Journalism, Representation and the Public Sphere

JOURNALISM, REPRESENTATION AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

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Recognizing difference in academia[1].
The sqridge as a metaphor for agonistic interchange

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Abstract

In this chapter I will be reflecting on conflicts in academia, an issue which has, all too often, been swept under the carpet of academic corporatism. I will begin these reflections by considering the different types of conflict that exist within academia. These include political and paradigmatic conflict, struggles between critical and administrative research, as well as linguistic, cultural, organisational, personal, resource-driven and competition-driven conflicts. In the next part of the chapter, I will discuss two trajectories for overcoming these antagonistic conflicts. One of these strategies, based on the fantasy of homogeneity, is considered to have insufficient strength to overcome antagonistic academic conflict, indeed it will often tend to enhance it. The second strategy, an agonistic approach to academia, is more promising in that it acknowledges that there are different pathways for theorising and researching social phenomena, especially through the use of emphatic and self-reflexive openness to facilitate dialogues between conflicting positions. In the conclusion, two metaphors - the 'bridge' and the 'square' - are integrated into the amphibious term: the sqridge, referring to a discursive tool that signifies agonistic academic spaces.

Keywords: Conflict; antagonism; academia; homogeneity; agonism; dialogue; bridge; square; sqridge

1.   Introduction – Divisions in academia

Academia has a long history of division. As one of the social fields, embedded in national contexts and their political realities, academia has not been untouched by these divisions. Let me start by briefly alluding to one older divide, one that is deeply (geo-) political. During the Cold War, when - to use Winston Churchill's ideological phrase – an iron curtain had descended across the (European) continent, most academics found themselves disconnected from their colleagues on the 'other' side of this curtain. The circulation of knowledge was obstructed by a combination of material and discursive elements, such as the lack of mobility and ideologically-inspired distrust. Of course, some academics were able to overcome these limitations, as Richmond's (2003) book, with its rather telling title Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain, shows. High-profile collaborations, such as the Nobel prize winning collaboration between the economists Koopmans and Kantorovich (see Bockman and Bernstein, 2008), and academic peace activism, such as the Pugwash movement (which also won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995) (Evangelista, 1999) certainly existed, but at the same time the obstructions caused by the East-West divide played a significant role in limiting academic exchange and knowledge-sharing. To give but one example: One cannot but wonder whether the role of the Tartu–Moscow Semiotic School (see Waldstein, 2008) could not have been more influential, and the work of academics like Yuri Lotman could not have found a wider readership, if they had not found themselves on the 'other' side of the divide to French structuralism.

This political divide illustrates the obvious point that academia cannot escape the dynamics of antagonism, but also that academia is one of the locations where attempts are made to overcome such divides. Secondly, this short narration about a political divide also illustrates that (academic) divides are not only material, but also discursive, where both sides (can) become entrenched in opposed ideological positions, fed by distrust and the suspicion of ulterior motives. As narrations about the cold war divide contain many elements that characterise antagonism in academia, they form the starting point for some reflections on the different antagonisms found there. This, in turn, raises the question of how to overcome these academic antagonisms. After a discussion of different antagonisms, grounded in the European (academic) experiences of the author, the chapter then turns its attention to two trajectories that have the potential to overcome these divides: the fantasy of homogeneity, and the recognition that conflict can be transformed from antagonism to agonism, thus redefining enemies into opponents whose positions are considered different but still legitimate. The second trajectory is grounded in Mouffe's (2005, 2013) work on agonism, which will be applied to academic conflict and combined

with a series of examples. In the conclusion, the second trajectory will also be enriched by a discussion on metaphors that try to capture dialogue and collaboration within a framework of diversity and conflict.

2.   Antagonistic conflict in academia

Beneath a layer of academic civility, fierce struggles often take place, the objective of which can be described by making use of Tuchman's (1972) concept of symbolic annihilation, and its three structuring aspects (omission, trivialisation and condemnation). The ruptures (or frontlines, to use a military metaphor) in academia often take the form of antagonistic divides, whereby particular academic ontologies, epistemologies, axiologies, methodologies, and other (academic) practices are defined as alien to academia, and become constructed as its constitutive outside.[2] These antagonisms also impact on academic identities, where propagators of particular knowledge are positioned using the friend/foe distinction. Inspired by Mouffe (2005), we can return to the work of Schmitt (1996: 27) in this connection, and to his definition of the enemy as whoever is "in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible." Sometimes, these antagonisms are organised on a spatial basis, pitching different regions against each other, or are time-based, when ideas of different eras (and generations) conflict, but in many other cases these antagonisms characterise (and disrupt) particular academic communities within the same space and time zones.

