

NICO CLOETE, LEO GOEDEGEBUURE, ÅSE GORNITZKA,
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PATHWAYS THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH –
A FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOUR OF PETER MAASSEN

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CONTENTS

<i>Nico Cloete, Leo Goedegebuure, Åse Gornitzka, Jens Jungblut and Bjørn Stensaker</i> Celebrating a friend – and a maturing research field	9
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HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE AND REFORM

<i>Glen A. Jones,</i> The university, society and government: shifting pacts and policy logics	15
<i>Åse Gornitzka, Ingvild Marheim Larsen,</i> The paradoxical drama of university change: four cases of moving the unmovable	18
<i>Harry de Boer and Frans van Vught,</i> Higher education governance in the Netherlands: from a Janus-head to a Trimurti.	25
<i>Tatiana Fumasoli,</i> Setting the trend: early conceptualizations of university strategy	33
<i>Rómulo Pinheiro,</i> Assessing change in higher education from the perspective of excellence versus relevance	37
<i>Philipp Friedrich,</i> University autonomy and reforms in Western Europe, or, Where 's the fun in Fun-damental changes?	41
<i>Ben Jongbloed,</i> On best practices, governance reform and travelling medicine shows.	46
<i>Bjørn Stensaker, Åse Gornitzka,</i> Studying change in academe – the search for ways forward	51

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

<i>Jürgen Enders,</i> The institutional dynamics of European integration and higher education	57
<i>Martina Vukasovic,</i> Double- (or quadruple-) isolatedness? Or: How we should learn to stop worrying and love researching European integration in higher education	61

Mari Elken,
 (Not so) strong convictions and (still kind of) weak evidence 66

Marek Kwiek,
 National reforms and their European contexts: on institutional and
 instrumental visions of the university applied to the Polish case 71

Jennifer Olson, Sheila Slaughter,
 Nordic higher education internationalization: the new bildung
 or a prestige economy?..... 75

António M. Magalhães, Amélia Veiga,
 European integration in higher education and research: challenging
 comparative studies..... 80

HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Nico Cloete, Teboho Moja,
 International collaboration, exchange and partnership:
 Netherlands, Norway and South Africa. 87

Patrício V. Langa, Gerald Wangenge-Ouma,
 Strong convictions, weak evidence: the challenge of building research
 capability in African higher education 96

Robsan M. Egne,
 Higher education in Africa: opportunities and challenges..... 100

Gordon Musiige,
 Dilemmas of researchers at Makerere university. 105

Martin Hayden and Sharon Parry
 Knowledge production and contradictory functions
 in African higher education 113

EDUCATION IN AND RESEARCH ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Leasa Weimer, Aliandra Barlete,
 Erasmus Mundus: a ‘lever’ for European integration and
 international attractiveness and competitiveness..... 117

Berit Karseth, Monika Nerland,
 Building the academic field of higher education:
 New times – enduring challenges?..... 122

<i>Rachelle Esterhazy, Jens Jungblut,</i> “When i write my master’s thesis” – The formation of higher education researchers and professionals through the Oslo higher education master’s programs	127
<i>Jelena Brankovic, Renze Kolster,</i> A few words on that thing called <i>Bildung</i>	137
<i>Ulrich Teichler,</i> Higher education research: a consolidated field?	143
<i>Norbert Sabic,</i> Analysing Peter Maassen’s contribution to the field of higher education research	146
<i>Peter James Bentley,</i> The triangle of coordination – influence within the academy	153
<i>Leo Goedegebuure and V. Lynn Meek,</i> On Bernini and Maassen: creating innovation and influence in comparative higher education.	160
<i>Christopher C. Morphew,</i> Researching higher education – what can we do better?	163

*Nico Cloete, Leo Goedegebuure, Åse Gornitzka,
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CELEBRATING A FRIEND – AND A MATURING RESEARCH FIELD

Introduction

This book is a festschrift for our dear friend and colleague Peter Maassen – turning 60 in 2016! However, it is also a book about a research field that we are – together with Peter – all engaged in. Higher education as a field and area of study is still a rather young and hardly matured field. Early research-based contributions emerged only in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and more systematic and comparative studies appeared first in the 1980s and 1990s. Peter joined higher education research in this particularly productive period, as one of the first to join Cheps – the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies at the University of Twente in the Netherlands.

As it has been for many of us, we never thought of a career in higher education studies, and neither did Peter. His domain was planning, albeit from a strictly theoretical perspective. And that's why he ended up with Frans van Vught and Joseph van Doorn in Twente, building that particular area in the broader frame of the still very young Faculty of Public Administration at that university. When the University of Twente managed to land a contract for a higher education policy research centre, sponsored by the Dutch government, and the resultant of some pretty decent lobbying by the then Governing Board member Eric Bolle and the young Frans van Vught who was involved with OECD's IMHE program at the time, Peter almost organically moved from planning to higher education although having very little content knowledge to bear upon the subject – as did his other start up colleagues.

But that has never – and never will by the way – kept Peter from making substantive claims about anything. So CHEPS quickly found itself on a roller coaster ride, and having come to the realization that Dutch doesn't get you very far in the academic world, quickly developed an international profile. One of these travels took Peter and Frans van Vught to South Africa in 1995, following the proclamation by Nelson Mandela to establish a National Commission on Higher Education, and as a result of an invitation that his later close collaborator Nico Cloete was heavily involved in. For Cheps these were engaging times. It was wild, it was wicked, and it was immensely exciting. And from these fairly disjunct origins, a great centre and emerging networks were born. With Peter as an integral part of that till the end of the 20th century as is highlighted in various contributions in this volume.

When arriving in Oslo in 1999, Peter started working at the Faculty of education, University of Oslo, first as a visiting scholar, then (more than) full-time Research

Professor and from 2005, holding a full professorship at Department of Education. Here he brought with him and institutionalized his higher education (HEDDA) network. Oslo became the new hub for the Maassenian world wide web of higher education studies. And here he started to develop a master program in higher education studies, a study program that today has established itself as one of the most internationally oriented programs at this level in Europe, attracting students from all over the world. In Oslo he partly blended in nicely with the natives – be it as a board member of the University College Oslo, as appointed member of the Government Commission on the structure of higher education in Norway or as an adjunct researcher at NIFU – and partly sticking out with his ‘dutchness’ (refusing to comply with the norm of conflict avoidance), his EU passport and his political science approach to the study higher education amidst a faculty of education. It was also in Oslo that Peter started to become more and more engaged in higher education in Sub-Sahara Africa, and to develop a long-lasting interest for higher education on the African continent. In South Africa, being inspired (awed) by Cheps, Nico Cloete was central in establishing the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) after the Mandela National Commission. In 2001, it was decided to undertake a review of five years of policy reform in South Africa, and Peter was again on top of the collaboration list. The subsequent book on *Higher Education Transformation: Global pressures and Local realities* laid the basis for another decade of collaboration. The first project was a study of development aid and its unintended consequences, then the Norwegian Masters Programme in Africa was created, a collaboration between the University Western Cape, University of Oslo and CHET, followed by the establishment of the Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa. This latter initiative involved the flagship universities of 8 African countries and more than 50 collaborators from around the world. In 2015 Peter became an extraordinary professor in the next collaboration venture, the Centre of Excellence in Science and Innovation Policy based at the University of Stellenbosch, one of the few attempts in the world to combine higher education and science policy studies. And by the end of 2016, Peter will be part of a new Carnegie funded doctoral/post doctoral programme in higher education studies that will be a University of the Western Cape/University of Oslo/Eduardo Mondlane University collaboration. Three books and at least 50 masters and Phd students later, Peter is one of the best known international higher education experts in Africa.

Still, while being engaged in the master program and in Africa, Peter also continued his interest in higher education governance and policy reform. In 2000, new opportunities in this area developed in Europe following the initiation of the Bologna process across the European continent, and the need for analyzing how the diffusion and pick-up of this reform took place throughout the continent. As such, one could argue that, at least in Europe, the Bologna process also meant a unique possibility for higher education researchers to conduct a range of comparative and multi-level studies of national reform, institutional change and the emerging Europeanization of the whole higher education sector. Together with Johan P. Olsen and ÅseGornitzka, Peter took the initiative to formulate a new research agenda for

analyzing the emerging European integration in higher education, resulting in the 2007 edited volume *University Dynamics and European Integration* that still can be said to guide and inspire Peter's research agenda in this area.

As indicated above, the academic life of Peter is very much entangled with the development of higher education as a research field. Hence, we would argue that this festschrift is not only a celebration and a gift to a friend and colleague, but also an informal and hopefully interesting peak into the historical and continuous development of an academic field. Researchers from social studies of science remind us often of the importance of the social and cultural events and characteristics of different disciplines and research areas, and how they contribute to shape the content and the contributions of the various academic tribes and their territories. These informal sides of the research process tend not to show up in more formal research articles, handbooks and encyclopedias, although they might be extremely important for the shaping of academic fields. One could even argue that in smaller research fields, such as higher education, these social and cultural dimensions can be even more important. To allow for contributions that address these informal sides, the chapters in this book are rather short, opting to combine the academic with the personal, and sometimes adding a twist to our knowledge of both Peter and the field of higher education studies.

The content and the contributions

The contributions of Peter to the field of higher education are numerous. He has published several hundred articles, reports, and book chapters, and has edited and co-edited more than a dozen books. In this book, we have chosen to split his academic contributions into four parts. In the first two parts, we offer a range of contributions that pick up and discuss some of the key insights and ideas Peter has brought to the *study of governance and reform*, and *the Europeanization of higher education*. While one certainly could argue that governance, reform and Europeanization also could be put under the same umbrella, we have still chosen to treat them independently, not least since most governance and reform initiatives still takes place in a domestic setting. However, as higher education governance is increasingly influenced by global ideas, we hope that offering a special section on the importance of Europe as a reform driver, we can demonstrate the need to take into account and understand the links and the complex relations between European ideas, national policy-making and implementation, and higher education dynamics.

In the third part of the book, we turn to the African continent, and present a number of contributions that demonstrate the interest Peter has developed for *higher education in the Sub-Sahara region*. The contribution in this section elaborates on the challenges, but also the prospects of higher education research in this part of the world. Together with his long-time partner in the region, Nico Cloete, a number of projects trying to uncover the key characteristics and the functioning of universities and colleges have been conducted, and it is our pleasure to present contributions that draw upon, elaborate and reflect on some of these projects and their results.

In the final part of the book, we turn to a different side of Peter, and highlight his role and style as a *researcher, but also as an educator, mentor, and supervisor* to the younger generation of students and scholars in the field, especially related to his central role in developing the master program in higher education studies at the University of Oslo. While an educational focus may be unusual in the *festschrift* genre, we think it is very appropriate, not least since we would argue that it is through education and training that the next generation of higher education researchers can emerge, and make their contributions. As such, we are very pleased that this book includes contributions, not only from a number of Peter's peers, but also from a number of the upcoming scholars in the field.

Enjoy!

HIGHER EDUCATION
GOVERNANCE AND REFORM

Glen A. Jones,
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THE UNIVERSITY, SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT: SHIFTING PACTS AND POLICY LOGICS

Introduction

Governance has been a core research issue in the study of higher education, though there is a general recognition that far too much of the research literature on this topic has been descriptive and atheoretical (Austin & Jones 2015). Despite, and perhaps in response to, these broader shortcomings, a small handful of scholars began to make important inroads in the grounded, empirical study of governance, especially in the context of higher education system reforms in Europe, during the last decades of the twentieth century (Maassen & Stensaker 2015), and there is now a solid foundation of theory-informed analysis of system-level and institutional governance.

While Peter Maassen's contributions to the study of higher education governance and reform can be traced back to the innovative and influential contributions that he and his colleagues at the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies made to the study of higher education policy and system reform beginning in the mid-1980s, I believe that his most significant contributions to this area of scholarship have emerged in the last decade and involved attempts to explore the complex, multi-faceted and multi-layered elements of governance and systems reform.

Complex Relationships

While there has been a tendency in the system governance literature to focus on the shifts in power and authority associated with what are frequently assumed to be bilateral relationships between the university and the state, Maassen explores a much more complicated world. This complexity emerges in part because he positions society, and in particular the social pact that underscores the relationship between higher education and the society in which it functions, as a key factor in these shifting relationships (Maassen & Cloete 2006). Massification and the shifting role of higher education, both real and perceived, have modified the historic social contract between universities and society.

Maassen explores some of these relationships by drawing on, and through collaborating with, Johan Olsen. Olsen's four models of university-society relations play an important role in Maassen's work, especially the corporate-pluralist model. This model replaces the notion of the unitary state with monopolistic authority with a society-university relationship involving multiple legitimate centers of authority and a plethora of interests groups and voices. This is a view of governance that recognizes the existence of complex policy networks, and the increasing importance

of the power shifts associated with the stakeholder society (Maassen 2000). In their analysis of these relationships from the position of the university a “as an instrument of national political agendas,” Maassen and Gornitzka (2007; who seem to collaborate a great deal on many things) note the complexities of governance in a context of shifting governing priorities. Universities respond in quite different ways to changes in these external relationships, depending on internal conditions related to the propensity for change and the signals that they receive from government and other stakeholders. If the university is to be an effective state instrument of economic development, there is a need for new partnerships and structures.

A second, complementary dimension of contextual complexity emerging from Maassen’s work is associated with the broadening scope of reform. Rather than focusing only on the agenda for European educational reform, Maassen and Stensaker (2011) discuss the implications of the expanding policy agenda which now includes the three poles of what the Commission has referred to as the knowledge triangle: education, research and innovation. Instead of responding to common, unidirectional external pressures for change, they note that there are distinctive policy logics associated with each of the three poles of the triangle; in other words, external pressures from diverse stakeholders involve complex, multifaceted notions of change that cannot be neatly resolved or addressed. While education, research and innovation are connected to the historic core missions of the university, embedded within at least some of these notions for change is a belief that the university is currently in crisis and that a wholesale reform of the institution is needed if the university is to live up to its potential. These pressures may lead to major structural transformations within the university, and necessitate or leverage major changes in university governance.

I have learned a great deal from Maassen’s work, and I believe that he has made enormous contributions to the literature. While many scholars strive for simplification and generalization, I have always been left with a sense that he thrives on complexity, on helping others recognize the fallacy associated with simplistic binaries, or with attempts to position policy options as lying along some form of unidimensional continuum. He is constantly challenging assumptions or common generalizations, frequently illuminating how a deeper, more complex understanding of the context and problem leads to important revelations, and new research questions.

Challenging Assumptions

A wonderful illustration of this point can be found in Maassen, Moen and Stensaker’s (2011) analysis of higher education reforms in the Netherlands and Norway. As the authors note, it is commonly argued that governance reforms leading to increased institutional autonomy and reduced government regulation are needed in order for universities to play a stronger role in the market and respond to societal needs. The argument presumes the important role of the market in creating more efficient practices, but there is also an assumption that there are advantages associated with the development of the university as a strategic actor, capable of establishing its own direction and destiny through independent,

rationale decision processes. Institutional autonomy is created by abandoning state-led, highly regulated governance arrangements. In contrast, Maassen, Moen and Stensaker, in their nuanced analyses of reforms in two European countries, point to a middle position between institutional autonomy and state-centered governance arrangements. They argue that “institutional autonomy and capacity for change are indeed important, but government policy and institutional goals should be the resultant outcome of integrative and communicative processes between policy-makers and higher education institutions” (p. 492). In other words, their analysis suggests that institutional autonomy may not be the noble good of governance, but rather that a more nuanced understanding of university autonomy and the role of the state are needed. We need to study institutions of higher education as organizational actors within large social systems.

I can point to a dozen academic papers by Peter Maassen that have challenged my thinking and influenced my work, but the common themes underscoring his contributions to the study of higher education governance and reform, in my opinion, relate to his understanding of the changing social pact and complexity of the social environment in which universities are located, the increasing scope and complexity of the roles they are being asked to play, and the complex implications and intersections associated with these changes. He asks us to challenge common assumptions about higher education governance and reforms, and leads us to a much deeper, theoretical understanding of the relationships between the university, the state, and society.

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THE PARADOXICAL DRAMA OF UNIVERSITY CHANGE: FOUR CASES OF MOVING THE UNMOVABLE

Introduction

Change processes and reforms are a common thread upon which we can hang much of Peter Maassen's work in the service of higher education research. In addition to numerous studies of change processes, he has been an agent of and a participant in the transformation of higher education systems and institutions worldwide. In the following we illustrate the challenges and paradoxes of organizational change in Norwegian university life – phenomena with which Peter has firsthand experience. To analyze change processes in such a system, we draw inspiration from one of the most legendary Shakespearian plays.

'Much ado about nothing' is a comedy – most reform processes in higher education aren't that funny. Yet this play contains ingredients we recognize from the garbage can drama of reform and change: rumor, deceit, mistaken identity, and things that rarely are what they appear to be. And most of all, Shakespeare's title captures how humans (reformers and reformees included) tend to fuss over things that are of little consequence and it hints at how they tend to overlook things that are highly consequential. This observation is relevant for theorizing how actors behave in the drama of university change. An institutional account of organizational change in general raises what has been described as the paradox of institutional theory (Holm 1995): How do actors that operate within established institutional settings manage to change the very institutional arrangements that constitute them? Are they as participants in institutionalized organizations doomed to stay immobile, resist attempt to change, and cultivate their own inertia? Why is it then, that we still can observe changes taking place that might even be fundamental and transformative? We take this purported institutional paradox as a starting point for making some observations on the sources and mechanisms of change in Norwegian universities. Like other societal institutions universities do not exist in a vacuum – they receive impulses, resources and ideas from their environment. Hence a source of change is in the interaction with the 'outside'. Under what conditions can universities be 'moved' and are more or less susceptible to mimetic, normative, and coercive pressures for change? What type of internal change processes and institutional resistance do these

pressures elicit? We lift the curtain on four change dramas that these universities have undergone the last decades: the drama of administrative change, introduction of result-oriented planning and performance management, establishment of a university strategy and changes in academic leadership.

Each of these cases sits more or less comfortably in one of the corners of a simple two-by-two matrix where we cross actors' resistance to change and degree of university change – a 'MuchAdo by Two' table. Here we extract the main 'take-home messages' from these cases and take a highly condensed stock of some of what we come to learn about the dramas (and comedy?) of university change. This we base on upon already published studies of four processes of change in the four 'old' comprehensive universities in the Norwegian higher education system.

Table 1. Much ado about university change

		Degree of change	
		Low	High
Resistance to change	High	I "Much ado about very little"	II "Much ado about significant, but voluntary change"
	Low	III "No ado about almost nothing"	IV "No ado about transformative change"

Four dramas of university change.

Much ado about very little – and then what?

The case of making the university into a planner

Result-oriented planning or performance based management is the joint management system for all Norwegian public institutions independently of the sector they belong to. This system has long roots and a ideational pedigree that goes back to "Management by Objectives (MBO) practiced in the US in the 1960s. The late 1980s saw the first introduction of Result Oriented Planning as a new concept in Norwegian university life. Later in the 1990s it was made mandatory for all state public organisations and institutionalised under the label Management by Objectives and Results in the public sector. A main component of the planning concept was the emphasis on formulating clear, stable, and consistent goals, goal-directed steering and the measurement of results in combination with delegation of formal decision making authority and user steering.

What happened when this planning concept first attached itself to the universities? To make a long story short: the earlier stages were marked by universities imitating private enterprise solutions in order to appear modern and efficient. Actors embracing the new concept saw it as a solution to a range of problems the university was facing. However, the introduction of the new and alien approach to planning, especially at the University of Oslo, generated huge contestation from within, at least parts of the academic staff. Protesters used strong symbols of resistance, as did the reformers in their efforts to promote it. The second

stage was marked by regulatory aspects in the sense that this was a government mandated reform implying that it would take a high price for universities to defy (Christensen 1997, Gornitzka 1997).

Despite deep conflict in the implementation phase, academic staff only reported small effects and modest change as a result of the new management system at university departments in the early phase (Larsen and Gornitzka 1995). Doomsday predictions of 'the end of university life as we know it' did not come true. The reformers' expectation of reaping the fruits of rationality, clarity and efficiency had equally low predictive precision. So far the drama clearly was a case of much ado about very little. Although established as an administrative procedure result-oriented planning was to a large extent decoupled from the way that universities were actually run. Yet, in this period institutional reinterpretation of the reform took place, making the planning concept more aligned with the institutional identity of university faculty.

Reforms seldom live a life in complete isolation. Managerial tools that are imported but decoupled do not necessarily remain detached (Røvik 2007). A decade later the remnants of the planning system was coupled to the funding system of higher education in Norway. As part of the Quality Reform in higher education in 2003 the Norwegian government introduced a performance-based funding model to improve efficiency and effectiveness in higher education. As money speaks much louder than planning documents, the effects of emphasising results were much stronger in the later phase than in the first. This is contrary to the level of conflict, that was high in the first phase and modest in the later stages. This could be explained by the fact that the implementation of the planning system in the 1990s was a precondition for the new funding system. These two reforms are linked to each other as they both emphasised goal-attainment and results. The funding reform as a coercive mechanism was also 'hidden' inside much larger reform stream (the Quality Reform). Potential 'ado-makers' seemed to have allocated their attention to other items on the vast reform menu. The funding reform, with potentially a very high TNT-factor and transformative implications, in this way slipped inside the university without much ado and brought the reform into square IV in Table 1.

Little ado about a lot – the silent drama of administrative change

In square IV we find two processes of change that the administration at Norwegian universities has undergone during the last 25 years: The bureaucratisation of universities and the professionalization of university administration. The two processes are closely interwoven, the first one can be viewed as a premise for the latter. If we define bureaucratisation as a phenomenon of growth in the part of the organisation that does not directly carry out the core activities (teaching and research), but that regulates, supervises and supports those who do, then Norwegian universities have been bureaucratised. Administrative positions have increased more

than the number of staff directly involved in 'production' activities. (Gornitzka *et al.* 1998, Gornitzka and Larsen 2004, 462–463).

In the growth period from late 1980s up to year 2000, the number of total administrative positions increased considerably. During this period total administrative staff (i.e. clerical positions and administrative officers and managers) increased by 66 per cent whereas academic positions had an increase of 56 per cent.

A significant shift *within* the total administrative staff at universities occurred during the same period. More and more clerical positions were replaced by staff in higher administrative positions (Gornitzka and Larsen 2004, 458). Consequently, university administration no longer consisted primarily of secretaries and office auxiliary services, but of professional administrators. This trend has just continued and 20 years later the traditional secretaries have become an extinct species (Gornitzka 2011). A corps of professional administrators now performs about 9000 person years in Norwegian higher education – 40 years earlier this staff category was barely invented.

The growth in the number of professional administrators represents a significant change in Norwegian universities. A class of university staff that hardly existed 40 years has been added. In that respect, we can conclude that the increasing professionalization of universities is a case of deep transformative change. In contrast to the other change processes described above and below, it was far from a legally sanctioned reform in itself. Bureaucratization for sure was never presented as a deliberate reform – it was never championed by reformers. The growth of professional bureaucracy is a type of change that does not result from any major events – a key aspect of this process is the fact that it is incremental and 'silent'. The lack of 'ado' in combination with the transformative character of the process, makes square IV in Table 1 highly relevant. In some respects it corresponds to the type of change that results from relatively stable responses to environmental change and internal processes. Contestation and controversy over bureaucracy has erupted from time to time. So have serious and intense processes towards pruning and grooming the administrative side of universities, but in this case the main pulse of change in a long term perspective is captured by this quote:

Most changes in organizations result neither from extraordinary organizational processes or forces, nor from uncommon imagination, persistence or skill, but from relatively stable routine processes that relate organizations to their environment (March 1988, 169).

Little ado about almost nothing – Establishing a university strategy

Since the early 1990s there have been many calls for universities to institute strategic planning and profile their scholarly activities (Larsen and Langfeldt 2005, 347) and this challenge is still high on the political agenda as a diversified higher education system is a goal. External pressures for university strategizing are high. If we go back to the 1990s when universities first were challenged to develop

a university strategy for research, the process was characterized by low level of conflict (Larsen 2000). This can be explained by the fact that the aim of establishing a coherent university strategy for research to some extent could be regarded more as planning than implementing measures – more talk than action. Strategies were decoupled from the practice of universities. However, gradually steps have been taken to prioritize research field. University strategy in the sense of prioritizing research areas could be controversial because many will associate this policy with steering of research by the central level of a university and as such be in conflict with traditional values and norms of academic freedom. Furthermore, if prioritizing specific fields mean reallocation of money, conflict is expected. However, the money allocated to these prioritized areas did not represent much in the total university budget, and therefore it was not regarded as an arrangement that would come at the expense of ordinary activities. In addition these kind of prioritizing was a result of processes involving faculty and professors, and such broad participation is a way to avoid conflict.

The strategy started out as a research policy document, but education, teaching and learning gradually became part of these documents (Larsen and Langfeldt 2005). A related topic has been the division of labour between the higher education institutions, a topic with potentially high level of conflict as it could mean, inter al., closure of study programmes. Despite the fact that there has been a call for division of labor in Norwegian higher education for years, little has happened. However, if it would be realized, we expect to find the process in square II in the table.

Much ado about something significant but voluntary –academic leadership reform

Strengthening academic leadership has been another recurring theme in Norwegian higher education, and since the turn of the century public authorities have seen this as an important measure to secure and develop quality of education and research in higher education institutions (Larsen 2007).

Clearly in this area pressures from the environment – especially global comparisons and international evaluations – promoted academic leadership as a panacea for the multiple problem menu that beleaguered research universities in the age of excellence, innovation, engagement, relevance and grand challenges. In order to strengthen academic leadership the Ministry of Education and Research in the first phase from 2003 opened up for replacing the leadership recruitment procedure from elected academic leaders to appointed leaders for a fixed term. The proposal met with strong opposition and in the public debate that followed many argued that appointed leaders was a threat to democracy in higher education. Consequently, the Ministry made what is saw as its most important tool for strengthening academic leadership, a voluntary measure. Since then a differentiated system of academic governance and management exists, where the leaders in elected positions can carry on side-by-side with appointed leaders – new and traditional arrangements co-exist

in a complex university governance structure (Larsen 2003). Whether the degree of change and instrumental effects of changes in recruitment procedures would match the intensity of the debate and controversy is another matter. Yet we know that recruitment procedures of leadership is symbolically important and a question of deep rooted institutional identity.

At the institutional level, electing the rector has been the 'normal arrangement' according to the Act on Higher Education. In 2016 the law will change, and appointed rector and external leader of the university board will be the 'new normal' (Meld.St.18(2014–15) 2015). However, the institutions can continue to choose which model they prefer. As such the reform is still voluntarily, and the reform could be seen as governance through signalling and layering. The unmovable has been partially and voluntarily moved and 'Much ado' blends with 'As you like it', another Shakespeare comedy.

Without further ado

It is not by accident that some works gain a place in world literary history. Their ability to capture the essence of the human condition makes them timeless and relevant beyond space. Shakespearian ideas can 500 years later assist us in analyzing the drama of reform, and help us make sense of change and inertia of organizational life in a university setting. Few things can be taken for granted when it comes to the future, but we are pretty sure that Shakespeare's play will continue to be relevant the coming 500 years as well, that higher education institutions will still exist, and that more drama of university change will take place – dramas that cause much commotion as well as dramas that unfold without much ado. In these dramas the difference between failures and success, between comedy and tragedy, is where we stop telling the story.

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HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE IN THE NETHERLANDS: FROM A JANUS-HEAD TO A TRIMURTI

An equivocal approach

In 1988 Maassen and Van Vught's 'intriguing Janus-head' article was published, in which they analyzed the new governmental strategy towards higher education in the Netherlands. For several reasons the Dutch ministry of education and science believed that as regards steering the higher education system it was a time for change. Changing political realities and ideologies (the advent of new public management), disillusion with and distrust of etatism and top-down steering and pressures on the level of public expenditures due to the massification of higher education in combination with economic recessions, induced the ministry to reconsider its steering philosophy towards higher education. The concept of 'steering from a distance' was launched. Instead of governmental micro-management with stringent regulations and extensive control mechanisms, the government should step back and allow the higher education institutions more room to take their own decisions while responding to the needs of society. Remote government control and enlarged institutional autonomy to increase system performance were the elements in this new governmental steering approach that attracted much attention, even when accountability (quality control) and openness to society (stakeholder approach) were part and parcel of the new approach as well. Furthermore, the government wished to enhance the differentiation of the system.

Maassen and Van Vught (1988) questioned the government's intention to step back: "to what extent is government willing to give away its authority to control the system?" Based on the three phases of variation, selection and retention of the model of natural selection, Maassen and Van Vught (1988, 72-74) concluded that the government was only partially stepping back and that it remained to be seen "whether the higher education institutions are really being allowed to become more autonomous. (...) The government is stepping back in some areas, but is enlarging its control activities in others."

They argued that the new governmental steering philosophy is based on two fundamentally different models, leading to 'a strange hybrid'. It contains elements of the natural selection model as well as elements from the traditional strategy of detailed planning and control. The selection principle through competition between the institutions requires a modest government role, namely consumer protection and monopoly or oligopoly prevention. However, according to the new governmental strategy, laid down in the white paper Higher Education: Autonomy

and Quality ('beleidsnota HOAK'), the government's role is far more active and restrictive towards the institutions. They may, as Maassen and Van Vught (1988) argue, operate as autonomous organizations to the extent that the government lets them. Institutions take decisions in the shadow of hierarchy. In the new planning system, a biannual dialogue, institutions must respond to the government agenda, indicating that the government largely sets the direction of the system (in contrast to the natural selection model). Funding becomes conditional on the institution's mission and strategic plan ('negative statement of financing' and 'mission budgets'). Quality control and evaluation systems will be developed and become mandatory. Thus, as Maassen and Van Vught (1988, 75) stated, like the Roman god Janus, in 1988 steering from a distance had two different faces, one looking back, and one looking forward. What has happened since?

Governance models

Elsewhere we have described a governance model as a set of general postures, assumptions and guidelines that appear to be followed when a government, without necessarily excluding other stakeholders from the equation, steers the decisions and actions of specific societal actors according to the objectives the government has set and by using instruments the government has at its disposal (Van Vught and De Boer 2015, 38).¹ From the huge number of governance, steering and coordination models, we distinguish two classic governance models (see also Van Vught 1989, 1995; Neave and Van Vught 1991; Van Vught and De Boer 2015). These two classic models also underlie Maassen and Van Vught's analyses of the steering philosophy published by the Dutch ministry in 1985.

The first model, *the model of rational planning and control* rooted in a rationalist perspective on decision-making, assumes that there is firm knowledge of the object of regulation, complete control over the object of regulation, and a holistic self-image of the regulating subject. The government's steering capacities are 'limitless' and the model implies centralized decision-making and significant control both over design and implementation of policy. The second model, *the model of self-regulation* assumes that knowledge is highly uncertain, control over the object should be avoided and regulating subject's self-image is atomistic instead of holistic. It emphasises the self-regulatory capacities of decentralized agents. The government, being an arbiter and 'game designer', is watching the rules of a game played by relatively autonomous players and interferes only when the game no longer is leading to satisfactory results.

In higher education these classic models are in consonance with the *state control model* and *the state supervising model* (Van Vught 1988, 1995; Goedegebuure *et al.* 1993). In the state control model, typically found for a long time in continental

1 Because of limited space for this chapter we will leave aside an elaborate discussion about definitions of 'governance', 'steering' and 'coordination'. Here we will treat them by and large as synonyms, just as for example Pierre and Peters (2000, 1) who say that thinking about governance means thinking about how to steer society and how to reach collective goals.

Europe, higher education is approached as a homogeneous system, micro-managed by the government. Government controls nearly all aspects of the dynamics of the higher education system and regulates for example institutional missions (mandates), access, curricula, degrees, (academic) staff appointments, employment conditions, owned physical assets, and prescribed in detail how public funds were to be spent (line item budgeting). The state supervising model, rooted both in the US and UK, shows far less governmental influence and leaves substantial space to the institutions. The government uses 'broad terms' of regulation, stimulating the self-regulating capabilities of the higher education institutions. Fundamental decisions about missions and goals are the province of the system and its individual institutions (Goedegebuure *et al.* 1993, 328).

