously located on the side of those with "special needs" (Cajete, 1999: 104; McLoughlin & Oliver, 2000). A focus on the handicap fails to register the courage and inventiveness of the latter, their creative pragmatism and unusual insights—and this failure to take notice of the strengths that come with a handicap extends, with variations, to all students who deviate from norms of the day, those who are non-traditional due to their ethnicity, class, gender, language, creed, or by some other trait that defines the Other as other. From such perspective, being-with the Other (institutionalised as diversity) is associated with costs, so that the appreciation of "the generative potential of multiple perspectives" to stimulate new ideas is likely to diminish (see Gundara, 1997: 135; Walker et al., 2008: 125). This inability to appreciate the perspectives of new arrivals on the educational scene acts, in turn, as a barrier to a whole range of students wanting to access higher, particularly

postgraduate education. It also debars new forms of knowledge and emergent forms of research.

While I cannot be entirely certain why ACCESS was given its title, I suspect that it is quite in order to take the journal by its name: to think of it as a network whose members want to increase access (as the means, opportunity, right and ability to approach, enter and use) for those who do not have it already. This intention is personally relevant to me since—even though I am more or less an insider today—I was an outsider in 1995, when I considered enrolling for a PhD. After the University of Auckland’s Elam School of Fine Arts, where I had completed a Masters thesis in 1985, would not take on supervision in a topic that lay outside the expertise of their only staff member with a PhD (and the School of Architecture, similarly, had no-one qualified to supervise), it was two editors of the journal, ACCESS, who helped me gain access. Jim Marshall was a member of the Deans’ committee at the time and told me much later that my name had come up regularly on the agenda (“have we found a supervisor for that woman yet?”). Nobody seemed willing to touch my transdisciplinary topic until Michael Peters offered supervision in 1996. My mode of thinking, too, was that of an outsider, namely German or European, which did not automatically gel with the academic idioms and patterns in Auckland at the time. I had only arrived back in New Zealand a couple of years earlier, having lost whatever naturalisation as a Kiwi I might have acquired during my first stay. Therefore, my own experiences as an immigrant PhD student and, later, a second-language editor form part of the background of this paper, in which I explore some aspects of arrival, right of entry, debate, translation, and change in tertiary education. They combine with observations of PhD students, whom I either supervise or have worked with as leader of the PhD programme in our School, as well as with my affiliation with ACCESS as a journal and a network.

When Jim Marshall, Colin Lankshear and other members of a group of academics (interested in Cultural and Policy Studies and research for Māori education at University of Auckland) initiated and edited ACCESS in the 1980s, they did this in an environment where criticality (as the sustained questioning of the given and the examination of its conditions of possibility), empathy and transformative action, as well as an interest in relations of difference provided shared points of interest.

When I was first exposed to ACCESS as a PhD student, editors Michael Peters, Jim Marshall, and Susan Robertson frequently appointed guest editors for special issues. In 1998, Michael suggested I edit, with my colleague Lucy Holmes, a special issue with papers originating in a symposium of PhD candidates at the School of Education. Jim and Michael both had great faith in students and their trust in our capabilities certainly spurred us on whenever the task of editing and organising our first publication seemed to get a little too much. Eventually, “Divarications: Aesthetics, art, education, and culture” went to print in 1999, including diverse papers that shared, however, an un-ease with the “immediate fit” of prevailing paradigms within theory and practice of education in New Zealand and a desire to unsettle biased legitimacies. Contributors thus sought to bring “the undiscussed into discussion, the unformulated into formulation” (Bourdieu, 1977: 169) and asked how things could be otherwise. For the first time in ACCESS, several papers addressed explicitly the role of the arts in education and cultural difference was another strong theme. Amongst the contributors were Janet Mansfield and Elizabeth Grierson, with whom I was to edit another issue in 2001, “Interventions: Inaugural Arts Forum”, when Elizabeth had taken over editorship of ACCESS and Michael and Jim had shifted into the role of Consulting Editors, a role they still hold today.² Three years later, in 2004, Janet and I each co-edited an issue of Volume 23, “Censure

