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**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES' EVOLVING RELATIONSHIPS: THE STATE, THE
UNIVERSITIES, THE PROFESSORiate**

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All recent publications on higher education converge to say that higher education is experiencing major changes. The conclusions they raise are by many respects similar to those developed in the literature on the health sector, the law industry or other professional fields. It is also striking to see that all, explicitly or not, tackle three issues that are classical questions in sociology or/and public policy analysis.

First, they address the transformation of the state and public intervention and focus on the changing steering capacity and instruments of public authorities on a specific sector. In higher education most attention has been given to the transformed relationships between the state and universities. The interventionist control state is vanishing and replaced by an evaluative state (Neave and van Vught 1991) developing new policies and instruments. Many reforms are inspired by the new public management narratives (more vertical steering of the system, setting of explicit targets and performance contracts, stronger managerial roles of rectors, deans, head of departments, etc.), but as shown by Ferlie, Musselin and Andresani (2008), many are also associated to the network governance narratives (development of networks between higher education institutions and other social actors designed for joint problem recognition and solving, organisational learning and dissemination of ‘good practices’), the combination between the first and the latter orientations varying from countries to countries and being more or less complementary (Paradeise et al. 2009).

Second, many studies deal with the transformation of the relationships between the state and the professions. While traditionally the sociology of professions observed (or denounced) the protection granted by state regulations in order for professions to keep their monopoly over their activities, most recent studies conclude that the state is no more protecting professions but aims at weakening the professionals by contesting their expertise or their monopolistic situation.

Third, a lot of emphasis is put on the transformation of the relationships between organizations and professions. In higher education, most contributions conclude that the collegial and professional governance that dominated higher education institutions is threatened nowadays by the introduction of managerial norms and instruments limiting professional power and professional autonomy. In other words, universities have gained control over academics.

My objective in this paper will not be to discuss these conclusions but to address two perspectives that they overlook. On the one hand, they are one-sided, i.e. they look at these relationships in one direction (role of the state on universities or on the professoriate, control of the universities over the academics) but they do not pay enough attention to potential reciprocal relationships. Therefore one aim of this paper will be to revisit these three main issues and complete some of their conclusions by looking at the other side of the story. By so doing, I will be led to argue that the on-going changes are reconfiguring rather than weakening the academic profession.

On the other hand, they look at these three different domains of change separately instead of having a more interactive perspective. I claim that the interactions between the state, the universities and the professoriate – what I called university configurations (Musselin 2001 [2004] – are interdependent and evolve in a rather coherent, related and compatible way.

Because the relationships between these three pillars are changing, university configurations are also changing and the consequences of these changes have to be addressed.

I will therefore focus on the implications the new emerging configurations have on the internal governance of universities and argue that if the latter have more (managerial) autonomy and increased organizational capacities, these institutional resources depend on the new academic elite that emerged through the recent transformations and has become an indispensable support for the legitimacy of the institutional strategies. In other words I will focus on the effect of the re-composition of the academic profession on the distribution of power within universities and look at the transformation of universities¹ from a viewpoint that is complementary with the construction of universities in organizations (Brunsson and Shalin-Andersson 2000, Musselin 2007, de Boer, Enders and Leisyte 2007, Whitley 2008).

To make these points, I will mainly draw on my own research on French and German higher education systems but will also rely on the prolific literature on the British system and recent research led by two doctoral students of the CSO (Felipe Camerati and Simon Paye) on the United Kingdom. This means that my understanding of “Europe” will be rather restricted in this paper. But the construction of a European higher education area is still on its way: the different European countries still have rather different systems and lack the integration mechanisms that can be observed among the US state public systems (Musselin 2009). It is therefore almost impossible to cover all countries. It is nevertheless relevant to focus on these three countries because they are considered as representatives of three very different traditions (Napoleonic, Humboltian and Anglo-Saxon).

I will develop my arguments in three sequences. The first part of the paper will be dedicated to the notion of “university configuration” (1.). I will show how looking simultaneously at the interplay between the State, the universities and the academic profession – i.e. a university configuration – is a powerful analytical framework to understand higher education systems and their transformation.

In the second part of the paper I will use this analytical tool to describe and understand the on-going changes in European higher education systems, first looking at the three classical issues (state/universities – state / academic profession – universities / academic profession) one after another (2.) and then at how they interact and impact the internal governance of universities and how they reconfigure the power distribution within the academic profession (3.).

1. University configuration, an interactive perspective on higher education systems

It is traditional to oppose the French (Napoleonic) and the German (Humboldtian) higher education systems. When I compared them in the 1980s and 1990s I observed that the interplay between the state, the academic profession and universities deeply differs from one side of the Rhine to the other and that this impacted the governance of universities in each country. I will sum up the main differences I observed and argue that the specific interplay between the three pillars (the state, the universities and the academic profession) can explain results from the specific trajectory of each higher education system.