During the last twenty-five years the distinction between the state control and state supervising models has proven to be a useful tool for the analyses of governance reforms in higher education. With reference to these two models, several studies have described and analysed the shift from state control to state supervision in continental Europe as well as the intrusion of state control aspects in the traditional British mode of state supervision. These studies also suggest that in reality combinations of elements of the two extremes are found. In fact, Maassen and Van Vught's analyses of the 'new' government strategy toward Dutch higher education already hinted at that when they qualified the 'HOAK-philosophy' as a hybrid of different models.

Some authors have argued that a dichotomy of governance models is too limited to adequately map and conceptualize reality. Next to 'hierarchy' and 'market' other concepts of governance would exist. Network governance is for instance often referred to as an alternative governance concept (e.g. Powell 1990; Thompson 1991). Also Adler (2001, 215) as well as Ouchi (1980), argues that alongside the market, the ideal type relying on the price mechanism, and the hierarchy, relying on authority, a third form of coordination exists: the community or clan, which rely on trust. These three types are blended in the real world: "empirically observed arrangements typically embody a mix of the three ideal-typical organization forms and rely on a corresponding mix of price, hierarchy, and trust mechanisms" (Adler 2001, 215).

Other authors such as Bradach and Eccles (1991), Lindblom (1977, 1990) and Williamson (1991) however maintain the position that there are two fundamentally different modes of coordination, 'centralism and mutual adjustment' or 'hierarchy and market', but based on these two extremes hybrids can be conceptualized. Lindblom (1990, 250) distinguishes for example with respect to coordination in addition to top down steering by specialised and standardized authoritative assignments (centralism) and coordination through perfect markets (disjoined mutual adjustment), also joined mutual adjustment as a coordination mode. The latter means that autonomous actors come together to discuss their differences and preferences and to reach agreements on their collective goals.

Also Williamson (1991, 280) argues that markets and hierarchies are polar modes and that hybrid modes such as long-term contracting and reciprocal trading can be located in relation to these polar modes. Transactions, he argues, which differ in their attributes, are linked to governance structures, which differ in their costs and competencies. The factors that determine these costs and competencies of governance structures are i) two types of adaptability, ii) incentive intensity, and iii) administrative controls. To compare hybrid modes of governance with markets and hierarchies Williamson (1991) discusses these four distinguishing factors.

We label the two types of adaptability, in Williamson's terms the performance attributes of governance structures, as 'autonomous adaptability' and 'cooperative adaptability'. Autonomous adaptability relates to the virtues of (perfect) markets, in which consumers and producers respond independently to price changes so as to respectively maximize their utility and profits. In this constellation incentive intensity is high —driven by self-interest and being self-responsible for gains and losses, both consumers and producers have strong incentives to reduce costs and behave efficiently. Markets are however not always perfect, for example because actors may behave strategically by distorting information and disclosing it in an incomplete and selective fashion (e.g. Van Vught and de Boer 2015). And in long-term dependency relationships transaction costs arise. The adaptation mechanism to respond to strategic behaviours and high transaction costs of frequent and repetitive activity, as in the case of long-term interdependent relationships, is cooperation. To craft a coordination mechanism, in which hierarchy supplants autonomy, conscious, deliberate, purposeful and orchestrate action is worthwhile to be taken. "The authority relation (fiat) has adaptive advantages over autonomy for transactions of a bilaterally (or multilaterally) dependent kind" (Williamson 1991, 279). Bilateral dependency, particularly in the long run, introduces an opportunity to realize gains through hierarchy, but at a cost. Hierarchy degrades incentive intensity and increases bureaucratic costs. Hierarchies breed management and administrative controls, which dampen the incentive intensity as well as the adaptability (flexibility) to external changes.

The hybrid mode of governance, such as long-term contracting, takes a middle position with respect to the four factors attributed to governance structures (Williamson 1991, 281). The incentive structure is not as prominent as in markets, one might speak of 'quasi markets'. The administrative controls are not as heavy as in hierarchies. It preserves autonomy to a large extent, providing possibilities to adapt adequately to external change, and it needs some kind of joint cooperation (see Lindblom's joined mutual adjustment) to reach and monitor agreements, requiring an administrative apparatus.

This conceptualization of governance structures, distinguishing hierarchies, hybrids and markets and its logic can also be applied to governance models in higher education. In higher education we would label such a hybrid as 'the state contract model'. As compared with the state control and state supervision model, which are polar opposites, the state contract model is positioned between these two traditional models, as depicted in table 1.

Table 1. Distinguishing attributes of the state control, the state contract and the state supervision model (adapted from Williamson 1991, 281)

attributes	governance model		
	state control	state contract	state supervising
incentive intensity	0	+	++
administrative controls	++	+	0
autonomous adaptation	0	+	++
cooperative adaptation	++	+	0
contract law*	0	+	++

++ = strong; + = semi-strong; 0 = weak

*for reasons of limited space this attribute is not discussed in this chapter

The third face

Since the analysis by Maassen and Van Vught (1988), what has happened with the general governance model in the Netherlands? Has the governmental view on steering the Dutch higher education system still two faces?

Certainly, the general approach of allowing more autonomy to the higher education institutions has continued over the decades following the introduction of the ‘HOAK-philosophy’ (e.g. de Boer *et al.* 2006). Universities (both research universities and universities of applied science) appear to have enjoyed increasing levels of autonomy, for instance in the areas of personnel policies, financial matters and ownership of property and estate. At the same time, ‘control mechanisms’ and accountability requirements remained in place or were even strengthened. Quality control by means of formal accreditation and system level efficiency tests for institutions that intend to launch new educational programmes are clear examples of the other face of the Janus-head. Thus, while various new policies were aimed to strengthen institutional autonomy, the government did not hold back from intervening. The number of rules set by the government was still impressive. In 2006, de Boer *et al.* (2006, 91) argued that “within this type of control shifts have been taken place from strong direct regulation toward softer forms of hierarchical control”.

But more recently there appears to have been a major change of perspective. And this is where the ‘state contract’ model has made its entrance into the world of higher education governance in the Netherlands. In 2000, the government announced that “against the background of further deregulation it has been suggested and discussed to develop the relationship between the government and the higher education institutions into the direction of a contractual relationship” (HOOP 2000), a suggestion that was effectuated about ten years later.

Largely under the political pressure from parliament and echoing a growing societal sentiment, the steering perspective has changed towards a stronger recognition of the needs and positions of the clients of higher education, particularly students. In the 2000s, a lack of trust in the overall governmental steering philosophy

emerged when some higher education institutions appeared to display strategic (and even opportunistic) behaviour, particularly regarding quality and enrollments. Higher education institutions appeared to be sensitive to the temptations of budget maximalisation (reacting to the indicators in the funding models) by lowering quality standards (in order to 'produce' higher numbers of graduates and faster 'times to degree') and by providing inflated information about their programmes (in order to increase enrollment numbers). When some of these excrescences came out in the open and were reported by the media, feelings of mistrust and even crisis were the result. Political responses like 'higher education institutions apparently have too much autonomy' and 'a stronger governmental steering of the higher education system needs to be introduced' were loudly voiced.

In this changing political context government invited the associations of both higher education sectors, representing the research universities and universities of applied science, to jointly design a general 'framework contract', in which both sides agreed to try to reach a number of system level performances. These collective agreements (2008–2011) at the sector level however were not sufficiently aligned with the strategic targets of higher education institutions. For some institutions the national targets were unrealistic because they were too high, while for others they were too low and therefore not challenging. Agreements with sub sectors as a whole did not have sufficient ownership from the higher education institutions (de Boer *et al.* 2015, 27). The government clearly communicated that these general contracts would bring along the introduction of specific contracts between the minister of education, culture and science and each individual institution. This view was further underpinned by the recommendations of the Veerman-committee, which among other things recommended a gradual introduction of mission-based funding operationalized by means of so-called performance agreements (Veerman-committee 2010). In 2011, the minister actually launched the instrument of performance agreements in his strategic agenda for higher education, research and science called "Quality in Diversity". These performance agreements set out the agreed upon specific goals that each institution will seek to achieve in a given time period. They specify clearly itemized performance targets (the ambitions of an institution) and, a novelty in Dutch higher education, these targets are directly linked to funding. The institutions receive ex-ante funding for the targets set, but may lose part or all of this funding in the next round of budget if the targets are not met. Achieved performances, corresponding to the individual missions developed by the institutions, will be rewarded, while underperformance will be financially punished.

As a result of the introduction of these performance agreements, the Dutch higher education governance model has substantially changed. The performance contracts clearly mark the introduction of the 'state contract' model in Dutch higher education policy. Not only is the current Dutch governance model a Janus-head of two combined steering approaches, comprising elements of state control and state supervision, it now also incorporates a third perspective, i.e. that of 'state contract'. The newly established contractual relationship between the government and the individual institutions constrain the institutional autonomy to some extent and

still has substantial costs in terms of administrative control (compared to the state supervising model), but at the same time it addresses some imperfections of the market and it offers opportunities for joint 'decision-making', flexibility and leaves an incentive structure largely in place (compared to the state control model). This shift in steering orientation of the Dutch government towards higher education implies that the 'intriguing Janus-head' appears to have taken on the appearance of a Trimurti, the Hindu triad of gods, showing a combination of three faces for three combined steering models.

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SETTING THE TREND: EARLY CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

A seminal paper:
Strategic Decision Making in Higher Education, 1990

As a PhD student writing a thesis on university strategies, I read at an initial stage of my research the important paper by Peter Maassen (with Henry Potman) on strategic decision making in higher education, published in *Higher Education* in 1990. Since then I have regularly referred to that piece over the years, and I consider it a “classic” in my trajectory as a scholar of organizations.

The paper analyzes the introduction of strategic planning in Dutch higher education in the eighties and its implications for the systemic diversification in the national landscape. This policy reform, anticipating several others across continental Europe in the years to follow, was aimed to trigger adaptive behavior and distinctive profiles of universities. By using their newly-gained institutional autonomy to define priorities and to allocate resources strategically, higher education institutions would differentiate from each other and find a sustainable niche. This would allow targeting specific groups of students, focusing on distinctive study programs, carrying out unique research activities. As such Maassen and Potman’s analysis pointed to issues that are still debated presently: what universities do with their autonomy? How can they contribute to mass higher education? How should they cope with shrinking or stagnating public financial endowment? The findings show that universities tend to pursue similar strategies and aim at similar profiles, thus proving new institutionalist hypotheses (Meyer and Rowan 1977; and DiMaggio and Powell 1983), which contend that in highly institutionalized organizational fields characterized by a high degree of uncertainty (as of number of students, external funding, knowledge dynamics in the case of higher education) organizations tend to mimic each other and strive towards the globally legitimate model of research intensive university.

At the same time, in an innovative way at the time of publication, Maassen and Potman combined their analysis with the strategic management literature, using Mintzberg’s seminal book on the structuring of organizations (1979), and Chaffee’s typology of strategies (1985a, 1985b). The authors drew from Mintzberg the model of professional bureaucracy to analyze universities as fragmented organizations where academics – as individual experts – hold the necessary knowledge to carry out teaching and research. They drew from Chaffee the interpretive model of strategy, where cultural and identity-based aspects, rather than rational calculation or adaptive moves, are central in building strategic capacity. The combination

of these two frameworks contributed to the emerging field of higher education research with a fine-grained analysis of isomorphic mechanisms.

Contributions to on-going debates: institutional autonomy and organizational actorhood

The argument put forward remains of central relevance in contemporary higher education studies. First, it provides valuable insight on the waves of policy reforms undergone by continental European universities. It does so based on theoretical arguments on why and how increasing institutional autonomy is often insufficient to redesign higher education systems (Verhoest *et al.* 2004, de Boer *et al.* 2013, Maggetti and Verhoest 2014) without implementing economic incentives or addressing structural constraints (Bonaccorsi and Daraio 2007) and without the support of identity-based strategic change (Paradeise and Thoenig 2016). The paper also links to the more recent literature on professional organizations, where it is argued that the encounter of the (academic) profession and the organizational setting leads to subtle change dynamics (Carvalho 2014, Nordegraaf 2015). Instead of the simplified vision in which academics and management struggle for decision-making power and professional autonomy, they illustrated how the reconfiguration of actors, resources, and governance structures give way to new organizational forms.

Second, with its focus on strategic planning, Maassen and Potman's paper anticipates the on-going debate on organizational actorhood (Krücken and Meier 2006), according to which universities are submitted to global scripts requiring them to develop into fully-fledged organizations with identity, hierarchy and rationality (Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson 2000, Seeber *et al.* 2015). In a distinct way, Maassen and Potman shed light on the complex nature of universities as "bottom-heavy" organizations (Clark 1983) and as institutions (Olsen 2007) which cannot be easily changed without the emergence of a whole array of unexpected outcomes. The authors demonstrated that there is no linear relationship between policy, strategy and organizational change, indeed an ecological view of co-evolving actors, resources, structural conditions and cultures needs to be taken into consideration (Gornitzka *et al.* 2007). Implicitly though, the paper prefigures some of the necessary conditions enacting – at least partially – university actorhood, as in the case of the active participation of universities in a "dialogue" with policy makers to discuss the future of higher education and the division of labor among the different stakeholders. As recognized partners in policy making, universities as organizations – and not academics representative of disciplinary fields – can profit from and further develop their "agency".

Ways forward: linking policy and micro level

Following this research trajectory, Peter Maassen has recently focused his conceptual and empirical work on the internal workings of the university. He has done so in an ambitious and clairvoyant way, linking his traditional interests

around policy and governance of higher education with a micro perspective on the “living autonomy” (i.e. the enacted institutional autonomy, or, its practices) at the shop floor level inside the university. The FLAGSHIP project, funded by the Research Council of Norway, has investigated how disciplinary fields embedded in university organizational sub-units (the departments) evolve differently within their own higher education institution, their national system, and against similar cases in several European countries. The findings provide a detailed and fascinating picture of the inner life of universities, more specifically in the departments where disciplinary fields and organizational structures come together to produce knowledge, build capacity to do so, and make sense of this endeavor. As such, the FLAGSHIP project is at the forefront of research into higher education policy and management, developing our theoretical understanding of how universities work, and providing a systematic comparative analysis. The project has already offered insights to policy makers and institutional and academic leadership on the tensions, opportunities and risks of reforming the higher education system and restructuring its universities. It has demonstrated how different types of interdependencies – such as between personnel policies and research management, or between academic leadership and administrative power – unravel and shape the decisions, actions, and outcomes in the contemporary university.

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ASSESSING CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EXCELLENCE VERSUS RELEVANCE

Background

One of the various topics pursued by Peter Maassen during the years pertains to the interplay between change and stability in higher education systems and institutions. I recall, in the many conversations with Peter on the topic, Burton Clark's (1983, 187) seminal work of particularly relevance in this respect. While referring to universities' ability to engage into adaptive capacity, Clark states that "the capacity to 'bend and adapt' is clearly aided or restricted by the specific forms institutionalized in national systems", ending with urging scholar for the "need to turn to key structural features and note their particular ways of influencing change". In this short, celebratory essay, I explore the ways in which the changing roles or tasks of universities - as a result of the accommodation of external pressures and demands - result into new sets of tensions, most notably when it comes to the interplay between 'relevance' and 'excellence'.

Exploring the tensions between being relevant and attaining excellence

Debates surrounding the modern university are shaped by conceptions of the latter's societal role as being able to address issues of relevance (e.g. the grand challenges facing human kind) on the one hand, whilst, being able to ensure scientific quality of the highest levels (linked to the notion of world class) on the other (Pinheiro 2015). Despite the fact that these two conceptualizations - which, in a sense, also underpin the interplay between *local* and *global* dimensions - are not mutually exclusive per se (Perry 2012), their successful achievement implies, nonetheless, the effective resolution of a series of key tensions at various levels. At the policy level, a major dilemma concerns the coupling of scientific activities aimed at *exploration* (i.e. the development of new knowledge frontiers) with that of (Mode-2) knowledge production addressing concrete problems facing society, akin to an *exploitation* approach (Gibbons et al. 1994; March 1991). Recent funding mechanisms, e.g. the EU's Horizon 2020 program, put a strong emphasis on the achievement of both aims, i.e. scientific breakthroughs as well as societal impact, but tensions remain with the respect to the increasing instrumentalization of science (Ramirez and Tiplic 2014), not least when it comes to the impossibility to determine with some degree of accuracy what the realizable societal impacts

(mid- to long term) will be. At the level of individual institutions, there are growing tensions when it comes to seemingly combining the logic of *meritocracy* associated with the quest for excellence with the ethos of *engagement* linked to the notion of “the civic university” (Goddard and Vallance 2013). What is more, the widespread Mathew effect in science (Kwiek 2016) is exacerbating the gap between ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’, resulting in new tensions and volitions between academic groups within and across sub-units. For example, inquiries from Northern Europe on the rise of centres of excellence within universities (stemming from nation-wide policy initiatives) suggest that less productive or successful academics are being “left behind” (Pinheiro 2012). For institutions located in less developed regions, the challenge of combining scientific excellence with local relevance remains, partly since the capacity of regional actors across public and private sectors to absorb knowledge (and sometime graduates as well) is limited (Benneworth et al. 2014).

The University at a cross-road

The organizational field of higher education is laden with archetypes and ideal-type notions of how universities ought to be organised internally. The research-intensive model occupies a privileged position as the model to be emulated and the envy of the world (Mohrman et al. 2008). This template, adopted by most ‘flag ship universities’, prioritises knowledge production of the Mode-1 type and is geared towards scientific excellence that is global in nature and thus de-contextualised per se. In contrast, the so-called emerging model of the entrepreneurial university (Pinheiro and Stensaker 2014) attempts to bridge global excellence with local relevance, largely by tapping on new funding opportunities arising from the unmet demands of specific stakeholder groups such as industry (Geiger and Sá 2008). Isomorphic pressures (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) have resulted in the increasing hybridisation between the aforementioned archetypes, arising from the fact that to survive in an increasingly competitive environment, both nationally and globally, research-intensive universities have become more entrepreneurially-minded (e.g. when it comes to external funding) while, at the same time, entrepreneurial universities have become more research-intensive. The latter phenomenon occurs both due to legitimacy reasons but also as a strategic means of attracting talented researchers and competitive research funding. What is more, system contraction (e.g. in the Nordics) has resulted in voluntary or forced mergers amongst providers (Pinheiro et al. 2016), a process that is also likely to foster internal diversity, thus resulting in increasing hybridisation and a blurring of archetypes (Pinheiro et al. 2015).

So what?

Clark’s original advice (above) on the salience of key structural features within higher education systems/institutions and the ways in which these influence processes of change (or lack thereof), seems to (still) be highly relevant for assessing contemporary dynamics in European higher education and beyond. The outcome of the interplay between activities and structures – macro/meso/micro levels -

aimed at either fostering excellence or relevance (or both!) should, thus, be assessed against the backdrop of the ways in which deeply institutionalised features such as disciplinary cultures, institutional hierarchies (status economies), and (localized) notions of academic autonomy either reinforce or mitigate such strategic efforts. If excellence and relevance are to co-exist with some degree of harmony within systems and institutions, it is paramount that both policy makers and institutional managers comprehend the mechanisms that both lead to the rise of new tensions and volitions within institutions as well as the ways in which these can be resolved or bridged. Future studies could, for example, try to investigate the ways in which academic groups and types of institutions attempt to institutionalised excellence alongside relevance and vice versa; and, in turn, shed light on the key structural features (systemic and institutional) that make this such a daunting task. As Peter, following Clark, would say, change in (the institution) of higher education (Maassen and Olsen 2007) is too important to be left unexplored in a systematic and comparative manner.

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UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY AND REFORMS IN WESTERN EUROPE, OR, WHERE´S THE FUN IN FUN-DAMENTAL CHANGES?

...one of the main reasons is that it's fun. Why else should someone want to work in academia? It's poorly paid and a lot of work.

(Peter Maassen, Lunch break thoughts, December 2015)

University autonomy and reforms in smaller Western European Countries

Several reform attempts at European universities are more or less under the suspicion that they eradicate the “fun” part in academia, especially from the perspective of scholars: more standardization, less (academic) freedom, more accountability, managerial logics, etc. All these new logics and trends are then at the same time strengthening the administrative dimension through which the university becomes more and more a service-oriented enterprise. (Slaughter & Rhoades 2004) This is, of course, a very black-and-white illustration. The picture is rather diverse and fragmented, dependent also on the countries where reforms are taking place. Still, especially in the European context there seem to be common threads why the “European” university is under observation and reform pressure, and the question is what the preliminary outcomes of these reform efforts are.

This contribution wants to present some findings from the FLAGSHIP project, initiated and conducted by Åse Gornitzka and Peter Maassen, Tatiana Fumasoli, and Bjørn Stensaker from 2011 to 2015, as well as findings from my master thesis which was focusing on the Austrian context. The core interest of the project was how several universities in smaller Western European countries have handled university reforms and autonomy, and how this has been eventually interpreted by the concerned people. The following lines are going to focus on the drivers and rationales of university autonomy, how the FLAGSHIP project has looked at it by presenting some general information and findings of this project, and how reform processes have played out in Austria by presenting the case of the University of Vienna. Finally, this contribution rounds off with the discussion of what these reform efforts are telling us about working in contemporary academia.

European trends and developments in university reforms

Universities in Europe are perceived as key institutions when it comes to the debates about socioeconomic competitiveness. (see e.g. the EU's Lisbon Strategy) The political mantra has been that universities aren't fully capable of meeting these demands which is mirrored by a low trust in existing university structures. (Maassen & Stensaker 2011) This lack of effectiveness in an increasingly competitive (higher education) world calls for new steering modes which are coupled with declining public funds and governmental opportunities for direct intervention. Western states have constantly drawn back from national core areas opening up for more flexible ways of governing different sectors like higher education. The assumption is that since actors or agents are closer to their daily matters they should get more autonomy in pursuing them. A solution was seen in market driven approaches that would cut out unnecessary system anomalies, thus raising effectiveness and efficiency (*ibid.*). The notion of new public management and managerialism was introduced, also with regards to specific governance problems that would emerge if you grant more autonomy: if a sector or lower level receives more operational freedom, how can you sustain some sort of governmental influence? Especially concerning universities and the higher education sector which are way too important for national interests to be left alone? One answer is holding universities accountable. And the question of freedom in the sense of institutional autonomy is a question of rebalancing the relationship between the state and the university, and how this accountability is negotiated.

Examining autonomy and reforms: the FLAGSHIP project

Since several Western European countries have reformed the higher education sector by introducing (new) concepts of university autonomy, the aim of the FLAGSHIP project was how these reforms would be translated inside the universities. The main assumption was that universities are robust institutions with a long institutional history, eventually filtering national reform agendas to a certain extent (Olsen 2007). Apart from that, institutional autonomy would also allow exploring rooms to maneuver, and the question was how universities and especially the "shop floor" (i.e. the departments) would use this new leeway. In order to assess the dimensions of (new) university autonomy, the following variables have been considered: *centralization* (e.g. dispersion of authority and modes of decision-making), *formalization* (e.g. degree of written and filed procedures), *standardization* (e.g. regularly occurring procedures like in personnel recruitment) *legitimization* (e.g. collective norms and belief) and *flexibility* (e.g. degree of adaptation of structures to changes in the environment). The examinations were carried out at major public and old, traditional universities in large urban areas.¹ Within these universities

¹ The countries and universities of interest were: Norway (University of Oslo, University of Bergen), Sweden (Stockholm University, University of Gothenburg), Finland (University of Helsinki), Denmark (Aarhus University, University of Copenhagen), the Netherlands (University of Amsterdam), Belgium (KU Leuven), Switzerland (University of Zurich) and Austria (University of Vienna).

case studies were conducted at several departments in selected disciplinary areas: psychology, chemistry, health and society, teacher training, and history.

Case study: university reforms and professorial recruitment at the University of Vienna

The research conducted in the frame of my master thesis (Friedrich 2013) focused on how professorial recruitment as part of the university's personnel policy would occur nowadays in Austria after major reforms in the sector. Especially the 2002 act released universities into autonomy under public law and enabled them to decide on their own organizational layout. As a consequence of that, the University of Vienna implemented its Organizational Plan in 2004 which led to major organizational restructuring within the university. One of the major consequences has been a more coherent university structure, where all parts are now perceived as being part of one organization. This becomes most apparent in the collective strategic planning in the form of development plans. In a number of bottom-up and top-down negotiations, departments, faculties and the rectorate agree on (academic) goals for a period of three years ("Target agreements") which then again are negotiated between the rectorate and the ministry ("Performance agreements") thereby determining funding and accountability aspects.

As for the university's autonomy in personnel policies, appointments of professors in former times were often non-transparent for the university as such (an academic black box one could argue) and highly politicized (because the minister appointed professors). With granting universities more autonomy, ministerial authority was forwarded to the executive structure of the university, especially to the rectorate, trying to break the dominant role of the departments. As a consequence of more institutional autonomy, particularly by reorganizing existing structures and pursuing a coherent organization, new and/or different actors became involved in the recruitment process. Nowadays, professorial recruitment procedures appear to be more a system of checks and balances where different important and influential actors come together who have increased capacity to interfere: e.g. the department, the faculty, the senate, external assessors, the rectorate, and/or formal quality assurance agencies. One motivation of the reform attempts was to move away from strong academic oligarchic but also nepotistic recruitment procedures where appointments were rather approved than controlled by higher levels, towards more coherent and transparent university recruitment practices. The assumption behind this was that the former system wouldn't focus sufficiently enough on academic merits concerning new appointments. The appointment strategy of the recent decade has been determined by a strong quality and internationalization focus, initiated by the top but increasingly internalized by all concerned parties since the aim is to attract top-researchers with high prestige.

What have the studies on university reforms and autonomy revealed?

In relation to the general findings of the project, this study on the different dimensions of university autonomy was exemplary in following ways. It showed that universities are becoming coherent organizations (e.g. joint strategic planning)

and have a strengthened executive structure (e.g. a more powerful rectorate). Commonly, there is now more transparency in terms of formalization, institutional benchmarking, performance indicators (key figures, statistics), also leading to an increased administrative and managerial dimension within the university. Despite that, academics are increasingly in-between different logics (administrative vs. academic prestige): as long as an academic has a strong research record with substantial funding he/she is granted a lot of leeway at the university. Less successful academics in terms of research are gradually captured by the administrative logic (e.g. teaching obligations) thereby constrained in the role as autonomous researcher. So a new interpretation of university autonomy both at the University of Vienna but also at other flagship universities indicates at least two main facets: first, universities as actors become more autonomous in terms of defining their own organizational structure and identity. Second, autonomy within the university is increasingly determined by the interplay between the administrative logic and prestige logic (Fumasoli, Gornitzka, Maassen 2014; Slaughter & Rhoades 2004).

Looking for the bigger picture: what kind of university for what kind of society?²

A remarkable feature of Peter Maassen is that he can present complex issues in an understandable and accessible manner. More than that, he does it in a way that historical developments and the bigger picture in higher education become not only interesting but suspenseful. Numerous master students who were starting to write their thesis – and were at the beginning (or the end) of their academic career – were given the advice by him to “take a step back” and to ask themselves: “what are you really interested in? Where do you see your thesis research in the bigger picture?” Whether this has created more confusion than epiphany in identifying one’s personal research interest is difficult to reconstruct. But in the end, one came (hopefully) to the conclusion that it is advisable to rely on the advice of someone who has acquired substantial theoretical and practical knowledge in this field. Not least by concluding the personal thesis writing process and this feature of academic work, as being exemplary for “what you want to do for the rest of your life or try to avoid for the rest of it.”

This, in fact, reveals the ambiguity of academic work which is, as pointed out by numerous scholars, a specific way of working, more of an intellectual craft that is difficult to categorize (e.g. Clark 1983; Musselin 2008). This being tightly coupled with academic freedom (e.g. with regards to curiosity-driven research) allows for the full bandwidth of human emotions: it can be enormously fun and rewarding (e.g. supervising young scholars writing their thesis) but it can also be most dreary and frustrating (e.g. supervising young scholars writing their thesis).

Despite supervision, the freedom of working and researching the topics one is curious about is another rewarding and fun aspect in academia. It seems that the new university autonomy can provide room for that kind of freedom but it comes at

2 Quote by Olsen, 2007

a high cost: you have to earn and justify it permanently, and you have to be highly competitive in it. Research remains the prestigious dimension in this game, and if you're successful you can have your freedom and intellectual fun. Otherwise you are gradually captured by the administrative dimension. The FLAGSHIP project was supposed to provide a better understanding of how the universities translate increasing expectations from society but also affect society in defining their own institutional (working) logics. Universities are in way mirroring current societal trends which is probably captured best by the phrase “*What kind of university for what kind of society?*” (Olsen 2007) It will be interesting to further see in which direction the universities are spinning due to those reforms and how the affected members will explore their leeway: how do veterans assess and interpret the development? How will newcomers be socialized? And how will they perceive the university?

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ON BEST PRACTICES, GOVERNANCE REFORM AND TRAVELLING MEDICINE SHOWS

Travel broadens the mind

Travel broadens the mind, they say. When it comes to higher education, gaining a first-hand, on-the-ground experience and ideas about policies and practices in place elsewhere can be extremely inspiring. It enriches one's understanding, brings forward ideas, and adds to the range of empirical observations that policy researchers and university professors make use of when carrying out their teaching, research, or when telling others – colleagues, students and clients – about 'what works' elsewhere. So it is with Peter Maassen. He is a well-travelled person. He has been to all continents (except for Antarctica), and he has visited many countries, universities and ministries, still finding the time to get a taste of the national culture, local wines and the latest musical trends. And he certainly is a great story-teller – always remembering incidents and details that others have long forgotten. One is always amazed of the knowledge, facts and trivia stored in his head. In other words: a great colleague to work with, although some of them might find it quite challenging to get used to his relaxed attitude towards deadlines and flight departure times.

One of Peter Maassen's research interests is that of higher education governance – in particular the governance of higher education in Europe. For a long time he has been studying policy-making in European education ministries and universities and contributed to our understanding of modes of governance – comparing policy-making across countries and institutions. In several of his works (e.. Olsen & Maassen 2007) he has written about the open method of coordination (OMC) – a means of governance in the European Union based on the voluntary cooperation of its member states and shaped as a kind of governance by means of dialogue, benchmarking, and exchange of 'good practice'. Instead of 'hard law', the OMC rests on 'soft law' mechanisms, such as guidelines and indicators, benchmarking and sharing of best practice. Its effectiveness relies on a form of peer pressure and 'naming and shaming', as no European Union member state wants to be seen as the worst in a given policy area.

In this contribution, I do not want to make any observations on the effectiveness of the OMC or the role it has played in the convergence of, or common architecture for, higher education systems in Europe. Rather, I want to focus on one aspect of it – the sharing of good (or, perhaps, best) practices. The sharing of good/best practices is seen by many governments – national and supranational – as a way of convincing others to change their current practices and adopt new, reformed ways of doing. As part of the OMC-type of governance, the sharing of good/best practices is a way for

governments to ‘get a foot in the door’ of policy areas where they formally do not have a large say.

Best Practices

Having worked in CHEPS – the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies – throughout most of the 1980s and 1990s, Peter Maassen very much has become aware of the sheer need that governments express to learn about “what works?”. Policy analysis is often about the question of what works best, where, why, under what circumstances, and what are the effects – intended and unintended? And this question is the one that is frequently underlying the commissioned research projects that are carried out by research institutes like CHEPS or a Faculty of Education like the one at the University of Oslo. A Ministry, a funding council, a Directorate-General for Education and Research or a university rector will be very eager to receive policy-recommendations for a particular issue or field. They will, in many cases without taking note of the underlying theoretical foundations or methodological observations, more or less immediately scroll down to the final conclusions and policy recommendations of the reports they receive from policy-researchers. Health warnings (‘Please, read the instructions for use before taking the medication’) are never very popular if one is looking for a quick fix.

