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The university in the twenty−first century
Towards a democratic and emancipatory university reform

The reaction from universities to demands for reform — both from the private sector and society — has been a state of paralysis and resistance in the name of autonomy and academic freedom. The only way universities can recover from their crisis legitimacy, writes Boaventura de Sousa Santos, is through radical democratic restructuring. Countering the brain−drain from poorer to wealthy nations — so far the main result of the transnationalization of education — will only be achieved by embarking on a counter−hegemonic process of globalization creating genuine equality of access.

In an essay published in the early 1990s, I identified three crises facing the university at the end of the twentieth century. First, the crisis of hegemony was the result of contradictions between the traditional functions of the university and those that had come to be attributed to it throughout the twentieth century. On the one hand, the production of high culture, critical thinking, and exemplary scientific and humanistic knowledge, necessary for the training of the elites, which had been the concern of the university since the European Middle Ages. On the other, the production of average cultural standards and instrumental knowledge, useful for the training of the qualified labour force demanded by capitalist development. The university's inability fully to carry out contradictory functions led the State and its economic agents to look beyond it for alternative means to attain these objectives. When it stopped being the only institution of higher education and research production, the university entered a crisis of hegemony.

The second crisis was a crisis of legitimacy, provoked by the fact that the university ceased to be a consensual institution in view of the contradiction between the hierarchization of specialized knowledge through restrictions of access and credentialing of competencies, on the one hand, and the social and political demands for a democratized university and equal opportunity for the children of the working class, on the other. Finally, the institutional crisis was the result of the contradiction between the demand for autonomy in the definition of the university's values and objectives and the growing pressure to hold it to the same criteria of efficiency, productivity, and social responsibility that private enterprises face.

In that essay I analysed in some detail each one of the abovementioned crises and the way they were managed by the university, especially in the central countries. My analysis was centred on public universities. I showed that, far from being able to solve its crises, the university, relying on its long institutional memory and the ambiguities of its administrative profile, tended to manage them formulaically to avoid their growing out of control. This
pattern of action depended on external pressures (it was reactive), incorporated
more or less acritically external social and institutional logics (it was
dependent) and was blind to medium− or long−range perspectives (it was
immediatist).

What has happened in the past two decades? How can we characterize the
situation in which we find ourselves? What are possible responses to the
problems that the university faces today?

The mercantilization of the public university

Despite the fact that the three crises were intimately connected and could only
be confronted jointly and by means of vast reform programs generated both
inside and outside the university, I predicted (and feared) that the institutional
crisis would come to monopolize reformist agendas and proposals. This is in
fact what happened. I also predicted that concentrating on the institutional
crisis could lead to the false resolution of the two other crises, a resolution by
default: the crisis of hegemony, by the university's increasing loss of
specificity; the crisis of legitimacy, by the growing segmentation of the
university system and the growing devaluation of university diplomas, in
general. This has also happened.

Concentrating on the institutional crisis was fatal for the university and was
due to a number of factors, some already evident at the beginning of the 1990s,
while others gained enormous weight as the decade advanced. The institutional
crisis is and has been, for at least two centuries, the weakest link of the public
university, since its scientific and pedagogical autonomy is based on its
financial dependency on the State. While the university and its services were
an unequivocal public good that was up to the State to insure, this dependency
was not problematic, any more than that of the judicial system, for example, in
which the independence of the courts is not lessened by the fact they are being
financed by the State. However, contrary to the judicial system, the moment
the State decided to reduce its political commitment to the universities and to
education in general, converting education into a collective good which,
however public, does not have to be exclusively supported by the State, an
institutional crisis of the public university automatically followed. If it already
existed, it deepened. It can be said that, for the last thirty years, the university's
institutional crisis in the great majority of countries was provoked or induced
by the loss of priority of the university as a public good and by the consequent
financial drought and disinvestment in public universities.

