

UNIVERSITIES AS METAPHORS

Back to the word *University* or /universe-city/. Isn't a university itself a universe of its own? Don't we walk it as if we walk through a city? Didn't Ibn Sina (Avicenna) say that Man is a miniature universe? The reader may easily apprehend the simile. However, if one is to look at universities as universes or cities, then one must look at one primordial aspect that is the essence of what we know as universe and what we call city: *Meaning*.

Both the universe and cities are physical and conceptual constructs that we continuously think, conceive of and (re)shape. The meaning we make of these conceptual and physical realities, knowing that meaning making is a very complex process of understanding and construing whatever we experience, and which relates to our *being* and *becoming*, can be also projected onto a university space, as being and becoming are tightly related to learning- *we learn to become; we make meaning of what we learn and the experience of learning*. Universities being themselves smaller universes with their specific order of things and their unique purpose, also makes one think of movement and motion. If everything in the universe revolves around one thing-be it the sun or a star or anything yet to come, and if everything in a city revolves around a specific place, be it a market, a square, a workplace..., then likewise, everything in a university revolves around....? **KNOWLEDGE**. And it happens that the embodiment of knowledge is nothing but us.

If we see universities as places mirroring the vast universe, we will surely be amazed by the intricate and vast network of connections, interactions and transactions that happen between the people working or/and studying at a university.

Going back to /universe-city/. One is surprised to find the same pattern in the word university in several languages: French, Spanish, German, Russian are some examples.

The metaphors that the word university articulate might be an interesting subject of study. Whether a gathering place or a community or a smaller universe, universities remain special places of which many have indelible memories and where many have reached intellectual and scientific lustre.

