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“Excellence” and “Quality” and the new relation between knowledge and politics in times of globalisation

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Summery

A shift in the relation between knowledge and politics is taking place within the academic world. New kinds of political interventions have the purpose of re-creating hierarchies within and between higher education institutions¹, new knowledge identities are emerging, and with this a new research policy.

“Excellence” and “quality” are the two most used categories – or symbols - for this shift in the relation between knowledge and politics. They refer to new practices for governing the academic community, new manners in which academic identities are being shaped, how academic work processes are organised and how (new) knowledge is values by different actors in society.

The new political intervention in the academic community is an answer to the challenges the tremendous growth both of student numbers and of higher education organisations has raised. Higher education as a whole does not any

¹ Bleiklie, Ivar (2005). Organizing higher education in a knowledge society. In Higher Education (2005) 49:31-59. Springer 2005.

longer select the elite through its mechanism of recruitment, and research has become an activity of all sorts and within all kinds of higher education organisations. The masses of students need new kinds of attention, but so do research. The new tools for the transformation of the relation between politics and knowledge; creating excellence in research and new ways of measuring quality in teaching, seems to unite the political and academic leadership. These instruments are being shaped in most parts of the world as instruments for the promotion of the competitions between the different units of the higher education system, now both within the nation-state and beyond. Thus all previous types of differentiation between higher education organisations are under change. New hierarchies will emerge out of the fierce competition for excellence and quality rewards.

The governance of a system of higher education and research whether this is binary or not, or with an elite structure of research universities at the top or not, will be replaced by individual competition for a position within a new kind of hierarchy to which rewards is distributed according to (politically shaped) criteria for excellence and quality. The desire is to govern through competition, thus also a desire to create differentiation according to organisational strategic competences, despite previous assigned position in a national system. In the competition between researchers and higher education organisations is “excellence” and “quality” rewarded and rewarding particularly through cross-border networking between organisations (more than disciplines). The nation-state is thus no longer necessarily framing the system or defining the rules of the game. And also the criteria for what is excellent and what is quality are standardised to centres of power beyond and at times above the nation state.

The centres of excellence as well as the ideas about quality in teaching build on certain ideas about knowledge that not many sociologies of knowledge to day

support in their analysis of relations between academia and society, between knowledge and politics. Excellence in research and quality in teaching as it is today being given meaning by numerous systems of evaluations which are more or less external to the academic community, contradicts the knowledge on knowledge which links creativity to plurality, critical mass and size with small group innovation, research with teaching, truth-telling to uncertainty, and usefulness to “useless” theories. The new knowledge-politics relation rather focuses the research front (which is where the truth is), relevance as predefined, concentration of resources around the big projects, the mediation of knowledge as a teaching activity, the project rather than the disciplines. Together this calls for hierarchies with a concentration of resources at the top. Research centres are valued more than disciplines. Knowledge production for clients seems to be more rewarding than developing knowledge for the students. And if a university wants to climb in the hierarchy, it seems more rewarding to focus excellence in research than quality in teaching. However, both excellence and quality governs the academic community, and evaluates academic work legitimized by sources of power external to and as an alternative to the old collegial or peer review kinds. If “excellence” and “quality” have been categories filled with meaning by the academic community (more or less on its own) before, this will perhaps not be the case under the new excellence and quality regimes of the new cross-national kind.² If we agree that the truth is relative, but has meaning as “robust knowledge”³ proving its value over time, then “excellence” and “quality” shift the focus towards processes of production and societal alliances focusing “form not content”, processes of political selection, not systems of critique, promoting the robustness of knowledge.

² See Denman, Brian D. (2005). What is a University in the 21st Century. Higher Education Management and Policy Volume 17, No. 2.). See particularly pp13 on new regulatory authorities: “What appears somewhat new in the sphere of regulation is the impact of outside regulatory entities. Finding this demonstrates the increasing need to understand types of institutions on a global scale”.

³ Bourdieu, Pierre (2004). Science of Science and Reflexivity. The University of Chicago Press.