The onset of the institutional crisis by way of the financial crisis, accentuated
in the last twenty years, is a structural phenomenon accompanying the public
university's loss of priority among the public goods produced by the State. The
fact that the financial crisis was the immediate motive of the institutional crisis
does not mean that the causes of the latter can be reduced to the financial
crisis. The analysis of the structural causes will reveal that the prevalence of
the institutional crisis was the result of the impact upon it of the two other
unsolved crises, the crises of hegemony and of legitimacy. And in this domain
there have been, in the last eleven years, new developments in relation to the
picture I described almost two decades ago.

The public university's loss of priority in the State's public policies was, first of
all, the result of the general loss of priority of social policies (education, health,
social security) induced by the model of economic development known as
neoliberalism or neoliberal globalization, which was internationally imposed
beginning in the 1980s. In the public university, it meant that its identified institutional weaknesses — and they were many — instead of serving as justification for a vast politico–pedagogical reform program, were declared insurmountable and used to justify the generalized opening of the university–as–public–good to commercial exploitation. Despite political declarations to the contrary and some reformist gestures, underlying this first collision of the university with neoliberalism is the idea that the public university is not reformable (any more than the State) and that the true alternative lies in the creation of the university market. The savage and deregulated way in which this market emerged and was developed is proof that there was a deep option in its favour. And the same option explained the disinvestment in the public university and massive transferences of human resources that, at times, looked like a "primitive accumulation" on the part of the private university sector at the cost of the public sector.

I identify two phases in the process of mercantilization of the public university. In the first, which goes from the beginning of the 1980s to the middle of the 1990s, the national university market is expanded and consolidated. In the second, along with the national market, the transnational market of higher and university education emerges with great vitality and so much so that, by the end of the decade, it is transformed by World Bank and the World Trade Organization into a global solution for the problems of education. In other words, the neoliberal globalization of the university is under way. This is a new phenomenon. Certainly, the transnationalization of university exchanges is an ancient process, dating back to the medieval European universities (not to speak of the early Islamic universities in Africa). After World War II, it was translated into the training, at a post–graduate level, of students from peripheral or semi–peripheral countries in the universities of the central countries and into partnerships between universities from different countries. In recent years, however, such transnational relations have advanced to a new level. The new transnationalization is much vaster than the former one and its logic is, unlike its predecessor's, exclusively mercantile.

The two defining processes of the decade — the State's disinvestment in the public university and the mercantile globalization of the university — are two sides of the same coin. They are the two pillars of a huge global project of university politics destined to profoundly change the way the university–as–a–public–good has been produced, transforming it into a vast and vastly profitable ground for educational capitalism. This mid– to long–range project includes different levels and forms of the mercantilization of the university. As for the levels, it is possible to distinguish two. The primary level consists of inducing the public university to overcome the financial crisis by generating its own resources, namely through partnerships with industrial capital. On this level, the public university maintains its autonomy and its institutional specificity, privatizing part of the services it renders. The second level consists of the biased elimination of the distinction between public and private universities, transforming the university as a whole into a business, an entity that not only produces for the market but which is itself produced as a market, as a market of university services as diverse as administration, teaching programs and materials, certification of degrees, teacher training, and teacher and student evaluation. If it will still make sense to speak of the university as a public good when this second level is attained is a rhetorical question.

From university knowledge to pluriversity knowledge
The developments of the past two decades have presented the university with very demanding challenges, especially the public university. The situation is near collapse in many countries on the periphery and it is difficult in the semi-peripheral countries. Although the expansion and transnationalization of the market for university services has contributed decisively to this situation in recent years, they are not the only cause. Something more profound occurred and only this explains why the university, while still the institution par excellence of scientific knowledge, has lost its hegemony and has been transformed into an easy target for social criticism. I think that in the past two decades, the relations between knowledge and society began to change significantly and these alterations promise to be profound to the point of transforming the way we conceive of knowledge and of society. As I said, the commercialization of scientific knowledge is the most visible side of these alterations. However, and despite their enormity, they are the tip of the iceberg and the transformations now in progress have contradictory meanings and multiple implications, some of them epistemological.

