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## The myth of autonomous university governance

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# THE MYTH OF AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

The belief in the need to preserve and further develop the autonomous governance of a university, allegedly one of the fundamental preconditions for the successful implementation of a university's mission, is one of the central pillars of academic culture. The historically grounded myth of the indispensability of university autonomy in its decision-making is seen as part of the academic community's defence against external pressure; as a support to the university administration's claim for some kind of special or explicitly privileged treatment by the state bureaucracy and political representatives. Naturally, this myth has its own use within the university. Here the motives of its narrators become less clear and there are at least four narrative sources within the cultural circles of Central European universities – the level of central power divided between the academic functionaries led by the rector, followed by the level of non-academic managerial staff, the faculty level, while the fourth level is represented by the individual departments, seminaries and institutes. Each of these sections of the university community narrates its myth according to its own needs and interests, and selects supporting arguments from the historical aspects of the university's autonomy when deciding its interests. One will narrate a story with great urgency and mobilize the public behind it, elsewhere there is a long-held silence – though this does not in the least signify giving up on a goal.

## **University governance in the pre-modern era**

For more than eight hundred long years in the history of the European university, since the start of the 11th century, there have been two basic models of organiza-

tion – the Bolognian and the Parisian. The first was the model of a community of masters and students on an equal basis, due to the fact that the students were the most important source of finance. And they also had decision-making powers. The Bolognian model mainly consisted of adult men from aristocratic families, who were used to deciding public matters through the bureaucratic elite; and so, understandably, they claimed this right at the university as well. In the Parisian case, the main source of university finance came from the church and so the teaching was not reliant on student finance, which led to power being in the hands of the masters. Both models had followers, though the model of the Paris university was by far the most popular, and was also a model for Central European universities founded as “*universitas magistrorum, doctorum et scholarium*”.<sup>364</sup> Here the financing of higher education was taken over by the monarch, thus the influence of students waned over time, in some cases to an insignificant level.

However, it would be a mistake to view the two models as dichotomous. If we disregard the differences in the division of power, the university community operated in similar ways. The medieval university was basically a guild, where matters were decided by an assembly of full members of the academic community – most often all of the professors (*concilium generale*) in the Parisian model. For “Parisian model” universities, the limited direction downwards was variable and sometimes the council could also include doctors and holders of lower academic titles. The assembly would elect a rector, usually every half a year, either directly or through electors. The rector had the right to manage the university’s assets, resolve disputes within the academic community and defend the university’s privileges externally. The rector had at his disposal the advisory body of the collegiate of deans and procurators, though even here the development in universities was somewhat different as sometimes a body might emerge from the advisory group which would take over some of the competencies of the rector. Often the division of competencies and powers was not fully determined by codified norms, instead a large role was played by university traditions, where a clear signal of the division of power was the university insignia and the form of university rituals.

Medieval universities did not have powerful administrative forces, and in an overall European context these were only small institutions. Most often, the number of actively registered students was around 100–200 people, and the administration was effective in dealing with such numbers. However, there were also several large universities with thousands of students. By the Late Middle Ages, the last remnants of the “Bolognian” model – universities formed by a free association of scholars – had completely vanished, and universities were founded by higher authorities, and given property, privileges and guarantees for their existence by

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364 Boháček, Miroslav: *Založení a nejstarší organizace pražské university*. Acta Universitatis Pragensis 1964, issue 1, pp. 5–31, here p. 16.

the supreme political authorities of the period – i.e. the popes and emperors. One typical privilege was the guarantee of autonomy, which strengthened the drawing of resources from underwritten property, while some historians believe that universities managed to manoeuvre between the political influence of the secular ruler, the church and the town communes, and thus exempted themselves from some of their duties. This is difficult to verify because the situation was different for each university and was highly variable over time. For example, the foundation of the university in Prague is linked to one papal and two royal decrees; in addition to the emperor and king, Charles IV, one prominent supporter of the new university was Arnošt of Pardubice (1297–1364), who was the king’s advisor and confidante. The university maintained friendly relations with the Roman Church as one of the guarantors of its existence and autonomy until 1417, when it issued its approval for receiving Utraquists, and was thus separated from the influence of Rome. The church’s influence returned to full strength on university soil with the transfer of the Jesuit school in 1622, and remained there until the reforms of enlightened absolutism.<sup>365</sup> It was not until between 1784 and 1841 that the percentage of theology students at the university dramatically fell from 50% to 8%.<sup>366</sup>

In its relationship with students, the university was very mindful of maintaining its reputation for autonomy, as this freedom in decision-making was demanded by students, and any shortcomings would have affected the reputation of the school within the university network. Therefore, any intervention by secular, or less frequently, religious powers, was usually conducted with discretion by the university, as normally the university had nothing to gain from open conflict. The complicated and very often individual search for and discovery of a relationship between university autonomy and dependence began to form lines of conflict in the medieval history of universities, which are still topics of public debate and sources of mythical narratives.

## Economic governance

External powers usually made use of economic issues to make their way through the doors of the university. When they were founded, medieval and many early modern age universities were provided with important property – in the case of Charles University this was the Carolinian foundation. The university’s holdings usually consisted of property, village holdings, privileges, duties and various salaries, while several universities kept valuable art collections or moveable property.

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365 Svatoš, Michal (red.): *Dějiny Univerzity Karlovy I. (1347/1348–1622)*, Prague 1995, pp. 33–35, 78–84; Beránek, Karel (red.): *Dějiny Univerzity Karlovy II. (1622–1802)*, Prague 1995, pp. 27–29.

366 Havránek, Jan (red.): *Dějiny Univerzity Karlovy III. (1802–1918)*, Prague 1997, p. 19.

The problem was usually administering these possessions. There were frequent changes in office personnel, who had limited competency to manage often considerable but in general quite disparate assets, while the university's small-scale bureaucratic apparatus did not provide the necessary support. Universities were unable to respond to fluctuations in the market and were unable to effectively administer their property, but traditionalism prevented property being transferred to a more suitable lease. One obstacle was the overall atmosphere in the university's teaching bodies, which often tended to approach trusteeship without any strategic thinking, without any long-term perspectives, often basically predatory – which was why the professors' committees prevented the leasing of university property due to concerns over increasing the transparency of the financial flows. The proceeds from the foundations would be squandered and the professors sometimes made successful attempts at selling off the university's core property. One typical feature concerned prospective personal promotion within the university hierarchy; for example, in Prague, many professors expected employment at the larger, wealthier and more prestigious university in Vienna, and thus behaved very short-sightedly and inconsiderately when it came to issues of property in their own departments.

The result of the problems in the university's economic management system was a general “*administrative failing*”.<sup>367</sup> With the exception of some of the large, rich universities (Cambridge, Paris, Vienna and Padua), the daily management of early modern age European universities was characterized by arrears in payments to teachers, employees and suppliers, while teachers sought to earn money outside of the university, e.g. from private tuition, various types of fraud when issuing and transferring university charges (matriculation, exams, graduation), demanding hospitality and gifts from students, etc. The governance of Prague's university, as with many others, was adversely affected by the military conflicts of the 16th and 17th centuries. The financial problems slowly accumulated from the first half of the 16th century, and from 1638, teachers did not receive any salaries or their full benefits in kind for several years. A report from 1660 estimated the arrears at an enormous sum. This decline in the university's economic fortunes can be seen symbolically in the state of the buildings, including the most important and prestigious ones – in 1714, the home of Prague university – the Carolinum – was closed due to the dilapidated state of the structure.<sup>368</sup>

Typical of the period was a concept for far-reaching university reform written by Peter Theodor Birelli.<sup>369</sup> He saw the decline in university finances as the tip of

367 Cf. Rüegg, *Geschichte*, II., pp. 162–165; Ibid, III., pp. 104–107.

368 Klabouch, Jiří: *K dějinám hospodářství pražské univerzity v 17. a 18. století*. Acta Universitatis Carolinae 1963, year 4, issue 2, pp. 87–114, here pp. 90–97.

369 Beránek, *Dějiny Univerzity Karlovy II.*, p. 41.

the iceberg in an in-depth critique of the conditions at the university, and called for intervention into the failed university governance. Teachers apparently taught nearly 60 hours per year, and the majority of their best lectures were given privately (i.e. paid), with the result that the lectures open to the public were empty. According to tradition there was no teaching on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Saints' days, or during the university holidays, graduation, matriculation and faculty assemblies. According to Birelli, this meant that in practice a teacher did not work for three-quarters of the year. Characteristically, this critique of conditions at the Prague university came from someone with experience from Western universities – Birelli was from today's Luxembourg – and it was typical of his analysis that he focused on the so-called secular faculties – mainly law and medicine.<sup>370</sup> Due to the influence of the Jesuits and the supervision by the episcopate, there was stricter discipline in theological faculties and also a greater degree of autonomous exclusiveness.<sup>371</sup> Overall, however, university autonomy in Prague in the early 18th century made for a rather grim picture.

