Trust and Universities:
Management of Research and Education under Changing Knowledge Regimes

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ABSTRACT
More explicitly than before, universities have become instruments of industrial and economic growth policies. This has led to an increase in accountability regimes and in the application of the so called New Public Management on universities hitherto governed by a Humboldtian, Weberian, or Mertonian norms and a high degree of internal freedom and autonomy. This paper reviews some of the literature on these phenomena and analyzes critically some of the positions taken. It is concluded that while there is arguably a considerable change in governance going on in Western university systems, the change is far from altering the academic ethos. Still, it is argued, institutional norms should also be defended, which could be achieved through differentiation of higher education and among research performing institutions and organizations. An important virtue of the university remains to deliver social value precisely because it is an institution of credibility, criticism, and trust.

JEL codes: I21, I23

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Introduction

For many years now, the issue of appropriate and efficient management of universities have been at the forefront. Clearly, the driver behind this interest is the transformation that universities are going through with growing external demands and also diminishing platforms of core funding. Ivar Bleiklie, a specialist on political institutions and organization theory, has addressed these issues in a solid and innovative paper. A particular strength of the paper is its reasoning tone and its modesty, even ambivalence, an appropriate position to take as the dilemmas are plentiful and no easy solutions are in sight. A further strength of the paper is that it summarizes a number of organizational trends into one comprehensive analysis.

In this short comment, I shall use Bleiklie’s paper as a point of departure for some reflections concerning leadership, management and institutional change in current university systems. The main thrust of my contribution is that the situation is far less predetermined than one might be inclined to believe when one listens to much of the public and policy debates on these issues. There is real choice and there is even likely to develop a rich variety of approaches. Not disregarding the real and potential impacts of New Public Management, and its ‘managerialist’ extremes – some would say perversions – an important task is to get it into proportion.

1. A Continuity Hypothesis

In his paper, Bleiklie summarizes and acknowledges the many trends that point in the direction of deep and fundamental change of universities: increased competition, reduced autonomy, and erosion of core values. These changes have already drawn considerable scholarly interest and have prompted commentators to talk of ‘academic capitalism’ (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997), the ‘commercialization of higher education’ (Bok, 2003), or of an entirely new logic of relations between universities and other societal actors – for example as codified by the concept Triple Helix (Etzkowitz and Leydersdorff, 1997), or under the concept of Mode 2 research (Gibbons et al., 1994), or even of a new form of ‘post-academic’ science (Ziman, 2000). Bleiklie is wise not to look at these statements and studies only as
empirical and theoretical reports on the state of the art in the academic world. He rightly sees them also as ethical, ideological and political claims on what should be the case, on whether change is good or bad, or on which direction change should take. He cautions us to reflect deeper on the extent to which the changes in external relations and conditions actually do bring about changes in internal operations and in core values. He is not readily prepared to accept as a given that the changes are either so drastic or deep as they are often perceived to be.

Bleiklie proposes what one might term a ‘continuity hypothesis’. Scrutinizing trends in four areas – academic authority, collegial co-ordination, social responsibility, and business enterprise emulation (or ‘managerialism’) – he finds that in all areas, there are clear signs of change, but it is a change within the boundaries of past patterns and trends. First, academic authority has been questioned for several decades by changing the constitution of universities in most countries, allowing for junior staff and other personnel to take position in deciding bodies. Second, collegiate co-ordination is being subverted by moving decision-making power – and control of resources – away from the professoriate. Third, social responsibility increases, and ‘third mission’ activities are increasingly included in accountability and performance measures. Fourth, clearly, the New Public Management ideals of the 1980s and 1990s have put their mark on universities, introducing incentive schemes and accountability regimes to respond to increasing external pressures for deliverables, and for provision of funding and other forms of sponsorship. In that process there has been a professionalization of leadership and management, disentangling the old professorial nexus of academic/administrative/institutional leadership that characterized the continental European chair system in particular. There has clearly also been a focus on output rather than on process, or academic culture, when it comes to assessing the quality of academic institutions and its work.

