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Social cartographies as performative devices in research on higher education

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we review social cartography as a methodological approach to map and collectively engage diverse perspectives within the study of higher education. We illustrate the uses of this approach by drawing on our own experiences engaging it as part of an international research project about the effects of the convergence of globalization and economic crises in higher education. We offer several examples of how social cartography can enable agonistic collaboration amongst existing positions, as well as open up new spaces and possibilities for alternative futures in higher education.

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In the current moment characterized by rapid social, political and economic change, and ever-expanding global interconnection, the role of higher education in society is increasingly under review. Within this context, some have expressed concern about the capacity of existing research approaches to adequately address the complexities of current debates (Brennan & Teichler, 2008). This is particularly so in the case of research regarding the international dimension of higher education (e.g., Kehm & Teichler, 2007; Robson, 2011). Following Macfarlane's (2012) effort to map higher education scholarship and tentatively capture 'tensions within [higher education's] territorial waters' (p. 131), in this article we explore the performative methodological uses of social cartography in the context of a large, international higher education research project. In doing so, we extend Macfarlane's cartographic provocation to engage the spatial dimensions of higher education in a figurative, rather than literal, sense.

Though interest in higher education as an object of study continues to grow,¹ there remains a dearth of what Barnett (2014) describes as 'meta-thinking about higher education' (p. 9).² As we attempt to demonstrate in this article, Rolland Paulston's methodology of social cartography offers a useful means to engage audiences in such 'meta-thinking'. According to Paulston and Liebman (1996), social cartography uses 'visual dialogue as a way of communicating how we see the social changes developing in the world around us' (p. 8). Social cartographies problematize common sense imaginaries, and draw attention to the intersections of normative claims in ways that amplify the ambivalences, contradictions and limits of common discursive assemblages. They can

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also complexify otherwise simplistic spatial models and metaphors that delimit possibilities for imagining and enacting alternative futures (Stavrakakis, 2011).

Instead of providing a fixed, totalized, or idealized *representation* of truth, social cartography serves a *performative* (and pedagogical) role as it enables diverse communities to 'open up meanings, to uncover limits within cultural fields, and to highlight reactionary attempts to seal borders and prohibit translations' (Paulston, 2009, p. 977). It is precisely by making the limits and juxtapositions (borders) of discursive assemblages visible that social cartographies can open up the possibility of the emergence of new and different discursive assemblages. In this sense, it is not the maps themselves but the act of engaging with them that holds the potential to interrupt common assemblages and to challenge rigid boundaries. In particular, cartographies can facilitate reflexive and agonistic forms of engagement amongst scholars and practitioners by taking account of paradoxes, and of situated investments, attachments and desires that shape responses to the shifting grounds of higher education.

Such engagements are essential in the context of growing challenges and changes (some even say crises) currently facing many colleges and universities around the world. Drawing on our own experiences using social cartography to navigate the productive tensions, synchronies and incommensurabilities of collaborative research about higher education, we argue that social cartography offers not only an important means of figuratively mapping current contexts, but that it can also help generate prefigurative imaginaries for pluralizing futures of higher education (Nandy, 2000). We seek to articulate/iterate currently dominant concepts of the university as an imagined space, but also to complicate and push beyond them towards the exploration of yet-to-be imagined ideas about the role of higher education in a thoroughly global society.

We begin by providing a brief overview of the study that prompted us to explore social cartography as a method, the Ethical Internationalism in Higher Education (EIHE) project. Next, we detail Paulston's approach to social cartography as a heuristic device for visualizing differences and dialogues within and between intellectual communities, and for identifying the 'edges' of existing debates. We then proceed to offer a series of examples of how we have used social cartography as a method to map and negotiate divergent perspectives within the EIHE project and related research. Finally, we conclude by offering our reflections on the figurative and prefigurative uses of this methodological approach within higher education and related fields.³

The EIHE Project

EIHE is an interdisciplinary, multi-site, mixed-methods research project funded by the Academy of Finland from 2012 to 2015. Over the course of the project, more than 20 partners located in nine countries on five continents came together to examine the convergence of internationalization and economic pressures in higher education. The project was motivated by shared concerns that financial imperatives were driving unethical internationalization practices and undermining the potential for ethical engagements in higher education (Khoo, 2011). Project data included policy documents, student surveys, interviews with staff and case studies. Many project partners also engaged in additional research related to, but not necessarily directly associated with, the primary project aims. Collectively, these data enabled us to map values, predispositions and perceptions

related to various elements of internationalization, including epistemic difference, global citizenship, social accountability and global change, as well as to track changes related to new funding structures and declining public funding.

