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Images of Utopia

University Policies, Academic Practices & Social Changes

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Zusammenfassung

Dieser Beitrag zielt darauf ab, die sich verändernde Rolle der Universität innerhalb der neoliberalen Wissensökonomien zu erörtern. Es wird die Frage aufgeworfen, welche Art von Raum Universitäten bieten und zu sein versuchen, um ihre Rolle in Bildung, Forschung und Öffentlichkeit zu erfüllen und zu schärfen. Darüber hinaus wird die Vorstellung einer Universität als Instanz der kritischen Offenheit, des freien Denkens und des öffentlichen Engagements betrachtet, die im Verständnis der Geisteswissenschaften verankert ist. Ein solches Konzept steht im Gegensatz zu dem häufig propagierten Modell eines sich selbst tragenden, marktorientierten und finanziell unabhängigen Anbieters von Berufsausbildung. Der Beitrag stellt die Ergebnisse des Projekts vor, das sich mit der Rolle der Universität im Rahmen der Ereignisse von 1968 befasst. Gleichzeitig soll die Beschreibung des Projekts dazu dienen, die gegenwärtigen Veränderungen im Bildungs- und Forschungsbereich an der Universität Zagreb aufzuzeigen.

Schlagwörter: neoliberale Reform, Universität, öffentliche Rolle, kritisches Denken

Abstract

The paper aims at discussing the changing role of university within the neoliberal economies of knowledge. It raises the question what kind of space universities provide and attempt to be in order to accommodate, and facilitate their educational, research and public roles. Furthermore, it approaches the idea of university as an instance of critical openness, free thought and public engagement which is engrained in the role of liberal art education. Such a concept stands against the frequently promoted model of a self-sustaining, market-based and financially independent provider of professional and vocational training. The paper presents the results of the project that deals with the role of university in the 1968 events. At the same time, the description of the project will be used to show the contemporary transformations of the educational and research system that occur at the University of Zagreb.

Keywords: neoliberal reform, university, public role, critical thinking

Our paper aims at discussing the changing role of university within the neoliberal economies of knowledge. The question we raise is: What kind of space do universities provide and attempt to be to accommodate and facilitate their educational, research and public roles? We approach the idea of university as an instance of critical openness, free thought and public engagement, which is engrained in the role of liberal art education. Such a concept stands against the frequently promoted model of a self-sustaining, market-based and financially independent provider of professional and vocational training.

To outline those processes, we will present the results of the current project of the *Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology* in Zagreb which deals with the role of university in the 1968 events, oriented towards achieving social and political changes. At the same time, the description of the project will be used to show the contemporary transformations of the education and research system occurring at the university. This is primarily related to the imperative of meeting societal needs through research projects, producing applicable knowledge but also designing projects that attract external funding.

In that way, we aim to address the changed position of university and its impact on society. In the chapters that follow we discuss two interrelated demands of neoliberal reforms. One refers to Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology that conceives itself as an applicable science. The other refers to the academic sector in general being prompted to transform into a market-oriented Higher Education Area.

Finally, we would like to address the following issues: How does ethnology and cultural anthropology handle 'the freedom to enable the "critical instinct"' (Chilton after Wodak 2009: 14) and bring its 'imagined role' to societies? How does it fit scopes of national and international funded projects? How does it handle university policies, respective academic practices and meets social change?

Meeting the Demands of Neoliberal Reforms

In which way has neoliberal governance reinvented the role of university and education to fit its political programs and overwhelming reforms of social and economic life? Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as Mark Olssen and Michael A. Peters show,

> *the traditional professional culture of open intellectual enquiry and debate has been replaced with the institutional stress on performativity, as evidenced by the emergence of an emphasis on measured outputs: on strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures and academic audits (2005: 313).*