University knowledge — that is, the scientific knowledge produced in universities or institutions separate from the universities but which retain a similar university ethos — was, for the whole of the twentieth century, a predominantly disciplinary knowledge whose autonomy imposed a relatively de-contextualized process of production in relation to the day-to-day pressures of the societies. According to the logic of this process, the researchers are the ones who determine what scientific problems to solve, define their relevance, and establish the methodologies and rhythms of research. It is a homogeneous and hierarchically organized knowledge insofar as the agents who participate in its production share the same goals of producing knowledge, have the same training and the same scientific culture, and do what they do according to well-defined organizational hierarchies. It is a knowledge based on the distinction between scientific research and technological development; the autonomy of the researcher is translated as a kind of social irresponsibility as far as the results of the application of knowledge are concerned. Moreover, in the logic of this process of the production of university knowledge, the distinction between scientific knowledge and other kinds of knowledge is absolute, as is the relation between science and society. The university produces knowledge that the society does or does not apply, an alternative that, although socially relevant, is indifferent or irrelevant to the knowledge produced.

The university’s organization and ethos were created by this kind of knowledge. It happens that, throughout the past two decades, there were alterations that destabilized this model of knowledge and pointed to the emergence of another model. I designate this transition, which Gibbons et al. (1994) described as a transition from “type 1 knowledge” to “type 2 knowledge”, as the passage from university knowledge to pluriversity knowledge.

Contrary to the university knowledge described in the preceding paragraph, pluriversity knowledge is a contextual knowledge insofar as the organizing principle of its construction is its application. As this application is extramural, the initiative for formulating the problems to be solved and the determination of their criteria of relevance is the result of sharing among researchers and users. It is a transdisciplinary knowledge that, by its very contextualization, demands a dialogue or confrontation with other kinds of knowledge, which makes it more heterogeneous internally and allows it to be more adequately produced in less perennial and more open systems organized less rigidly and
hierarchically. All the distinctions upon which university knowledge is based are put in question by pluriversity knowledge but, most basically, it is the relation between science and society that is in question. Society ceases to be an object of scientific questioning and becomes itself a subject that questions science.

The tension between these two models of knowledge highlights the extremes of two ideal types. In reality, the kinds of knowledge produced occupy different places along the continuum between the two poles, some closer to the university model, others closer to the pluriversity model. This heterogeneity not only destabilizes the current institutional specificity of the university, it also questions its hegemony and legitimacy in such a way as to force it to evaluate itself by self-contradictory criteria.

Pluriversity knowledge has had its most consistent realization in university–industry partnerships in the form of mercantile knowledge. But, especially in the central and semi–peripheral countries, the context of application has been non–mercantile as well — cooperative and dependent on the solidarity created by partnerships among researchers and labour unions, NGOs, social movements, particularly vulnerable social groups (women, illegal immigrants, the unemployed, people with chronic illnesses, senior citizens, those afflicted with HIV/AIDS, etc.), working–class communities, and groups of critical and active citizens. There is a growing sector of civil society developing a new and more intense relationship with science and technology, demanding greater participation in their production and in the evaluation of their impact. In multiethnic and multinational countries, pluriversity knowledge begins to emerge from inside the university itself when incoming students from ethnic and other minority groups understand that their inclusion is a form of exclusion. They are confronted with the tabula rasa that is made of their cultures and of the traditional knowledge of their communities. All of this leads scientific knowledge to confront other kinds of knowledge and demands a higher level of social responsibility from the institutions that produce it and, consequently, from the universities. As science becomes more ingrained in the society, the society becomes more a part of science. The university was created according to a model of unilateral relations with society and it is this model that underlies its current institutionalism. Pluriversity knowledge supplants this unilateral notion with interactivity and interdependence, both processes enormously invigorated by the technological revolution of information and communication.