### Introducing statist practices into university governance and their boundaries

The state normally intervened in times of university crisis – in dealing with vices and glaring injustices, renovating university buildings, moving universities to more appropriate places, etc.<sup>372</sup> In particular, the removal of the influence of the Jesuits in education (1773) brought about a sharp rise in state intervention in the Catholic countries of Europe, and even universities which had been founded by the Roman church gradually found that in the 19th century ecclesiastical funding became a marginal source, even for theological faculties.<sup>373</sup>

In Austria, the enlightened absolutism of Maria Theresa and Joseph II represented a watershed for many reasons, including the *Studienhofkommission* (1760) with its numerous subsequent statist measures in Habsburg-controlled lands,<sup>374</sup> where universities were completely administered by the state from 1783–1784.<sup>375</sup> The same level of dependence on the state budget was typical for other Austrian

370 Kučera, Karel: *Rané osvěcenský pokus o reformu pražské university*. Acta Universitatis Carolinae 1963, year 4, issue 2, pp. 61–86, esp. pp. 64–65.

371 Klabouch, K *dějínám hospodářství*, pp. 90–97.

372 Rüegg, *Geschichte*, II., pp. 162–163.

373 Rüegg, *Geschichte*, III., pp. 106.

374 Stanzel, Josef: *Die Schulaufsicht im Reformwerk des Johann Ignaz von Felbiger (1724–1788)*. *Schule, Kirche und Staat in Recht und Praxis des aufgeklärten Absolutismus*. Paderborn 1976, pp. 237 ff., 379.

375 Beránek, Karel (red.): *Dějiny Univerzity Karlovy II. (1622–1802)*, Prague 1995, p. 51.

universities.<sup>376</sup> Rich universities with effective governance in German lands were spared state intervention, and many of them were only partially affected by the state's grant policies and the concomitant supervision. Newly established universities, however, were usually completely dependent on state budgets, or state property was only entrusted into their administration. In particular for universities from the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age, the share of the finance from the original foundation was still significant in the first half of the 20th century; for example, in Marburg in Germany, teachers in the 1960s were still receiving benefits-in-kind in the form of wood from the forests owned by the university.<sup>377</sup> But the intervention by the strongly statist regimes meant that this was a curious exception in 20th century Central Europe. Walter Rüegg estimated that in Europe in 1938 the percentage of public finance in university budgets ranged from 25% to 100%, while Czechoslovak universities at the time were completely reliant on the state budget.<sup>378</sup>

However, accompanying this loss of economic autonomy and the transfer of power away from the university came the flourishing of Central European and German universities, which were now largely financed by provincial budgets. At the same time, however, there was also a change in how their mission was understood. The upswing was due to the fact that the public model of university financing provided certainty and a future which could not be found in the previous regime of "administrative failing". The change in the understanding of their mission was on the flipside of the same coin: it was reasonable to expect that public authorities would want the right of control in exchange for finance, and that this would lead to a greater level of bureaucratization of universities. In addition, politicians in the modern era were accountable to their electorate. With increasing democratization and the politicization of the public in the 19th and 20th centuries, universities were no longer allowed to become independent bodies or nonpartisan institutions, nor were they even allowed to be bureaucratic organizations outside of public debate. The power of the civil servant coupled with taxpayers' demands led to university governance, management and efficiency becoming open topics for discussion.<sup>379</sup>

Walter Rüegg considered secularization, bureaucratization and specialization as being the most significant symbols in the development of European universities from 1800 to 1945. Universities became the subject of state-education poli-

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376 Lemayer, Karl von: *Die Verwaltung der österreichischen Hochschulen von 1867–1877*. Vienna 1878, p. 41; Dybiec, Julian: *Finansowanie nauki o oświaty w Galicji 1860–1918*. Kraków 1979, p. 22.

377 vom Brocke, Berhard: Universitäts- und Wissenschaftsfinanzierung im 19./20. Jahrhundert. In: Schwinges, Rainer Christoph (Hg.): *Finanzierung von Universität und Wissenschaft in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*. Basel 2005, pp. 343–462, here p. 344

378 Rüegg, *Geschichte*, III., p. 106.

379 Taylor, *Crisis*, pp. 54–55.

cies, which in the case of nation states meant the so-called national interest. In multinational monarchies, the equivalent relationship was blurred – in Austria both the ruling dynasty and the Roman Catholic Church saw the university as “state property”, as did a large section of the public and, albeit more gradually, representatives of the state bureaucracy. In place of the medieval models from Bologna and Paris came new models. The French “Napoleonic” model had a high degree of bureaucratization, statization and faculty specialization, it was strongly orientated towards vocational education and a rigidly defined curriculum, typically with a subordinate role for the arts faculties (*Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines*), which usually only provided part of the bureaucratic exams and organised lectures for the public. In many ways, the Prussian model or Humboldtian university was in direct contrast to this. This held aloft a university model which focused on realizing a vision of universally focused study and the mutually enriching harmony of research and teaching, with arts faculties playing an important consolidating role. With its idealistic universalism “directed towards the truth”, the Humboldtian university somewhat disguised the reality that it was also a state-supervised institution, and that a significant number of the disciplines had never strayed from their close focus on vocational education, where there was far more emphasis placed on satisfying the (state’s) demands for specialists, rather than a universally and philosophically grounded relationship between research and tuition.

Therefore, with the Prussian model we encounter a mixture of idealism, (particularly in the arts faculties), and the professionally orientated pragmatic specialization of the medical and law faculties. From the start of the “Humboldtian” era, then, this loyalty towards the interests of the state proved to be one of the conflict lines in universities. While the legal and medical disciplines were not particularly troubled by state supervision and its attendant bureaucracy, as the state demand for experts quite suited them, the humanities saw state supervision more to their detriment and struggled to defend their own usefulness in the eyes of the state bureaucracy, where the only defence mechanism open to them was the idea of the harmony between state and national interests – something which the Humboldtian humanist scientists usually strongly supported. From a legal perspective, the university during this golden era was a *mixtum compositum*, where there was more corporative autonomy in curriculum issues, the conferral of titles and honours, and the organization of the school, while there was state management in the material side of running the school.<sup>380</sup>

In Central Europe the trend towards the state supervision of universities led to a sharp rise in the number of universities. The extensive developments were obvi-

380 Beran, Karel: Proč je univerzita veřejnoprávní korporací? In: *Historie, současný stav a perspektivy univerzít. Úsvit nebo soumrak akademické samosprávy*. Uspořádal Josef Staša. Prague 2008, pp. 110–120, here p. 118; expanded on in Wolff, Hans J.: *Die Rechtsgestalt der Universität*. Cologne 1956.



ous, but the quality and prestige of the schools remained relatively low compared to the rest of Europe, with the exception, of course, of the University of Vienna.<sup>381</sup> During the Early Modern Age, the countries of Central Europe under Habsburg rule still had relatively few universities, particularly when compared with Western Europe. The main universities in this network were the universities in Prague (founded 1348), Krakow (1364), Vienna (1365), Graz (1586), Lviv (1661) and Innsbruck (1668). In addition, there were several schools of insecure standing, where – typically for the situation in Central Europe – the influence of the state and the church became intricately interwoven; for example, the Order of the Benedictines in Salzburg and the Jesuits in Olomouc. One typical organizational characteristic was the clear predominance of the theological faculties within the academic communities. The Austrian state did not assume complete control over these schools. It did not entirely reduce the church's influence and either transformed them into theological-philosophical academic lyceums (Olomouc 1782, Salzburg 1810) or different types of universities (Ljubljana 1783–1791). The teaching statute for Olomouc changed two more times: in 1827 the school was recognised by the state as a university again, but then abolished in 1860, leaving only an independently functioning theological faculty. In the 19th century the Austrian state continued with its rapid expansion of universities, enjoying more success with technical colleges (eight schools in total) than universities (1875 Černovice, 1882 Prague university divided into Czech and German sections), where the interests of the dynasty and the state clashed more often with the interests of the individual nations. The emergence of small nation states in Central and Eastern Europe after the First World War signalled the start of a competition between 1919 and 1922 to see which nation could fulfil its ambition to build more universities: Brno (1919), Bratislava (1919), Poznań (1919), Ljubljana (1919), Pécs (1921), Szeged (1921).