¹ In a contribution to be presented at the 2011 Egos Conference in Goteborg, Bleiklie, Enders, Lepori and Musselin (2011) developed the notion of “penetrated hierarchies” to qualify this organizational transformation.

1.1. University configurations: the case of France and Germany

In France and Germany, as for most professions in continental Europe (Rueschmeyer 1986 or Krause 1996), the state has provided public support for the academic profession to develop as a self-regulated and protected occupational group², but the role of the academic profession in the steering of the higher education system was radically different in the two countries and the relationships between the public authorities (the central ministry in France, the Land ministries³ in Germany) and the academic profession were opposed in nature when E. Friedberg and I (Friedberg et Musselin 1993) looked at them by the end of the 1980s. In France, we observed a strong co-management between the national ministry and various categories of academics: professors appointed by the ministry assessed the research projects or the new training programs sent by the universities; former professors were appointed as top-managers at the ministry; representatives of the numerous professional associations or academic unions tried to influence or lobby the ministerial bureaus... Furthermore the formal organization of the ministry and the main decisions it took were exclusively discipline-based. By contrast, the formal organization of the German ministries and the main decisions they took were exclusively university-based. The only interaction between a German ministry of *Land* and the academic profession occurred for the recruitment of professors: the ministerial staff controlled the conformity of the procedure and, if the recruitment concerned an academic “star”, they could provide the university with a special budget helping them to offer an attractive bid.

The relationships between the universities and the academic profession were very different as well. French academics expressed no loyalty or affiliation to their universities: academic felt hosted by an institution that provided them with few resources and towards which they did not feel accountable. In theory, French universities could be described as collegial – the deans and the president were considered as *primus inter pares*, these university leaders were all elected (and still are) while different university bodies were dedicated to discussions, exchanges and deliberations – but interviews revealed that in practice they were very weak, hardly making decision and having almost no influence on faculty members (Friedberg and Musselin 1989, Beckmeier and Neusel 1991). Academics having direct access to the ministry, getting grants from the research institutions, or engaged in interpersonal relationships with the local political actors or economic partners could completely ignore their affiliation to their universities (Musselin 1987, Chapter 4). As a whole, bottom-up collegiality⁴ (Lazega and Wattedled 2010) prevailed, but was rather limited when it came to governance issues: the level of social relations and exchanges among peers was rather low and the degree of coordination among peers was kept to a minimum.

In Germany, even if the affiliation to their discipline was stronger than to their university (Altbach 1996), professors expressed more loyalty to their institution and were linked by the implicit contracts passed when they were recruited: they received resources (budget, offices,

² A closer look at this point would of course show variations between the two countries.

³ In Germany, the Bund has very restricted competences on higher education. As we will see below, this increased during the recent decades as the *Länder* were recognized more and more autonomy in the way they can steer their university systems. But in the last 6 to 7 years, the *Bund* regain a lot of steering capacity with the introduction of the federal policy called “*Exzellenzinitiative*”.

⁴ In a recent paper, E. Lazega and O. Wattedled (2010) suggest to distinguish between two approaches of collegiality. The first one is weberian and can be qualified as top-down: collegiality is a mean among others to exercise bureaucratic management. The second is neo-weberian and is bottom-up collegiality and is a pure organizational: collective action: social discipline is needed for cooperation to emerge among rival associates/peers.

assistants...) to develop their activities and were in return expected to be involved in the self-management of their institution and to be successful in their teaching and research. In a way, the recruitment's starting fund was a kind of bet: the university put resources on someone and hoped to recover its gain later on. And it often succeeded: through the implication of the professors in the management of their university, the level of bottom-up collegiality was higher than in France.

Finally the relationships between the public authorities and the universities were also strongly contrasted. In France, because the ministry was first of all steering through the disciplines and their representatives, universities and their presidents were not pertinent interlocutors. The main interactions between the ministry and them were centered on bureaucratic and control exchanges. In Germany by contrast, the *Land* ministries were in permanent interrelations and negotiations with the universities of the *Land* whose presidents (or rectors) were their main partners. The allocation of new budgets was obtained by direct negotiation between them, when new demands appeared.

To sum up: this comparative research showed that the relationships between the State, the professoriate and universities were different in the two countries but also that in each country the different relationships were fitting together, thus producing a specific "university configuration" in each case. In France for instance: the strong co-management between the state and the academic profession was compatible with and reinforced by the discipline-based steering led by the ministry but also compatible with and reinforced by the institutional weaknesses of French universities and the low institutional affiliation of French academics.

Looking simultaneously to these three main components does not only help identifying the characteristics of a specific system: it also provides explanations for its transformation and its dynamics.

1.2. The dynamics of university configurations

The comparison of the French and the German higher education systems in the late 1980s provided two static pictures. But where do they come from? Since when is each of these specific interactions taking place? When and how do they evolve? Historical research on the French and German higher education systems provides clearly evidence that the two pictures of the late 1980s were not purely conjunctural but resulted from the distinct histories of the two systems and from the completely opposite orientations they engaged in at the beginning of the 19th century, i.e. the Napoleonic versus the Humboldtian conceptions of universities (Charle 1994, Renaut 1995). While at the end of the 18th century the French and the German university systems were facing important critics, they both experienced radical changes (what some political scientists would call critical junctures (Collier and Collier 1991) leading to two different paths that durably weigh on their developments.