and Governance in Education: Policy contexts”, with Elizabeth.³ Most papers had a strong Foucauldian bent—the latter perhaps an influence attributable to Jim Marshall, whose work on Foucault in the context of educational research, teaching and administration would have influenced nearly everyone in his immediate sphere. Several subsequent issues were explicitly concerned with policy matters and internationalisation, for instance volumes 25(2) and 27(1 and 2),⁴ but these topics were also constantly underpinning papers in other issues of ACCESS. This history of joint editing is indicative of a feature that is certainly not exclusive to ACCESS, but nevertheless important for me: collaboration, interdisciplinarity and networking were important values during our PhD candidature at the School of Education. To this day, Michael Peters and Jim Marshall’s former PhD students collaborate regularly. Our group of “Michael’s maidens”, as we called ourselves with a peculiar sense of irony, also included Ho-Chia Chueh and Nesta Devine, the latter a multiple contributor to ACCESS, and currently my colleague at AUT University. These networks have not only given me access to the world of journal editing—which I continued on another level as joint executive editor of *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts*, with Ross Jenner from 2004, and for which I have edited several themed issues. They also provide a platform for me to discuss questions of access to the academy and to publishing for my own students today.

ACCESS is still committed to the advancement of critical perspectives on cultural policy and practice, philosophy of education, pedagogy and politics of knowledge in the arts and humanities, creative discourses, knowledge economies and politics. It is Elizabeth Grierson’s merit not only to have rescued ACCESS when it needed a dedicated editor, but also to have maintained its continuity and standards—to the extent that it was repeatedly given an A in the Australian Research Council’s journal rating exercises.

ACCESS’ focus on access—as the means, opportunity, right and ability to approach, enter and use—is urgently needed in societies in which equity has disappeared from the lists of priority goals and tertiary education environments focus on efficient input-output ratios.⁵ In Aotearoa/New Zealand, Government stipulated targets for growth in specific areas of the University leaves little space for a sustained engagement with, for instance, the unfolding of Māori and Pacific knowledges. This lack of engagement is further cemented by key performance indicators based on data that only partially reflect complex urban demographics. With 37 per cent of the city’s population born overseas in 2006, Auckland is arguably an arrival city in Saunders’ sense and the growing enrolment of students from developing countries reflects this. AUT’s goals in the 2012-16 Strategic Plan (AUT University, 2011) signals a willingness to engage with “diverse domestic and international student population[s]”, to help students develop “international and intercultural competencies”, and to advance “educational opportunities and success in the diverse communities of Auckland and New Zealand”—all aspects that Saunders would probably identify as factors contributing to successful arrival cities and their equivalents in educational contexts.

On the other hand, AUT University’s 2011 determination of its student clientele was based on an assumption that Māori and Pasifika populations amounted to 9.2 per cent and 11.2 per cent respectively in the “Auckland region”. What counts as “region” here is, of course, debatable and by no means stable. For the purposes of the Spatial Design programme in the School of Art and Design, for instance, the hinterland includes the Far North, from where the majority of Māori graduates come, and where the demographic proportion of Māori was anywhere between 54.4 and 33.0 per cent in 2006.⁶ If these figures were used instead to determine the weight of Māori epistemologies and methodologies in the overall curriculum, current contents and foci would shift considerably. The openness to all kinds of diversity can,

and often does, come at the price of a clear-sighted and hardnosed awareness of the particular indigenous kind of difference. In *Arrival City*, Saunders notes that the “residents of arrival cities do not consider themselves ‘the poor’ but rather successful urbanites who happen to be passing through a period of poverty, perhaps for a generation” (2011: 274). This is not likely to apply to Māori who migrated to the cities in Aotearoa—and at this point, it seems to me, Saunders exhibits a blind spot that mars his otherwise insightful and well informed analysis, a blind spot that is typical of settler societies like Canada and Aotearoa/New Zealand. After a first and fast reading, I did not find a single mention of the particular situation faced by indigenous people in this scenario—this amounts to a perpetuation of a habit of thinking in which early colonial settlements are imagined in *terra nullius*. What would an arrival city have been to those who were “there” before the city founders even arrived? What might it mean for indigenous people migrating into the cities today? Graham Hingangaroa Smith once famously commented on postcoloniality, “did I miss something ... did they leave?” Māori students share many of the migrants’ features, strategies and tactics that Saunders describes, and many demonstrate similar courage and innovative entrepreneurship. It is, in both cases, not the lack of those qualities that prevents them from arriving, but the misunderstanding of their situation by policy makers, government actions—and educators in our situation. The task of opening access to non-traditional students thus extends in two directions and concerns both indigenous and immigrant populations. But if we do not know how to look, if we do not even know where to start looking, we will have no place and no name for our future world. In Aotearoa, as in other “postcolonial” settler societies, these questions urgently wait to be confronted.