By this overturn in higher-education policy, public higher education institutions all around the world were irrevocably pulled into governmental discourse, strategies and plans related to economic reforms. This meant that public universities became the target of a severe audit culture that was meant to assess economic sustainability and ability of educational programs to respond to governmental ideas of the role of universities in knowledge capitalism. In this way, auditing becomes the first step to reach neoliberal reforms in higher education. The universities were diagnosed and pressured to meet the demands of immediate economic restructuring (e.g. lowering dependency on budget, and re-thinking the project based self-financing). The same happened to the educational programs that underwent numerous evaluations and, in many cases, responded to evaluations by changing programs in accordance with neoliberal economies. Olssen and Peters showed that 'marketization has become a new universal theme manifested in the trends towards the commodification of teaching and research and the various ways in which universities meet the new performative criteria, both locally and globally in the emphasis upon measurable outputs' (2005: 316). Accordingly, the role of university has changed, at faster or slower pace, adapting the goals in research and aims in education to better fit neoliberal policy. Our modes of teaching and its end-goals as well as our research (its mode and its aim) have increasingly started to echo the imperative to change, to adapt, to fit. Public universities answered this demand by proposing re-education, vocational trainings, specialisations that would provide immediate recognition for the global market needs of very particular specialists in the changing world of globalised capitalist economy.

The other discursive imperative that pushed its way into the university arena is the one of 'knowledge capitalism' and 'knowledge economy'. Those 'are twin terms that can be traced at the level of public policy to a series of reports that emerged in the late 1990s by the *OECD* (1996a) and the World Bank (1998), before they were taken up as a policy template by world governments in the late 1990s' (ibid.: 331). Turning into 'hegemonic' imperative, knowledge capitalism has conceptualised knowledge as 'the most important form of global capital – hence "knowledge capitalism"' (Burton-Jones 1999; cited in Olssen and Peters 2005: 338). That ongoing shift has superimposed new forms of knowledge utilisation. By becoming *a capital* and *a value,* the knowledge and the knowledge-providing institutions of higher education have been reclaimed by capitalist concepts of utility, like need and demand or user and consumption. In knowledge capitalism as the new learning economy, learning institutions are pushed 'to tailor their products and services to the needs of individual and corporate knowledge consumers' (Burton-Jones 1999; cited in Olssen and Peters 2005: 338). As Alan Burton-Jones suggests, behind the idea of 'knowledge capitalism'

stands the concept of evaluating knowledge as the means that is 'fundamentally altering the basis of economic activity, thus business, employment, and all of our futures' (ibid.). But what kind of knowledge is useful and what, on the other hand, is unwanted and useless, a knowledge of no practical value? In a way, the neoliberal university is no longer encouraged to linger upon reflection and production of knowledge known as the *Mode 1 knowledge* – the one that 'has been traditionally produced in the academy separately from its use'. Instead, we are increasingly stimulated to produce *Mode 2 knowledge*. That is 'the knowledge which is produced in-use, linked directly to the functional imperatives of the world of work' (Gibbons et al. 1994, cited in Olssen and Peters 2005: 330).

The Language of Neoliberal University and Education and its Croatian 'Translation'

As far as we can see and have described by now, it is obvious that the discourse of neoliberal economy has impacted educational and knowledge policy and, consequently, made it *inseparably* intertwined with social and economic policy of late and developed capitalism, and more so, of global capitalism and its neoliberal policy of free market. Political interest in the goal of education to promote economic growth has been broadly discussed and used in political programs and strategies of conservative, democratic and liberal governments worldwide. While these programs differ in several ways, they share common ground by emphasising the role of education in economic reforms on the one hand and linking education with social changes and social stability on the other. Some of them (like American presidential candidates and the parties they represent) put an emphasis on 'massification' of education in general, and higher education in particular. They see those processes as ways to combat poverty, under-education, high percentage of dropouts, low percentage of higher-education attendees, enormous expansion of private higher-education system that discourages a large part of population to gain knowledge needed to participate in the global economy (cf. Mazier 2014: 18, cf. Obama 2007). The others, predominantly those aired by governments that promote welfare capitalism, or/and market and state capitalism (European ones, but American democrats alike), stress the role of education and *universities* as supportive of governmental politics – 'that is to accommodate its students to succeed in the global economy' (Fairclough 2006: 70).

So, it would be justifiable to say that it is not just economy that is global. It is also the discourse on utilising education or, better to say, the program to put the education to use by labour market and industry, which is becoming increasingly global in political discourses.

Many prominent political leaders have thus declared the dependence of economy on useful education. Such was the case with Barack Obama, who said:

Since the early nineties, when these trends first began to appear, one wing of the Democratic Party – led by Bill Clinton – has embraced the new economy, promoting free trade, fiscal discipline, and reforms in education and training that will help workers to compete for the high-value, high-wage jobs of the future (Obama 2007: 146).

