CHAPTER NINE

The University and the State in Europe

The Uncertain Future of the Traditional Social Contract

MAREK KWIEK

Introduction

Europe is witnessing general attempts at a reformulation of the postwar social contract which gave rise to the welfare state (with public higher education as we know it). I argue here for a strong thesis according to which Europe is facing the simultaneous renegotiation of the postwar social contract concerning the welfare state and the accompanying renegotiation of a smaller scale, by comparison, modern social pact between the university and the nation-state.[1] The renegotiation of the (nation) state/university pact is not clear outside of the context of the changing welfare state contract, as state-funded higher education formed one of the bedrocks of the European welfare system in its major forms, and state-funded higher education remains one of its foundations.

I am following here Stephan Leibfried and colleagues who argue that "competitive pressure to lower tax rates undermines the state's resources and has the potential to unleash financial crises that, in turn, trigger cuts in welfare spending" (Hurrelmann et al. 2007: 7). Consequently, what they term "the golden-age constellation" of the four components of the state (the territorial state, the constitutional state, the democratic welfare state, and the interventionist state) is currently threatened: "different state functions are threatened to a greater or lesser degree, and subjected to pressures for internationalization of varying intensity"

(Hurrelmann et al. 2007: 9). I argue here that higher education policies, and especially public funding for universities, are one of the dimensions of the "golden-age constellation" under renegotiations in Europe today: they come under the "interventionist state" and its functions in Leibfried's formulation.

Higher education has been largely publicly funded in its traditional European forms and its period of largest growth coincided with the development of the postwar welfare state. The massification processes in European higher education were closely linked to the growth and consolidation of (major models of) European welfare states (on Central European welfare states, see Kwiek 2013, 2014). We are currently witnessing the growing significance of knowledge production, acquisition, dissemination, and application in our societies and economies on the one hand—and the rapidly changing roles of European higher education systems on the other.

Despite—as it seems—radical changes in the functioning of European universities that have been taking place for the last twenty to thirty years, both European societies and, especially, European policymakers are thinking about further structural changes. On reading national governmental and international reports, transnational and EU visions of the functioning of universities and of the whole public services sector in the future, we can conclude that profound transformations of the higher education sector, and of its narrow sector of research universities, are still ahead of us. Universities, throughout their history, change as their environments change, and the early twenty-first century is not exceptional. Despite relatively homogeneous cross-national arguments for reforms—often linked to the ideas of New Public Management—there are different actual directions of current and projected reforms in different national systems (Gornitzka and Maassen 2011, Mazza et al. 2008, Paradeise et al. 2009).

Education, including higher education, is viewed in this chapter as a significant component of the traditional welfare state (following Joseph Stiglitz from *Economics of the Public Sector* and Nicolas Barr from *Economic Theory and the Welfare State*). Transformations to the state, and the welfare state in particular, affect—both directly and indirectly—public higher education systems in Europe. This chapter sees the institution of the university and the institution of the state as closely linked (following Becher and Kogan 1980, Kogan et al. 2000, Kogan and Hanney 2000): problems (and real and perceived failures) of the latter inevitably bring about problems (and real and perceived failures) of the former, as historically, in the postwar period in Europe, the success of the latter led to the success of the former.

Thus I view the modern university and the modern state closely linked throughout the last two centuries, from the very beginning in the Humboldtian

ideas of the research university from the early 1800s (Kwiek 2006: 81–138, Kwiek 2008b, Wittrock 1993). This way of thinking about the university and the state can be found in the ideas of new institutionalism in organization studies, especially those emerging in the last three decades in political sciences. Institutions, the arguments go, do not undergo their transformations in isolation: institutions operate in parallel, and in parallel they change (see Aldrich 2008, Brunsson and Olsen 1993, Hannan and Freeman 1989, March and Olsen 1989). There is a complex interplay of influences between institutions and their environments, and universities are perfect examples of powerful connectedness between changes in institutions and changes in the outside world from which they draw their resources, founding ideas, and social legitimacy. Without high levels of resources, strong and widely socially accepted founding ideas, and powerful social legitimacy, institutions begin to falter. Resources follow founding ideas, embedded in social legitimacy; the danger is that decreasing legitimacy and weak founding ideas may lead to declining (especially public) resources. This is especially relevant for countries in which there is a strong cross-sectional competition for scarce public funding between competing claimants, such as the competition between healthcare, pensions, and higher education spending in Central and Eastern Europe in the last quarter of a century, combined with cross-generational conflicts in rapidly aging societies (see Kwiek 2013). The institution of the university in Europe, in its different national embodiments, is clearly undergoing a fundamental transformation today—along with the traditional institution of the state in general, and the welfare state in particular. First, I shall discuss the modern university in the context of the changing welfare state, and then in the context of the changing nation-state; then conclusions will follow.