Introduction

The last few decades of the previous century saw an unexpected and unpredicted growth in higher education and research. Not only was the term “mass education” coined to indicate the growing number of students entering higher education. We have also had many more universities established, we had greater variety in kinds of universities, and lately we have had a growing differentiation in ownership, both public and private or combinations of these, also more and more as cross border consortium or other kinds of international alliances.

Research has likewise had an enormous growth, through research centres outside the universities, but more and more as centres linked to universities or as extensions of the regular university activities. For some universities the so-called fringe activities have come to dominate the kernel of the university organisation, and they have proudly taken the title “entrepreneurial universities”. The growth in research funding has been linked to ideas about size, concentration and usefulness. These ideas have also come to influence the basic research or non-commissioned research thus how universities structure the relation between disciplines and projects.

However, with the enormous growth in both size and number of universities, research has also been spread on more campuses, among a greater number of academics. This spread of the research has been a way of keeping up the quality in teaching, and for the university as an organisation, a way to secure its reputations as well as its funding. A growing tension between concentrations of research on the one hand and research as part of an academic culture of teaching on the other can be detected. How these combine, is one of the most important

indicator of how an organisation combines resources to climb the ladder(s) created by the excellence/knowledge nexus.

Numerous debates about how to keep the link between teaching and research have emerged. The tradition which sees the students as part of the process of research and teaching as integrated in this common process of discovery is threatened by new tensions and tradeoffs between the two. The mass university can not handle this tradition which is the dearest to the “idea of a university” when demands for excellence are mounting. Calhoun, mainly based on his experiences with the US system, often described as elitist at the top, “democratic” at the bottom; calls this “the intensified tension between excellence and accessibility”. Given the recent changes (new public relations, marketing campaigns, management structures, and competition in rankings) the rhetoric of excellence, the “positional good of being seen to be better than others” now encompasses a number of very different and incommensurable dimensions of the academic organisation. On the other hand “accessibility”, the opening of the university for the previously excluded and “underrepresented”, produces inflation in credentials, and thus new emphasis on prestige differentiation among these credentials, despite formal similarity. An organisation which combines reputation building for the certificates (of their graduates) with the rankings of excellence optimises its competitive force. It is the “trade off” between excellence and accessibility which creates the new kinds of stratification; or hierarchies of status and resources. And the space for trade off depends on the handling of the “criteria for quality in teaching”, (which in Norway is student throughput, in other societies it can be payback from alumni societies and professions). And here Calhoun has the worry that “Education itself focuses more and more on professional expertise – understood as the provision of private benefits, rather than the essentially public good of informed

citizens”⁴. On the other hand; excellence is also gaining meaning by its external evaluations.

So; with the coming of the mass-university, the growth in kinds of universities as well as types of ownership of universities leading to new kinds of cross-border providers, the whole idea of the university also changes. Academic degrees are devalued, titles are inflated, professions are degraded and professors become locally employed researchers or teachers. The system has to recreate its societal value. This is done, and more and more through organisational strategies. Growth in size and numbers creates competitions for status and resources of all kinds. The new industry, academic rankings, is but one expression of this development.

The degradation of academic values, the competitions and its systems of ranking, the growing number of both students, and universities competing (globally) for these students, has created the new situation. Excellence and quality are the categories used by actors trying to gain control over this new situation. These two words link the competition to the political regulation of this competition. Through these two words, and the actions and institutions that are built around them, the relation between knowledge and politics seems to be about to change fundamentally. During the last ten years, quality and quality assurance has been a heated topic at all levels, from the nation-state to UNESCO. Later, but now with the same momentum, the ideas about excellence are spreading, it is excellence in Europe, in Africa, in the different countries and at the many universities. We all go for excellence and we all go for quality; the

⁴ Calhoun, Craig (2006). The University and the Public Good. Thesis 11, Number 84, February 2006; 7-43.

question is who fills these empty categories with meaning and guidance for action⁵?