The Austrian state did not command the strength of the Prussian or French states; the Habsburg bureaucracy did not proceed – with the exception of the Josephine era – as uncompromisingly and ruthlessly as its Hohenzollern or Napoleonic counterparts. The Habsburg state took into account the interests of the Roman Catholic Church for much longer than in Western Europe. However, it was the reforms of Leo Thun in 1849 and the higher education law of 1873 which created space for university corporative autonomy, which Czechoslovakia also introduced with a law in 1918.<sup>382</sup> Autonomy remained *lex lata* until the issuing of the university law in 1950, when universities became state institutions for all intents

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381 Teichler, Ulrich: *Hochschulsysteme und quantitativstrukturelle Hochschulpolitik. Differenzierung, Bologna-Prozess, Exzellenzinitiative und die Folgen*. Münster–New York 2014, p. 149, translation of the original Japanese text by Hiroshi Yamazaki.

382 Lentze, Hans: *Die Universitätsreform des Ministers Graf Leo Thun-Hohenstein*. Wien 1962; Engelbrecht, *Geschichte*, pp. 234, 240–241; the effects on the Czech lands Havránek, *Dějiny Univerzity Karlovy III.*, pp. 99–103.

and purposes. In reality, though, university autonomy had been a fiction as a result of the Nazi occupation and the communist coup in 1948.<sup>383</sup>

From the 1880s, the Austrian authorities had become increasingly hamstrung in their activities due to internal political problems, in particular the rivalry of the Central European nations. Their ambition was not to unpick the Austrian monarchy, but to use it to their own ends – specifically to dominate any territory with a majority of speakers of one language, or where there were historical claims to that land. Therefore, it was not primarily a struggle of nations *against the state*, but a *struggle for the state*. Territory, universities – in fact, practically everything was seen as national property, and in the struggle to seize it, people who belonged to a national community, but who were formally in the service of a transnational Habsburg state, had to subordinate themselves to this goal. The identity and social status of Austrian officialdom was changing.<sup>384</sup> An Austrian official could now be a Czech or a German, and this corresponded to the change in the relationship between the state and the university, at least on the practical level of decision-making. The state sphere was being rent asunder by national interests.

Although the Central Europe of the Habsburgs followed Western European or Prussian university models, it copied them inconsistently with particular regard to its own specific cultural characteristics, and as a result was less statist and bureaucratic. Therefore, the universities in the Habsburg empire were a peripheral part of the Prussian model of higher education. With their considerable eclecticism in adopting the Prussian models, rather than resembling Germany or the West, they were much more similar to the haphazardly modernizing universities of Southern Europe – famed historically, but which had become ossified in the 19th century and were on the periphery of the university network. Additionally, the unstable regimes of the successor states to the Habsburg empire continued with these eclectic, conceptually vague policies. The enthusiasm at the start of the postwar era for building universities as the flagships of the nation's education policies soon began to wane when faced with financial restrictions. In Germany, Poland and Hungary this was compounded by dramatic inflation and the increasing pressure from national conflicts and chronic internal-political instability. Therefore, the interwar Central European university presented the picture of an institution whose teaching corps happily harked back to the ancient traditions of European universities and their governance, clinging to symbolic expressions in science and teaching, while ignoring the fundamental changes in politics and society. Most importantly, they happily forgot the fact that universities were completely dependent on the decisions of the state when it came to the most crucial organizational

383 Beran, *Proč je univerzita*, pp. 110–120, here p. 118; Morkes, František: *Zákony o vysokých školách z let 1948–1989*, *Pedagogika* 49/1999, pp. 115–127, pp. 116–118.

384 Klečáček, Martin: *Iluze nezávislosti. Sociální status c. k. soudce v konfliktu loajalít mezi národem a státem na přelomu 19. a 20. století*. *Český časopis historický*. Year 112, no. 3 (2014), pp. 432–462.

and management issues. This was a contradictory type of dependence. Although the state had taken over all responsibility for universities, and the political leadership had signed up to the idea of universities as the nation's flagships, at the same time they refused to allow enough money from the budget to go towards the development of tertiary education.<sup>385</sup> Compared to Austria there was a sharp rise in the money spent on education from the Czechoslovak state budget, though most of the expenditure was on lower school levels, while the state's approach towards universities was inconsistent. One reason was the prioritization of technical education at four of the fifteen Czechoslovak universities, another was that state expenditure on research was minimal.<sup>386</sup> The state had a vision for universities where research and teaching would be in harmony, but in reality this applied only to teaching. In addition, the state was doubtful that universities were being efficiently managed and opened a debate concerning the reduction or even closure of some schools. It demanded greater efficiency from the investment of public funds through tighter bureaucratization, but which was difficult to implement in a disorderly political climate. For example, the idea that the Czechoslovak state would be able to gain absolute control over Prague's German university came up against the realities of politics: any heavy-handed treatment of the university by the state could escalate the problems surrounding Czech-German cohabitation, with numerous ramifications for foreign policy. The situation was similar to the relationship with the Slovak university in Bratislava, and to a lesser degree with the university in Brno, which twice enjoyed waves of support from the provincial patriotism of Moravians.<sup>387</sup> The corporative governance of universities was also a target of criticism from people within its own ranks – the influential lawyer František Weyr, a teacher at Brno's Masaryk University and one of the architects of the Czechoslovak constitution of 1920 – systematically called for it to be limited. According to Weyr, the surviving administration was the reason for the unfortunate isolation of universities from public life, and Weyr was forthright in his criticisms of the failure of teachers' bodies in relation to regulating research and teaching, and of the administrative incompetence of the academic corps.<sup>388</sup> Therefore, during the interwar period in Central Europe there was a confrontation between the surviving ideal of the autonomous governance of universities and inconsistent and basically contradictory bureaucratization. The entire Humboldtian university culture found itself in a similar position, in particular the once-famous German university.

385 Rüegg, *Geschichte*, III., pp. 104–107.

386 Doležalová, Antonie: Fiskální politika. In: Kubů, Eduard – Pátek, Jaroslav (red.): *Mýtus a realita hospodářské vyspělosti Československa mezi světovými válkami*. Prague 2000, pp. 24–40, here 34.

387 Fasora, Lukáš – Hanuš, Jiří: *Masarykova univerzita. Příběh vzdělání a vědy ve střední Evropě*. Brno 2009, pp. 60–86.

388 Urbášek, *Vysokoškolský vzdělávací systém*, p. 12.

## The birth of academic capitalism

Between 1871 and 1914, German universities were the global benchmark – in the eyes of observers they came closest to the ideal of academic education. Many historians consider the “spread” of German universities and German science abroad as the most significant *soft power* of Wilhelmine Germany.<sup>389</sup> At that time, American universities, in particular the elite private schools, used German universities as their model.<sup>390</sup> During the first half of the 19th century, the USA was particularly influenced by the teaching methods at German universities, in particular from the humanities and philology. It was only a few decades later that they started to become interested in the methods of organizing research activities. What was important here, however, was that when looking for a model for a research university this did not apply to the German Humboldtian university in general, but almost exclusively to German technical and applied-science research – i.e. where investment produced fast and clear results.

On the other hand, neither research into the humanities or basic research in science and medicine was of any particular interest to the Americans. It was in the research disciplines adopted by the Americans that the managerial or capitalist way of perceiving universities was most thoroughly implemented. These disciplines had provided German science with its greatest successes at the world exhibitions in the USA (1876 in Philadelphia, 1893 in Chicago and 1904 in St Louis). And it was thanks to imitating and developing these European models, coupled with its excellent laboratories, that even before the First World War the USA had become the global frontrunner at the expense of Germany and Great Britain.<sup>391</sup> This opened the way for the development of “academic capitalism” as a result of the shift in influence within the global network of universities towards the USA. From the somewhat ridiculed periphery of the university system, America gradually became the model for the 20th century, and imitating it in other parts of the world became a mantra – even if a university was shaken by crises, paralysed by uncertainty and unable to find a way out from their problems – this would be a panacea for their troubles. Nevertheless, any outward adoption of the American model in Central Europe in the interwar period was done quietly and with some embarrassment. After 1945, it was done openly in Germany, and after 1989 it became a magic formula for a modern style of university management. The “American” style of university management legitimizes university dignitaries in their

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389 Stern, Fritz: Deutschland um 1900 – und eine zweite Chance. In: Hardtwig, Wolfgang – Brandt, Harm-Hinrich (Hg.): *Deutschlands Weg in die Moderne*. Munich 1992, pp. 32–44, here p. 32.