In France, it started with the French Revolution and the suppression of the universities in 1793, when all corporations (including academic ones) were abolished. In the following years, faculties of law, medicine, theology, and later of sciences and humanities have progressively been re-created but independently from one another. Napoleon consecrated this process with the creation of only one university covering whole France, the Imperial University. The whole system became steered from Paris by the *conseil d'instruction publique*, a body of Parisian academics who were in charge of the academic staff and training programs for their own

discipline (Gerbod 1963). Very quickly the members of this *conseil* developed relationships with the *Grand maître* (the minister) and his administration (i.e. the ministry). The discipline-based co-management I observed in the 1980s started at that time: the *Facultés* in the absence of universities became the organizational units in the French system and the deans the main partners of the central co-managing actors.

In Germany, the reflections led by the reforming philosophers (Fichte, Schleiermeier,...) mobilized around Wilhem von Humboldt developed a completely different institutional and relational design. Each university became an institution embracing and coordinating all disciplines and organized in institutes led by professors in charge of both teaching and research. The ministry of each *Land* protected the academic profession but also influenced its transformation by imposing scientific meritocracy as the legitimate criteria for recruitment and promotion (Clark 2006).

In the two countries the main characteristics of the configurations born by the beginning of the 19th century remained quite stable, notwithstanding some marginal changes that regularly occurred but did not modify the whole design. A first reason for that has to do with the dynamics of increasing returns leading to path dependence (Pierson 2000) that began with each trajectory: once a specific institutional design has been adopted, and became familiar to all actors, it became more and more difficult to come back and chose an alternative path. Commitment (Becker 1960) to one orientation and sedimentation of practices and relations solidified the informal and formal rules in which actors use to play, produced routines and cognitive maps⁵. A second reason for the stability of the configurations is linked to the interdependence between the three sets of relationships described above. They are persistent because they are compatible one with another and reinforce one another. Changing one relationship is not sufficient to change all of them. Typically, while major reforms in France first aimed at recreating (1896 act) and strengthening (1968 act) universities, they did not simultaneously changed the relationships between the newly created universities and the academic profession, nor did they weaken the co-management between the profession and the ministry. As a result, universities by the end of the 19th century as in the late 1970s were unable to become autonomous and to win over the disciplines. Path shifting (Palier 2005) finally occurred in the late 1980s when the implementation of four-year contracts between each university and the ministry introduced changes that affected the three pillars of the university configuration: it introduced institutional logics in the ministry (weakening the discipline-based forms of steering), competed with and weakened the network of relationships developed with representatives of the professoriate and recognized the university presidents as relevant interlocutors, pushed these presidents to develop projects for their institution and to try and coordinate internally. Not only do the interactions between the three pillars change when university configurations evolve: the way public authorities work, the internal governance of universities and forms of regulation within the academic profession are moving accordingly.

These interactive and dynamic forms of change are affecting university configurations today and have strong impact on universities and the academic profession as we shall see.

⁵ When I led interviews at the French in 1987, discipline-based steering was “evident” for the interviewees who were neither conscious of it and therefore not able or wanting to consider alternatives.

2. Current Trends in European university configurations

In this second point, I will use the same analytical framework to describe the major changes affecting the European university configurations and show that these changes share some common traits. They promote the emergence and the strengthening of some academic elite whose actions and decisions play a central role in the empowerment of universities but simultaneously empower the rewarded faculty members because the latter are in a better position to negotiate with their university leadership.

Before developing this argument, it is important to note that the quite aggregate level of observation that will be used in this second part might give the impression that higher education systems in Europe are becoming similar. Convergences in trends should not leave unconsidered that the closer one gets, the more different each system still remains (Musselin 2005). It is also important to note that these trends did not occur with the same temporality in the three countries (it started much earlier in the United Kingdom than in Germany or in France), even if I will not develop on this aspect here.

Notwithstanding these nuances, one can observe that a more complex interplay between the state, the universities and the professoriate is emerging in the three countries while each relationship linking them one with another is in redefinition.

2.1. More autonomous universities but also more interventionist states

The transformation of the relationships between the universities and the states were probably the more studied (Henkel and Little 1999, Kehm and Lanzendorf 2006, de Boer, Enders and Schimank 2007). All kind of evidences show that universities gained institutional autonomy (Berdahl 1982) because the state delegated to them different competencies, decisions or responsibilities they did not have before. This process is more visible in continental Europe where universities were considered as public services. Now, German and French universities have a global budget instead of headings expenditure they had to respect. Since 2009, French universities are progressively becoming responsible for their payroll⁶ and they are also responsible for the internal allocation of the research budget that was directly allocated to the labs before. But they also become more autonomous by diversifying their source of funding.

