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## **Introduction: European Universities and Their Changing Roles and Functions**

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### ***External contexts to internal transformations***

There are numerous and often interrelated causes of current transformations of European universities studied in this volume. First, globalization processes with their impacts on European nation states and public services these nation states have traditionally been guaranteeing to its citizens. Second, Europeanization 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 postwar 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 new economic and social contexts. The above processes, except for demographics, have been culminating about a decade ago and have been accompanied by powerful, both national and supranational, discourses at various interrelated policy-making levels: the most prevalent discourses were focused on such constructs of the social sciences and (national and global) policy as “globalization”, “Europeanization” and “European integration”, “knowledge economy”, and “knowledge society”. These general umbrella terms have been organizing much of research in social sciences and have been providing underlying rationales for new

higher education policies theoretically considered or actually implemented throughout Europe.

Universities have been placed in the very center of those social sciences and policy constructs, and consequently they have been increasingly debated, at both theoretical and policy levels, in fundamentally new social, cultural and economic contexts. The contexts in question have been unexpected for both most academics in general and most higher education researchers in particular. The new contexts – with European universities discussed, analyzed, measured and ranked to degrees unheard of before the policy-based ideas stressing their economic relevance came – provided new conceptual frameworks to discuss changes in old institutions. The changing roles of the nation states and welfare states have been in the spotlight for at least two decades, and so have been the changing roles of universities traditionally, in a European context, closely linked to both (Kwiek 2006).

### ***Fundamental transformations***

Current transformations of European universities are fundamental. In the last two or three decades, European universities are gradually changing the paradigm in which they have been governed, managed, funded, and assessed (by both societies at large and policymakers). The scale of their functioning (and funding) in biggest European economies have been the highest in their history. Presumably, this scale makes holding them increasingly accountable to both governments and its various specialized agencies (as well as the public at large) unavoidable. From a historical perspective, both millions of students, hundreds of thousands of academics, hundreds of institutions and dozens of billions of euros invested in biggest national European systems are providing new contexts in which universities are operating today. New contexts of operation require new contexts of analysis, though. Never before in eight hundred years of their history – or two hundred years of their modern history – have universities been so central, both at the rhetorical level and in practical terms, to economies of European nations. Never before their successes have brought about so diverse and so tangible and measurable gains to societies and economies – but, at the same time, never before have their failures brought about so diverse and so tangible and measurable losses to societies and economies. Their successes and failures, as successes and failures of central institutions to societies and economies undergoing deep and fundamental changes, are increasingly viewed as contributing to successes and failures of their environments, from the local to regional to

national levels. Never in their postwar history have universities been analyzed, compared, and ranked from all possible angles of their functioning (research, teaching and various third mission activities) in so much detail. And also, never before have been universities as individual institutions and national higher education systems, directly and indirectly, assessed by influential international analytical centers (such as e.g. the OECD or the World Bank). Processes transforming universities today are not different from processes transforming their environments; in particular, transformations of universities are closely linked to transformations of the institution of the state, both globally and in Europe, and transformations of the public sector and public sector services (Kwiek 2010).

Universities are changing rapidly throughout Europe, and the acceleration of their changes in the last two decades – both in the institutional discourse in which they have been embedded and in institutional practices – is closely related to brand new levels to which both the discourse and institutional practices have been elevated: the European (often identified as the EU-level) and global levels. In the last decade, there has been the ever more powerful institutionalization of the common educational space (synonymous with the integration of higher education within the Bologna Process) and common research space (synonymous with the European Research Area promoted by the European Commission, with its strong diagnosis and equally strong normative vision of how European universities should be functioning and why, referred to as “the modernization agenda of European universities”, see Kwiek and Kurkiewicz 2012). Analytical frameworks and major conceptual tools used in current discussions about the future of European universities, in general and at the level relevant to policymakers, are increasingly provided by international and supranational organizations and institutions and wide networks of their academic experts. They also provide policymakers and academics alike with the necessary comparative data, framed in large-scale comparative analyses of changes and trends, that cannot be ignored in any public or academic discussions about universities’ futures. At the same time, both the European Commission, the OECD and the World Bank have been heavily involved in both conceptualizations and comparative analyses of reforming the public sector as a whole.