In light of these transformations, we can conclude that the university finds itself in the presence of opposing demands that have the convergent effect of destabilizing its current institutionalism. On the one hand, the ultra–private pressure to commodify knowledge displaces the social responsibility of the university with a focus on producing economically useful and commercially viable knowledge. On the other hand, an ultra–public social pressure shatters the restricted public sphere of the university in the name of a much broader public sphere traversed by much more heterogeneous confrontations and by much more demanding concepts of social responsibility. This contrast between ultra–private and ultra–public pressures has not only begun to destabilize the university's institutionalism, it has also created a profound fracture in the university's social and cultural identity, a fracture translated as disorientation and defensive tactics and, above all, as a kind of paralysis covered up by a defensive attitude, resistant to change in the name of university autonomy and academic freedom. The instability caused by the impact of these contrasting pressures creates impasses in which it becomes evident that demands for larger
changes often accompany equally large forms of resistance to change.

Response: The counter-hegemonic globalization of the university

As I have suggested for other areas of social life (Santos 2000; 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2003), I think the only efficient and emancipatory way to confront neoliberal globalization is to oppose it with an alternative, counter-hegemonic globalization. Counter-hegemonic globalization of the university-as-public-good means that the national reforms of the public university must reflect a country project centred on policy choices that consider the country's insertion in increasingly transnational contexts of knowledge production and distribution. These will become increasingly polarized between two contradictory processes of globalization: neoliberal globalization, and counter-hegemonic globalization. This country project has to be the result of a broad political and social pact consisting of different sectoral pacts, among them an educational pact in the terms of which the public university is conceived of as a collective good. The reform must be focused on responding positively to the social demands for the radical democratizing of the university, putting an end to the history of exclusion of social groups and their knowledges for which the university has been responsible for a long time, starting long before the current phase of capitalist globalization. From now on, the national and transnational scales of the reform interpenetrate. Without global articulation, a national solution is impossible.

The counter-hegemonic globalization of the university-as-public-good is, thus, a demanding political project that, in order to be credible, must overcome two contradictory but equally rooted prejudices: on the one hand, that the university can only be reformed by the university community and, on the other, that the university will never reform itself. These are very powerful prejudices. A brief examination of the social forces potentially committed to confront them is in place. The first social force is the public university community itself; that is, those within it interested in an alternative globalization of the university. The public university today is a very fractured social field within which contradictory sectors and interests fight each other. In many countries, especially peripheral and semi-peripheral ones, such contradictions are still latent. Defensive positions that maintain the status quo and reject globalization, whether neoliberal or alternative, predominate. This is a conservative position, not just because it advocates hewing to the status quo, but mainly because, deprived of realistic alternatives, it will sooner or later surrender to plans for the neoliberal globalization of the university. University personnel who denounce this conservative position and, at the same time, reject the idea that there is no alternative to neoliberal globalization will be the protagonists of the progressive reform that I am proposing.

The second social force of such reform is the State itself, whenever it is successfully pressed to opt for the university’s alternative globalization. Without this option, the national State ends up adopting, more or less unconditionally, or succumbing, more or less reluctantly, to the pressures of neoliberal globalization and, in either case, transforming itself into the enemy of the public university, regardless of any proclamation to the contrary. Given the close, love-hate relationship that the State carried on with the university for the whole of the twentieth century, the options tend to be dramatized.

Finally, the third social force to carry out the reform are citizens collectively organized in social groups, labour unions, social movements, non-governmental organizations and their networks, and local progressive
governments interested in forming cooperative relationships between the university and the social interests they represent. In contrast to the State, this third social force has had a historically distant and, at times, even hostile relationship with the university, precisely because of the latter's elitism and the distance it cultivated for a long time in relation to the so-called "uncultured" sectors of society. This is a social force that has to be won through a response to the question of legitimacy, that is, via non-classist, non-racist, non-sexist and non-ethnocentric access to the university and by a whole set of initiatives that deepen the university's social responsibility in line with the pluriversity knowledge mentioned above.

Beyond these three social forces there is, in the semi-peripheral and peripheral countries, a fourth entity that may be loosely called national capitalism. Certainly, the most dynamic sectors of national capital are transnationalized and, consequently, part of the neoliberal globalization hostile to the emancipatory reform of the university. However, in peripheral and semi-peripheral countries, the process of transnational integration of these sectors is filled with tensions. Under certain conditions, such tensions may lead these sectors to see an interest in defending the project of the public university as a public good, especially in cases where there are no realistic alternatives to the public university for the production of the kind of technological knowledge needed to strengthen their insertion in the global economy.