This being said, Bleiklie’s overall observation is that the changes are, albeit stronger in some countries and universities than in others, so far fairly moderate. He does not sense that we are anywhere near the point where this change has fundamentally transformed academic institutions. He has empirical observations to corroborate his claim. It is still an almost universal fact that academic leaders have to be full professors. However, universities are increasingly dependent of external resources and benefactors, not business enterprises. Collegiate values are still alive and strong and exert enormous restraining power on whatever formal constitutional power, or managerial will, that rest with the, admittedly growing, leadership strata. However, although output measures and rankings are increasingly
influential, collegiate evaluation (‘peer review’) of the quality of academic work reigns supreme. Bad research is still bad research, and universities show no signs of accepting it to any larger extent today than they did in the past; if anything, the opposite might be claimed as comparisons across disciplines, systems, and nations are much more easily undertaken today (an observation that is mine and not Bleiklie’s). In addition, rankings is also a measure of bad research, which is consequently far more effectively exposed today than in the past, and bad research is not easily compensated by success among business or government, at least not for long.

Now, these may seem fairly general and ‘middle-of-the-road’ remarks – perhaps serving the purpose of tempering the discussion and urging us not to consider the university system worthy of much interest at all; a ‘business as usual’ message. I certainly do not think that this is the right conclusion to draw from Bleiklie’s paper. On the contrary, I think one virtue of his analysis lies precisely in its non-deterministic, open and reasoning approach.

2. Orthodoxy and Modernity in University Governance

Using the gist and broad categorizations of Bleiklie I would like to continue this short analysis by inviting ourselves to think about the perceived threats of managerialism as rather an area of conscious choice and responsible policy-making, naturally taking the changing external conditions into account. If the university, or in a wider sense, the academic community and its workers, is the animal, society is its environment, and we need in a disillusioned way to find methods – the plural is crucial – of adapting successfully to these conditions. There is no reason to believe that we live in a one-street town.

The debates on managerialism often depict two ideal type models that are pitted against each other, much like les anciens et les modernes in the late seventeenth century. Not only is this a gross simplification, it is also not taking into account the many distinctions and differentiations that can be made within each ‘camp’.

Those who are mostly sceptical of change cannot just be identified with the defence of organizational values through the autonomy of elites, that Bleiklie, referring to Philip Selznick’s classical Leadership in Administration: A Sociological Interpretation (1957; new ed. 1984), claims as a valid indicator. The ‘ancients’ are in fact as diverse a group as any other. The caricature version is that they are protecting privileges that are increasingly outmoded and irrational. However, among the orthodox sceptics are also those who argue for mainstream Humboldtian ideals, claiming that academic autonomy is historically proven to be
an outstanding way of producing solid new knowledge. Another claim is that there is a ‘virtuous circle of autonomy’. Quality is to be proven under academic freedom, which will approve of the best work, which will then sustain new generations of academics pursuing even better evaluations of even better research, etc. These virtuous circles may be threatened by the introduction of external criteria and the upward spiral of quality may be broken, although more funding may have been brought in and more (but less original) work is done. An implication of this line of argument is usually to defend core funding in order to maintain academic authority and local independence in the making of strategic decisions on research. This is already fundamentally compromised in many European countries, where annual parliamentary decisions govern the size and direction of core funding for research. On the other hand, these are usually quite foreseeable decisions, although Thatcherite shocks do sometimes occur, but, honestly, not so often.

The ‘ancients’ would most often claim adherence to, or at least feel more comfortable with, a Mertonian logic. Other features of this logic would be an academic world based on CUDOS norms (Communism, Universalism, Disinterestedness, Organized Scepticism), a basic belief in an ideal ‘linear model’ – it has probably never existed (Edgerton, 2004) – of basic research-applied research-innovation-manufacturing, and caution vis-à-vis too deep connections to industry and social interests. The ancients’ chief outlook on what has been going on in Academe, in essence since the early stages of the mass university and the first signs of the breakdown of the binary system in the 1960s and the 1970s, has been pessimistic and nostalgic. ‘Decline’ and ‘erosion’ are terms often heard, and these are words used even by those who would otherwise in no way undersign any form of cultural conservatism. When it comes to Academe, this position is perfectly compatible with utmost radicalism as well as with both liberalism and conservatism. A well articulated strand of criticism stems from the so-called STS- (Science and Technology Studies), or SSK- (Social Studies of Knowledge) fields. Based on anthropological, sociological, and historical studies these fields have, over the past generation, provided a new and detailed image of laboratory science which emphasizes continuity, social intelligence and integrity, and clearly an ethos that is not easily compatible with managerialism.

