• Individual and social
• Differing kinds of ‘public’ and public good in higher education
• Neoliberal economics radically reduces our understanding and practices of ‘public’
• Rebuilding public good in higher education, in a contested space
WHAT IS SOCIETY?
¿QUÉ ES LA SOCIEDAD?
“The problem of the relation of the individual to society is a meaningless one. We might as well make a problem out of the relation of the letters of the alphabet to the alphabet. An alphabet is letters, and ‘society’ is individuals in their connections with one another.”

John Dewey (1927), The public and its problems, p. 69
DOMINANT WESTERN NOTIONS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS, STATE, MARKET AND CIVIL SOCIETY
DOMINANT WESTERN NOTIONS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS, STATE, MARKET AND CIVIL SOCIETY
DOMINANT WESTERN NOTIONS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS, STATE, MARKET AND CIVIL SOCIETY
IN THE NORDIC MODEL STATE AND SOCIETY ARE EQUIVALENT. THE STATE GUARANTEES EQUALITY, SOLIDARITY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS.

SOCIETY AND STATE INCLUDES INDIVIDUALS, AND THEIR SOCIAL ASSOCIATIONS.
WESTERN LIBERAL IDEAS OF ‘PUBLIC’ AND ‘PRIVATE’

A. Normative-universal
   ‘public good’:
   public contains private

B. Communicative-inclusive ‘public’:
   public includes and links to all the private units

C. Analytic/economic:
   public private dualism
   (public and private exclude each other)
THE PRIVATE REALMS CONTAINED AND NURTURED IN THE BROAD PUBLIC REALM (AGAIN, THE NORDIC MODEL)

SOCIETY AND STATE (PUBLIC)

INCLUDES (PRIVATE) INDIVIDUALS, MARKET AND CIVIL SOCIETY
ZERO-SUM RELATION BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE (AS IN NEOLIBERAL ECONOMICS)
THE SOCIALLY-INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATIVE PUBLIC
THE UNIVERSITY AS A CRITICAL PUBLIC SPHERE
PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE GOOD (THE ZERO-SUM RELATION)

Political dual:
Public = state/government (as in ‘public sector’)
Private = spheres of home, family, economic market, corporate sector

Economic dual:
Public goods = non-excludable or non-rivalrous goods, can’t be produced profitably in market
Private goods = everything else
Public goods are non-rivalrous and/or non-excludable. They are subject to market failure and must be financed by governments or philanthropy.

Goods are *non-rivalrous* when consumed by any number of people without being depleted, for example knowledge of a mathematical theorem, which sustains its use value everywhere, indefinitely, on the basis of free access.

Goods are *non-excludable* when benefits cannot be confined to individuals, e.g., clean air regulation, national defence, basic research.

Private goods are neither non-rivalrous nor non-excludable, and can be produced and sold in economic markets as individualised commodities.

(Common-pool goods are rivalrous but non-excludable, such as a fishing zone. Club goods are excludable but non-rivalrous until congestion occurs. Merit goods are rivalrous and excludable, but subsidised by government because otherwise the goods will under-consumed, e.g., because the private benefits are diffuse and long term.)
PUBLIC GOOD CAN BE A CONTAINER OF PRIVATE GOOD. THEY DO NOT HAVE TO BE ZERO-SUM

“A tenable conception of the public sphere would countenance not the exclusion, but the inclusion, of interests and issues labelled as ‘private’”.

Nancy Fraser (1990), Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. Social Text, 25/26, pp. 56-80. https://doi.org/10.2307/466240
MILTON FRIEDMAN AND JAMES BUCHANAN
The economic public/private dual is a distinction between non-market and market production. It maximises the scope for capitalist economy while sustaining a limited liberal state with residual functions. In this market-ideal world, markets produce everything except a small group of outcomes which cannot be produced for profit on a market basis.

This is a neo-liberal mechanism for limiting public spending. In education and health, the government chooses whether to provide the service as a universally accessible public good (e.g. primary schooling in many countries) or private good (e.g. higher education in England). Samuelson’s economics allows economic policy makers to define teaching/learning as a private good where the benefits are individualised and the student/graduate pays the cost. The claimed private/public split of outcomes is mapped onto a private/public split of costs.
MARKETISATION CHANGES EDUCATIONAL BEHAVIOURS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Cyndi Lauper

“Money changes everything
Money, money changes everything
We think we know what we're doin’
We don't pull the strings
It's all in the past now
Money changes everything

"They say we'll be your friends
We'll stick with you till the end
Ah! but everybody's only looking
out for themselves
And you say well who can you trust
I tell you it’s, just, nobody else"
Societies, political systems, governments have a policy choice in higher education.
MODELLING HIGHER EDUCATION AS ONLY A PRIVATE GOOD NEGLECTS ITS MANY CONTRIBUTIONS

For an economic account of the multiple contributions of higher education to society see –


https://doi.org/10.1016/j.qref.2018.05.005
THE MORAL PROBLEM: CORRUPTION OF THE MISSION
PUBLIC/PRIVATE SPLIT OF TERTIARY FUNDING, OECD, 2019

Chile was the fourth most privatised system in funding terms.

Source: OECD, *Education at a glance 2022*, p. 266
CONCLUSIONES

• Todas las naciones tienen una opción política sobre el bien público en la educación superior.

• La elección de una nación está determinada por la cultura política, especialmente las relaciones entre la sociedad y el Estado.

• Para ampliar el bien público en la educación superior, centrarse en el público universal y en el público inclusivo y comunicativo, y rechazar el dualismo público/privado.

• Para alejarse decisivamente del neoliberalismo es esencial construir un amplio consenso público en la educación superior.

• Esto requiere un Estado comprometido con la justicia social y la justicia climática-naturaleza. Estas son las cuestiones del bien público en nuestro mundo.
¡Gracias por escuchar!