While driven by a shared concern about the changing role of the university in the realm of social imaginaries and individual imaginations, and a shared commitment to reimagine the civic role of the university, we nonetheless brought to the table a multitude of different perspectives. At times conflicting, at others times complementary, and often both, our diverse disciplinary backgrounds, theoretical orientations, political perspectives, social locations and personal histories all contributed to a rich tapestry of scholarly insights. Respect for epistemic difference was both an object of study for the project itself and an important guiding principle for the ethos of the large research team. In this sense, it was important to synthesize and keep visible the range of different conceptual spaces from which different partners were approaching the same basic set of problems.

The overall frame of the project was grounded on a discursive strand of postcolonial theory informed by poststructuralism, in particular the work of Spivak (2012), who inspired the project's attention to complicities of critique, double binds and paradoxes. It was also informed by Sousa Santos' (2007) critique of 'abyssal thinking', and his conceptualization of ecologies of knowledge, which suggests the need to attend to the intersections of both knowledges and ignorances. However, the theoretical perspectives of project partners varied, and included: liberal critiques of neoliberalism (e.g., Nussbaum, 2010); (neo)Marxist critiques of neoliberalism (e.g., Harvey, 2005, 2011); postcolonial critiques of liberal subjectivities (e.g., Thobani, 2007); and postcolonial, decolonial, Indigenous and critical race theory critiques of both capitalism and the nation-state (e.g., Coulthard, 2014; Mignolo, 2011; Silva, 2007). In this uneasy context of competing and complementary forms of critique within a singular large research team, the methodology of social cartography helped to 'trouble tidy binaries' and to 'deliberately hold together necessary incompatibilities' (Lather, 2006, p. 36).

This was achieved as the methodology performed a number of purposes, including grounding the collaborative commitment to explore multiple analyses of the same phenomenon; upholding the relational orientation of the project without compromising different disciplinary conceptualizations of rigour; and dispelling confusion as differences could be traced and discussed without a need for theoretical consensus or resolution. Thus, social cartography quickly became one of our primary means of attending to the contributions and limitations of what each of us brought to the project, as well as finding generative spaces of tension. At the same time, it became central to our general analysis of the data as well, enabling us to make sense of the ways that concrete problems and solutions are embedded in often unexamined theoretical and metaphysical frameworks (Weidman & Jacob, 2011). In the following section, we review some of the basic guiding principles and methodological aspects of social cartography, and discuss some of its primary benefits with regard to both scholarly and relational considerations.

Social cartography

Maps produced using Paulston's tradition of social cartography can be understood as metaphorical devices that enable provisional visual depictions of difference between and

within intellectual communities. These maps allow for multiple ways of seeing to be simultaneously acknowledged, affirmed and addressed in their inevitable particularity and partiality, without imposing demands for immediate resolution or consensus. By bringing together a range of possible approaches to diagnosing and addressing shared problems or issues of concern, social cartography can render explicit what are often otherwise taken as implicit theoretical, political, epistemological and ontological assumptions (Rust & Kenderes, 2011; Weidman & Jacob, 2011). The resulting maps can help make visible how problems and solutions are situated within and between particular social locations and perspectives (Paulston & Liebman, 1994, p. 215).

In articulating his social cartography approach to mapping educational debates, Paulston specified that this approach contrasted with modernist and positivist approaches to mapping that claimed to capture objective truth and reality. Although in some ways social cartography seeks to provide a performative panoptical view of the issue to be mapped, it does not claim a disinterested position of omniscience. Instead, it is self-consciously situated: only those parts defined as relevant by the mapper(s) will be included and made meaningful. The politics of making things visible and invisible is acknowledged upfront. These maps are also not timeless, but rather depict a 'provisional unity' (Paulston, 2009, p. 980). Thus, as is the case with many qualitative methodologies, social cartography maps are not meant to be generalizable (Liebman & Paulston, as cited by Yamamoto & McClure, 2011), but are instead open to diverse readings, discussions and remapping by different individuals and communities, as we illustrate in the next section.