How the individual universities in the future will work and succeed in the competition will depend on how it is valued by the two categories; quality and excellence, or rather, who has control over these essentially contested categories. The universities (some much more than others) can influence this link, but must also adjust to it and utilize the new rules of the game to survive. This new relation between politics and knowledge will also change the content of knowledge, decide on whose knowledge matters for whom, and what knowledge will be given priority.

Knowledge and politics

The relation between knowledge and politics has many dimensions to it. Since nobody believes anymore that there is knowledge which is not influenced by social context (not even mathematics), shaping social relations is also the shaping of knowledge. Epistemology does not dictate its condition of creation. Rather, how knowledge creation is organised creates its epistemological content. The belief in truth-telling is also a belief in a certain way of bringing forth knowledge, as historical studies of “science studies” show⁶. From Descartes to Wagner, the search for truth, the epistemological arguments, contains political arguments about space and time and resources needed for the creation of this truth. At the time of Descartes it was both for or against the state and for or against the religious authorities and how these authorities intervened in the work

⁵ For a reflection on the terminology; see de Wit, Hans (2005) ”Incentives to enhance quality and attractiveness” Paper to the conference ”Enabling European higher education to make its full contribution to the knowledge economy and society” February 10th 2005. Centre Albert Borchette, Rue Froissart 36, Brussels. European Commission. DG Education and Culture.

⁶ Enebakk, Vidar (2005). Mellom de to kulturer. Oppkomsten av vitenskapsstudier og etableringen av Edinburgskolen 1966-76. Acta Humaniora. Det humanistiske fakultetet. Universitetet i Oslo.

process and the kind of truth-telling that was possible. To day it is more likely for or against the all encompassing economy. And to day we are also much more aware of how the processes of knowledge creation themselves are social, and how the external world is reproduced within the stories about the truth.

The continuous re-arrangement of the relation between knowledge and politics may take the shape of science wars, due to the different epistemology's contextual preconditions. This may even make scientist become fundamentalist (Wagner 2006), denying that social relations influencing their work process and priorities, thus their truth-telling. After the many studies of the life of the laboratories, this fundamentalism, however, is on the retreat. Also studies on how knowledge production and dissemination are shaped mutually, has been growing in numbers since Steven Fuchs analytic attempt some 15 years ago⁷⁸⁹. The debate on excellence and quality, ideological categories we all enjoy the sound of, are political interventions rearranging the mutuality of “creation and dissemination”. It is a way of reorganising the knowledge community, emanating from the political debate about how to govern the expanding mass-universities and research society. However, it is not only politicians who have created this debate, but also representatives of the academic community, the research politicians, the university leadership and even the different researchers who due to their concern about their daily work situation recreate this governance system within their epistemologies.

⁷ Fuchs, Steven (1992) *The professional quest for truth. A social theory of science and knowledge*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

⁸ A growing number of studies of how systems of evaluation shape knowledge organisation illustrates well these variables (see Dirk van Damme “Trends and Models in International Quality assurance and Accreditation in higher Education in relation to trade in Educational Services” in: Deupree (eds) OEXCD/US Forum on Trade in educational Services: Conference Proceedings. QA. Washington. See also Wagner, Peter (1990) *Sozialwissenschaften und Staat. Frankreich, Italien, Deutschland 1879–1980*. Campus, Frankfurt.

⁹ Nowotny, H (et.all) (2001) *Re-thinking Science. Knowledge and the Public in an age of uncertainty*. Polity. Cambridge

The political intervention into the academic community, through excellence and quality, is a reaction to the previous decades of expansion, but also much more. It is a fundamental attempt to renegotiate the relation between politics and knowledge in times of globalisation. The nation state which held together the expanding number of universities and funded (mostly) the masses of new students, is today seeking to change this commitment to the system as a whole. Excellence and quality relates to a new way of governing the sector and its expansion, thus also new kinds of societal commitment to knowledge. Young people are expected to be educated at “university level”, and the economy, as well as other organisations of society, is expected to rely on “cutting edge knowledge”. On the other hand, as degrees, titles and professions are being degraded by the numbers, and research potentially becomes scattered around within the educational system, the need for the new relation between knowledge and politics emerges. The character of this new relation is competition for resources and status. The rules for the competition are set by the criteria for “excellence” and “quality”. Excellence and quality shapes the new play ground of knowledge. The fluidity of these categories fit the new situation of internationalisation and globalisation; often talked about as the neo-liberal deregulation of the links between the system and the state¹⁰. The new kinds of social and political commitments of the neo-liberal kinds can easily enter as criteria of either excellence or quality or both, whether these social and political units are regions (like EU¹¹) or the global economy and its representatives

