

Universities and the Public Sphere: Knowledge Creation and State Building in the Era of Globalization Brian Pusser, Ken Kempner, Simon Marginson and Imanol Ordorika (Eds.). (2012). New York: Routledge. 261 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-87847-0

The disparaging impact of neoliberal intrusions in higher education has been exposed by many scholars from around the world. Austerity measures prescribing less public funding for a public utility such as university education are gradually turning university education into an elite commodity unaffordable to vulnerable communities. The disruption of education of the poor, minority ethnic groups and women has been vividly observed in the challenged nations of the global South such as in Africa. The noble conviction that education is a public good is being systematically threatened by the Euro-America socio-economic neoliberal doctrine advocating for corporatization and marketization of almost all human activity in pursuit of capital returns.

The authors of this volume have successfully produced a collection of work that demonstrates the human hazards of the neoliberal restructuring of higher education currently being experienced around the globe. The analyses of the authors are anchored on the potential role of universities to serve as public spheres, to be sites of critique as well as places of knowledge creation with no concern for profit. This volume addresses the fundamental function of universities as global public spheres. Habermas's notion of the public sphere forms the basis for the authors' discussions of neoliberal influences on the university. At the core of their analyses, contributors analyze the degree to which the globalization of knowledge and attempts by neoliberal policy makers and corporate interests has eroded the transformative democratic potential of the university. The volume joins other publications that have unmasked the imperial and dominating attributes of neoliberalism. The different but connected case studies portray neoliberal restructuring of higher education as developed North/Western machinations to dominate and gain from the commercialized university.

Though the volume is not divided into any sections, one can easily discern an organizational structure from the manner the chapters follow each other. Chapters 1 and 2 are introductory and provide a theoretical framing for the whole volume. In Chapter 1 the editors present their argument that not only is the potential to serve as an essential public sphere inherent in the university, but it is also the university's position as a site of critique and knowledge production that enables it to create public goods that are essential to the public welfare. In the second chapter Simon Marginson exposes and discusses Habermas's notion of the public sphere. The conception of a university is that it has the capacity to sustain criticism independent of the state and often directed toward it, while throwing up strategic options for the state to consider. In other words one measure of the university as a public sphere is the extent to which it provides space for criticism and challenge (p. 13). Public good ties universities into a larger process of democratization and human development. Though the whole volume deals with this idea of the university as a public sphere, it is in this chapter where Marginson provides a theoretical anchor that other authors utilize as the basis for their different discussions. This approach by the editors helped link coherently all the chapters to the theme of university and the public sphere. Readers can easily follow the discussions the various chapters are engaged in without each individual chapter being repetitive by addressing the guiding theme of the book.

In Chapter 3 Brian Pusser argues that conceptualizing and realizing the university as a public sphere are the most significant challenges facing universities in the United States. Pusser posits that the realization of a public sphere in higher education calls for deconstruction of the

forces that constrain the contemporary university from serving as a public sphere: the role of the state, neoliberal market policies, the institutions themselves, and the efforts of social actors. What is presented in this chapter is the failure by higher education institutions in the United States to pass the public good litmus test. Jenny Lee and Brendan Cantwell in Chapter 4 corroborate Pusser's observations as they highlight the prevalence of neoracism among international students and postdoctoral fellows in Chapter 4. Their chapter seeks a redress of the fact that students and postdocs from developing countries experience many challenges that raise doubts about the extent to which they are able to participate in the public sphere and benefit from private goods it produces. Considering the huge numbers of international students in modern universities in the developed countries this chapter is involved in a discussion of a pertinent topic that relates to almost all higher education institutions. It is this diversity of issues and regions that are addressed by this volume that makes it relevant and appealing to many readers.

The focus of the volume shifts from the United States to Asia where Chapters 5 and 6 consider higher education in Japan. In Chapter 5 Akiyoshi Yonezawa and Hugo Horta discuss Japan's unique approach to attracting and educating international students. Mayumi Ishikawa discusses the search for prestige and status by higher education institutions in Japan in Chapter 6. The chapter is a study analyzing the creation of dominant world-class university models and their impact on Japan's higher education. Global university rankings that are shaping contemporary higher education are exposed as a process of capitalist knowledge production and expansion. The fact that United States and other Western institutions dominate the global models illustrates transnational power and the emerging dimensions of the global construction of knowledge. It is English, western, scientific and capitalist with a heavy tendency to devalue humanities and non-Western and/or non-white knowledge and cultural/indigenous knowledge systems. Despite these critical observations, the authors of this chapter do not proceed to see such knowledge production as a form of modern domination of non-Western societies by the colonial neoliberal developed world.

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 take the discussion of universities and the public sphere to Africa, specifically South Africa and Angola. The challenges wrought by neoliberalism are well documented and hence the difficulties encountered by higher education institutions in operating as public spheres. The obstacles women and people of colour meet in their attempts to access higher education in "free" South Africa is a reminder of a global problem. However it is Ivor Baatjes, Carol Anne Spreen and Salim Vally in Chapter 9 who observe that "the academy in South Africa, previously a cog in the reproduction of racial capitalism, today continues to entrench inequality by embracing a neoliberal, market-oriented ideology" (p. 139). The chapter illustrates how the transformation of higher education in post-apartheid South Africa is a narrative of continuing class and racial stratification and exclusion. In other words neoliberal academic capitalism is reproducing inequalities many thought had been buried with the end of apartheid. This illustrates a common trend in the global South where the state and corporate collude at the expense of the suffering majority poor. This again corroborates the observation that there is nothing post-colonial and independent for many people in countries where European administration ended. Independent governments have become local representatives of international capital prepared to implement neoliberal reforms in higher education without much questioning.

The volume does not only concentrate on narrating challenges but there are attempts to suggest possible solutions to reclaim the university/higher education as a public sphere. In Chapter 11 while focusing on California the authors end their discussion by proposing that

“institutions of higher education should consider how to link with the different social actors that are continuously challenging neoliberalism” (p. 193). The authors however do not interrogate the observation that higher education may not be a united front. There has been fierce opposition to academic capitalism from humanities and related disciplines but it appears the sciences may not join the fight. However, the struggles by student movements such as in Montreal (Quebec) and others worldwide should be noted and encouraged as answering the call in this chapter.

Chapter 12 considers the manner the reigning market regime has seen the introduction and prevalence of the faculty off the tenure track where universities have developed the policy to employ part-time and full-time non-tenure track faculty. Neoliberalism and its economic considerations that include budget recessions and fiscal planning seem to suggest that this kind of overloaded and inexpensive faculty may be the model for the post-neoliberalism future. The volume should have ended with Chapter 12 and not Chapter 13 which is just another case study of academic capitalism in Mexico. The authors of Chapter 12 are encouraging a struggle to reclaim the university as a democratic and critical public sphere. However, though clearly expounding the debilitating impact of neoliberalism on the university, the authors of this chapter and throughout the volume, do not engage neoliberalism as the modern form of colonialism. The assault on the university, the remaining neutral bastion of critique and social democracy by politicians and capital should be unmasked as it is-modern colonialism.

This volume adds weight to the progressive struggle against neoliberal hegemony. The neoliberal restructuring of higher education also referred to as academic capitalism is slowly eroding the public nature of research universities. The pressures of neoliberalism are eroding academic freedom, access and affordability resulting in the loss of public spaces in universities for democratic discussions and interactions. The volume can be of significant use to students and scholars involved in comparative education studies and higher education in general. This is an integrated text serving as a comprehensive summary of perspectives from international scholars.

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