If it was not for the fact that so many academics are clearly for the sort of change that the ‘ancients’ are against, one would be tempted to call this very particular form of self-understanding for ‘academism’, in the same way as there has recently been talk of ‘journalism’ – a self-prophesized special role for an entire profession, ostentatiously on behalf of society. The chief ideologist of this may not be Robert K. Merton but rather Max Weber.
There is a distinctly Weberian touch to much of what many of the most articulate ancients say when they speak out. They are clearly not happy when boundaries between the *Beruf* of *Wissenschaft* and society at large are blurred by the *Zweckrationalitäten* of politics, profit or prophecy, not to speak of latter-day horrors such as ‘regional economic growth’. These are monstrosities, the invasion of which threatens the academic profession at its very heart.

In the same way, we should try to discriminate among the advocates of reform, the ‘modernizers’, or the would-be ‘managerialists’. In fact, this wide array of people is probably even more heterogeneous than the camp of ‘ancient’ orthodox. To begin with, the chief ideologists are altogether different, which Bleiklie is also eager to point out. The Michael Gibbons-led group of half a dozen of the most superbly able authors that conceived of the Mode 1/Mode 2 binary divide, were at the core university academics, united by the effort to understand the change that research and innovation was undergoing in the late twentieth century. If they also came out as advocates of sorts of Mode 2 it was not because of any propagandistic conviction but simply because it is, for the realist, crucial to identify the structural and historical changes in order to make the best possible of them. The argument was essentially pragmatic: ‘Mode 2 is where the enterprise is going, therefore it is where we are going. What does that mean?’ It included the equally pragmatic, perhaps tragic, observation that unless a valid social mandate for science is articulated after the Cold War, public support of the entire enterprise will be waning (see also Nowotny et al., 2001).

Henry Etzkowitz, the chief architect and ardent spokesman of the Triple Helix is not just an eminent and eager sociologist of knowledge, researching many countries and their innovation systems in his hunt for the ‘Holy Grail of Growth’, he is also an advocate of business-oriented universities. When he finds outward looking schools, such as MIT (Etzkowitz, 2002), which can provide innovations, jobs, regional impact, and other features of successful business orientation, he has found a school that suits his palate. If the university also performs well academically it just confirms his theory that research excellence helps, but if it did not he would still not feel discouraged; the job of the cat is to catch rats. CUDOS is not the issue for the believers in Triple Helix, rather, traditional academic values are often obstacles to the overall success that is so important if universities are to fulfil their actual and future duty: to deliver economic growth in a competitive world market of innovation and production.

3. The Managerialist Ethos
Among the reformers, one would also find those who may take even more radical managerialist positions. However, the leading lights of ‘audit society’ have not originated from Academe, nor have they used universities as their central arena of experimentation, or as an exemplar. Rather, the notion of managerialism in Academe is rather one of the concepts, methods, criteria and values borrowed from the New Public Management (Kjaer, 2004) and applied on universities. In effect, as Bleiklie demonstrates, the loans are more or less comprehensive, often less. They are also seeping in, slowly and gradually, to be absorbed by universities only to the extent that they can survive internally, and whether they can survive internally is often guided, ultimately, by pressures externally.

More numerous indeed, therefore, are those that advocate change not for lack of affection of the collegiate structures nor of the university as a classical and very special institution, but out of necessity and as a result of another love, that of widening participation and a higher education and research that caters to all. Behind this position, that may be more or less ideological (mostly on the left), is often the notion that unless this more accessible university becomes reality the nation’s competitiveness will go down. To increase the university sector is crucial for survival. This position is, in principle, compatible with all modernizing positions mentioned above.