One recent example is a European Commission-funded project that CHEPS worked on in close collaboration with NIFU and some other partners. In light of disappointing statistics on the number of students that prematurely drop out of their degree programme or that decide to switch programmes after a couple of months, the Commission felt it needed to learn more about drop-out and completion in higher education – and the policies that work in raising study success. The study should present our current understanding of the phenomenon – both in terms of numbers and in terms of policies and initiatives implemented to tackle it. As part of the study, recommendations were to be provided that then might be taken up by policy-makers and universities interested in reducing drop-out and increasing completion. The study was to tell the policy-makers which ‘buttons to press and levers to pull’ – giving a presentation of some best practices in the sense of countries (in the case of this report, they were England, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway) that seem to do a good job in terms of tackling drop-out and completion.

Being the kinds of institutes and researchers that we are, we were of course happy to make such an inventory – presenting the wide spectrum of study success policies we found in 35 European countries, producing tables that listed the available indicators of study success and presenting a number of universities where interesting policy initiatives to improve completion are to be found. However, we were somewhat more reluctant and rather more careful in giving simple recommendations on what policies to implement. There is no ‘cook book’ we know of, authored by the Jamie Oliver of evidence-based higher education policy; a book offering delicious and healthy recipes inspired from all over the world. Our friends in Education Ministries or the European Commission will have to cook up their own

meal. As CHEPS/NIFU chefs, we may have some menu suggestions, but whether these will work or will go down well with our clients is not a straightforward matter. Policies prepared at the top may not always have a predictable impact on the shop-floor level – on students and professors. It is – to quote Paul McCartney – a long and winding road.

Travelling medicine shows

Although just about everyone agrees that *education* is a solution to most of our — and everyone else's — economic problems, education is not like medicine. To learn about its effects, one needs a solid evidence base. Education policies, however, are seldom based on experimental research; evidence-based policies are rare. To understand the effectiveness of a particular policy treatment we cannot run trials with an experimental group and a control group. What we *can* do is carry out international comparative work: take a close look at policies administered across the world for addressing a particular problem, make an inventory, study the national context, identify the critical elements defining success and failure, and look for any policy evaluations that may have been carried out (Maassen & Van Vught 1994). This is the closest one can get to experimenting and identifying evidence-based policies (El-Khawas 2007). Through this kind of learning by doing – or *travelling* – approach one keeps accumulating knowledge about the relations between actions and consequences. It produces a menu of possibilities from which policymakers then will have to make an intelligent selection about possible lines of action to implement. So, policy research cannot tell us what works, or *will* work. It can only indicate what worked in the past – or what did not work in the past. In the past, medicine shows were traveling horse and wagon teams which promoted 'miracle cure' medications and other products between various entertainment acts. In our modern times, the sale of snake oil has long been forgotten – but the search for policy potions is still ongoing.

Performance contracts

When it comes to good/best practices, one example is the use of *contracts* (sometimes known as performance contracts) as a tool for reorganising the public sector (Greve 2000). Performance contracts have been hailed as a new governance concept in higher education (de Boer *et al.* 2015; Claeys-Kulik & Estermann 2015). In Denmark, contracts (known as *development contracts*) were introduced in 1999 as a dialogue-based instrument that should offer universities more opportunities and flexibility to respond to changing demands and expectations. This new steering instrument marked a shift from top-down regulation to a more decentralised form of governance (also see the contribution by de Boer & Van Vught in this book). Development contracts lay down agreements about a university's own strategic goals and its commitment. They are agreed between

the Ministry of Science, Innovation & Higher Education and each individual university – covering a three-year period and including a number of indicators that are related to the strategic national priorities for higher education and that enable the evaluation of results. Over time, this steering instrument went through a number of changes, but the contracts always respected the consensus-seeking political climate that characterises Danish higher education. In that sense, they could not be expected to really make a difference when it comes to changing the course of the higher education ‘ship’. An evaluation by a team of experts, including Peter Maassen, suggested (Bladh *et al.* 2009) that there was room for improvement. The experts argued that:

“The development contracts could be used as individual, helpful tools for the universities’ strategic development and profiling, as well as for realising important targets, such as speeding up graduation and specific enrolment targets. However, we do not find the development contracts in their current practice effective enough as such steering instruments ... The development contracts have become too detailed and process-oriented. In practice they consist of a list of indicators, on which universities provide data.”

In other words, the contracts act more like an accountability mechanism instead of an instrument for encouraging universities to improve their performance or develop an explicit institutional profile. Other countries (e.g. Australia, Austria, Canada, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands) also have implemented some form of performance contract – with some of them attaching financial rewards to meeting the targets specified in the contracts (de Boer *et al.* 2015). However, the effects of performance contracts are difficult to assess. They seem to be highly dependent on factors such as the design and regulatory context of the contracts, the overall funding system, the universities’ internal governance and, obviously, the amount of funding attached to the contracts. This suggests that it is still too soon to conclude that performance contracts work or do not work. They can work, but probably only if some – so far, unknown – conditions are met.

Long may you run

There is still a great need for undertaking a thorough comparative analysis of so-called best practices and governance reforms such as performance contract systems. To do this it is crucial to pay attention to the differences in the actual practices or the design of the performance contracts. As always, their design, objectives and context is crucial for understanding whether they actually work. The idea of performance contracts is a promising one, but how it may be translated into policies and whether it results in anything like a best practice is still to be discovered. Just like Peter Maassen, ideas travel fast – over time and across borders. Ideas shape and reshape higher education policy (Degn 2015). Therefore, for both, the best advice should be: ‘travel on’ – while listening to Neil Young’s song “Long May You Run”.

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STUDYING CHANGE IN ACADEME – THE SEARCH FOR WAYS FORWARD

Introduction

Higher education studies can proudly argue that the field was central in exploring how culture could be a valid and highly relevant factor for explaining human behaviour in organizations (Stensaker *et al.* 2012). Initiated through the early contributions by Burton Clark (Clark 1970 1972), the view that culture as an important factor for understanding both continuity and change is currently an established recognition in higher education research (Välilmaa 1998).

Peter Maassen has over the years extensively explored the cultural dimension of higher education, not least through his doctoral thesis entitled “Governmental steering and the academic culture” (Maassen 1996). This study analysed the impact of governmental steering on academic culture in Germany and the Netherlands. Based on a theoretical framework inspired by cultural theory (Douglas 1986, Thompson *et al.* 1990), the study found that governmental steering attempts affected the academic culture in higher education institutions to a limited degree (Maassen 1996, 161). However, the contributions of this study went beyond these findings. In fact we argue in this essay that the study had characteristics that pointed to a systematic, theoretically oriented, comparative and outward looking approach to conducting research on higher education. In this respect it was a thesis with a mission.

Ways of doing research

Today, higher education research is quite established as a research area, with numerous conferences, journals and book series that both define the field, and brings the knowledge on higher education forward. However, we do not need to go back more than a couple of decades to witness a quite different state in the field. The study of university organisations – the search for a new dean at UC Irvine, to be precise – had yielded some of the 19th century key paradigm shifts in the social sciences (Cohen *et al.* 1972). Yet the bulk of the important contributions were made in the research area during the 1970s and 1980s were still marked by being exploratory in their nature, perspectives and methodology and intuitive more than systematic. The 1990s marked a new era in higher education research through an

interest in making the field more similar to other applied research areas and less *sui generis*. Peter's study on governance and culture can be said to be one of the first in this new generation of higher education research. To us, the study had three distinct characteristics that should be acknowledged for its later influence.

Linking higher education studies to general social theories

In his study of academic culture, Peter reviewed the concept in a broad manner, and included literature both from higher education (e.g., Becher 1989) and from the corporate world (e.g., Alvesson & Berg 1992) and drawing on the Durkheimien roots that undergird the cultural theory of Thomson, Ellis and Wildavsky (1990) and Douglas (1982). Through a rigorous and critical approach, he managed to unpack the blurred and quite confusing statements and understandings that can be related to the concept, exposing the fact that many researchers "have used the term culture without explaining how they interpret culture, how and why they want to apply it, let alone specifying the underlying theoretical assumptions" (Maassen 1996, 43). By linking studies of culture in higher education to more general theories on culture, Peter managed to go beyond the – still – dominant view that culture in higher education is either based on disciplinary characteristics or related to the university as such. Hence, the links to more general theories opened up the field to new perspectives and approaches that later have enriched the studies undertaken.

Linking conceptualisations to systematic empirical analysis

One of the traditional characteristics of higher education research has the emphasis put on the single case study, and the accompanying exploratory and curiosity-driven empirical design¹.

According to Peter, higher education could at the time of the writing of his thesis be characterised "as a field of study in which few members have an interest in theory testing and paradigm building" (Maassen 1996, 2). While there is no doubt also a great need for exploratory and inquiry-led studies within the sector, diversity is perhaps even more needed, especially if higher education research wants to build its reputation. One of the key ambitions in Peter's doctoral thesis was his consistent up-building of hypotheses derived from clearly defined concepts guiding the empirical analysis undertaken. Much to the chagrin of some of Peter's colleagues and discussants in the 1990s (Kogan 1999), he insisted that the road to develop knowledge with a longer shelf life than ex-university president's memoirs went via developing general hypotheses that could be put to the test through comparative and systematic empirical research. While one could argue that this currently is a quite normal approach in higher education research, it is still remarkable how fashionable concepts such as for example "quality culture" and similar terms are attempted to be analysed without neither proper conceptualisation of what "quality culture" might mean, nor through a solid empirical design. Luckily, we seem to be much better equipped as a research field today than in the mid-1990s.

1 And not to forget, the specific genre of higher education research that used to turn personal experience with university life into empirical findings.

Linking governance to culture and human behaviour

However, we would argue that the most significant contribution made in Peter's doctoral thesis was his ambition to establish what we today often label as multi-level analysis – the linkages between macro-level developments and micro-level behaviour. Here, we might return to the key findings of Peter's study, the fact that governmental steering seemingly had little impact on the academic culture. State steering – governments' attempt to adapt, influence and control specific actions and interactions in society according to certain objectives – had an effect on social institutional contexts within which academics work and live. But the second step effect on academic 'ways of life' was nowhere to be found, at least not in Peter's Dutch-German sample. Governments can change the context within which academic work and live – making them more competitive, more evaluative and more decentralised – but cannot affect their 'way of life'. Peter's observations on the elusive link between macro and micro feed into the debate on how governments' deliberate attempts to change society stay on track or are derailed as they travel from one level of governance to another – a debate on the designability of key societal sector in democratic political orders with ramifications far beyond the world of state steering of the academe (Olsen 1997). The same goes for scholarship on the puzzling relationship between structure and culture – a puzzle that refuses to become irrelevant for scholars as well as reformers. Human behaviour may seem impervious to changes in formal structure at macro- and meso levels – be it funding arrangements, mergers, change of status and governmental affiliation. Culture may seem to 'eat structure for lunch' any time of the day. Culture in institutionalised organisations is difficult to tame as an instrument of design and management tool (Zucker 1977, Stensaker 1998). Yet, as suggested by the institutionalist turn in Peter's scholarship (Maassen and Olsen 2007), formal structure is more than myth and ceremony. The interaction of structure and cultural factors can have transformative effects for key societal institutions such as the university (Slaughter & Leslie 1997).

Pointers to the future

The complex relationship between structure and culture has been a key topic for years in higher education studies, and there is still much work to be done to increase our understanding of these links. However, in one of the projects Peter has been involved in lately, the so-called Flagship-project, some under-researched areas of higher education studies have been picked up that are promising for exploring the structure – culture relationship. These areas include the many new and expanding administrative dimensions that are embedded in modern universities, and how processes of administrative specialization and professionalization, for example in personnel policies, impact how academic staff is recruited and socialized into academe, and how such processes in turn may trigger institutional transformations. Organizational recruitment, specialization, professionalization, and socialization are areas well known to both social science studies and institutional theory in particular (Selznick 1957, Scott 2001), and the fact that these areas increasingly are

been targeted for more in-depth analysis may suggest that higher education indeed is a sector that has become more 'normal' and more similar other sectors in our societies. Of course, and as Peter probably would argue, it is only by conducting proper empirical investigations into this topic that we can acquire new insights and develop new theoretical assumptions on whether higher education is special still – perhaps even in the years to come.

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EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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THE INSTITUTIONAL DYNAMICS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

‘Trust Us’

Motorpsycho (1998)

Introduction

One of the main themes addressed by Peter Maassen focusses around ‘European Integration and Higher Education’. Through his many publications in this area Peter strengthened the conceptual foundations of research on ‘Europeanization’. He linked this field up to institutional theory and the study of public policy and public administration. He also largely contributed to the establishment of empirical evidence on the European dimension in higher education.

It seems to me that, in the first instance, Peter was deeply sceptical about the political and scholarly interest that emerged around buzzwords such as ‘Internationalisation’, ‘Globalisation’ and ‘Europeanisation’ in higher education. It must then have been at the turn of our Millenium that Peter Maassen joined the academic debate about ‘Europe and Higher Education’ (Gornitzka & Maassen 2000a; 2000b). Ironically, this coincided with his move out of the territory of the European Union from the Netherlands to the shores of Oslo in Norway. Obviously, this was a wise move given his subsequent prolific writing on the institutional crisis of the European university, the European modernisation agenda for higher education, the multi-level dynamics of European policy-making, and the Europeanisation of higher education. A healthy scepticism though remained characteristic for his perspective on European politics for higher education. This can be illustrated by some quotes from the introductory chapter of the book on ‘University Dynamics and European Integration’ (Maassen & Olsen 2007):

„European universities face demands for urgent and radical reform . . .
The reform rhetoric is both problem driven and solution driven. . . . On
the one hand, reform demands are raised in an atmosphere of perceived
performance crisis, or even identity crisis. In particular, Europe’s capacity
to compete in the global „knowledge economy“ is seen to be affected
negatively by the perceived incapability of her universities to meet the fast
growing demand for higher-level skills and competencies, and research-
based commercial technologies. . . . The solution prescribes a new
organizational paradigm, rebalancing external and internal relations of
authority and power in university governance. . . . The remedies offered are

celebrating private enterprises and competitive markets and they can be seen as „a solution looking for problems“ (Cyert and March 1963; Cohen *et al.* 1972), and usually finding them, in all sectors of society.“ (Olsen & Maassen 2007, pp. 3–4)

The Institutional Crisis of the European University

A major focus of Peter's work is about understanding 'the problem', that is understanding the institutional crisis of the European university within the frame of the broader political, social and economic transformations in the 'Europe of Knowledge' (Gornitzka *et al.* 2007). Unquestionably, the University in Europe, that is the University as an institutionalized organizational form vested with widely shared norms and values across society, is facing an institutional crisis: a state of institutional confusion (Enders & De Boer 2009) and a process of de-institutionalisation and of re-institutionalization. The traditional compact between the University and Society has been eroding and ideas and actors emerging on the level of European policy-making play a more visible role than in the past in the contest around the institutional form of the modern university. For Peter, understanding the institutional dynamics of the European university thus implies to conceptually and empirically inform the search for a new compact between the university and its environment (Olsen & Maassen 2007).

Among his many valuable contributions in this area has been to reject a functionalist account of the 'performance crisis' in higher education and to dig deeper into changing belief systems and institutional contestations about the role of the university. The well-known environmental determinism that dominates some of the political debates around the reform of the European university could thus neither be the appropriate conceptual lense for understanding university dynamics nor the appropriate strategic tool for political intervention into the institutional foundations and organisational operations of European higher education. Instead, Peter consistently questions the empirical evidence provided (if at all) in European politics for change in higher education, calls for understanding higher education and research policies within wider frames of shifts in governance and reform projects for public services. In consequence, Peter and colleagues developed an ambitious research agenda to identify conditions and possible outcomes of radical reform as well as of more incremental change in European higher education.

The Multi-level Governance of Higher Education and Research

Another major focus of Peter's work is about understanding the 'solution', that is understanding the multi-level dynamics of the governance of higher education and research in Europe. The governance of universities in Europe, related European policies such as the Bologna process (Neave & Maassen 2007) and the Lisbon

agenda, proved to provide fertile ground for the application of the European policy studies literature and the wider governance literature to the field of higher education (Maassen & Stensaker 2011).

The intriguing phenomenon of European integration has indeed challenged our conceptual and empirical tools for higher education studies to integrate the European dimension into frameworks that tended to concentrate on the single nation state and domestic policies for higher education (Enders 2004). The study of the interplay between European policies and domestic policies in its many guises also raises awareness for the study of the organisational adaptation to this policy mix and the role of the universities as policy actors influencing their environment. What stands out in Peter's work on the fascinating emergence of European actors, ideas and powers in higher education is the balance he achieves in taking the European level serious while not neglecting the lasting powers of nation-states and the endurance of the university as an institution. While he realises and analyses the growing capabilities at the European level to influence the fate of the university he stays attentive to the role of nation-states, their political powers and their interplay with the European level. While he looks into the dynamics of European governance and national governance he does not perceive the university as a passive recipient of institutional and organisational frameworks. In more recent work, this perspective has been extended in two ways: First, Peter and colleagues investigated the combined environmental pressures of education policy, research policy and innovation policy on the European university (Maassen & Stensaker 2011); second, further attention was paid to the interplay of European ideas, domestic policies and institutional practices in the Western Balkans (Brankovic *et al.* 2014) and comparative reflections on Poland and Norway (Kwiek & Maassen 2012).

'May You Live in Interesting Times'

Meanwhile, the project of European integration finds itself in the midst of a deep institutional crisis. The European Union is struggling with an economic crisis in as much as with a crisis of democratic legitimacy. In the aftermath of the financial meltdown in 2007 the EURO-Zone continues to suffer. The absence of a 'European response' to the recent refugee crisis highlighted a lack of basic political and humanitarian solidarity, and the British Exit from the European Union has become a serious option.

Currently, 'Europe' seems to be the sick man of Europe and the process of European integration is in a state of stagnation if not decline. Some scholars may feel inclined to argue that the study of the European dynamics does no longer have much to offer given the state of affairs of European integration. Peter's work points into the opposite direction: Studying a historical period of institutional crisis has much to offer for deepening our understanding of institutional dynamics, their underlying forces and their potential outcomes.

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DOUBLE- (OR QUADRUPLE-) ISOLATEDNESS? OR: HOW WE SHOULD LEARN TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE RESEARCHING EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

Studying European integration in higher education may be considered to be fraught with risks. Given that “*The Bologna Process has been one of the most studied, if not the most studied European integration attempt with respect to the University*” (Neave & Maassen 2007, p. 135, emphasis in original), one runs the risk of producing research that is far from novel.

Fortunately (?)

“... studies on European integration and higher education have often suffered from what might be called ‘double-isolatedness’. Many studies have treated higher education as a sector isolated from the overall integration processes. In addition, rarely analytical frameworks from general social sciences, and especially Europeans studies have been used for studying European integration processes in higher education” (Maassen 2009, p. 281, emphasis added).

This chapter aims to unpack the two isolations and to highlight how Peter’s own research has been contributing to decreasing them. Moreover, based on re-reading of Peter’s work, two additional isolations – from history and from the rest of the world – will be identified.

The original two isolations

The first isolation identified by Peter concerns the analysis of European integration in higher education in isolation from other integration processes, in particular in closely related policy areas, such as research, vocational education, education in general etc.

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In his own work, Peter highlighted the importance of looking beyond the Bologna Process, and exploring the linkages with the EU's Lisbon Agenda from 2000, and how *"reform processes interact and intertwine, if not integrate, as several partially interconnected developments intersect, cross and meld"* (Neave & Maassen 2007, p. 135). In other words, European integration in higher education relies on two pillars – a pan-European Bologna and an EU-driven Lisbon pillar (Maassen & Musselin 2009), and is marked by a mixture of *"trans-national, intergovernmental and supranational processes of cooperation and policy making"* (Olsen & Maassen 2007, p. 6).² Moreover, higher education, and more generally knowledge, is often 'exported' to other sectors as a policy solution (Gornitzka & Maassen 2011), in particular in light of the centrality of knowledge policies to overall EU developments (Maassen 2009). The fragmentation of policy making into distinct policy sectors is often mirrored as fragmentation of research about these phenomena. But this approach is not suitable to explore how and why, as demonstrated in relation to EU's knowledge triangle of education-research-innovation, the logics behind integration initiatives may not be necessarily coherent. In higher education the focus is on standard setting (e.g. qualification frameworks, quality assurance standards and guidelines), in research on concentration and in innovation on strengthening the networks between universities and industry (Maassen & Stensaker 2011), and *"new tensions and contestations may arise as policies in these areas are further developed"* (p. 764).

What is interesting here that the isolation of European integration in higher education from other integration processes is inextricably linked to a point Peter made before Bologna and Lisbon became 'all the rage'. In his 2000 analysis of the state-of-the-art of higher education research on both sides of the Atlantic, Peter also outlined an ideal situation that included a plea to *"make possible the development of connecting and (partly) overlapping research and other activities with fields which focus on proximate, complementary domains, for instance, science studies and (non-higher) education studies"* (Maassen 2000, p. 65). This serves to underscore that to understand dynamics in higher education one must do justice to the conditions under which higher education operates, in particular go *"beyond a single institutional framework and take into account inter-institutional tensions and collisions"* (Gornitzka, Maassen, Olsen, & Stensaker 2007, p. 182, emphasis in original).

This plea for a more theoretically robust research approach is closely connected to the second isolation Peter highlighted – isolation from 'the mother disciplines'. It seems that higher education research on European integration has taken on a more general characteristic of higher education research: *"the research work of most career higher education scholars relies on previous higher education publications, and rarely applies more general, basic disciplinary approaches"* (Maassen 2000, p. 59). Furthermore, given that (European) policy making also often suffers from 'strong convictions, weak evidence', one seems to be left with a situation in which *"the theoretical and empirical basis for understanding the institutional dynamics of European higher education institutions is relatively weak"* (Maassen 2007, p. 208).

2 In several of his publications, Peter compares these complex interactions across governance levels to a marble cake. I hereby remind him that his promise to support a discussion about European integration in higher education with a marble cake was made (too) long ago.

Peter's own research on European integration in higher education has been strongly embedded in an institutionalist perspective. He has time and again reminded the community that "*the dynamics of European universities cannot be understood solely in terms of environmental necessities and functional improvement... there may be local, regional and global identifications, as well as European ones*" (Olsen & Maassen 2007, p. 12). In other words, it is necessary to look "*beyond routine, incremental change and reform, and conceptualize current dynamics as search for a new pact... explore the importance of the legitimacy of institutions... analyze change as processes of contestation ... and consider the more complex ecology of processes and determinants*" (Gornitzka *et al.* 2007, p. 182, emphasis in original). These lessons for further research resonate with a number of insights from social sciences (of institutionalist persuasion). Namely, they serve as a reminder that institutions can be seen as nested (Holm 1995) and that one should not forget the normative pillar of institutions (Colyvas & Powell 2006; Scott 2008). This interest to theoretically ground research on European integration of and change in higher education is perhaps most evident in the explicit comparison between several theoretical arguments – global scripts, path-dependence, external shock, incrementalism, intercurrency and temporal sorting – when accounting for change in governance and funding in three Nordic countries (Gornitzka & Maassen 2011).³

Peter's contribution to understanding the intricacies of European integration in higher education mirrors another ideal for higher education research he pleaded for in 2000, and that is to "*to contribute to the theoretical and conceptual state of the art in the 'mother disciplines'*" (Maassen 2000, p. 65). Or, as stressed more recently:

"research on European integration cannot but benefit from broadening the range of sectors and institutional spheres that constitute its basis of analysis... understanding the effects of European integration on the University feeds our insights into the dynamics of European integration that a focus on economic integration alone cannot" (Gornitzka *et al.* 2007, p. 213).

The additional two isolations

While the vision that higher education researchers can indeed follow the footsteps of Clark, Cohen, March and Olsen – who gave the general social sciences the concept of 'organisational saga' and the 'garbage-can' model of decision-making (Clark 1972; Cohen, March, & Olsen 1972) – would be sufficient, Peter has in his work highlighted two additional aspects in which higher education research can be improved, that are also of relevance for social sciences in general.

The analysis of Nordic cooperation in higher education and how it may be affected by European initiatives in higher education is a clear reminder that European integration rarely happens in a vacuum (Maassen, Vabø, & Stensaker

3 Any similarity of this work with (arguably) the best demonstration of the benefits of comparing several theoretical approaches to explaining the same empirical phenomena – Allison's work on Cuban missile crisis (1999) – is probably not coincidental.

2008). While the point that the national level matters is an obvious one (and one Peter has been making as well, see above), the additional message in this work is that there may be other regional integration processes that came before the European one and research isolated from considerations of prior regional dynamics is not going to bear much fruit.

This is more than a (simple) reminder about the importance of path-dependence and the basic tenets of (historical) institutionalism. It is a plea to think carefully about different levels of analysis and to make sure that all relevant levels (and processes embedded in them) are given adequate researchers' attention. The focus on 'below Europe, above nation-state' levels can thus help in identifying part of the reasons why European integration in higher education may be advancing at multiple speeds and why differentiated integration, not only in higher education but also in general (Holzinger & Schimmelfennig 2012), is more a trademark than an exception of European integration.

Finally, research on European integration in higher education has also suffered from myopia to processes beyond Europe. While treating Europe as *sui generis* is not the fault of higher education researchers alone, there is significant potential in comparing European processes to similar dynamics in other parts of the world, such as Africa, Latin America or South East Asia. "*Such a position misses the potential for both highlighting the uniqueness and demystifying it by not going beyond Europe, similar to fruitful analytical angles that are missed in higher education studies by taking the university sector as their sui generis*" (Gornitzka *et al.* 2007, p. 210, emphasis in original).

And here one comes full circle. Not only has Peter's work been a continuous call for and work on improving the theoretical foundations of higher education research. He has also tried to remind us of the importance of solid methodology and benefits of carefully designed comparisons, because while 'strong convictions, weak evidence' may be dangerous for policy makers across different governance levels, it is even more dangerous for (higher education) researchers.

Sure, the 'double-' or 'quadruple-isolatedness' of research on European integration in higher education may be daunting, in particular for a novice researcher who is in need of a map through the fog of concepts open to interpretation and models that are not always as robust as one wants them to be. But the same 'isolatedness' can be considered as an invitation to turn on strong theoretical and methodological lights and point them into the fog. So: stop worrying.

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(NOT SO) STRONG CONVICTIONS AND (STILL KIND OF) WEAK EVIDENCE

Introduction

By all accounts, European integration in higher education should not exist. This was the opening sentence to an article draft long time ago. While somewhat clumsy formulated, it was an attempt to capture the somewhat unexpected changes that have taken place in the last 15 years. The process of constructing the “European University” has been brewing for some time (Corbett 2005), with both ups and downs (Maassen & Musselin 2009), in general having been met with suspicion and constraints once the EU became too eager with its proposals¹. Despite decades of attempts, joint coordination on the EU level remained modest for a long period (with the notable exception of the Erasmus programme). However, since the launch of the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Agenda around the turn of the millennium, there has been a “full swing” (Maassen 2009, p. 281) and a “remarkable upward episode” (Maassen & Musselin 2009, p. 6) for European integration in higher education, creating a complex multi-level system with multiple logics at play (Maassen & Stensaker 2011). Interest in European integration in higher education has been rather prominent in Peter Maassen’s work. An example of this long-standing interest is the book co-edited by Peter Maassen and Johan P. Olson from 2007 “*University dynamics and European integration*”. The book has become a landmark publication, with the introductory chapter that set the agenda has been quoted more than 250 times², and the edited book as a whole has well over 100 citations across a variety of themes.

This contribution will engage in a small empirical exercise to further examine one of the claims in the book, namely that of “strong convictions, weak evidence” (Olsen & Maassen 2007, p. 13). In the book, two “ghosts” were identified representing the *convictions* – the American Ivy League university and the organization and management models from private enterprises. Where the first was frequently used to frame the problem (Europe is lagging behind), and the latter is more frequently presented as the solution, both with sweeping generalisations. The reform agenda is presented as a rather one-size-fits-all approach with little critical examination of what the actual problem is (who is lagging behind and how, what the US model

1 A good case being the ever-so-difficult-to-locate-in-electronic-form Memorandum of higher education from 1992.

2 Google scholar

contains of, and how universities contribute to the development, to name just a few issues) thus being based on rather weak *evidence*.

Having in mind that the Modernisation agenda was updated in 2011, and is now entering a new round of consultations – how strong has the conviction remained and has the evidence improved? Thus, this contribution will examine two aspects of the argument: First, it will attempt to identify potential shifts in policy solutions for European integration processes in higher education as represented in documents related to the Modernisation agenda, and second, it will identify the kind of knowledge base that these European documents have used as legitimation (or evidence). In simple terms, what kind of (and whose) knowledge are these documents based on? Having in mind that education and research are areas with a rather high use of expert groups and matching expertise (Gornitzka & Sverdrup 2008) one also needs to ask the question, whether this is reflected in the knowledge base for these policy proposals?

Thus, the focus here is on the content of policy rather than the process. In this, policy documents are a formal expression of the problems that are considered as relevant and solutions that are considered to be appropriate (based on Gornitzka 1999). As these documents also have a public function, they have to be able to present such proposals and instruments as legitimate, substantiated by particular knowledge claims and/or matching data. So – this little exercise has two components. For the first part of the question (the convictions), a very brief review of key documents has been conducted – the modernisation agendas and their accompanying staff working documents (SEC). For the second part of the question (the evidence), the focus is on the kinds of data sources these various documents have used.

The convictions

So, what has happened since 2007? The EHEA passed its completion target, the Bologna Process lives on and has shifted its focus more recently on teaching and learning processes. The university-business cooperation has been emphasized. A new Modernisation agenda was formulated in 2011. The Framework Programme became “Horizon”. Europe now has a qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF) and one for higher education. A number of initiatives are now coordinated under the umbrella of Erasmus+. Thus, it can be stated that European integration in higher education has definitely moved forward on multiple trajectories and according to multiple logics (Maassen & Stensaker 2011).

For this little exercise, the focus is on the “convictions” presented in the 2011 Modernisation agenda – examining both the staff working document as well as the final communication. Compared to the SEC from 2005, the 2011 SEC opens the scene rather differently. Where 2005 began with framing the activities as a part of the Lisbon agenda, the approach in 2011 appears to have taken a step back, emphasizing institutional diversity as a starting point. While the dual (economic and social) focus has been a characteristic of the EU, the start of the document downplayed that somewhat, and higher education is seen to make a contribution to “*Europe’s*

collective well-being, creating new knowledge, transmitting it to students and fostering innovation” (p. 3). The Bologna Process has obtained a much more prominent role in the document, as a way to describe success and arguably providing the “*EU’s own higher education modernisation agenda with additional momentum*” (p. 6). This could be interpreted as a failure of the Commission to establish the Modernisation agenda on its own, or as a success of integrating the processes over time. While there have been ample studies showing the Commission’s expanded influence on Bologna (Amaral, Neave, Musselin, & Maassen 2009), one could wonder whether the influence is in fact mutual. Bologna can thus effectively occupy some of the existing institutional space initially planned for the Modernisation agendas and export some of its underlying ideas as well.

At the same time, the document is a prime example of a Commission who is reluctant to give up its grand ideas and indicators, with less focus on why these indicators would be the relevant ones, other than that they were referred to in the previous documents. From this perspective, the convictions remain, and the “ghosts” of success roam the document, with equally ethereal substance: “*Despite the large-scale expansion of higher education in the last decade, the EU as a whole still lags behind many of its competitors in terms of the proportion of the active population with a tertiary education qualification*” (p. 17).

The 2011 update of the Modernisation agenda in essence does not come with many new ideas, to a large extent the convictions are recycled and perhaps even watered down. The main message remains – European higher education does not use its potential. At the same time, there is less emphasis on one-size-fits-all, and emphasis on institutional variation is now pronounced: “*higher education institutions too often seek to compete in too many areas, while comparatively few have the capacity to excel across the board*” (p. 3), the notion of excellence is linked to diversity. Furthermore, Bologna is now presented as a third part of the tripod of the European Research Area (ERA), the Modernisation Agenda and the Bologna Process. The objectives largely follow the logic of the previous document: quantifiable increases in participation, quality and relevance, governance and funding, the knowledge triangle, and internationalisation. The causal claims remain unclear, even as the Commission now has introduced the word “evidence” as a way to describe the support for their arguments, and has considerably reduced the use of negative expressions (not performing, not suffice, not deliver, etc.). So – what is this evidence all about?