The delegation of competencies goes along with a transformation of the role of the state that G. Neave and F. van Vught (1991) described as the emergence of the evaluative state: instead of producing rules and controlling whether they are respected, governments develop more procedural policies (Howlett 2005, Musselin 2006), set principles rather than define all details, etc. But it is also the rise of an incentivizing state: rather than prescribing how things should be done, ministries develop rules of the game inducing compliance from the actors if they want to succeed. Introducing performance indicators such as the number of graduations or the number of research active faculty members for instance incites universities to pay attention to the success of their students or the research productivity of their members. The recourse to incentives increase the intensity of competition among institutions and specific steering instruments have been developed accordingly: very good examples for this are the

⁶ Each year since January 2009, a certain number of universities become responsible for their payroll. Still 10% of French universities have not. Before 2009, the payroll was managed by the state and university budgets were only running budgets.

research assessment exercise⁷ in the United Kingdom or the “policies for excellence” led by countries like France (with the *Grand Emprunt*⁸) and Germany (with the *Exzellenzinitiative*) to identify “excellent universities” or “excellent scientific clusters” to which more funding will be allocated

Increased institutional autonomy therefore goes hand in hand with increased competition and increased differentiation as the incentive-based policy leads to a concentration of material and symbolic (reputation) resources.

The efficiency of these incentive policies and their increasing weight somewhat contradict those who conclude to the disengagement of the state. Not only are higher education and research very high on the political agenda (and have not been so high for long) but the new public steering instruments mentioned above have a strong constraining impact on higher education as in other sectors. P. Le Galès and Scott (2008) or Naidoo (2008) for instance conclude that the larger managerial autonomy given by the state is partly an illusion as, in fact, the incentives-based instruments exercise a stronger control over behaviors. Some states (like the United Kingdom) reduced their financial share in university funding but they at the same time are more interventionist than ever in terms of what should be searched or how teaching should be organized (Mangset 2009).

2.2. Less protection from the state for academics, but a new academic elite legitimized by the state

As mentioned in the introduction, the sociology of the professions emphasized the role of the state in the recognition and protection of professions. Seminal authors like M. Larson (1977) or E. Freidson (1994) gave a more critical view of this process and claimed that professionals made use of their expertise in order to obtain monopoly and closure but were in fact following their own private interests and captured the state.

Nevertheless, as mentioned in the first part of this paper the relationships between states and professions can not be reduced to this protecting role. Other forms of interactions exist. On the one hand, by its decisions, the state can have an impact on the development of the profession (by promoting a research orientation rather than another) or on the internal structure of the profession itself⁹. On the other, authors like Halliday (1987) also stressed that the state gains from the regulation of professions when it provides the state with professionals who can engage their expertise in the government: the strong co-management observed in the French case or to the role of the co-opted elites in the reforms led in the 1980s in the UK (Kogan and Hanney 2000) illustrate this point.

⁷ Led about every five years, it consisted in the evaluation of the research activity of all academic departments that each received a grade. The grades were published on the website of the RAE and had a strong direct impact on the level of public resources they received but also on the private resources as firms could look at grades before choosing a lab with which they cooperated. Discussions are on-going about how to proceed in the future.

⁸ The French and the German states organize national challenges relying on national call for projects (*Exzellenzinitiative* in Germany, *Grand Emprunt* or *Investissement d'avenir* in France) aimed at modeling the national panorama by identifying champions and putting more money on them.

⁹ In Germany for instance, when the state puts more resources on the table in order to attract a “star”, it works as a “buyer” on the “market for professors” and thus contributes to the reputation of some academics.

This traditional interplay between states and professions is nevertheless widely refined nowadays. As observed by most analysts, critics of the academic profession have become more common in the recent decades among members of the state, the media or the society at large. The United Kingdom is probably the best documented case as many authors outline the strong attacks against the professions led by the Thatcher's governments (see for instance Ball 1990, Fulton 1994). But the discourse of N. Sarkozy in January 2009 revealed a similar critical trend about French academics: the President of France presented them as poorly efficient and suggested they chose this occupation because there was light and heating in their offices rather than to produce research.

These critical representations led to the alteration of state/profession relationships in higher education and in other professional sectors as well (Evetts 2002). Protections provided to specific professions have been renegotiated or suppressed. In higher education, Austrian and Italian professors no longer are civil servants for instance while tenure was suppressed in the UK in 1988. Instruments were also developed at the national or federal levels in order to promote new behaviors and increase productivity and quality: the Research Assessment Exercise in the UK aimed at increasing the quality and quantity of the scientific production; the creation of the ANR (French national research council) promoted a more selective access to funding by fostering research on projects and the AERES (*Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur*) assess all labs, higher education institutions and training programs; the accreditation agencies in Germany (Serrano-Velarde 2008) were supposed to improve the quality in teaching, etc. In France a decree passed in 2009 foresees that every four years the teaching and research activities of each academic will be evaluated by the CNU (*Conseil National des Universités*), a national body that already existed but sees its role reinforced¹⁰. As a matter of fact European states were very active in the recent years in creating and developing new bodies, or reaffirming the role of already existing ones on the assessment of teaching and/or of research. By receiving delegation from the state to carry on scientific and /or pedagogical evaluation of the activities or projects of the academic professions, the legitimacy of these bodies increased.