It may even be further elaborated adding a component of functional differentiation. If, the argument goes, the university sector expands radically, its internal specialization, and also a differentiation of quality, will take place. In order to avoid a de facto ‘race to the bottom’ competitive schemes must be introduced, and, even more fundamentally, the orthodox privileged equality in principle, must be abolished. It is time to earn one’s merit, even with state funding. Strangely, this radical liberalism has become the mainstay of Labour policy for the university sector in the United Kingdom, and tendencies in this direction are now also seen in Sweden and in some other, notably North European, countries. Bleiklie has seen some of this in his paper, but I would imagine that the logic in this direction is stronger than he and his colleagues’ research project (Kogan et al., 2000) has so far revealed.

In a remarkable way, this turn of events may also be where the ancients and the moderns may be able to meet. There are a number of ‘ifs’, however. If differentiation is widespread, and if levels of external orientation and involvement in third mission are allowed to vary, and if the taking of roles among schools and universities can vary considerably depending on size, location, history and circumstances at large, one would predict some universities to adopt Humboldtian strategies whereas others would adhere wholesale to the gospels of business and social orientation. This differentiation may be further encouraged by
increased pluralism among funding agencies and of increasing numbers of success criteria in
the accountability of universities. It is already the case that some universities are performing
better than others, in limited fields. A good example may be Stanford, nowadays a top-rating
university, but also one that is relying extremely heavily on its schools of science, medicine
and engineering; in the humanities and social sciences it is still good but by no means in line
with the best according to recent rankings published in the United Kingdom
(www.thes.com/statistics). Performance in third mission is as yet less often ranked (although
some indicators do occur, examples are income from licensing or patent statistics). However,
when third-mission performance does become systematically studied and achievements
debated, monitored and subsequently published, some universities may wish to prioritize
success in that dimension as well, whereas some may wish to put it at a lower priority.
Humboldtian hardliners would claim that they hang together – ‘Business will only go for the
best research’ – but it would be surprising if that were universally the case; such has not been
the pattern in the past. Business goes for useful research, which is to them the same as ‘best’.

It is evident that there are a number ways one could take a positive stand towards
change. Overall, it seems to me that all those different positions rely heavily on what I would
like to call a realist attitude to external factors. A growing system of higher education and
research in a globally competitive economy does force governments to take action against the
risk of quality loss and lacking morality. To frame this necessity with the ‘autonomy of the
elites’ argument of Selznick is one way of putting it, but only one way of several that are
possible. You might as well wish to term it the upholding of standards and quality assurance.
The Higher Education Authority in Sweden – to quote a small nation but one strong in science
– has assumed such a controlling function since 1999. However, as yet, it lacks the funds
(and, crucially, the mandate) to carry out any performance-based allocation, but it can
withdraw degree-granting rights on the undergraduate and master levels. (Interestingly, such
rights cannot be taken away for graduate education; truly a remnant of Humboldtian
autonomy.)

The Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) in the United Kingdom has
introduced performance-based schemes in both education and research through the Research
Assessment Enterprises (RAE). At the European level, the Lisbon process – starting in 2000
with the ambition to reach a minimum 3 per cent share of GNP for R&D (private and public)
by 2010 in all EU member countries – is gaining some momentum, although the target still
seems far away. The Bologna Process, facilitating access in higher education across Europe
through a common degree system, is soon to be introduced. Both these European initiatives are likely to put pressure on member states to improve their accountability.

Further, there is research to put behind the modernist stance. Whereas sceptics point to ‘functional overload’ and ‘organizational stress’ in universities across Europe (but not to the same extent in the rest of the world), the modernizers would rather quote data claiming that co-operation with many interests and ‘promiscuous relationships’ among researchers and their departments and research groups are good for performance. Research groups with many and diverse co-operative schemes running seem to be successful not only in more categories (education, research, social justice, co-operation with industry), which may not be surprising, but also in the category of pure science measured as publications in science journals. As yet, we know too little on why this is the case. However, what is demonstrated is that isolation in the ivory tower may be not just detrimental to certain dimensions of academic work; it may also be a disadvantage to the quality of the core of academic work, basic research.