The evidence

In principal, one cannot assume that policy documents would extensively make references to scientific literature. While this would for instance be the case in Norway, where the latest structural reform in higher education had a long list of bibliography and academic sources as well as grey literature (reports), Commission working papers or communications are not necessarily written in the same style. Existing research on citations in the EU has examined impact assessments that

are arguably a means to consolidate existing knowledge in the field, but no such assessment was developed for the modernisation agendas. Thus, the next best thing are the staff working documents, as they consolidate some of the empirical basis for the convictions presented.

In the SEC (2005) 518 – about half of the references are to other EAC documents. The references also include three EU related reports: a report on student mobility by INCHER at the University of Kassel, commissioned by the European Parliament and the DG Research, the Sapir report (an independent high level study group to reform the economic system of the EU), and a report on the human capital in a global knowledge-based economy. However, aside these, there is little clarity regarding the evidence. The data is mainly obtained from US sources (Open Doors and the Council of Graduate Students). In addition to this, the evidence is composed by statistics from Education at a Glance and Eurostat. Furthermore, concrete references also include The Guardian, China's Statistical Yearbook, and the Global Competitiveness Report by the World Economic Forum. One could argue that overall, this is a rather odd combination of sources, in total being rather thin evidence – in line with the arguments from the book. What is interesting is that the Modernisation agenda highlights on the very first page that they have consulted a number of experts *ad personam*, this being emphasized rather explicitly in the document. While this is an impressive list of names, one could wonder about the selection criteria. Of the eight included, there are three economists, one law professor, two experts from university leadership, and two represent scholars with a political career.

While the formatting aspects of this are perhaps less significant (the 2011 staff working document has in fact introduced a “bibliography” in a more substantiated form), it is also clear that the scope of information has been widened. While the 2011 document to a large extent reads like recycling, it shows a much wider set of sources. Rather than over half of the sources, now only about one fourth links back to the Commission. Sources based on research are primarily commissioned research papers (i.e. the CHEPS studies on the Bologna assessment and higher education reforms or the Oxford Research study on skills). A stark difference is that stakeholder organisations and the Bologna Process have become an important source for knowledge – with multiple references to communiques, as well as documents from EUA, ESU and ENQA³. However, the remaining of the document still largely builds on statistical sources. So while it seems that there is a wider inclusion of stakeholder views and the role of the Bologna Process has become more substantiated in the legitimation of problems and solutions, the kind of knowledge that the Modernisation agenda builds on is still very much emphasizing indicators and quantification, with less rationale for why these would be relevant to be examined.

In the actual communications, the way in which particular proposals are presented is anchored in consultation and a stated agreement among respondents.

3 European University Association (EUA), European Student Union (ESU), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

This is to a large extent to be expected, considering that the SECs are accompanying documents to provide the basis for the policy texts.

Concluding comments

So what can be concluded from this little empirical exercise? Not *too* much. However, perhaps a few comments can be made. Perhaps the relationship between the Modernisation agendas and the Bologna Process is more complex than the Commission exerting influence. When the Bologna Process and the stakeholders who have a prominent role in it obtain a larger segment for the kind of knowledge that is used to legitimate particular preferences about the Modernisation agenda, this could also be an indication that the Bologna Process is slowly occupying the political space of the Modernisation agenda. Currently, the Modernisation agenda is currently going into a third round of reformulation and consultation, and the Bologna Process has recently obtained some fresh blood with its emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning. Perhaps it is soon time to re-examine the relationship between these processes. For the time being, the “strong convictions and weak evidence” claim still holds true. Maybe European integration in its current form is unexpected, but it keeps on withering along.

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NATIONAL REFORMS AND THEIR EUROPEAN CONTEXTS: ON INSTITUTIONAL AND INSTRUMENTAL VISIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY APPLIED TO THE POLISH CASE

Introduction

I had been studying various aspects of Polish higher education reforms for several years before I encountered Peter Maassen and Johan P. Olsen's *University Dynamics and European Integration* (2007). As a collection of chapters on different visions of the institution of the university – referred both to the past and, especially, to the future – it had a tremendous effect on my thinking about what is behind higher education reforms. About that time, there appeared an opportunity to fund a research project on Polish and Norwegian reforms, NORPOL (2009–2011). I had an honor and pleasure to co-run it with Peter. The two years of collaboration and joint conferences in the two countries were very fruitful, especially in the context of understanding the growing conflict over where Polish higher education should go; and what the preferred shape of reforms should be. Our joint project coincided with the period of heated debates about the co-called Kudrycka reforms, changing basic rules of the academic game in Poland – in both governance and funding – in 2009–2011 (Kwiek 2015b). Both teams studied Polish and Norwegian reforms in a wider European context in detail, and our co-edited book was published in 2012 (Kwiek and Maassen 2012).

I am referring here to the mind-opening Maassen and Olsen's book because it has formed my approach to what Peter with Åse Gornitzka, Johan P. Olsen and Bjørn Stensaker termed the “search for a new pact” (Gornitzka *et al.* 2007) – and which I was able to refer to the complicated Polish case of universities under powerful reform pressures. The conceptual framework developed in the Maassen and Olsen's book was fascinatingly useful for thinking about Poland. The book provided both an overview of the four visions of the university and, especially, detailed commentaries on each of them, leading to a jointly produced, daring research agenda.

The relevance of ideal-type of university models

Specifically, the book led me to studying the applicability of the two following models to the realities of Polish universities: the university as “a rule-governed community of scholars” (related to Robert Birnbaum's “collegial” model and Ian McNay's “collegium”); and the university as an “instrument for shifting national

political agendas”, developed in detail by Peter and Åse (Maassen and Gornitzka 2007, 81–98).

The university in the first model has its own constitutive, normative, and organizational principles; it shows a shared commitment to scholarship and learning, basic research, and the search for the truth; it is supposed to benefit society as a whole and not specific “stakeholders”; truth is an end in itself, and the higher education system evolves through internal, organic processes (rather than external design) (Olsen 2007, 30–31; see also two classical statements on the university as a “community of scholars”: John D. Millett’s *The Academic Community. An Essay on Organization*, 1962, 66–105; and Paul Goodman’s *The Community of Scholars*, 1962, 84–106). In the second model of the university – as an “instrument for shifting national political agendas” – the university is viewed as “a rational tool for implementing the purposes and policies of democratically elected leaders” (Olsen 2007, 31).

The organizing principle of the latter vision as defined by Peter and Åse is “hierarchy and command” and in this vision there are two core functions of the university: the training of employees for the growing professional bureaucracy and the production of knowledge in areas that provide the basis for the state’s wealth and welfare. Its underlying assumption is that “the state is best positioned to represent the public interest” (and to set up national agendas and identify national priorities) and its underlying question is “who gets what, when and how” (Maassen and Gornitzka 2007, 83). Universities’ main tasks are thus the contribution of the knowledge of direct relevance to the state and the provision of competent civil servants and workers. The organizational autonomy of universities is low, and individual academic freedom stays at a relatively high level. In this vision, outputs rule, rather than inputs, as in previous decades. The university’s relationship with the state and society at large is “redefined and reorganized” and the current transformations involve “more than the marginal adjustments to changing circumstances” (Maassen and Stensaker 2011, 766). Universities and the economy are brought together closer than ever before, and there is growing policy emphasis on the economic role of higher education. There is intense tension between economic and social perspectives in viewing the institution of the university (Gornitzka and Maassen 2000, 219). And, in more general terms, there is intense tension between its institutional vision and various forms of its instrumental visions, including the one in which it is merely an “instrument for national political agendas”.

While studying the Maassen and Olsen book, my research question was to what extent Polish universities could manifest the characteristics of the above two models. I linked the two visions presented above to selected variables from a large-scale European dataset on the changing academic profession in 11 countries (the combined CAP and EUROAC datasets) to see how the Polish system could be located among other European systems in the process of deep Europeanization (see Maassen and Musselin 2009). The initial hypothesis was that Poland should be a “community of scholars” type of system to a higher degree than most European systems. In particular, I assumed that the current dynamics of changes was as follows: the collegial model is powerful today but it may be slowly eroding in the face of ongoing structural reforms.

The first model was found exceptionally powerful among Polish academics, and the second model was powerfully promoted in Poland by the international community of experts appealing to such umbrella terms as the “knowledge-driven economy”; this model was also strongly promoted by the policy-making community in a recent wave of higher education reforms in Poland, heavily influenced by the OECD report on Poland, swiftly translated into Polish (see Fulton *et al.* 2007). This was actually *the* model for the policymaking community in the recent reform period.

The initial assumptions were that there might be strong incommensurability between the values shared by two communities (the Polish academic community and the Polish policymaking community). Polish academics turned out to be strongly embedded in the first model of university organization (“a rule-governed community of scholars”) and the Polish policy-making community turned out to be heavily involved in implementing the second model of university organization (“an instrument for national political agendas”), so carefully defined by Peter and Åse. The general rejection of the direction of ongoing reforms by large segments of Polish academia may be a reflection of a fundamental incommensurability regarding the guiding principles believed to drive Polish universities. The above rejection may be the result of a clash between two university models carefully defined in the 2007 book. These initial assumptions were confirmed by the detailed empirical analyses (see Kwiek 2015a). The emergent conflict between the vision of the university shared by the academic community (the value-based, autonomy-driven “community of scholars” model) and the vision shared by the policy-making community (instrumental, externally-driven) is a conflict about what can be termed “basic values” (Bowen and Schuster 1986, 53): those which are “derived from long academic tradition and tend to be conveyed from one generation to the next”.

Final reflections

Before I have read the Maassen and Olsen book (2007), I was trying to present the ongoing conflicts between the reformers and the reformees in Polish higher education in various conceptual frameworks. But the split between “institutional” and “instrumental” visions of the university in general, and between its “collegial” and “national agendas” visions in particular, turned out to be especially useful. This conceptual framework developed over the years in various forms (from the opposition between universities as “social institutions” and as “industrial branches” in Gornitzka and Maassen 2000 to “institutional” and “instrumental” models presented in Maassen and Olsen 2007) proved to be operationalizable and measurable, using the data on academic attitudes and behaviors across Europe. I owe the successful combination of theoretical insights and primary data analysis to Peter, and especially his sustained emphasis on the usefulness of the 2007 book. He was right in suggesting the book to us, both Polish and Norwegian teams in the NORPOL project. The book – and especially its concluding chapter about the search for a new “foundational pact” and changing relationship between the university, state and society – has been a continuing source of inspiration for me.

Still, the book opens numerous roads to be further explored. I am happy that I had a privilege to be working with Peter, and that I was able to test empirically the theoretical frameworks he developed so successfully. Peter, thank you!

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NORDIC HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALIZATION: THE NEW BILDUNG OR A PRESTIGE ECONOMY?

Nordic Model higher education and the new internationalization

The tenants of the Nordic Model are built upon ideals of equity, welfare, commonness and democracy. These social and cultural ideals are embedded in various institutions, and are translated into symbolic and material actions. In the field of higher education internationalization, the Nordic model has been firmly embodied in many programs and projects, most notably the Nordic cooperation program, NORDPLUS that was adopted in 2000. In 2004, Maassen and Uppstrøm undertook a project examining the then current state of the program and the role Nordic cooperation in general played in the internationalization of higher education. Although their findings supported the idea that internationalization generally and Nordic cooperation specifically, formally aligned with the Nordic model ideals, they noted that there was a growing awareness that a ‘new internationalization’ was developing globally.

Contrary to the Nordic model ideals, the new internationalization is underpinned by notions of economic competitiveness and a commercial orientation (Maassen & Uppstrøm 2004, p. 18). The new internationalization was arguably further enhanced with the introduction and developments associated with the Bologna Process and Lisbon Agenda that prompted a number of changes in all of the Nordic countries. As Maassen *et al.* (2008) write, “it is an interesting issue whether Nordic higher education institutions have managed to maintain the traditional Nordic cooperation when confronted with the high-profiled European Initiatives in this field” (p. 128). Indications that the traditional Nordic cooperation and associated Nordic ideals are at risk of being influenced if not replaced are apparent in many of the Nordic countries. Specifically and more recently is a publication from the Norwegian ministry of education and research entitled *Panorama* (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2015), which encourages HEIs to have a strategic focus on international cooperation with the economically emerging BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries, rather than an open call or emphasis on capacity building interactions. The focus on the BRICS countries for both education and research is clearly stated as a means to connect to Norwegian higher

education as well as industry to the new centers of “global knowledge production” to “strengthen competitiveness and innovation” (*ibid.*, p. 9)¹.

Tempering or perhaps ‘filtering’ (Christensen, Gornitzka & Maassen 2014) the shift to focusing solely on the economic relationships within higher education cooperation is the emphasis on social cohesion (Maassen & Stensaker 2011), as well as other institutional and contextual factors (Stensaker *et al.* 2008). Despite national or regional ‘filters’, the developments in the field of internationalization signal a new paradigm is emerging for Nordic internationalization. Maassen (2015) thus asks: “what can be the new paradigm? Is this signaling a post-internationalization age?” We take up Maassen’s query, and suggest that indeed there is a new paradigm emerging for Nordic internationalization—that of ‘Prestige Internationalization’. Building from the work of Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), we argue that through the theory of academic capitalism we can see that higher education is a prestige economy built on limitless competition for funding and prestige, fostering the creation of new circuits of knowledge, people and resources flows and directing HEIs’ actions.

Prestige economy and Erasmus+

Academic capitalism describes changes that took place in many Anglo-American higher education systems due the reforms in the broader political economy of the countries (Slaughter & Leslie 1997). Changes in direct state funding and increasing numbers of students created conditions for HEIs that fostered a more intensive competition for external resources (Slaughter & Rhoades 2004). Yet, it was not just any external resource, certain funding and funders were and are considered more ‘prestigious’ (Taylor 2016). For example, in the United States, funds derived from state allocations and student tuition are essential for running HEIs, but are often partially reallocated to faculty and departments able to bring in additional grants and contracts that differentiate the HEIs from other HEIs while at the same differentiating within the specific HEI. The overall effect has been a shift in how faculty members, departments and HEIs are regarded, so they are increasingly seen “as experts capable of generating revenues (Brint 1994) while simultaneously viewed as subject to administrative scrutiny to determine their contributions” (Rosinger *et al.* 2016, p. 28). As such, resources stemming from research-related activities and research-based university-industry collaboration aimed at economic innovation are perceived as more important than other types of funding, thus building other indicators of success, or lack thereof, for the various academic units within HEIs.

In many of the Nordic countries elements of the prestige economy are becoming visible in various areas of higher education, including internationalization. Although changes in state funding have not been as dramatic as those seen in Anglo-American contexts, shifts made in basic funding arrangements for higher education also put a

1 Translation from the original: “Regjeringen ønsker at høyere utdannings- og forskningssamarbeid skal ses i sammenheng med norsk næringslivs internasjonale virksomhet, kompetansebehov og innovasjonssatsinger.”

premium on acquiring competitive funding, with particular types more sought after (i.e. European grants/awards). For internationalization activities, funding from the European Commission is often seen as the most prestigious. In 2014 the European Commission unveiled a more streamlined funding program for higher education internationalization, the Erasmus+ program. Erasmus+ brought together seven of the existing European programs (i.e. Erasmus Mundus, Lifelong Learning, Youth in Action, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink, and the Programs of cooperation with industrialized countries in the field of higher education).

In the case of one Nordic country, Norway, the Erasmus+ program represented an expansion of opportunities, as previously Norway was able to participate only in selected programs due to the fact that it is outside of the European Union. However, the Erasmus+ program also represented a greater financial investment for the Norwegian state as participation requires payment to the European Commission. As such, there is an explicit interest of the Norwegian government for all Norwegian HEIs to engage in Erasmus+ to benefit from their investment. In a presentation of the Erasmus+ program given by two representatives of the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU) prior to the official start of the Erasmus+ program in 2014, the SIU representatives stressed the importance of applying for funding under this program, not only to recoup the financial input from the Norwegian state but also to take part in the high-status program. In outlining Erasmus+ one representative made it was clear that the program's emphasis was not solely linked to education or research, but was also closely tied to the European emphasis on jobs and growth. He noted that despite being "typical democratic Norwegian" institutions, HEIs need to "get the [Erasmus+] rhetoric into your head" when applying for one of the grants (presentation, UiO 15.10.2013). Erasmus+ focus on strategic engagement and alliances between HEIs and businesses and industry was outside of the typical Norwegian internationalization mindset, as seen in the likes of the Nordic NORDPLUS program. Yet, as Maassen and Uppström (2004) indicated the 'new internationalization' was afoot and by 2013 was quickly developing into concrete programs and symbolic prestige that Norwegian HEIs were encouraged to engage with to have opportunities that bring in material and symbolic resources.

In the presentation the SIU represented attempted to 'filter' the Erasmus+ program by stressing that HEIs only need to align with the rhetoric to acquire the resources, after which HEIs can focus on their own goals. Yet in promoting and facilitating the program, SIU and by extension of being a state agency the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, is contributing to expanding the ideas embedded in the program. In essence, SIU is supporting competition for external resources, alliances with industry and encouraging a more stratified internationalization by giving preference to particular 'strategic' countries. Supporting SIU are the local internationalization offices found in all Norwegian HEIs. These offices, to differing degrees, support faculty and students in accessing European grants and present the successes of the programs and projects on HEIs websites, contributing to the prestige of the institution, department and ultimately the faculty. Hence, for Norwegian higher education, prestige is arguably one of the

driving factors for engaging in the Erasmus+ program. But it isn't just prestige, many of the 'new internationalization' programs are designed to link higher education to broader economic goals and to stay abreast with global trends. In a meeting between SIU and its Dutch sister internationalization agency, NUFFIC, in 2014 discussions around how to navigate aspects associated with the 'new internationalization', such as encouraging international students to remain in host countries took place. The Chair of SIU's board of directors noted that considerations for providing opportunities for international students to remain in Norway after completing their degrees, the SIU team replied that, "we would never think of going that far" (interview SIU Chair, October 2014). However, the Chair did recognize that SIU's "focal point" had changed since 2013 and with the recently elected government the focus was shifting from engaging in capacity building projects towards an emphasis on keeping Norwegian higher education and industry connected to key countries for reasons of competitiveness and innovation (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2015).

Bildung or prestige internationalization?

Given Norway's commitment to Erasmus+ its HEI system may be on a similar path. Karseth and Solbrekke (2016) argue that the EU and Bologna positions with regard to curriculum are moving Europe to "the final demise of the Humboldtian university" (p. 229). Their analysis focuses on the curricular changes through which the soft governance of the EU and Bologna processes have created new governance structures and policy guidelines that lay the groundwork for programs such as Erasmus + that privilege prestige competition, workforce development and job creation above the autonomy of the faculty with regard to curricular matters. Additionally, as part of Olson's (2016) analysis of German internationalization, she concluded that "Although each practical change may not seem dramatic, taken together these actions [moving from "a simple international office to having in-house professionals or hired professional marketing units, branch recruitment offices in key countries, and sophisticated services"] alter the vocabularies, narratives, and frames of reference for HEIs and internationalization" that result in "channeled competition and the building of a country-wide brand [that] will benefit both the system and individual HEIs" (p. 248).

In short, Maassen, who is committed to the Nordic Model, was prescient in foreseeing a new internationalization paradigm, which might challenge it. While Norway is far from "academic capitalism," a development the authors of this piece and those cited in it deeply regret, the prestige economy of higher education combined with the incentives offered by states and the EU are pushing Norway in the direction of greater competition. This competition is focused on prestige (excellent research), but also a competition that includes partnerships between HEIs and industry aimed on turning research into commodities on international markets. This paradigm values faculty less for following where research leads and more for what they contribute to economic development.

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EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH: CHALLENGING COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Introduction

The theme of European integration in higher education and research explicitly came to the fore in Peter Maassen's work in the 2000s. However, since the beginning of his research a seminal comparative concern reflected his awareness about the need to go beyond the nation-state as a unit of analysis. Actually, comparative higher education policy is an enduring topic in his academic work focusing on the analysis of trends, issues and diversification of higher education systems. The comparative perspective underlined that the relationship between higher education and the nation-states should be broadened to take into account emerging regulatory patterns and international and supranational coordination efforts. In this sense, his research on governing European higher education systems and institutions was a door way to direct his focus on the role of higher education in the processes of Europeanisation. The path of Peter Maassen's work on European integration in higher education and research evolved around major themes such as the relationships between the nation-state and higher education systems and the role of university dynamics and of organizational changes in European integration.

The nation-state and the European dimension

Even though, in a first phase, the nation-state was the unit of analysis, (e.g. Goedegebuure *et al.* 1994) the international perspective was in fact central in Maassen's scholarship. The European TSER/HEINE project, which he has coordinated, can be seen as a turning point in his work to considering the European dimension in higher education studies. In that phase the focus was mainly on the relationships between the state and higher education and the transformation of the political steering modes in Europe (e.g. Gornitzka & Maassen 2000). The next step took research on policy change focusing on the dynamics of higher education in the Europeanisation processes. This development underlined the need to pay attention to the "crucial interplay between the new and emerging levels of coordination of European higher education" (Huisman, Maassen, & Neave 2001, 11), as it is visible in the book he edited in 2001 with Guy Neave and Jeroen Huisman. Multi-level governance and national political steering of higher education were intertwined with on-going reforms initiated in the 1980s across Europe.

University dynamics and European integration

Expanding the focus on the role of higher education in the processes of Europeanisation Maassen's work since mid-2000s concentrated on the relationships between European integration and higher education. Actually, in 2007, with Johan P. Olsen he has edited a book *University Dynamics and European Integration* (Maassen & Olsen 2007) that became a central reference in the area of higher education studies, and two years later he has edited, with Alberto Amaral, Guy Neave and Christine Musselin, also a major book on *European Integration and the Governance of Higher Education and Research* (Amaral, Maassen, Musselin, & Neave 2009).

The analyses of the transformations that European higher education systems and institutions were (and still are) experimenting envisaging European integration, namely those resulting from the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (the Bologna process), were articulated, on the one hand, with the creation of the European Research Area (ERA) and, on the other hand, with the national conditions and specificities impacting on the reforms. The question of how do the European integration efforts, induced by goals and by the political instruments developed for their attainment, affect higher education institutions not only in their organizational forms but also in their basic activities, came into the center of the stage. In this sense, university dynamics emerged clearly as a *locus* of the interplay between levels in the coordination of European higher education, i.e. supranational, national and institutional. Simultaneously, Maassen's work has bridged higher education research and research on European studies by addressing the question of "how the dynamics of the European university has been affected by European integration, cooperation and policy-making" (Maassen & Olsen 2007, 181). The fact that European universities were living a critical period in which the power, authority and responsibility in the governance of universities – as well as the introduction of market-like mechanisms in political coordination of higher education systems and institutions – drove Peter Maassen to underpin the rise of a 'new pact' between society and European universities. These transformations were pointed out as being behind the ideograph of 'Europe of knowledge'. The analysis of the reconfiguration of higher education under 'Europe knowledge' had major support in, and expanded, his previous research on the relationships between the political power and higher education systems and institutions.

Bridging higher education and research and European integration

Peter Maassen's work moved European integration to the center of the field of research on higher education. The dilemmas and contradictions stemming from the relationships between the governance layers of higher education – the supranational, national and institutional levels – reshaped his comparative perspective. By mapping the changes in the European university with regard to its organization and governance, to the development of European level institutions actors and policies influencing the European university and by exploring the relationship between this two analytical strands allowed Peter Maassen to underline "that European elements can in practice hardly be separated anymore from the national ones" (Maassen &

Olsen 2007, 181). The long lasting topic of governing and governance of higher education in Peter Maassen's research was reconfigured under the framework of European integration of higher education and research.

Organizational changes and the comparative perspective

The late developments of Maassen's research reflect the reshaping of his comparative perspective under the European Union political coordination of higher education. Actually, in the field European integration and higher education "... to study any single process of European integration in isolation is problematic. Under some conditions, as Bologna and Lisbon demonstrate, reform processes interact and intertwine, if not integrate, as several partially interconnected developments intersect, cross and meld" (Neave & Maassen 2007, 135).

This is the case of university autonomy. Under the framework of the modernization agenda of the EC (2006) it was made clear that the latter mission and commitment to promote the roles of higher education and pointed out three areas of 'possible reform' in higher education: curricular, governance and funding (European Commission 2007). This agenda of modernization, as Peter Maassen highlighted "is addressing more or less the same reform issues as the European ministries have done for 15–25 years, and suggests that more needs to be done: larger and more radical institutional autonomy, a more radical professionalisation of institutional management and leadership, more private funding (incl. tuition fees), etc. (Maassen 2008, 109). On-going reforms at the national level were intersected and crossed by the European coordination efforts and are impinging on the way higher education institutions reconfigure their autonomy. Peter Maassen's research has been highlighting precisely that university autonomy as part of European integration cannot be studied in isolation, let alone when one assumes a comparative perspective. However, he clearly assumes that the national level is still key in the regulation of the systems and that it is the "most important governance layer for European higher education" (Maassen 2008, 99). Maassen's research and scholarship have been emphasizing that there are multiple external relationships affecting the autonomy of universities and that the European elements influence not only their organizational features but also the way autonomy is 'lived' in their basic activities (Fumasoli, Gornitzka, & Maassen 2014, 11). Institutional autonomy and organizational change dynamics are better understood using a comparative perspective to grasp these processes: "Autonomy is not only a question of delegating decision making competencies along the hierarchical line of command between the responsible Ministry and subordinate university. Nor is it merely a question of substituting state control over university activities with market dependencies" (Fumasoli, Gornitzka, & Maassen 2014, 5). This stance challenges comparative approaches "either comprehensive or descriptive, strongly focused on the larger EU member states, or individual country case studies" (Fumasoli, Gornitzka, & Maassen 2014, 11). Actually, the analysis of institutional autonomy and correlated

processes opens avenues for further research focusing on the need to compare the 'policy issues' within and across countries and institutions (Maassen 2008).

Peter Maassen's work on European integration in higher education and research went beyond the (inter)national perspective without hindering the nation-state as the "most important" governance layer. While European integration gained momentum in his scholarship by recognizing a European dimension, challenging the nation-state as unit of analysis, it did not dilute it in supranational governance. Moreover, another Maassen's major contribute to higher education studies relies on the fact that his research bridged higher education and European studies scholarship by underlying the role of university dynamics and of organizational changes. With this background, his research has brought forward the need to adopt a challenging comparative perspective that simultaneously acknowledges the influence of supranational coordination efforts and that reforms do not take place without national governments.

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HIGHER EDUCATION
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INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION, EXCHANGE AND PARTNERSHIP: NETHERLANDS, NORWAY AND SOUTH AFRICA

Introduction

When Peter Maassen was invited to South Africa to participate in the historic discussions about the policy proposals for the reform of higher education post-1994, he arrived with Frans Van Vught – both sleekly dressed in jeans, high collar shirts and blue jackets. Not only had apartheid South Africa isolated us from higher education debates, we did not even know how global higher education experts dressed! South African scholars involved were not only impressed with their dress style, but also by their sleek ideas and systematic diagrams of higher education systems. They worked in tandem and finished each other's sentences. This was South Africa's introduction to the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) at the University of Twente in the Netherlands. South African Commissioners serving on the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) wore a path to the Netherlands, so much so that one of the Commissioners, Jon File, is still there a few decades later.

Maassen continues to visit South Africa from Oslo, virtually on an annual basis. Over the years, Teboho Moja has served as a visiting Professor at the University of Oslo, and Nico Cloete is currently appointed as a guest Professor there. The three will meet in New York in May 2016 to continue to exchange ideas on policies and practices, as well as new ideas on key issues in higher education and development that span three continents. The exchanges include a focus on producing a new generation of higher education researchers in Africa (see also other contributions in this section).

Twenty years of engagement with Maassen has produced three books and a number of book chapters and reports. These have made a significant impact on the understanding of higher education in Africa – both from our perspective and from that of scholars in the field in the US and Europe, including the roles in African higher education of the latter.

A New Higher Education Governance Model for South Africa

In 1995, Nelson Mandela appointed the NCHE (see NCHE 1996) with Moja as Executive Director and Cloete as Director of Research. The NCHE was charged with advising the new 'government of national unity' on the restructuring of higher education by undertaking a situation analysis; formulating a vision for higher education; and putting forward policy proposals designed to ensure the development of a well-planned, integrated and high quality system of higher education.

The crucial contribution from CHEPS was their model of *rational planning and control* for the whole system, and the *model of self-regulation*. South Africans were impressed by the rationality of the 'new governance' approach and seduced by the Janus-faced, central-decentralised role of government (Maassen & Van Vught 1988). The influence of the international policy experts was considerable. In particular, combining their expertise with the emergence of the new information and communication technology made their contribution almost instantaneous and very alluring. It was much easier, and quicker, to get a short position paper from an Internet-connect expert in the Netherlands than from a South African academic, who, more often than not, had not read the latest international literature and, in 1995, did not even have email as yet (Cloete & Muller 1998).

The NCHE proposed a new model of 'cooperative governance' in an attempt to mediate the opposition between state intervention and institutional autonomy. Here, the state's role was reconstructed as steering and coordinating, informed by a Higher Education Management and Information System (HEMIS), while institutional autonomy was to be exercised within the limits of accountability. The democratised cooperative governance relationship between the state and higher education institutions had to reconcile the self-regulation of institutions with the decision-making of central authorities. Van Vught described that new policy framework as the most comprehensive and ambitious reform of a higher education system undertaken anywhere in the world (*ibid.*). The new framework changed the way government and universities think and talk about higher education governance in the post-apartheid era. It also introduced an innovative structure, the Institutional Forum, where all stakeholders met to raise and discuss issues.

A Review of the New Governance Model

Ten years after the NCHE's (1996) report, Cloete, Maassen and Moja were part of a team that published a book, *Transformation in Higher Education: Global pressures and local realities* (Cloete et al. 2006), which reviewed the post-1994 higher education reform in South Africa. The concluding chapter, 'Modes of governance and the limits of policy' (Muller, Maassen, Cloete 2006), was a review of governance reforms. We wrote, amongst others, that South Africa had the good fortune to initiate and undergo a period of radical reform during what has come to be known globally as the 'Roaring Nineties', roughly bracketed by the fall of the Berlin Wall and 9/11. This was the decade – for nearly all developed countries and many developing countries – of unprecedented economic growth and new levels of prosperity. This

rapid growth, requiring rapid adaptability, fuelled the gathering rejection of the 'iron cage' of the traditional governance approach in the private and public sectors alike (Cloete *et al.* 2006).

In South Africa, following a financial crisis precipitated an outflow of capital in 1996, deficit-reducing policies were put in place as premier instruments of finance policy for the country, and it was only a matter of time before its hegemonic effects would be felt in all other domains of policy and governance. Under these circumstances, the erstwhile Department of Education's participation approach to governance and policy in higher education stood little chance of being implemented. Its main function, during the middle years of the decade, was to buy symbolic legitimisation and consensus – despite what had been the undoubtedly good intentions of its proponents. We argued that our rather naïvely rationalist conception of policy had bumped up against certain realities (*ibid.*).

The weak infrastructural power of the state in the early post-1994 years could not make the trade-offs necessary for greater participation and more cooperation. Following the superordinate decision of financial austerity, came the slow process of conforming sectoral policies and approaches (to a greater or lesser extent) to the hegemony of finance. Having to conform to national macro-policy pushed higher education into the market while, in part, it continued to cling to remnants of traditional governance steering and, at the same time, ideologically to the rhetoric of participation, equity and social justice. This curious composite mode, with a benign mythical superstructure and a more destructive but invisible base, was understandably represented and responded to quite differently by different constituencies, expressing different interests:

- The Minister of Education and his Department expressed themselves in philosophical opposition to the market, while technically implementing market features, or at least features that were to have market effects.
- The policy analysts allied to the African National Congress – by the same logic, but drawing diametrically-opposed conclusions – lamented the betrayal of participation, thereby curiously fulfilling the Party's necessary ideological role of unity construction in a time of market-fuelled dispersal of interests.
- The weak higher education institutions complained that it left them dangling in the wind of the market, and about the lack of state intervention.
- The strong institutions invoked university autonomy and complained of too much state intervention.