The creation of new bodies, the strengthening of already existing ones by the extension of their missions, but also the crucial role they play in the evaluation, recognition, rewarding, funding of academics or projects introduced some major changes in the relationships between the states and the profession that can not be reduced to the sole stronger control they exercise over academics: they also promoted the creation and development of new elite in charge of assessing and sitting in these bodies. It would be needed to more carefully look at whom the members of these new elite are and how they are chosen. This probably varies from one country to another. In France for instance, the linguistic capacity, besides the scientific reputation, often plays a major role as deliberations are often held in French. Imitation can also be expected to work: individuals invited by certain bodies and having served as expected, might be invited by other bodies later on. A study of these elite, who they are, how recurrent they are, how and where they serve is missing for the moment. Nevertheless some differences with the former elite dominating the academic profession can be stressed.

¹⁰ By many aspects the CNU is the follower of the *Conseil de l'instruction publique* mentioned above: it is discipline based and mainly concerned with the careers of French academics. In the past, its role was rather strong (it could for instance modify the choice of a local hiring committee) but was weakened by a reform in 1992 that reduced its function to two missions: deciding about 50% of the promotions (the other half being decided by the institutions themselves) and examining whether candidates applying for the first time for a position of *maître de conférences* or professors were qualified enough to apply. With the mission of evaluating all French academics, the CNU recovers a stronger place.

The members of the elite are most of the time appointed rather than elected as are the members of many older bodies of that kind. In France for instance the already mentioned CNU consists for of 2/3 of elected members and 1/3 appointed; while the academics serving at or for new bodies like the ANR or the AERES are all appointed. They are also much more international than before: the participation of international scholars works like a certificate for impartiality and quality. In Germany, among the 25 scientists appointed to select the best projects for the *Exzellenzinitiative*, fifteen are either non German or German working for a very long time abroad.

A further characteristic of this group is that they challenge the interpersonal networks that developed around some reputed professors who were able to manage the careers of their disciples. These figures are still very important in Germany because of the relationships linking a professor with his/her assistants while in France they remained very central (T.N. Clark (1973) spoke of “patrons and their circles) until the 1980s but were progressively replaced by less powerful mentors. The more collective, formalized, explicit decision-making process in the recently created bodies make such interpersonal relationships more difficult to push¹¹ and the new elite collectively, rather than some “mandarins” individually, are becoming central in the career development of academics.

The increased influence of “new” elite has different causes. First they are all the more important as governments use their assessments to make their decisions and legitimize their choice because they result from a peer review process. The selective allocation of research funding in the United Kingdom does not appear as a decision from the department of education but results from the “automatic” transformation of the evaluation led by the RAE into funding – a nice example of what K. Weaver (1988) called *Automatic Government* – .

Second, in order to justify their results, the academic elite develop rules, explicate criteria, create categories, rank or classify journals, etc. and this allow setting norms about what is expected, what is good or not, etc. They can thus be described as a group of normative agents (using the categories identified by Richard Scott 2008 when he looks at the role of professionals in the transformation of institutions). They participate to the creation of norms but also diffuse them. F. Camerati (forthcoming) for instance observed that those sitting in such external peer review bodies were asked to train and give advices to their colleagues in their own universities and that departments were very sensible to getting information about what is expected from those bodies (which do not all have exactly the same norms) from them. The professional norms produced (and imposed) by the new elite are rather explicit because they have been translated into procedures, templates, decision-making processes by the administrative staff affected to these bodies and whose role is to guarantee the quality of the process. The peer review is more and more formalized in order to (try and) avoid personal influence, networking... Quality assurance and ISO norms have been developed in order to secure (and provide guarantee about) the quality about the way it works. National assessment agencies can for instance get a label from the ENQA that certifies that they work in conformity with the norms defined by this European network of evaluation agencies.

Third, these evaluations are also more and more public. The list of the research projects selected by the ANR, the DFG or the British research councils are available on their website as are the ratings of the research assessment exercise, of the AERES or of the German

¹¹ Many of these new bodies have written deontological agreement trying to avoid conflicts of interests.

accrediting agencies. Information is thus provided to stakeholders (students, their family, tax payers, private labs etc.) but this also protects the results of the evaluations from political influence or negotiation.

