

Ethical Challenges in the Era of Academic Capitalism: Mission of Critically Engaged (Art) University

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Position paper – plaidoyer - 2019

Key words

- Academic capitalism,
- expanded professionalism,
- entrepreneurial university,
- sustainability,
- university market,
- managerialism,
- employability (university as producer of labour force)
- University autonomy
- critical university,
- Academic ethics
- academic solidarity,
- Empathy
- University in public realm
- University as knowledge producer

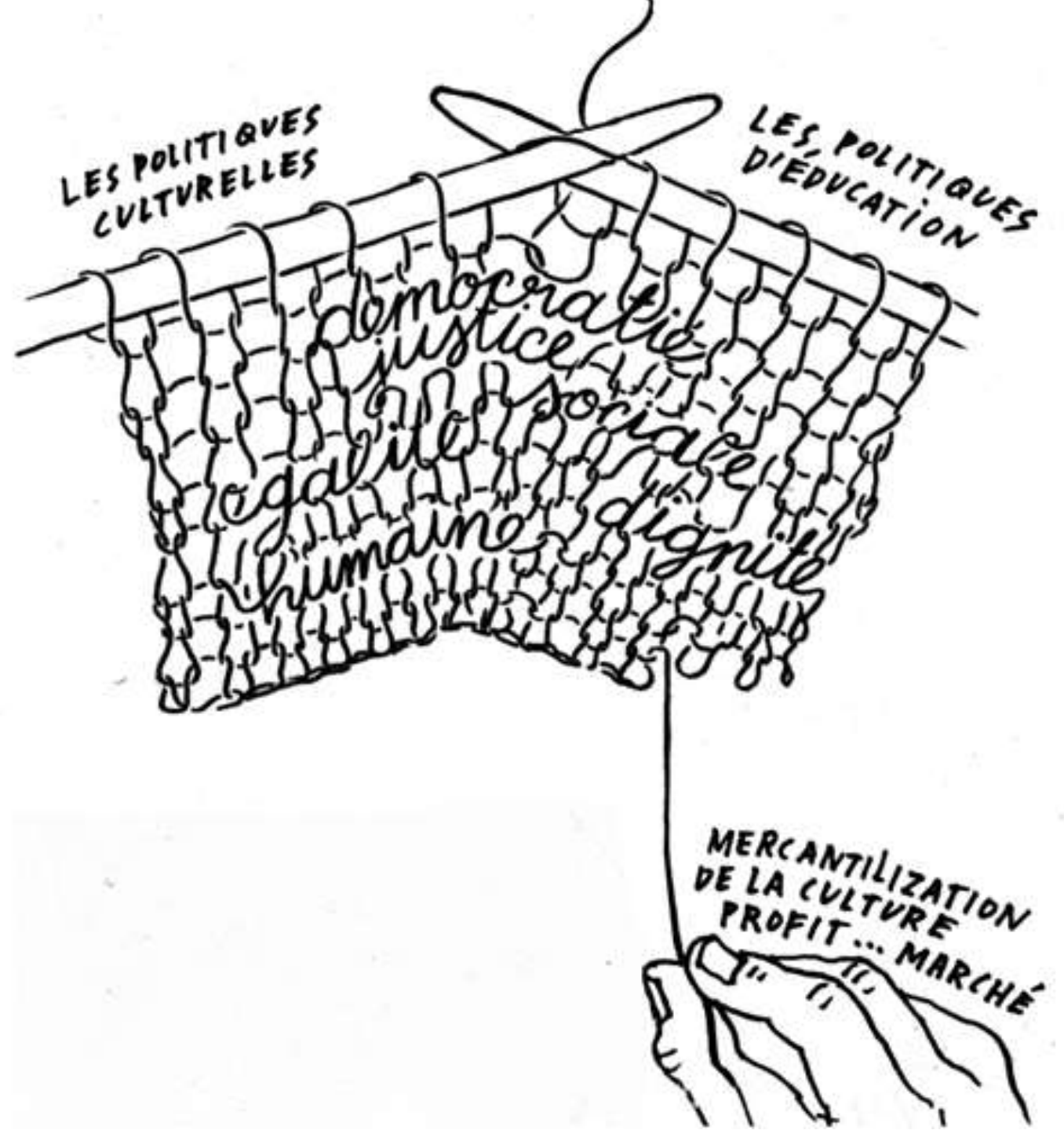
Pressures in the time of globalization

Universities on a crossroads

- Competitivity - Ranking done according to quantitative criteria is the key “benchmark” of development
- „rentability“ - attracting student bodies from “emerging markets” that could make each programme profitable
- Policy (rhetorical, verbal) demands – inclusion, accessibility