We characterised this direction, following (Peters 2001), as a market-led governance approach with two distinct subtypes: a flexible/managerial component with minor interventionist features, and a deregulatory/interventionist component with substantial market features that could continue to pose threats to the weaker institutions. It would not be adequate to describe this approach as a political U-turn; nor would it be adequate to attribute it solely to a technical deficit. Rather, it came about as a result of a broader structural set of forces shaping the field (Cloete *et al.* 2006). We argued that the symbolic rhetoric of the first phase may yet linger awhile since it might have some use, but that it would not last long. Further, we

contended that South African higher education policy was heading for that Janus-headed phase described by Maassen and Van Vught (1988) for the Netherlands, and by Amaral and Magelhães (2001) for Portugal. In all of this, South Africa was following well-trodden reform footsteps – albeit without the effects expected from the 1994 ‘revolution’.

At the time of writing of this chapter, the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall ‘social movements’ have driven higher education to its biggest post-apartheid crisis by completely abandoning the old-style rationalistic, stakeholder dialogue model, in favour of a no-hierarchy, internet-age, instant-crowd-mobilisation approach (see Castells 2012). Having said this, these current social movements have also shown some signs of old-style ‘third force’ party politics (Cloete 2016).

A South African Higher Education Amendment Bill tabled in April 2016 is described by William Somo, a ministerial spokesperson, as follows: ‘The proposed changes to laws governing tertiary institutions should not be seen as a blank cheque giving the Minister unrestricted powers. In actual fact, the Bill requires the Minister to do much more before acting.’¹ The Janus-faced talk resurfaces.

Development Aid in Africa

By 2006, bored and disappointed with South African governance reform, Cloete and Maassen undertook a review of higher education in Africa, and realised that higher education governance on the continent was in even more of quagmire than South Africa. This led to a study on higher education and development aid in Africa, and its (mainly unintended) consequences (Maassen *et al.* 2007).

Internationally, current reforms are characterised by a common core consisting of strengthening university autonomy; professionalising university management and leadership; introducing more competitive elements of university funding; and stimulating a research focus on science, technology and the life sciences. Strikingly, there is one major university policy area that is hardly affected by these developments: the university and ‘North-South’ development cooperation (*ibid.*).

A closer reading of the main international declarations and agreements on development in Africa shows widely divergent approaches, with emphasis on one or more of the following: aid, trade, debt reduction, poverty relief, improvements in health care, security, infrastructure, investment, governance and capacity development. There is no generally-accepted ‘development model’ or approach that links a set of key drivers for development in Africa. This raises the question of the role of higher education in development. Our analysis of the role of the university in development cooperation was informed by Olsen’s (2007) models on university governance and organisation. We posited the following four models (Maassen & Cloete 2011):

- The traditional development approach: higher education as a non-focal/luxury ancillary

1 <http://www.dhet.gov.za/SiteAssets/Latest%20News/February%202016/The%20Higher%20Education%20Amendment%20Bill%20Misinterpreted.pdf>.

- The institutional development approach: the university as a self-governing institution (the ‘Republic of Science’)
- The instrumental development approach: the university as a producer of appropriately skilled professionals and applied knowledge, and
- The engine of development approach: the university as an engine of development in the new knowledge economy.

We acknowledged that these models do not exist in a pure form in practice and are not mutually exclusive. Most countries involved in development aid subscribe to some version of ‘the university as engine of development in the knowledge economy’ but, contradictorily, push a different approach for the role of higher education in developing countries. Here, the dominant approach adopted is the ‘instrument for development’ model, which implies a different role for higher education in the South (*ibid.*). A major consequence of this approach is the relative neglect of the research function of universities. Institutional capacity-building is limited to management and teaching capacity with, for example, hardly any serious effort to relate the relatively marginal basic research activities in universities to the investments in centres and programmes of research excellence in the donor countries. This contributes to the growing gap between universities in developing countries and those in donor countries when it comes to knowledge production and contribution to innovation. Despite many good intentions, such as ‘sustainable development’, the continuation of systematic gaps, and the disconnection of external from internal development policies, ensure that improvements in higher education could remain largely a mix of the promotion of narrow donor country interests, Santa Claus-type patronage, and never-ending dependency (*ibid.*).

A Framework for HERANA: Pact, academic core and coordination

Concurrent to that study, the Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa (HERANA) was conceptualised. In 2008 the HERANA project was established with funding support from the US Foundation Partnership (Ford, Carnegie, Rockefeller and Kresge) and the Norwegian Agency for Research and Development (NORAD). HERANA is managed by the Centre for Higher Education Trust (CHET) in South Africa and has more than 50 participating academics from Africa, Europe and the US.²

The project involved the collection of data at both the national and institutional levels from flagship universities in eight African countries: Botswana – University of Botswana; Ghana – University of Ghana; Kenya – University of Nairobi; Mauritius – University of Mauritius; Mozambique – Eduardo Mondlane University; South Africa – Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (which was replaced by the University of Cape Town in the final analysis); Tanzania – University of Dar es Salaam; and Uganda – Makerere University.

2 For more details see: <http://www.chet.org.za/programmes/herana/>.

At the heart of the project was the development of a conceptual framework, to which Maassen in particular made crucial contributions. Maassen argued that the university's unique contribution to development is via knowledge – either transmitting knowledge to individuals (teaching), who will go out into the world and contribute to society in a variety of ways, or producing and disseminating knowledge (research, engagement) that can be applied to the problems of society and economy. A university's ability to make a sustainable contribution to development therefore focuses on the nature and strength of its knowledge activities. We linked the approach to Burton Clark's (1998) notion that when an enterprising university evolves a stronger steering core and develops an outreach structure, its heartland is still in the traditional academic departments, formed around disciplines and some interdisciplinary fields. Our analytical assumption was that it is this core that needs to be strengthened if flagship universities, as key knowledge institutions, are to contribute to development.

Following this argument, and supplemented by a review of three higher education systems (South Korea, Finland and North Carolina) that successfully connected higher education to development (see Pillay 2011), this work resulted in a book, *Universities and Economic Development in Africa* (Cloete *et al.* 2011). Key conclusions of this publication were that there was a lack of clarity and agreement (pact) about development and the role of higher education (except in Mauritius); research production at seven of the eight universities (i.e. all except Cape Town) the academic core was not strong enough to enable the institutions to make a sustainable contribution to development; and in none of the countries (South Africa included) was there a coordinated effort between government, external stakeholders and the university to systematically strengthen the contribution that the university can make to strengthen the academic core.

These empirically-based conclusions provided a powerful argument for continued funding for continuing HERANA into a second phase.

Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education

The next phase of HERANA (2012–2016) required more comparative data across the eight institutions, as well as strategies to strengthen knowledge production (essentially postgraduate studies, but particularly doctoral programmes and research). One of the key outputs of HERANA 2 was the publication of the book, *Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education* (Cloete, Maassen & Bailey 2015). In the introductory chapter, and following Castells (1993, 2001), Cloete and Maassen (2015) summarised the five core functions of universities as: producing values and social legitimation; selecting the dominant elites; training of the labour force; and producing scientific knowledge and supporting its application in society. The challenge for higher education systems is not to have universities as societal transformers, or to isolate the universities from the social into secluded laboratories or the boardrooms of multinational firms, but to develop institutions which are solid and dynamic enough to withstand the

tensions that will trigger the simultaneous performance of seemingly contradictory functions.

The concluding chapter (Cloete, Maassen, Bunting, *et al.* 2015),³ stated that three key points can be extracted from problems faced by the three ‘illustrative’ universities (Mauritius, Nairobi and Makerere) in managing contradictory functions. Firstly, in terms of awareness and policies, and some structural changes, all three are committed to strengthening the knowledge production function. Secondly, what Mauritius showed is that even with policies regarding the role of the university in the knowledge economy, if there is not a deliberate commitment to differentiation at both the national and institutional levels, the functions of undergraduate training will continue to dominate. Thirdly, despite strong institutional commitments to strengthening research at both Nairobi and Makerere, without national support that can curtail the strong pressure for fundraising through expanding undergraduate enrolments, the institutions will not be able to manage the contradictory functions of undergraduate training and knowledge production. We further concluded that strengthening emerging research universities requires national governments to build capacity in their national research and higher education council systems and to adopt differentiation policies that reward research. The universities need to restructure their undergraduate/postgraduate and their junior/senior staff ratios, and put in place much stronger incentives for PhD training and research outputs. In addition, the donor community needs to radically rethink how they support such efforts.

The book made a major impact at the African Higher Education Summit in Dakar (10–12 March 2015)⁴ and was well received by the Rector of the University of Oslo, who presided over the launch in Norway.

Centre for Higher Education Transformation

Upon completing the NCHE report late 1996, and the heady days of global higher education policy, neither Teboho Moja nor Nico Cloete could face returning to the institutional trenches of transformation contestations. So with financial encouragement from Ford Foundation, political encouragement from the Ministry of Education and expert advice from CHEPS, we established CHET. At Chet’s 10th anniversary Van Vught said: “*During the last ten years CHET has shown a remarkable development. From a young, but much needed, expertise centre on higher education in South Africa, it evolved into an internationally known and much appreciated research centre. CHET has become a respected partner in the global higher education research community.*” Peter Maassen was, and still is a key fellow of CHET; through identifying and framing issues, contributing to research, writing, training and friendship.

3 The book had three editors, 22 authors and 45 contributors.

4 <http://summit.trustafrica.org/>.

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STRONG CONVICTIONS, WEAK EVIDENCE: THE CHALLENGE OF BUILDING RESEARCH CAPABILITY IN AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

Globally, higher education has experienced many interventions and reforms across various domains, viz. governance and management, size and shape, research, funding mechanisms, quality assurance, etc. Generally, many of these reforms and interventions are, inter alia, borrowed from practices in other countries, prescribed by consultants working for international organisations, driven by ideology or recommended by task teams or summits. A common characteristic of these reforms is that their knowledge base is usually remarkably weak. As Peter Maassen would describe it, these reforms are fuelled, in the main, by ‘strong convictions, weak evidence’ (Maassen 2007). The notion of ‘strong conviction, weak evidence’ in higher education is one of Peter’s pet subjects, and in this brief tribute to him, we discuss the challenge of inadequate research expertise in the field of higher education, especially in Africa.

The constitution and governance of higher education systems in most countries is still informed by what one of us has called experiential knowledge (Langa 2014), which refers to common sense knowledge that we acquire by participating in higher education in some form or the other as students, academics, managerial staff, or in any other form, without necessarily committing ourselves to the study of higher education as a social phenomenon/institution. The fact that one has many years of experience working at, managing, studying or trading with, institutions of higher education does not make her a higher education expert.

Many people owe their strong convictions about how higher education should be governed based on experiential knowledge, as opposed to expert knowledge. Although for many years higher education has been managed by academics, and experts in their disciplines, the complexity of higher education institutions and systems today require a more rigorous kind of knowledge produced by people dedicated to research about higher education as a social phenomenon/institution (Altbach 2014, Altbach 2006). Higher education has become a complex phenomenon with multiple implications in many dimensions of the social reality.

In the words of Marcel Mauss (1969), higher education can be considered a ‘*Total Social Fact*’, that is, it can be studied from a sociological, psychological, pedagogical, economic, and historical perspective. In Africa, as is the case in some other parts of the world, it seems the urgency for change has made it extremely difficult to temper the convictions with substantial evidence that is based on fundamental research on higher education as a social institution on the continent.

Issues of funding, governance, quality, access, success to mention a few, require expert knowledge that one cannot master simply by participating in higher education in one form or the other. We are not suggesting that experiential knowledge is unimportant. It certainly has its place in the governance of higher education. Our argument is that experiential knowledge, coupled with political and ideological preferences, is the wrong basis for driving higher education reforms.

Peter Massen’s call for strong evidence stands out as an accurate description of the state of affairs of higher education as both a field of research and practice. More precisely, it is a powerful notion to account for the current state of higher education research and practice globally, but particularly in Africa. Certainly, this characterisation cannot be grossly generalised. Like in other research fields, there are centres and peripheries in the higher education knowledge producing enterprise. To meet the new demands and needs in higher education systems and institutions, the field of higher education research has emerged in the past half century, particularly in USA and Europe. In the last two decades, higher education research in Asia has increased significantly. The main centres in terms of higher knowledge production and research are in the developed countries, with significant strength in the Western Europe, USA and more recently China (Kehm and Musslin 2013). In Africa the field of higher education studies is still incipient.

Most of Africa’s first post-colonial higher education institutions have achieved the golden age of 50 years, yet most of these institutions lack a single centre or institute or even an academic position that is dedicated to the study of higher education. The knowledge base that serves the governance of higher education systems and institutions is still predominantly experiential, imported or occasionally commissioned for policy purposes. In other words, higher education governance in Africa is still very much intuitive and based on strong convictions.

Strengthening the African HE knowledge base

The institutional conditions to support knowledge production on African higher education remain a challenge. Higher education programs are still extremely limited in scope in all but a few countries and do not exist in much of the African continent. According to a recent global inventory of higher education centres and programmes, at least 28 countries have a total of approximately 277 academic programmes with some focus on higher education (Rumbley *et al.* 2014). There are roughly 453 academic degrees offered in the field of higher education globally.

Approximately, half of these academic degrees are located in the USA, where academic administration was professionalised first (Altbach 2014).

Of the 274 academic programmes in the inventory, two thirds are in the USA (70%), China comes second (11%). The UK has about 5% programs. Japan has 2.2% programs, the rest of Asia, excluding China, has less than 1%. In terms of research centres, “the largest number found in one country is 50 in the USA, followed by China with 45, the UK with 18, and Japan with 11. Germany, Canada, and Australia follow, with 8, 7 and 5, respectively” (Rumbly *et al.* 2014, 1296)

Africa has only 7 of which 4 of them are located in South Africa, 1 in Mozambique (established by Prof. Patrício Langa) and 1 in Uganda (established by Prof. James Nkata). More recently, another programme was established in Cameroon. The four programmes in South Africa are not entirely focused on the actual development of higher education as a field of studies. One of the programmes focuses on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education; another one focuses on *bibliometrics* and the other two provide some sort of training for higher education leaders and managers. Other than the university-based research centres, several non-governmental organisations are also involved in research on higher education, for example, the Centre for Higher Education Trust (CHET), the Southern Africa Regional University Association (SARUA), and the Association of African Universities. Despite the importance of this kind of higher education research enterprise, mostly occurring outside of academia, there is a great need for structured academic and research based programmes located within the universities.

Maassens' contributions for the establishment of HE Research in Africa: The case of South Africa and Mozambique

Peter Maassen has left his footprint in establishing higher education as a field of research in Africa. Since his early days of collaboration with the National Council on Higher Education (NCHE) in Mid-1990s that set the new (post-apartheid) higher education system in South Africa, to more recent collaborations with the post-graduate training and research in Mozambique and South Africa, Maassen has been involved in setting the benchmark for a strong engagement with research based knowledge in HE in Africa. With his support, we established the Master's Programme in Higher Education in Africa (HEMA) at the University of the Western Cape in 2008 and the Master's Programme in Higher Education Studies and Development (MHESD) at Eduardo Mondlane University in 2012. HEMA programme at UWC is by dissertation, and included three support modules, i.e. non-credit earning modules. These were: 'Research Methodology and Proposal Development', and 'Higher Education and Development'. The third module, 'Introduction to Higher Education' (August to September 2008), was taught at the University of Oslo. EMU programme included students taking the 'Introduction to Higher Education Module' in Oslo and the Research Methodology and Proposal

Development. Currently, these institutions are working towards the establishment of new doctoral programmes in HES and continue to work closely with Maassen.

We honour Peter Maassen for his important contribution worldwide to the field of higher education studies and particularly to strengthening higher education research in Africa. Maassen has served as a key actor of the expansion of the field to the African continent. The HERANA¹ project, coordinated by CHET, is a good example of his direct involvement in creating research capability to explore the most relevant issues on African higher education. His engagement is invaluable and incomparable and we praise him for that.

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1 <http://chet.org.za/programmes/herana/>

HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Rationale of the Study

In this paper an attempt is made to highlight the opportunities and challenges of higher education in Africa. Of course, it is very difficult to explain the details of the opportunities and challenges of higher education systems of such a big and diverse continent like Africa in such a short essay. Modern higher education, in a relative term, has a short history in the African context (Teferra and Altbach 2003), whereas western countries have a well-established and time-tested academic tradition (Cloete and Maassen 2015; Hall 2010). This is because since the opening of the University of Bologna, the oldest university in Europe, in 1088 (Bonomini *et al.* 1994), there has been a continuous development of scholarship in the western world. On the contrary, in many African countries, university education started after independence from colonial rule particularly in the second half of the 20th century (Teferra 2008; Teferra and Altbach 2004). According to Cloete and Maassen (2015, pp. 2–3), historically, universities played a major role as ideological apparatuses, that is, as producers of values and social legitimation. As such both religious universities as well as secular ones played key roles in justifying domination and western superiority in the colonial world.

Hence, it is important to analyze the opportunities and challenges of Africa's higher education in order to have a better understanding of the system and thereby support the efforts made to strengthen its contribution in the knowledge production process. I will start by presenting two basic questions that address the core issues under consideration.

- What are the opportunities associated with higher education in Africa?
- What are the challenges of higher education in the African context?

Opportunities of Higher Education in Africa

The contribution of education to the well-rounded development of a country becomes evident particularly through higher education. This is because higher education is a level at which students are pursuing professional training in their respective areas of specialization before they enter the world of work (Egne 2015). As such higher education is presumed to have a key role in delivering the knowledge requirements for development. Furthermore, higher education is assumed to play a key role in both raising awareness among students about sustainable development

and giving them the competences to put it into practice (Egne 2010). Studies reveal a strong association between higher education participation rates and levels of development, and that high levels of education are essential for the design and production of scientific research, new technologies, innovative capacities, and the development of civil society (Cloete *et al.* 2011).

The core objectives of the African higher education reforms are to ensure equality, accessibility, accountability, relevance, and responsiveness to the demands of the continent's people (Ashcroft 2004; Egne 2014). Additionally of relevance to these reforms have been the efforts by some of the countries to bridge the development gap between the various nations and other social groups in their respective national states by increasing access to higher education (Egne 2014). It can be argued that if Africa is able to provide quality, accessible and relevant higher education to its people, there is a possibility to provide its young population the chance to become part of a productive workforce that can make the most out of the continent's ample resources.

Challenges for Higher Education in Africa

Higher education is considered to have a key role for delivering the knowledge requirements for development. The positive impacts of higher education institutions on economic development and poverty reduction in the African context is underscored by public figures (Egne 2015), such as Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations who, as quoted in Bloom *et al.* (2005, p. 4), states:

“The university must become a primary tool for Africa's development in the new century. Universities can help develop African expertise; they can enhance the analysis of African problems; strengthen domestic institutions; serve as a model environment for the practices of good governance, conflict resolution and respect for human rights, and enable African academics to play an active part in the global community of scholars.”

In spite of this reality, enrolment rates in African higher education in general and in Sub-Saharan Africa in particular are by far the lowest in the world, currently averaging between 5 & 10% (Cloete and Maassen 2015). This has implications on the productivity of the region in terms of producing and disseminating scientific research outputs. According to Cloete and Maassen (2015), there has been a common misconception that a major problem in the African higher education system is that it has been massified without adequate resources. Nevertheless, in reality, nowhere in the continent one can find a real differentiated and massified system; there are only overcrowded elite higher education systems (Cloete and Maassen 2015).

Furthermore, Europeans during the colonial times instilled elite university systems in their colonies with the intention of producing a limited number of educated indigenous people that would support their colonial administration (Cloete and Maassen 2015; Teferra 2008; Teferra and Altbach 2004). In addition,

many scholars (Altbach and Selvaratnam 1989; Lulat 2003; Teferra and Altbach 2004) claim that higher education in many developing countries is shaped by colonialism and organized based on the European model. It could be argued that this elite university system emphasizes established canons, paradigms, theories, explanations and perspectives of the western world (Cummins 2000) that may not fit to an African context. In addition, the elite university system may have a negative consequence on the fairness of provision of higher education to African communities.

Moreover, African countries are also places where the languages of the European colonizers' are still used as media of instruction. In support of this notion, Qorro (2009, p. 72) states "the use of English as the medium of instruction has had serious effects on the quality of education in Africa from the colonial era to the present day. As a result, education has been an investment with little or no returns for African societies." The same author further claims that, in Africa, students lack the opportunity to question, discuss, dialogue, and think critically and creatively mainly because the language of instruction constrains self-expression, self-confidence and self-advancement.

Furthermore, studies suggest that higher education institutions in Africa are characterized by more frequent incidents of student unrest (Balsvik 2007; Nkinyangi 1991; Semela 2012). According to Balsvik (2007, pp. 3–4), contrary to experiences in the western world, these cases of unrest lead to teaching and studies being disrupted in African universities for weeks, months, or in extreme cases even years. Besides, as suggested by Semela (2012), African higher education institutions are targets of opposing political forces and radical religious elements. In other words, many African countries are victims of protracted conflicts among indigenous ethno-cultural groups (Egne 2015). As asserted by Semela (2012, p. 324), these conflicts especially target school children and young people in higher education institutions.

Due to the above and other similar problems, there is a high dependency of African higher education institutions upon high-income countries' higher education institutions. In support of this claim, Teferra and Altbach (2004, p. 39) assert "universities in the large industrialized nations are the major producers and distributors of scholarly knowledge. Academic institutions in other countries, particularly in developing countries, are largely consumers of scholarly materials and research produced elsewhere." According to Cloete, Bunting, and Maassen (2015, p. 29), African universities are not strengthening their self-generative capacity and are thus struggling to make a substantial contribution to either new knowledge generation or the application thereof.

The Way Forward

The growing connectedness between countries across the world needs rethinking. In other words, our way of living is changing dramatically because of globalization or internationalization (Crossley and Tikly 2004). It can be argued that to help Africa to be an emergent continent in this globalized and competitive world, it is important to strengthen its higher education institutions' capacity for producing and disseminating knowledge. According to Cloete and Maassen (2015),

traditionally, universities in Africa focused on ideology, elite selection and training, and performed poorly on knowledge production. As a result, Africa needs to shift towards increased participation from the existing low base of under 10% average enrolment rates (Cloete and Maassen 2015) while also increasing its scientific research output.

To this end, apart from creating conducive conditions that stimulate knowledge production in African higher education institutions, it is necessary to strengthen Africa's higher education system through creating sustainable collaborations with western countries' higher education institutions. To this effect, it is important to create a comprehensive framework in which the perspectives of both African and western higher education institutions would be addressed on equal footing.

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DILEMMAS OF RESEARCHERS AT MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

Introduction

Research is the deliberate effort to produce knowledge, which is a key component for both innovation and invention in any organisation. The knowledge infrastructure of an organisation is a reflection of the degree of innovation (Crompton 2002, 2). In essence, today's higher education arena in partnership with other key stakeholders, such as the industry and community, makes innovation a valuable asset, thus forming the foundation for a knowledge-based economy. Leydesdoff (2012, 27) notes that the universities have earned a more salient position in what is now described as a 'knowledge-based economy' than they did in the previous 'political-based economy'. This structural change from political to knowledge-based economies makes the universities now accountable to many stakeholders, who look to it for innovative solutions (Altbach 2009). Due to the slimming budgets in most public universities, research funding especially in Africa is so increasingly dependent on new funders such as donor-agencies or private enterprises. These players increase the pressure on university professors to be productive and to administrators to act more transparently based on an ethos of efficiency and effectiveness (Kirsch 2006). All these research and development (R&D) interventions lead to what Castells defined as technological capabilities (2000, 40).

Similar to other parts of the world, the higher education sector in Africa has undergone numerous structural changes, many of which were based on neo-liberal policies (Mamdani 1993, Maassen 2012). Beginning from the late 1980's the World Bank, for example, advocated budget cuts for universities and encouraged funding for universal primary education. These changes have had an adverse effect on universities including their research activities. Research in most African universities has therefore remained an endeavour of individual senior academics, who seek both a financial reward from donor-funded projects and opportunities to be promoted to the upper echelons of the academic profession.

Research in the African university

Research in many African universities has in recent years seen a rise in publications, research collaborations, also between the global south and north, research funding in key priority areas, and many other indicators of scholarship. According to SCOPUS, the research-output of African scholars increased between 1996 and 2006 from 1.2% to 2.3% of the world's publications, a quadruple increase

from 12,500 to over 52,000 research papers (Schemm 2013, 11). However, despite this rise in publications, there are many variations based on region, GDP level, or academic field. Between 1998 and 2008 wealthier countries have enjoyed a more pronounced increase of research-output than their poorer counterparts in African. Countries with a higher GDP such as South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, or Algeria managed to produce more research-output compared to the central African region with countries such as Kenya, Uganda, or Ghana (Jonathan *et al.* 2010).

Another variation in scientific output levels is based on the disciplinary background. The hard sciences produced the largest number of research output in the field, including, amongst others, areas of specialisation such as tropical medicine or agriculture. Therefore, science faculties have enjoyed a number of funding opportunities ranging from doctoral grants, research publication grants, or travel and operational support schemes. The scientific fields have gained what is called a “critical-mass of resources and international capabilities” as noted by Tijssen (2015, 66) and can thus attract more research partnerships abroad compared to their colleagues in the humanities.

Despite the positive development measured by the bibliometric analyses, the research environment in individual universities is still mainly based on a poorly institutionalised academic core (Maassen 2012) with unpredictable financial allocations to universities. In one of the studies of the HERANA project focusing on eight African flagship universities, Cloete *et al.* (2011) highlight that only the University of Cape Town met the set target of one research paper per permanent academic in every two years. The rest of the flagship universities, including the case which is in the focus of this study Makerere University (MUK), failed to meet the target. The data revealed for MUK that it produced an average of one research article in ten years per permanent academic staff member. This is the nature of the research environment that this contribution seeks to investigate.

The current state of MUK’s research environment

MUK is the most significant university in terms of research-output in Uganda. According to the 2007 HERANA report MUK reached the third place (139) after Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (180), and the University of Cape Town (1017) in terms of the number of research publications (Cloete *et al.* 2011). Despite the indication of an 11.7% increase in publications, the report emphasises that MUK’s publication ratio per permanent academic was still at 0.20 by 2007.

MUK is what could be described as a “donor-darling” in both Uganda and the whole of East Africa. It has gained much needed donor-support especially for its research. SIDA, NORAD, the Carnegie Corporation, and USAID are the most significant external donors for MUK’s research. The funding has mainly been channelled to the hard sciences, including tropical medicine, agriculture, and technology. With the donor-agencies managing more than half of the available research budget, the university has been forced to streamline much of its research facilities under a new office the Directorate for Research and Graduate Teaching

(DRGT), which has been successful in creating a research agenda and policies on external research grant applications, staff training on research management or the organisation of doctoral studies. This directorate is a positive step towards enforcing transparency, accountability, and efficiency regarding the flow of funds from donors to the university's faculties.

The government concentrates its research funding especially in the area of agriculture such as in the case of the "Presidential Initiative on Banana Industrial Development" (PIBID). However, this support has only been extended to selected faculties. The university's budget does not allocate any direct funds for research publication and rather gives academic staff support, such as scholarships, to pursue their doctoral education. This policy follows the aim to ensure that most academics at MUK should have a PhD level qualification, which is not yet a given as in 2011 only 31% of MUK's academic staff had doctoral degrees (Bunting *et al.* 2015). MUK also only had a very small number of PhD graduates despite an increase in graduates on the master level. This low number of doctoral graduates reflects a weak academic core with potentially poor supervision or mentor-ship of doctoral students. Currently doctoral supervision is not financially rewarded, which explains the reluctance towards supervision at the university. Furthermore, there are disparities in doctoral graduation between disciplines with hard sciences performing better than arts and humanities, also due to the existence of donor-funded projects.

The dilemmas of African researchers

A number of scholars have attempted to explain the dilemmas of African academics regarding their role as researchers. Some have come up with different ways of categorizing the challenges based on a causal perspective. Sawyerr (2004), for instance, postulates two major components, the individual and the environmental – including social, institutional and material factors – as key influences of research capacity in African universities. He notes the active role played by the individual academic who must be equipped with the necessary qualifications and research skills to strengthen the research capacity. However, as the case stands in most African countries, the number of doctoral students is still low. The 'individualistic-scholarship' (Mouton 2010) of the researchers has led to a stagnation in the growth of research groups and capabilities as many brilliant researchers choose to focus on donor-funded projects also for their own financial benefit, rather than involving a larger number of faculty staff. Among the environmental components, one should note the role of the rather weak institutional research policies, a general lack of funding, poor equipment, weak research management, as well as a lack of incentives as recurring themes. Manuh *et al.* (2007, 69–75) further emphasize factors such as a growing teaching-load due to significantly increased student numbers, the lack of clearly articulated research priorities at both the national and the institutional level, and the absence of a strong academic leadership as key hindrances. On the other hand, Cloete *et al.* (2011, 36) note that the weak academic core has been exacerbated by the lack of research funding and the cumbersome research grant application processes. They also note that master programmes have not inspired

progress to doctoral degrees especially due to the absence of incentives and mentorship. Quintana *et al.* (2012, 20) in an attempt to explore the doctoral challenges in Africa make three key observations: poor university management, the insufficient number and lack of quality of the doctoral programmes, as well as a lack of academic staff with doctoral qualifications who can serve as supervisors. Musiige and Maassen (2015, 16) emphasize the role of donor-funding in influencing the research culture at MUK, since university leaders have no control over the funds it undermines the growth of a sustainable research policy. Regardless the increasing number of partnerships between donor-agencies, which has enabled more funds to flow into MUK, not all academics have embraced academics publishing. Many have settled for writing mere reports at the end of projects, which is an indicator of the general poor research culture. Cloete (2011, 37) refers to this as “a complex set of capabilities” in an environment that has developed a “negative-attitude” towards research due to a long period of underfunding and underinvestment (Harle 2011, 7). Musiige and Maassen (2015) summarise the conditions that influence research productivity at MUK as organisational, individual, funding and research culture. These four concepts are representative of the roots of the main dilemmas that researchers in Africa face.

Discussion of the findings

Poor funding and a weak incentive system for research

The incentive system at MUK cannot be characterised as being adequate as it does not discourage academics from engaging in other non-academic activities to supplement their salaries. The available research support comes in the form of doctoral support for academic staff that has no PhD and wants to pursue doctoral studies. This research support does not provide any funding for the actual research activities within the faculties. With minimal financial support for research activities from both the government and the university academics are forced to engage in other non-academic activities to supplement their salaries and thereby often ignore their research obligation as it is not remunerated. The state funding for research has been channelled to a handful of projects mainly in the areas of science and agriculture. Furthermore, this funding has been inconsistent and falling outside the university’s research priorities as exemplified by The Presidential Initiative for Science and Technology (PIST)¹.

The major sources of research funding are the donor-agencies such as SIDA, NORAD, or the EU agencies, which mainly focus on their priority areas for development and poverty alleviation. From a disciplinary perspective science faculties are the key beneficiaries of donor-agency research funds. For most of the social sciences and humanities, this causes a funding vacuum. Donor-agencies channel their funds through the university research offices; however, several members of staff have noted during interviews that bureaucracy and inefficiencies

1 <http://news.mak.ac.ug/2014/08/presidential-initiative-enhances-mak-science-and-tech-impact>

lead to delays in the research projects. This discourages many academics to apply for donor funding, since they know that if it is channelled through the university offices, their projects may be adversely affected in terms of their respective timeline.

An additional challenge is the lack of adequate skills in applying for international competitive research grants. Due to this lack of skills of many African academics, those few senior academics that have the necessary experience to apply for international research funding consolidate their seniority and financial status within the institution instead of sharing their expertise.

MUK has since 2013 developed a number of positive steps through the DRGT, ranging from developing a research agenda, opening research and grants offices in each faculty, and the support of academic staff in the pursuit of their doctoral degrees. The university still lacks a sustainable incentive system that rewards academics for publishing scholarly works, as the current form of reward, acquiring a promotion in academic rank, is not very motivating due to the overall a low-remuneration environment and the relative attractiveness of outside work including donor projects or consultancies.