According to Paulston (2009), the process of social cartography generally involves selecting the issue to be mapped, selecting a range of texts that substantially address that issue, identifying the positions of each text and the ways that they intersect and overlap with other texts and, finally, testing and adjusting the map with those communities that are mapped. Hence, although mapping positions and their abutments risk reifying them, as has indeed often been the intended use of maps by many imperial powers (Turnbull, 2000), those who engage social cartography may instead trace borders 'in an attempt to break down what might be seen as established but unjust boundaries' (Yamamoto & McClure, 2011, p. 156). Ruitenber (2007) suggests that cartography 'allows us to ask different kinds of questions' (p. 10). Indeed, by mapping the contours of debates about a particular issue, social cartography can help to identify the cracks and edges of existing positions, thereby serving as a strategy of 'un-bordering' reason: 'a point of departure for new research, as well as for new maps resulting from the knowledge generated by that research' (Paulston & Liebman, 1994, p. 223).

In the case of EIHE and associated projects, social cartography served as an indispensable complementary approach to the primary, more traditional, (mixed) research methods. It both enriched our data analysis and helped to ensure attentiveness to our diverse aims and interests for the project. Engaging in the process of collectively mapping our perspectives in turn allowed project members to engage 'reflexive and non-absolutist' dialogue (Epstein, as cited by Paulston, 2000, p. xiv) that in turn led to different approaches to conflict, novel insights, collaborations and imagined possibilities for higher education. In the following section, we describe some of the mapping efforts from the EIHE project.

EIHE examples of social cartography

We have collaboratively designed several cartographies in the EIHE project that have been used in different ways, including research team building, literature reviews and the design of data collection tools and analysis of data. In this section, we present the three cartographies that have been most useful in situating the theoretical framework, priorities and findings of the project. These are juxtaposed imaginaries of the university, corporate/civic discursive orientations, and articulations of internationalization. However, before we introduce our examples, we should note that our mapping of each cartography was informed by our understanding of the possibilities and limitations of a meta-frame that is common across all of them: the modern/colonial global imaginary. We have explored this social imaginary elsewhere in more detail (see Andreotti, Stein, Ahenakew, & Hunt, 2015; Stein & Andreotti, 2015a, 2015b) but, in brief, it naturalizes Western/European domination and capitalist, colonial social relations and projects a local (Western/European) perspective as a universal blueprint for imagined global designs (e.g., Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2000; Silva, 2007, 2013; Spivak, 1999; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012; Wynter, 2003).

According to Taylor (2002), a social imaginary 'is not a set of ideas; rather it is what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society' (p. 91). Social imaginaries provide both a descriptive and a normative framework for what things are and what they should be, and thus through them it is possible to recognize an ideal, behind which 'stands some notion of a moral or metaphysical order, in the context of which the norms and ideals make sense' (p. 107). However, as this order underlies 'the taken-for-granted shape of things' (p. 111), it is not commonly recognized as contingent and historical. Theorists of the modern/colonial global imaginary, and related concepts, suggest that it began with the European Renaissance and simultaneous initiation of the European colonial project and slave trade. While there have been significant changes in the *content* of this imaginary (from decolonization to international development in the post-World War II era, to the globalization era starting in the 1970s), today its *form* continues to be dominant. Therefore, this imaginary can be difficult to challenge, as alternative imaginaries are often made to appear either unintelligible or impossible.

Juxtaposed imaginaries of the university

From the beginning, the EIHE project sought to document (and challenge) the intensified application of entrepreneurial logics and diminished public funding for higher education around the world. However, we found that before we could map these changes – including their basic character, divergences and convergences across contextual difference, as well as the reasons for and responses to them – we needed to first situate them within a longer genealogy of the university. The result was a cartography of four very broad juxtaposed social imaginaries of the (Western) university, all of which operate within the modern/colonial global imaginary described above: scholastic (twelfth to sixteenth century); classical (sixteenth to nineteenth century); civic (mid-nineteenth to mid-/late-twentieth century); and corporate (the 1970s to today). Although these imaginaries are represented within a period of historical emphasis, their influence extends beyond historical temporalities in a juxtaposed fashion. Each imaginary transcendentalizes an iconic symbol of its historical time by rendering something above critique: the church and Hellenic philosophy

(scholastic imaginary), universal reason and secular knowledge (classical imaginary), the modern nation-state (civic imaginary), and the capitalist market (corporate imaginary). All four university imaginaries operate within the dynamic and contested but enduring modern/colonial global imaginary. This complex configuration is represented in [Figure 1](#).