The Modern University and the Welfare State

In the new global order (Djelic and Quack 2003, Hale and Held 2011, Held and McGrew 2007, Slaughter 2004), universities as institutions are striving for a new social, cultural (and perhaps especially economic) place as they are increasingly unable to maintain their traditional roles and tasks. Universities cannot afford the frustration associated with potentially declining institutional prestige and potentially dwindling financial resources across Europe. Universities as institutions need to remain key social institutions in contemporary knowledge-based societies, as they have been so at least since the early 1800s of the Humboldtian and the Napoleonic reforms in Prussia and France. Currently, their institutional prestige is on the rise in all major European systems, and public spending in higher education,

in most Continental European countries, has outpaced growth in student numbers, despite the recent financial crisis.

The social and economic environment of universities has been changing radically in the last two to three decades (as scrutinized in Amaral et al. 2009, Bonaccorsi and Daraio 2007, Mazza et al. 2008, Paradeise et al. 2009). The positions taken by their most important stakeholders have been evolving too (primarily those taken by the state and, to a lesser extent, students and labor markets). Market opportunities for the functioning of universities have been growing, as most European economies have been getting more and more market-oriented with respect to public sector services in general, and as, increasingly, students and their families have been having increasingly marketized and customer-like demands (see Teixeira et al. 2004). Higher education quasi-markets emerged, first in England and later on in the Continental Europe. "Academic entrepreneurialism," or seeking noncore non-state income through risk-taking activities, became an important part of the higher education landscape, as various recent empirical studies show (Kwiek 2013, Shattock 2009, Williams 2004, 2009). The "entrepreneurial university" became a topic for both academics (see Kwiek 2008a) and transnational organizations (see, for instance a joint 2014 initiative of the European Commission and the OECD: *heinnovate*, a web-based tool to measure the degree of entrepreneurialism of academic units and universities along seven major dimensions, from "leadership and governance" to "organizational capacity, people and incentives" to "entrepreneurship development in teaching and learning," www.heinnovate.eu). Both the official discourse of the emergent European Higher Education Area and European Research Area, as well as a large part of academic debates accompanying their formation, increasingly emphasize the belief that universities should play a stronger role of effective engines for economic growth in the emergent knowledge-based economies (Kwiek 2010, 2012).

In this way, the university in the European context, basically without any large-scale public and academic debates about its fundamental principles, seems to be opening a new chapter in its history. In contrast, such public and academic discussions accompanied the formation of its Humboldtian model in the early nineteenth century in Berlin, and accompanied the most important twentieth-century debates on "the idea" of the university, on the occasion of publications devoted to the issue of the university such as prewar works by Ortega y Gasset and Max Weber and postwar works by Karl Jaspers and Jürgen Habermas (see Gasset 1944, Habermas 1971, Jaspers 1959, Weber 1973, as discussed in Kwiek 2008b).

The public university is increasingly viewed as merely one among many types of public sector institutions and its traditional claims to social (as well as economic and political) uniqueness are increasingly falling on deaf ears across Europe. A

current Europe-wide discourse on the university as a key institution for economic growth, in the version consistently promoted by the European Commission and the OECD, questions all its aspects and criticizes it to its very foundations. The long-term problem is, as shown by theories of institutional change (Dryzek 1996: 104), that

> no institution can operate without an associated and supportive discourse (or discourses). Discourses may best be treated as institutional software. Institutional hardware exists in the form of rules, rights, operating procedures, customs, and principles.