A part of the Democratic party program of restructuring and reforming America's global leadership was seen in 'those investments that can make America more competitive in the global economy: investments in education, science and technology, and energy independence' (Obama 2007: 159).

An elaborate analysis of educational discourses was systematically conducted by Norman Fairclough in his assessment of the British New Labour party program in a book titled *New Labour, New Language?* The image of knowledge capitalism and its discursive wordings, where knowledge is seen as 'capital' and 'value' and appears in collocations with 'economy', makes Fairclough conclude that:

In the case of education, the emphasis is overwhelmingly on economic development. This becomes evident when we look at how education is represented – what discourses are drawn upon in representing education. Education Minister David Blunkett's foreword to the Green Paper 'The Learning Age' assembles a variety of different discourses around learning – it is 'the key to prosperity' and 'human capital', but 'love of learning' also goes with 'an enquiring mind' and 'civilised society' and 'helps us fulfil our potential and opens doors to a love of music, art and literature'. Yet the 'human capital' discourse is overwhelmingly dominant – in Blunkett's words, 'investment in human capital will be the foundation for success in the knowledge based global economy'. Like any corporation, the Government 'invests' for competitive advantage, and in a knowledge-based economy that primarily means investing in 'human and intellectual capital' (Fairclough 2006: 48–49).

The creeping ideas of knowledge capitalism and knowledge economy have been one of the most influential and hegemonic discourses in the last few decades. It influenced the whole range of political narratives, regardless of divisions between the right and the left, conservative, democratic or liberal. The 'translation' of global economy of knowledge and its accompanying discourse into the Croatian political arena was somewhat expected. It was particularly so due to the collapse of Yugoslavia and the change of the political regime in the 1990s in Croatia, which was accompanied by dismantling of the socialist welfare political system. The newest election program of the contemporary Croatian president Kolinda Grabar Kitarović is a vivid example of the impact of globalised discourse on education and economy. Being

nominated as a presidential candidate in late 2014 by the *Croatian Democratic Party*, a right-to-centre Croatian political party, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović published an election program titled *For better Croatia*. Her program consisted of around forty pages and evoked education as one of the major issues in bettering Croatia. This program resembles the wordings of the speech of one of the British labour leaders during Blair residency as Prime Minister.[1] Kolinda Grabar Kitarović thus states:

> *I will especially support the necessary reforms of the education system, which has to be in function of economic growth. Within my jurisdiction and without impinging on the autonomy of institutions, I will endorse the structural reforms in this field, in accordance with the acts implemented in the European Higher Education and Research Area. Concretely, the President of the Republic of Croatia should coordinate the creation of a national agreement by advancing towards successful European standards, and not primarily by maintaining the existing bad practice in the Republic of Croatia (Kitarović 2014, trans. by authors).*
> *It is important to ensure more investments in the education of human potentials in this field, particularly of young people, since that will bring new quality to the system. It is also crucial to endorse a public understanding of the importance of fundamental social values of the Rule of Law, starting from the earliest school age of children and youth through the educational process that follows the model of European institutions (Kitarović 2014, trans. by authors).*

In our president's political vision, the educational reform is a 'necessity' and it is related to economic growth, whereas the education is seen as to enhance 'human potentials'. Working along the borrowed wordings of neoliberal educational reforms, her program reflects the ideational change to be made in education. In her program, the ideas and concepts of 'quality of education', 'European framework', 'successful European standards' are opposed to what is otherwise practised and indulged in Higher Education in Croatia. Those other strategies of researchers and educators are labelled as a 'bad practice', when compared to the good practice that should mimic 'European' values in education.

