THE UNIVERSITY AS AN URBAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE
2nd UNICA ‘University, Culture and the City’ Conference

THE PLACES OF THE UNIVERSITY: RETHINKING MISSIONS AND VALUES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Place as the essential condition of every historical event and every prestigious social institution.

Two dimensions of place:
- spatial
- symbolic.
The university and the city

- The places of the first universities
  - Why did a university emerge in Paris rather than in Charter, in Oxford rather than in London?
  - When a city turns from a temporary shelter to a home of the university?
- The university as a cultural phenomenon

The university and society

- The contested essence of university today
- Some theoretical considerations
  - Voices of intellectual “fathers”
  - The capability approach
- In search of a new model of roles of higher education and university

The university as the city cathedral
How can we explain the concrete spatial localization of the first universities?

- Why did the first European university emerge in Bologna, rather than in Rome or Milan?

- Why did a university emerge in Paris rather than in Charter, in Oxford rather than in London?
When a city turns from a temporary shelter to a home of the university?

- Lessons from the history of the failed universities
- The city as providing living conditions for students or as a place which manages to incorporate them.

The university as a cultural phenomenon
The contested essence of university today:

- The three ‘Ms’:
  - marketization
  - massification
  - managerialism.

- Towards a purely instrumental role for higher education?

- Is university losing its legitimacy?
Argument:

➤ There is a need to reconsider the value and missions of higher education/university.

➤ Higher education and its main institution – the university – performs a plurality of missions/roles.

➤ Higher education has not only instrumental, but intrinsic and empowering value as well at both individual and societal level.
The distinction between science as a means and as an end in itself.

The main principles for building of a university institution that today are still valid – unity of teaching and research, academic freedom, university autonomy.

The mission of the university – development of both personality and science, understood as internally driven processes of self-development, which are not subjected to instrumental goals.
Development by the Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen, and then by the political philosopher Martha Nussbaum.

It is not so much the achieved outcome (functioning) that matters, but the real opportunities that one has for achieving those outcomes (capability).

By emphasising important personal and social values, such as freedom, agency and personal (identity) development, justice and well-being, the capability approach sets a framework for critical evaluation of current developments in higher education.

5 different ways in which education can be valuable to the freedom of a person: *intrinsic importance, instrumental personal roles, instrumental social roles, instrumental process roles* and *empowerment and distributive roles* (Drèze & Sen 2002).
Whether to start from ends and values or from resources?

The raison d'être of higher education in contemporary societies – teaching, research and service.

Institutional perspective towards higher education/university:
- Higher education “has an impact on society over and above the immediate socializing experiences it offers the young” (Meyer 1977).
- It links the “role structure of society to universalized cultural knowledge” and “defines certain types of knowledge as authoritative in society on the basis of the highest cultural principles, e.g. science, rationality, natural law” (Meyer et al. 2007).
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<th>Level of influence</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Society</th>
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<td><strong>Character of influence</strong></td>
<td><strong>Instrumental</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intrinsic</strong></td>
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<td>• Employability (formation of graduates’ abilities to find employment by developing relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes, identities)</td>
<td>• Valuing and acquiring knowledge for its own sake</td>
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<td>• Formation of status identity (being a student or a graduate)</td>
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<td>• Human capital development and well being</td>
<td>• Knowledge development</td>
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<td>• Legitimisation and stratification of different types of knowledge/disciplines</td>
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WHAT IS NOT AND WHAT IS UNIVERSITY EDUCATION?

- University education is not just knowledge transfer from knowledgeable teachers to unknowing students. It is a joint scientific life of a community of teachers and students.

- University education is not just vocational education. It is a way to join the world of knowledge, emotional empathy of the search for truth.

- University education is not just something useful. By itself and for itself it has value and brings satisfaction.

- University education is not only preparing for future life. In itself it is a way of life with its own specific goals and values.
THE UNIVERSITY AS IVORY TOWER
THE UNIVERSITY AS SHOPING MALL
THE UNIVERSITY AS THE CITY CATHEDRAL
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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