This is a counterintuitive conclusion and it should be handled with care. Data are scarce, more research on performance of research groups under different social conditions is clearly necessary. Still, already at this point, it speaks for some caution towards adopting a too nostalgic and orthodox position. It rather underscores the heterogeneity argument that I am trying to make here.

4. Performance Verification

Let me summarize this paper so far. Although there has been clearly a managerialist trend in universities for more than a decade, and although there is clearly a divide in the academic opinion on features such as Triple Helix, academic capitalism, Mode 2 and their likes, it is equally clear that there are a number of unavoidable social, structural, economic, changes in external conditions of Academe that help explain why universities are responding and adapting internally. For the same reason, a very large number of STS scholars, policy analysts, and also academics themselves, advocate some form of change, albeit not any far-reaching managerialism (which is, by the way, an ideologizing concept, with connotations of manipulation and bureaucratic rule that is prone to scare rather than to comfort most enlightened citizens). Rather, for analytical purposes, it is a matter of understanding the enormously strong driving forces behind the change, and to look in a rather non-partisan way
at how these changes play out under different circumstances, before taking a position on what might be the best ways of moving forward.

There is certainly no clear-cut road to take. In fact, there are enormous challenges and built-in dilemmas ahead, regardless of how one sees the situation. The fundamental dilemma facing all university systems is one of autonomy versus accountability. Even the advocates of the orthodox version of autonomy (the Humboldtian and linear models), would usually acknowledge that the legitimacy of autonomy rests on performance, and performance needs some sort of verification, either on the market or by accountable success criteria. In the United States, the market serves over the long term the function of quality regulator, although the complex market of higher education – with ill-informed clients – has in turn given rise to a large number of rankings and easy-to-use quantitative measures of success for prospective students, parents, sponsors, donors, colleagues and other concerned parties. In Europe, where the market plays a minuscule role in higher education in most countries, this dilemma is harder to deal with and accountability seems somehow inevitable.

This gives rise to the following question: Will ‘managerialism’ sit well only with the ‘modernists’? Or, how would it at all be possible to advocate a large publicly funded university system that is fully autonomous and can retain full decision-making authority without being accountable? The idea seems utopian.

This, in turn, has to do with the empirical observation presented in Bleiklie’s paper that there are already quite a few different, non-perverted (i.e. not totally given over to managerialism) systems that function all right in different countries. True, in principle one can see increased managerialism as a viable possibility, so that the present level of it is just a beginning, not a full hegemonic phase that may occur later. On the other hand, we may already have seen the peak of managerialism in universities, or it may increase slightly here and there, and even become reduced in other places, depending on a multitude of factors, first of all its own share in success. All this gives rise to another question: Will universities and university systems in the future present, rather, a number of empirical manifestations of a quite inescapable policy logic, of which hege monic managerialism is the extreme perversion rather than the rule?

Not denying that important values are involved (and I shall get back to those later), I would like to stress the empirical nature of both these questions. After well over a decade of competing theoretical constructs that have become more or less reified and stylized, and that have given energy to heated debates on policy and ideology, it seems the right time to address the actual changes. That is to say that we still do not have all the evidence. Nonetheless, from
the literature, indeed from Bleiklie’s paper, and as well from the analysis above, there seems to appear an answer to the two questions, which is that there are in fact already a multitude of versions of increased accountability and efficiency measures being built into the university systems in many countries. I would take that as a provisional given in the remaining part of my analysis.

This is also to say that the dualistic framing of the policy-debate is probably misconceived, as Bleiklie rightly observes. Autonomy or accountability is not the question. A Hegelian *Aufhebung* of the dilemma is already visible. The policy discussion will in all likelihood become less concerned with whether, and more directed towards questions of how the inevitable accountability can be reconciled with autonomy and other properties of universities that may or may not improve performance. This last prediction fits particularly well with the argument on differentiation, presented above.