Re-claiming legitimacy

In a situation in which hegemony is irremediably affected, legitimacy is simultaneously more urgent and more difficult. Thus, the battle for legitimacy is going to be ever more demanding and university reform must be centred on it. There are five areas of action in this domain: access, extension, action-research, ecology of knowledges, and university/public school partnerships. The first two are the most conventional but they will have to be profoundly revised; the third has been practiced in some Latin American and African universities during periods of greater social responsibility on the part of the university; the fourth constitutes a decisive innovation in the construction of a post-colonial university; the fifth is an area of action that had a great presence in the past but that now has to be totally reinvented.

Access

In the area of access, the greatest frustration of the past two decades was that the goal of democratic access was not attained. In the majority of countries, factors of discrimination, whether of class, race, gender, or ethnicity, continued to make access a mixture of merit and privilege. Instead of democratization, there was "massification" and afterwards, in the alleged post-massification period, a strong segmentation of higher education involving practices of authentic "social dumping" of diplomas and degree-recipients. The most elitist universities took few initiatives, other than defending their access criteria, invoking the fact, often true, that the most persistent discrimination occurs on the way to the university, within primary and secondary education. It is foreseeable that the transnationalization of higher education services will aggravate the segmentation phenomenon by transnationalizing it. Some foreign providers direct their offers to the best students coming from the best (often, the most elitist) secondary schools or having graduated from the best national universities. In a transnationalized system, the best universities, occupying the top national rungs in peripheral and semi-peripheral countries, will become the bottom rungs of the global ladder. Of the four kinds of transnationalized
services, foreign consumption is one of those most responsible for the new “brain drain,” particularly evident in India, but also present in some African countries, like Kenya and Ghana.

Among the master ideas that should guide the matter of access, I discern the following:

First, in countries where discrimination of university access is largely based on blockages at the primary and secondary instructional levels, progressive university reform, in contrast to the World Bank's recipes, must give incentives to the university to promote active partnerships, in the areas of science and technology, with public schools.

Second, the public university must remain free with maintenance scholarships, rather than loans, going to students from subaltern classes. If it is not controlled, the indebtedness of university students will become a time bomb: a population encumbered by the certainty of a debt that can take twenty years to pay is being thrown into an increasingly uncertain labour market. Scholarships should be granted which include the possibility of student jobs in university activities both on and off campus, a rare practice specially in peripheral and semi–peripheral countries. For example, undergraduate and graduate students could volunteer some hours each week as tutors in public schools, helping pupils and, if necessary, teachers.

Third, in multinational and multicultural societies, racial and ethnic discrimination should be confronted with programs of affirmative action focused both on access and attendance, especially during the first years when the drop–out rates are often high. Needless to say, racial and ethnic discrimination occurs in conjunction with class discrimination, but cannot be reduced to the latter; it must be the object of specific measures. In India, caste discrimination is the object of affirmative action, despite acting in conjunction with class and gender discrimination. In South Africa, racial discrimination is the object of affirmative action, despite acting in conjunction with class discrimination. As happens in these two countries, anti–discrimination action in the university must be carried out in conjunction with anti–discrimination measures in other spheres, like access to public employment and to the labour market in general. In this way the university will be linked to a progressive national project and bearing witness to it.

Fourth, the critical evaluation of access and its obstacles — like the rest of the discussion on the areas of extension and ecology of knowledges — must explicitly confront the colonial character of the modern university. In the past, the university not only participated in the social exclusion of so–called "inferior" races and ethnicities, but also theorized about their inferiority, an inferiority extended to the knowledge produced by the excluded groups in the name of the epistemological priority conferred upon science. The task to democratize access is thus particularly demanding because it questions the university as a whole, not just who attends it but what kind of knowledge is transmitted to those who attend it.