The scholastic university imaginary combined the interests of the Roman Catholic Church and secular powers by training both professionals and clergy. This imaginary drew on Hellenic traditions as well as Christian doctrine (Scott, 2006). In the transition from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, the classical imaginary of the university can be identified. This imaginary focuses on universal reason and the training of elites for governance and leadership in the emergent nation-states of Europe. There was an emphasis on secular knowledge and technical skills, and interest in both humanistic and scientific knowledge that would contribute to nation-building (Scott, 2006). At the same time, as the classical imaginary was emergent in Europe, it was exported to the Americas as part of Europe's colonial project. The first universities were founded in South America in the sixteenth century and in North America in the seventeenth century (Mignolo, 2003; Thelin, 2011).

The civic imaginary of the university focuses on the education of a nation-state's citizens and the training of large numbers of graduates for professional labour. Though it emerged as the dominant university imaginary in the context of Euro-American post-war reconstruction and Cold War-era political and ideological demands, its roots can be traced to earlier developments such as the founding of the first land grant universities in the USA in the mid-nineteenth century (Brown, 2003). The civic imaginary is significantly associated with the expansion and democratization of access to higher education and the fostering of civic engagement, as well as a strong mission in support of research and development in the service of national security and economic growth.

The most recent university imaginary started to emerge with the diminishing financial role of the state in the provision of social services in the 1970s: the corporate imaginary.⁴ This imaginary focuses on training graduates to be social and economic entrepreneurs and on strengthening university–industry partnerships. Whereas in the civic imaginary the worth of knowledge is measured by its use-value, that is, the usefulness of a particular service or product in meeting human needs, in the corporate imaginary, knowledge is measured by its exchange-value, that is, the exchange equivalent by which these products or services are compared to others in a capitalist market which indicates how much people

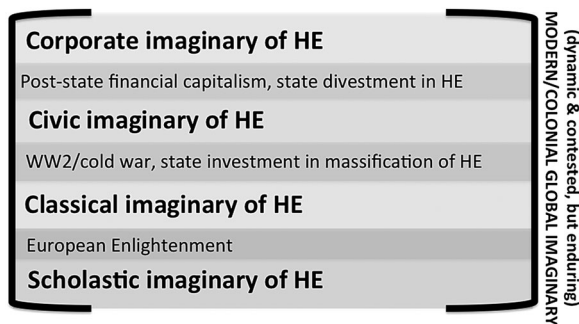


Figure 1. Juxtaposed imaginaries of the university.

are prepared to pay for or invest in them. Once exchange-value replaces use-value conceptualizations of knowledge, it becomes difficult to justify research, instruction, or other university activities that do not produce pre-defined 'economically justifiable deliverables'. The financialization of capitalism and its relationship to the modern nation-state has fuelled the dissemination of this imaginary in the past 30 years and particularly so in the current context of economic crises.

All four university imaginaries – scholastic, classical, civic and corporate – co-exist in a dynamic fashion, manifesting in particular assemblages depending on the contours of a given context. However, civic and corporate imaginaries tend to be the most salient, producing unpredictable and at times contradictory and incoherent outcomes for staff, faculty, students and communities. This dynamic is further complicated by the fact that while the civic imaginary is oriented towards the local and national contexts, the corporate imaginary is more global in both research and student recruitment. Yet as economic imperatives fuse with civic missions, engagements with both local and global communities are increasingly conceptualized in narrowly instrumental terms (Matthews & Sidhu, 2005; Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011). The conflictive interface between the civic and corporate university imaginaries is largely what prompted the EIHE project. The next cartography offers a closer look at the paradoxes and implications of this interface.

Between civic and corporate imaginaries: discursive orientations

Mapping discursive orientations is a means to tease out and articulate the ways that imaginaries of higher education are iterated. Discourses, in this sense,

not only represent the world as it is (or rather is seen to be), they are also projective imaginaries, representing possible worlds which are different from the actual world, and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions. (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124)

While social imaginaries are (re)produced in part through discourse, in any given context there will likely be several, competing and overlapping discursive orientations. Mapping the diverse conceptual frameworks of project partners mentioned above and the literature around the neoliberalization and internationalization of higher education, we used social cartography to identify three primary discursive orientations at the current nexus of the civic and corporate imaginaries of the university: neoliberal, liberal and critical. As discussions progressed amongst the project team, we also mapped four areas of interface where they meet (i.e., neoliberal–liberal; liberal–critical; neoliberal–critical; neoliberal–liberal–critical). These are represented in [Figure 2](#).

