

BOOK REVIEW

Knowledge production in European universities: states, markets and academic entrepreneurialism, by Marek Kwiek (Higher Education Research and Policy Series), Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 2013, 486 pp., €65.40 (hardback), ISBN 978-3-631-62403-6

In his new book, *Knowledge Production in European Universities*, Marek Kwiek points to six outside forces that have changed the European university and graduate ‘knowledge-work’ milieu and creates specific challenges to their leaders to come up with effective policy solutions. These forces have been:

First, globalization processes with their impacts on European nation states and public services that nation states have traditionally been guaranteeing to its citizens. Second, Europeization processes, most often defined as a regional, European response to globalization and internationalization processes. Third, the large-scale (in theory, practice, or both) questioning of the foundations of the ‘Golden Age’ of the Keynesian welfare state in the form it has been known in post-war Europe and large-scale reforms (in theory, practice, or both) of the public sector in general and its particular public services. Fourth, demographic changes which affect or are expected to affect in the next few decades the majority of aging European societies. Fifth, the massification and (often) universalization of higher education and its increasing diversification across European systems. And, finally, the emergence of knowledge societies and knowledge driven economies and the acknowledgement of the fundamental role universities play in the new economic and social contexts. (15)

As Professor and Director at the Center for Public Policy Studies, and UNESCO Chair in Institutional Research and Higher Education Policy at the University of Poznan (Poland), Kwiek is well qualified to elaborate further on these themes, following in the footsteps of previous books such as *The University and the State: A Study into Global Transformations* (2006), reviewed in volume 31.3 of *Higher Education in Europe*. Topics covered in the text include: I. ‘Changing Universities and Their Changing Environments’ (detailing changing state/university relationships in Europe, including consideration of the growing ‘complexity of the academic enterprise in Europe’ and how its social contract can be renegotiated and reformed); and, II. ‘Towards Empirical Evidence: Academic Entrepreneurialism and Knowledge Exchange in European Universities’ covering topics such as what ‘academic entrepreneurialism’ is and how universities (both public and private) can be best governed and managed in the [so-called] new, ever-changing environment (which will inevitably include use of ‘diversified channels of knowledge exchange’ gained via university-enterprise partnerships). Such verbiages have become the unfortunate norm for the former ‘ivory tower’ because, to paraphrase former UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor (1997), the university is no longer seen by most ‘policymakers under pressure’ as a Platonic ‘watchtower’ guarding elite intellectual values, but more as a

transmission-belt of utilitarian, ‘paying’ applied knowledge, especially for stressed working and lower middle-class students (cf. Florea and Gilder 2013).

Kwiek notes the influence of two streams of thought at the close of his book, ‘one from John Ziman suggested almost two decades ago in his study on science in a “dynamic steady state”’: ‘we are in a state of flux leading to transformative changes in the university sector across Europe, and various knowledge exchange mechanisms are those university nodes where the changes are experimented with’. Quoting Ziman (1994), Kwiek holds with him that:

‘We are still in the midst of a major historical event, whose contours and outcome we can only guess. ... The new structures that are emerging are not the products of a gentle process of evolution: they are being shaped very roughly by a dynamic balance between external forces exerted by society at large and internal pressures intrinsic to science itself. ... The whole system has become extraordinarily fluid. Nobody is quite sure what arrangements will crystallize out and harden into a regular pattern of principles, procedures, policies and practices for the longer run.’ (373)

However, Kwiek then approvingly quotes J. Stanley Metcalfe (2010, 30) to show that even if universities are operating under new entrepreneurial pressures, it does not follow that they should be expected to operate as profit-making business ventures do:

‘the division of labour between profit seeking business corporations and universities reflects both the quite distinct roles that these organisations fulfill, and, the complementarity between those roles. We can all understand that it would be as unwise to expect firms to behave like universities as it would be to expect universities to behave like firms. The division of labour is there for a purpose, it should be respected.’ (373)

Furthermore, Kwiek argues that a regional consideration of universities’ functioning in Europe is necessary, in that Western Europe is a very different place (both economically and politically) from the Central and East European states in post-communist period, in that the socialist norms of the later region collapsed almost completely after 1990, leaving their governments open to much more ‘new world order’ neoliberal policy pressures than those governments in more-stable Western Europe region were subjected to.

With rise of the much-heralded ‘end of ideology/end of history’ macro-motif, for many higher education policy-makers (including Kwiek), the resulting hegemonic ‘realist’, ‘serious’ extant norm (in a new, unsure academic field) thus precluded the possibility of envisioning further *transformation* of the larger post-1990 future; that is, it only envisioned *managing* a never-ending political ‘present’ (upon an otherwise always ‘changing’ university micro-landscape, a puzzlement indeed). Kwiek does not offer (in the book under review at least) any encompassing solutions (and it may be unfair to expect him to). He concludes, ‘there is a plethora of nationally-specific and culture-related choices to be made by both policymakers and academic institutions, and the effects of these choices are still largely hard to predict’. (190)

In this reviewer’s (perhaps too-long) experience of reading higher education policy, he finds that, like many other noble (and not-so-noble) efforts he has reviewed over the last decades, if Kwiek’s book ‘fails’ to free us from entangling policy-webs of our own collective making (of either conservative or progressive hue), it fails for the most humanely reasonable reasons, culturally speaking. To follow A. O. Hirschman’s (1970) idea, Kwiek seems to perhaps *hope* that each one of us can somehow gain both a ‘voice’

amidst the relentless political-economic overdetermined webs both left and right policy 'standpoints' create. For him, his anti-utopian expectation throughout the book seems to be that we can 'administer' our way out of the dilemmas of the capitalistic/statist divide in a 'post-ideological', '*post-histoire*' Europe with the aid of a wise entrepreneurial spirit in the rapidly changed and changing sector of higher education in Europe. Perhaps the Polish historical experience he well embodies in a humanistic frame does not allow for much of an overtly revolutionary vision; this reviewer would hazard to think that Kwiek would say such 'revelations' are better left to God's calling in his distinct place and at his unique time. Speaking for himself, this sympathetic reader wished for more 'utopianism' and less 'realism' in this fine and useful book, but maybe that is his own shortcoming showing!

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