## *The global convergence of education policies and the specificity of universities as institutions*

Globally, higher education policies in the developed world seem to be increasingly convergent and the higher education sector seems to be viewed as a substantially less special or unique sector of national economies than at any previous period in its modern history. The sector, with its nationally differentiated institutions with vastly different national and institutional traditions, by policymakers and the wider public rather than by academics and higher education researchers, is viewed as an ever-more measurable growth and production factor with ever-more powerful impact on the development of national knowledge economies and, in particular, knowledge-intensive industries. Global economic constraints, related to practices of globalization and internationalization of national economies, ideological to an extent and so far closely linked to the global dominance of the neoliberal discourse in politics – discernible to different degrees in different countries – reduce national policy choices made by national governments. The economic and political constraints, in a similar vein, reduce the scope of national policy choices in higher education. The “market perspective” in policy thinking about the future of major areas of the public sector and public sector services, from a global perspective, is becoming stronger than ever before. The public services include, in particular, healthcare, pensions and postcompulsory (higher) education. The market orientation prevails in relatively less affluent economies of new EU member states.

In short, the specificity of the university as a social institution – especially in a policymaking-level discourse and an expert-level discourse dominating in Europe, in contrast to an academic discourse (see Musselin 2007, Maassen and Olsen 2007, Välimaa and Hoffman 2008) – has been disappearing. Universities, formerly institutions, are increasingly regarded as organizations, with far-reaching consequences (Gumport 2012, Bastedo 2012, Brunsson 2009). The protection period that has lasted since at least the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in most Western European countries seems to be over. The specificity of universities as institutions and the state protection had resulted from several decades of the convergence between the interests of European nation states (and opportunities provided by welfare state systems they had formed and financed) and the interests of educational institutions. The protection period is no longer possible in massified and universalized higher education systems, though. While in the beginning of the last century elite systems enrolled about 1 percent of the age cohort and produced graduates mostly for state institutions and state jobs,

current participation rates in most European systems come close to or exceed 50 percent of the age cohort. Higher education, at the same time, is becoming a multi-billion euro enterprise, an important branch of national economies in Europe, with graduates counted in millions every year and with relatively high, and not decreasing over time, wage premium for higher education (although this is not the case in all European economies, as annual OECD data show).

The removal of the protective umbrella from above the institution of the university is perhaps most clearly seen in Europe in the way the university has been conceptualized in the past decade in the global (the World Bank, the OECD and, to a smaller degree, the UNESCO) and European/EU-level (the European Commission, the Bologna Process) discourses about the future roles of higher education in general, and of universities, or its most elite and costly segment, in particular, in evolving mature Western European societies. The gradual demise of the specificity and uniqueness of the modern institution of the university brings about the gradual demise of its functioning under a state (and so far largely non-market) protective umbrella. Consequently, higher education across Europe seems to be following other public sector services: it is treated more often as a set of organizations than a set of institutions, and it is becoming more market-driven than ever before.

New, gradually emergent rules of the game by which European universities are already functioning (or are expected by policymakers to function soon) are radically different from traditional rules by which they were functioning two decades ago in most European systems. Fundamental changes in the rules of the game by which both individual academics, individual institutions and whole national systems function are accompanied by changes in social, political and economic discourses in which European universities are embedded: at the national, European, and global levels. Changes in Poland follow changes prevalent across Europe (Kwiek 2012a, 2012b, 2013a).

The growing complexity of the academic enterprise today is also due to the fact that higher education systems in Europe have been under powerful reform pressures. Reforms increasingly, and throughout the European continent, lead to further reforms rather than to reformed higher education systems, which supports arguments put forward by Nils Brunsson about all organizations in modern society: “large contemporary organizations, whether public or private, seem to be under almost perpetual reform-attempts at changing organizational forms”, Brunsson 2009: 1). Again, Polish higher education sector is not an exception to this trend. Higher education has changed substantially in most European economies in the last two or three decades but it is still expected by national and European-level policymakers to

change even more, as the recent European Commission's modernization agendas for "universities" and for "higher education systems" tend to show.

### ***Broad features of the complexity of the academic enterprise today***

There is a number of broad features that add to the complexity of the academic enterprise. In general, they include the acceleration of national, European and global discussions, permanent renegotiations of the state/university relationships, universities functioning under permanent conditions of adaptations to changing environmental settings, renegotiations of the general social contract providing the basis for the postwar welfare state and its public services, the huge scale of operations of, and mostly public funding for, universities, the divergence between global, supranational, European and often national reform discourses and academic discourses about the future of the university, and the link between arguments about private goods/private benefits from higher education and arguments about public subsidization of higher education. These broad features are the following:

(1) *The acceleration of national, European and global discussions.* In the last one or two decades, discussions about the future of the institution of the university at national, supranational (e.g. European) and global (e.g. by the World Bank and the OECD) levels have accelerated to an unprecedented degree. The university is viewed as becoming one of the most important socioeconomic institutions in post-industrial societies in which social and economic well-being is increasingly based on the production, transmission, dissemination and application of knowledge. The rising importance of the institution is reflected, *inter alia*, in the breadth and scope of public, academic and political discussions about its future.