Extension

The area of extension is going to have a very special meaning in the near future. At a moment when global capitalism intends to functionalize the university and, in fact, transform it into a vast extension agency at its service an emancipatory reform of the public university must confer a new centrality
to the activities of extension and conceive of them as an alternative to global capitalism, attributing to the universities an active participation in the construction of social cohesion, in the deepening of the democracy, in the struggle against social exclusion and environmental degradation, in the defence of cultural diversity. The extension involves a vast area of service—provision for a variety of recipients: working—class social groups and organizations, social movements, local or regional communities, local governments, the public sector, and the private sector. Apart from providing services to well—defined recipients, there is also an entirely different area of service—provision that has the society in general as its recipient: the promotion of scientific and technical culture and the study of the arts and literature as tools to empower citizenship and deepen democracy.

In order for extension to fulfil this role it must avoid being directed toward money—making activities for the sole purpose of gathering non—state resources. In this case, we are faced with a discrete (or not so discrete) privatization of the public university. On the contrary, the extension activities I have in mind are designed to address the problems of social exclusion and discrimination in such a way as to give voice to the excluded and discriminated social groups.

Action—research

Action—research and the ecology of knowledges are areas of university legitimacy that transcend extension since they act both at the level of extension and at the level of research and training. Action—research consists of the participative definition and execution of research projects involving working—class and, in general, subaltern communities and social organizations grappling with problems whose solution can benefit from the results of the research. The social interests are tied to the scientific interests of the researchers and so the production of scientific knowledge is directly linked to the satisfaction of the needs of social groups lacking the resources to have access to specialized technical knowledge through the market. Action—research has a long tradition in Latin America, but it has never been a university priority. Just as with extension activities, the new centrality of action—research is due to the fact that the neoliberal transnationalization of higher education is transforming the university into a global institution of action—research at the service of global capitalism. Here too, the battle against this functionalism is only made possible by constructing a social alternative that focus on the university's social utility and defines it in a counter—hegemonic way.

Ecology of knowledges

The ecology of knowledges is a more advanced form of action—research. It implies an epistemological revolution in the ways research and training has have been conventionally carried out at the university. The ecology of knowledges is a kind of counter—extension or extension in reverse, that is from outside to inside the university. It consists of the promotion of dialogues between scientific and humanistic knowledge produced by the university, on the one side, and the lay or popular knowledges that circulate in society produced by common people, both in urban and rural settings, originating in Western and non—Western cultures (indigenous, African, Eastern, etc.), on the other. Along with the technological euphoria, there is also today a lack of epistemological confidence in science that derives from the growing visibility of the perverse consequences of some kinds of scientific progress and the fact that many of modern science's social promises have not been fulfilled. It is
beginning to be socially perceptible that the university, by specializing in scientific knowledge and considering it the only kind of valid knowledge, has actively contributed to the disqualification and destruction of much potentially invaluable non-scientific knowledge, thus causing the marginalization of social groups to whom these kinds of knowledge were the only ones available, and causing as well, more generally, the impoverishment of human experience and diversity. So social injustice contains cognitive injustice at its core. This is particularly obvious on the global scale, where peripheral countries, rich in non-scientific wisdom, but poor in scientific knowledge, have seen the latter, in the form of economic science, destroy their ways of sociability, their economies, their indigenous and rural communities, and their environments.

Towards a new institutionalism

The institutional domain is a key area of the public university's democratic and emancipatory reform. I previously noted that the virulence and salience of the institutional crisis reside in its being a condensation of the deepening crises of hegemony and legitimacy. This is why I have focused up to now on these two crises. It is my opinion that university reform must be centred on the matter of legitimacy. In fact, the loss of hegemony seems irremediable, not only because of the emergence of many alternative institutions, but also because of the growing internal segmentation in the university network, both at the national and global levels. The university today is not the unique organization it was and its heterogeneity makes it even more difficult to identify the uniqueness of its character. The processes of globalization make this heterogeneity more visible and intensify it. What remains of the university's hegemony is the existence of a public space where the debate and the criticism of society can, in the long run, happen with fewer restrictions than in the rest of society. This core of hegemony is too irrelevant in today's capitalist societies to sustain the university's legitimacy. This is why institutional reform has to be centred on the latter.