390 Paulus, *Vorbild USA?*, pp. 44–65.

391 Röhrs, Hermann: *Einfluss der klassischen deutschen Universitätsidee auf die Higher Education in Amerika*. Weinheim 1995, p. 93 ff.; Paulus, *Vorbild*, p. 46 ff.

functions and silences critics – such and such measures in the “American” style are necessary – just look at how high the famous American universities are in the rankings and where ours are! Stricter controls are needed in the name of improving efficiency! We might recall that the university accreditation system originally came from America. From 1819, the principle of freeing schools from state supervision was recognised, but it brought with it a great widening in the spectrum of curricula and varying levels of teaching quality, and as a result the accreditation system emerged “from below”, with the support of the public, as a supervisory body overseeing the quality of education. Characteristically, however, there were large differences between the disciplines and an emphasis on vocationally focused curricula – the earliest from 1874 for the medical disciplines, law from 1890 and forestry from 1900.<sup>392</sup>

The use of the USA as a model was not confined to Germany in the period immediately after 1945 – contemporary Central European debates on university reform also reveal strong links to American models, particularly the elite private universities. Hundreds of others – often schools with very controversial reputations – are left out of the picture. Meanwhile, the picture of their management and financing is viewed reductively, omitting the fact that there are massive financial resources from the private sector behind the high quality of the top American schools, resources which for the foreseeable future will not be available to European universities, which are mainly financed by public sources. According to Sylvia Paletschek, in Germany the state financing of universities reached its peak in the 1990s,<sup>393</sup> and the situation has not changed since. Some figures might help to illustrate this shift from elite to mass education. When the Humboldtian (or “elite” in today’s language) model was at its height, universities normally had between 2,000 and 5,000 students; in 1914 Berlin University was considered to be exceptionally large with 10,000 students. During this period a total of approximately 60,000 students studied at 21 German universities. In Austria, only the University of Vienna with its 9,000 students (1914) could compete with Berlin.<sup>394</sup> After 1960, the idea of mass universities began to take root in all European countries.<sup>395</sup> Today, the important public universities in Central Europe regularly have between 30,000 and 60,000 students. In 2017, Charles University had a total of 50,000 students, while Masaryk University had 35,000. In comparison, the prestigious private research universities such as Yale had some 16,000 students in 2017,

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392 *Hodnocení kvality*, p. 30.

393 Paletschek, *Die permanente Erfindung*, p. 525.

394 Engelbrecht, *Geschichte*, p. 236.

395 Moraw, Peter: *Gesammelte Beiträge zur deutschen und europäischen Universitätsgeschichte. Strukturen – Personen – Entwicklung*. Leiden – Boston 2008, p. 365 ff.

Harvard 21,000 and Oxford 23,000.<sup>396</sup> From 1200 to 1900 the number of university students in Europe represented 1% of their population year, while in the countries of the OECD today, 30% to 80% of the population year are students.<sup>397</sup> Over recent years the pan-European trend in public tertiary education has been towards stagnation or even a reduction in state financial support, which does not correspond to the high number of students, while under the banner of academic capitalism the regulations have become increasingly strict for how the funds are used, with the attendant bureaucratic pressure.<sup>398</sup>

The confidence of Czech academic governance, undermined by the loss of control over university management, was dealt another blow by the concept of academic capitalism. The fact that universities are completely economically dependent on public financing has not yet dealt a killer blow because the state still provides resources. Although not much, it is enough to ensure the basic running of the university, while more importantly – the state does not demand a great deal in return. Although universities are involved in annual disputes with ministers over additions to the budgets, the state shows relatively little interest in how effectively these resources are used. With the change in the political climate and growing pressure from the public for a managerial method of running the state, three exceptionally important themes have cropped up in the negotiations between Czech universities and the state authorities, symbolizing the allegedly uneconomic use of public funds: the large number of students prematurely abandoning their studies; the high percentage of graduates with poor prospects on the labour market; and research activity aimed at accumulating knowledge without any practical application.

Academic capitalism is an answer to these incongruities. It stresses the need to increase the efficiency of university methods, but does not take into account the specific characteristics of university governance and management, and basically administers universities using the same tools as any other commercial enterprise, or the same way as private universities have been managed over the years.

The changes in academic identity were indicated by the contrasting answers in a questionnaire which was based on a humorous idea by Stefan Collini<sup>399</sup>:

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396 <https://www.yale.edu/about-yale/yale-facts>; <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/student-numbers?wssl=1>; <http://www.harvard.edu/media-relations/media-resources/quick-facts> (29. 6. 2017).

397 Schofer, Evan – Meyer John W.: *The Worldwide Expansion of Higher Education in the Twentieth Century*. American sociological Review 70, 2005, pp. 898–920.

398 vom Brocke, *Wege*, pp. 208–210.

399 Collini, Stefan: *What are universities for?* London 2012, pp. 132–133.

Your profession?	I work in human resources and research	I am a university teacher.
Your institution's specialization ?	We produce highly qualified workers and highly useful and accessible scientific knowledge	I teach students and write books.
Your position in the institution?	I have a middle-management position, directly accountable to the managing executive	I am part of a large community of scholars; I fulfil certain administrative tasks and can influence the running of the school through elections, as the members of the board are elected from amongst my colleagues
Condition of the firm?	In recent years we have achieved a solid year-on-year growth of around 5%, we managed to increase our work efficiency by 3%	I feel that the amount and quality of teaching has worsened over the past twenty years, as we don't have enough time to complete our tasks to the same level as before
Global position?	Outstanding. Our brand has established itself on the global market and there is a high evaluation of our firm on the ratings ladders	Hm... we are a Czech university...we're trying to improve our international standing, so far we've been successful mainly with Slovaks.
Company motto?	Global quality for a good price	We don't have a motto.

## In praise of academic capitalism

Advocates of the theory of academic capitalism argue that it is strongly modernist, progressive, centralist, superior from a material viewpoint and very technocratic. Their view is strongly focused on the present and predictions for the future, while the historical aspects of the tradition of university administration and culture of decision-making are trivialized, or even completely ignored. In the Czech Republic this discourse began to appear in the mid-1990s, when it was part of the official programme for catching up with the advanced nations – i.e. a search to find a way to modernize local universities by simply adapting to the universities of the West, which were interpreted generally and slightly naively as cultural models.<sup>400</sup> Today,

400 Hendrichová, Jana – Čerych, Ladislav et al.: *Terciární vzdělávání ve vyspělých zemích: vývoj a současnost*. Prague 1997, p. 90.

in comparison with countries from Western Europe and the USA, the Czech debate on the theory of academic capitalism is less intensive, occasionally based on sociological research, but strongly technocratic due to the absence of research into any cultural-historical context.<sup>401</sup> It is precisely the technocratism and economism, characterized by an ignorant or even contemptuously negative attitude of the historical context of running a university, which is grist to the mill for critics of academic capitalism, and the primary cause for academia dividing into two camps – the supporters and opponents of the new system of decision-making, where both employ mythical narratives to legitimize their positions.

The basic ideological application of the theory of academic capitalism consists of general scepticism towards the ability of history to speak to the present, the conviction that the various historicizing mythical defence narratives within the academic community merely serve to block a progressive programme while preserving redundant and hopelessly backward university principles and traditions. Their anti-historical scepticism is often justified and their arguments in this regard are convincing to many people. In addition, the theory of change management, which is also applied to universities, is able to skilfully prepare its proponents for any critical responses, providing them with a whole series of tools from various fields of science aimed at overcoming any initial shock and confusion which the proposals might cause amongst the public; from rational, albeit sceptical acceptance, to emotional acceptance, and finally to integrating the community into the vision.<sup>402</sup> Critics of academic capitalism do not have such sophisticated tools and alternative visions of progress, and clearly never will. It is little wonder that the managers of universities who are loyal to this vision of academic capitalism are surrounded by professionals from change management – it is thanks to them that this vision can be implemented, even if at the initial stages of the process fewer than 10% of the academic community are convinced it is the right path, while within the disciplines it is difficult to find any supporters. The administrative character of decision-making is formally maintained, the tradition of the university does not suffer any harm. But on the road towards decision-making, two camps meet and come into conflict: in the first fragmented and disunited camp is a victory for basically unclear, rather emotionally based doubts about developments based on the complex overlapping and clash of departmental, faculty and university identities and interests; influential academics from this camp have doubts which are usually supported by a wealth of experience. And alongside them, or rather opposite them, are the precisely focused psychological, sociological and managerial competencies of a phalange of workers from the rectorate and other

401 Závada, Jiří et al.: „Benchmarking“ v hodnocení kvality vysokých škol. Aula 14/2006, special edition, pp. 83–96; Vinš, Václav et al.: *Vnitřní hodnocení na vysokých školách. Analýza výročních zpráv a dlouhodobých záměrů vysokých škol*, ibid, pp. 61–82; Prudký – Pabian – Šima, *České vysoké školství*, p. 79.

402 Wehrlin, Ulrich: *Hochschul Change-Management*. Göttingen 2014<sup>2</sup>, pp. 46–54.



central departments, freed from doubts thanks to their unambiguously defined university identity, as well as the directness and rapacity of youth.

