

## **Science for the many, not for money**

All over the world, Higher Education and Research are currently subject to the shock doctrine of neoliberalism, where knowledge is perceived as a mere way to improve competitiveness of economy, as a possible source of benefits and as a tool of control for governments. This neoliberal agenda for science is implemented through a new mode of public management in which students, teachers and researchers have to become entrepreneurs of their cognitive capital and reputation. Far from the co-operative ideals of science and academia, universities and research institutions are managed like corporations, competing with one another to attract the “best” students and researchers. Research groups and collective bodies of work are almost systematically crushed. Science managers are supposed to look for funds and grants to employ an ever-larger mass of precarious staff, whose poor wages contrast with increasingly high earnings of a new managerial elite embodied in university presidents or vice-chancellors. Suffering at work affects most of a new intellectual proletariat. On another side, the madness of evaluation, the pressure to “publish or perish” and the privatization of scientific publishing lead to a soaring number of publications, which threatens both the quality of research and the open transmission of knowledge. This material war in which austerity goes along with privatization stands with an Orwellian ideological war where words, written in a poor and lying newspeak, lose their meaning. The desire for recognition of each leads to the servitude of all, the values of competition and utilitarianism are gaining ground in our scientific communities, where individuals are more and more isolated and dread being excluded from the game.

Fortunately, resistance has emerged, both in countries where the application of these policies was the most developed (Great Britain or Chile for instance) and in countries where they are still less advanced (France, Germany or Canada, especially the Quebec region). Everywhere, mobilizations propose alternatives to these neoliberal policies, which are very close to one another both in terms of values and concrete measures. Most crucially, we all share the view that knowledge is part of the commons of humankind, and that its value depends on its being shared with the greatest number. The other components of the alternative to neoliberal science stem from this principle.

First, the university must be free. But the fight for the effective abolition of tuition fees also demands that students be acknowledged the right to a substantial financial allowance which would guarantee their autonomy by giving them the means to deal with board and accommodation and to spare time to study.

Second, academics and researchers must not only have decent salaries and pensions, they must also be granted full positions with strong independence guarantees. This is a necessary condition if we want to avoid conflicts of interests between science, and the powers of money and politics.

They must also benefit from long-term credits, without spending much of their time applying for an increasing number of grants and projects through awful bureaucratic procedures or having to constantly justify the scientific use of funds allocated to them. It is only at this price that they will be able to claim for their right to time, without which no real intellectual progress, no free science and no free, solid and coherent education are possible.

Finally, democracy must be at the heart of universities and research institutions. The critical debate with the citizens and the collegiality of decisions must replace the top-down management coming from incompetent zealous bureaucrats only interested in stimulating competition and the so-called “excellence”.

The social and ecological emergency that the whole world currently faces represents a common general interest that should push us to unite if we want to meet all these challenges. A massive development of scientific knowledge is now necessary to ensure the ecological transition of our societies and escape the looming disaster. Public investment amounting to 3% of the GDP of nations must be devoted to the public services of research and higher education. We also have to fight back in an organized manner: it is time to construct a global alternative in which scientists, students and citizens defend the three pillars of free higher education and research: independence of scientific and intellectual production, free criticism, and unrestricted transmission of knowledge.

The signatories of this call, whether members of the academic and research community or of the social movement as a whole, come from all over the world. We commit ourselves together to promote the values of criticism, collegiality and co-operation in science and academia. We defend well-endowed universities and public research institutions that are free from private interests. We fight against precarious working conditions and we promote an alternative system of scientific publishing in which knowledge is free and open.

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