A neoliberal discursive orientation is made more visible in the context of public sector austerity and state defunding of higher education, which animates the corporate imaginary of the university (Barnett, 2013) and practices of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). This discursive orientation promotes the perspective that 'human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets and free trade' (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). Thus, it commodifies knowledge, research, teaching and service, framing the core 'business' of the university as a provider of credentials, expert services and commercial innovations. Students are framed as rational clients/customers in a transactional relationship with instructors, and knowledge of worth is

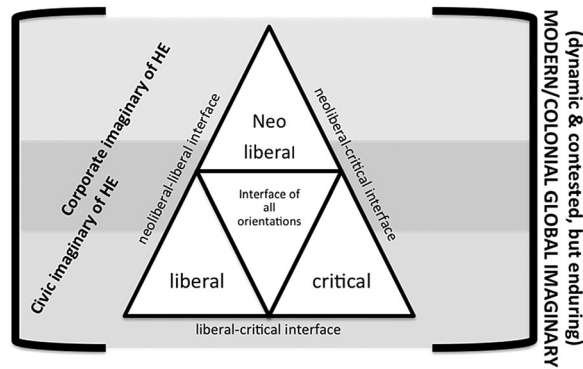


Figure 2. Discursive orientations in the corporate/civic imaginary of higher education.

evaluated in terms of its exchange-value. This discursive orientation operates within an economy of prestige where international rankings define measures of success. Income generation and branding become cornerstones of institutional survival. In this orientation, the role of the nation-state is to enable and to protect, with military force if necessary, the rights of capital and the smooth functioning and expansion of markets.

A liberal discursive orientation has its origins within a civic university imaginary that is accountable to a democratic notion of the nation-state. This orientation promotes a commitment to the public good, civic engagement, representative democracy, equality, individual freedoms, a Keynesian orientation to economics, and a strong state role in welfare and re-distribution. This orientation represents a scope of different positionalities that try to harmonize democratic rights, commitments to social well-being and economic prosperity. This orientation frames education as having an inherent value in the formation of national citizens committed to a singular ideal of progress, conceptualization of humanity and vision of the future. Research is framed as a form of problem-solving that improves national indicators of development. This orientation promotes equity, inclusion and access as the extension of membership to marginalized actors in society in established institutions. However, connections between the material and epistemic violence of economic development (through exploitation, destitution, dispossession) and the sustainability of the 'First World' state through the unequal international distribution of wealth and labour that produce the 'Third World' are often foreclosed.

A critical discursive orientation seeks to interrupt violent patterns of power and knowledge. It highlights capitalist exploitation, processes of racialization and colonialism and other forms of oppression at work in seemingly benevolent and normalized patterns of thinking and behaviour. This configuration is also located within the civic university imaginary, emphasizing the need for the inclusion of more diverse voices, and for radical forms of democracy. However, rather than reproducing singular and homogeneous narratives of the nation-state (as in the liberal orientation), it aims to transform, pluralize, or replace these narratives through historical and systemic analyses of patterns of oppression and unequal distributions of power, labour and resources. This orientation tends to see the university as an elitist space, an ivory tower, and call for its accountability towards empowering and giving voice to marginalized populations, emphasizing the public role of the university and its mandate in relation to the public good.

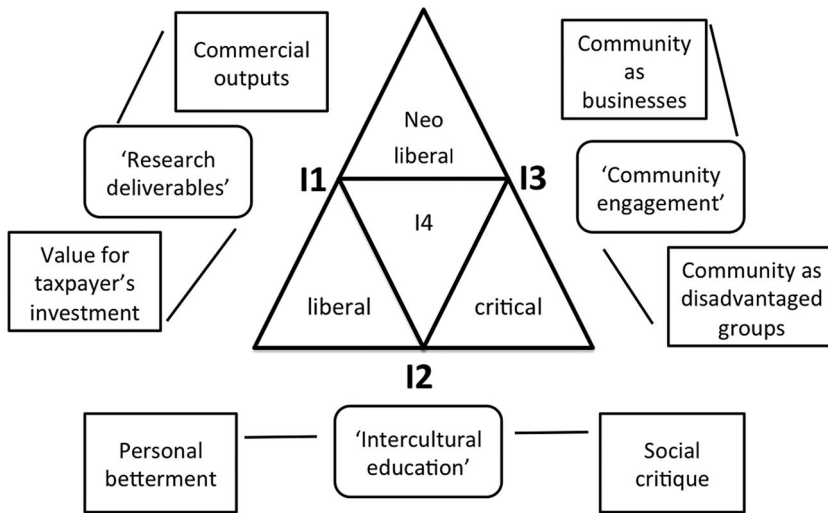


Figure 3. Examples of multiple readings 1: signifiers at interfaces 1, 2, and 3.

The interfaces between these different configurations are spaces of ambivalence where signifiers are deployed with multiple strategic meanings. The neoliberal–liberal interface is often used in economic rationalizations of former civic processes and meanings (e.g., defending the humanities’ role in offering soft-skills for the market). The liberal–critical interface shows a deeper recognition of injustices, but advocates for institutional change based on personal (rather than systemic) choice or transformation (see Ahmed, 2012). The critical–neoliberal interface deploys critical strategies to defend interests framed in economic terms, that is, framing the economy as the common good, or the protection of entitlements of ‘clients’ and stakeholders (ranked by institutional investments and risks) as the promotion of fairness and justice. The fourth interface is where signifiers that appeal to all three discursive orientations are deployed. We have used this cartography to show the ambivalence and multiple readings of common condensation symbols deployed through or at the interfaces of the three orientations, as Figures 3 and 4 illustrate.

Articulations of internationalization

In addition to mapping imaginaries of the university and university discourses, we were also interested in articulations of internationalization, as this was a primary concern of the EIHE project. According to Callan (2000), interpretations of internationalization tend to shift according to ‘the varying rationales and incentives for internationalization, the varying activities encompassed therein, and the varying political and economic circumstances in which the process is situated’ (p. 16). A social cartography approach enabled us to consider these variables and prompted us to ask new questions and generate new vocabularies about the study and practice of internationalization. In particular, we were concerned to identify which articulation predominated at our partner sites, in order to understand how certain possibilities for international engagement are normalized and supported through institutional channels, while others are discouraged or illegible (Figure 5).

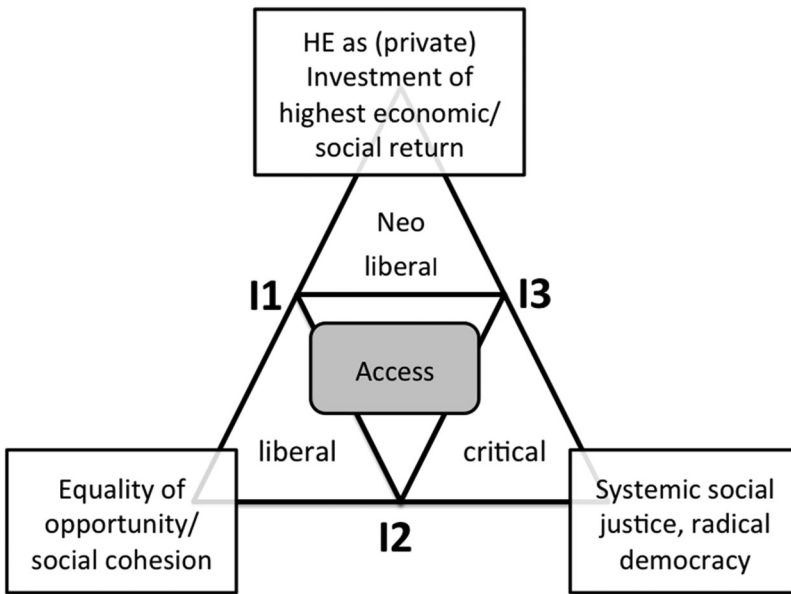


Figure 4. Examples of multiple readings 2: signifier at interface 4.