All those tendencies are vividly reflected in the policies and practices of the *Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences* at the University of Zagreb. We are talking about the largest public faculty of humanities (and social sciences – them being sociology, psychology, pedagogy, information and communication sciences) in Croatia. In the last decade, the faculty provides 189 BA and MA study programs in a range of disciplines and enrols around thousand students each year after conducting extensive entrance exams. The first challenge we have been facing for a decade now is the

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1 Cf. Fairclough (2006: 49) on David Blunkett's foreword to the *Green Paper – The Learning Age*.

decrease in the number of applicants. Ten years ago, a number of 3910 candidates (with a peak in 2010 with 4146 prospective students that participated in the entrance exam) applied for taking entrance exams. In the following years the number rapidly fell to around 2622 in 2017 (cf. Faber 2018). After 2017 and the restructuring of management, which followed almost two years of management crisis, the new management pulled the statistics showing that in the last eight years the faculty lost around 2500 students. While in-depth analysis of the reasons for such a decrease in admission was not conducted, the lower management was told that there are several factors that lead to 'small numbers'. Some of them reflect societal transformations, such as economic, ideological and socio-cultural changes. The problem was not as simple as it first appeared and could not be pinned directly to the previous management. One of the main challenges we face is the dominance and primacy of *STEM* fields, which have been directly emphasised and prioritised by the Croatian Government. The change has manifested itself in the financial support to humanities, which dropped rapidly in comparison to the financial support to hard sciences. The second factor is an increasing number of small public universities 'strategically' dispersed throughout the country. The third is a growing number of private Higher Education institutions that reappeared in the last decade.[2] The latter – without an entry-exam policy – are claimed to compete with public universities and are colloquially defined in very unfavourable terms as 'pay-and-get-your-diploma-universities'. The fourth is a loss of trust among students in education-in-humanities, particularly regarding its potential to enable them to navigate successfully through a global job-market. It is not rare that we overhear our students saying: 'I don't know what to do with this diploma once I get it from the *Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences'*. It is a recursive reflection on the future of humanities and students' own career prospects.

Along with a lack of marketing, propulsive and active work in advertising the university, those would be the main reasons conveyed by management on why humanities and some social sciences do not prosper at our university. Those trends go together with a shift of perception of what university represents and which roles it should fulfil. Its recent role is best explained in the new strategies developed by the

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2   According to the *Agency for Science and Higher Education*, in 2019 there are 104 public institutions of Higher Education in the Republic of Croatia. They make a cluster of eight public universities, eleven public polytechnics, and three public colleges. On the other hand, there are twenty-six private institutions of Higher Education: two private universities, six private polytechnics and eighteen private colleges (cf. Mozvag – Directory of Study Programmes 2018). In 2010, there were seven public universities, three private universities, thirteen public polytechnics, three private polytechnics and three public colleges in comparison to twenty-seven private ones (cf. Doolan, Dolenec, Domazet 2012).

Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, and consequently in our own Faculty's strategic documents. The role of knowledge and the very conceptualisation of knowledge is formalised and appropriated through those documents.

Strategies of a Reformed University

In 2014, the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology was adopted as one of the main legislative goals of the Government of Zoran Milanovic, the former chairman of the centre-left *Social Democratic Party* in Croatia. Its title, *New Colours of Knowledge*, promised a change in the approach to education and a new and refreshed look of the educational concepts and mechanisms. The fact that the then Prime Minister himself, as well as all his ministers and special advisors, took part in the *National Coordinating Body for Developing the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology*, shows the importance attributed to the document in the political arena of the time. It is conceived as the first systematic strategy that encompasses all the levels of education, from pre-school, primary and secondary education to higher education, adult training and lifelong learning. In the introduction to the Strategy, a strong link between education and science, defined as the state's developmental priorities, and the economic growth is established. On the one hand, education policymaking is brought in connection with the global economic trends, and with the specific vastly changing Croatian context on the other. Croatian researchers and educators are prompted to be open, mobile, innovative and to use advanced technologies. Their mission, as well as the mission of the whole science and education system, according to the Strategy, should be to 'enhance global knowledge through research and to contribute to the welfare of Croatian society, especially the economy' (Ministry of Science and Education 2017: 17). Although humanities and social sciences are supposed to have their share in building a knowledge society based on those values, other disciplines are prioritised in the vision of the restructured education and research system. Knowledge and skills related to *STEM* fields are thus treated as prerequisites for the construction of a progressive, economically stable and technologically advanced Croatian society and thus, according to the Strategy, should be taught from an early age (ibid.: 25). In applying *new colours* to the face of the Croatian educational and research system, to 'reach the level of highly developed countries', universities are supposed to play a special role. This is how the vision of a university is formulated in the Strategy:

> *Universities must assume an active role in transferring innovations from science to the economy and to society. Universities also play an important role in the lifelong learning system by developing education curricula, training programmes (especially*

by experts working in the education system) and contemporary teaching aids. Universities must play an active role in their immediate environment (social, economic and cultural) with which they need to interact constantly. Special attention must be paid to strengthening the links between universities and the economy (Ministry of Science and Education 2017: 20).