5. **Universities as Innovators**

So far, this paper has largely been an attempt towards an analytical disentanglement – or a deconstruction – of the logic of change of current university systems and the stylized policy positions or ideological controversies that this change has produced. In the final part of the paper, I shall turn to another key issue that follows almost obviously out of the analysis above. If the empirical situation speaks overwhelmingly in favour of a heterogeneity of approaches, the position of autonomy will inevitably vary. Then the following question comes up: Why should universities hold and carry certain core values? I am here thinking not only of autonomy as such a core value but also of the Mertonian CUDOS norms (Merton, 1942) and other rules of honour and indeed even academic liturgy and procedural order. The question seems all the more pressing if it is an established fact that performance and quality assurance are measured and managed through other institutions external to the individual university (which is the case because the university as an interested agent cannot be trusted with assessing its own performance, according to this logic).

In order to deal with this issue we must widen the perspective to include the full potential of the roles and uses of the universities in society. If one does that, one could think of two fairly distinctive approaches. The first has to do with values as support to performance, the second has to do with values related to the wider social role of knowledge and knowledge-
based authority. The latter issue is too often neglected in discussions of managerialism, autonomy and accountability.

First, however, is it a value issue, or an empirical issue?

Although we have just seen that mission-oriented research groups seem to perform well, even very well, in basic research, there is also overwhelming evidence to support the claim that basic research in traditional academic settings – research universities, with traditional academic funding and with a large degree of autonomy – is an enormously efficient way of producing new theoretical and empirical, if not immediately applicable, knowledge (Pavitt, 2004). If one was to answer the question of how a knowledge-producing system was to be designed – as if on a clean slate – no single proposal would perhaps be a priori better than the other. Nevertheless, an answer that ruled out autonomy and CUDOS altogether would clearly be out of touch with everything we know about the scientific enterprise. The independent researcher discovering truths about nature and society, driven by her or his own quest to know, is not a piece of self-interested fiction invented by the scientific community itself. It is a sound empirical fact.

This historical and sociological fact could be translated into contemporary policy debates simply by applying a set of empirical questions. What is the level of autonomy and CUDOS in different research environments – and how do these perform on a number of dimensions? This is a fully researchable question and it is already being turned into monitoring schemes in many countries. What is, as yet, less well developed, however, is the relation between traditional research performance measures (publications, citations, level of funding, academic invitations, etc.) – i.e. what might be called quality of research, and success in entrepreneurship. There seems to be some positive connection between a very high level performance of research and indicators – such as patents, firm start-ups, licence income, etc. – although the literature is stronger on start-ups and firm formation than on licensing and patents (for examples, see Etzkowitz, 2002, on MIT; Saxenian, 1994 and Lowen, 1997 on Stanford). In the United States universities hold a strong position in this respect (Lach and Schankerman, 2003). Among the top-ten income-earners from licences in the United States are several high-rating research universities, such as University of California, Columbia University, University of Wisconsin, and Stanford University (figures from 2002 according to the Association of University Technology Managers). On the other hand, there are many top-rated universities that do not have any significant licence income. In addition, there are a few of the major licence-takers that are not highly rated research universities. It is largely a randomized game, with many attempts and very few ‘hits’. In other parts of the world the
discrepancies, or the random relationships, between academic quality and license income seem to be even more persistent, although the data are scarce and vulnerable. At best we may claim that good research is a quite necessary but not a sufficient prerequisite for success as an entrepreneurial university.