Let us look more closely at the three central arguments from the “optimists’ camp”:

- a) *Academic capitalism is an inevitable consequence of globalization and technological developments and the way in which science and research are linked to these processes*

Economic globalization is seen as an unstoppable process, bringing the conceptualization of science into a transnational framework.<sup>403</sup> Additionally, according to this theory, faced with globalization, the university will have to fundamentally redefine its relationship with the social and political environment.<sup>404</sup>

Mark Taylor, a professor of religion at Columbia University, predicted that by 2020 the study of this discipline would be very heavily influenced by the global choice of universities and digitalization. Students, who have been used to spending much of their time online with their “circles of friends” from across the world since childhood, will see it as completely natural to study online, to have e-learning, and to combine the skills and information gained at university with those from the virtual world. It will be entirely natural to put this theoretical knowledge into practice on a global scale, and students will be able to decide for themselves the length, type and financial cost of study. Symptomatically, Taylor mentions the astonishment and uncertainty that students’ parents will face as a result of this type of study, particularly those from small-town mid-west America. However, they will have little choice when faced with the unavoidable changes brought about by new technologies.<sup>405</sup>

This represents a widely used, convincing, but at the same time, very contentious set of arguments. Those who use them have the advantage of the indisputable developments in new digital technologies and their gradual impact on practically all areas of life in the advanced world. It is difficult to find any opposition to the need for universities to utilize the new technological trends, and it is precisely at this point that the credibility of all critics of academic capitalism is lost. At the university in Brno there have also been on-going debates about the need to gradually digitalize all systems since 1979 – at first it was the agenda of the admissions system, then personnel, then later the allocation of student accommodation; since

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403 Slaughter, Sheila – Leslie, Larry: *Academic Capitalism. Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University*. Baltimore 1997, pp. 31.

404 Kauppinen, Ilkka: *Towards transnational academic capitalism*. Higher Education, Vol. 64, No. 4 (October 2012), pp. 543–556, here p. 545.

405 Taylor, *Crisis*, pp. 218–221.

1995 the development of digital technology has been one of the decisive factors in the further development of the university.<sup>406</sup>

The theory of globalization as a driving force has another two weak points, stemming from the concept of globalization as a process which brings advantages to one and all; the older, simplified win-win interpretation of globalization has been shown to be untenable in the light of the financial crisis of 2008 and increasing inequality, and requires new, more in-depth analyses.<sup>407</sup> In the Czech, Central and East European academic environment, the greatest concerns are about the “brain drain” and the so-called scientific imperialism of Western European and American universities and research institutes.<sup>408</sup> Even in the Anglophone centre of the global university network there have been strong voices stressing the university more as a national and regional, rather than global institute, especially in relation to its teaching mission.<sup>409</sup> It fulfils the function of an important regional employer, an organiser of significant national and regional events, it is a constructor and important actor in the creation of the city’s public space, it is a taxpayer and a member of numerous consortia of regional institutions.<sup>410</sup>

And the same applies to two additions to the theory of globalization as a driving force. Firstly, that the Western European left-wing idea about the imminent demise of nation states, the role of which would be transferred to transnational organizations, and the approaching triumph of “global thinking”,<sup>411</sup> has been shown to be a chimera in the context of political developments in Europe and the USA since roughly 2005 (the referendum on a European constitution in France, identity and isolationist movements in many countries). This applies to the countries of the Visegrád Four (the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia) more than anywhere else in Europe. And then there is academic capitalism and the role of the humanities and social sciences. Their research results are seldom commercially viable, any global comparisons are difficult to measure due to their ter-

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406 Archive MU, A6 Science Faculty, box 4 (Automated systems).

407 Milanovic, Branko: *Global Income Inequality by the Numbers*. Global Policy Volume 4. Issue 2 . May 2013, pp. 198–208.

408 Hryniewicz, Janusz – Jałowicki, Bohdan – Mync, Agnieszka: *Ucieczka mózgow ze szkolnictwa wyższego i nauki. The Brain Drain in Poland. Regional and Local Studies*. Warsaw 1992; <https://financialobserver.eu/cse-and-cis/serbia/serbia-experiencing-health-sector-brain-drain/> (2.1. 2018).

409 Gibbons, Michael: A Commonwealth perspective on the globalisation of higher education, In: Scott, Peter (ed.): *The Globalisation of Higher Education*. Philadelphia (PA) 1998, pp. 70–87.

410 Spoun, Sascha – Seyfarth, Felix C.: Die Vertreibung aus dem Elfenbeinturm: Selbstverständnis, Attraktivität und Wettbewerb deutscher Universität nach Bologna. In: Jamme, Christoph – Schröder, Asta von (Hg.): *Einsamkeit und Freiheit. Zum Bildungsauftrag der Universität im 21. Jahrhundert*. Munich 2011, pp. 193–220, here p. 201.

411 Kauppinen, Ilkka: *Towards transnational academic capitalism*. Higher Education, Vol. 64, No. 4 (October 2012), pp. 543–556.

ritorial limitations, while they also respond to new technological innovations with reservation and strong cultural scepticism.<sup>412</sup>

b) *University governance is marked by outdated and historically discredited forms of organization which restrict free competition in education and research.*

This is corporativism and governance expressed using professional or statist principles, previously known as guilds. The unsustainability of this form is demonstrated through the reliance on state regulation, and its supporters are those members of the academic community whose quality of teaching and research is not competitive in an international or global context.<sup>413</sup> The enclosed nature of academic bodies and their antipathy towards integrating outsiders is a blind alley for scientific progress, preventing many universities from becoming part of the international network of university education. So-called academic inbreeding (building a career only in the school where the academic studied)<sup>414</sup> characterizes the tendency for creating a group of researchers around a professor made up exclusively of his own pupils, whose academic career is pursued exclusively at their alma mater and no attempt is made to acquire long-term work experience abroad or in other more local universities. In the Czech Republic and Central Europe this is exacerbated by the language barrier, limiting the integration of foreigners into the work collective. A very effective way for regulating attempts at bringing in outside staff into Central European universities is the salary conditions, which discourage academics from Western Europe and the USA. The supporters of academic capitalism tend to belittle these two problems, and usually point to the natural or technical sciences, where due to the predominance of an Anglophonic culture, internationalization is easier and it is possible to receive (temporarily) a higher income thanks to European structural funds.

In the eyes of the optimists, the strength of academic capitalism is in dealing with that aspect of academic governance which is blatantly dysfunctional – the heads of individual institutions. If the professor/head of an institution avoids provoking the senior academic bodies with catastrophic cases of mismanagement, and if the person is not completely unproductive in the field of research, then their position is assured. They can build a clientelist network with their subordinates, who repeatedly elect them to their function in return for guaranteed security, i.e. overlooking or playing down obvious long-term failings in their research or managerial and teaching work. Within this power network, the institution usually perceives the outside world – the faculty and university leadership of

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412 *Hodnocení kvality*, p. 30.

413 Rhoades, Gary – Slaughter, Sheila: *Academic Capitalism, Managed Professionals, and Supply-Side Higher Education*, Social Text, No. 51, Academic Labor (Summer, 1997), pp. 9–38, here p. 34.

414 Pabian – Prudký – Šima, *České vysoké školství*, p. 73.

other institutions – as latent enemies disturbing the status quo. If a university's decision-making process is based on models from the public or non-governmental sectors, then this closed-off world will remain undisturbed. Any intervention by the dean into the often poor conditions of the institution is incompatible with the institutional culture, and as a result, intervention is highly improbable; one exception is the clear bankruptcy of a department due to a lack of students or research outputs. A statutory body's decision to close down a team due to unconvincing research results is standard in the Czech Republic in some of the central university departments or at specialist research university centres, but not at faculties with their autonomous decision-making and often long traditions of existence.<sup>415</sup> With its instruments of evaluation and economism, academic capitalism might change the institutional culture to the extent that any steps taken by the dean or rector away from isolationism will not be viewed negatively by the academic community, but as the normal reaction of a crisis manager.