Along with stressing the contribution of science and education to economic growth and the imperative placed on the value of knowledge on the labour market, another dimension that is particularly stressed in the Strategy is the European framework, to which the Croatian research and education belong and look up to. The strategic planning in Croatia is largely based on a series of European Union documents and instruments (such as *Horizon 2020, Innovation Union, A Digital Agenda for Europe, Youth on the Move, A Resource-Efficient Europe, Agenda for New Skills and Jobs*, etc.; ibid.: 18). Also, the European dimension of education, that is, training for European coexistence, is proclaimed to be one of the core values that should be placed to the forefront through a comprehensive curricular reform (ibid.: 50). However, when we look at the formulations, showcases and comparative examples used in the Strategy, we can conclude that not all parts of the European Union are treated equally as role models: priority is given to the 'experience from industrially developed countries' and 'the best practices from European', that is, predominantly West and North European countries (ibid.: 24, 28).

Those strategic priorities, set at the governmental level, flow down from the top of hierarchy through the organisational chart that encompass all the educational and scientific institutions in Croatia. Therefore, strategic plans of universities and faculties throughout the country – the *Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences* at the University of Zagreb included – often quote the Ministry's policies and use their strategic acts as the framework for their own strategic planning. Their programs and actions are largely dependent on the Ministry's financing, which drives the institutions towards achieving the Ministry's strategic goals, their criteria and definitions of a successful education and research system.

The University of Zagreb is no exception to this rule. The university bodies have developed and acquired several separate strategic documents that regulate distinct domains of the university's activities, such as the *Internationalization Strategy; Energy Analysis and Refurbishment Strategy; Quality Insurance Strategy; Development Strategy; Research, Transfer of Technology and Innovations Strategy*, etc. In the strategy centred on research, technology and innovation, again both lines of argument for a better education and a better university are used: economic development through the application of knowledge on the one hand, and the wider European context on

the other, which is often referred to by the European Union motif of unity in diversity. The document outlines the university's mission in the following way:

> *The University will strengthen the link between innovations and economy, endorse international cooperation and networking, as well as systematically encourage and develop its social influence. It will reinforce the communication between the scientific and artistic community and the public (Sveučilište u Zagrebu 2014: 2).*

The same trend is observable in the new *Development, Science and Research Strategy* of the *Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences* which has been acquired in February 2018. Here, internationalisation and the faculty's positioning within a frame of comparable institutions in the European Higher Education Area are proclaimed to be among the main goals of strategic planning. In this document, the emphasis is not so much placed on the economic growth based on research and education. In the case of humanities and social sciences, the key concept that replaced the scientific contribution to economy is applicability of knowledge and skills. Career profiles based on market demand, meeting the needs of the contemporary society, collaboration with entrepreneurs, civil societies and local communities are set as principles that should navigate humanities and social sciences towards the new horizons of educational reform. Another shift noticeable in this document is the change of focus from the learning process to learning outcomes. In this way, by detecting concrete, measurable and applicable results of our educational activities, knowledge is again treated as goods, and the learning institutions gain their comparative value based on their adjustments to societal and market needs (cf. Filozofski fakultet 2018).

What, then, is the position of the ethnology and cultural anthropology study program and of our department in this network of diverse policies and actors? The structural imperative to orient its scholarly considerations towards research applicable for the benefit of society and economy, and its educational plans towards the production of competencies recognised on the labour market, is strongly felt in this field as well. Although attention is still paid to critical thinking and cultural analysis of contemporary and historical social processes – neoliberalisation of education in Croatia included – the adoption of a discourse that insists on the production of more 'useful' knowledge (useful in economic and political terms) is also discernible. Therefore, in its mission statement, the *Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology* is presented as follows: 'It is a centre of intellectually stimulating and innovative research which applies specific ethnographic approaches in order to respond to the challenges of contemporary dynamics on the regional, social, political,

economic, and cultural level' (cf. Mission and Vision-Statement at Website of the *Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology Zagreb*, n.d.).