As a matter of fact, the relationships between the academic elite and the state are complex and not completely stabilized. The state can rely on the decisions and evaluations made by these elite to justify its one decisions, but it also becomes dependent on them and has less room to exercise some political influence. In the 1980s for instance the group of experts mobilized by the French ministry to assess the projects sent by the universities was located at the ministry, their names were secret and their result not publicized: their interplay with the ministry was thus less visible and the latter was not tight by the assessments. The visibility of the new elite, its professionalization, the official delegation they received from the state de-legitimate political interferences, but nevertheless there are still potential tensions between peer-review and political orientations. In some cases, the new academic elite and its administrative staff succeeded in reducing the influence of the political sphere. The *Exzellenzinitiative* in Germany is for instance led by the *Wissenschaftsrat* and the DFG and they keep the political actors at a distance: final decisions are made by a commission composed of scientific experts and representatives of the *Länder* and the *Bund* but the scientific actors have more votes than the politicians and can therefore resist to the political will if they all vote in the same direction. But this is not always and everywhere the case. In France for instance, it seems that the international scientists mobilized to sit in the juries of the *Grand Emprunt* and the administrative staff of the ANR (that is in charge of organizing the selection) procedure have been less able to resist to the political pressures. It is probably too early to draw conclusions about the *Grand Emprunt*, but for the selection of the LABEX (excellent labs) the president of the jury was asked to “save” 17 projects among those assessed with “B” and to add them to the list of “A”. The precipitation with which the selected IDEX (Universities of Excellence) has been published after the episode of the LABEX can probably be explained as a way to protect the work of the jury in charge of the IDEX from a similar influence.

Even if the interplay between the academic profession and the states remains a place for conflicting influence, and if recent policies have been clearly be implemented in order to submit the academic profession to more evaluation and competitive ordeals, it would be overstated to speak of the dismissal of the academic profession and a more balanced statement has to be made. Academics are submitted to more control and less protection but at the same time some academic elite are legitimized and peer review is recognized as the best way to identify scientific meritocracy.

2.3. *Universities are empowered by the “new” elite but also depend on them*

How does this affect universities? Does it affect the organizational characteristics of universities?

In order to answer these questions, these characteristics have to be recalled. First, universities share a common characteristic with hospitals, courts and cultural organizations: they, one way or another, accommodate high levels of professional power and autonomy with bureaucratic characteristics. As a result, their professional members are both affiliated to an organization and to a discipline. They have been qualified of professional bureaucracies by Mintzberg (1979) and two consequences derived from that. First professional legitimacy dominates within such organizations. Second their style of governance is closed to the definition of

collegial organizations provided by Waters (1989): power is not concentrated in the hands of one individual but shared by a community of peers and expertise legitimizes this power¹².

Second, unlike hospitals, courts and cultural organizations, the activities they perform are loosely coupled (Weick 1976). It is possible (maybe not good, but this is another issue) to give a class without knowing which class the students had before or will have after. It is possible for a team of biologists to do their research without taking into account what the team next door is doing. In other words most activities can be performed without cooperating and interacting actively with the other members of the faculty because they are not indispensable to achieve one's work. Moreover, research and teaching rely on "unclear technologies" (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972), i.e. technologies that are difficult to describe, prescribe and reproduce (Musselin 2007).

These two main features of universities (professional bureaucracies with loosely coupled activities performed through unclear technologies) have been challenged by the public policies mentioned in the first part of this second section. By delegating new competencies to universities, strengthening their leadership, rationalizing their activities, they "constructed universities into organizations" (Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson 2000, Musselin 2007, de Boer, Enders and Leisyte 2007, Whitley 2008). This process is not typical for universities. Many studies in other professional sectors observed that both professional legitimacy and collegiality are threatened in professional bureaucracies because the managers are gaining control and power over the professionals. Comparing three different professional sectors, S. Ackroyd, I. Kirkpatrick and M. Walker (2007) observed quite similar trends aiming at transforming public services in "managed services", efficient and performance oriented" (Ackroyd et al. 2007: 11): the increase in managerial logics, the introduction of managerial instruments and devices, the strengthening of hierarchical relationships and leadership.

Many authors, especially in the UK conclude to the dismissal of professions (Harrison and Pollitt 1994, Ackroyd 1996). The same conclusions are developed about universities and the academic profession (Deem et al. 2007, Vinokur 2009). As I will first argue, the nature of the relationships between each single academic and his or her university has indeed been strongly affected. I shall then observe that the control of universities over their staff relies on the increased influence of external peer reviews and that some academics gains power from this.

Major transformations in the relationships between an academic and his/her university

Research concluding to the dismissal of the academic profession within universities first of all deals with autonomy and power. They show that the management of academic work is less discretionary than it used to be and no more relies on the self-determination of academics. This statement of course primarily concerns the growing population of permanently temporary workers, i.e. knowledge workers for which the secondary labor market (Doeringer and Piore 1971) is no more a transition period to a tenured or tenure-track position (Rosenblum and Rosenblum 1996) but a situation that lasts and may become permanent. Typical for these positions is the fact that they are most of the time specialized on some tasks and are engaged in a rather hierarchical relationship with the permanent staff. But recent evolutions are not limited to the increased share of casual staff. They also impact permanent

¹² In the ideal-typical collegial organization of Waters leaders are elected, career development is based on the autonomous exercise of expertise and depends on the judgement of peers, leadership relies on a larger expertise and credentials define who is part of the group and who is not.

faculty members. As shown by most authors, if academic values are not much affected by the managerial orientations, their concrete activities are impacted by an increasing bureaucratization (fulfillment of time sheets, activity reports, etc.) and formalization in the organization of work (Barrier 2010 and 2011, Jouvenet 2011). J. Barrier observed that research on projects is organized in work packages while scientific production is structured in sequences for which deliverables are expected: this transforms the way academics allocate their time and organize their work and their activities are more traceable.