¹⁰ Delanty, Gerard. Ideologies of the Knowledge Society and the Cultural Contradictions of Higher Education. Policy Futures in Education, Volume 1, Number 1, 2003. p 75: “In higher education neo-liberalism had an impact in formation of what has been called the McUniversity, where the ideologies of efficiency and control through accountability have led to a major restructuring of higher education in many countries, but especially in the English-speaking world (...). In the rationalised enterprise of the neo-liberal McUniversity there is greater managerial power, structural centralisation, increased student intake, the casualisation of labour and the elimination of inefficiency. There is also the additional ideology of accountability, which in effect is about increased accounting”.

¹¹ An expression from within the sector itself, for example by Winckler, Georg. “The contribution of Europe’s competitiveness” at the Conference of the European Ministers of Education, Vienna, 16-17 March 2006. His arguments, and comparisons (including the focus on China) are common rhetoric. 1) concerning with whom to compare: “With respect to research excellence, 80 % of the top 20 and more than 50% of the top 100 universities of the world are located in the US”; concerning ideas about critical mass and size: “American universities

within the different nation-states, in addition to or together with the states themselves.

The rules of the competition are setting the stage for a differentiation within the sector. These rules promote the hierarchy according values of size, concentration of resources and topics. After years of expansion along many dimensions, time has come for the governing of the sector, not at a distance as the “regulation school” argues, but by setting the rules that promotes excellence (and elitism) at the top, despite democratic access at the bottom. Higher education organisations, research centres, disciplines, professors, and students needs to learn to compete about position in these hierarchies, to climb the wall of the pyramid. Choices of centres of excellence which is a political and research political process, the setting of criteria of quality and the organisation of a quality assurance system, which also is a political act, represents a process of selection all actors in the sector have to relate to, adjust to and act strategically to. They become criteria for resource distribution, and for further addition of resources. Success criteria govern - the possible consequences of this kind of governance of knowledge ignored¹². Nobody asks why things go wrong (which still is important in research) or what is gained from “third best” (which is what most students get).

undertake research and advanced research education only if they have a critical mass: only 260 US universities offer a PhD programme, whereas there are about 1000 such institutions in the EU-25”. About disciplines: “Universities should not just be conglomerations of departments of faculties or of study programmes but should overcome their fragmentation”. About competitions as a mean for hierarchy: “In the case of universities, competition leads to a contest in reputation, manifesting itself by attracting public awareness, brains and money”. About the need to create a teaching environment: “requires (quoting EUs vision paper) a fundamental reconsideration of the curriculum and of pedagogic methods in every discipline, to ensure a student-centered approach and the achievement of appropriate learning outcomes at every level and in every subject”. And the strategic focus on excellence in research: “Acknowledge and reward excellence at the highest level. – All Member States should review their provisional postgraduate (master and doctorate) levels and the disciplines concerned. –Financial support should be made available at a European level to develop excellence at graduate/doctoral schools and networks meeting key criteria. Strengthening competition for excellence through the European Research Council”.

¹² And within this system; who will pay for research on research lost? “Dagens Nyheter” a Swedish newspaper reports (April 10 - 2005) argues that the success of Assare Lindbeck and the centre created around him has damaged economics as a field of knowledge in Sweden. Svante Nylander, who has written the history of the “national economics” argues that the concentration of resources to the Stockholm School of International economics has made the fields sterile. This is all the more the case since not enough resources have been mobilised to build alternative academic communities within the sector.