(2) *Permanent renegotiations of the state/university relationships.* In the last two or three decades in Western Europe, there have been permanent renegotiations of the relationships between the state and higher education institutions (see Amaral et al. 2009, Paradeise et al. 2009, Neave and van Vught 1991). As developed economies are becoming ever more knowledge-intensive, the emphasis on university reforms may be stronger in the future than today. At the same time, knowledge, including academically-produced knowledge, is located in the very center of key economic challenges of modern societies (Bonaccorsi and Doraio 2007). In most European systems, the relationship between the state authority and higher education institutions is far from being settled.

(3) *Universities functioning under permanent conditions of adaptations to changing environmental settings.* The changing social, economic, cultural and legal settings of European higher education institutions increasingly compel them to function in the state of permanent adaptation; adaptations are required as responses to changes both in their funding and governance modes (see Shattock 2009 and Krücken et al. 2007). Reforming universities does not lead to reformed universities, as examples from major European higher education systems show. Policymakers, following New Public Management lines, tend to view universities, like other public institutions, as “incomplete”; reforms are intended to make them “complete” institutions (Brunsson 2009). Reforming is thus leading to further waves of reforms (Maassen and Olsen 2007).

(4) *Renegotiations of the general social contract providing the basis for the postwar welfare state and its public services.* Europe faces a double renegotiation of the postwar social contract related to the welfare state (which traditionally includes education as in Stiglitz 2000 and Barr 2004) and the renegotiation of the social contract linking, in the last two hundred years, public universities and European nation states (Rothblatt and Wittrock 1993, Kwiek 2013a, Kwiek 2006). The future of the traditional ideas of the university in settings in which public institutions and public services are increasingly based, or compelled to be based, on the economic logics and (quasi-)market formulas of functioning (LeGrand and Bartlett 1993: 13-35) is still unclear. Current pension reforms throughout Europe are a widely publicly debated aspect of the same social contract.

(5) *The huge scale of operations and funding.* The scale of operations (and funding) of universities, both university teaching and university-based research in European economies, remains historically unprecedented. Never before the functioning of universities was bringing so many diverse, both explicitly public and explicitly private, benefits. But also never in postwar history all aspects of their functioning were analyzed in such a detailed manner from international comparative perspectives, and, indirectly, carefully assessed by international organizations (see Martens et al. 2010). Measuring the economic competitiveness of nations increasingly means, *inter alia*, measuring both the potential and the output of their higher education and research and development systems. Therefore, higher education can expect to be under ever more (both national and international) public scrutiny. The traditional post-Second World War rationale for resource allocation to universities has been shifting to a “competitive approach” to university behavior and funding (Geuna 1999).

(6) *The competing discourses about the future of the university and its missions.* There has been a growing divergence between two major sets of discourses about university

missions in the last decade. The first is a set of global, supranational and EU discourses. And the second is a set of nationally differentiated traditional discourses of the academic community, deeply rooted in traditional, both national and global, academic values, norms, and behaviors (Välilmaa and Hoffman 2008). The two sets of discourses seem as distant today as never before. Struggles between them (the former set supported by the power of the changing modes of the redistribution of resources and legal changes relevant to universities' operations, and the latter set supported by the power of academic traditions, and, in general, of the undifferentiated academic community as a whole) lead in many systems to conflicts between alternative institutional rules (March and Olsen 1989) and conflicts between policymakers and national academic communities about the substance and underlying directions of higher education reforms (Poland is a good example here).

*(7) Finally, the link between arguments about private goods/private benefits from higher education and arguments about its public subsidization.* Private goods (and private benefits) from higher education have been increasingly high on the reform agendas and in public discussions that accompany them. Together with the increased emphasis in public policy in general on private goods (and private benefits), the threat to the traditionally high levels of public subsidization of traditional public institutions may be growing (Marginson 2011, McMahon 2009). Viewing higher education more consistently from the perspective of private investment (and private returns) is more probable than ever before since the 1960s when the human capital approach was formed. This may have an impact on long-term public perceptions of social roles of universities and their services, and on long-term views about public funding of universities in the future.