In the first articulation, internationalization for a global knowledge economy, higher education is framed as a central element of economic growth and competitiveness (Gibb & Walker, 2011; Ozga & Jones, 2006). Because of this, emphasis is placed on preparing graduates with entrepreneurial skills and other human capital to compete in a global labour market (Adamson, 2009), and faculty success is measured by quantifiable

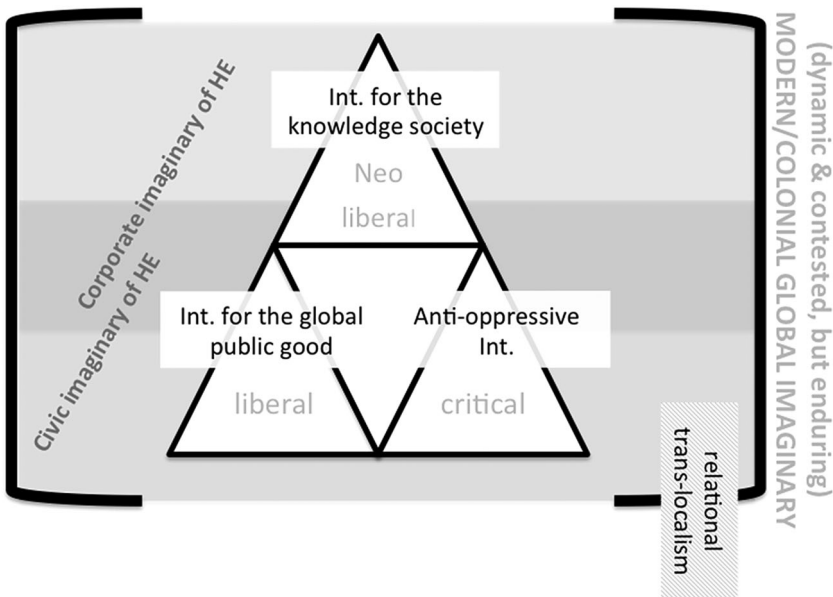


Figure 5. Articulations of internationalization.

outputs such as publication rankings and grants received (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). This articulation largely presumes the universal use- and exchange-value of Western knowledge, such that low-income countries are thought to lack adequate 'knowledge capital' (Sachs, 2005). In the second articulation, internationalization for the global public good, there is an emphasis on making universities more inclusive and democratic. This includes a global expansion of social mobility and equal opportunity to access higher education. In this articulation, higher education (particularly in the Global North) is understood to play a vital and benevolent role in producing the global public goods of democracy, prosperity and knowledge (Marginson, 2007; Peters, 2002; Stiglitz, 1999). Both the first and second articulation are situated within the modern/colonial global imaginary; the third articulation, anti-oppressive internationalization, challenges it (but remains within it) based on a commitment to work in solidarity for systemic transformation towards social justice. This articulation is strongly informed by anti-colonial, anti-imperial and anti-racist commitments. It disputes the veracity of claims made by the global knowledge economy articulation that 'jobs are universally accessible and that the global economy is equitably structured' (Shahjahan, 2013, p. 690), and also suggests that the global public good articulation's emphasis on universal inclusion is a means of depoliticizing difference and demanding conformity with Western educational standards. This articulation is concerned with supporting and defending those who may be harmed by unethical internationalization programs and policies.

We mapped the fourth articulation of internationalization, relational trans-localism, outside (or, at the edges) of the modern/colonial imaginary that frames the other three articulations, as it challenges what is currently possible within the logics and structures of most mainstream universities. There is a strong commitment to recognize complicity in the harmful practices identified by the anti-oppressive articulation, to disinvest in them, and to affirm relationships based on connections not mediated through them. Thus, this articulation replaces 'internationalization' with 'trans-localism', recognizing that interconnection and ethical obligations exceed the borders of the nation-state and the onto-epistemic grammar of modernity.

Acknowledging that most projects and policies operate as an assemblage of multiple positions, we noted that each engagement depends on the fields of intelligibility, resources and opportunities that are available in any given context. Nonetheless, through this research project we found that it is rare for mainstream universities to enact either 'anti-oppressive' or 'trans-local' articulations in an official capacity, as these two articulations challenge normative understandings of the obligations and primary purposes of the university in both the civic and corporate imaginaries. We have explored this further in an article on ideas of decolonization in higher education (see Andreotti et al., 2015).

As we presented these cartographies in multiple academic forums, we have noted their pedagogical value in challenging and shifting boundaries of reasoning and possibilities for action. We observed that the power of social cartographies is not in offering a normative orientation towards a specific claim, or in their ability to comprehensively capture every possible position on a particular issue, but instead in their ability to productively de-stabilize taken-for-granted assumptions. By illustrating tensions and paradoxes in different normative stances, cartographies can generate new insights, take people to the

limits and edges of their thinking, and open interfaces between different intellectual communities.