The creation of the hierarchy and the competition for positions in the hierarchy is the primary dimension of the new relation between politics and knowledge. However, the hierarchy also activates the relation to a secondary effect of knowledge expansion and internationalisation; the market. The market for students, for research funding is expanding, but position in the hierarchy is a precondition for success also in this competition – the more an institution or a centre can combine reputation resources, the better it will be fitted for the competition in the market. In this case, the market reproduces and strengthens hierarchy.

The student market has been present in some cultures for a long time, both for the best brains and for the best paying student. In more socially responsible nation-states with free access to higher education (democracy of access), and with quality in the system, and not a select number of institutions, it is a new situation with this competition for students, and the “quasi-market” generated by the new funding models. But we are quickly adjusting. The advertisement budgets exploded.

Over the years not only the numbers of universities and university colleges have expanded, but also the kinds of educations included in the sector. These changes have also carried within themselves the potential for a student market also in our civilised parts of the world where family fortune does not decide academic learning access (Norway and similar countries). First: What used to be educations linked to particular sectors, and organised and supported by these, are now “upgraded” and integrated as part of the overall education system. The distance between education and work has been enlarged; the corporate networks have been dissolved. The “re-linking” will have to happen through the labour market, and through working life criteria for competence and qualifications

mediated to the curriculum planners. Second; the professions are seen as agents of potential self-indulgence, as economic monopolises more than learning societies with a societal ethics. Their monopolies have to be broken down, for the benefit of the labour market. Third: The universities have to produce the knowledge which is in demand by society (however it is spatially defined), and the priority between types of knowledge, have to follow predictions about societal demand. All together; students are recruited to a higher education sector which has fewer corporate links to the working life, thus a sector which needs to create these links for its candidates to succeed. And the success of the candidates is a criteria of organisational success and, again, future student recruitment.

As for research, more and more dependence on the reputation of doing good research has shifted the focus to commissioned work. The now half a century old tradition of competing for research funding through applications, seen as important for the promotion both of research independence and quality, is to day mixed with types of commissioned work, which in most cases shapes the applications to its purpose, more than having funding shaped by the applications. The research “for teaching”, the search for improvement of basic disciplinary knowledge, loses ground for the sake of programme- and project oriented research with a “knowledge product” (for the user), less the student as its end result.

The ideas about excellent knowledge is created by political- and university leadership. It does not grow out of the epistemological debates, or wars for that matter. The arguments and motives are many; priority of scarce resources for research, improvement of the reputation of the university, at least in some selected areas, securing first rank knowledge for national development in areas of priority, set new standards for the many, and so on. But what is characterising excellent knowledge? An answer to this question is also needed since those who

politically construct this image of knowledge need to link it to ideas about knowledge, both ideas about how it best can be created, as well as to its kind of episteme. Also the researchers have to be “excellent”, not only their centres.

First of all, the CE recreates the “mirror image” of knowledge, thus they also recreate the positivism of the sciences. The CE will produce the truth because they are part of a community of scholars who through their methods and already acquired knowledge are in privileged position to gain access to the truth which is out there, waiting to be found by the right constellation of persons. Again, it is the distance created between society and the researchers - a space for experimentation, and the distance between the masses of students and the researchers, which gives privileged access to the few and bright, and the access of resources for continuous trial and error, which makes it possible to seek out what is positively given. Further, knowledge must be seen not only as hierarchical according to degrees of excellence, but also as a linear in its development. There is always someone out there who is closer to the truth than others. Knowledge is thus international, and CEs can only become such centres through its links with the internationally recognised “front”. There are no science wars, casting doubt about the linearity of knowledge or where the frontline is, or rather; the frontier. Researchers seem to easily adapt to these ideas about their role for the creation of the truth, which goes so well with the need of research policies to create an image of excellence. The status of the university becomes linked to its degree of involvement with research of international reputation, hence also a guide line for internationalisation. The local links to the daily life of a university, the ideas about the students as part of and critical for the process of research and the ideas that knowledge is – and must be- context specific, and therefore also a choice of priority between many possibilities, is absent in this understanding of knowledge.