The European university is not an exception. Its strength in the last two hundred years resulted from the power of the accompanying discourse of modernity in which the university held a central, highlighted, specific (and carefully secured) place in European societies (Delanty 2001, Rothblatt and Wittrock 1993, Wittrock 2003). A new social and economic location of the institution requires a new discourse which legitimizes and justifies it and sustains public confidence, without which, in the long run, it is impossible to maintain a high level of public trust (and, consequently, a high level of public funding). Therefore, the struggles over a future form of the institution are also, and perhaps above all, the struggles over a form of a discourse which legitimizes its place. In the new century, those struggles have intensified and for the first time became global, with the strong engagement of international and transnational organizations and institutions. To a large extent, the future of European universities will depend on the social and political acceptance of legitimizing discourses currently emergent around them. Supportive discourses for universities seem to be still in the making, amid the transformations of their environments. The strength of supportive discourses shall indirectly determine the social and economic location of universities in the future. And the supportive discourses for universities unavoidably clash with supportive discourses for other competitive public resources in our aging societies (Poland is a good example: Kwiek 2012). New cross-sectoral competition for higher social legitimacy emerges as public spending on the two major claimants to the public purse is on the rise: healthcare and pension schemes.

Consequently, reforms of the public sector are underway across Europe, and the university has been subject to them, despite its traditional, historical exceptionality. It seems better to be able to steer the changes rather than to drift with them, though. Often new quasi-market rules operate alongside more traditional rules linked to the modern university (Kwiek 2009b). Current debates about the future of the university are more central to public policy and wider public discussions

than ever before: European universities consume annually hundreds of billions of euros on teaching and research and produce millions of students and graduates. The future of average European citizens has never been so closely linked to the performance of European universities. It is hardly possible to view the transformations to the institution of the university without viewing the transformations to the social fabric in which it has been embedded. The modern university is under the very same pressures as other modern institutions and other social arrangements. The possible decline of its historical exceptionality (at least compared with the postwar period, if not with the two hundred years of the materialization of Wilhelm von Humboldt's ideas) results from the same pressures as those affecting other modern institutions—including the institutions of the state and its agencies, public services, and institutions of the private corporate world (see Campbell 2004, Djelic and Quack 2003, Held and Young 2011).

Political scientists often stress the idea that the economic space of the nation-state and national territorial borders no longer coincides. Examples include Fritz Scharpf (a former director of the Max Planck Institute for the Studies of Societies in Köln) and John G. Ruggie of Harvard University (see also Beck 2005, Held et al. 1999, Held and McGrew 2007). Consequently, the postwar "embedded liberalism compromise"—the social contract between the state, market, and labor—does not work anymore as it was designed to work within closed national economies (see Hays 2009: 150–158). Scharpf argues that in the history of capitalism, the decades following the Second World War were "unusual in the degree to which the boundaries of the territorial state had become coextensive with the boundaries of markets for capital, services, goods and labor" (Scharpf 2000: 254; see also Scharpf 2010: 91–126, 221–246). At the moment of the emergence of classic European welfare states, investment opportunities existed mainly within national economies and firms were mainly challenged by domestic competitors. At the time, however, when major European welfare state regimes were being constructed, it was not fully realized how much the success of market-correcting policies depended on the capacity of the territorial nation-states to control their economic boundaries. Under the forces of globalization, though, this controlling capacity was lost. Therefore, "the 'golden years' of the capitalist welfare state came to an end" (Scharpf 2000: 255; see also Kwiek 2007, Mishra 2011, Scharpf and Schmidt 2000).

The social contract which had allowed the nation-states in advanced capitalist countries to be accompanied by a welfare state originated right after the Second World War. With the advent of globalization, the social contract is eroding, or is at least under powerful pressures, though, to different extent in different countries. The compact between state and society in postwar territorially bounded national democracies was intended to mediate the deleterious domestic effects of postwar

economic liberalization. Now it is under question, in theory, in practice, or both (Blyth 2002, Held and McGrew 2007).