*c) Academic capitalism introduces new ideas and fresh air into the conservative climate of the university, where the old dichotomies and conflict lines lie petrified, little understood by anyone outside of academia*

Public universities take the positives from the management practices of commercial institutions, including private universities, while discarding the negative habits from the non-private, regulated sector, especially some of the relics of customary law.<sup>416</sup> The driving force for change will be the change in students' mentality – from being a consumer of education, they will become a customer who plays a far more important role in determining the form of the educational process. A similarly optimistic view of academic capitalism is held by the stakeholders, i.e. all of the external actors in a university's educational and research work. For a university to be accommodating in its approach towards its "customers", it is necessary to standardize the products on offer, which is provided by quality control mechanisms (Total Quality Management – TQM).<sup>417</sup>

This will lead to dialectically surmounting the conflict between the interests of the individual faculties and disciplines, where into one melting point will be combined the interest groups of the academic community, whose strategy will be to bet on market mechanisms, including those which rely on regulation. University autonomy thus gains new meaning through its responsibility for the school within the market relationships in education and research; the old clientelist system of professors and lecturers loses its *raison d'être*, there will be an end to certain

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415 <https://www.ceitec.cz/evaluace/t1133> (20.12. 2017)

416 Vondrák, Ivo: *Proč zavádět systém managementu jakosti na univerzitní pracoviště*. AULA, year 13, 03 / 2005, pp. 26–31, here p. 26.

417 Rhoades – Slaughter, *Academic Capitalism*, p. 14.

academics and disciplines leeching off public budgets, the work of the university will gain new meaning – for academics themselves, but particularly for all of the external actors connected to university work and also for the taxpayer.<sup>418</sup>

The arguments of academic capitalism’s supporters are not usually as ideologically restricted and technocratic as their opponents suggest. They recognize that the application of academic capitalism and TQM in public universities with long traditions and deeply embedded institutional cultures cannot be an imperative – it has to progress step by step, taking into consideration the specific missions of each section of a university.<sup>419</sup> In the discourse, academic capitalism is usually seen as being affiliated to a specific circle in academic culture, whilst the Humboldtian university is usually regarded as the most traditionalist in a global comparison. Here, more than anywhere else, it is necessary to respect the fact that the components of a university have different goals and ways of achieving them. It is not an “industry” in the narrow sense of the word as it revolves around working with people, and so each university has to carefully examine the TQM path with regard to its appropriateness and effectiveness. It is necessary to always take into account the motivated participation of the academic public in the entire transformational process of the university, and minimize any approaches which might be considered authoritarian, centralist or overly hasty. Close contact has to be maintained with the managerial and expert (i.e. professorial) bodies to prevent alienating the two groups, which is a *conditio sine qua non* for the university’s successful overall transformation. In their enthusiasm for change, the leadership of each university has to progress very sensitively, as universities are institutions which are very vulnerable to political, technological, economic and social changes. In particular, the academic community’s cohesion is paramount, and it is necessary to use democratic forms in decision-making to continually renew the consensus regarding any changes and the ways in which they are brought about.<sup>420</sup> The specific paths towards the selective and successful application of academic capitalism have been documented in numerous university case studies, for example, at the Vienna Wirtschaftsuniversität.<sup>421</sup>

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418 Ibid, p. 16.

419 Sporn, Barbara: *Managing University Culture: An Analysis of the Relationship between Institutional Culture and Management Approaches*. Higher Education, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Jul., 1996), pp. 41–61; Rhoades, Gary: *Capitalism, Academic Style, and Shared Governance*. *Academe*, Vol. 91, No. 3 (May – Jun., 2005), pp. 38–42.

420 Ibid, pp. 42–43.

421 Ibid, pp. 48–51; Yokohama, Keiko: *Entrepreneurialism in Japanese and UK Universities: Governance, Management, Leadership, and Funding*. Higher Education, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Oct., 2006), pp. 523–555; Tuunainen, Juha: *Hybrid Practices? Contributions to the Debate on the Mutation of Science and University*. Higher Education, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Sep., 2005), pp. 275–298.

## Criticisms of academic capitalism

Who are the critics of academic capitalism? They tend to be people who are connected by their shared negative impression of the changes in universities in recent years, rather than people who have a similar type of academic career or social background. In their eyes, the university today has suffered from a type of social dethronement, which *pars pro toto* also applies to the position of teachers. It is painful for them to accept the loss of public trust in universities, as a result of which they have to permanently struggle for media attention and persuade politicians and grant agencies of the relevancy of their research. There is also the uncertainty of generational experience, as most of the academics who have influence in today's universities were students at a time when the situation was dramatically different. And there is also real trauma resulting from the cases of academics' drastic ethical failings<sup>422</sup> – in a Czech context, the turning point was a scandal at the Law Faculty of the West Bohemian University in 2009 surrounding plagiarism and the sale of titles to people from the business sector, public administration and politics.<sup>423</sup> There is a similar view of academic titles from certain Slovak universities, as well as of the unduly high financial payments which academic functionaries have been awarding themselves.<sup>424</sup> Academics from traditional universities are particularly sensitive to the presence of numerous new universities and private higher-education institutions, which have made the university landscape more incomprehensible and untrustworthy for the general public.

Critics of academic capitalism have developed a distinctive mythical discourse. It is based on an awareness of the university in crisis, and an almost desperate hope of finding a way out – at the same time, though, there is scepticism towards the methods of addressing the problems offered by the apologists of academic capitalism. This pessimistic discourse is characterized by a disrespect for managerial practices and digitalizing technocratism, which are rejected as absurd and fundamentally flawed due to their separation from any historical context. As part of this discourse, the university has a right to deferential treatment and a place outside of TQM solely because it is *per se* a university – an institution which has signed up to the truth, with pure science as the way of achieving it, an institution with a strong ethical mission, unlike any TQM or change-management.

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422 Seyfarth – Spoun, *Die Vertreibung*, p. 197.

423 [https://zpravy.idnes.cz/kvuli-plzenskym-pravum-se-poprve-sejde-komise-titul-zatim-odebran-nebyl-14s-/domaci.aspx?c=A100626\\_171702\\_studium\\_jan](https://zpravy.idnes.cz/kvuli-plzenskym-pravum-se-poprve-sejde-komise-titul-zatim-odebran-nebyl-14s-/domaci.aspx?c=A100626_171702_studium_jan) (21.12. 2017)

424 <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-64640160-slovenska-vysoka-skola-danubius-uz-nesmi-rozdavat-doktorske-tituly-doktorat-z-ni-ma-i-hejtman-hasek> (21.12. 2017); [https://www.lidovsky.cz/superplat-dekanky-na-dotaz-na-neumerne-vysoke-odmeny-jsem-odpoved-nedostal-rika-byvaly-rector-iga-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A180323\\_115043\\_ln\\_domov\\_mpr](https://www.lidovsky.cz/superplat-dekanky-na-dotaz-na-neumerne-vysoke-odmeny-jsem-odpoved-nedostal-rika-byvaly-rector-iga-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A180323_115043_ln_domov_mpr) (23.3. 2018).

This obvious distance, bordering on contempt, from the principles of managerism, from economic rules and their political connotations, is what binds these critics together, but which at the same time is their greatest weakness. The absence of economic and political aspects to their thinking prevents the creation of a plausible alternative theory to academic capitalism, which is very strong precisely in these points. Therefore, the arguments of its critics are inconsistent and are unable to respond to a number of serious questions. It is the apologetic idealization of a Humboldtian golden era, the epoch of the elite university which disappeared without trace when it stopped fulfilling its social function. In this idealization of university history, the mythic narrative of the “pessimists” is often strongly manipulative and reductive concerning the important historical context of how the Humboldtian model operated, similar to the arguments of the supporters of academic capitalism. The difference, however, is in the language – the pessimistic myth is accompanied by as rich a language as the intellectuals can muster to reflect the fact that this discourse has a distinctly intellectual character and is connected mainly to the humanities. It differs from the optimistic mythical narrative, which likes to use numbers and graphs; the frequent Englishisms of the optimists contrasts with the ostentatious use of Latin and the Romance languages in the pessimistic narrative – but neither one is a condition of trustworthiness – the manipulative aims of both groups of narrators are quite obvious here.

Despite the fact that the critical narrative is incoherent and often not particularly trustworthy, it still has value. Although it does not provide an alternative to academic capitalism, it does offer food for critical thought and for doubting the wisdom of the paths that universities have blindly embarked on in recent years. There is variable quality in these disquieting ideas. Some of them point to the failings of academic capitalism ad hoc, while others doubt the entire system and the ethical aspects of its operation and objectives.