Simultaneously, academic leaders are expected to become “managers” and receive more responsibilities and increased hierarchical authority, while collegial bodies have less decisional power, are challenged by university boards in which stakeholders are represented, and lose their function of “parliament of science” (Rémond 1989). Coming back to the distinction introduced by Lazega and Wattebled (2010) between top-down and bottom-up collegiality, it seems that the former (described by the two authors as a mean for bureaucratic management) is overcoming the latter. This is very clear in the case of France, where university presidents still rely on committees or groups to work on new ideas, prepare decisions or propose solutions but these collectives often consist in individuals chosen by the presidents rather than on peers chosen by the professoriate (Barrier and Mignot-Gérard, forthcoming).

Finally, another phenomenon is also affecting European universities: they are transformed into employers. Until very recently, the permanent staff was composed of public servants and as such the State was their employer, even if they were recruited by a committee located in their institution. As a result, when a French professor is newly recruited as a full professor, he/she receives an official decision signed by the President of France. But even if this still remains the case, in France as in some other countries, it should not hide the profound transformation of the relationships between universities and their academic staff and the two main changes they are simultaneously experiencing: these relationships are becoming closer to employee-employer relationships and European universities are developing as internal labor markets (Musselin 2005). While this is very common for North-American universities, it is completely new to most European ones, even in the UK. European universities can thus redefine the incomplete contract they have with their staff. Some examples can document this point.

In Germany, the resources (assistant positions, research budget, administrative staff...) allocated when a professor is recruited are now time-limited while there was no time limit in the past: they will be renewed, or not, according to the performance of the professor. The former implicit contracts that were passed between a university and a newly recruited professor have been replaced by formal objectives (about teaching, research, services) that are regularly assessed (every three to five years) and might influence the income of the professors as merit-salaries have been introduced.

In France, in a near future (probably 2012), all academics should be submitted to evaluation every four years. This process will be led by a national body (the CNU, *Conseil national des Universités*). Building on these results, each university will be allowed to “modulate” the workload of each academic (more teaching for some and more research for others for instance) and thus to renegotiate his/her activities.

In the UK, such a “modulation” has already occurred and is more and more formalized into different career tracks. During their professional trajectory, the permanent staff are

progressively “pushed” either in a research or in a teaching career track, according to their classification (research active or not) for the REA (research assessment exercise) (Paye, 2010).

The development of assessments and devices (contracts by objectives, modulation, activity reports...) reveal the construction of “university based internal labor-markets” – comparable to the United States – in countries (Germany and France and to a lesser extent the UK) where a national craft/professional labor-market prevailed (Doeringer and Piore 1971). This is particularly evident in Germany where the progression in the career and the academic reputation previously depended on the capacity of being “called” by another university while no alternative device allowed each university to reward (or not) its staff. Nowadays, German universities can even propose tenure-tracks to a new category of academic staff, the *Juniorprofessoren*¹³, which was inconceivable a few years ago.

All these transformations provide evidence about the dismissal of the academic profession. They show the increasing constraints exercised by universities on the academic profession but also efforts to reduce the loosely coupled character of academic activities and to make them more traceable. Nevertheless, the paradox is that this is implemented through a parallel increasing recourse to external peer review, i.e. to academic power.

Peer review as a management tool for universities:

The increase in managerial imperatives imposed on the academic profession too often lead to concluding that the academic power is weakening. In fact, faculty members are confronted simultaneously with more managerial but also with more professional controls. One does not exclude the other but they reinforce each other.

The main reason for that is that university managers primarily rely on academic legitimacy in order to control academics because the organizational characteristics of universities disqualify more classical solutions do not work: hierarchical relationships are not efficient on loosely coupled activities and unclear technologies are difficult to steer. As a result, external peer review gained in intensity, in credibility and in legitimacy. The decisions made at the university level are largely based on the evaluation carried out outside the university by the new elite sitting in research councils, editorial boards or evaluation agencies... These processes gain in importance as they are not only attributing funding, access to readers or reputation but are also providing institutional rewards and defining the principles for merit.

In the case of the UK departments (Camerati forthcoming), managerial and professional pressures are clearly combining: getting a grant is at the same time a signal for academic quality and a way to cover the cost of the department. The external academic assessments allow developing the research scope of the department but also identifying the active researchers, those rewarded by their external peers. In France, quite similar behaviors are observed in an on-going research I am leading this month: in some universities, the grades obtained by labs or teaching programs after their assessment by the AERES are transformed into budgetary algorithms or used to redesign the research units or the teaching offer.