The teaching role versus the research role

Researchers in African universities, like their counterparts worldwide find themselves in an extremely competitive and commercialised working environment. This affects their individual role as teachers, researchers and social contributors. For the academics at MUK the teaching role is dominant above all others, which implies that they have to sacrifice their research time to fulfil their demands with regard to teaching. For the individual academic who does not have the time to do research, there are no possibilities for job promotion regardless of how many years he has taught. In essence academics have to choose between executing their prime role as lecturers and remaining static in their career or to neglect their teaching role and advance their career. The lure of financial gains in an environment of poor remuneration encourages many to teach in other universities or colleges to supplement their salaries, which also leaves them with less time for research activities.

Weak networks and collaborations

Networking and collaboration are vital components in the growth of a research culture in a faculty. The research environment in most universities is characterised by a group of highly reputable senior academics that have a strong network within or outside of the university, and who lead research groups, manage large research funds, and conduct multiple projects. In the case of MUK, networking and collaboration are both individual efforts that evolve mainly around superior academics holding the rank of a professor and who are highly connected to donor agency projects. Whereas the few professors at the top succeed in terms of building their networks, many academics still lack the skills and the means to tap into these

networks. The financial implication attached to most of the research projects is moreover a temptation for individuals to restrict their projects to a closely-knit circle of colleagues and not the wider faculty. Some respondents further hinted to poor institutional facilitation regarding the reimbursement of expenses for attending international conferences, hence reducing their opportunities to network.

Poor research dissemination structures

Dissemination can be central to building a researcher's aspiration. Both internally (local-university) and externally (international) peer-reviewed journals must enable researchers from both developed and developing nations to participate in the global scientific research community (Altbach 2007). At MUK, the dilemma regarding dissemination lies in the use of internal journals versus their credibility in the eyes of the university's promotion board. Although many researchers are willing to publish through the internal journals in their faculties, many of their works are not taken into account, when it comes to their time to promotion. The university academic promotions board faults the internal journals for failing to meet the international peer-review standards and lacking recognised individuals on their editorial committees. For many researchers, disseminating their research through internal journals is easier than approaching external journals, due to the competitive process and rigour that is usually involved when publishing in international journals. The key question is which journal should these academics choose to disseminate their work through? The dilemma lies in both improving the quality of internal journals and matching their standards to those of international journals. The few successful internal journals are those funded by donor-agencies as the university does not invest sufficient funds in its own journals.

Doctoral students and supervision

Strong supervision in doctoral programmes is a foundation for expanding and maintaining the academic core in a faculty. The doctoral fellows not only save the professors more time by taking up teaching so that professors can concentrate on their research, but also contribute to a vibrant research environment through their own thesis work. The different doctoral programs at MUK have seen an increase in funding especially in the sciences. Many of the doctoral students in these areas receive scholarships, take part in donor-funded projects, and even graduate on time. Contrary to that, in the humanities most doctoral students are self-sponsored and do not graduate on time. Another dilemma for these young researchers is that the university's DRGT office started to increase the pressure on doctoral students to graduate on time and producing at least two peer-reviewed publications within six years. The key challenge here lies in the poor supervision practices, where professors are hardly available for consultation and feedback for the doctoral students. The senior academics often dedicate more time to donor-funded projects, which are very lucrative to them, than to doctoral supervision.

The role of the departments in building a research culture

The role of research groups within departments is central to building a stronger research culture. This is the initial stage of building networks and collaboration within the faculty and also the university. Also with regard to its departmental research management MUK faces a challenge, which manifests in the absence of research groups at the faculty level. This can also be attributed to the strong emphasis on teaching rather than research at the departmental level. This leaves the researchers to follow the research part of their work in a highly individualised setting, preventing any strong research group capabilities. Thus, only those individual academics that are able to successfully attract an external project, are those involved in research.

Conclusion

This brief contribution has explored the dilemmas and challenges that researchers working at MUK face when pursuing the different constitutive parts of their academic work. The discussion points mainly towards one major challenge that hinders more pronounced research productivity: Sustainable research funding that creates incentives for academics to be actively involved in collaborative research projects. The lack of such funding has shaped both the individual and institutional research culture, and in this sense the challenges that MUK faces are illustrative of the overall situation of academics in Africa.

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KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND CONTRADICTIONARY FUNCTIONS IN AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

When considering the body of scholarly works produced over the years by our friend and colleague, Peter Maassen, we were interested to discover that he has recently written about higher education in Africa. We have no experience of higher education in Africa but were curious about Peter's work, particularly concerning whether his research in Africa might throw light on the kinds of higher education policy issues that exist in Southeast Asia, a region with which we are much more familiar.

Peter is co-editor, with Nico Cloete and Tracy Baily, of *Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education* (Cloete *et al.* 2015), a book that reports on the second phase of a project entitled the Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa (HERANA) project, under direction by Nico Cloete. In the second phase of the project, eight national flagship universities, one each from Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda, were examined. Of particular interest was the general question of the relationship between higher education and socioeconomic development.

The book has 12 chapters: four address the performance of each of the eight African universities; two address identifiable research incentives at several of the universities; two address system-level governance arrangements for higher education in various African countries; and two address aspects of community and student engagement relating to these universities. There is also an interesting chapter that speculates on the role South Africa might play as a hub for PhD training in Africa. Finally, a concluding chapter addresses systemic and institutional policy issues identified from the evidence and analyses presented in the various chapters.

The book's chapters cohere well conceptually, based on a critical literature about the social functions of universities with special reference to the scholarship of Manuel Castells and Clark Kerr. In a cover note for the book, Manuel Castells claims that the book's themes have universal application, writing that it should be "mandatory reading for academics, policy-makers and concerned citizens, in Africa and elsewhere". We firmly agree with this considerable claim. The insights identified are indeed universal in applicability, but have special relevance to developing economies. Though book will undoubtedly become a standard reference text for future scholarship concerning higher education policy issues in Africa, there is much in the book that relates to higher education policy in general.

The final chapter of the book draws together key themes from the various chapters. It conveys an important message that national flagship universities in

Africa need to become “academic institutions committed to the production and dissemination of knowledge in a range of disciplines and fields, and equipped with the appropriate laboratories, libraries and other infrastructure that permit teaching and research at the highest possible academic level” (p. 261). To this end, there must be agreement at a system-wide level about the distinctive knowledge-producing role of these institutions in contributing to socioeconomic development, and there must be an appropriate provision of support to enable them to have the capacity to perform a knowledge-producing role.

The HERANA project would certainly be interesting and valuable to replicate in the Southeast Asian region. Southeast Asia may be less than one-eighth of Africa’s physical size, but it is about two-thirds as populous as Africa. As in Africa, most of its economies are emerging rather than developed, and it shares with Africa the legacy of colonial rule by various European powers. There is also internal variation in both regions in the economic capacity of different economies, and in their ability to support national flagship universities. In Southeast Asia, Singapore, which now has several internationally competitive national flagship universities, is relatively wealthy, but countries such as East Timor, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, which also have national flagship universities, are relatively poor, and their flagship universities are not yet of any regional significance in terms of their knowledge-producing capacity.

There is much more to be said about how the circumstances of national flagship universities in Southeast Asia may compare with the circumstances of the national flagship universities that provided the case studies for this book. In the absence of a comparable systematic investigation of the situation in Southeast Asia, much of this comment could, however, be speculative. There are, however, conclusions drawn in the book that are, without much doubt, application to the Southeast Asian region. One of these is the need at a system-governance level for the development of an agreement, or pact, between government, universities and relevant socioeconomic actors about the role that should be played by universities in development. Evidence of this kind of discussion is difficult to find in many Southeast Asian settings, though countries that have made a significant effort in this regard include Singapore and Malaysia. Another that is that the emergence of knowledge-producing national flagship universities is much less likely to occur without a national commitment to the distinctiveness of the role of these institutions and a willingness to provide them with the resources required to develop.

Knowledge Production and Contradictory Functions in African Higher Education makes a valuable contribution to the higher education literature. Nico, Peter and Tracy are to be congratulated in bringing the book to fruition. Peter’s foray into higher education policy issues in Africa has been rewarding for us all.

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EDUCATION IN AND RESEARCH
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ERASMUS MUNDUS: A ‘LEVER’ FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL ATTRACTIVENESS AND COMPETITIVENESS

Introduction

Traditionally, European higher education policy has been “contained by national borders and presented as nationally sensitive” (Gornitzka *et al.* 2007, p. 196). Throughout the 19th century sovereignty of national systems of higher education managed to maintain rather autonomous governance. However, the game changed in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s with the creation of the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy. Since then, European Union (EU) competency in the area of higher education policy has continued to grow and expand (Neave & Maassen 2007). The EU, through discourse and policies, made invested interests in the integration and modernization of European higher education, thus influencing national reforms. One such policy that exemplifies EU dipping its toes into higher education is the Erasmus Mundus (EM) programme. For more than ten years, EM has served as a policy instrument to further integrate higher education as well as increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education globally.

Brief history of Erasmus Mundus

In July 2002 the European Commission (EC) adopted the ‘Erasmus World’ programme proposal, later renaming the programme, ‘Erasmus Mundus’ (Weimer 2008). The EM decision was approved in December 2003 and the programme officially launched in January 2004. The first five years (2004–2008) of the EM program were evaluated in July 2007 and subsequently the programme was extended for another five years (2009–2013). The second phase of the programme came with substantial changes: 1.) a large budget increase tripling the original amount, 2.) consortium partnerships opened up to include non-European higher education partners and 3.) doctorate programmes were added to the menu of masters’ programmes. The current phase (2014–2020) of the EM programme comes under the new Erasmus+ programme. Despite numerous debates about changing the EM name, the brand remained the same. The joint doctorate degrees were moved to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions, so the focus is strictly at the joint master’s degree level now. Another significant change that was implemented included balancing the

scholarship amount awarded to European students and non-EU students, before this adjustment European students struggled to make their scholarship award stretch to the financial demands of the programme. The overall aim is to fund 25,000 new students and select 350 joint degree programmes by 2020.

Through the various funding stages of the programme, the original characteristics have endured: consortia of a minimum of three European institutions, creation of integrated joint degrees with a unique mobility scheme and lucrative scholarships for selected students. Since the origin of the programme, 18,600 master's scholarships and 1,400 doctorate scholarships and a total of 328 programmes have been funded and branded with the distinction of Erasmus Mundus. Over 75% of EM students and alumni originate from non-EU countries, coming from approximately 200 countries from around the world (European Commission 2016).

Achieving the Bologna & Lisbon aims through EM

In 1999, Ministers of Education from 29 European countries agreed on the objective of achieving a greater compatibility and comparability of their national systems of higher education, launching a series of region-wide reforms which came to be known as the *Bologna Process*. One of the goals of the Bologna Process was to consolidate the project for a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), a common regional framework proposed in Sorbonne a year earlier (Barlete 2010). Even though not initially invited to the Bologna Process discussions at the Ministry level, the EU launched the Lisbon Strategy in 2000 with the intention of becoming the most advanced knowledge economy in the world. Indicators showed that when compared to 'major players', who were responding to the globalization of higher education through various policies, Europe was seen to be 'lagging behind'¹. The lagging behind argument has been a rationale frequently used by the EC to justify its actions and proposals in the field of higher education. Olsen and Maassen (2007) point out that this argument is usually supported by "strong conviction, weak evidence", as weak empirical evidence about the performance of the European institutions is provided to justify generalising arguments. The narrative of the 2002 EM policy documents uses symbols, numbers, and language to portray a story of European higher education underdeveloped in the race to attract global talent and be a leading knowledge economy. The intergovernmental Bologna Process did not give joint degrees the needed push, instead the ambition came from the supranational level as the EU developed regional programmes aimed at increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of European universities – Erasmus Mundus being one of them (Maassen 2011).

Joint degrees were an important way to achieve the aims of Bologna and Lisbon (Maassen 2011). While the Lisbon Strategy encouraged competitive approaches

1 The rhetoric of European HE 'lagging behind' usually refers to the monetary investment in higher education and research and development (R&D), compared to that of other countries such as the US and Japan.

for Europe to rise up as a dominant knowledge economy, the Bologna Process propagated interest in the international dimension and attractiveness of European higher education around the globe, EM was one of Europe's answers to both international competitiveness and attractiveness. In the conception phase of the EM policy development, it stated, "Higher education cannot be confined only to the geographical limits of the European Union or the wider Europe" (EC 2002, 2). A shift occurred in the European HE policy process from intra-European cooperation to extra-European cooperation and competition. Launching the EM programme was a way to compete for global talent with other national flagship scholarship programmes, such as the US Fulbright programme (Maassen 2011, Weimer 2008).

Additionally, the EM programme facilitated deeper higher education integration. For the propitious programmes that were selected for Erasmus Mundus funding, various agreements among consortium institutions were needed: diploma protocols, study and exam regulations, patterns and mobility of study, allocation of ECTS, academic calendars, and quality assurance (Papatsiba 2013). This meant that programme directors, institutions, national agencies, and governments were implicated in integrative solutions, creative work-arounds, and reforms to ensure their participation. During the first phase of the EM programme, the Bologna Process objectives, i.e. the three-stage study scheme and European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), were taking shape through national reforms. At the same time, EM consortiums of academic units were tasked with creating the core of EM degree programmes: integrated joint curricula. These consortia worked together to develop joint learning units across European borders which were facilitated by, and at the same time nudged, the Bologna process reforms.

While EM was born in the hands of the European politicians, it was implemented, shaped, and even embraced by national governments and agencies, higher education institutions, research networks and consortiums, and academics. Initially, the implementation and embrace was not always met with mutual affection as some national legal frameworks did not accommodate the integrated nature of joint degrees.

These [EM] programmes operate in a grey zone between national legal frameworks and European level integration ambitions. National participation in the establishment of a joint Master degree program and the issuing of joint diplomas have the facto implied regulation changes at national level and changes in local rules. This is a consequence of an indirect pressure on national regulations from the institutions that are participating in this scheme (Gornitzka *et al.* 2007, p. 2000).

This is European integration; it is a slow, gradual, and sometimes mucky process.

Even today several national legal frameworks do not permit institutions to award a joint diploma (a single document), resulting in separate documents known as multiple degrees. Another example of the tension between national policies and supranational ambitions include tuition fees. The EM programme guidelines

allowed institutions to collect tuition fees up to a specific threshold level. However, in some countries, collecting tuition was illegal according to the national legal framework. In Finland, specifically, the EM programme added fire to an already tumultuous tuition fee debate (Weimer 2013) leading to the introduction of fees for non-EU students in 2017.

Not only did the EM programme incite institutional and national reforms for regional convergence, but fundamental elements of the programme stimulated European integration. Historically, international higher education collaboration has been driven by the personal agency of academics in developing their own networks. In this aspect, EM was innovative: it offered an opportunity for funded collaboration at the institutional level, thus adding a new complex element to international collaboration in higher education even if those institutional links were born out of academic partnerships. Academic collaboration has been an essential element in the shape and functioning of the EM programme from the beginning. For example, the European Masters Course in Higher Education (HEEM) programme was one of 14 programmes selected for the first year of Erasmus Mundus. The consortium was formed by the Universities of Oslo (Norway), Tampere (Finland) and Aveiro (Portugal) and offered a two-year programme specialised in international higher education. Over 200 students from all over the world have participated in HEEM (Maassen 2011) and are now part of a wider network of professionals and academics working in higher education around the globe.

Conclusion

The reforms in European education in the past decades were an intense response to the globalised world, as well as regional and supranational ambitions, development and the internal needs from within the systems. They meant to reach important goals, to increase attractiveness of the European higher education, but also to stimulate European integration.

As a regional policy, the EM programme incited institutional and national reforms for regional convergence and challenged the rusted governance systems in several ways. As an instrument for attractiveness, it allowed academics (both in training and senior) to explore the European systems through mobility and integrated academic collaboration.

Last but not least, as alumni from the HEEM programme, the very fact that we are able to discuss and critically analyse the Erasmus Mundus programme as an international policy in higher education demonstrates the relevance of the programme and its impact to students' qualifications.

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BUILDING THE ACADEMIC FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION: NEW TIMES – ENDURING CHALLENGES?

Introduction

This reflection paper focuses on the theme of building higher education as an academic field. As part of the educational sector, higher education is indeed an important generator of national as well as global development. Additionally, its role as an educational system, which has materialized via a range of public and private organizations entrusted with a particular mandate, makes higher education appear as a set of institutional arrangements, practices and groups of actors rather than as an academic field. However, during the last decades, extensive efforts have been made to both systematize knowledge about this area of the educational sector and to build an academic field to expand the development of higher education policies, institutions and practices. One major contribution in this regard was the publishing of the four volumes of *The Encyclopedia of Higher Education* in 1992, which were jointly edited by Burton Clark and Guy Neave. In addition to providing a review of higher education systems in 137 countries, these volumes also served to systematize research themes and analytical perspectives found to be productive for developing a better understanding of higher education in society. The themes organized by Clark and Neave were informed by a range of disciplines across the social sciences, and they addressed the relationship of higher education institutions to society at large: issues of governance, administration and finance; knowledge about faculty and students; and knowledge about what are sometimes called the primary processes of higher education: teaching, learning and research. Related categorizations were later established in reviews of research in and about higher education such as those of Malcolm Tight (2003, 2012).

Peter Maassen also expanded on these thoughts and devoted most of his academic career to enhancing the development of higher education as an internationally oriented academic field. His engagement spanned the education-research divide, acknowledging that such a field needs to be served by special educational programmes as well as by distinct research activities. Moreover, he insisted on both the interdisciplinary nature of higher education and on the necessity of bringing different perspectives together in both educational programmes and research agendas. In the remainder of this paper, we will first provide a brief account of how these ideas have been taken forward in Peter's initiatives to build an

international master's programme of higher education and a stimulating research environment for PhDs. Next, we will discuss, in general, the challenge of developing a 'field of practice' into a 'field of research', which we will argue inevitably involves differentiation and, potentially, disciplinary fragmentation. We will conclude with a reflection on the current status of higher education as an academic field and explore whether or not there is a current need to re-integrate discipline-specific contributions or if it is preferable to maintain them separately.

Building an academic higher education programme

In cooperation with seven other European universities, Peter Maassen began his work, which was strongly supported by Lise Vislie, the first Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Oslo, to establish a two-year master programme in higher education. The idea was to offer a programme that provided students with the opportunity to profit from the expertise and distinct knowledge available at cooperating institutions (where the establishment of the Higher Education Development Association, *Hedda*, became a key actor). The curriculum was developed through conversations and commitments between the different partners, and in the fall of 2002, the first cohort of students started in the programme. The modules were in many ways consistent with the themes in Clark and Neave's encyclopaedia, with an emphasis also on the history of higher education.

The programme was unique in many ways. Firstly, as a result of the involvement of universities from seven European countries, it was the first European master's programme in higher education. In comparison, there were more than 150 master and PhD programmes in the field of higher education in the US during the same period. Hence, there was a clear assumption that a European programme was needed. Secondly, through the various areas of specialisation of the universities involved, the curriculum was structured to cover a wide range of disciplinary perspectives of higher education and thus reflected an interdisciplinary profile. Thirdly, and in addition to Peter's vision of an internationally oriented and interdisciplinary programme, the programme needed to balance academic and professional objectives in a manner that allowed students to become professional higher education managers as well as academic researchers in the field of higher education. Therefore, the overall aim of the programme from the beginning was to strengthen the relationship between higher education research and practice.

The programme has now been running successfully for more than 10 years. A parallel joint Erasmus Mundus degree programme was established, which existed from 2004–2010, with Peter as its coordinator. This expansion was important because the scholarships, which were funded through the EU, enabled more students from non-European countries to participate in the programme.

The ideas of being exposed to research from different disciplines and the necessity of understanding the international landscape in order to contextualize developments in national higher education systems were important in Peter's engagement in building a research environment for PhDs. When the Norwegian

Graduate School in Educational Research (NATED) was established in 2009, Peter was the first leader of one of its four tracks, which were devoted to higher education and professional learning. Here, as in the master's programme, he stressed the importance of both exposing candidates to different research traditions in higher education and of introducing them to prominent international scholars in the field. Thus, a recurrent idea in his work emphasised that different research approaches should enrich each other and facilitate the understanding of how macro/micro processes are related. Moreover, in light of his continued international orientation, comparative analyses and perspectives have constituted an important part of his academic toolkit.

The 'scientification' of a field

What, then, is the relevance of these ideas today, and what challenges do they entail? When a sector-specific field of policy and practice develops into an academic field, it inevitably occurs through the disciplines. 'Scientification' implies research-based knowledge development through the application of specific methods and analytical perspectives. The way in which knowledge is produced and validated as well as what are considered relevant objects of inquiry, will vary between disciplines. In Knorr Cetina's words (1999), disciplines form distinct epistemic cultures, moulded around their specific ways of producing and warranting knowledge. Moreover, because rigorous research also requires a strict focus and problem framing, it allows only a limited section of the empirical world to be investigated at one time. As research-based knowledge accumulates, new scientific contributions will often take an increasingly specialized problem as their point of departure. In short, this may lead to a fragmentation of the academic field into specialized tracks as well as to a situation in which new scientific contributions become less accessible for policy makers and practitioners who not are embedded in a given academic subfield.

A telling example can be found when comparing the two editions of Malcolm Tight's *Researching Higher Education* (2003, 2012), a book that has been on the reading list of the master's programme in higher education since its inception. Written as an introduction to the academic field of higher education and its main research themes, the first edition provides case studies from published articles, which productively illustrate the main topics and lead newcomers into the field. In the second and updated edition, our experience has been that the case studies provided are suitable, albeit to a lesser extent, as introductory texts for newcomers; the research questions addressed in the articles are, in certain cases, either too narrow in character or they require relatively advanced insight into the research field to be understood. The case studies are still useful for illustrating different types of studies and methodologies utilized by higher education researchers; however, the research problems and findings are of a more limited scope and thus contribute to a more advanced discussion. This is, of course, not a problem for the research field itself. Rather, it reflects the logic of science and its intrinsic drivers towards differentiation and specialization. However, the more mature a research field, the

larger the risk that new divides may develop between research and education, between research and practice and between different subareas of the research field. This in turn may call for a rethinking of how the academic field of higher education can be further developed.

The academic field of higher education: new times – enduring challenges

Today, it is not only developments inherent to science itself that contribute to fragmentation; current policies for higher education and related areas, such as science and innovation policies, challenge the institutional order of universities. For instance, research policies are imbued with notions of excellence and global competition, which generate a drive towards disciplinary specialization and a search for universal yet partial truths. Additionally, education policies carry expectations for interdisciplinary proficiency and societal relevance, which generate pressures to address problems in a more holistic fashion. In the wake of these developments, there has been a call for policy coordination and the subsequent research needed for such coordination as part of studying higher education policy (Braun 2008). Peter Maassen is among several scholars who have attended to this challenge and conducted research on higher education governance through approaches that account for a horizontal expansion of traditionally vertical processes. This has, among other things, resulted in studies on the expanded roles of higher education agencies as well as of how knowledge policies are coordinated across several sectors in his recent research agendas (cf. Maassen, Nerland, & Yates, Eds., forthcoming 2016).

It seems that a need to consolidate the field has again emerged; however, in the current environment, there is a call for emphases not only on integrating knowledge from different disciplinary traditions in research and education but also on allying policy processes and governance initiatives across a wider 'knowledge sector'. As more stakeholders take interest in higher education and its interfaces with society, overcoming fragmentation remains an enduring challenge. In this landscape, the need for higher education professionals who are capable of understanding connections between different arenas and processes and of employing an integrated perspective on universities and their shifting policy contexts may be greater than ever. Additionally, in order to make progress as a scientific field, we also recognise the need for more discipline-based research. This is needed to ensure that research in higher education keeps pace with theoretical and methodological developments in its contributing disciplines such as within political science, the sociology of organisations and the learning sciences. It is also needed for the sake of introducing new scholars to the research field and doing so not only in the area of content knowledge but also to the methodologies and epistemological underpinnings that inform knowledge production. Balancing these concerns will thus be a continuous task for educational programmes that target higher education.

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“WHEN I WRITE MY MASTER’S THESIS” – THE FORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCHERS AND PROFESSIONALS THROUGH THE OSLO HIGHER EDUCATION MASTER’S PROGRAMS

Introduction

In modern academia researchers are mainly judged by their impact and productivity, which is usually measured in publications, research funding or citations. While the significance of the impact of Peter Maassen’s research on the higher education studies community is undisputable and clearly visible in many of the other chapters of this volume, this contribution puts a focus on a different part of Peter’s work, namely the impact he made by establishing two Higher Education Master’s programs at the University of Oslo and by shaping them actively in his roles as head of program, teacher and supervisor. We know from previous studies that attending a study program can have a significant effect on students’ career trajectories and that study programs offer arenas in which students are introduced to disciplinary cultures and research fields (Hounsell & Anderson 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini 2005). Especially the latter not only has a function for the students but also for the research area for which the study program is supposed to prepare them, as it is through the introduction of new students that a research area ensures a stable influx of young and talented researchers or practitioners that are accustomed to the specific ways of producing and warranting knowledge (Knorr Cetina 1999).

Peter Maassen rightfully recognized in the early 2000s that there is a need to create a research-based and research-oriented master’s program as an environment in which both students with a professional or an academic interest in higher education could receive a well-rounded and overarching training, while at the same time being introduced to the wider higher education research community.¹ Based on Clark’s (1987) definition of the academic profession being shaped by three dimensions – the national, the disciplinary and the institutional setting – we therefore focus on inquiring about the geographical location of the graduates, as well as their disciplinary and institutional affiliation both before and after the study

1 For a brief description of the history behind the establishment of the Higher Education Master’s Programs in Oslo, read the contribution by Karseth & Nerland in this publication.

program. This allows us to map the students' professional and academic trajectories as well as the influence by the study programs.

It is in this spirit that this chapter sets out to analyze how the two Higher Education Master's programs at the University of Oslo have contributed to the formation of a group of higher education researchers and professionals. We understand higher education researchers as people who academically analyze and study higher education in diverse institutional settings, such as a university, a college or a research institute. Higher education professionals on the other hand are not primarily active in teaching and research but prepare and support decisions of university management, establish services and actively shape the three missions of research, teaching and transfer of knowledge (Schneijderberg & Merkator 2013). The data for this chapter was collected with an online survey that was sent out to all graduates of the two Higher Education Master's programs in Oslo. In this survey we inquired about the graduates' professional and study trajectories prior to joining the master's program in Oslo as well as their careers after graduation, and how they perceive the master's programs both in general and with regard to preparing them for their respective careers.

Following this introduction we will briefly present the conceptual framework for our study followed by the methods used and the data gathered for the analysis. In the next section we will present the career trajectories of the graduates of the Oslo master's programs before finalizing this contribution with some concluding thoughts on the role of the master's programs for the formation of a higher education research community.

Conceptual background

In order to analyze how the two Higher Education Master's programs at the University of Oslo have contributed to the formation of higher education researchers and professionals as a distinctive group, we base our framework on the following considerations. According to Clark (1987) the academic profession is shaped by three dimensions: the national, the disciplinary and the institutional setting. Considering the group of higher education researchers and professionals being part of the academic profession, we focus on inquiring about the geographical location of the graduates, as well as their disciplinary and institutional affiliation both before and after the study program. This allows us to map the students' professional and academic trajectories and how they have been influenced by the study program. We define trajectories both as geographical movements, as well as horizontal and vertical transitions. Horizontal transitions refer to changes in the disciplinary or institutional affiliation, while vertical transitions refer to any moves up or down the academic or professional hierarchy.

By mapping the graduates' trajectories before and after their enrollment in the program, we can judge the impact the program has on the formation of the higher education community. We expect this impact to be reflected in several indicators: first, the percentage of graduates who continue their trajectory in a higher education related research field or profession. Second, the extent to which graduates perceive

the master's program as influential for their career after graduation. Third, the extent to which graduates have built and maintained a network within the higher education community after graduation. And last, the extent to which graduates report feeling connected to the program and the higher education community.

One pre-assumption is that the body of students entering the program is rather diverse in terms of their national and disciplinary origin, as the programs are actively promoted as international, interdisciplinary programs that are taught in English and have no specific entry requirements with regard to what discipline the applicants need to have studied before. In case the programs have an impact on the formation of a group of higher education research and professionals that share a distinct epistemic culture (Knorr Cetina 1999), this should be reflected in the graduates becoming more homogeneous in terms of their research interest after they have finished the program. Moreover, the dimension of the geographical location before and after the program shows whether graduates typically stay in Norway, return to their home countries, or move on to other countries. This gives insight into the role the programs play in building local higher education communities and to what extent graduates enter a more internationally oriented higher education community.

Methods and data

The survey was specifically developed by the authors for the purpose of this analysis but it includes some questions that were adapted from the HEDS First Destination Study (Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium 2015). After a pilot run with a group of fourteen current students of the Higher Education Master's program and two colleagues, the final version was sent out as an online version to all graduates of the two programs for whom contact information was available. The dissemination happened repeatedly through different channels, including email and social media platforms. Moreover, respondents were asked to forward the survey link to fellow graduates.

The survey consisted mainly of descriptive questions about the academic and professional trajectories of the graduates before, during and after the study program. Moreover, several items inquired about the connection the graduates felt to the study program and the higher education community, as well as the way they stay in touch with the community. A final section addressed to what extent graduates perceived various skills acquired during the study program as important for their current position. In order to provide anonymity within the relatively small and distinctive population, the respondents were free to not provide any personal information about their nationality, country of current residency, gender and year of birth.

A total number of 82 respondents completed the online survey, which amounts to a response rate of approximately 44%. While we assume a slight bias due to the fact that those graduates who have stayed in touch with the community are more likely to respond to an alumni survey, we are confident that we were nonetheless able to gather a representative sample of graduates as described in the following. The sample consists equally of graduates from the Master of Philosophy in Higher Education, which is offered as a full degree at the University of Oslo, as well as

the previous Higher Education ERASMUS Mundus Program (HEEM), which was conducted in cooperation with the University of Aveiro and the University of Tampere. Also with regard to the year of enrolment in one of the MA programs the sample shows a sufficient spread of respondents as all cohorts between the years of 2002 and 2013 are represented in the survey each with multiple respondents. The same is true with regard to the year of graduation, where the sample includes respondents from the years 2004–2016. Six respondents indicated that they were either still enrolled or had dropped out before graduation, in which cases their responses were only used for questions addressing the trajectories before the study program. Of the respondents 58% are female and the mean/median year of birth is 1979/1980. The nationality of the respondents highlights the diverse and international intake of the master's programs and table 1 provides an overview of the answers provided.²

Table 1. Nationality of graduates

Nationality	Number of respondents
Ethiopian	6
Norwegian	6
American (USA)	6
Chinese	5
Serbian	4
German	3
Portuguese	3
Australian	2
Georgian	2
Ghanaian	2
Iranian	2
Mexican	2
Russian	2
Bangladeshi	1
Belorussian	1
Brazilian	1
Colombian	1
Dutch	1
Estonian	1
Japanese	1
Lithuanian	1
Thai	1
Ugandan	1
Ukrainian	1
Zambian	1
Zimbabwean	1
Nationality not provided	24

² Not all respondents identified their nationality.

Professional and academic trajectories of graduates from the Oslo Higher Education Master's Programs

Prior to inquiring about the graduates' trajectories both before entering and after completing the master's programs, we wanted to get an understanding of the connection that the graduates feel towards the program and whether they would recommend the program to someone else. A total of 89% of the respondents would recommend the master's programs to someone else, while 2.4% would not recommend the programs. This positive assessment of the master's programs is also reflected in the fact that 40.2% of the respondents reported to know a friend or a colleague, who took up the master's program following the graduate's recommendation. It thus seems that the graduates fulfill the role of ambassadors for the program and support the recruitment of future students. This function is especially relevant in the light of the career trajectories of the graduates, which will be reported below.