Examples of ad hoc criticism include cases of the failure of internationalization programmes, which touch more upon areas of science which are demanding in terms of language competency and territorial and cultural links. The cases of foreign “flying professors” – symbols of the modern struggle with academic inbreeding, who take advantage of short-term high salaries but do not become part of the environment or the collective, and after a while change their workplace in search of a better career and even higher salary (often to the annoyance of the other team members) – are definitely arguments to be welcomed. One Austrian critic of academic capitalism, Konrad Liessmann, is also critical of the overuse of English in academia, where it has indeed become the lingua franca. In itself this phenomenon is usually seen positively, but Liessmann views the situation through the prism of the humanities, which draw upon their legitimacy from a linguistic and cultural plurality that is being damaged by the insensitive dominance of Eng-

lish.<sup>425</sup> Liessman offered a compelling, albeit absurd case, when he presented the career path of Immanuel Kant as being completely at odds with today's contemporary academic evaluations. As is well known, Kant never left his home town of Königsberg, but in spite of this he was awarded a definitive professorship, which TQM would define today as typical of academic inbreeding. Immediately after this appointment he more or less stopped publishing and only wrote two newspaper articles over ten years. According to Liessmann, today he would "*have to answer for his lack of effort and ineffective research work. At the very least he would have been placed into an innovative and interdisciplinary minded research project.*" At that time, of course, he was a dean and had several other functions, but it was also then that he came up with his Critique of Pure Reason. And when it was finally published, the scientific community – along with the peer-review incantations of today's scientometrics and TQM – ignored it and even ridiculed it as a work which was "*unintelligible, too complex, not aimed at the user, therefore useless.*"<sup>426</sup>

But it is precisely with Liessmann's theory of miseducation, so popular in the circles of sceptical judges of the present state of higher education, that it is easy to see some ad hoc critical arguments develop into a deeper critique. Liessmann unmasks the allegedly beneficial motives of TQM as an untrustworthy veil covering the real motives – among them is the unacknowledged unwillingness of a large part of society, represented by the head of state, to financially support the university as a provider of abstract knowledge, the practical use of which is hard to define, rather than support the university as a buttress for the cultivation of society and the development of critical thought, which leads to the abstract values of freedom and democracy. Those who uncritically stand by the principles of TQM and academic capitalism do not like to admit that the basic source of its legitimacy is by making savings in resources aimed at higher education. The development of economic management in American universities was the direct result of a reduction in public spending as a consequence of the economic turmoil in 1973, and savings made by Ronald Reagan's administration in the 1980s.<sup>427</sup> Savings, savings...according to Liessmann, this is the true objective behind the interference in institutions, fields of study, other educational and research workplaces, or the movement of finance to places which in the future can expect higher places in the rankings.<sup>428</sup> All other arguments are merely smokescreens.

A favourite target of critics is the ratings mania of the university heads, rushing around worrying about movement in the Shanghai rankings; and every critic is

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425 Liessmann, *Teorie nevzdělanosti*, p. 91.

426 Liessmann, *Teorie nevzdělanosti*, pp. 62–63.

427 Bok, Derek: *Universities in the Marketplace. The Commercialization of Higher Education*. Princeton 2003, pp. 8–13.

428 Liessmann, *Teorie nevzdělanosti*, p. 60.



capable of collecting a great deal of evidence on the absurdity of such behaviour and the low evidential value of similar measurements.<sup>429</sup> Here the arguments have their global as well as national dimension, and familiarize readers with the problem of evidence in the life of an academic. For example, in the Czech university landscape any drop in the quality of teaching or research at Charles University could never reach such a level that it would endanger the position of the school in the elite national rankings or even the existence of the school as such. This is also true for its visibility on the international stage, where the attractiveness of Prague as a tourist destination, its cultural variety and transport accessibility, will always be important for the exchange of academics and “internationalization”. It is unimaginable in the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria or Poland that they would close down universities which had founding charters dating back to the Middle Ages and whose notable previous research successes include a Noble Prize – albeit from the more distant past. Even if they have not been able to capitalize on that success in the subsequent fifty years, it is still produced as a tool of visibility for the local and international public. Neither is it important that some Nobel Prize winners were only loosely associated with a particular university, perhaps even controversially – one example is the sharing of the Noble Prize for polarography (1959), awarded to Jaroslav Heyrovský, between the Czech Republic Academy of Sciences and Charles University – or the assumption of awards from the German section of Charles University by the Czech part. The political rules of visibility are written into university culture to the extent that universities a priori belong to a group of elite, and in many respects, untouchable schools, which would be considered too new in Western Europe, having barely celebrated the centenary of their foundation.

Another strand of the argument points to the pitfalls of applied research being financed at universities by private sources. Here there is no clear evidential value concerning any of the problematic forms of cooperation in relation to the entire enormous sector, but the argument resonates effectively due to people’s deep mistrust of capitalism in the Czech Republic and Central Europe. We can only speculate on how the public would react to symbols linking the commercial sector and universities – in the USA, after the initial shock, the public has grown accustomed to such things as the introduction of the *K-Mart Professor of Marketing* or the *Yahoo Professor of Computer Science*.<sup>430</sup> In his book *Bought Research*, Christian Kreiß presents dozens of cases of ethically dubious research projects procured by the well-known sharks of global capitalism (so-called contract research), in par-

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429 Münch, Richard: *Akademischer Kapitalismus. Zur politischen Ökonomie der Hochschulreform*. Berlin 2011, pp. 53–67.

430 Bok, *Universities*, p. 2.

ticular by the tobacco, food, chemical and pharmaceutical industries.<sup>431</sup> Sections of the Czech public are especially interested in the connection between research and the powerful oligarchical institutions with clear political ambitions (Agrofert, PPF). However, manipulation of research on their part has not been proven either in court or by the ruling of a university ethical commission or similar body, without which it would be impossible to imagine the effective legislative regulation which Kreiß proposes in his book.<sup>432</sup> In Czech academia there is a precedent from Masaryk University in Brno, where attempts by the university management and the Law Faculty to cooperate more closely with the Energy and Industry Holding of Daniel Křetínský, a graduate of the university, came up against objections from the faculty's Academic Senate. Regarding the establishment of a joint research centre (the Institute of Energy Studies), the senate argued that there was a lack of regulation to prevent the work of the faculty being subordinated to the interests of a private subject, particularly in the situation where research results negatively affected his interests.<sup>433</sup> On one side of the debate on similar cooperation is the argument about the need to bring academia closer to the commercial sector, on the other is the concern that this will lead to a decline in the credibility of public institutions and their research, which has already been viewed anxiously by many experts, particularly in sociological and political research. This topic receives relatively little attention in the mainstream media (owned in the Czech Republic by the captains of industry) or in the academic press, though it is a frequently discussed subject on social media, and the subject of unfounded or partially founded rumours and myth.<sup>434</sup>

The most sophisticated of these arguments concerns the normalization of science through mechanically applied scientometrics in the service of academic capitalism. The hunt for the impact factor and various forms of *peer-review journal articles* places the monopolization of strategic decision-making for the future direction of research into the hands of a few institutions and their governing academic coterie. A frequent subject is the proven or, more often, perceived profiles of various “citation mafia” made up mainly of Anglophonic academics from the leading global universities. Room for independent research, sometimes truly creative and original in its approaches, has dramatically shrunk over recent years with this normalizing system. This understandably applies more to sciences with a global reach, where scientometrics has become much more embedded, than in

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431 Kreiß, Christian: *Gekaufte Forschung. Wissenschaft im Dienst der Konzerne*. Berlin - Munich - Vienna 2015, esp. pp. 21–81.

432 Ibid, pp. 175–183.

433 [https://brno.idnes.cz/daniel-kretinsky-pravnicka-fakulta-masarykovy-univerzity-poh-/brno-zpravy.aspx?c=A180207\\_381505\\_brno-zpravy\\_dh](https://brno.idnes.cz/daniel-kretinsky-pravnicka-fakulta-masarykovy-univerzity-poh-/brno-zpravy.aspx?c=A180207_381505_brno-zpravy_dh) (8.2. 2018)

434 <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/nazory/1368357-byznys-a-pruzkum-verejneho-mineni>; [https://technet.idnes.cz/volebni-pruzkumy-0zx-/veda.aspx?c=A131016\\_152300\\_veda\\_pka](https://technet.idnes.cz/volebni-pruzkumy-0zx-/veda.aspx?c=A131016_152300_veda_pka) (20. 12. 2017).

the humanities. And the fact that criticism of this “scientific imperialism” often has anti-American political connotations is of secondary importance here.

In his unique work on the state of Austrian higher education, Christian Badelt considers the impact of academic capitalism on labour-law relationships in universities and on the employment culture in general. He claims that the introduction of TQM and commercialization has shifted competencies to a higher level, i.e. from individual academics to the department heads, and from there to the deans and rectors. In his view, the identity of a subject or faculty becomes lost within an identity bound to the university. An academic has to become used to an entirely new way of handling resources – the school will be able to get rid of unused space or people much more flexibly than before. The academic community will have to become accustomed to the very noticeable reaction of their superiors to any mistakes in their teaching or research work, including the termination of employment, closing down a research team, etc. And the new atmosphere is also apparent in the relationships between universities and research teams. Brno academics will start to view their counterparts at Charles University much more as competitors than the colleagues with whom they have sat together on academic committees or collaborated on projects. According to Badelt, the entrepreneurial university is both a challenge and – in the light of these briefly outlined problems – *contradictio in adjecto*.<sup>435</sup>

## Conclusion

Public pressure and a decline in prestige have forced Czech and Central European universities to become part of public debates, often highly political and ideological, and make themselves accountable for the way in which they invest public money. The academic community has thus found itself in an onerous position as this change in the public perception of universities threatens the illusion of their loftiness, created by even the smallest, newest and most obscure universities, who use the name to suggest membership of the ancient tradition of the *universitas* and a superior global network of knowledge.