The institutional reform I propose here intends to strengthen the public university's legitimacy in the context of the neoliberal globalization of education and envisions supporting the possibility of an alternative globalization. Its principal areas can be summed up in the following ideas: network, internal and external democratizing, and participative evaluation.

Network

The first idea is that of a national network of public universities upon which a global network can be developed. In almost every country, there are university associations, but such associations do not come close to constituting a network. In the majority of cases, they are merely pressure groups collectively demanding benefits that are appropriated individually. In another direction entirely, I propose that the university's public good begin to be produced in networks, meaning that none of the nodes in the network can insure by itself alone all the functions into which this public good is translated, be it knowledge production, undergraduate and graduate training, extension, action-research or ecology of knowledges. This implies an institutional revolution. Universities were institutionally designed to function as autonomous and self-sufficient entities. The culture of university autonomy and of academic freedom, although defended publicly in the name of the university against outside forces, has been frequently used inside the university system to pit university against university. Competition for ranking exacerbates separation and, because it takes place without any compensatory
measures, it deepens the existing inequalities, making the top of the pyramid even sharper and the overall segmentation and heterogeneity more profound. Building a public network implies the sharing of resources and equipment, the internal mobility of teachers and students and minimal standardization of course plans, of school year organization, of systems of evaluation. None of this has to eliminate the specificities of each university's response to the local or regional context in which it is located. On the contrary, maintaining such specificity gives each individual university more value within the network. The network, while creating more polyvalence and decentralization, strengthens the public university network as a whole. It is not about making excellent universities share their resources in such a way that their excellence would be put at risk. Rather, it is about multiplying the number of excellent universities, offering each the possibility of developing its niche potential with the help of the rest.

The organization of universities within the network must be directed to promote internal articulation in the four areas of legitimacy: access, extension, action-research, and ecology of knowledges.

Internal and external democratizing

Apart from the creation of the network, the new institutionalism must work toward the deepening of the university's internal and external democracy. When we discuss university democratization, we are usually thinking about ending forms of discrimination that limit access. But there are other dimensions. Recently, the university's external democratization has become a highly debated theme. The idea of external democratization gets conflated with the idea of the university's social responsibility, since what is being discussed is the creation of an organic political link between the university and society that ends the isolation that has demonized the university, in recent years, as a corporative manifestation of elitism, an ivory tower and so forth. The appeal for external democracy is ambiguous because it is made by social groups with contradictory interests. On the one hand, the call comes from an educational market that invokes the university's democratic deficit to justify the market's need for greater access to it, something that is only possible if the university is privatized. External democratization implies the university's new relation with the world of business and its ultimate transformation into a business. On the other hand, the call for external democratization comes from progressive social forces that are behind the transformations occurring in the passage from the university model to the pluriversity model; it comes especially from the allies of historically excluded groups which today demand that the public university become responsible to their long neglected interests. The pluriversity model, in assuming the contextualization of knowledge and the participation of citizens or communities as users or even co-producers of knowledge, requires that such contextualization and participation be subject to rules which will guarantee the transparency of the relations between the university and its social environment and legitimatize the decisions made in the ambit of such relations.

This second appeal for external democracy aims to neutralize the first, the call for privatizing the university. The appeal for privatization had an enormous impact on the universities of many countries in the last decade, to the point where university researchers have lost much of the control they had over research agendas. The most obvious case is the way research priorities are defined today in the field of health, where diseases that affect the majority of the world's population (malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS) are not given research priority. From the moment the regulatory mechanisms of the scientific
community begin to be dependent on the centres of economic power, only external bottom–up democratic pressure can insure that matters with little commercial interest but great social impact make their way into research agendas.