Our ability to adjust to diverse social circumstances and to different subject matters and to work productively in interdisciplinary projects and teams becomes a source of viability for our discipline, as well as for the Department itself.

Knowledge Revisited: Two Case Studies

How do these tendencies and new orientations work in practice? To chart general trends in Higher Education in Croatia and their echoes in the fields of ethnology and cultural anthropology study programs, we will address two projects of the *Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology* that show the workings of the global knowledge economy in our context. The first one bears the title *Harmonisation of Study Programs from the Field of Humanities and Social Sciences with the Needs of the Labour Market* and was conducted within the Croatian qualification framework – qualification standards, granted by European Social Fund (ESF) within the Operational Program *Efficient Human Resources*, 2015–2016. The second one is entitled Images of *Utopia 50/68*, which was part of the larger EU project *CreArt*, which links six European cities in promoting artistic creativity. It was carried out in cooperation with the *Croatian Association of Fine Artists*, a non-governmental, non-profit, and politically neutral union of professionals, in 2018.

How do these two projects fit into the image of a neoliberal university? It seems to us that both address 'the major challenge [seen] as one of reconciling traditional functions of knowledge production and training of scientists with its newer role of collaborating with industry in the transfer of knowledge and technology' (Olssen and Peters 2005: 334). The latter one belongs to what Norman Fairclough sees as a traditional role of university in enhancing human understanding of other humans. It was when he was trying to explain the role of university and his own endeavours in researching public rhetoric of politicians that he had to position himself in opposition to the expectations set for him as a researcher by neoliberal research agendas. He states for himself that he sees his work rather as 'within the tradition of critical social science – [that] seeks knowledge for purposes of human emancipation (rather than for instance to make organisations work more efficiently)' (Fairclough 2006: 16).

The first project belongs to what we have appropriated to be our contemporaneity and immediate future in research and education aims. In that sphere, knowledge is viewed as a set of skills that enables us and our students to manoeuvre through the

global market of the knowledge economy. The project *Harmonisation of Study Programs with the Needs of the Labour Market* is a direct reflection of all the tendencies on the global and national level we described above. It was carried out within the Croatian Qualifications Framework as the main set of principles and financing source, which functions as a niche increasingly used by Faculties to finance the reform of their study programs. Through this project, the *Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences* attempted to make a systematic step towards the recognition of humanities and social sciences on the labour market and to eliminate 'the observed weaknesses of the study programmes' (Belaj 2017: 509). The *Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology* was selected as one of the seven departments involved in the project, whose programs show 'strong potential of being integrated into the labour market' (ibid.). This is how Marijana Belaj, a project coordinator for our department, describes the objectives and procedures of the program reform:

> [T]he objective of the Department was to define the integral qualifications standard in accordance with actual occupations and labour market needs, and to improve the existing bachelor and master programme of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology by founding it on the learning outcomes of an appropriate level and an adjusted load on students with regards to the number of ECTS credits achieved. Following the guidelines and methodology of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF), research of graduates' working careers and the development of occupational standards preceded the creating of the qualification standards (ibid.).

Therefore, labour market analysis was an integral part of the project, and it served as a basis that informed and directed all the other project phases, which had the design of new study programs as one of its most relevant outcomes. For that purpose, a survey was conducted among the ethnology and cultural anthropology alumni who graduated from 2003 to 2014, to get information on their careers, educational needs and applicability of competencies they gained while studying. The survey results have pointed to some interesting trends in the treatment of knowledge and higher education. Ninety-four ethnology and cultural anthropology graduates submitted their questionnaires – 39,9 % of the whole number of graduates in the observed period (ibid.: 510). Roughly half of them graduated within the Bologna system, and the other half finished their studies before the reform took place. At that time 83 % of them were employed, in different fields: museum and heritage preservation institutions, scientific and teaching fields, sales jobs, etc. What the survey has shown is that the graduates highly value the way their study program equipped them with specific skills for their professions, especially for research and critical analysis, establishing professional communication and intercultural dialogue – they even wrote they got more of those skills than they actually need

in their everyday working surroundings. What they stated they lacked are the skills of project conceptualisation and project management, as well as competencies in the sphere of cultural industry and cultural products and other general skills (ibid.: 512). The survey results posed a serious question for the Department members. Shall we then reduce the parts of our programs that foster critical thinking, systematic cultural analysis and ethical issues to boost the competence of our graduates in project and culture management? In the new study program devised in the frame of this project we attempted to find the middle ground – always a difficult position to maintain. This is a challenge we still face in our everyday teaching practice.