Centre of Excellence

CE are now being established in most modern societies as well as in the developing regions of the world. CE as it now is emerging in all part of the world, have a new and much more politicized shape to them than many of the previous centres, whether emanating from the higher education sector itself (as centres of advanced study, or as centres based on a particular funding outside the university sector (Max Planck for example). Research politicians, research councils, external “users” are united by the argument that this is the way to organise knowledge for the new knowledge economy with and in relation to the research university. The knowledge economy, which presupposes the knowledge society as a broad citizen’s project, can only advance through such concentration of brains and resources. “Perhaps the biggest adjustment that the universities will have to make in this sphere is to develop structures which promote group creativity. So far, the emphasis in universities – and it is a consequence of the disciplinary structure – has been on individual creativity. Little if any attention is given to the challenge of teaching people how to “create” in a team situation. This will need to change”¹³

The centres for “advanced studies”¹⁴, may be for- runners to the newly focused debate and arrangement on CE, but are not part of the same policy for knowledge use and dissemination. Centre of Excellence (as for example proposed in the White Paper on research at the end of the last century in Norway)¹⁵, is part of the more recent century’s transformation of our universities (used as a collective term for universities and colleges of all sorts). The more of these centres a university has, the higher in the research hierarchy a university is likely to be ranked, but the creation of these centres and their content often

¹³ Gibbons, Micheal (1998) Higher Education Relevance in the 21st Century. Education. The World Bank.

¹⁴ Historically this terminology is related, but may also in different national cultures express different ways of organising and professionalizing knowledge as well as different ways of connecting across disciplines and borders, see “CAS. Oslo 1992 –2002. Advanced Study in a Norwegian Context” CAS, Olso, 2002.

¹⁵ St.meld 39 (1998-1999).

hinges on external sources and organisations working with or through universities.

Joseph Epstein recalls a conversation with Edward Shils about one of the early moves towards creating units for advanced studies. “I remember once asking him his opinion of the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton. He didn’t doubt the right, in intellectual distinction, of most of its members to be there, but what he regretted is that such a place took many distinguished scientists and scholars out of the stream of influence on students that they undoubtedly would have had in universities. He saw this as an unfortunate break in the necessary linkage of knowledge that passed from the teacher to the student” (Epstein 1997). Since then (going back to the 1930s), the parting of excellence from quality has been debated, but only during the last 20 years has this become a fashion and a must, but then linked to processes which the different universities are less and less in control over, but more and more dependent on, and with consequences for the conflict between “excellence and accessibility” yet to be understood.

Only a few examples can be highlighted to indicate trends, but also variations. The latest reforms in Germany (the first round of selection just finished) develop along a number of dimensions. It seeks to select whole institutions of excellence (Elite-Universitäten), networks of excellence (Exzellenzclusters) and schools for professions (Graduierungsschulen)¹⁶. And as Dagmar Simon (member of “WZB Projektgruppe “Wissenschaftspolitik””) argues “Es wird ein lohnendes Projekt sein, die neue Struktur der Grosscluster und ihre Wirkungen auf die wissenschaftlichen Disziplinen zu beobachten” (WZB Mittelungen, März 2006:45). Thus Germany has chosen more roads than one in its attempt to create

¹⁶ And as in most countries we find in Germany a clear break with the idea of “advanced studies”; The Wissenschaftskolleg of 1980 organised after the 130 Princeton model, has a separate location, is run by the cross-disciplinary community which it is hosting and values interdisciplinary (not cross-disciplinary), intercultural exchanges (not universal audit criteria), and intellectual heterogeneity (as a counterforce to specialisation).

hierarchies, perhaps as a mirror image of the plurality of knowledge hierarchies which are already there. Also in Germany, is this break with the previous tradition of “centres for advanced studies”, most notably the Wissenschaftskolleg as noted above. When the US universities took over from the German universities as the dominating Nobel-prize-receiving institutions, the argument was that they better than the Germans took care of Humboldt values, but did this within new kinds of centre (primarily advanced learning), a type of organisation which the Germans borrowed back in the times of “after war crises” within their universities¹⁷. In addition to Wissenschaftskolleg, Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Forschung, located to Bielefeld, for example, was given a new or original type of organisation compared to most known centres at that time in Europe. Also this organisation was organised very differently from the process of selection, choice of topics for research and priority of specialisation of the new SE. It is a meeting place for the creation of new topics among the foremost researchers (globally) within a limited time (usually no more than a year). The composition of research teams is cross-disciplinary and borderless, organised around topics which the researchers themselves “invent” through a system of proposals. The success of this model has inspired a number of other institutions (SCASSS in Sweden for example, and CAS in Norway).

