

Towards a Socially Responsible University: Balancing the Global with the Local

*Na poti do družbeno odgovorne univerze:
uravnoteženje globalnega z lokalnim*

ACA-CMEPIUS Conference, Bled 2019

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1. A short introduction

- What do we mean by “Engaged University” and “Social Responsibility”?
- The most important function of universities is providing with good and relevant teaching and research... But...
- Should we change the way we provide teaching/learning? Should we change the way we do research? Should we change institutional strategies?



A short historical overview...

The University in the Middle Ages → “Universalist perspective” (“*Global*”)

The University of the Liberal Nation-State → The University at the service of the state and its needs (“*Local*”)

Different perspectives...depending on political vision:

- Cultural vision
- Utilitarian vision
- Instrumentalist/interventionist vision

Now what?

Global Impact

Local Impact



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2. A new society is emerging: what does it mean for HEIs in terms of responsibility and engagement at local and global levels?

From an “Age of Changes” to a “Change of Age”

- **Powerful technical and scientific advances**
ICTs, digital age, artificial intelligence, science revolution/new materials, etc.
- **Globalization**
Economic interdependence. Severe environmental crisis.
- **Knowledge-intensive society**
- **World of work in full transformation**
Robotization, economy platforms, precariousness, etc.
- **Social and political challenges**
Poverty, increased inequalities, loss of rights and freedoms, populism and neo-fascism, etc.

1. Knowledge Society and the Role of HEIs

“The problems facing humanity today require a great mobilization of knowledge. (...) we must be able to generate a great deal of knowledge, which requires forms of organization and cooperation for which we are not yet sufficiently prepared. (...) In this sense: 1) The questions that are elucidated in the field of science are also matters of citizenship; and 2) The main problems of a democracy are less problems of political will than cognitive failures that we have to solve with a better knowledge of the complex realities that we govern.

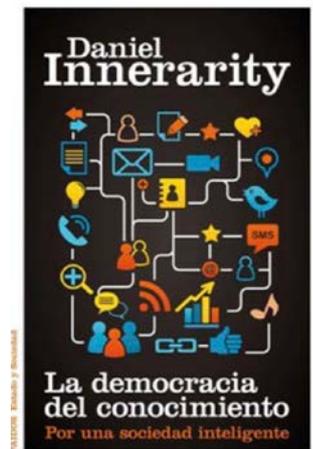
(...) an intelligent society is not a society in which people are intelligent but a society whose rules, norms, processes and procedures are intelligent. The complexity of our societies, the density of interactions, interdependencies or shared vulnerability, all this makes it increasingly important that our way of organizing is intelligent.”

Translated from: Innerarity, Daniel. *La democracia del conocimiento: Por una sociedad inteligente*. Paidós, 2011.

- The need to open the HEIs to society
- Growing expectations of society regarding HEIs
- The need for HE and science cooperation at global level

But... HEIs lose the monopoly of knowledge

But... HEIs still very much based at national/regional perspective and focusing in competition



2. Balancing the global with the local

GUNi Higher Education in the World Report 6

The Report deals with the dual responsibilities of universities at local and global scale, exploring the potential conflict, or intrinsic difficulties, in addressing both local demands of society based on the race for global competitiveness, and local and global demands to contribute to a more equitable and sustainable society.



GUNI SERIES ON THE SOCIAL COMMITMENT OF UNIVERSITIES

**Higher Education
in the World 6**
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3. The Academic Disciplines

GUNi Higher Education in the World Report 7

- Diagnosis, debate and proposal trying to address the problems derived from the current perception, transmission and application of humanities.
- Focus on a challenge-based approach and not on the classic disciplinary approach of the various academic areas.
- Promote a frank and fruitful dialogue between technology, science and the humanities.



Official launch:
10th December 2019
Barcelona

+120 authors
+35 countries

4. A Renewed Emphasis on Responsibility and Engagement in Higher Education

Universities in the Last Decade...

- ➔ **Progressive institutionalization** of Social Responsibility and Engagement in Universities (from marginal reports to institution wide strategies)
- ➔ **Progressive integration** of SR in mission statements, strategies, programmes and initiatives
- ➔ From a university that looks “inwards” **to a university that looks “all around”** (“think global, act local”)

4. A Renewed Emphasis on Responsibility and Engagement in Higher Education

The TEFCE Project

The objective of the TEFCE (*Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement*) project is to develop innovative and feasible **policy tools** at the university and European level for supporting, monitoring and assessing the community engagement of higher education institutions.

Main activities:

- Elaborate a mapping and critical synthesis of CE
- Developing an innovative toolbox
- Pilot the tool at partner universities and their local communities
- Assess feasibility of developing policy tools for CE at EU level
- Stakeholder consultations
- Project visibility and comms



4. A Renewed Emphasis on Responsibility and Engagement in Higher Education

Teaching & Learning

- New curriculum – Emphasis on competences
- New pedagogy for engaged learning
- Transdisciplinary approaches – Beyond rigid academic structures
(disciplinary/departments boundaries rigidly define curriculum)
- Incentivize societally-engaged teaching

4. A Renewed Emphasis on Responsibility and Engagement in Higher Education

Research & Innovation

Emerging concepts: Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), Science with and for Society (SwafS), Open Science, Citizen Science, Participatory research, Knowledge diplomacy, Transdisciplinary research



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3. Some Final Questions and Remarks

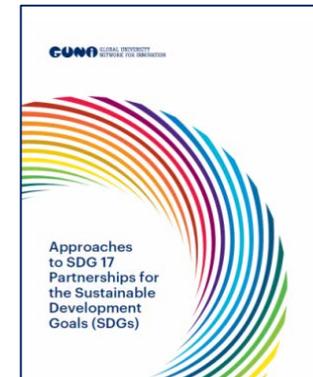
Looking towards the Future: the Agenda 2030



- International political agenda that seeks the transformation of the planet and people (all of them, not only developing countries)
- How to make it possible? 3 essential ingredients: **political will, participation of all actors and knowledge**
- We have an ambitious global project (Agenda 2030) but without political, economic or legal instruments!
- In the HE field, HEIs are becoming international but still without adequate answers and organized with “national perspective”. Are the networks of universities an adequate way? Can we tackle it with “global” universities? (not too successful so far)
- Tension: global problems but universities still focusing on local?

GUNi's Work on the 2030 Agenda

- International Conferences on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
 - 1st edition "*Actors and Implementation*". Barcelona, September 2017
 - 2nd edition "*Higher Education & Science Take Action*". Barcelona, March 2020
- Projects and publications
- Group of Experts in SDGs and Higher Education



Some Final Remarks

- Social responsibility and university engagement as a growing strategic focus for HEIs – The Change of Age requires redefine HEIs
- The need to guarantee real university autonomy and academic freedom
- Tension between local and global: only universities with '*glocal*' vision and mission can resolve the tension
- A more engaged university requires new focus of higher education and research policies from governments and parliaments (financing, incentives, accountability/data,...)
- New concept: *Internationalization of Higher Education for Society (IHES)* (Brandenburg; de Wit; Jones; Leask)
- The Agenda 2030 as a real catalyst for HEIs at global level



GLOBAL UNIVERSITY NETWORK FOR INNOVATION

Thank you very much for your attention!

Najlepša hvala za vašo pozornost!

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