The second project carries the subtitle which we could easily use to define the strivings of university teachers and researchers in the contemporary processes of knowledge formation. *Images of Utopia* can be read as pointing to a gap between global, EU and national power relations and expectations from higher education and what we, as educators, professionals and citizens, consider to be the education for an open, mobile, tolerant and just society. What kind of involvement of professors, scholars and students is needed to make a social change that counts? This was one of the questions we raised in the project that marked the 50th anniversary of the 1968 happenings in Croatia or the former Yugoslavia, as well as worldwide. The evocations of the political turmoil, social movements, student protests and their repression, as well as the overall atmosphere and significance of 1968, served as a lens through which we observed the current situation in our society and at our university (Potkonjak and Škrbić Alempijević 2018). The core of the project revolved around the artistic reinterpretation of 1968, that is, around temporary spatial interventions created by five members of the *Croatian Association of Fine Artists*. We combined artistic and research activities, by including five students of ethnology and cultural anthropology in the project, whose research the two of us supervised. Their aim was to grasp ethnographically the memory materialised through art, its effects and its potential to transform people's sense of place and, perhaps, to change their experiences and world-views. One of the issues we wanted to raise echoes the topic of this paper: what kind of university contributes to the students and graduates' role of active citizens? What kind of education encourages them to show 'a much broader social interest than demands focusing on the improvement of students' living standard', which back in 1968 were 'criticised together with other segments of political, economic and social life' (Klasić 2018: 23)?

The site of the artistic interventions was not selected by chance. The artwork was located in the building of our faculty: The images mounted along the corridors we cross daily at a swift pace changed the rhythm of our and other passersby's steps; they made our everyday working space seem different and conveyed alternative

messages, at least temporarily. This is how we argued for the choice of the faculty as the venue for these artistic interventions:

> *Why the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb? Except for the fact that we wanted to enrich the Faculty's programme of public events by adding an art project to it, the reason for selecting this location lies in the collective perception of that institution. Such perception is imbued with social memory in general, and not primarily with evocations of the year 1968. In the public discourse and institutional self-perception, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is often perceived as the point of critical thinking and free expression of diverse identities and ideas. As a result, the Faculty is represented as the initiator of social change, as the place where many student protests took place, social movements were initiated and resistance against dominant policies was expressed. In our contemporary social memory, it is also defined as an arena in which the images of utopia are being (re)created (Potkonjak and Škrbić Alempijević 2018: 15).*

In conclusion, we think that the strategies of our department, as well as the collective and individual endeavours of its professors and students, can be sketched through the intertwinement, common threads and clashes between those two projects. The one insists on the harmonisation of education with the needs of the labour market, and the other searches for images of a utopian university in present-day higher education policies, practices and realities.

What our research has shown is that the current university policies, as well as tactics and practices of educators and researchers are deeply immersed in the actual political, economic and social context. They reflect the dictates of the global and national system of governance and institutional frameworks; at the same time, they function as mechanisms that keep that system operational and viable. Also, they highlight the dilemma of how research and higher education can serve the society best: either by creating conditions and knowledge for a better life and a better, healthier, more pleasant, secure, harmonious and equal world, or by equipping individuals better for market needs and keeping track of money flows. In contemporaneity, those two approaches are rarely seen as synonyms. The tension between those different tendencies is particularly observable in humanities, where the direct applicability of knowledge and skills on the market is not as clear-cut and obvious as in some other scholarly areas. That also brings ethnology and cultural anthropology, which seek for a deeper understanding of humanity and finding solutions to human problems, to a very delicate position. In this process, these disciplines are getting attuned to the neoliberal developments of the 21st century we, as academics, researchers and engaged citizens, are most critical of.

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