This postwar compromise assigned specific policy roles to national governments—which governments seem increasingly unable, or unwilling, to perform. One of the indirect effects of globalization on the state is its impact on the ability of the state to "live up to its side of the postwar domestic compact" (Ruggie 1997: 2). The emergence of global capital markets posed entirely new policy problems. As Castles and colleagues summarize recent changes (see also Pestieau 2006: 1–8, Swank 2002: 274–289, Seeleib-Kaiser 2008: 1–13):

> Now there is marked tendency to perceive social investment as a dead weight on the economy rather than as a factor providing a boost off the starting blocks in a "race to the top". In a nutshell, the transformation of the international political economy decreased the autonomy and sovereignty of the nation-state—but did not support the evolution of functionally equivalent higher authorities at the international level. (Castles et al. 2010: 11)

The existing systems of supervision and regulation, systems of taxation and accounting, were created for a "nation-based world economic landscape" (Ruggie 1997: 2). Economic policies are becoming increasingly denationalized and the state is increasingly unable, or unwilling, to keep its promises from the Golden Age of the welfare state. As Leibfried and Obinger (2001: 2) stress, "the welfare state is now seen as a part of the problem, not as part of the solution, as it was in the earlier Keynesian view." The whole idea of the welfare state is under renegotiations, and the access to and eligibility for tax-based public services are under discussions, increasingly related to possible individual contributions. And the welfare state has traditionally been one of the main pillars in the appeal of the nation-state construction.

The power of the nation-state, and the power of the loyalty of its citizens, has rested, *inter alia*, on a firm belief in (historically unprecedented) welfare rights. When the Keynesian welfare state was formed, the role of the state was to find a fair balance between the state and the market—which had fundamentally transformed postwar social relations in all the countries involved in this social experiment (mostly advanced Western democracies). The task of this postwar institutional reconstruction was to devise a framework which would safeguard and aid the quest for domestic stability without triggering the mutually destructive external consequences that had plagued the interwar period.

Science, and public funding for science, was in a state of perpetual expansion in the "Golden Age" (1950–1975) of the postwar Keynesian welfare state in Europe (Bush 1945, Kwiek 2013, Ziman 1994). The massification of higher education was in full swing in Europe. The stagnation which started in the

mid-1970s in Europe was perhaps the first symptom that the welfare system in the form designed for one period (the postwar reconstruction of Europe) might not be working in a different period. The social conditions have changed considerably; the postwar social contract was related to an industrial economy in a period of considerable growth, the male breadwinner model of work, and closed, national economies with largely national competition for investment, goods, products, and services. Since the 1970s, the marriage of the nation-state and the welfare state has been under powerful internal and external pressures. The social agenda of the 1980s and 1990s changed radically: after the policies of the golden age of expansion, European welfare states have been shaped by what Paul Pierson termed "politics of austerity" (Pierson 2001). Increasingly, the changing conditions affect universities.

The Modern University and the Modern Nation-State

It is the overall argument of the present chapter that current transformations to the state under the pressures of globalization (and Europeanization) will not leave the university unaffected, and consequently it is useful to discuss the future tasks and mission of the university in the context of the current global transformations of the state. The legitimacy of, and loyalty toward, modern liberal democratic welfare states is under severe stress today and the whole idea of a (European) postwar "social contract" between the state and its citizens is threatened. The sovereignty of the state has traditionally meant also the sovereignty of national educational policies and full state support for nation-state–oriented universities (from their inception as modern institutions bound by a "pact" with modern nation-states, as shown excellently by Bill Readings in his *The University in Ruins*, 1996). The university used to provide the modern nation-state with "a moral and spiritual basis" and, along Humboldtian lines, professors, as Gerard Delanty argues in *Challenging Knowledge: The University in the Knowledge Society*, "constructed themselves as the representatives of the nation" (Delanty 2001: 33, 34; see Kwiek 2009a). Not any more, though.