¹³ These new positions are very similar to the “on tenure tack positions” in the US: after two time-limited contracts of three years each the *Juniorprofessoren* can apply for a tenured professor position.

This again reconfigures the academic profession. External peer review does not only discriminate among peers in terms of status (research professors *versus* teaching professors for instance in the United Kingdom): it also provides some academics with more capacity to negotiate with their institution and to maintain their academic freedom. These mechanisms empower those who are recognized by the external peer reviews. As long as they keep this position, they can negotiate favorably with the “managers”: they “buy out” classes and thus still control the allocation of their time, or threaten to leave the department (with the financial and reputational impact this can have if it happens just before the research assessment exercise in the United Kingdom) if they do not get what they ask for.

The other way round, those who do not succeed or do not play the game of the external peer review are exposed to more control, less margin of maneuver and more hierarchical relationships exercised by the managers. At the level of universities, there is less a reduction of professional power in general than a reduction of the number of those still possessing all the attributes of professionals and a new segmentation among the academic profession of the same institution.

To sum up: the transformation of the relationships between the universities and their academic staff again can not be understood without simultaneously looking at the increasing role of external peer review and its effects on the reconfiguration of the academic profession as a whole.

3. Power reconfigurations

Having looked at the relationships between the state, universities and the academic profession and at the interplay between these relationships in three European countries, a first conclusion to draw is that academic power is not dismissed. On the contrary, peer review and professional assessments are playing an always more central role within higher education systems because of the strengthening or the creation of different kinds of academic bodies, devices or committees in charge of producing ratings, evaluations or selections.

If the academic profession is thus recognized some legitimacy, it at the same time affects the power distribution within the profession. The two sets of antagonistic forces stressed by P. Bourdieu (1984 [1988]) in his book on the *Homo Academicus* seem no more relevant. Building on the study of the French (Parisian) professors in 1967, he opposed on the one hand disciplines as law and medicine in which inherited, economic and political capital prevail to disciplines like humanities and science in which scientific and intellectual capital dominates. On the second hand, Bourdieu showed infra disciplinary antagonistic forces between academics getting their reputation through their capacity in controlling academic careers and those striving for intellectual or scientific recognition.

Different forms of domination seem present now. First the casual staff is all the more dominated that the access to permanent positions is rarer and more difficult. Second, among the permanent staff the segmentation between those whose research activity is rewarded and the others is at the same time stronger and more visible. Third, those participating to this segmentation, the academic elite sitting in assessing bodies have also gained in importance and played a more determinant role. Fourth new categories are emerging that have a hybrid character because they mix academic capital and managerial capacities. Academic leaders in

universities belong to this group but also academics involved in the management of the evaluating bodies (the chair of the ANR or the president of the DFG for instance).

This internal reconfiguration of the academic profession goes along with an increased differentiation between the “winners” (academic elite and those they reward) and the others in terms of prestige but also in financial terms: more resources for research, increased salaries or bonuses are awarded to the “winners”.

This is at the same time reinforced and instrumentalized by universities. We described how the more autonomous universities mobilize external peer review to legitimate the decisions made or exercise pressures on those who are not successful. The combination of academic and managerial power over the latter deeply affects the situation of those faculty members who are considered by academic leaders as academic workers rather than as academic professionals and see their autonomy reduced.

By contrasts academics rewarded by external peers become less independent from their university than able to negotiate their participation to their institution. As stressed at the beginning of this paper, relationships to the environment have always been an important resource for academics engaged in them. But while it previously freed them from feeling affiliated to their place or allow them to keep cooperation with their direct colleagues to a minimum (as described by Gouldner in his seminal papers about local and cosmopolitans), today it is a vital resource to resist the pressure of managerial control and rebalance power exchanges with academic leaders. While before disengaging from relationships with the environment had no strong effects, today it costs autonomy and negotiation capacity. The pressure to go on getting external grants, to get high rewards and positive evaluation from one’s peer is the cost to be paid to keep managerial control away.

The interdependences between universities and the academic elite, between universities and their faculty members and between the later and the academic elite have simultaneously increased. The global level of power has increased between all partners.

Conclusion

University configuration is a useful analytical tool to understand higher education systems. Looking at the relationships between the state, the academic profession and universities and at the interplay between these relationships provides a more complete but also a more balanced view of the on-going reforms.

Three main conclusions can be drawn from the results developed in this paper. First, the recent evolutions are not a zero-sum game in which when some have more power and other have less. The level of interdependence within university configurations has globally increased and the three pillars have been empowered but therefore becomes also more dependent on the others.

Second the distribution of the winners and losers has changed: in particular those controlling the academic profession before are not the same as now and the way and places where they exercise their power has also changed.

Third and lastly, the gap between the winners and the losers has increased: the prestige, the resources and the academic autonomy of the latter is significantly lower than before while it is significantly higher for the former.

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