In public interest:
University and higher
education – public
good

Vahida Ramujkić,
illustration for the book
Milena Dragičević Šešić
*Vers les nouvelles
politiques culturelles*,
CLIO, 2016



art universities – approach changes

- educating new generation of artists and art managers aware of socio-political and cultural contexts
- integrating critical issues within art teaching.
- More inclusive, keeping its demanding selection process that made many art schools inaccessible for students coming from de-privileged social background or migrant communities.
- Public policies demanded universities to introduce affirmative actions (i.e. toward Roma students) and to raise accessibility for students with physical handicaps.

I am Milica Tomic, I am Bosnian, Norwegian...
I am Milica Tomic, I am Chinese, Serbian, Albanian...
Before Amin Malouf book – *Killing identities*



Conversion et la promotion de la
cultures culturelles



Radically questioning dissonant issues

Mrđan Bajić – Yugomuzej 1998- 2000

Milena Dragičević Šešić

UMETNOST I KULTURA OTPORA



XXI century: markets and sustainability

- Universities have to behave according to neoliberal demands: managerial and marketing techniques in governance and audience development become more important than creation itself.
- That have imposed necessity to academia to change curriculum accordingly and it has forced them to go back to skill training – only it was not any more about artistic skills (master classes in traditional academia were transferring skills from masters to students) but about transversal skills (skills related to communication, persuasion, fundraising, team work, etc.).

arts educational institutions have to

- become service providers, to be marketable and to attract as many students as possible (treated as customers) promising them successful future artistic career (similar to the way of how American universities are advertising their quality by level of salary that an average graduate is receiving at the beginning of career).
- Artist has to become his own manager, PR agent or, at least, academia has to offer to him, as a learning outcome, set of skills that would guarantee his **employability**. And to make them understand that **THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE** for their careers.

Conclusion

- The academic culture is now squeezed in between traditional higher education values and new university “culture of management” that endorse benchmarking, competitiveness and comparability...
i.e. honorary doctorates – to whom?
- Lacking empathy
- Keeping knowledge as commodity, curriculum as product to be sold – not to be shared



Academic capitalism - Can art or any other school keep its artistic and teaching integrity, its autonomy, stimulating and encouraging creativity and critical thinking of its students?

- challenges that affect art education curricula under the pressure of market and public policies (both cultural and educational), developed within “academic capitalism” (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2009) that expects schools to be not only sustainable but profitable (Bala et. al, 2018).



Mladen Stilinović



Mark Fisher – career choice – a free will or?

- “one of the most successful tactics of the ruling class has been **responsibilisation**. Each individual member of the subordinate class is encouraged into feeling that their poverty, lack of opportunities, or unemployment, is their fault alone. Individuals will blame themselves rather than social structures, What Smail calls "Magical-voluntarism" – the belief that it is within every individual’s power to make themselves whatever they want to be – is the dominant ideology and unofficial religion of contemporary capitalist society, pushed by reality TV "experts" and business gurus as much as by politicians".



Expanded professionalism

- Transversal skills - are skills the future of education?

Contradictory policy demands

- University has to be a key platform for research and knowledge production;
- To contribute to social and economic development working on those themes;
- To educate critical intelligence and researchers but also, to educate „professionals“ for the labour market of today and tomorrow
- To realize its own sustainability by designing profitable curricula, and remove non-profitable ones;

New Public Management demands from universities

- to become entrepreneurial organizations according to criteria that are formulated by capitalism as a global social formation. Thus, **contemporary university might be analyzed as the institution of academic capitalism.** That limits spaces of university autonomy as well as its critically engaged functions as its main tasks are to educate new generations of graduates according to employability defined by labor market.