In the case of the EIHE project, for example, we discussed how it is common to locate research and/or pedagogy in a liberal or critical orientation without recognizing the extent to which this work and its conceptualization interfaces with the dominant neoliberal orientation. Recognizing such ambivalences and complexities in ourselves and others started to make it possible for us to acknowledge and articulate the ways that the civic imaginary of the university is increasingly compatible with and reconstituted by a corporate imaginary. Another example is the guidelines for project partners' future use of the EIHE data in contextual comparisons, which were collectively created and agreed upon during our final project meeting. Three of these guidelines articulate well what we believe are approaches to collaboration and knowledge creation informed and facilitated by the use of social cartographies. These include consideration of:

- Methodological nationalism, by reflecting critically on its (inevitable?) use
- The complexities of interpretation, highlighting: positionalities; partiality of authors; different discursive orientations and the tensions between them; ethical conundrums, incommensurabilities, and paradoxes; and self-reflexive attentiveness to our own readings of the context and the data (and recognition of the limits of doing so)
- The differences between performative and representational intentions of the research narratives, and the different desired effects of these intentions (and unintended effects) in the field of intervention (EIHE Project Meeting, Budapest, 5 September 2015).

However, despite Paulston's ideas about the purposes of social cartography, different people who engaged with the cartographies produced by the project, including project partners, have used and modified them in different ways in their own contexts, according to their specific needs and interpretations. For example, some partners have used them as heuristic representational tools to interpret data with a view to better strategize resistance to neoliberalism in their own institutions, while others have used them as tools of deconstruction deployed to articulate 'aporias' that were previously illegible in their contexts. This attests to the generative power of cartographies for multiple theoretical orientations and their potential to create a different form of academic engagement not necessarily geared towards a pre-defined outcome, but towards on-going academic conversations that do not only merely tolerate difference, but that actively seek to engage difference for its creative and critical gifts.

Conclusion

In this article, we have sought to demonstrate how social cartographies can bring to and keep on the table competing, complementary and even incommensurable perspectives about higher education. This approach to complex and contested topics shifts the focus from one of systematizing convictions in order to argue for a specific normative stance towards a more collective yet agonistic examination of the dynamics operating within and between intersecting discourses. Specifically, we highlighted how cartographies helped to sustain research relationships in the EIHE project without requiring consensus,

and enabled project partners to better understand the limitations of approaches to higher education that are rooted in the modern/colonial global imaginary (including neoliberal, liberal and critical approaches), as well as the strategic possibilities and constraints for change within it.

In college and university contexts, the act of mapping and sharing cartographies can also serve both reflexive and strategic purposes. For those wishing to both situate themselves and their work in current debates, and to consider future directions for higher education, social cartography can be a means of facing the impossibility of narrowly prescriptive approaches. In the case of the EIHE project, it was precisely by not turning our backs to this impossibility that we were able to clear new, heterogeneous spaces for imagining and acting otherwise in response to shifting financial conditions and ethically dubious internationalization efforts. By addressing the spatial dimension of higher education in both figurative and prefigurative ways, social cartography has the potential to ‘open the possibility of possibilities’ (Barnett, 2014, p. 21) for higher education, that is, possibilities that exceed the increasingly narrow set of futurities currently on offer.

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Notes

1. This growing interest in higher education extends well beyond the field of higher education itself. Humanities scholars in particular have authored many articles and books on the subject, which has in turn contributed to the birth of a new specialization, ‘Critical University Studies’ (Williams, 2012).
2. For notable exceptions, see the work of Malcolm Tight (e.g., 2004, 2012, 2013, 2014) and Ronald Barnett (e.g., 2004, 2005, 2014).
3. The boundaries of higher education as a field are, as is the case in many fields, contested (Clegg, 2012).
4. We chose ‘corporate’ for the most recent imaginary of the university for purposes of intelligibility. Notwithstanding the fact that in the USA, for example, universities arguably set a foundational precedent for the legal status of corporations in the mid-nineteenth century (Barkan, 2013), it is common to refer to today’s university as ‘corporate’ in reference to its increased employment of business/profit-making logics.

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