Even in a very general sense, laudable goals concerning diverse domestic and international student populations often disappear in day-to-day operational decisions unless strong arguments are mounted regularly in their support. ACCESS, with its focus on the transformative potential of pedagogies and educational policies in their social and cultural contexts, helps identify, develop and sophisticate such arguments.

It also helps translate themes and issues from one cultural context to another—and by cultural I do not only mean ethnic properties, but equally of those of administrative, technical, political, social or language contexts. At AUT, as in other universities in most parts of the world, international enrolments are becoming increasingly important. They entail the arrival of new students whose ways of thinking, learning and knowing differ significantly from those already predominant at the host university, just as mine did when I was a budding PhD student and as those, very often, of Māori students do. More likely than not, their view of the world is formed through a different language; they bring with them potentials that are rarely recognised. It is sad to see how unprepared the majority of staff and students are for a full engagement with these differences (if they register them), and how most do not know how to look to understand. From my own situation, as an immigrant and second language speaker of English, I remember that many a missed engagement was a consequence of failed translation processes. Paul Ricoeur makes an explicit connection between literal and cultural translation processes when he talks about *linguistic hospitality* which, if it prevails in a translator’s inherently agonistic practices, can make her work deeply satisfying. Translation, for Ricoeur, is an art of negotiating between Self and Other, a correspondence without adequacy or “complete adhesion” (Kearney, 2007: 151), a fragile condition supported by a minimum bilingualism and the recognition that “just as in the act of telling a story, we can translate differently, without hope of filling the gap between equivalence and total adequacy” (Ricoeur, 2006: 10). In this relationship, “the pleasure of dwelling in the other’s language is balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home, in one’s own welcoming house” (10).

Dialogue between Self and stranger (*dia-legein* as both conversation and the establishment of differences) then welcomes difference and invites the strange to “step into the fabric of [one’s] own speech” (Kearney, 2007: 151).

ACCESS and of *Arrival City* are both concerned with what invites or obstructs access. The understanding of these patterns becomes increasingly important the more educational environments are exposed to the internationalisation of teaching and research, the emergence of new creative research agendas, the discussion of creative universities, and also current moves towards open access publications.

Saunders is probably too sanguine about the economic functions of arrival cities and the role of the middle-class. Nevertheless, his observations of the dynamic links between the migrants’ original communities and the urban networks, each supporting and advancing the other and forging inter-generational chains leading to the migrants’ arrival in the established city and the survival of the village, have relevance in the current development of Western universities. As someone who accompanies students on their journey of learning, I have a deep interest in the problems and potentials of “non-traditional” students. AUT is proudly called a university for the changing world and many staff are interested in the diverse approaches of new arrivals to undergraduate and postgraduate study. Yet, universities in New Zealand, who have to operate as businesses, are caught in what Marshall calls a “march of performativity” (in Peters, 2005: 295). In this situation, it is not only important to be able to argue the inherent human right to educational access, but also the benefits to the institution deriving from non-traditional students’ participation. The AUT strategic plan stipulates all the right values for the inclusion of Māori, Pasifika and international students alongside mainstream Pākehā. To implement those values at the operational, day-to-day level, it is crucial that these values and goals are translated into valid curricula and engaged with at the level of research, teaching and administration.

ACCESS has, since I have known about it, demonstrated a commitment to asking questions about how a given situation could be otherwise and better, and how we can think about “difference” differently. Access has been a concern, not only a title, and there have also been moments where the peculiar difference indigenous students bring with them to the task of learning and research was explicitly made a topic—as in Vol. 8(1), 1989. ACCESS is well placed to further expand and refine these questions, and I look forward to future discussions engaging with and exceeding Saunders’ insights in *Arrival City*.