Similar to the positive outlook on the programs, also the connection that the respondents still feel towards the program can be considered as strong. More than three-quarter of the respondents (76.8%) reported to feel either a very strong or a strong connection to the master's programs and only 18.3% feel only little or no connection at all to the program. Similarly, 71.9% of the graduates of the Higher Education Master's programs reported to feel a very strong or some connection with the higher education research community. Very little or no connection were only reported by 18.3%. Considering the strong correlation between those two variables (.66, $p < .01$) this link between feeling connected to the master's programs and feeling connected to the higher education community can be considered a first indicator that points towards the master's programs work towards the formation of a growing group of higher education researchers and professionals. When asked about the ways in which the graduates stay in touch with the higher education research community, most respondents claimed to rely on social media such as facebook, twitter or research gate (68.3 %), higher education related blogs (e.g. the Hedda blog) (61 %), personal contact with teachers or fellow students from the master's program (58.5%), reading academic journals (58.5%), receiving relevant emails through higher education research related email lists (51.2%), attending higher education research conferences (34.1%), or collaborating with other higher education researchers on publications (26.8%). A smaller percentage claimed to be paying member of an international higher education research association (e.g. CHER) (11%) or to use other means of contact such as collaboration on projects (4.9%). Only 7.3% reported not to have any contact anymore. These numbers highlight two things, first, and as it would be expected, different forms of online communication play an important role for graduates to stay in touch with the higher education research community. Second, and a bit more surprising, it seems that there is a large number of graduates using more classical academic ways to stay connected to the higher education community including relevant academic journals, collaboration for publications, or attending conferences. This might be related to the fact many graduates have followed an academic career. Interestingly,

higher education research associations such as CHER or EAIR do not seem to play a major role here.

When looking at the background of the graduates and their trajectories before they entered one of the programs the diverse background of the students is again highlighted. Most respondents (80%) report to have moved to Oslo at the start of the program. When asked about their prior degrees, two-thirds of the graduates state that they had one higher education degree before starting their program in Oslo, 27% report to have had two degrees, and 6% even had three higher education degrees before entering one of the master's programs. Most respondents (70%) reported that their first higher education degree was a 4-year Bachelor program, 18% joined the master's programs with a 3-year Bachelor and 8% finished a 5-year program before entering one of the master's programs. The subject area of the first higher education degree of the respondents shows on the one hand that the programs recruit from disciplines that are classically perceived to be linked to higher education research and from which higher education scholars usually tend to borrow concepts and theories (Maassen 2000). On the other hand, the significant split between these disciplines also highlights the diversity of intake of the programs.

Table 2. Subject area of first higher education degree

Subject Area	Percentage of respondents
Business and Management	13.4%
Education	30.5%
Humanities	23.3%
Social Science	19.5%
Others	13.3%

Most of those graduates (56%) who obtained a second degree before starting one of the Master's programs in Oslo, took part in a 2-year master's program. Of those who even had a third degree prior to their enrolment in Oslo 60% took part in a 1-year master's program. The distribution of subject areas for the second and third degrees are comparable to those of the first degrees reported above.

The graduates of the Oslo master's programs do not only come with a diverse educational background. Many of them (89%) also had prior work experience before starting the master's program. In two-thirds of the cases the work experience was related to higher education issues. Concerning the duration of the work experience 32% report to have worked at their position for more than 3 years and 40% stated that they worked in their position between 1 and 3 years. Thus, before starting the master's programs the respondents already brought with them both academic and professional knowledge relevant for higher education research. Concerning the level of their employment most respondents (43%) report to have been working as administrators but not in a leading position. A fifth of the respondents held a professorial position³, around 10% worked for the government or related agencies and 4% were administrators in leading positions. This indicates that people who

3 It should be pointed out that most of the students who are part of this group originally come from developing countries.

already work in higher education and want to pursue a career in this area might be actively looking for programs that equip them with skills and competences to further their opportunities and that the Oslo programs are perceived to do exactly this.

During their time in the Oslo master’s programs most of the graduates (60%) were full-time students without having a job, 23% were full-time students and had a job in addition, 8.5% were on leave from their employment and only 2.5% were working and registered as part-time students. The majority of those who were employed during their time in the master’s programs either had the job before enrolling (46%) or started working during their first year of study (32%). Half of the respondents who worked during their studies report that their job was related to the higher education sector.

At the moment of response, around 70% of the respondents were employed either full or part time, while 16% indicated they were currently unemployed and looking for a job. The rest indicated to be on leave from a permanent position (3.7%), currently unemployed without looking for a job (6.1%) or being in another employment situation (4.9%). Out of those who currently hold a position, around 27% work in Norway and another 27% in another European country, while the rest is spread out over the globe (6.1% in Africa; 4.9% in North America; 3.7% in Asia; 2.4% in South America; 2.4% in Oceania). No less than 80% of the currently employed graduates indicated that their position is related to higher education in the wider sense, which speaks strongly for the formative impact of the higher education programs with regard to the career trajectories of their graduates. Of those who are working in the higher education sector, about 46% hold an academic position (12.5% professor; 8.3% postdoctoral researcher; 14.6% PhD candidate; 6.2% institutional researcher; 4.2% research fellow). Another 22.9% hold an administrative position (10.4% leading administrator; 12.5% not leading administrator). The rest holds positions in governmental agencies (6.2%), stakeholder organizations (4.2%), government/ministries (4.2%) or other organizations (6.2% not-for-profit organization; 2.1% public sector; 2.1% private sector). It is interesting that around 48% of the respondents indicated that the current position was not the first one they held in the higher education sector since they graduated. Most of those previous jobs were short-term positions with around 69% of them lasting 2 years and less.

The fact that about half of the respondents hold a PhD degree or are currently pursuing one is an indicator that the master’s programs prepares graduates well to enter an academic career afterwards. When asking those graduates who were currently holding an academic position whether they wanted to stay in academia also after the end of their current contract, around 64% answered with yes, around 4% with no, while 28% didn’t know yet. When asking those who were currently holding a non-academic position, around 23% indicated that they would like to move toward an academic position in the future, around 27% were not interested in doing so and 50% were not sure about their future plans yet. When asking those graduates in academic positions what best described the main research area of the department or institute they work at, 44% responded with ‘higher education research’ and 32% with ‘non higher education specific social sciences’. The rest of the answers spread equally between ‘non higher education specific educational research’ (12%)

and 'others' (12%). Those numbers show that a considerable number of graduates have continued their path in higher education research. It is interesting to compare those numbers to the distribution of main research interest among the graduates in academic positions. About 64% indicate that 'higher education research' is their main research interest, while 28% refer to 'social science (non-higher education specific)' and 8% 'educational science (non-higher education specific)'. When asking those interested in 'higher education research' to specify their interest further, the responses were widely spread (see table 3).

Table 3. Responses to: "Could you please further specify the themes you are interested in" (Multiple answers possible)

Research theme	Percentage of responses
Institutional Management	57%
Quality	57%
Knowledge and Research	43%
Teaching and Learning	43%
System Policy	36%
Student Experience	15%
Academic Work	15%
Course design/Curriculum studies	7%
Strategy	7%
Governance and organization of HE	7%
Internationalization	7%

What is interesting is that 40% of those graduates who indicated higher education research as their main research interest are affiliated to institutions that don't have a specific focus on higher education, which reflects the fact that the higher education research community is to a certain extent fragmented and consisting of individuals or small groups conducting their research embedded in departments with other research focus.

Concerning the role the master's programs played for the career trajectories of the graduates, it was positive to see that over fifty percent of those graduates who currently were employed claimed that they would not have gotten their current position without having graduated from the master's's program. Another 20% were not sure about this fact, while around 28 % believed they would have had a chance to get their job nonetheless. When asking specifically about the different aspects of the master's program that might be important for their current position, the responses show a generally very positive picture. Among the aspects that were rated as predominantly important were 'Generic skills attained in the master's program' (87,7% rather or very important), 'Familiarity with Europe/European HE system' (80% rather or very important), 'Knowledge about academic aspects of higher education research' (76,7% rather or very important), 'English language skills' (73,3% rather or very important), 'Methodological knowledge about how to conduct research (71,7% rather or very important), 'Autonomous work expertise gained during master's thesis' (71,7% rather or very important), 'Knowledge about

sectoral aspects of the higher education profession’ (68,3% rather or very important), and ‘Network and contacts met through the master’s program’ (68,3% rather or very important). The following were considered to be of slightly less importance: ‘Familiarity with higher education sector as a workplace and where to find suitable jobs’ (58,3% rather or very important), ‘Diploma from UiO [University of Oslo]’ (56,7% rather or very important) and ‘Familiarity with Norway/Norwegian HE system’ (53,3% rather or very important).

About 41% returned to their home country at some point after graduation (including Norwegians who stayed in Norway after graduation). Moreover, 29% moved to a third country which was not their home country. The rest (29%) stayed in Norway after graduation even though coming from another home country. Considering that many of the graduates who returned home are originally from developing countries, one can see the role the programs are playing in supporting the growing and professionalizing higher education in many of those developing countries. Moreover, the fact that a considerable number of graduates spread out to other countries shows the potential of the programs with regard to building an international higher education community. At the same time, the programs also contribute to the local labor market, as a large number of graduates continue their professional and academic careers in Norway.

Conclusion

The findings show that the two Higher Education Master’s programs at the University of Oslo have left a considerable mark on the community of higher education researchers and professionals. Fourteen years after the first cohort began its studies, the two programs combined have educated almost 200 professionals and academics, out of which many are directly engaged with higher education topics.

Although coming from very different disciplinary backgrounds and study programs the Higher Education Master’s programs have successfully introduced their graduates to the higher education research community and motivated many to become a part of it. The impact the programs have on shaping their graduates’ career trajectories is visible in the fact that around sixty percent of the graduates reported that they have found a position that is related to higher education. More than fifty percent were certain that the master’s program was decisive for getting their current position and almost all skills attained during their studies were rated to be of high importance for their employment. Another area where the impact of the programs becomes visible is related to the various ways the graduates keep in touch with each other and the higher education community, even though they are spread out all over the world. Considering the challenges the higher education sector is facing with regard to increasing complexity and fragmentation, it is clear how the master’s programs contribute to the consolidation of the emergent field by supporting the formation of a community of graduates who are capable of integrating knowledge from different disciplinary traditions and employing an integrated perspective on the higher education sector and its shifting policy contexts (see also the contribution by Karseth & Nerland in this publication).

Even though this has not been covered in the survey, it seems clear that the research environment linked to the research groups working on higher education at the University of Oslo, and also specifically the work of Peter Maassen play a central role in building and keeping this network active. The positive experiences and memories of the graduates are also reflected in their overall high connection they report to feel towards the master's programs, as well as the overwhelming number of graduates who would recommend the programs to others. With one of the authors being a graduate of the programs herself, it can be said that the overall findings of this survey resonate well with the positive personal experiences gathered during the studies in the program as well as with Peter Maassen and his colleagues who make this program an excellent choice for anyone interested in higher education.

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A FEW WORDS ON THAT THING CALLED *BILDUNG*

Introduction

Education matters. It matters to individuals as well as to the society. Over the centuries and around the globe, the share of people who could access education and stay longer in it than their parents continuously increased. This upward trend gained particular momentum in the aftermath of WWII: over the past half a century, we have had thousands new universities established around the globe, a steeper than ever increase in enrolments and graduations, and an unprecedented diversity of student cohorts. Yet, this expansion and growth came with more than a handful of challenges.

Volumes have been written on what this meant and still means. Even though this speaks to the increasing importance our society places on higher education, it seems that the way we talk about it has changed along the way. With this in mind, we would like to use these pages to say a few words on what seems to be slipping through the cracks of the current higher education discourse: the humanistic legacy and its place in modern higher education (Olsen & Maassen 2007). We turn to one of the best-known concepts in the philosophy of education – *Bildung* in order to argue that, contrary to some accounts (e.g. see Løvlie & Standish 2002; and Nybom 2007 for examples), thinking of higher education through this lens is by no means obsolete and is still very much viable.¹

Bildung is very well known to students of higher education. It is usually associated with Wilhelm von Humboldt and the birth of the modern university at the beginning of the 19th century. It means, roughly put, “an ideal personal self-development through the pursuit of truth” (Anderson 2004, p. 52) and it is neither more nor less than education, but rather an altogether different concept. Comparing the two concepts, Prange argues that:

“It [*Bildung*] is associated with liberty and human dignity, whereas education is associated with teaching skills and morals. We would not expect Pink Floyd to cry: ‘We don’t need no *Bildung*’, whereas ‘We don’t need no education’ has the ring of self-determination and freedom from indoctrination, curriculum and mind-confusing exams.” (Prange 2004, p. 502)

1 The authors wish to warn the reader that they are no experts on the matter, but more enthusiasts of sorts. We advise the reader to proceed with caution.

This, he argues, makes *Bildung* “much better than mere education.” We could not agree more. Going somewhat beyond the definition or translation of the term, we could safely say that *Bildung* is an ideal, even a philosophy of sorts (Nybom 2007). At least that is how we, students in the course “History and Philosophy of Higher Education” of the Higher Education European Master programme (a.k.a. HEEM)², understood it.

Fast forward to the 21st century – the era of globalisation³, with all the “goods” and “evils” it may carry, the idea or ideal of *Bildung* has a certain ring to it, although we are often not sure what it exactly means in the contemporary context. Indeed, the world today is very different from the one in which Humboldt lived. It is more populous, more connected, more integrated yet more unequal, its problems more shared, its communities multicultural and increasingly diverse in more than one way. Our society is global.

Asked against this backdrop, the answer to the question of “what kind of university for what kind of society?” (Olsen 2007, p. 25) seems straightforward: we need a university which will, in its teaching mission, enable individuals to be free and responsible citizens of such a world. Thus the task of understanding how contemporary schools, universities, but also policies, governance, or funding arrangements resonate with the values contained within the idea of *Bildung* seems to be as timely as ever.

However, our ambition here is far more modest than that. Doing justice to the subject would undoubtedly require “at least five PhD projects working together”⁴ and would probably also displease the editors of this book⁵. Instead, we would like to engage the reader in reflecting on one specific educational initiative through the lens of *Bildung*. Of course, we refer to the HEEM programme, initiated and led by Professor Peter Maassen, which gave birth to a truly vibrant family of higher education graduates and was a life-changing experience for the two authors of these lines. Before we turn to HEEM, let us briefly revisit the idea itself.

Bildung then and now

Humboldt saw education as necessary for a broad, intellectual and creative development of individuals, through which well-educated and cultured citizens would emerge. Despite this apparent breadth, *Bildung* is far from having a universal

2 For those who are coming across it for the first time: HEEM was a 2-year study programme led by Peter and offered jointly by the University of Oslo, the University of Tampere and the University of Aveiro between 2004 and 2011. It was part of the Higher Education Development Association – HEDDA.

3 During one of his lectures in our first semester in Oslo in 2008, Peter warned us that choosing globalisation as our master thesis subject may result in us being stuck with not being able to define the concept. Thus, considering the word limit, and indeed out of fear that we won't be able to agree on the definition, we agreed to use the concept without defining it.

4 Peter's (entirely justified) remark after Jelena presented her first master thesis proposal. Tampere, April 2010.

5 Given the word limit the authors are required to respect, of course, not because the editors do not care about ambitious research agendas, *au contraire*, we believe.

meaning or value, for these have changed throughout history and meant different things in different contexts (Løvlie & Standish 2002).

Yet *Bildung* and the so-called “Humboldtian University” seem to be used as an ideological reference and “an eternal source of moral and intellectual legitimation” by contemporary advocates of various agendas (Nybom 2007, p. 78). References to the Humboldtian legacy are integral to any discussion on the current state and the future of the European University (Nybom 2007; Prange 2004). It is particularly invoked by critics of the modern ideal of the market-oriented university whose students are consumers and to whom the state is nothing more than yet another stakeholder. However, as Nybom argues (2007), Humboldt himself was concerned both with the cultural and moral side of education, and with the utilitarian one. Teaching was central to it as much as research, contrary to some modern interpretations of this legacy (Anderson 2004). As Humboldt put it himself:

“There are undeniably certain kinds of knowledge that must be of general nature and, more importantly, a certain cultivation of the mind and character that nobody can afford to be without. People obviously cannot be good craftworkers, merchants, soldiers or businessmen unless, regardless of their occupation, they are good, upstanding and – according to their condition – well-informed human beings and citizens. If this basis is laid through schooling, vocational skills are easily acquired later on, and a person is always free to move from one occupation to another, as so often happens in life.” (Günther 1988, p. 132).

These words need to be read against their historical context: although they resonate with certain universal values, they also resonate with the needs of the day (Prange 2004). What does, then, “an ideal personal self-development through the pursuit of truth” (Anderson 2004, p. 52) mean for contemporary higher education? In what way are “the mind and character” of “well-informed human beings and citizens” to be cultivated today? To which end and at what cost? And, finally, what does a master programme on higher education have to do with it?

A higher education study programme on higher education

We admit: a higher education programme on higher education may make some heads spin⁶. Even those of us who were part of it get confused sometimes, although more often by paradoxes inherent to the subject at hand than by the fact that such subject exists.

HEEM was no ordinary master programme. We do not say that because it was an international, interdisciplinary, exciting, and even life-changing *academic* adventure, but because it encompassed some truly remarkable features which are not that common among study programmes nowadays. Above all, we argue that

6 An exchange many HEEM students will easily relate to: “What do you study?” / “Higher education.” / “Yes, but *what?*” / [Sigh].

some elements specific to HEEM resonate well with the idea of *Bildung*, taken to the contemporary context. As a study programme, HEEM taught us what *Bildung* meant not only in theory, but also in practice. Below, we highlight four such elements.

Engaging oneself with the world. HEEM was a truly international project in many ways, which we find to be ideal for engaging individuals in and further preparing them for the on-going conversation on higher education⁷. After all, *Bildung* is about “the process and the result of an engagement between ego and world” (Thompson 2005, p. 530) and an educated person is “a competent contributor” to “the ongoing conversation of mankind” (Løvlie & Standish 2002, p. 339). Importantly, there appears to be a consensus among scholars on the importance of citizenship that is “global,” as well as on what constitutes the curriculum that should strengthen it (Davies 2006), although we could not really claim that HEEM has made us all “global citizens.” Probably because we are not sure what it means to be one. But what we can say is that it created conditions for us to embrace an identity somewhere along these lines. On the curriculum side, we were taught how to approach higher education in local contexts within broader processes, but also to understand these global processes without losing sight of the local dynamics. It did it by engaging us in the on-going conversations among scholars in the field and beyond. We were asked to take on board knowledge and tools from a range of disciplines. Our learning environment was uniquely international, which made not only the global multicultural condition more of a reality for us, but also made us more perceptive of different realities that co-exist around the world. Certainly, not only in the matters related to higher education.

Research-informed teaching. Davies suggests that “part of the skill of being a global citizen is the capacity for research, and one can at least start the process in a school by encouraging research skills and working out the effect of action” (Davies 2006, p. 23). That good teaching is unthinkable without research is a well-known thing to any former HEEM student. Not because this is what the literature told us, but because “the unity of teaching and research,” a *Bildung* principle, was built into the core of every HEEM course. By way of example, our teachers were some of the leading researchers in the field. Our reading list comprised seminal scholarly work. Our activities were geared towards a research-based understanding of how higher education operates. Our curriculum was built around contemporary and relevant issues in higher education, which we were encouraged to understand, explain or theorise. It may sound trivial, but it is worth stressing: one can’t teach without knowledge and we all know where knowledge comes from.

A subject-based curriculum. Although we like to see higher education as a distinct field of study, we are aware that higher education lies at the intersection of numerous disciplines, such as history, philosophy, sociology, and economics, with courses covering subjects such as policy, organisation, management, pedagogics, global processes, to name a few. One could write volumes on how such an approach benefits our understanding of a subject, yet maybe the most important

7 And indeed many graduates continued their professional careers in this direction (see the contribution by Jungblut & Esterhazy in this volume).

Bildung lesson to take from it is that reality can be questioned from more than one standpoint, with one not necessarily being better than any other. The key is, we think, in complementarity and in the continuous challenging diverse approaches subject one another to. Indeed, there are those who advocate that interdisciplinarity is not a way to go (e.g. Jacobs 2014), yet we contend that a subject-based curriculum does not have to run against the more traditional discipline-based one. Importantly, such an approach does not have to be exclusive to interdisciplinary fields, for the challenge is not only how to efficiently organise our curriculum, but how to create a learning environment in which students, but also their teachers, understand that all knowledge is related. They are called *universities* for a reason, after all.

Autonomy and responsibility. The handful of us who were lucky enough to be part of HEEM could enjoy a great degree of autonomy in our studies. We had the liberty to choose topics for our assignments, literature we would use for it, as well as theoretical approaches and methods. We had the time needed to explore and discuss these among ourselves and with our teachers. However, this appears to be less and less the case for a growing number of students setting foot in a university, even at postgraduate level (Trow 2007). This is truly unfortunate. Yet if one would shrug it off by saying that “there is no alternative,” we would not be agreeing. We maintain that universities and governments can still do a lot to create conditions which would not only allow, but also motivate students to devote themselves fully to their studies and to be both autonomous and responsible in that process. Wellbeing of our society and our planet are unthinkable without individuals who assume responsibility for their action (or inaction). Character-formation through scholarship, a principal purpose of *Bildung* stressing the inseparability of individual freedoms and responsibility towards oneself and others, should thus be an integral part of any curriculum.

So, what kind of university for what kind of society?

By way of conclusion, we would like to leave the reader with the following. We think it is very important to share the appreciation that, geography on the side, distant corners of the world are today closer than ever. Some call this globalisation, although we are not entirely sure whether such thing even exists. Either way, one thing is certain: today’s society is very complex, and so are the ways of understanding and explaining it, and not least of trying to make it better for present and future generations. Therefore, we believe that having an appropriate learning environment that nurtures autonomy and responsibility, where teaching stays close to research, and in which we do not shy away from simultaneously engaging different disciplines to address scientific and practical challenges – is of immense importance. HEEM has certainly not been alone in its efforts to be such an environment⁸, yet we fear it may be closer to an exception than to a rule. Fact is, we do not know this either. But

8 Yet, the international master programme in Higher Education at the Faculty of Education at the University of Oslo was recognised as a good practice through winning the University of Oslo’s Best Learning Environment award in 2010.

we do know that higher education researchers, us included, have the responsibility to engage with issues brought to us by such a reality and that this responsibility is borderless. The question of “what kind of university for what kind of society” may be a political one (Biesta 2015; Olsen & Maassen 2007), but this does not mean we can leave it to policy makers alone. On the contrary.

Happy Birthday Peter!

Thank you for the *Bildung* experience and may you keep inspiring many generations of students and scholars to come!

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HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH: A CONSOLIDATED FIELD?

Introduction

A survey undertaken in 2013 came to the conclusion that there are at least 6,000 higher education researchers worldwide (Rumbley et al., 2014). In passing, it is stated as well in this report on higher education centres and programmes that there are more than 6,000 “institutional researchers” as well. The figures certainly suggest that higher education research cannot be viewed anymore as completely marginal. However, the figures do not suggest either that higher education research as a highly appreciated and strongly supported field of research.

How would such a survey have looked like, if Peter Maassen had been responsible for it? Most likely, he would have liked to avoid such an uneven procedure of looking in-depth in academically based higher education research and merely offer a guess as regards institutional research. He has paid attention to the various sectors of higher education research in his career – for example with close ties to both the European Association for Institutional Research (EAIR), which started its first activities in 1978 (cf. Maassen and Sharma, 1991; cf. also Frackmann and Maassen, 1992), and the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER), which was founded in 1988 – i.e. two years after Peter Maassen embarked on higher education research. He also cooperated with institutions of varied character, when he strived for more increased cooperation among select research units in this field within a framework called HEDDA.

Quality criteria in higher education research

This does not mean, however, that he pragmatically appreciated any kind of higher education research. In contrast, he always formulated a high level of expectation as regards the quality of research in the higher education area (see notably Maassen, 2000, Maassen & Stensaker, 2005). He criticized deficiencies of the theoretical basis, simplistic views of actual developments of higher education, and an often missing practical relevance.

He formulated his expectation as regards higher education research in the framework of a conference which actually addressed the links between higher education research on the one hand and on the other policy and practice: “... ideally, the outcomes of higher education research should: 1. contribute to the theoretical and conceptual state of the art in the ‘mother disciplines’; 2. add our knowledge on higher education in a way that will help to improve steering and design of processes,

organization and behaviour in this sector; 3. make possible the development of connecting and (partly) overlapping research and other activities with fields which focus on proximate, complementary domain, for instance science studies and (non-higher) education studies” (Maassen, 2000, 64-65). Thereby, he expressed the hope that theoretically well-based higher education research could open up new practically relevant perspectives.

When he formulated this ideal, he stated: “This ideal is far from being realized” (2000, 65). He pointed out that institutional background and the conceptual basis of higher education researchers is quite diverse. And he did not expect that everything can be achieved concurrently. For example, when Peter Maassen analyzed some years later the master programmes on higher education what emerged in the early years of the 21st century in European countries (Maassen and Pausits, 2013), the analysis focused on the contribution of these programmes to the professionalization of institutional leaders and managers. This focus suggests implicitly that he did not expect strong concurrent contribution of these programmes to the professionalization of institutional research and to academic reproduction.

One way of achieving both a solid theoretical basis and high practical relevance of research could be to specialize on a limited range of themes and implicitly a limited number of mother disciplines. For example, I have argued that higher education research can be divided into four major areas: quantitative-structural aspects, knowledge aspects, teaching/learning and research and related person aspects, and finally organizational aspects (Teichler, 1996). Each area has a thematic focus and a link to a few ‘mother disciplines’.

In looking at Peter Maassen’s academic career, however, we can clearly state that he himself did opt for enhancement of the quality of higher education research via specialization. He has addressed a broad range of thematic areas, and he is very active to counterbalance the widespread complexity reduction of higher education research through looking at a single or only a few countries: Peter Maassen has aimed at analyzing the situation in a broad range of countries and in strengthening comparative approaches. More than half of his publications can be classified as comparative. When he addressed more than a dozen different countries in individual publications or when he treated continents, e.g. Europe and Africa, or regions, e.g. Western Europe, Nordic countries or sub-Saharan countries, comparative perspectives were leading. Also, he has addressed a broad thematic range: Certainly, the majority of publications focus on governance and management, policy and reform, and quality assurance, but many other themes have been addressed occasionally: The academic profession, teacher education, knowledge and higher education, culture and higher education, ICT, and funding of higher education. One could argue that he tried to extend his list of three imperatives for good higher education with two additional ones: 4. Higher education researchers should cover a broad thematic field in order to serve a cross-fertilization of theories and field knowledge. 5. Higher education research should be comparative in order not to be overwhelmed by the idiosyncracies of the local and national surroundings.

Closing reflections

When Peter Maassen started his career, higher education research in Europe was still in its infancy. It looked feeble in comparison to the developments already visible in the U.S., and looked weak as compared to the high ambitions formulated. Peter Maassen pointed out the progress made by higher education research in Europe, and he himself has contributed to it. The publications on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of EAIR (Begg, 2003) and of CHER (Kehm and Musselin, 2013) indicate such progress (see also Teichler, 2015). But he refrained from sweeping statements about the progress actually reached. Would he say that the glass is half full now or half empty? We do not know. Possibly, he would say that irrespective of the progress reached and the deficiencies persisting, it is worth striving for further improvement. There are further challenges ahead.

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ANALYSING PETER MAASSEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

Introduction

In this paper I am going to explore the works of Peter Maassen, who has both directly and indirectly contributed to my academic upbringing. Without his determination to establish a European master program in higher education studies, I would have probably never become a higher education researcher myself. That's why I find it appropriate to celebrate his 60th birthday by reflecting back at his most significant scholarly achievements. This short piece of work, is not just analytical, but also bears symbolic meaning. It's a gift to one of my most distinguished former professors.

Bearing in mind the extensive freedom given by the editors of this festschrift, I have decided to structure my study according to the principles of grounded theory. Instead of starting out from a general theoretical framework, outlining specific hypotheses, and testing those through a number of rigorous scientific methods, I rather started out by collecting qualitative data and looking for possible patterns to emerge (or not). While there is a general structure to my study, it is coupled loosely enough to enable for a new ground-breaking theory to emerge, that could change once and for all how we see and understand Peter Maassen's academic work.

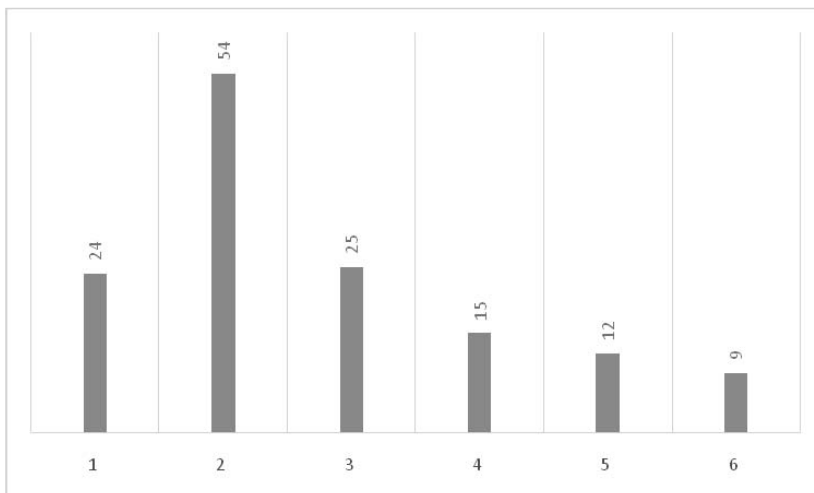
Rationalist individuals share the belief that academic work, that is to say its quality and relevance, can be properly assessed by various quantitative tools. Through subscribing to the same notion, I will try to explore the contribution Peter Maassen made to the field of higher education research. To do this, I will rely on citation indexes and computer assisted content analysis. While these metrics are an appropriate depiction of somebodies publishing activities, they have serious limitations in depicting performance when it comes to teaching master students, participation in pub quizzes at the university, field trips with students into the woods, and socializing at academic dinner parties. By acknowledging these scope conditions, I want to emphasise that certain aspects of Peter Maassen's past activities are excluded from my study. Instead, I take a very narrow and limited view of his academic activities.

The impact in numbers

There are many topics in the field of higher education that Peter Maassen has explored and published research about in his career. Getting published is of crucial importance to all academics. When I was a student I was being told that as an academic I would need to publish a lot or my academic career will perish. Hence, it seems appropriate to use Harzing's *Publish or Perish* software¹ to assess Peter Maassen's contribution to the field of higher education research.

On the 5th of February in 2016 I run a query with *Publish or Perish* across the database of Google Scholar to identify the scholarly impact of Peter Maassen. The initial results of the query made me realize that there is more than one Peter Maassen in the world. Apparently, there is a medical doctor with the same name who regularly publishes articles about osteoporosis and osteopenia self-assessment tools and screening in the general population. There is also an engineer Peter Maassen who is interested in developing an analogue processor comprising quantum devices. Due to disciplinary differences (i.e. medical doctors and engineers tend to publish in teams of 5 and more) it was fairly easy for me to separate the different individuals. After successfully filtering out the publications of the "real" Peter Maassen, I came to the conclusion that until now, he produced about 139 publications that received at least 1 citation. This count includes both English and non-English language publications that are either single author or co-authored works (see Figure 1). However, the result is not free of possible measurement errors, as Google Scholar often reports separately publications that have been referenced in different ways. Nevertheless, it is a fairly good indicator for the scholarly impact of Peter Maassen in the field of higher education research.