The social, political, and economic contexts in which universities function are changing, and so are changing student populations and educational institutions (increasingly compelled to meet their changing demands). Higher education is subject to powerful influences from all sides and all – new and old alike – stakeholders: the state, the students, the faculty, employers, and the industry, and on top of that, it is becoming a very costly business. Changes to higher education systems as a whole are expected to make universities meet the new needs of society and the economy. In Becher and Kogan's terms, European governments today increasingly view the "normative" and the "operational" modes of universities as being "out of phase", and react accordingly, through waves of reforms (Becher and Kogan 1980: 122).

The complexity of the academic enterprise is also that different stakeholders may increasingly have different needs from those they traditionally had, and their voice is already



increasingly taken into account (as in the case of students, especially under Bologna-inspired reforms in Europe). Institutions are thus expected to transform themselves to maintain public trust (and to have good rationale to use public subsidies). The “demand-response imbalance” diagnosed by Clark (1998: 129ff.) comes from four sources: more (and more different types of) students seek and obtain access to higher education; more segments of the labor force demand university graduates; old and new patrons expect more from higher education; and knowledge outruns resources (1998: 129-131).

Following transformations of other public sector institutions, universities in Europe – traditionally publicly-funded and traditionally specializing in both teaching and research – may soon be under powerful pressures to review their missions in view of permanently coping with financial austerity in all public sector services. Universities may soon be under pressures to compete more fiercely for financial resources with other public services, also heavily reliant on the public purse. Public priorities are changing throughout the world and new funding patterns and funding mechanisms can be experimented with (Central Europe, Poland included, has long been experimenting with various forms of privatization of public services). Also the rationale for European university research funding has been changing throughout the last two decades (Geuna 2001).

### ***Social trust in public institutions and universities as “incomplete” organizations***

A new general context for universities is that the social trust in public institutions can no longer be (automatically) guaranteed, which is a substantial change of the social mood prevailing in postwar Europe, with relatively lavish public funding guaranteed and high social prestige of public universities and of the academic profession taken for granted. Traditional academic values, closely associated with the public service responsibilities of universities and science, Scott argues, “have to come to terms with a new moral context in which the superiority of the public over the private can no longer be taken for granted” (Scott 2003: 299). This new “moral context” has been widely supported by emergent EU social policies, especially social policies advocated in CEE countries. As Bleiklie et al. conclude,

[s]ome sort of contribution to society has always been demanded from the universities in return for a certain degree of autonomy and public funding. What is arguably at

stake today is that a less clearly delimited definition of the nature of the universities' contribution to society pose a potential threat to their autonomy. ... One reason for the resilience of the university institution is that universities have at one and the same time been able to sustain sweeping change and protect their core functions. However, past resilience is no guarantee against future decay (Bleiklie et al. 2000: 307).

The status quo – or the current social and economic *modi operandi* of universities in Western societies – is very fragile: the multi-faceted impacts, trends, and challenges are far-reaching, long-term and structural in nature. The durability and stability of institutions, even in periods of major reforms is, however, that “institutions are not simple reflections of current exogenous forces or micro-level behavior and motives. They embed historical experience into rules, routines, and forms that persist beyond the historical moment and condition” (March and Olsen 1989: 167-168).

Organization studies show that no matter how strong external discourses surrounding the institution are (here: global, transnational and EU-level discourses), the potential for changes and a range of possible reforms is always relatively limited, and the period for institutional adaptation – relatively long. It is therefore difficult to assume that the intentional direction of changes in the academic sector as a whole will coincide with their actual direction of changes. Often in the history of the university, significant scope of changes remains determined on the one hand, by redefined tradition, and, on the other hand, by sheer contingency. “Great expectations”, as shown a quarter of a century ago by Cerych and Sabatier (1986), often lead to “mixed performance”. At the same time, policymakers tend to view institutions, higher education institutions included, as “incomplete”. Reforms are renewed attempts to make universities “complete” organizations (Brunsson 2009).

