Workshop Proceedings – Scholarship and Critical Research

Critical Tourism Conference Sarajevo

The aim of this workshop was to explore the role research can play in achieving critical action and positive change and at the same time meet the needs of academia. Universities have traditionally been where social innovations started – can we still play that role today, or do we have to resign ourselves to rule supreme in our ivory towers?

Questions posed in the Workshop:

1. **What impact should critical research have**?

   What is impact? - meaning social impact, academic/scholarly impact, and ????

2. **What are potential solutions or strategies for overcoming or dealing with the devaluation or undervaluation of critical research? (Scholar activism and beyond scholar activism)**

   Responses in terms of :-

   a) the need for certain types of publications and impact of these publications

   b) administrators who evaluate academic performance

   c) promotions and tenure processes

   d) need for recognised research grants

What is academic activism and critical research with social impact?

The following definition of activism helps situate the discussion on critical research and the impact intended from such activities. Academic activism can be defined in various ways. From a more action-oriented approach, Blomley (2008) proposed four ways that academic activism may be undertaken depending on the action of the academic. Firstly, through rhetoric or scholar voice, the academic can be an activist through the production of knowledge that challenges subjectivities within academic publishing and presentations. This can occur through engagement with people in classrooms, at conferences or reading journal articles. Secondly, academic activism occurs through collective work in the academy where this position can be used to facilitate change. Thirdly, academic activism occurs through becoming a scholar with voice in the public sphere who actively proposes, facilitates or empowers change or resistance. Lastly, academics can belong to activist groups which seek

change or work with the state to change policy or legislation. An academic activist can be one or more of these types at any one time and they may change roles over time as well.

First question in the workshop: What impact should critical research have?

The following are the responses from participants that were written on post it notes. Comments below reflect the general conversation about impacts generally not simply about the question posed.

1. Teaching impacts Early childhood
2. Policy impacts from research
3. Awareness raising
4. Pushing boundaries of knowledge
5. Create different social perspectives
6. Help develop critical autonomy
7. Being an activist is not destructive to wider population
8. Imact on participants of research
9. Normative aspect of research – aim to improve and change
10. Impact is frequently still within a dominant hegemonic frame – challenge to that frame is undervalued.
11. Spreading influence or power of humanity
12. Pressure of refereed publications limits social impact
13. Universities do not always like it if students become an activist and active citizens
14. Impacts are hard to predict and measure. It can take a long time for impacts to be realised.
15. Can we be everything to everyone!!
16. Impact is about how to create open space for more critical and creative actions
17. Multifaceted impact: Academic/theoretical/media/mainstream/community action.
18. Pressure to publish verses the time to nurture students
19. Impact for whom?
20. Long term intangible or short term tangible
21. Policy recommendations are not considered by those in power.
22. Political overtones of change
23. Change discourse in a field
24. Policy change

The second question in the workshop: What are potential solutions or strategies for overcoming or dealing with the devaluation or undervaluation of critical research?

1. Consultancies can be a useful way of increasing relevance of research as well as an alternative funding source to ever increasingly competitive academic research grants. However, there may be strings attached to funding.
2. Linking in with networks of fellow academics help value critical research

3. Linking class room with research is important in valueing critical research – sometimes difficult with changing curriculum and also managerial flavour of programs in business schools

4. Timing impact:- 1) there may be times when more critical research is warranted more than others. 2) High levels of energy are often needed to undertake this type of research – not possible to maintain all the time. 3) need to have standing in field of research to have impact. When does an academic want to have impact and how is that standing used in what context – press; community meetings; online worlds; policy domains etc

5. Need to obtain multiple outcomes from efforts – publications, reports, press releases, wider communication from blogs, etc. Think of obtaining research, teaching and service outcomes from one activity.

6. Use open source publications – most cited papers are the ones that are accessible NOT the academic articles. This has implications for impact factors if citations are important in those calculations and the type of open journal has standing. POINT BEING if the journal is listed in Google Scholar then it has greater chance of counting in academic performance reviews and also has wider social impact because it is accessible information.

7. Very difficult to change institutions – 1) play a parallel game of ticking boxes and doing critical research with social impact. 2) Academics in positions of authority can play a role in change – change the way the impact is measured.

8. Play a different game altogether – non academic and participatory publications are valued (outside the academy)

9. Be strategic about linking with other faculty and disciples (eg health field)

10. Class room integration – research with teaching leads to personal valuation and increases quality of teaching.

11. Choosing critical scholarship is dependent on academic freedom – leads to publishing more interesting stuff

12. Role modelling to students is a way of valuing critical research in itself

13. Intellectual and academic community can be the mediating community between other communities

14. Need to have an academic standing to enable (greater) social impact

15. The act of doing this type of research changes and reshapes realities (lives) and gives people tools for doing it.

16. Need to find reality checks – find communities outside ivory tower to ground socially relevant work.

17. Find greener pastures. Leave institutions that do not value critical research or research with social impact.