   Obviously, these antagonistic divides only very rarely result in violence,[3] but this does not mean that their intensity is limited. Despite common beliefs,[4] there is much at stake, as antagonistic positions all have very strong claims on the understanding of social reality, and the resulting power struggles are located at every possible level of academia. These micro-physics of power are played out in publications (and the reviewing processes that allow texts to be published or not), at conferences, in appointment and promotion committees, and in departmental meetings, with the objective of eschewing particular approaches, and of trivialising and condemning particular knowledge. At the same time, the intensity of these struggles is cloaked by academic politeness, professional group solidarity and collective interest, a lack of academic self-reflexivity, and a lack of dialogue between the sociology (and philosophy) of knowledge and other academic fields and disciplines. Although academic analyses of academic struggle and antagonism exist, such as Scandalous Knowledge by Hernnstein Smith (2006), the dark sides of these conflicts are often exposed in more literary works, such as, Hermans' (1975) critique of a Dutch university in Onder Professoren [Amongst Professors].

One area where academic antagonism has manifested itself is in the so-called paradigm wars. Paradigms are significant, because, as academic ideologies, they structure academic knowledge production. In Ritzer's (1980: 7) words, "a paradigm is a fundamental image of the subject matter within a science." As such, it combines three basic dimensions (ontology, epistemology and axiology[5]). Focussing on sociology as a "multiple paradigm science", Ritzer (1980: 158) explicitly points to the existence of struggles between fields and disciplines, where "each of [the] paradigms is competing for hegemony within the discipline as a whole as well as within virtually every sub-area within sociology." Before Ritzer, Kuhn (1962), using a more mono-paradigmatic approach and in a rather depersonalised way, described the struggle between paradigms and the scientific revolutions that lead to the replacement of one paradigm by another (which can be translated as their symbolic annihilation).

One of the most fiercely contested areas where the paradigmatic battles have been fought is the struggle between constructivism and realism. Smith (2006), for instance, refers to Mohanty's (1992) work on literary theory, which (in Smith's reading) uses the "common dismissal of relativism as transparently absurd" in arguing that "contemporary literary/cultural theory is beset by a debilitating scepticism about the possibility of rational argument and objective knowledge that would be relieved by better acquaintance with the accounts of knowledge and language developed some years back […]." (Smith, 2006: 34) Another example is the Sokal hoax, in which a physics professor at New York University managed to get a fake article published in Social Text (which at the time was not peer reviewed). Later, in the book Intellectual Impostures, co-authored with Bricmont, Sokal (1998) thoroughly critiqued the use of science jargon in postmodern theory; a critique which was problematically conflated with a much less well-argued critique of the ontology of postmodern theory itself.

A second area of paradigmatic struggle is between critical and administrative research (see e.g. Melody and Mansell, 1983; Smythe and Van Dinh, 1983; Nordenstreng, 2009). Here, the confrontation is mostly located at the axiological level, between academic positions and identities that defend a "confrontation with unnecessary and illegitimate constraints on human equality, community and freedom" (Carpentier and Dahlgren, 2013: 304) and the belief in an academia that can (and has to) be value-free. Related to this we can find (mainly, but not exclusively, with critical researchers) a concern about the instrumentalisation of research, and "the need to sometimes privilege non-functionality (not unlike in the Arts), or to maintain control over which types of relevance are privileged." (Carpentier, 2010: 131 – my translation) This is related to another realm of fierce academic debate, namely the struggle between academia and policy-makers.