Notes

1. “Traditional” students were the majority of students in Western universities until about twenty years ago: “male, from high-status social-economic backgrounds, members of majority ethnic and/or racial groups, and without disability” (Taylor & Beasley 2005: 141).
2. The title of the 2001 issue signalled Elizabeth’s strong interest and engagement with art as a form of knowledge in education. To discuss and debate the recently introduced *Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum: Draft* (1999) and *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (2000), Elizabeth and Janet had organized the *ARTS FORUM: The Draft Arts Curriculum and Teacher Education in the Postmodern Context* in 2000, at The University of Auckland. Educators in the arts, from primary, secondary and tertiary backgrounds, presented papers with a focus on music and visual arts. The subsequent journal issue included papers from the forum, as well as contributions submitted in response to invitations and a call for papers. Under Elizabeth’s editorship, several later ACCESS issues continued an engagement with arts and aesthetics in education: a double issue in 2003, “Technology, Culture and Value: Heideggerian themes”; in 2009, “Creative Arts in Policy and Practice”; in 2010, “Aesthetics in Action”; and in 2011, “Ways of Drawing Out” and “Theatre and Performance in the Asia-Pacific”. Outside these explicitly themed issues, many contributions addressed art and design practices and

theories in education. Vol 22 (1 & 2) 2003, Double Issue. "Technology, Culture and Value: Heideggerian themes" explores technology, culture and value through the work of Heidegger. The collection extends the critical approach to contemporary questions of technology and technologised thinking in the work of education, cultural production, language and self or social constitution. Vol. 28 (1) 2009, "Creative Arts in Policy and Practice" addresses issues of creativity in education, global policies of UNESCO, local narratives of creative practice, innovation and enterprise discourses and the politics of aesthetic production in neoliberal discourses of education. Vol 29 (1) 2010, "Aesthetics in Action" investigates questions and issues of aesthetics in urban contexts and explores the shaping powers of aesthetics in action furthering our understanding of culture building in national and globalised conditions and extending discourses of aesthetics in context of place-making. Vol 30 (1) 2011, "Ways of Drawing Out: Thinking, mapping, designing, communicating beyond the boundaries" considers new and emerging ways of organising learning in a complex world, exposing normative practices to challenge through arts and sciences, philosophy and psychoanalysis, calligraphy and design, and their applications in education. Vol 30 (2) 2011, "Theatre and performance in the Asia-Pacific: Regional culture and modernity in the global era".

3. Elizabeth and Janet's issue concerned politics of curriculum history, curriculum change and teacher education, professional development in education, union education, and university teacher education. Elizabeth and I edited the second issue, "Internationalism, Diversity and Governance", which addressed internationalism in education, the Tertiary Education Commission's role in New Zealand, export education policies and practices, cultural equity in policy and pedagogy. Vol. 23 (1 & 2) 2004, "Censure and Governance in Education: Policy Contexts" engages themes of educational governance and governmentality particularly in response to teacher education and issues of diversity and internationalism; plus an Annotated Bibliography of ACCESS Journal 1982-2005.

4. Vol. 25 (2) 2006, "Politics of Globalisation, Research and Pedagogy" addresses research and pedagogy in context of the politics of globalisation, raising questions of audit and management, quality systems, politics of regulation in academic work, the political goal setting of global knowledge economies and the way these systems constitute academic subjectivity. Vol. 27 (1 & 2), "The Politics of Educational Research: International perspectives on research accountability and audit systems" investigates the terrain of research accountability and audit systems, including ranking processes such as the RAE, RQF/ERA, PBRF.

5. The "principal mode of production" currently determining academic work, see Grierson (2006: 74).

6. See Palmer and Nepia (2011). In the Auckland Region, the proportions ranged from 7.8 per cent in Auckland City to 26.0 per cent in Papakura. Seen in another way, 32.4 per cent of New Zealand's total population live in the Auckland region while 24.3 per cent of the total Māori population does, which makes Auckland's the largest Māori population of the six New Zealand centres. 87.0 per cent of the Māori population lived in the North Island in 2006. See <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/quickstats-about-a-subject/maori/location-te-wahi.aspx>

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