As I argued elsewhere (Kwiek 2006), national education systems were created as part of the state-forming process which established the modern nation-state. They were born when states based on absolutistic or monarchical rule gave way to the modern nation-state: as Andy Green stresses in his *Education, Globalization, and the Nation-State*, the history of "national education" is thus very much the history of the "nation state in formation" (Green 1997: 131). National education systems contributed to the creation of civic loyalties and national identities and

became guardians for national languages, cultures, literatures, and consciousness. The modern university and the modern nation-state went hand in hand, or were parts of the same wider process of modernization (and I mean here two Continental models: the Humboldtian and, to a lesser extent, the Napoleonic one). Consequently, reconfigurations of the modern nation-state today (mostly, but not exclusively, under the pressures of globalization) are bound to affect the modern institution of the university. State-sponsored mass education was in modernity the primary source of socialization facing the individual as citizen of a nation-state (Spybey 1996). European nation-states were engaged in authorizing, funding, and managing education systems, including higher education, to construct unified national policies.

The crucial step in the historical development of European universities is what Guy Neave termed the process of their "nationalization"—bringing the university formally into the public domain as a national responsibility. With the rise of the nation-state, the university was set at the apex of institutions defining national identity (Neave 2001: 26). The emergence of the universities in Berlin and in Paris marked the termination of the long process for the incorporation of the university to the state (Neave 2001: 25). The process of the "nationalization" of the university settled the issue of what the role and responsibilities of the modern institution in society should be. The emergent nation-state defined the social place of the emergent modern university and determined its social responsibilities. The nation-state determined the community to which the university would be answerable: it was going to be the national community, the nation. The services and benefits the unitary and homogeneous nation-state gradually, and over the passage of time, placed at the disposal of society went far beyond education and included, for example, generous healthcare systems and old-age pension schemes. Nowadays, as the redefinition of material foundations of the welfare state in general progresses smoothly (through new legislation) in most parts of Europe, social contracts with regard to these (and possibly other) areas of state benefits and state-funded services may have to be renegotiated, significantly changing their content, range, and the validity of the contract itself.

Increasingly, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, culture in the sense of *Bildung* (until then more related to the development of the individual as the individual and not to the individual as the nation-state citizen) became mixed with political motivations and aspirations, focused around the notion of the German national state (Wittrock 1993).[2] In a global age, these motifs have been put under pressure. Forging national identity, serving as a repository of the nation's historical, scientific or literary achievements, inculcating national consciousness and loyalty to fellow-citizens of the nation-state do not serve as the

rationale for the existence of the institution of the university any more. At the same time, the disinterested pursuit of truth by curiosity-driven scholars in the traditional sense of the term is no longer accepted as a general *raison d'être* for the institution either.

Consequently, regardless of whether we focus more on the cultural unity of the nation or on the political unity of the nation as the two distinct driving forces behind the development of the modern university, both motifs are not working in post-national and global conditions. Neither serving truth nor serving the nation (and the nation-state) can be the guiding principles for the lavish public subsidization of the institution today, and neither of them are even mentioned in current debates at global or European levels. What increasingly counts is the economic "relevance" of universities, and their possible contribution to economic growth (see Brennan 2007, Pinheiro et al. 2012, Välimaa and Ylijoki 2008). Traditional missions of the modern university are subject to far-reaching renegotiations. Massified European universities, open to millions of students, with millions of graduates, with huge annual operating budgets, seem no longer able to follow traditional "ideas of the university" discussed in Volume 1 of this publication.

Conclusions

There are four tentative conclusions. Firstly, traditional relationships between higher education and the state are changing, and the main forces driving the change are globalization-related (and, in Europe, Europeanization-related). Globalization processes affect the institution of the university mainly indirectly while the processes of European integration affect it mostly directly (the best example being the Bologna Process). Higher education is likely to be strongly affected by these globalization-related processes mainly through the impact of the ongoing transformations to the state. As Peter Scott argues about the threats of globalization to universities, consistently with arguments in this chapter,

> as the welfare state struggles to preserve core services—for example, in basic education, health, and social security—universities may find that their current funding base is increasingly eroded. ... The autonomy traditionally enjoyed by universities, and their consequent semi-detachment from state bureaucracies, have made them especially vulnerable to these new experiments in "semi-detachment" (in other words, reduced availability of state subsidy). The upward pressure on tuition fees in "state" universities is perhaps an example of this phenomenon. (Scott 2005: 48)

Secondly, public higher education worldwide is a much less exceptional part of the public sector than it used to be a few decades ago (before the ideas of New Public Management became prevalent): either in public perceptions, or in organizational and institutional terms (governance and funding modes), or both. This disappearing—cultural, social, and economic—exceptionality of the institution of the university will heavily influence its future relations with the state which, on a global scale, is increasingly involved in reforming all its public services (see Krücken and Meier 2006, Musselin 2007, Kwiek 2011). General reform ideas in higher education become similar to general reform ideas in the public sector, cost-sharing/co-funding being a good example of similar lines of thinking.

