

# Volunteers Economically Abused: Neoliberal Formalism, MICE Philosophy, and the Capacity for Comprehensive Understanding

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Dr Neville Buch and MICE<sup>1</sup>



5TH AUSTRALIAN EAST COAST TRIP SERIES ABSTRACT: The travel from Brisbane to Geelong through country New South Wales, running out of petrol with no money but the kindness of others, spending several days with Australian leading Islam/Muslim historian and then the return trip via Sydney where I presented on the Dynamic of Cognition at the University of Sydney's "Leaving Religion and Non-Religion Thought Symposium.

**The "How Companies Outsource Labour to You" audio commentary on MICE's Contributory Economy and Human Authorship:**

<https://drnevillebuch.com/important-public-statement/volunteers-economically-abused-neoliberal-formalism-mice-philosophy-and-the-capacity-for-comprehensive-understanding/>

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<sup>1</sup> Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) has been fairly used in the production of this work. The tool used is Google NotebookLM (recently rebranded as Gemini Notebook). It is an AI-powered virtual research assistant and thinking partner designed to help a person interact deeply with their own documents. Unlike general chatbots, it is source-grounded, meaning it only generates answers based on the specific PDFs, documents, or links uploaded. The A.I. process in the production of this work has been limited to the attached (prompts) on each of the questions in turn. This ensures an accurate reading of each source. The author then rearranged and re-edited the answers the A.I. provided. The human author publishes this work. A.I. is never an author when used properly. This assistance is not qualitatively different from a human research assistant when that assistance is deemed to have no authorial status but is acknowledged.

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## 1. Core Economic Argument: The Exploitation of Unpaid Voluntary Labour

In orthodox neoliberal economics and public choice theory, **volunteerism** is frequently celebrated as an efficient, market-clearing mechanism for civic engagement and social service provision (Prewitt 1970: 5; Durr-e-Nayab 2023: 301) [2, 5, 28–30]. Scholars like Bevin Luchel argue that if an intellectual project, historical synthesis, or social care initiative possesses genuine value, it should either achieve immediate commercial monetization or survive on “unfunded volunteer labour, independent presses, or personal wealth” (Luchel 2026, cited in Buch 2026a: 5) [28–30, 39–40].

However, political economy and critical sociology expose this assumption as “**the great deception**” (Petras 1997: 1587; Pupo & Duffy 2012: 27) [3–5]:

1. **Structural Mask for State and Corporate Retreat:** Volunteerism functions as a convenience for centralized institutions, allowing governments and corporate bodies to withdraw from funding permanent public infrastructure while relying on unpaid labour to absorb operational fallout (Petras 1997: 1587; Herd & Meyer 2002: 665; Kelemen et al. 2017: 1239) [3–5, 9–10].
2. **Downward Transfer of Responsibility:** This dynamic is formalized in **Jameel’s Economic Law of Responsibility Burden** (Jameel 2026b: 79; Buch 2026b: 2) [6–10]. When institutions step back from funding essential knowledge production and community welfare, unpriced operational, cognitive, and financial liabilities are shifted directly onto vulnerable individuals, causing chronic financial strain and decision fatigue (Son & Wilson 2015: 1059; Jameel 2026b: 79) [5, 9–10].
3. **The Empirical Fallacy of “Digital Voluntarism”:** Market fundamentalists point to platforms like Linux, Wikipedia, and arXiv as proof that high-level intellectual commons require no public financial underwriting (Luchel 2026, cited in Buch 2026a: 6) [42–44]. As Buch’s rebuttal demonstrates, this argument collapses under institutional examination:
  - **Linux and Apache** are heavily subsidized by major technology corporations (such as IBM, Google, and Red Hat) that extract commercial value from shared software standards (Benkler 2006; Buch 2026a: 6) [43–44].
  - **arXiv and PhilArchive** circulate papers written by scholars who are overwhelmingly supported by salaried university positions or institutional fellowships (Buch 2026a: 6)<sup>[1]</sup>.

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- **Wikipedia** functions as a tertiary aggregator of existing literature; it does not generate primary archival research or complex historical synthesis, which require years of dedicated, funded labour (Buch 2026a: 5–6) [39–40, 43–44].
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## 2. Alignment of the Economic Argument with MICE Principles and Philosophy

The **Management Institute for Contributory Economy (MICE)** counters the economic abuse of volunteers through an integrated philosophical architecture that redefines human value and labour [27–35, 48–55]:

- **Organological Restoration (Bernard Stiegler):** Expecting thinkers, researchers, and care-workers to subsist on unpaid voluntarism accelerates “**denoetization**”—the systematic liquidation of cognitive faculties and deep memory caused by exhaustion and market neglect (Stiegler 2010: 45; Buch 2026a: 3)<sup>[2][3]</sup>. MICE restores “long circuits of attention” by underwriting cognitive scaffolding, ensuring that intellect is not sacrificed to short-term market survival [33–34, 49–50].
- **Decoupling Contribution from Extractive Wage-Labour:** MICE recognizes that hyper-industrial automation and artificial intelligence permanently erode conventional employment (Buch 2026a: 8)<sup>[4]</sup>. Instead of forcing all human activity into narrow market jobs or abandoning unmarketable work to unpaid voluntarism, MICE establishes a **Contributory Income Scheme** that remunerates non-rivalrous social value, ecological stewardship, and independent research (Buch 2026a: 8; Jameel & Buch 2026: 102) [8, 48–49].
- **Operationalizing “Professional Contractualism”:** MICE replaces unpaid volunteerism with publicly accountable contracts modelled on civic infrastructure (Buch 2026a: 8) [49–50]. Just as societies publicly finance civil engineers and health officers to protect physical safety, society must underwrite independent humanists and community researchers to protect democratic literacy from demagoguery and epistemic collapse (Buch 2026a: 8) [49–50].
- **Ethical Dimension and Panser (Thinking as Caring):** Drawing on Bernard Williams's “thick ethical concepts” and Nel Noddings's ethics of care, MICE practices **panser (thinking as caring)** [35, 62–64, 67]. This model recognizes care work and historical synthesis as essential civilizational capital that demands dignity, structural protection, and compensation rather than exploitative praise [35, 62–64, 67].

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- **The POLICE Diagnostic Filter and Open Constitutionalism:** Through the five-stage **POLICE model** (Philosophically **O**ntology, **L**ogic, **I**ntersect, **C**ompatibility, **E**ducation) and **Open Constitutionalism**, MICE ensures that public funds are distributed transparently through peer-reviewed criteria rather than bureaucratic monopolies or market Darwinism [34–37, 41–42].
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## 3. Alignments Between Volunteer Abuse and Comprehensive Understanding

The economic abuse of volunteers directly restricts society's capacity for **comprehensive understanding** (“**360-degree vision**”) by trapping individuals and institutions in cognitive rigidity [28–30, 39–44, 48–55]:

1. **Fixed Mindset vs. Open Mindset:** Neoliberal market fundamentalism exhibits a **Fixed Mindset**, treating unpaid volunteerism as an endless safety valve for market failures (Luchel 2026; Buch 2026a: 2) [28–30]. This mindset conflates price with value, assuming that unfunded work is inherently worthless. An **Open Mindset** recognizes that deep historical understanding and social care require protected time, resources, and institutional stability.
  2. **Decision-Fatigue and Cognitive Impairment:** Forcing scholars and civic leaders into chronic financial precarity and volunteer over-extension depletes their cognitive bandwidth (Son & Wilson 2015: 1059; Jameel 2026b: 79) [5, 9–10]. Decision-makers acting under resource depletion fall into “a-historical framing,” reacting to immediate crises rather than perceiving long-term historical trajectories.
  3. **Restoring the “Historical Person”:** Reclaiming a 360-degree vision requires viewing human beings as evaluating, willing “**historical persons**” rather than atomized *homo economicus* nodes or unpaid system operators (Buch 2026a: 5) [29, 38–39, 54]. A comprehensive vision demands an economic architecture that shields human attention and preserves democratic public space [33–34, 52–55].
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## 4. Why This Message Is Important: Reclaiming Human Authorship

Rejecting the economic abuse of volunteers and establishing a Contributory Economy is vital for the future of civilizational knowledge and democratic health [27–30, 48–57]:

- **Preventing Epistemic Collapse and Cultural Amnesia:** Demanding that primary historical research and archive excavation submit to immediate market profitability or volunteer

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charity ensures cultural denoetization and historical forgetfulness (Buch 2026a: 6) [39–40].

- **Restoring Substantial Fairness ( Eudaimonia ):** Replacing unpaid volunteer exploitation with remunerated contribution shifts societal success from pecuniary profit accumulation (*chrematistike*) to Aristotelian flourishing (*eudaimonia*) and substantial fairness<sup>[5]</sup>.
- **Protecting Democratic Wisdom in the Age of AI:** In an era of automated predictive text and corporate audit metrics, protecting independent humanists ensures that truth-seeking remains pluralistic, rigorous, and grounded in human moral agency [33, 47, 52–55].

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## In-Text Harvard References & Bibliography

### In-Text Harvard References

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- (Connell 1997: 115)
- (Durr-e-Nayab 2023: 301)
- (Froyum 2018: 465)
- (Godwin 2002: 16)
- (Herd & Meyer 2002: 665)
- (Jameel 2026b: 78–79)
- (Kelemen, Mangan & Moffat 2017: 1239)
- (Oppenheimer 2001: 1)
- (Petras 1997: 1587)
- (Prewitt 1970: 5)

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