**Participative evaluation**

Finally, the new institutionalism entails a new system of evaluation that includes each of the universities and the university network as a whole. Mechanisms of self–evaluation and hetero–evaluation should be adopted for both cases. Evaluation criteria should be congruent with the aforementioned goals of the reform and applied through techno–democratic or participative tools rather than through technocratic ones. The latter are today strongly recommended by transnational educational capital. They entail quantitative external evaluations, both of teaching and research, leaving out the fulfilment of any other functions, namely extension and, of course, research–action and ecology of knowledges. In the case of research, evaluation is focused on what is most easily accounted for by bibliometric techniques that differentiate publication types and locations and measure the impact of the publications by the number of citations. Little evaluation has been done of the less easily quantifiable areas of extension and, when it occurs, it tends to privilege university–industry relations and to centre on quantitative criteria like the number of patents, for example.

The fixation of criteria through mechanisms of internal and external democracy is fundamental since they define the social value of the different university activities. The university should not promote single models of professorial activity but, rather, differentiated models that value the specific competencies of different groups of professors. This allows the university to increase its social returns and to introduce internal incentives for new activities that serve as a shield against the unilateral pressure of the mercantile incentives. The participative evaluation models facilitate the emergence of sufficiently robust internal evaluation criteria to measure up to the external criteria. The principles of self–management, self–regulation, and self–discipline allow the evaluative processes to serve as processes of political apprenticeship. These principles are the only guarantee that participative self–evaluation will not turn into narcissistic self–contemplation or an exchange of evaluative favours.

**Conclusion: No surrender**

The university in the twenty–first century will certainly be less hegemonic but no less necessary than it was in previous centuries. Its specificity as a public good resides in its being the institution that links the present to the medium and long term through the kinds of knowledge and training it produces and by the privileged public space it establishes, dedicated to open and critical discussion. For these two reasons, it is a collective good without strong allies. Many people are not interested in the long term and others have sufficient power to be wary of those who dare to suspect them or criticize their interests.

The public university is, thus, a permanently threatened public good, which is not to say that the threat comes only from the outside; it comes from the inside as well. I am more than ever aware that a university socially ostracized for its elitism and corporate tendencies, and paralysed by the inability to question itself in the same way it questions society, is easy prey for the proselytes of neoliberal globalization. This is why the emergence of a university market —
first, a national market and now a global one — by making the public university's vulnerabilities more evident, constitutes such a profound threat to the public good it produces or ought to produce.

The conjunction between factors of internal threat and factors of external threat is quite obvious in evaluating the university's capacity for long-term thinking, perhaps its most distinctive characteristic. Those who work in today's university know that university tasks are predominately short-term, dictated by budget emergencies, inter-departmental competition, professorial tenure, and so forth. The management of such emergencies allows for the flourishing of types of conducts and professionals that would have little merit or relevance were it possible and urgent to focus on long-term questions. This emergency-ridden state of affairs, which is surely due to a plurality of factors, must also be seen as a sign that powerful outside social actors are influencing the university. What is the social return on long-term thinking, on using the public spaces for critical thinking or even the production of knowledge apart from what the market demands? In the World Bank's way of thinking, the answer is obvious: none. If it existed, it would be dangerous and, if not dangerous, unsustainable in semi-peripheral and peripheral countries, since it would have to compete with the central countries that have supposedly unequivocal comparative advantages in this domain. If this global and external logic did not find such fertile ground for local and internal appropriation, it would certainly not be so dangerous.

The university is a public good intimately connected to the country's project. The political and cultural meaning of this project and its viability depend on a nation's ability to negotiate, in a qualified way, its universities' insertion into the new transnational fields. In the case of the university and of education in general, this qualification is the condition necessary for not making the negotiation an act of surrender and thus marking the end of the university as we know it. The only way to avoid surrender is to create conditions for a cooperative university in solidarity with its own global role.

This is a shortened and updated version of a text first presented in Brasilia on 5 April 2004.

References
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1 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "From the idea of the university to the university of ideas", in *Pela Mão de Alice: o Social e o Político na Pós−Modernidade*, 1994.

2 I analyse this epistemological revolution in great detail in Santos, 1995 and 2000.

3 For example, in Brazil, I have become aware of extremely rich experiences in the extension services of Northern and Northeastern universities that are totally unknown or undervalued in the Central and Southern universities. And I am certain that the reverse happens too.