Similar questions that can be asked for individual universities can be addressed to entire university systems. However, the connections on the systems level are far more complex, and traditional indicators do not seem to work. Evidence again is contradictory. Very complex, pluralistic systems, such as the American, is a high performer in terms of innovation, and there are studies to sustain the claim that this is due to properties of the US system – such as its competitiveness and its pluralism with a large number of research performing institutions (Rosenberg, 2000; Henrekson and Rosenberg, 2000). The cases of Finland, Canada and the Netherlands, all strong scientifically, have recently seen considerable success. There is, however, also evidence to suggest that small and not particularly strong university systems at times can function very well if they are well embedded in the private and public innovation structures (Italy). On the other hand, strongly university focused systems with persistently very high ratings on the science indicators, such as the one in Sweden, do not seem to enhance entrepreneurial performance (Henrekson and Rosenberg, 2000). Again, data so far can tell us very little in terms of firm evidence in favour of any one particular policy solution, but in principle knowledge in this area should be able to develop and empirical performance of different university systems should be able to measure and monitor much better in the future than today. If so, the conditions for policy-making will change.

In conclusion, on this point, we can say that although we know that academic values such as autonomy are not always necessary to achieve good performance ratings, we can certainly not say that they work against performance. Moreover, to try to reduce autonomy radically, and transform universities more generally along the lines of the business enterprise, is clearly going to overall performance, even though exceptional success could be registered in individual cases, perhaps in particular in third-mission activities.

6. Tacit Virtues of Universities
The entrepreneurial university is, however, only one of several dimensions of the third mission. There are other kinds of services, or ‘goods’, that universities, openly or tacitly, are
expected to deliver, and that they have provided, to a large extent, under the Humboldtian era. These tacit dimensions of extramural service may be: criticism (a reasonably non-partisan platform for informed opinion), credibility, reliability, special expertise and, perhaps most importantly, trust. There may also be others, but making the list very long creates the risk of overstretched the civil benefits from the university to an extent where most universities will fail to meet the standard, so a certain caution is appropriate. The examples given are sufficient.

These are certainly honourable properties. Are we not right in questioning whether it is just the idealized self-proclaimed version of universities – the vice-chancellor's annual address – that they represent? Would not other social institutions be able to provide trust (banks or insurance companies?), expertise (consultants or hospitals?), criticism (media or artists?), platforms for opinion (media or think tanks?). In principle: yes. In reality: no. Even with knowledge production being increasingly performed in such institutions, as claimed by Mode 2 proponents, there will still be enormous differences, first in the sheer comprehensiveness of knowledge amassed, second in, precisely, autonomy. Even banks and insurance companies cater to readily identified interests. They cannot be expected to provide the sort of independent opinion, criticism, or advice that we can rightly expect from universities or from academic intellectuals.

This extended role of universities is one that they perform by their very nature of being universities – according to a certain system of values. The extended role requires a certain minimum of standards and probably also a certain minimum of intellectual critical mass. Low-rating universities and institutions with a bad reputation cannot expect to enjoy the same credibility as the top-ranking institutions, and this seems interestingly to be true both in market-driven and in publicly funded university systems. The general level of trust in universities exceeds that of all other institutions in most countries where such things are measured.

We may conclude that the legitimacy of universities has very much to do with the extent that they are able to serve as upholders of criticism, credibility and trust. If such properties are dependent on autonomy and non-partisanship – which they are – autonomy is indeed something to cherish and to foster.

We have now further underlined the dilemma described above. There may be cases where research institutions can do well and provide impressive performance and much value for money with less autonomy; such institutions would rate high on accountability. There may evidently be circumstances under which such institutions should rightly enjoy public funding.
At the same time, if the large majority of the research and higher education institutions that we call universities lose their autonomy in order to achieve that particular kind of performance and efficiency, there would probably occur a loss of legitimacy that would in all likelihood be a more serious threat to the university system than the gain derived from the (potentially) improved (short- to middle-term) accountability. The autonomy-accountability tension is seriously aggravated if the dimensions of legitimacy and the wider social role of universities are taken into account.

Let me, in relation to Bleiklie’s paper, first make the observation that this particular kind of wider performance, or role, of universities is not much discussed there. His analysis, rich and broad ranging enough, does not depart very far from traditional missions in education and research. A second observation is that the managerialism that he does discuss does not seem to pay too much attention to this wider social role either. New public management wizards care little about trust, credibility, or criticism – at least as far as their ideas are reflected by Bleiklie (and I think in that he does not conceal anything important). This omission on the part of managerialists I would expect to follow from a very common disease among institutional consultants and experts: they fail to take into account the tacit, or we may say civic, properties of institutions.