Another significant area of antagonism is related to the development of English as an academic lingua franca, which is one of the most visible effects of the westernisation of academia. The introduction of a lingua franca has benefitted communication and exchange within academia, particularly in Europe. To use McQuail's (2008) words: "The wide use of English as a lingua franca has, somewhat paradoxically, been itself a vehicle for convergence and for the emergence of something like a European identity for the field." Yet there are a considerable number of negative consequences linked to the domination of a lingua franca, and this has provoked resistance from academic communities in other parts of the world, often located in the global South, but also in European countries such as France. We should not forget that language is for many people more than just a communicational tool. This is an argument well-expressed by De Cillia (2002: 8) when he says that "languages are far more than just media of communication […] the mother tongue is the central symbol of individual and collective identity, a symbol which represents belonging to a certain ethnic group, to a certain language community." It is also argued - and I tend to subscribe to this argument - that the domination of one language might reduce conceptual diversity and impoverish our academic language(s) and writing styles. Livingstone's (2005 – see also Meinhof, 2005) mapping of the signifiers 'audience' and 'public', shows how different words in different languages allow different aspects of the meanings of these crucial signifiers to be emphasised. In other words, social-communicative processes are not easily captured by one specific concept, and linguistic diversity does play a significant role.

As academics are (in most cases) embedded within universities, with their particular structures of departments, faculties and schools, these organisational structures become the prime locations for these antagonisms, as academics enter into competition with their colleagues over allocation of scarce material and symbolic resources. These struggles are intermingled with and strengthened by interpersonal conflicts triggered, for instance, by clashing personalities. One illustration of these departmental wars comes from a blog posting by Tallmadge (2010), describing the conflicts that one colleague found himself embroiled in:

> As we traded stories, it became clear that he had actually fought in many battles, from which he still bore scars. He had nurtured junior colleagues only to see them denied tenure; his scholarship had been publicly attacked by ideologues; he had arm-wrestled with deans for the resources needed to sustain a nascent environmental studies program that is now regarded as one of the best in the nation; he had been tempted by offers of high-ranking administrative positions that would have given him power at the expense of family, community, and teaching.

Weber, in Science as a Vocation (2004[1918]), formulated a more disturbing perspective on academia, when discussing what to say to young scholars who came to seek advice about their habilitation[6]. Provided they were not Jewish, according to Weber[7] they must be asked this question: "Do you believe that you can bear to see one mediocrity after another being promoted over your head year after year, without becoming embittered and warped?' Needless to say, you always receive the same answer: of course, I live only for my 'vocation' – but I, at least, have found only a handful of people who have survived this process without injury to their personality." (Weber, 2004[1918]: 7)

An even stronger formulation of a critique relating to the narrow-mindedness and shallowness of academics in dealing with colleagues (and thus the internal antagonisms) can be found in the above-mentioned Dutch book Onder Professoren [Amongst Professors], published by Hermans (1975). The author of this fictional account was a geographer at the Dutch State University of Groningen from 1952 until 1973. After resigning from his position, Hermans wrote a vitriolic critique of academic life, centred on the main character of chemistry professor Rufus Dingelam, who in this story wins the Nobel Prize for a discovery made 20 years earlier. This award-winning substance (Alicodrin) is a whitener that can be used for washing, but derivatives are also used as a medicine to combat epilepsy and to increase potency. After the announcement is made, Dingelam is subjected to his colleagues' jealousy and hostility, self-interest and hypocrisy. Together with a student occupation of his laboratory, this eventually forces him to flee to Monaco.

The internal struggles and competition for scarce material or discursive resources are further enhanced by existing cultures of competition within academia and by the increasing role of market-driven forces. An academic competitive culture is based on vertical hierarchies that are grounded in quality criteria. Refined categorisation systems (often created by academics themselves) are used to produce these hierarchies, which are fed by the idea that is it possible to rank its objects, align them according to a particular scale and determine the existence of a very best. Examples can be found in the awarding of prizes (the Nobel Prize is one such example), but also in the ranking of universities[8], the categorisation of academic journals or of candidates for academic positions. An academic competitive culture is structurally different to a culture of excellence, which is not grounded in a ranking system, but in a threshold system that defines criteria for excellence but does not feel the need to discriminate within the category of the excellent, and that is equally interested in developing support strategies to achieve excellence for those who have not achieved this status (yet). For instance, in relation to journal reviewing, a culture of excellence stimulates journal editors and reviewers to work with

authors to improve their texts, while (the worst excesses of) an academic competitive culture, or what Gill (2009: 239) calls "the peculiarly toxic conditions of neoliberal academia" results in reviews such as the following:

> This paper will be of no interest to readers of x (journal name). Discourse analysis is little more than journalism and I fail to see what contribution it can make to [an] understanding [of] the political process. It is self evident to everyone except this author that politics is about much more than 'discourse'. What's more, in choosing to look at the speeches of Margaret Thatcher, the author shows his or her complete parochialism. If you are going to do this kind of so-called 'analysis' at least look at the discourse of George Bush. (anonymous reviewer quoted in Gill, 2009: 238)

Secondly, also the increasing role of market-driven logics enhances antagonism. One area in which these market-driven logics have had a severe impact, is academic publishing. The dominance of commercial publishers has had a problematic impact on the accessibility of academic writing[9], has removed the (textual) ownership from academics, and has excessively used free (academic) labour. In a recent interview, Dozens (2014), professor of Genetic Medicine at the University of Cambridge and yet another Nobel Prize winner (in Physiology/Medicine in 2002), vehemently criticises these exploitative publishing models, and the antagonism embedded in them:

> [...] the journals insist they will not publish your paper unless you sign that copyright over. It is never stated in the invitation, but that's what you sell in order to publish. And everybody works for these journals for nothing. There's no compensation. There's nothing. They get everything free. They just have to employ a lot of failed scientists, editors who are just like the people at Homeland Security, little power grabbers in their own sphere.
> If you send a PDF of your own paper to a friend, then you are committing an infringement. Of course they can't police it, and many of my colleagues just slap all their papers online. I think you're only allowed to make a few copies for your own purposes. It seems to me to be absolutely criminal.

In some cases, the market-driven approach of academic publishers has provoked stronger resistance, as in the case in 2006 when the entire editorial board of the mathematics journal Topology resigned, to protest against Elsevier's pricing policies. In their letter of resignation[10], they argue that this pricing policy "has had a significant and damaging effect on Topology's reputation in the mathematical research community." At the end of 2013, Schekman (2013) – yes, yet again a Nobel Prize winner – announced his boycott of what he called "luxury journals": "chiefly Nature, Cell and Science."

But also university themselves have not been spared the effects of market-driven logics. Stabile (2007: 3) argues that, from the earliest days of the university, there have been those who have advocated "a competitive market approach to academia by stressing monetary gain as an incentive." Interestingly enough, Stabile links the non-market driven approach to virtue, and

the market driven approach to sophism. More recently, universities and their employees have been exposed to what Gill (2009: 230) calls the "increasing corporatisation and privatisation of the University", which produce new and more intense antagonisms:

> These include the importing of corporate models of management into University life; the reformulation of the very nature of education in instrumental terms connected to business and the economy; the transformation of students into 'consumers'; and the degradation of pay and working conditions for academics, as well as the increasing casualisation of employment, yet with little organized resistance from trade unions or other bodies. (Gill, 2009: 230-231)

For instance, at the level of university governance and project management, market-driven management uses discourses of modernisation, responsibilisation, rationalisation, cost-reduction and efficiency. The struggle is still ongoing and some universities have maintained their decentralised decision-making structures that aim at guaranteeing internal (organisational) democracy and autonomy, for instance through the rotation of positions of power. Moreover, in these more traditional models, universities are governed by academics who take on administrative-managerial tasks, and not by managers who remain detached from academic activity as such. The increased entry of market-driven managers into the university's decision-making structures is leading to a different managerial culture that both fundamentally alters the power balance within the universities, and produces antagonistic relations within the university, often to the detriment of academics.

3. Trajectories for overcoming antagonistic conflict

The antagonisms described above are widespread, but not omnipresent. Academia is also characterised by many forms of co-existence, recognition of diversity and various types of collaboration. But at the same time, conflict remains very much part of academia itself. Following the discourse-theoretical position (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), which is very much influenced by a sociology of conflict, conflict is seen as an ontological condition which structures the social, and which thus also impacts on academia. But at the same time, antagonistic conflict is only one way of articulating conflict - based on a dichotomised friend/foe structure. There are also other ways of overcoming the antagonistic articulation of conflict without ignoring the existence of conflict itself. The re-articulation of antagonism into agonism is one such trajectory that will be discussed here (in part 3.2), but before doing so, we need to discuss one other trajectory that deals with antagonistic conflict, and that is its denial by reverting to the fantasy of homogeneity.

3.1 Trajectory 1: The fantasy of homogeneity

The fantasy of the universality and homogeneity of academic spaces is based on what Stavrakakis (1999: 96) calls "an ethics of harmony", a desire for reality to be coherent and harmonious. This fantasy defines the social as a whole whose components are all equal and similar. As a fantasy, it is of course not restricted to academia, and we can find many of its variations in other spheres of the social. For instance, in the nationalist variation of this fantasy, there is a national community that is an inseparable whole; while in the populist variation, the people are seen as the whole. In the academic variation, the fantasy of homogeneity consists in the desire for a consensus at the paradigmatic level (and its sublevels of ontology, epistemology and axiology), for complete understanding despite linguistic differences, for the transcendence of political and cultural conflict, for frictionless collegialities and interdisciplinary dialogues, for the perfect collaboration with other segments of the social, and for the final and ultimate resolution of difference.

One illustration of this fantasy can be found in the fragmentation/cohesion debate in the field of communication and media studies, as described in Craig's (2008) summary of the successive special issues of the Journal of Communication on The Future of the Field: Between Fragmentation and Cohesion from 1993. There Craig writes:

> Some saw the continuing fragmentation of the field as a problem; others celebrated fragmentation as an invaluable source of adaptive strength. Some called urgently for efforts to define the intellectual focus of the discipline; others just as urgently insisted that any such effort to define a theoretical core would be not only useless but counter-productive.

Particularly on the cohesion side of the debate, there is a strong belief that such a cohesion-generating consensus can (and has to) be achieved, effectively defining the core of the discipline, and using the problematising label of 'fragmentation' to describe academic (paradigmatic) diversity.

It is important to stress that the notion of fantasy is used here in a non-orthodox Lacanian sense. Common-sense meanings of this concept tend to be almost exclusively negative, but in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, fantasy is conceptualised as having (among others) a protective role (Lacan, 1979: 41), and remains connected to drive and desire, thus also displaying fantasy's generative capacities. With respect to academia, this implies that the fantasy of homogeneity is a driving force for academic collaboration and exchange, grounded as it is in the belief that mutual (and full) understanding can be achieved, and that all conflicts can eventually be resolved.

At the same time, the academic fantasy of homogeneity becomes frustrated by a number of contingencies and dislocations which make diversity reappear. Not unlike Lefort's (1988) reflection on the empty place of power

in contemporary democracies, we can say that the heart of academia, and its disciplines, is empty, although filled by a continuous stream of practices at the level of research, pedagogy, representation and (public) intervention. Different paradigms, pedagogical ideologies, individuals and organisations struggle for control of the empty heart of academia, in order to position themselves on one of the thrones of knowledge, only to find themselves dethroned soon afterwards or to discover that the phantasm is disrupted by the presence of other academic discourses or institutions with similar claims.

There is also a dark side to the academic fantasy of homogeneity, as it can feed hegemonising strategies that make antagonism reappear by excluding what (or who) is defined as outside. After all, if the Other is seen to threaten a community's enjoyment, we can then turn against "the Other who stole it from us." (Žižek, 1998: 209) Of course, as Mouffe (2005: 15; emphasis in original) remarks, not every we/they turns into an antagonistic friend/enemy relationship, but we should "acknowledge that, in certain conditions, there is always the possibility that this we/they can *become* antagonistic, that is, can turn into a relation of friend/enemy." To use nationalism as an example: Žižek (1993: 201) points to the enjoyment this sense of belonging generates. He writes:

> The element which holds together a particular community cannot be reduced to the point of symbolic identification: the bond linking together its members always implies a shared relation toward a Thing, toward Enjoyment incarnated.

A similar process of othering can occur in academia, when a particular paradigm, approach, group, … has achieved a hegemonic (power) position that can enable them, in a very post-political way, to declare the fantasy of homogeneity realised, at the expense of a series of others.

3.2 Trajectory 2: Agonism and academia

The problem with the first trajectory lies in the post-political ignorance of conflict and diversity, which contradicts the need to structurally acknowledge the existence of conflict at the ontological level. This means that we should avoid articulating the notion of conflict as intrinsically problematic, or as avoidable, but attempt to find ways of reconciling conflict and diversity with the (democratic) principles of academia. Consequently, the issue is not to suppress conflict, but to encapsulate it in a democratic-academic order.

To provide a theoretical basis for this second trajectory, we can make use of Mouffe's (2005) reinterpretation of the work of Schmitt (1996) (and his friend/foe distinction) in order to theorise the need to shift from an antagonistic enemy model to an agonistic adversary model. Agonism is seen to transform the antagonistic relationship into a "we/they relation where the conflicting par-

ties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents." (Mouffe, 2005: 20) In other words, an agonistic relationship does not hide the differences in position and interest between the involved parties; they are "in conflict" but "share a common symbolic space within which the conflict takes places." (Mouffe, 2005: 20, see also Mouffe, 2013: 7).

In the context of academia this position first of all implies the acknowledgement of conflict within academia, and of the conflicts between academia and other fields of the social (e.g., commercial publishing, academic policies, …). From this perspective, conflict, and the diversity that lies behind it, is unavoidable and should not be ignored (as the fantasy of homogeneity does), or erased and (symbolically) annihilated (as antagonism does). The agonistic position leads to a multi-perspectivist, contextualised and dialogical approach to academia that stimulates communication between different academic positions, but also accepts that they are sometimes irreconcilable, and that enforced reconciliations lead to a weakening of academia rather than a strengthening of it.

Agonistic approaches to academia recognise that there are different pathways with which to theorise and research social phenomena, and that the combining of approaches (whether the elements are articulated or not) enriches a particular field of study. These approaches also take into account the contexts of the different academic positions, in order to understand and appreciate their different histories, geographies, politics, sociologies and philosophies. Equally important is an emphatic and self-reflexive openness that facilitates a dialogue between these different conflicting positions, and avoids ultimate truth-claims and zero-sum game debates. These encounters have the potential to generate academic alliances and to produce new, dialogically-established, knowledge without artificially enforcing consensus, and are supported by acknowledgment of the importance of structural irreconcilability within academia.

Crucial to the establishment of these agonistic academic spaces is the removal of a series of thresholds that hinder these dialogues. Of course, we should also acknowledge that many academics are already (implicitly or explicitly) committed to the creation of agonistic communicative academic spaces, either at the level of every day academic practices, or in specific projects. But, at the same time, we should not remain blind to the existence of these thresholds. One significant threshold is language, an issue that has, for instance, been discussed extensively within IAMCR,[11] as this academic organisation has three official languages (English, Spanish and French), though here again English has become the dominant working (conference) language. There is a need for more linguistic creativity to deal with language diversity by using translations,[12] but also moving beyond translations by using multi-linguistic strategies. A second and even more structural threshold is created by sources of antagonistic conflict. Particularly important here is the need to decrease the

impact of academic competitive cultures and of market-driven logics within academia as they tend to lead to the incorporation of antagonistic conflicts, and to work against the creation of agonistic communicative academic spaces. But also violations of the human and labour rights of academics[13] by university management personnel or by government actors are significant problems that require more attention. As I, together with Dahlgren, have argued elsewhere (Carpentier and Dahlgren, 2013: 304), this implies the need to recognise academia as a semi-autonomous field, and to engage "in joint knowledge production and dialogue, e.g. in civil society, to engender participatory knowledge construction." At the same time one will need to resist attempts at incorporation and to protect academia's independence.

4.   Conclusion

In my conclusion, I want to briefly reflect on two metaphors, and their capacity to signify agonistic academic spaces. The first metaphor is the bridge, which can be seen as a metaphor for respectful academic exchange. In its implicit reference to an absent space – the space that needs to be spanned by the bridge - it brings in the notions of distance, difference and conflict, and the intense effort and investment it takes to build a connective device. The fragility and locatedness of the bridges also signifies the complexity of these dialogical endeavours. Also, the bridge metaphor shows that the construction of academic connectors is possible, even when it is difficult. Yet, at the same time, there are problems with the bridge metaphor, as its connecting-two-shores structure grounds itself in a logics of dichotomisation. It also sets up the idea that once the bridge has been constructed, it is easy to cross (Hall and Minnix, 2012: 67), and that a particular artefact (a bridge, and thus a theory, a method …) can play this connecting role (Repko, 2012: 27).

      The second metaphor is that of the square, which serves as metaphor for the opportunities of interchange, (re)presentation and debate (see, for instance, Iveson's (2007: 3) definition of public space). Squares are accessible meeting places, which can be approached and entered from different sides. They are often the nerve centres of cities, where main buildings (town halls, churches, commercial headquarters …) are located. They are also places of celebration, protest and surveillance (Yesil, 2006). As a metaphor for academic encounters, the square signifies the existence and accessibility of multiple common spaces, but also the possibility to easily leave these spaces (and return to the home). But again, this metaphor has its problems, as it downplays the efforts that the engagement in agonistic practices require and moreover tends to (over)emphasise either the unity and homogeneity of the visitors, or the antagonism of the occupants (with respect to whoever/whatever they are protesting against).

But the combination of these two metaphors, into what I propose to call the sqridge[14], serves my purpose of signifying the agonistic academic spaces quite well. The sqridge metaphor incorporates the notion of diversity and conflict, which should not be erased but recognised, acknowledging that there are different positions (or river banks) in academia, which are structurally irreconcilable, but which can be connected. At the same time we should move away from a polarised way of thinking, bearing in mind, for instance, Haraway's (1985: 96) critique on binary oppositions. This is nicely captured in the following sentence from the Cyborg Manifesto: "One is too few, but two are too many." Here, we need the symbolic strength of the square and its reference to the easily accessible meeting grounds that will allow for more communication, collaboration and contestation, without the impediment of barricades but with agonistic respect for diversity.

In short: Academia needs more sqridges.

Notes

1 This is a shortened version of the following article: Carpentier, Nico (2014) 'On Walls, Squares, Bridges and Sqridges A framework to think about North-South dialogues in communication and media studies', Journal of Latin American Communication Research, 4(1), http://www.alaic.net/journal/index.php/jlacr/article/view/88
I want to express my express my gratitude to Journal of Latin American Communication Research for their kind permission to publish a shortened version in this book.

2 As Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argued, we should not forget that antagonisms have both negative and positive aspects, as they attempt to destabilise the 'other' identity but at the same time desperately need that "other" as a constitutive outside, stabilising their own identity.

3 As always, there are notable exceptions, such as the Unabomber (Chase, 2003).

4 This implies my disagreement with Sayre's law, with states: "In any dispute the intensity of feeling is inversely proportional to the value of the issues at stake issue—that is why academic politics are so bitter." (quoted in Issawi, 1973: 178)

5 Sometimes methodology is also mentioned as a component of paradigms.

6 The habilitation is a qualification for (full) professorship, which is obtained after the PhD. This system is, for instance, used in a number of countries, including Germany.

7 Disturbingly, for Jewish students the advice is different: "lasciate ogni speranza" (Weber, 2004[1918]: 7), which translates as: "Abandon all hope."

8 For an analysis of the universities' "competition to become prestigious" (Breault and Callejo Parez, 2013: 2), see Breault's and Callejo Parez's (2013) book The Red Light in the Ivory Tower.

9 Commercial publishers have resorted to using a semi-open access model, in which authors (or their funders) now pay very considerable amounts of money to provide readers with unrestricted access to their work.

10 math.ucr.edu/home/baez/topology-letter.pdf. See also Shapiro (2006).

11 See, for instance, http://iamcr.org/lang-use-trans, http://iamcr.org/201103-lang-policy, and http://iamcr.org/langdebate.

12 For its book series at Palgrave, established in 2014, IAMCR has committed itself to including one English translation of a non-English publication per year.

13 See http://iamcr.org/resources/latest-news/1209-turkey, for a recent IAMCR statement regarding academic labour rights and free speech in Turkey.
14 Arguably, Jože Plečnik's triple bridge, called the Tromostovje, over the river Ljubljanica in Ljubljana, Slovenia's capital, comes close to the sqridge.

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