The clash of these two mythical narratives lies at the heart of the struggle for the very identity of the university itself, and it is particularly interesting because it is occurring in universities almost every day – i.e. in relation to clarifying opinions concerning the immensely important and also controversial issues of decision-making competencies, forms of control and evaluation, and the possibilities and limitations of the university’s response to undertakings devised by external actors

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435 Badelt, Christian: *Die unternehmerische Universität: Herausforderung oder Widerspruch in sich?* Vienna 2004, pp. 30–40.

or stakeholders. From the viewpoint of the critics of academic capitalism, it is a matter of the proverbial cogwheel, which turns quickly here, slowly there, but in each case, tooth by tooth, inevitably brings the university closer to its new unloved role. Every interaction with the commercial sector is viewed as a Faustian pact by some sections of the university community.<sup>436</sup> With the economization of its operation, the university loses the rest of its identity as a multipurpose, non-political and independent expert, and becomes just one more hungry mouth to be fed by the taxpayers. And there are more links in this causal chain: if a university is no longer an independent arbiter and expert – or at the very least is not accepted in this role by a significant part of the public – then it can hardly be surprised when opposition forces stand up against it, calling for a reduction in its budget, always of course with arguments about higher work efficiency, the social relevance of its work, avoiding waste, etc. The narrators of the academic-capitalist myth tell their story with this as their defence, while the more sophisticated of them use it as an apology – by introducing TQM they are only trying to protect the university from the more drastic aspects of economism, the supporters of which would *never* take university tradition into account.<sup>437</sup> The only alternative, after all, is the privatization of university education, as they have done in the USA. With the growing importance of private sources of finance, the top public schools (University of Michigan, University of Virginia) have become de facto private or semi-private – without taxpayers even seeming to notice.<sup>438</sup> A similar trend in Czech and Central European education, whether directed or not, is very unlikely. What is more likely is that the state will increase its supervision to the extent that the university will be managed like a company, and the state will no longer fund the “non-productive” parts to the same extent as before. In 2017 with the formation of Andrej Babiš’s government – the man behind the vision of “to run the state like a company” – the academic environment might come closer to this concept than we at present suspect.<sup>439</sup>

The theme of a noble and distinguished independence – the ivory towers – has been part of the university’s mission since the Middle Ages. It was only in the 19th century that this idiom was used as a symbol of the arrogance of universities which had turned away from social reality and the world. In the 12th century, however, this idea was embedded in the mission of the first universities, that it was preparation for *healing the world*. It was about sparing a young person who was

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436 Bok, *Universities*, p. 200.

437 Nantl, Jiří: *Mechanismus tvorby vůle orgánů univerzity. (Podmínky jejich legitimacy a efektivity)*, In: *Historie, současný stav a perspektivy univerzity*, pp. 54–60, p. 57.

438 <https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/innovations/the-privatization-of-state-universities-it-makes-sense/31744> (20.12. 2017).

439 <https://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/politika/politici-volicum/Babis-ANO-Ridit-stat-jako-firmu-A-proc-ne-499512> (20.12. 2017).

the hope for a better tomorrow and the world, allowing him time to mature so he can carry out his task.<sup>440</sup> And despite many years of continued criticism, this idea is still a strong part of the identity of university communities, which like to stylize themselves as islands of positive values in a society convulsed by controversy and unease due to pessimistic visions of the future. The old issue of the mutual compatibility of the world of finance and the world of noble goals receives a new form here, this time the issue of the (level of) compatibility between capitalism and democracy.

For critics, a key role is held by the academic senates, which are seen as a symbol of the main defence of university governance. As the voice of the academic community it is expected that the senate will come up with ways to thwart the machinations of academic capitalism. The strong position of the academic senates and the privileged position of students within them was viewed in Czechoslovakia at the start of the 1990s as fulfilling one of the key demands of the revolution in 1989, the driving force of which was the students. Some universities and faculties, in particular Charles University, used the legal means at their disposal to grant students the maximum representation in the academic senates, which approaches 50% of the mandates.<sup>441</sup> Thus in practice the students have a significant say in the running of the faculty; the level of the constructive policy of the senate, though, is highly dependent on individual senators. A handful of people with great (political) ambitions, with complicated personal relationships with their colleagues and no small level of exhibitionism can seriously disrupt the relationship between the heads of the faculty and the senate. The authority and legitimacy of Czech university senates has been inadequate for a long time now, the electoral participation in the students' chamber is often in single percentage figures, while in the chamber of the academic employees there is the usual problem of finding trustworthy candidates. The meetings at the university administration committees are filled with arguments and formalities.<sup>442</sup>

The problems with the legitimacy of the senates are too great to be able to fulfil their mythical role as defenders of academia. They stem from democratic limits, in particular the failure to respect the rule of *one person – one vote*, particularly in the case of student representation. A more serious problem is that the members of the senate are rarely the more senior academics, people who have experience and have some scientific or pedagogical renown; they normally feel overburdened with work and show no interest in a senator's post.<sup>443</sup> As a result, during the election of a dean or rector, the professors and senior lecturers nerv-

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440 Rüegg, *Geschichte*, IV., pp. 32–33.

441 <https://web.natur.cuni.cz/student/studentska-komora-akademickeho-senatu-prf> (31.3. 2018)

442 Rodriguez-Moura, Enrique: *Freiheit und Macht an der Universität*. Berlin 2016, pp. 59–71.

443 Vanderziel, Jeffrey: *Senát hájí zájmy univerzity*. MUNI, December 2017, p. 12.

ously watch the election determined by the votes of students and lecturers.<sup>444</sup> And finally there is also the divergence in interests of the university senate and the faculty senates, which is reflected in the differences in the interests of departments and disciplines, and the complex mergers and struggles within the identity of each academic in terms of the department, faculty and university.<sup>445</sup>

In the struggle with their opponents, critics of academic capitalism and change management usually lose their position step by step. This is even the case in those clashes where they have more powerful arguments, and the modernism, centralism and progressivism of the exponents of academic capitalism and TQM are shown to be primarily ideological tools for the overall economization of decision-making in universities and society as a whole, with very unpredictable and potentially very risky consequences for people and society. Critics of academic capitalism lose out in their arguments because they are unable to combine a vision of academic governance and the value of social responsibility, and thus present a complex and trustworthy alternative for the decision-making mechanisms in university against TQM, which can respond with a simple truth: by representing taxpayers, the state has the right to oversee the public investment into higher education.<sup>446</sup>

A section of academia uses the myth of the right to a special style of management and the grave danger posed by academic capitalism as a defence mechanism against the uncertainty of following through the implications of their own dependence on state funding to their logical conclusion. By using some historical examples – usually somewhat misinterpreted – they talk about the university as a black box where public money pours into, but it is impossible to find out what society actually derives from the university.<sup>447</sup> This section of academia is basically satisfied with the present system of financing Czech higher education. Although the resources provided are modest, the supply is somewhat unstable and is accompanied by degrading procedures, as a result of the absence of thorough supervisory mechanisms, when the advantages and disadvantages are weighed up, the situation is actually quite acceptable. The myth is a product of the uncertainty of one's role: the university, or more precisely, those departments which are completely reliant on state financing, find themselves in the precarious situation of consumers of public resources, which relativizes the value of public control over their activities, and at the same time, portray themselves as the guardian and beacon of democratic principles, but one of which – the flow of public money supervised by representatives of the taxpayer – has been in existence for a long time.

444 [http://ceskapozice.lidovky.cz/akademicka-samosprava-musi-byt-stavovska-nikoli-demokraticka-p6q-/tema.aspx?c=A160623\\_165535\\_pozice-tema\\_lube](http://ceskapozice.lidovky.cz/akademicka-samosprava-musi-byt-stavovska-nikoli-demokraticka-p6q-/tema.aspx?c=A160623_165535_pozice-tema_lube) (6. 1. 2018)

445 Nantl, *Mechanismus*, p. 57.

446 Watrin, Christian: *Studenten, Professoren und Steuerzahler. Die Gruppenuniversität in ökonomischer Sicht*. München 1979, pp. 29–34.

447 *Hodnocení kvality*, pp. 7–8.