University global market

- At the same time university has to become competitive on the global market of university programs and services thus achieving its own sustainability, efficiency of management but also profitability that would endorse investment in new hubs and laboratories and research that is demanded by corporations or political authorities.

What is expected of academics / contradictory demands / especially for us on peripheries...

- If the university is expected to be turned to research (or to „valorised“ research, published in indexed journals) and to be self-sustainable at the same time – it is obvious, unless you are mighty rich Ivy league university, that both demands can hardly go together with respect to academic principles.
- If it is expected that curriculum should enable students to get analytical and critical thinking skills, but also to skills that are guaranteeing employability
- Curriculum oriented toward analytical, critical thinking skills on one side
- Toward skills that are guaranteeing employability / so

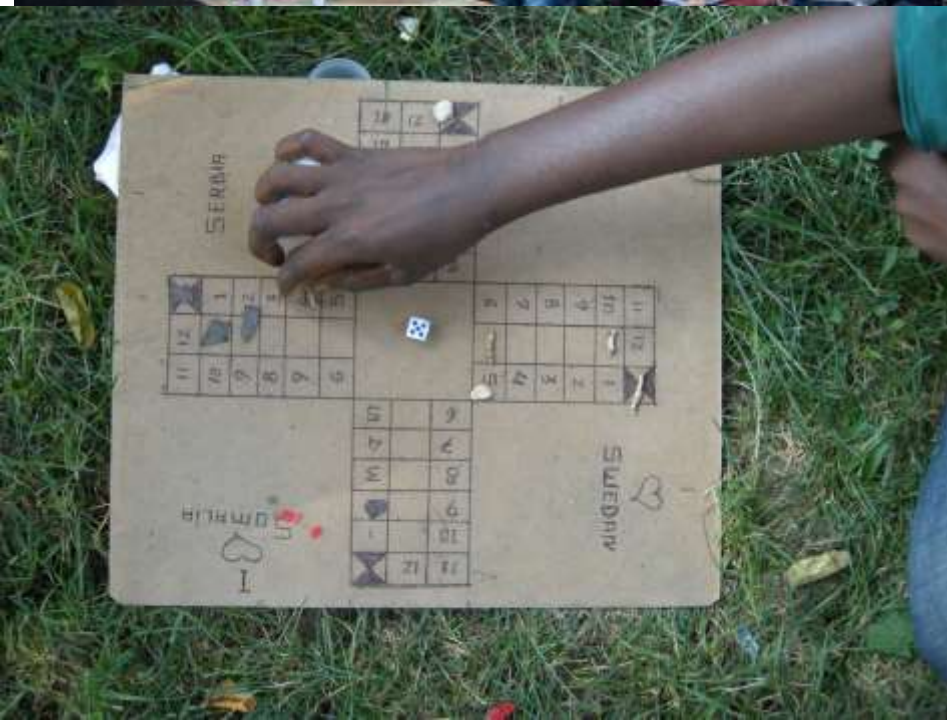
What learning results are going to be prioritized?

Thus, in spite of the efforts of “individualization of learning”, the process has to be highly normativized (measurable), and thus it is difficult to adapt it according to individual needs (unless, there is a highly motivated professor)

“Balance” in between principles & market demands

- That forces universities around the world to balance in-between their original principles and new market demands. These dilemmas are especially difficult for schools in arts and humanities that have hard time to define their new missions in the new world of corporate capitalism.
- In spite of discourses of new university managements that endorse **transdisciplinarity and innovation**, the research shows that most of resources are given to those **projects and programs that are already highly profitable** or have that potential.

Mixer house, Belgrade



Project thematic and methods - Case studies

- Transdisciplinary approaches and methods, including *practice as research*, applied in numerous research: from investor capitalism and its social effects, through urbanism (right to the city), public management (reconsideration of public-private partnership), commodification, competitiveness, nationalism, culture and politics of memory, etc. have achieved important results in their conceptual elaborations beyond usual explanations of disciplinary research.

Position paper - plaidoyer

- for self-organization and connections of researchers and artists that are active in academic and cultural realms. Through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary projects both in research and education they should defend university's autonomy but succeed in creating new platforms for better understanding and critical relation towards social realities and new organizational and operational models of acting important for sustainable (cultural and economic) development of their community and the global world.