Thirdly, further reforms of higher education in Europe are inevitable, as the forces behind ongoing changes are global in nature and similar in kind throughout Europe. The forces of change are similar, although their current influence varies from country to country (the room of manoeuvre of individual institutions, perhaps except for high globally ranked research universities, seems to be very small in Europe due to their dominant reliance on public funds in both teaching and research missions. Exceptions include universities in England—in contradistinction to the rest of the UK—which apply strong cost-sharing mechanisms and operate in a strong higher education "quasi-market": the level of private funding available is more changeable and potentially more based on individual institutional strategies). In Europe, the forces of change are structurally similar, although they act through various "national filters" (Gornitzka and Maassen 2011). The creation of mass higher education is no longer a dominant goal of states and governments as it has already been achieved: there are many other, competing, social needs today, though.

And fourthly, it is increasingly difficult to understand the dynamics of future transformations of universities without understanding the transformations of the social fabric in which they are embedded, including transformations to the welfare state and the nation-state.

New ideas about the functioning of the state indirectly give life to new ideas about the functioning of universities—which in Continental Europe have traditionally been heavily, directly or indirectly, dependent on public funding. One can summarize briefly changes in European welfare state models: things will never be the same (see Greve 2012, Palier 2010, Pestieau 2006). Presumably, the same refers to European universities, keeping in mind the multidimensionality of transformations, their powerful embodiment in the cultural traditions of particular European nation-states, and their strong dependence on the pace of changes taking place across all public sector services.

Finally, the traditional social contract between the university and the state is faltering because the state across Europe is under unprecedented pressures. The ongoing renegotiation of this contract will determine the future of European universities for decades to come: a major role of national academic communities today is to understand the change process and to assist in defining terms and conditions of a revised contract for the benefit of both the society and their institutions. If they do not push for a revised "idea of the university" themselves (as integral part of an emergent contract), new ideas stemming entirely from the outside of academe may prevail. In Continental Europe, the "idea of the university" is in the making, right before our eyes. Just as the European Union and its "jewel in the crown," the European welfare state, is globally unique, so are European universities. As large-scale and empirically based global comparative studies demonstrate (see Teichler et al. 2013), the governance and funding patterns in (Continental) European universities are worlds apart from global patterns. A new European–global hybrid in university funding and organization may be emergent today: while European universities are powerfully affected by global trends (as are European welfare states), they are bound to retain their distinctiveness. The degree to which this European–global hybrid will be more "European" than "global," that is to say, the degree to which traditional elements of the university/state social contract will be retained in the future, depends to a large extent on the academic profession. The form of the revised social contract can still be influenced, and there is still enough time to consider its long-term implications, including implications for the academic profession as the core of the whole academic enterprise. Let us academics be not caught by surprise.[3]

Notes

1. For the origins of the social pact between states and universities in France (see Weisz 1983); in Germany (see McClelland: 1980); see also such classics as Ringer (1990) on Germany, Sanderson (1999) on Great Britain, Ben-David (1992) on Britain, France, and Germany, and Rothblatt and Wittrock (1993) on the emergence of the "modern university."
2. I present detailed arguments combined with reading of the relevant works by Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Friedrich W. J. Schelling as well as the discussion on the German "idea" of the university between Jürgen Habermas and Karl Jaspers in Kwiek (2006: 80–136), in a Chapter: "The Idea of the University Revisited (the German Context)."
3. I would like to express my gratitude for highly useful comments I received from Michael Peters and Ronald Barnett. All limitations of the chapter are clearly mine, though. This chapter draws from my book, *Knowledge Production in European Universities. States, Markets, and Academic Entrepreneurialism* (Frankfurt and New York: Peter Lang, 2013). The

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