In all ongoing reform initiatives throughout Europe, there is a hidden dynamics of changes in relationships between the state, or the major sponsor of teaching and research, and academics, or the major beneficiary of state sponsorship of the academic enterprise. The academic profession has a fiduciary role to play: constitutive rules and practices are not easily changeable, they take time to root and take time to change. The modernization agenda of European universities (including a recent EU “agenda for the modernization of Europe’s higher education systems”, see Kwiek and Kurkiewicz 2012) means the change in rules constituting its identity. Institutions are defended by insiders and validated by outsiders and because their histories are encoded into “rules and routines”, their internal structures cannot

be changed or replaced arbitrarily (March and Olsen 1989). Reforming higher education is closely linked to reforming states in which it operates.

Emergent complexities of the academic enterprise refer to the academic profession. Both academics and academic institutions are highly adaptable to external circumstances and change has always been the defining feature of national higher education systems. Academics are clever creatures and operate within clever academic institutional cultures, with the necessary balance of change and stability always at play. But the sweeping changes potentially expected now are far-reaching indeed, and go to the very heart of academia. The university as an institution will survive by adaptation: “At the institutional level, there will be mergers and acquisitions, and perhaps even the occasional ‘death’. But the university will survive” (Martin and Etzkowitz 2000: 23). Traditionally, universities demonstrated what Ulrich Teichler called a “successful mix of effective adaptation and resistance to the adaptations it was called to make” but today the research university in Europe is more endangered than ever before (Teichler 2006: 169). From the perspective of the academic profession, the interplay of change and stability, or change and continuity, and its perceptions by the academic community, is one of the most important parameters of ongoing higher education reforms (Gornitzka et al. 2007). The scope of changes expected for all major aspects of higher education operations (management, governance, funding, missions, and faculty) is much bigger than commonly thought in the academic community. The changes envisaged by policymakers, at both national and especially supranational levels, are structural, fundamental and go to the very heart of the academic enterprise (Kwiek 2010, Kwiek 2013b).

### ***The present volume***

The present volume is divided into two major sections. Section I is focused on German-Polish transborder universities and is based on a combination of Europeanization and globalization theories and substantial empirical material collected on universities located in the Polish-German border areas. The papers in this section are authored by Heidi Fichter-Wolf, Hans-Joachim Bürkner and Marek Kwiek (and they are introduced in a separate introduction to section II). Section II is focused on changing roles and functions of European universities and its papers are authored by junior scholars mostly associated with the Center for Public Policy Studies of the University of Poznan (and its UNESCO Chair in Institutional Research and Higher Education Policy): Karolina M. Cern, Dominik Antonowicz, Petya Ilieva-Trichkova,

Piotr W. Juchacz, Krzysztof Senger, and Krystian Szadkowski, as well as by Zbigniew Drozdowicz, the dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at AMU. They discuss recent legal changes in higher education in Poland, higher education research in Poland, the role of centers for advanced studies, the university's third mission in a Marxist context, the diversity of academic roles, the expansion of higher education and its inequality, and an effectiveness analysis of investment in the higher education sector.

Zbigniew Drozdowicz in his paper analyzes reform attempts undertaken in Poland in the post-1989 period. In particular, he discusses recent changes in the law on higher education and the law on academic degrees (2011) and future prospects of their implementation. Dominik Antonowicz in his paper discusses the development of higher education research in Poland and the reasons behind the expansion of higher education research in Europe. Piotr W. Juchacz develops two theses: first, there is a need of integrative transdisciplinary research in contemporary academia and, second, the best place to develop such type of research are centers for advanced study, project-based units separate from traditional faculties and departments. Piotr W. Juchacz and Karolina M. Cern in their article analyze a broad range of faculty activities and measures of their evaluation within an institutional framework of the university. Petia Ilieva-Trichkova focuses on the question of how the distribution of opportunities in the access to higher education has been changing over time among diverse groups of the population. Her main argument is that recent expansion of higher education in Bulgaria does not go hand in hand with the corresponding reduction of inequalities in access. Krzysztof Senger argues in his paper that the research and development activities should translate into the birth of new business entities supported by new technologies. In the time of the economic crisis, there is a need for informed decision making processes, especially for an effectiveness analysis of an investment in the higher education sector. Krystian Szadkowski's paper contextualizes an emerging stream of higher education research (critical university studies, Marxist higher education research) in order to mark some challenges posed by the rise of the university's third mission to the Marxist theory of education and to contribute to this new stream of research by proposing a conceptualization of third mission activities. The volume contributes to higher education research in its diversified forms; consequently, it is intended for a diversified audience, from a broad range of academic disciplines.<sup>1</sup>

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