This is not to say, of course, that cases for managerialism could not be made. Universities can obviously shape up their performance through all sorts of incentive programmes and competitive funding systems and other devices. This is what has happened in the United Kingdom, where the RAEs show an admirable record of improved performance on the ground, and a healthy shake out of underperforming institutions.

Is all then good and well? Efficiency is enhanced alongside with managerialism staying away from the areas where it would clearly be dangerous and almost surely would do harm? Well, to address that question, we also have to ask: What if tacit values and properties were to be harmed through the workings of the managerialist culture itself?

That risk cannot be nullified. It remains a memento to all practice and study of policy in this area. The great virtue of Bleiklie’s paper, however, is that he makes us see that there is a relatively strong resistance and continuity in the academic culture. Despite the policy logic that is driving most systems towards a managerialist ethos (an ethos that by the way is not just superimposed on universities by governments) – universities do also adopt it deliberately in what they believe to be their own self-interest – despite this logic, Bleiklie observes a modest to low level of managerialist response. He is certainly no alarmist. As an experienced social scientist, he knows that there is always a certain inertia in organizations and some deep-seated
love of identity and tradition, not to speak of university ‘brand names’. There is a virtue of being credited with trust and credibility in an era of erosion of precisely such intangible but cherished virtues.

7. Credibility, Criticism, and Trust

What the future holds is not known. From what we learn in Bleiklie’s paper, hopefully sustained by the analysis above, I would predict that the changes in universities will stay modest. Variety will probably increase and institutions will take different strategies forward, encouraged by the increasing exposure to external pressures of market and politically driven demands. This process is very much worthy of study. It contains enormous possibilities, alongside with the dangers, and we may, in the process, see new hybrids of institutions, the properties of which we do not yet know.

However, some of the research institutions that will likely thrive under the new circumstances we do already know quite well. They are: special and professional schools, tailoring their education and combining it with profiled research; research institutes, specializing in advanced and mission-oriented research, often in flexible alliances with firms and universities; research companies, that can deliver quickly and that can listen to the need of the customer; university colleges, that are able to focus on the right niches and build solid research competencies. Some of these organizations may score high academically, but that is not always their primary roles. Some may also enjoy trust and credibility, but most of these institutions will not find the only, or even the most valid, criterion to measure their success.

It is extremely important when we try to understand managerialism, that we also discuss these kinds of research organizations. It seems as if in them, managerialism (although rarely called by that name) is the order of the day, rather than the problematic occasional intervention.

Then there are the universities. They are not all similar, some may even repeat properties that are common among the less comprehensive performers (colleges, institutes, special schools). However, by and large, they are a different category. It is reasonable to believe that universities, in particular the full fledged comprehensive research universities, will react differently to the new policy logic. In addition, in a European setting, this is an interesting pattern to follow. In particular, if there is a funding level of some magnitude above the level of the nation state, there will certainly be universities trying to achieve at the highest level and claim their funding from it. Others will opt for other levels. Clearly, the
managerialist ethos will sit more or less well with some institutions, depending on their strategy.

Lastly, if we return to the caricature dualism of ancients and modernizers pitted against each other, I agree with Beiklie that it is indeed a false picture. Nevertheless, I would perhaps urge us to take one or two steps further in the analysis to create the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, which is to see that both the sceptics and the enthusiasts are framed within a larger pattern of, I would say, inevitable change. Within that pattern of change, there are probably many more positions to take, along a continuum, than the dualist caricature would suggest.

Maybe there is also room at this point for a timely articulation of a third way in policy, combining the timeless(?) values of autonomy and CUDOS to defend the legitimacy of the university as an institution. If so, it should in my mind be in due acknowledgement of accountability and performance monitoring and some other democratic and ordering features – even though some of those may originate from managerialist culture. This last qualification I have added in order to sustain and enhance quality, and to secure public engagement with and support for an institution that can deliver social value precisely because it is an institution of credibility, criticism and trust.
REFERENCES