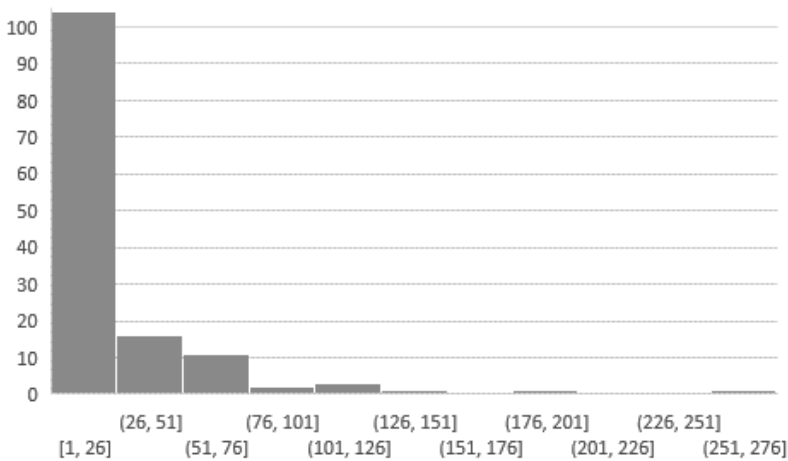
Figure 1: Distribution of publications according to the number of authors



1 The software is available for free at the following website: <http://www.harzing.com/resources/publish-or-perish>

Continuing with reporting the findings, I should probably highlight that Peter Maassen's publications have received a total of 3,240 citations during the past 31 years². Based on the outlined data it is easy to calculate the yearly average of citations, which is 104.52, and the average citation per paper, which stands at 23.31. Considering the latter information I want to stress that the median for average citation per paper is 9 and its mode is 2, which indicates a fairly skewed distribution of citations (see Figure 2). This means that most of the publications (104 to be precise) received only between 1 and 26 citations, while the number of highly cited publications (more than 100 in total) is 6. While this is not considered as a normal distribution in statistical terms, it certainly is "normal" in the real life of academics.

Figure 2: Distribution of Peter Maassen's publications according to the number of citations



Considering the above outlined information, we arrive to an h-index³ of 32. This is the number that represents the scholarly productivity of Peter Maassen at this point in time. Of course, it is very difficult to make sense of it in itself, and that is why it is useful to compare it to other people's scores. First of all, let me report that Peter Maassen has an h-index that is 16 times higher than

-
- 2 The earliest publication is dating back to 1985 with the title „The Practice of Institutional Research in Western Europe“. Since it was published it has been cited two times. To change this, I have decided to cite this document in my current study (although the likelihood of it being noticed by Google scholar is very low).
 - 3 The *h-index* attempts to measure both the productivity (how many publications an individual produced) and their impact (number of citations each publication received). It is calculated by ranking all the publications of an author according to their citation level. All the publications that have more citations than their actual rank are considered to have an h position. The final score is determined after identifying the publication in the ranking that's position is equal (but not less) than the amount of citations it received. In other words, if somebody has an h index of 50, it means that the person has at least 50 publications that received 50 or more citations.

mine. Another scholar in the field of higher education research, who might serve as a better comparison, is Burton Clark. Today, it is almost impossible to study the governance of higher education without his famous triangle of coordination. In comparison Burton Clark has an h-index of 52 and his most cited publication is “Creating entrepreneurial universities: Organisational pathways of transformation”. According to Google Scholar this publication alone has more citations⁴ than Peter Maassen’s entire works combined. However, when taking into account that the average h-index of social scientists in the world is slightly over 20, Peter’s h-index is certainly way above the world average in this scientific area.

The impact in words

In this part of the study I look at the most important research publications of Peter Maassen (as ranked by the Google citation index) and analyse their content with the help of NVivo. The analysis was a very mechanical process without a specific theory guiding it. My only intention was to get a better understanding of the topics Peter Maassen has addressed in most of his research. Two broad topics stand out right away. One is the governance of and in higher education, while the other relates to global and regional trends in higher education (which I refer to as Europeanization and internationalisation in the continuation). These two categories have been also utilized when selecting the appropriate texts for the content analysis (see Table 1). Therefore, in the continuation I will explore how these two streams of scholarly interests compare to each other.

Table 1: Summary of analysed texts from Peter Maassen

	Article	Book chapter	TOTAL
Governance	4	2	6
Europeanization/ internationalization	2	5	7
TOTAL	6	7	13

In total 13 documents have been selected for the content analysis. These were the top ranked publications of Peter Maassen⁵. During the selection process I systematically excluded edited volumes, a couple of publications that did not fall into any of the two broad topics, and publications I had no access to. The final number of publications was divided rather equally between the two topic areas. The detailed list of publications is presented in the subsequent table.

⁴ The number of citations for this single book is 3943.

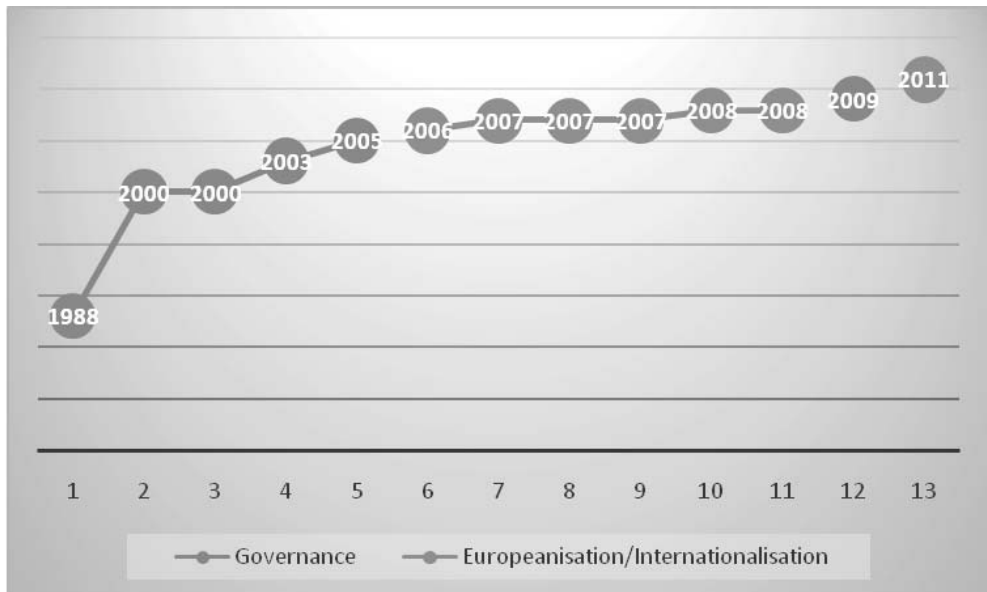
⁵ I considered both single authored and co-authored publications.

Table 2: Detailed list of analysed texts from Peter Maassen

Rank (h-position)	Author(s)	Publication year	Title of publication
3	Å Gornitzka, P Maassen	2000	Hybrid steering approaches with respect to European higher education
4	JP Olsen, P Maassen	2007	European debates on the knowledge institution: The modernization of the university at the European level
5	P Maassen, N Cloete	2006	Global reform trends in higher education
6	P Maassen, B Stensaker	2011	The knowledge triangle, European higher education policy logics and policy implications
7	P Maassen	2003	Shifts in governance arrangements
10	Å Gornitzka, P Maassen, JP Olsen, B Stensaker	2007	“Europe of Knowledge:” Search for a New Pact
15	P Maassen, FA Van Vught	1988	An intriguing Janus-head: the two faces of the new governmental strategy for higher education in the Netherlands
17	G Neave, P Maassen	2007	The Bologna process: An intergovernmental policy perspective
18	P Maassen	2008	The modernisation of European higher education
22	P Maassen	2000	The changing roles of stakeholders in Dutch university governance
23	IM Larsen, P Maassen, B Stensaker	2009	Four basic dilemmas in university governance reform
27	B Stensaker, N Frølich, Å Gornitzka, P Maassen	2008	Internationalisation of higher education: the gap between national policy – making and institutional needs
33	P Maassen, B Stensaker	2005	The black box revisited; the relevance of theory-driven research in the field of higher education studies

A significant trend can be spotted already in Table 1. It is apparent that Peter Maassen published his research on the issue of higher education governance mostly in journals, while his research on Europeanization or internationalisation usually appeared as book chapters in edited volumes. Secondly, when examining the publications’ dates (see Figure 3) it becomes obvious that before 2005 governance of higher education was Peter Maassen’s favourite topic, while after 2006 his academic attention turns to issues of Europeanization and internationalisation.

Figure 3: Publications arranged according to their dates of publishing (y-axis)



In the next phase I looked at the content of these publications (without engaging in any kind of sophisticated coding process). It might be important to note that the longest word which is most frequently repeated by Peter Maassen is 'internationalisation'. It is repeated 161 times across all the 13 publications that were analysed (or 173 times if we count also those times when it was spelled with a "z"). This word and its related forms (i.e. internationalisation, internationalise, internationalising) account for 0.22% of all the words used by Peter Maassen. However, the most frequently used word is educational (1667 times), which including its related forms (e.g. educated, education, and educational) account for 2.29% of all the words used. It is closely followed up by the words 'university' (1609), 'higher' (1309), and institutions' (1137).

Coming to our two rivalry topics, the two are almost equally represented in the texts. Europeanization is slightly ahead with a total count of 840 (including words such as European, Europeanised, or Europeans). Governance has a count of 826 (including words such as govern, governance, governed, governing, government, governments, governs), while the exact match for 'governance' is 435 counts.

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THE TRIANGLE OF COORDINATION – INFLUENCE WITHIN THE ACADEMY

Introduction

Developing a higher education specific curriculum that is theoretically grounded as well as relevant to the broadness of its student backgrounds is challenging. Judged by the commonly applied attributes of an academic discipline, higher education studies lacks disciplinary cohesiveness (Tight 2014). Established in 2001 by Peter Maassen, the University of Oslo's Master in Higher Education was the first of its type in Europe. Due to the broadness of higher education as a field of study and research, the University of Oslo's program seeks to be multi-disciplinary, as well as international, research-oriented and relevant to a variety of career opportunities. However, there is one enduring "cornerstone" to the program which unites the fragmentation of knowledge and students. If one examines the course syllabus, readings are listed in alphabetical order. Except for one. Burton Clark's (1983) *The higher education system* is the first-listed reading (ahead of Manuel Castells). Clark's book is exceptional in a syllabus otherwise drawn from articles and chapters. It is also old, only Martin Trow's 1970 article on "massification" is older.¹

While higher education may lack many unifying features and modes of inquiry, Clark's contribution has brought together many students and researchers. At the time of writing, his 1983 book had 3,462 citations in Google Scholar. Its impact is partly due to the breadth of topics covered, allowing different researchers to apply his theoretical approaches to their objects of inquiry. The purpose of this article is to take Clark's ubiquitous "Triangle of Coordination" and apply it to the academic profession using the 2007 Changing Academic Profession (CAP) survey data, conducted in 18 countries and Hong Kong.

Integration and coordination: from two to three axes with triangular coordinates

Higher education systems have multiple parts with different tasks and missions. In the early part of his book, Clark (1983) describes within-institution divisions based on *sections* and *tiers*, and between-institution divisions based on *sectors* and *hierarchy*. Clark's triangle is an attempt to visualise how different countries integrate these disparate elements and coordinate relationships between institutions.

Prior to introducing the triangle, Clark (1983) presents coordination based on a single axis, from "Unitary and unified state administration" to "Market linkage" (p. 138). This can also be understood as a continuum from centralised to decentralised,

1 <http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/uv/iped/HEM4100/h15/pensumliste/index.html>

and simple to complex. Countries where higher education is governed by a single, centralised governmental bureaucracy have “tight” systems of state coordination. Countries where coordination is spread across multiple bureaucracies, or where the state has less influence, have “loose arrangements” and coordinated by “market linkages”. These systems also tend to contain multiple tiers, sectors and hierarchies. At the time, Sweden was identified as the purest case of the former (followed by France), and USA the latter (followed by Japan). Britain and Canada sat in the middle. Clark was interested in each country’s ordinal placement, rather than “precise spacing”. Japan’s placement in between Canada and USA did not imply it was equally close to both. Nor was Sweden a purely centralised coordination system, it was simply more unified than its comparators.

Clark’s triangle extended the visualisation to a third axis and placed countries within this space. However, these triangular coordinate placements were based on judgement rather than empirical data. The CAP survey data allows us to take Clark’s theoretical representation and use empirical data for country coordinates, based on who academics perceive as the primary actors in core decisions in their countries.

Data and results

The CAP survey asked academics to nominate which actor had “primary influence” over each of the following 11 processes:

1. Selecting key administrators;
2. Choosing new faculty;
3. Making faculty promotion and tenure decisions;
4. Determining budget priorities;
5. Determining the overall teaching load of faculty;²
6. Setting admission standards for undergraduate students;
7. Approving new academic programs;³
8. Evaluating teaching;
9. Setting internal research priorities;
10. Evaluating research;
11. Establishing international linkages.

Survey respondents could nominate one of:

1. Government or external stakeholders;
2. Institutional managers;
3. Academic unit managers;
4. Faculty committees/boards;
5. Individual faculty; or
6. Students.⁴

2 Not asked in Germany

3 Not asked in Norway

4 Hong Kong also included a seventh actor, university senate, which I treat as equivalent to Faculty boards.

The primary decision makers in each country differ across the 11 processes, but for simplicity Figure 1 presents the mean for government across all 11 in each country.

Figure 1. Proportion of academics nominating Government or external stakeholders as having primary influence over 11 university decision-making areas

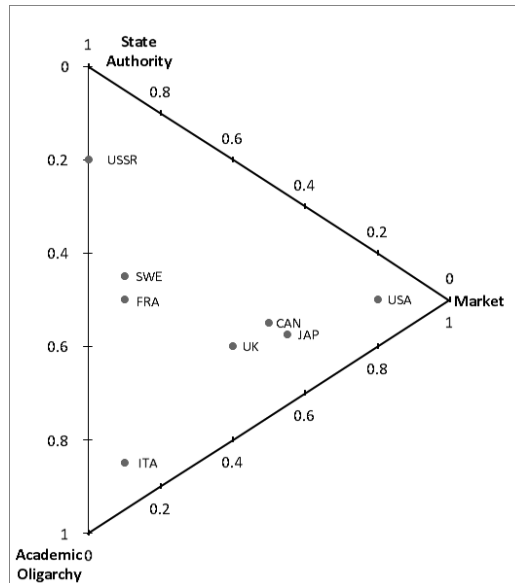


There are two main results from Figure 1. Firstly, government is rarely a core and direct actor. Only academics in Mexico were likely to report government more than 25% of the time, with China next highest (17%). Secondly, countries are clustered on the far right hand side with few substantive differences between them. Therefore, ordinal placements are inappropriate.

Clark understood the limitations of the single state to market axis. Less government did not mean more market. Decision making power also resides within the academic oligarchy. He offered Italy as the purest case of this, with a “mock bureaucracy”, weak state control and weak market relations. Clark also expanded his country examples from six to eight, and used distances between country points as an extension of ordinal placements noted earlier.

Figure 2 replicates Clark’s triangle based on estimated triangular coordinates. The purpose of Figure 2 is to show how each country has de facto triangular coordinates in Clark’s triangle and that these coordinates can potentially be derived from empirical data. For example, Italy has coordinates of 0.8, 0.1 and 0.1 for academic oligarchy, market and state, respectively. These points are traced along the respective axes with the dotted line. USA shares a common coordinate with Italy for state authority, and therefore, the line cross both country points. At the other extreme, USSR has coordinates 0.2, 0.0 and 0.8. Its placement directly on the academic oligarchy axis reflects its complete lack of market orientation.

Figure 2. Clark's Triangle of Coordination with estimated triangular coordinates

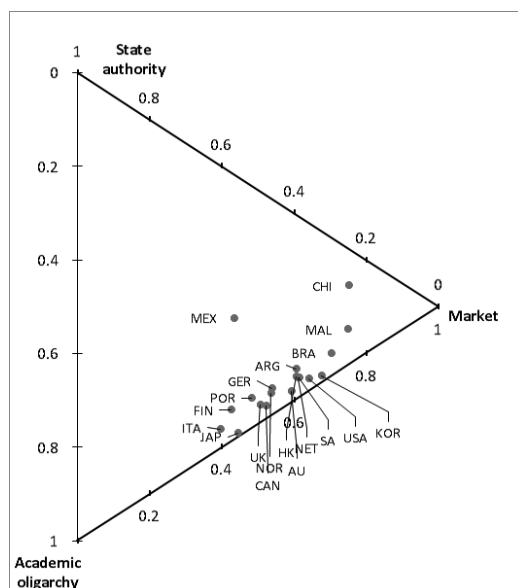


Utilising the CAP data for triangular coordinates is not straightforward. There are many practical and theoretical complexities which cannot be described in this short paper, but whose implications are discussed briefly later. Each country receives coordinates based on the following process. Where academics indicated “government” as a primary influencer, this is taken as proxy for “state authority” (consistent with Figure 1). The influence of “individual faculty” and “faculty committees/boards” aligns reasonably well with academic traditions towards autonomy, collegiality and democratic self-governance. Therefore, this is taken as a proxy for “academic oligarchy”. The role of “institutional managers” and “academic unit managers” is more difficult to address and could feasibly be an extension of state power, market power or academic oligarchy. However, the rise of managerial power and new public management has aligned with a neo-liberal agenda towards marketization in many countries, reshaping the academic profession as employees (rather than a collegial community) and students as customers (Salazar & Leihy 2013). The rise of performance-based funding and decentralisation of budgetary responsibilities also extends the impact of managers to the departmental level (de Boer & Goedegebuure 2009; Lang 2014). Therefore, managerial power is treated as a proxy for “market”. Responses for students as a key influencer are excluded because their influence is minimal and Clark also considered this group relevant in only a limited range of contexts (1983, p. 125) (see Table 1 in Appendix for full results).

The proportion of academics in each country nominating state authority (government), market (managers) and academic oligarchy (faculty and committees) as having primary influence over 11 university decision-making areas is operationalised as triangular coordinates in Figure 3. For example, in Italy the

mean proportion for the academic oligarchy was 56%, the highest amongst all countries. This corresponds to a coordinate of 0.56 on the vertical axis, placing Italy closest to the academic oligarchy corner. Given that around 40% reported market (“managers”) as the strongest influence, it is placed to the left of the middle along the market axis at coordinate 0.40. With only around 4% of academics in Italy reporting government as a primary influencer (see Figure 1), it shares a similar profile to all countries other than Mexico and China, close to the line separating market from academic oligarchy.

Figure 3. Proportion of academics nominating state, market and academic oligarchy as primary influence over decision-making by country, depicted as triangular coordinates



Discussion

Unlike Clark’s triangular visualisation, empirical data for primary decision makers across countries leads to no ideal country types for market, state or academic coordinated systems. There are many reasons for this, including the aggregation of different types of decisions and the variety of perspectives of academics, which may be due to different interpretation or represent substantive differences across ranks, disciplines or institutional types within countries. These considerations are worth exploring further.

Secondly, state authority appears uniformly weak, with differences across countries mostly along the academic oligarchy – market axis. Perhaps this is because higher education systems are too large and complex to be micro-managed by the state, with the distinction between countries on this axis offering substantive illustration of how power is divided between academics and managers (or the market). However, it also illustrates one of the greatest challenges of international comparative research.

The rise of managerial power has often been viewed in opposition to the academic oligarchy, but whether this represents a shift towards greater market coordination or state control is likely to be context specific. For example, Marginson and Rhoades (2002) view managers as part of the state control, relabelling Clark's triangle vertices as market, professional/collegial and government/managerial. This may make sense in certain countries, but managerial power can be part of marketization processes or even the entrenchment of the academic oligarchy. Countries like Italy may retain a "mock management" structure where management and the academic oligarchy are intertwined, with market responsiveness, competition and accountability effectively resisted (Rostan 2008).

Clark's triangular approach is a useful method for visualising the strength of managerial power relative to the state and academic oligarchy across countries, but its impact on higher education coordination and the academic profession cannot be adequately understood from a simple triangle representation. From the perspective of the academic profession, understanding the balance of power requires understanding who the managers are, how they are appointed (or elected), and how their performance objectives are defined. Such an approach then draws us away from aggregated between-country comparisons and towards an acceptance that, even within a single country, understanding the academic profession "begins with a willingness to pursue diversity" (Clark 1997, p. 23).

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Appendix

Table 1. Proportion of academics nominating “State authority” (government), “Market” (managers) and Academic oligarchy (faculty) as having primary influence over 11 university decision-making areas

Country	State authority	Market	Academic oligarchy
ARG	6%	61%	33%
AU	2%	59%	38%
BRA	5%	70%	25%
CAN	3%	52%	45%
CHI	17%	75%	8%
FIN	7%	43%	51%
GER	6%	54%	41%
HK	5%	61%	35%
ITA	4%	40%	56%
JAP	1%	45%	55%
KOR	1%	68%	31%
MAL	8%	75%	17%
MEX	26%	43%	31%
NET	4%	61%	35%
NOR	5%	54%	42%
POR	6%	48%	45%
SA	4%	61%	35%
UK	4%	51%	46%
USA	3%	64%	33%

ON BERNINI AND MAASSEN: CREATING INNOVATION AND INFLUENCE IN COMPARATIVE HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

Trying to do justice to the excruciatingly diverse career of our friend and colleague Peter Maassen is beyond a Herculean task. One that the specified length of the chapters for this *Festschrift* make impossible anyhow. We have therefore opted for the opposite. We focus on a very particular week in the life of Peter, namely the one of September 28, 1995. This week featured the 8th CHER Conference, held in Rome with the theme 'Cross-National Studies in Higher Education, the state of the art in the disciplines' following on from the 1994 CHER Conference in Twente, also on the theme of cross-national studies. For indeed these were the days of sustained debate on comparative methodology in higher education. And Peter's contribution was singularly unique as we will demonstrate in our short essay.

Comparative methodology

Our field has always prided itself in its internationally comparative approach to higher education studies. Yet it also has forever struggled to come to terms with what the implications of this particular feature are from a methodological perspective. 1994 marked the 10th anniversary of CHEPS, and Frans van Vught, Peter Maassen and Leo Goedegebuure thought it a good idea to take this occasion to bring together much of CHEPS' own efforts in the field of comparative higher education policy studies through joint chapters with their most prominent international collaborators. It was also the year that Van Vught went on sabbatical leave to the US, leaving CHEPS in the hands of Maassen and Goedegebuure. We won't dwell on whether or not this was a good decision, but it certainly got that duo interested in managing a research centre. More to the point for this contribution was that Van Vught used part of his sabbatical to immerse himself in the world of comparative social science studies.

Obviously, that was what sabbaticals always have been intended for: read up and come back re-inspired and fired up. That certainly worked for Van Vught as he embarked on a treatise on comparative methodology that ended up as the first chapter of the anniversary book, co-authored with Goedegebuure. And it became the theme for the annual CHER Conference.

For those lacking some of the historical antecedents of our field, CHER was established in Kassel in 1988. Its foundation board members, comprised of Ulrich Teichler, Maurice Kogan, Guy Neave and Frans van Vught, had a unifying goal of trying to block the big international consultancy firms from obtaining the bulk of the European Commission's research and evaluation projects and establishing the prominence of the European higher education research community. The CHEPS Director by far was the youngest amongst these four, as was CHEPS itself in the European research community and beyond at that time. And with youth comes audacity, recklessness and at times righteousness. And so it was with its approach to comparative higher education research methodology.

Written from a particular view on social science research, strongly influenced by Karl Popper, the introductory chapter argued for a distinctive approach to comparative research, requiring explicit theoretical grounding and explicit methodological choices and implications for research designs. Whilst internally consistent in its argument, it also was explicitly critical of what had blossomed under the umbrella of comparative studies in our field in the past. The result of which was some of the established higher education researchers taking strong offence to both the critique and the comparative methodology advocated. The heated discussions during that initial conference on cross-national studies are best summed up as "Well, your theory is not my theory and your methodology certainly isn't my methodology", and "We aren't %@\$ well working with lab rats and experiments". It would be fair to say that the higher education community got a bit carried away with itself over this. But, despite some verbal boxing and blows, common sense ultimately prevailed and a second conference was agreed upon to further work this theme through and allow for a range of views to be expressed in a special issue of *Higher Education*. And the CHER Rome Conference was to be the stocktake of this all.

From Stocktake to Stockade

However, the Rome conference ended up being more stockades of warring camps on various sides of the comparative research methodological debate than a stocktake. Unfortunately, aspects of the argument became personal and words were exchanged amongst leaders in our field that in an earlier era would have led to pistols at 20 yards. The situation called for urgent mediation, which Peter provided through wise counsel and humour.

One way to dissipate the tension was through exhausting walks through the streets of Rome viewing the numerous historical sites which Peter, armed with the latest version of the Eyewitness Travel Guide, led with a gusto that would have put any Japanese tour leader to shame. One such particularly arduous venture was the "Walk around Bernini's Rome", highlighting the life and works of Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

It is not an overstatement to suggest that at times our colleagues in the field of higher education can be a bit humourless at best and egotistical knowalls at worst.

The raging debate over the proper (if not the Popper) approach to comparative higher education research during the Rome conference brought out the worst of such behaviour. Peter, and a few of his more larrikin colleagues, saw a way of exposing some of the more extreme and pompous positions being adopted through reinventing Bernini as a higher education researcher with particular expertise on comparative methods.

In presentations and during discussion times at the conference, Peter would ask participants “Have you read Bernini’s latest work on comparative higher education?”; “What do you think of the Bernini position on comparative methodology?”; “Do you think Bernini offers valid solutions?”, and so on. No one ever explicitly denied not knowing who Bernini was, and a few of our colleagues appeared to be well versed in Bernini’s works. This to the delight of us in the audience hearing Bernini’s profound insights on comparative methodology espoused on the public debating stage.

Eventually, the penny dropped, and colleagues realised they were the brunt of a joke, one which most, though maybe not all, enjoyed and shared once outed. It became a good joke to share over a beer or two, and served to help restore comradery to our small collegium of higher education researchers. Peter is one of the few if not the only one of your brethren who could have pulled off such a pointed but goodhearted ‘prank’.

The evidence of innovation and influence

Of course, the significance of Peter’s scholarly contribution to comparative higher education policy studies over decades is without question. He established the Springer Higher Education Dynamics book series and with Alberto Amaral initiated the Portuguese Douro seminars, all of which were based on a strong comparative element. His work in Africa with Nico Cloete and his current study of flagship universities in various countries are all cross-national in design and execution. We could go on, for there is no limit to the number of examples that one could cite demonstrating Peter’s contribution to our field. But the story of Gian Lorenzo Bernini and the Rome CHER Conference will always have a warm place in our memories. And it was a long walk...

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RESEARCHING HIGHER EDUCATION – WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER?

Introduction

I'm pleased to contribute to the Festschrift for Peter. He is a good friend and an important scholar of, among other things, governance issues in higher education. He and his UiO colleagues (Bjorn Stensaker, Åse Gornitzka, and Tatiana Fumasoli, among others) have been gracious in hosting me and my family on my several visits to Oslo, and my research and understanding about European higher education has benefitted greatly from the conversations we've had about all things higher education. As an American, I don't have a nuanced understanding of the utility of a Festschrift (Americans really don't have a nuanced understanding of much!), but I'm hopeful my contribution can lend a hand.

The Festschrift is, I'm told, an opportunity for a friendly, informal examination of a scholar's work and contributions. With that aim in mind, I'll focus on a few things that I've noticed about Peter's work that make his contribution to the field unique. I won't bother with making the case that Peter's work is of high quality; that's pretty darn clear at this point! Instead, I'll discuss what I've decided (as of this month) to call the *Maassenesque* qualities of scholarly writing about higher education governance. More specifically, I'll discuss Peter's critical but optimistic view on governance, his direct writing style, and his use of knowledge from outside higher education. Along the way, I'll provide illustrations from some of the pieces I've used in my own work.

Critical Optimism

I think it's easy to be cynical in our field, particularly on my side of the pond where policymakers and higher education leaders seem unwilling to apply some of the good work we've done to improve the governance of colleges and universities (see: I sound cynical!). The problem is, sometimes the cynicism gets in the way of the work, distracts us from our purpose, and makes it hard for us to frame our work in ways that would be useful to policymakers. One of the things I appreciate about Peter's work is that he comes at problems with a perspective that combines an appropriate critical perspective with a dose of optimism that makes his work both readable and relevant. He doesn't sugarcoat it, but he also doesn't get sidetracked by acting like chicken little. Peter can discuss, for example, the shift from a faculty-centered governance model to a contemporary New Public Management in an even-handed manner that suggests the sky may not be falling and simultaneously

extract appropriate, researchable questions like “What is the origin of this threat [to the internal affairs of the university]? How can it be interpreted?” (Maassen 2003, p. 33). The result of his approach is that neither he nor his reader is blinded by a knee-jerk reaction to the change being discussed, but is instead reminded that this development is a good opportunity for learning.

Peter’s optimism for his work and research on governance is easy to see in his presentations which, I’ll take the opportunity to point out, are always done with his eyeglasses pushed up over his forehead. You can’t come away from Peter’s presentations without encountering a few good ideas. His slides are a mix of stream-of-consciousness plus many quotations, peppered with exclamations that rely on customized abbreviations (e.g., “wrt” = “With Respect To”) such as: “Our current knowledge basis wrt and understanding of higher education change dynamics in Europe is in drastic need of European version of the famous Carnegie program!” (Maassen 2014). This quote demonstrates Peter’s scholarly and teaching perspective well: the current dilemma is an opportunity for us to learn more and see which old ideas are useful and/or need to be amended.

Direct Writing Style

Many of us aren’t as direct as we could be in our written work. This is particularly problematic because we are an applied field and our work should be transparently relevant to those who might want to use it to improve their universities. We shouldn’t be afraid to make strong claims if our work supports them. Peter’s work -- and his personal style of communication -- doesn’t suffer from this malady. Whether he’s writing for a scholarly audience or for publication in a different format where normative statements are appropriate, it’s easy to understand his findings and perspective. In this way, he’s like the American baseball umpire who “calls ‘em as he sees ‘em.”

A couple of examples illustrate Peter’s direct style. Consider “African universities are not strengthening their self-generative capacity and are thus struggling to make a substantial contribution to either new knowledge generation or the application thereof” (Cloete, Bunting & Maassen 2015, p. 29) or “In the new model the state should serve less predominantly as funder, receiver of graduates, and user of knowledge. There should be governance by standardization, dialogue, benchmarking, and exchange of ‘good practice’” (Maassen 2007, p. 13). Both of these claims are strong and clear, yet clearly linked to the arguments and claims made in the work being cited. No milquetoast here. We could use more of this in our field.

Use of Knowledge From Outside Higher Education

Our field lacks a specific disciplinary perspective. This is much more of a blessing than a curse. “Higher education” problems are, by their very nature, multi-disciplinary. Governance problems are some of the more complex, as they bring together problems and topics relevant to management, sociology, economics, among

other fields. Peter's scholarship, more than most of ours, demonstrates an ability to bring together concepts and viewpoints in unique ways. This ability (and eagerness) to incorporate and build from disparate knowledge is a particular talent and is probably linked to Peter's appetite for good books, regardless of the topic. A good example is Peter's routine references to the historical foundations of contemporary problems. Peter is as quick -- or quicker -- than anyone in our field to remind the reader that contemporary governance problems are often swirled in cultural milieu that go back decades or even centuries.

The result is articles and presentations littered with useful reminders that not much is truly new in our field. Peter connects, for example, Bismarck's notions about the pragmatic nature of politics to questions about what types of higher education systems will serve us best (2014). He directs us to welfare reforms of decades past as instructive examples as we contemplate contemporary university reforms (Kwiek & Maassen 2012). His treatment of contemporary African higher education is replete to relevant British and French commissions and meetings that, actually, didn't happen that long ago (Cloete & Maassen 2015). And, he links Norwegian "domestic traditions" to contemporary higher education reform (Gornitzka & Maassen 2012).

Peter leverages more than the relevant work of historians. As I note above, higher education is naturally a multidisciplinary exercise, or at least it should be. Too many of us, unfortunately, don't reach out very often to innovative thinkers in other fields who are writing about concepts that can be useful in our field. We're very good at citing the usual suspects, but don't stray too far afield. Peter is one of the best at identifying and transplanting good ideas. His references are quite likely to include contemporary (and historical) work from public policy experts, economists -- anyone with something particularly useful to say. His typical reference list doesn't ignore the higher education experts we are used to seeing (e.g., Kerr, Slaughter, and Neave) but usually features a few new faces (e.g., Esping-Anderson 1990; Peters 2001; Mazzucato 2013) that contribute substantial ideas to our conversation.

These characteristics describe what makes Peter's contribution unique and are some of the reasons that he is the kind of scholar that I point out to my students when they are looking for conceptual insights and new ways to frame problems (and solutions). I wish him all the best on his 60th birthday.

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