Academic Heterotopias: Envisioning Students as Possibilists and Future Designers
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The Creative University has been addressed in the notions of “being” a university by Ron Barnett (2011). How can this “being” as a practice be set up in our Higher Education practice (Weber 2013a) as a practice of “becoming”? How can critical thinking, crossing boundaries, sense of possibility and design-ability become a living educational imaginary in Higher Education (Weber 2013b)? Discussing the “creative university” in a Foucauldian perspective, institutional discourses can offer subjectivating and as well transformative (em)powerknowledge (Weber 2009). Academia in this sense can become a Heterotopia envisioning students as possibilists and Future Designers. Integrating a Bourdieudian perspective, the “limits of the brain” (Bourdieu 1987) have to be addressed, in order to develop professional reflexivity, to develop critical designability and to grow by ethical dilemmas.

Connecting to a transformative philosophy of engagement and a vision of cosmopolite citizenship, the contribution in a second step discusses a framework for transformative education for the transition into Higher Education. The framework suggested here a) theorizes transitions and trajectories; b) uses habitus-theoretical perspectives for opening towards reflexivity for seeing possibilities; c) refers to social innovation strategies and sustainability methodologies and d) applies individual and collective models of “Design-Ability”.

In a third section the presentation shows empirical results of three years of training students’ self organization to become a Change-Agent and Future-Designer (Weber 2015). The goal of the program “Future-Designers” is the purposeful shaping of one’s own strategies for professional paths for sustainable futures. With that, the Network Coaching Program centrally aims at enabling sustainability in higher education by self-education, peer leadership training and social innovation development as well as strategy development. The empirical analysis of the program (Brake 2011; Brake/Bremer/Lange-Vester 2013) shows, that the program helps shaping strategies for futurability and sustainability innovation regarding social, ecological and economical sustainability.

Finally, the contribution in a self-reflexive turn asks for the possible underlying shift from “knowledge” to “ethos”, to be found in an academic Higher Education approach like this. Heterotopia then might be made of mixtures between romanticism, entrepreneurism, politics and reform-pedagogy.

Reference:


