

Moving through the city: visual discourses of upward social mobility in higher education advertisements on public transport in Santiago de Chile

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Chile is one of the world's most neoliberal countries with a high level of privatised healthcare and education. The presence of advertising for both public and private universities points to the radically altered relationship between public and private higher education as a consequence of neoliberalism. Some authors describe the increasing similarities between the representations of public and private universities as evidence of their hybrid nature whereas others contend that what comes across as contingent hybridity is the dominance of a neoliberal discourse that has invaded public universities. This article looks at how public and private universities' visual and textual representations of themselves evolve in a context of mobile, neoliberalised public spaces. The research is based on a mobile visual ethnography of higher education advertisements on public transport in Santiago de Chile in 2010. The visual and textual dimensions of the advertisements are analysed by means of critical discourse analysis. The universities' particular sales messages with regard to promised upward social mobility and employability through education are reinforced by the intertwining of images, mobile spaces and actors. However, as the discourse analysis shows, the promises of equal upward social mobility are in contrast with the realities of neoliberal higher education and the increasing financial debt faced by students.

HIGHER EDUCATION ADVERTISING IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Between November and April, Santiago de Chile is full of higher education advertisements. On public transport the merchandised discourses of private and public universities about themselves come to the fore. Advertisements can be found on city buildings and motorways, at bus stops and on buses, inside and outside underground stations and on trains. This almost gives the sensation of the university coming to one's doorstep. In 2006, Chilean universities spent more than 60 million dollars on advertising, which places them third after the big shopping chains (US\$240 million) and cell phone

providers (US\$92 million) (Mönckeberg 2007). As Andrés Bernasconi showed in his analysis of universities' online mission statements, private Chilean universities also use their web-pages to reach future customers (Bernasconi 2006). The omnipresence of higher education advertisements in public spaces, newspapers, radio and television reflects the move towards a neoliberal reorganisation of the education system. It points to the altered relationship between public and private universities that has resulted in a segregated education system which puts people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds at a disadvantage and prioritises the already prosperous (Hursh and Henderson 2011). The key changes go back to the authoritarian implementation of educational 'reforms' during the Pinochet dictatorship in the 1980s (Brunner 1997, 2005; Taylor 2002; Torche 2005). The complete restructuring of the university sector involved destroying the traditional system through an unregulated market provision of private higher education with no public subsidies, implementing different types of higher education institutions and certificates and transferring the cost of state financed institutions to students, thus forcing public universities to acquire funding from other sources than the state (Brunner 1997, 226). With only 0.3% of GDP, Chile has the lowest level of state funding for tertiary education compared to all other OECD countries. On average, OECD countries invest 1.1% of GDP in tertiary education (OECD and Banco Mundial 2009).¹ In no other Latin American country have private universities grown as rapidly as in Chile between 1970 and 2006 – from 34% of all registered students in private universities in 1970 to 74% in 2006 (CINDA 2007).² The rise of private universities went hand in hand with student loan systems, beneficial not only to universities but to a network of credit providers (Larraín and Zurita 2008; Taylor 2002). Yet, only recently have these conditions of a segregated and neoliberal education system been challenged by a much broader segment of Chilean society. Since June 2011, Chilean students from both the secondary and tertiary sector have been demonstrating

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FIGURE 1. Advertisement for a postgraduate course in mediation in a private university, Santiago de Chile, January 2010.

in the streets and occupying schools and universities, pointing to the failures and inequalities of the Chilean education and higher education system. The movement has radicalised the public discourse, culminating in a more general critique of the privatisation of public goods (Mayol 2012; Times Higher Education Supplement 2011; The Economist 2011). The privatisation of public goods such as education is by no means confined to Chile and needs to be seen in the context of neoliberal globalisation (Olssen and Peters 2005; Torres and Schugurensky 2002). However, looking at Chile as a laboratory case of the transformation of the sphere of universities through the market is particularly relevant at a time when other countries such as the UK face the destruction of the public education sector and move towards the Chilean model.³

THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DIMENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION ADVERTISING: HYBRIDITY OR NEOLIBERAL OMNIPRESENCE?

Within the context of a highly privatised higher education landscape and scarce state funding for public

universities, advertising gains a significant role to attract future students in order to generate income through tuition fees. Following Norman Fairclough, the presence of higher education advertising in the public arena can be seen as one indicator of higher education having become a market place with education as its commodity, pointing to the radically altered relationship between public and private universities (Fairclough 1993). Over the last 20 years, critical geography and critical urban studies have made major contributions by highlighting how neoliberalism gets inscribed and implemented into space (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Cronin 2010; Harvey 2006). Brenner and Theodore emphasise the strategic role of the city and of urban planning in promoting neoliberalism and thus enhancing segregation (Brenner and Theodore 2002). As Cronin has shown in her research on advertising in public spaces, processes of commercialising public space significantly intensified during the second half of the twentieth century (Cronin 2010).⁴

With regard to universities, several studies in the United Kingdom (UK) (Fairclough 1993; Lowrie and Willmott

2006; Mautner 2005a, 2005b) reveal how marketization processes in higher education have been transforming the public discourse about the university. Based on a critical discourse analysis of press advertisements for academic posts, programme materials for an academic conference, academic curriculum vitae and entries in undergraduate prospectuses, Norman Fairclough (1993) identified promotion and advertisement as taking a major communicative function within British higher education.⁵ Anthony Lowrie and Hugh Willmott (2006) took the development for a degree sponsored by industry as a focus for exploring the involvement of prospective employers in shaping higher education provision. Their research showed that in the process of developing and introducing an industry sponsored curriculum into a British university, a market relevance discourse merged with a traditional (public) discourse. Lowrie and Willmott, as well as Fairclough, argue that public and private universities meet up in what almost seems to gain the dimension of a new public – (public) spaces of advertising and merchandising. As the boundaries between the so-called public and private elements of higher education have become increasingly blurred, Lowrie and Willmott (2006) speak of a new hybrid discursive order that leaves behind the clear-cut dichotomy of public and private universities.

The concept of hybridity was originally used in the eighteenth century to describe interracial conflict as a result of colonialism. At the end of the twentieth century hybridity has become a master-term in cultural studies and postcolonial studies to denote multiple identities and belongings as well as blurring boundaries (Kraidy 2002). Critics argue that hybridity is employed to mean practically anything which then turns it into an ambiguous and ‘conceptually disposable’ term (Kraidy 2002, 322). This would often go at the expense of variables such as inequality, segregation and social class that are then intended to be made invisible. Finally, the conceptual omnipresence of the notion of hybridity in the social sciences and humanities would further indicate the success of neoliberal multiculturalism (Araeen 2000, 15, cited in Nederveen Pieterse 2001, 224).

While it needs to be acknowledged that there is no clear-cut distinction between the public and the private spheres in higher education anymore, neoliberalism has triggered ways of thinking about higher education that purvey that hybridity has become a new state of mind, rather than revealing neoliberalism as the underlying mechanism that pushes forward the supposed state of hybridity. Interestingly, the phenomenon of not making a clear distinction between the public and the private seems to be particularly popular in higher education studies. Hybridity is often mentioned within the context

of the so-called ‘postmodern’ university or in labelling it as heterogeneous and hybrid. Yet, this can obscure the actual reality without giving it the name it deserves: the neoliberal university (Davies, Gottsche, and Bansel 2006) or the entrepreneurial (Mautner 2005a) or enterprise university (Marginson and Considine 2000). Understanding higher education advertising in the public arena as a visual and textual discourse and thus social practice may give us fundamental empirical insights into how universities represent themselves in a marketized public arena, looking beyond the mere rhetoric of hybridity.

VISUAL AND TEXTUAL DISCOURSES: A MOBILE VISUAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF HIGHER EDUCATION ADVERTISEMENT IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN SANTIAGO

With a few exceptions, to date, critical discourse analysis studies are still heavily text based, mostly excluding the visual dimension as a form of discourse (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000; Bailey, Townsend, and Luck 2009). Besides, where visual elements are considered, the discourse analysis of processes of marketization in higher education has exclusively focused on higher education prospectuses and university web-pages (Bernasconi 2006; Mautner 2005b). The analysis of advertising images has also been furthered thanks to marketing and communication studies (Foss 1994; Scott 1994; Mullen and Fisher 2004). According to Scott (1994), advertising images can be understood as a discursive form with visual rhetoric operating at the levels of invention, arrangement and delivery of the argument. However, as these approaches do not connect the meaning of images with a more structural analysis of society they only allow for a limited understanding of visual discourses. A good sociological approach is provided by Caroline Knowles and Paul Sweetman (2004). Visual methods would be particularly well suited to develop C. Wright Mills’ ‘sociological imagination’ as they capture the specificity of social processes (Knowles and Sweetman 2004, 7). It is precisely this sociological imagination that I make use of in order to understand how discourses of public and private universities about themselves are created in marketized public spheres of public transport.

Moreover, I needed a methodological approach that does justice to the mobile nature of spaces, images and spectators in and around public transport. Traditional empirical research methods are often too static to deal with the floating nature of the social, with movement and with relationships of time and space in today’s complex world (Law and Urry 2004). For this research, I adopted Sarah Pink’s mobile visual ethnography

approach. Pink (2008) suggests that with the researcher taking the same routes as her research subjects or objects, people's and objects' mobilities can be experienced and thus reconstructed. This is to say that instead of taking pictures of advertising material at underground stations, bus stops and in underground trains without paying attention to the journeys in between and the intermittent mixture of public and private, a mobile visual ethnography captures the mobile processes and specific reconfigurations between public objects (public transport), spheres of merchandising (advertisement) and the spectator.

The empirical research was carried out between January and April 2010 in Santiago de Chile.⁶ On numerous trips throughout the city by public transport, I visually captured the mobile landscape of higher education advertising. I collected digital photographs of higher education advertisement material in underground stations, on and inside underground trains, at bus stops, on and inside buses, motorways, buildings and in the immediate proximity of university buildings throughout Santiago. I documented the ethnographic work with digital photographs and field notes that were taken during and after each ethnographic session.

Subsequently, all ethnographic material was analysed by means of a critical discourse analysis with regard to the public/private university's discourse about itself, the underlying messages the public/private university wants to convey about its key missions, the significance of the market in its intertwining with the public/private university and the discourse of the advertisement in relation to its spatial and mobile configuration. Visual and textual materials were systematically coded and discursive orders were established in several analytical steps (Fairclough 1993, 2003). For Law and Urry (2004), the mobility paradigm also has implications for new ways of understanding the relationship between theory, observation and engagement. In a similar vein, the intertwining of the public and private sphere as well as their emergence in mobile merchandised public spaces are reflected in the way I write about them, paying attention to the small moments in between and making them visible.

MOVING THROUGH THE CITY: DISCOURSES ABOUT UPWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

In order to capture a wide variety of advertising, the key part of my ethnography focused on the most frequently used underground line (No.1). Inspired by the mobility research paradigm outlined above, I will describe one of my underground trips. As I leave the house and start



FIGURE 2. Advertisement Universidad de Chile, Underground stop Tobalaba, Santiago de Chile, March 2010.

walking towards the Tobalaba underground station, I can spot the first advertisement located below the official underground sign outside the station. It is an advertisement for postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Economics and Business Studies of the Universidad de Chile for the academic year 2010. In capital letters it says 'CHILE, VAS A CRECER' ('Chile, you will grow'). Below that we can see a business man climbing up a ladder while assisting another identical-looking man to do the same.

To be precise, their climbing up the ladder could be interpreted in two different ways: first of all as a reference to the expected benefits of doing a postgraduate degree in the economics faculty at one of the most prestigious Chilean public universities and second as a reference to the process of education and studying at the university in a team and its advantages for future leadership activities. In both cases, the ladder and the climbing men can be read as visual metaphors for upward social mobility by means of education. Yet, in analysing a piece of advertising one should pay equal attention to what can and cannot be seen. The illustration of the slogan 'Chile, vas a crecer' does not include women, indicating that these degrees are meant to attract male, upper-class postgraduate students. The absence of female actors in the advertisement reflects the still deeply gendered ways

in which business is framed in Chile (Godoy and Mladinic 2009).

Line 1 connects the upper class areas of Santiago – close to the mountains and home to several prestigious private universities – with the old centre of Santiago, the University House of Universidad Católica, Universidad de Chile and the university area (barrio universitario) with many private universities, technical training centres and professional institutes. The fact that this underground line connects both ends of the social spectrum is worth noting, as Santiago's urban structure is characterised by high social segregation (Tironi 2003; Ureta 2008). For Manuel Tironi (2003), Chile's new poverty is less about material needs and more about social exclusion and urban segregation. However, new forms of social exclusion, spatial segregation and privatisation of the public sphere are not confined to Chile but a common feature of Latin American cities in the context of economic restructuring (Ortega-Alcázar 2009). Gulson and Pedroni (2011) further highlight the deep interconnections between neoliberalism, the city and education policies by pointing out how the commodification of education has also altered the significance, practice and imaginaries of city spaces. In the case of this research, the advertising sector makes use of the highly segregated urban geography of Santiago in order to address particular socioeconomic groups who live in the area or are likely to pass through it. In fact, the area around underground stop Tobalaba is home to many upper middle class families and some of Santiago's most prestigious private schools.⁷ The spatial embeddedness of the advertisement thus lends an even deeper meaning to its marketing message.

In contrast to most higher education advertisements that target individuals and their interest in individual success, this particular piece of advertising addresses Chile as a country. However, the 'Chile, vas a crecer' advertisement was only put up in the middle of March 2010, whereas an almost identical one that only portrayed a single businessman climbing up the ladder was widely advertised before this time.⁸ While my ethnographic study merely stretches over a very short period of time, it is important to note that events during that period may have resulted in a slight alteration of the image and its message.⁹ The timing of the publication of the new advertising image that addressed Chile's growth and portrayed two people coincides with the weeks after the traumatic 8.8 magnitude earthquake of 27 February 2010. During this period messages of encouragement with regard to Chile's reconstruction were frequently woven into the general content of any type of advertisement. By capturing the public atmosphere after the earthquake, it could be assured that Chileans would

still pay attention to something that had ceased to be a priority theme. In Thrift's terms, this advertisement can be seen as an example of capitalism increasingly trying to draw in the whole intellect and emotions (Thrift 2006). By communicating two messages in one, the advertisement addresses both the initial promise of upward social mobility by means of education and citizens' preoccupation for their country after a major natural catastrophe.

'THE ONLY WAY IS UP, BABY!'¹⁰ TACIT AND EXPLICIT MODES OF ADVERTISING UPWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY

I make my way down to the underground and wait for the underground train, going westwards to the city centre. Inside the train, all surfaces above windows and doors are entirely covered with higher education advertisements. This time of the year, underground trains and buses turn into education-themed spaces. No matter whether you are sitting or standing, it is almost impossible not to take notice of these advertisements. Most of them convey messages about the potential incentives of taking a university degree. Upward social mobility is presented with various metaphors of altitude, movement and openness. The world would be open to students once they graduate, says one of them ('Entra al mundo de (X) y sal al mundo que quieres'). The literally mobile nature of public transport as the carrier of these advertisements reinforces their messages of promised upward social mobility. With the exception of one university (Universidad de Santiago), most examples of higher education advertisements of both public and private universities referred to individual success.¹¹ Yet, little or no reference is made to intellectual formation at university or to education for its own sake. Where content is provided at all, this happens by listing the different areas in which students can choose to study. The range offered in private universities is rather small, focusing on a few disciplines in the natural sciences and social sciences that are regarded as a guarantee to find employment after university, such as engineering, business studies, marketing or nursing. However, many subjects of the humanities and the social sciences are only offered at public universities. This is to say that the humanities and social sciences are still mostly confined to the middle and upper classes that are much more likely to go to public universities.¹²

Upward social mobility emerges as the overwhelmingly present discourse of universities in both explicit and implicit versions. Private universities with a low level of selectivity emphasise upward social mobility, better



FIGURE 3. Advertisement Universidad Católica, Underground line 1, Santiago de Chile, February 2010.

conditions of life and employability as a result of university education.¹³ Elements of growth are illustrated by means of altitude metaphors such as ladders, skyscrapers and the like. Private universities with a low degree of selectivity further stress the availability of special student loans and credits as an incentive to choose a particular university. While public universities partly make visual references to growth and mobility through education, the employment of explicit growth metaphors is much more common in private universities with low selectivity.

Leadership and economic prosperity as promised results of higher education are equally present. Many advertisements address the issue of employability, guaranteeing that students will get value for money with great job prospects thereafter. With Chilean students paying the highest tuition fees world-wide in relation to the GDP (Meller 2011) customer-like mentalities have been on the rise as students want to see tangible benefits from their studies. This phenomenon is not confined to Chile but is a global trend as students have to pay increasing levels of tuition fee within expanding neoliberal university systems and the decline of public funding (Naidoo and Jamieson 2004). While all types of higher education institutions are visually present in advertising, the majority of advertising is done by professional institutes, technical training centres and private universities with a low degree of student-selectivity. This is due to their dependence on tuition fees as a major source of income.¹⁴ Public universities and most traditional private universities are nowhere near as present on the advertising market. They are in very high demand regardless of their advertising activities since only those students with the highest scores in the entrance examinations are eligible to get a place.¹⁵ Students' socioeconomic backgrounds have become more diverse since the late 1990s, with many



FIGURE 4. Advertisement, Underground stop Los Héroes, Santiago de Chile, February 2010.

students being the first generation of their families to go to university, reflecting an international trend towards more heterogeneous student populations (Archer, Hutchings, and Ross 2003). Between 1980 and 2006 the proportion of 18 to 24 year olds in universities has risen from 7.2% to 34% (OECD and Banco Mundial 2009, 77).¹⁶ While many more students now attend university, access to good universities is mostly confined to those who could afford to go to good private schools and are more likely to achieve high scores in their university entrance exams. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who went to public schools and girls have a much lower probability of getting a place at a good university (OECD and Banco Mundial 2009, 309).¹⁷ Hence, social inequalities in the schooling system are perpetuated at the level of higher education (Donoso and Cancino 2007), questioning the promise of education leading to equal upward social mobility.

I manage to hold on to a handhold in the underground train and face an advertisement of the Universidad Católica, one of Chile's most prestigious universities. It only shows the traditional university logo but there is no mention of high salaries and upward social mobility as anticipated outcomes of a postgraduate degree at this university. Following Chmielewska, a logo:

is as much a visual sign, a visual marker that is unambiguously recognized, as it is an acoustic sign, a sound marker that decidedly recalls its visual self. It is a complex language sign, not a simple entity that refers to something else. It is Janus-faced in its material form (marking both visual and acoustic terrain of its meaning), and it is highly self-referential in its complex deictic function (pointing to its own position, history, and importance as well as various related fields of signification). (Chmielewska 2005, 355)

The author concludes that given the mix of symbolic and iconic functions, a reading of a logo using standard semiotic categories and separating words from images is not possible. Applying this to the case of the traditional university logo, it should be noted that public universities and selective private universities tend to rely on their tradition and status. Upward social mobility is thus implicit in the status and the prestige of these universities and does not need to be spelt out. As attending these universities is still a guarantee for making it to the very top of the social spectrum (Meller 2010), the logos of these universities alone stand for everything that all the new players on the educational market have to make explicit.

The journey continues. I get off at underground station Los Héroes which is located at the heart of the *barrio universitario* (university neighbourhood) in the centre of Santiago. It is home to several private universities, technical training centres as well as professional institutes. As I leave the train, I see a big advertisement that stretches over the whole length of the stairway. Below the headline ‘Ahora todos pueden llegar más alto’ (Everyone can make it higher), we see the image of a male student holding his certificate on graduation day surrounded by his proud parents. The slogan of the advertisement, ‘Ahora todos pueden llegar más alto’ from a group of five private universities with a low degree of selectivity suggests that upward social mobility by means of education is no longer a privilege of the upper classes. Going up the escalator, the promise of upward social mobility almost turns into a physical experience. Anne Cronin (1997, 2010) interprets the phenomenon of advertising that is set in mobile environments as part of a staged performance and argues that the spatially and temporally mobile feel of the advertising image lends the visual a performative aspect. Following Cronin, posters that indicate upward social mobility and are staged in spatial settings such as escalators or buses, create a dialogue between the advertising message and its environment. In this respect, discourses of higher education advertising are reinforced by public spaces and specific urban geography.

However, it is the second part of the advertisement that indicates why everyone can make it up higher (‘ahora todos pueden llegar más alto’). On the right hand side, the advertisement praises the low monthly payment rates for a student loan.¹⁸ As private universities with a low degree of social selectivity depend almost entirely on tuition fees, they have a vested interest in offering special student loans (Larraín and Zurita 2008). Following the OECD, Chile is amongst the six countries with the highest average cost for a degree in higher education. 85% of the expenses of universities are funded by private

households, that is, by students (OECD 2007). Yet, although making profit through universities is forbidden by law, Olivia Mönckeberg (2007) demonstrated how business associations and high-ranking politicians have bought themselves into universities and are thus involved in profit-making universities at the expense of students.¹⁹ Hopes for upward social mobility are particularly high in the university quarter around Los Héroes in the centre of Santiago where a large percentage of students are the first ones in their families to attend university.

I reach the top of the escalator where passengers have to walk through swinging exit doors. They are covered in advertising of a big professional institute. The omnipresent way in which most of these advertisements suggest upward mobility and a better life is reminiscent of the promises about increased mobility and freedom in mobile phone advertisements. Yet, as Sebastian Ureta showed in his study about the use of mobile phones by low income families in subsidised housing areas in Santiago de Chile, many of these families hardly ever experience the ‘unlimited freedom’ of talking as they mostly have prepaid phones and cannot afford to have long conversations. According to Ureta, ‘the individuals studied face limitations and exclusions that profoundly constrict the potential “mobility” afforded by these devices’ (Ureta 2008, 477). In a similar way, the promise of higher education leading to equal upward social mobility is compromised by the current neoliberal system. In a longitudinal study of graduates’ employment careers, Patricio Meller (2010) found that the economic benefits of attending a traditional public university or a private university with high selectivity are much higher than attending private universities with low selectivity.²⁰ However, in the long run graduates from private universities with lower degrees of selectivity would still earn comparatively more than their peers who decided to work after the PSU (university entrance exam). These fragmented promises make David Harvey conclude the following:

Neoliberal thought provides a benevolent mask of wonderful-sounding words like freedom, liberty, choice, and rights, to hide the grim realities of the restoration or reconstitution of naked class power, locally as well as internationally, but most particularly in the main financial centers of global capitalism. (Harvey 2005, 119)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

After numerous trips on the underground and on buses in Santiago, what can be understood of the visual and textual discourses of public and private universities’

advertising in merchandised and mobile spaces of public transport? The analysis supports the conclusion that most university discourses in higher education advertising in public transport reflect the idea of the entrepreneurial university. While private universities dominate the sphere of advertising, public universities are equally present. Their presentations of themselves are, however, less explicit with regard to the anticipated outcome of university education, such as upward social mobility and employability. They rely mostly on their prestige and on perceptions of the quality education that is offered in their institutions. These results are by no means a surprise and confirm findings that public universities have become permeated by managerialism and marketisation (Fairclough 1993; Slaughter and Leslie 1997). The omnipresence of marketing has shaped the public sphere to an extent that one can speak of the transformation of the public towards marketized public spaces. I agree with Lowrie and Willmott (2006) who conclude from their analysis of marketing activities of universities in the UK that the previously clear cut distinction between the public and the private in universities no longer exists in its traditional form. However, while the public has become more marketized, what I could see was not so much hybridity as a two-way process transforming public and private spheres but the colonisation of the public sphere by the private, resulting in a complete transformation of the initial meaning of the term 'public'. In fact, calling this landscape hybrid does not seem to capture the essence of things. There is nothing ambiguous or hybrid about neoliberal higher education advertising landscapes. The clear-cut messages of universities' advertising discourses are also reinforced by the visuals and the places in the city where they can be found. This results in a holistic experience of a mobile neoliberal advertising space that is, amongst other things, also called public transport. Yet, when leaving the underground train it is hard to remember that the university is also about things other than promises of upward social mobility, employability and leadership. As Hursh and Henderson state, '[c]ontesting neoliberalism necessitates that we situate neoliberal policies within the larger neoliberal discourse promoting markets, competition, individualism, and privatization' (Hursh and Henderson 2011, 181). Contesting neoliberalism in education as the mainstream discourse, the work of the Chilean students' movement has further revealed that what is called hybridity in the postmodern university is the concealment of the neoliberal university. It is yet to be shown where else one can encounter visual discourses of the university apart from in advertising.

NOTES

- [1] Denmark (1.8%) and Finland (1.7%) lead the ranking. Within Latin America, Mexico (0.9%) and Brazil (0.8%) show much higher GDP rates for tertiary education than Chile.
- [2] The latest research shows that within Latin America, countries with the biggest proportion of private universities such as Chile, Colombia and Costa Rica show the highest rates of social segregation (Brunner and Ferrada 2011).
- [3] The most recent example of the increasing colonisation of higher education by neoliberalism is British higher education. The UK experiences an unprecedented funding cut of 40% in funding (excluding research funding), down from £7.1 bn to £4.2 bn (Department for Business Innovation and Skills Spending Review Settlement 2010). The Browne Review proposed a massive rise of tuition fees in order to make up for the loss of public funding (Browne Review 2010). By removing the cap from tuition fees, as of 2012 universities are able to charge fees of up to £9000 a year, three times more than before. This results in only those students being able to go to university who can afford to be in debt for more than 30 years. In September 2012, UK universities already faced a decline of more than 30 000 students (see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2012/sep/10/university-admissions-chaos-clearing-numbers-down> [accessed 11 September 2012]).
- [4] However, the interaction between public and private spheres in advertising is by no means a new phenomenon. According to Laura Baker, advertising in public spaces can be seen as a key form of commercialising public space that goes back to the nineteenth century in the United States (Baker 2007).
- [5] Critical discourse analysis aims to understand the often hidden relationships between discursive practices, events and texts and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes, investigating the making and origins of such practices as well as attempting to reveal how they are ideologically shaped by relations of power (Fairclough 1993). Discourses are social practices such as spoken or written language use as well as semiotic practices such as photography that take place within a particular social and historical context (Fairclough 2003).
- [6] Although I collected visual data of universities, technical training centres and professional institutes, this paper is dedicated to an analysis of public and private universities only.
- [7] For further information on how Chileans select schools and how these processes reflect the geographical and social segregation of Chilean society, see Stillerman 2010.
- [8] According to John Grady, advertising images are known to be social indicators for the condition of a society (Grady 2007). To take an example, John Grady analysed

- the changing conceptualisations of race in advertising images published in TIME magazine between 1936 and 2000. In order to make sense of the substantial differences in how race was discursively constructed over time, Grady analysed the images in relation to political and historical developments at the time (Grady 2007).
- [9] It is worth noting that the peak time of higher education advertising is between December and March.
- [10] This heading is a reference to a famous pop-song in the 1980s: see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeyOnNple4M> ('The only way is up, baby!').
- [11] The advertisement of the Universidad de Santiago (USACH), one of the oldest public universities in Chile, presents education as a cultural and collective good that is of national significance. Education is framed as a means of transforming the country. '161 years of transforming people and the country. USACH – part of our culture' ('161 años transformando personas, transformando país. USACH – en la cultura').
- [12] While this has been the reality for Chilean youth for the last three decades, the funding cuts for British higher education in December 2010 will have similar effects. According to British vice-chancellors, this will mean the disappearance of between 75% and 95% of all teaching funding whilst research subsidies to science, technology, engineering and mathematics will be continued. As a consequence, this will result in the almost complete withdrawal of state funding from the social sciences, the humanities and the arts (Times Higher Education Supplement 2010).
- [13] Universities select students according to their scores in the university entry exams (prueba de selección universitaria – PSU). While traditional universities only accept students with very high entrance scores, many private universities do not have rigid requirements and take students with the minimum score in the PSU.
- [14] In 2010, public and private universities as well as professional institutes and technical training centres spent \$19213378.371 (thousands of pesos) on advertising activities in newspapers, posters, radio and television (data according to MegaTime S.A. 2011).
- [15] In Chile the university entrance exam (Prueba de selección universitaria – PSU) is an extensive multiple choice test covering a variety of subjects. It is taken at the end of the last year of secondary school.
- [16] The number of students in higher education has risen from 117 000 in 1980 to 245 000 in 1990 to over 678 000 in 2007.
- [17] Students from the richest 40% of families are over-represented in all types of higher education institutions, occupying 70.2% of all places in all private universities, 53.2% of the places in 'traditional' universities (Universidades del Consejo de Rectores), 51.3% of the places in Professional Institutes and 45.5% of the places in Technical Training Colleges (Centro de Formación Técnica) (OECD and Banco Mundial 2009, 81).
- [18] An association of five private universities in the centre of Santiago introduced this specific social higher education loan, which allows people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to attend university.
- [19] In July 2011 the Chilean Minister of education Jorge Lavín resigned under the pressure of the students' movement. One of the key accusations against him was that he himself had been the holder of massive shares of a private university and once declared that his investment would have been worth the money. See <http://upside-downworld.org/main/chile-archives-34/3303-chile-when-triumphant-neoliberalism-begins-to-crack> [accessed 17th November 2011]. In August 2011, pressured by the students' movement, the Chilean congress voted against profit in higher education. Yet, on a practical level nothing has changed.
- [20] For the first two years after graduation, graduates from private universities with a low degree of selectivity would face more difficulties in finding employment compared to graduates from private and public universities with a high degree of selectivity. More specifically, for graduates from private universities with low selectivity the promise of having a better life through education soon after graduation would only be fulfilled by a few degrees such as nursing (Meller 2010).

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