The critic of the ZiF seems like a prelude to the new SEs. It has been criticized for not taking care of national priorities, long-term follow up, and the linking between research creation and knowledge dissemination¹⁸. This critique is a critic of the control the academic community has had over these centres. A new

¹⁷ Manfred Eigen, analysing the shift from Germany to the USA insists (after emphasising that US universities had implemented Humboldt better than German Universities) that “Alle gross Erfolge der Forschung sind bislang an Zentren erbracht worden” For further details see Eigen, Manfred “Die Deutsche Universität” in Eigen, Gadamer, Habermas, Lepenies, Lübke, Meyer-Abich *Die Idee der Universität*. Springer-Verlag 1988.

¹⁸ See Halvorsen, Tor “ZiF – det første senter for “Advanced Studies” I Tyskland?” i Korsnes, Olav (red) *Disiplin og Nyskaping. Tverrfaglighet og forskningspolitikken i 90-åra*. AHS serie B 1989:4. Bergen .

policy, located outside the universities, but as way also of governing the universities merges as a policy for CE.

The new revival of the English higher Education is also linked to this new type of concentration of resources¹⁹. Even The Association of African Universities hopes for four centres in addition to what is already there, to lift a whole continent. The revived cooperation between Nordic research councils and universities argues for excellence networks, as does also the EU framework programmes, in addition to and as support for coming centres. In Norway expectations seems to be that we must develop many such CE²⁰ (since – in a small country - no pre-made solutions are acceptable through dissemination alone). Other (often economically less fortunate systems of Higher Education like in England) see SC as part of a global division of labour which may justify a rationalisation of your own system to the benefit of the taxpayer. Some types of knowledge must be imported, others must be developed according to nation-state and cultural identities, and yet other types must be developed due to local competitive ability and advantages²¹.

The variation in solutions to the new movement of Excellence is great. However they all have some trait in common. First they presuppose constant “borderless” comparisons and learning from other centres of excellence. Ability to connect globally with the most creative parts of the surroundings will in itself be a sign

¹⁹ In the newly released “White paper” “The future of higher education” from Department for Education and Skill, highlights as a main point: “research Excellence - Building on our Strengths. British universities have huge strengths in research. New resources will help improve teaching and research at our universities but we also need to repeat the benefits which flow from concentrating the best research in larger units – better infrastructure, better collaboration within and between disciplines, easier development of research-only posts and better pay for excellent researchers” (p5).

²⁰ “Det er lett å snuble i den misforståelsen at forskning er noe vi kan overlate til andre land, og at vi kan nøye oss med å importere rapporter og tidsskrifter hvor resultatene er publisert. Men det er ikke slik vi hever kompetansen i Norge. Det er ikke slik vi utløser innovasjoner. Der er ikke slik vi utvikler et norsk kunnskapssamfunn” (Kari Kveseth, i Samspill Nr 1/2002).

²¹ For example the continuous debate in England about what to give priority, where also arguments like the following are legitimate: “In natural science answers are global – solve a problem in the US, and you have cracked it everywhere. But a lot of social science is country specific.” (In Prospect magazine, op.cit.)

of degree of excellence as the criteria for future evaluation. And the ability to become nodes in network of excellence depends on ability and priority of this network at the cost of other possible networks – like networks in counties with less reputation. It is the kind of network you are in that gives value to the knowledge, not vice versa. Second it is their linking to the research financing organisation, thirdly their embeddedness in positivist sociology of science; presupposing a research front, a positively given truth, and a focus on research as a product, rather than a process which also is containing the education of coming generations. Generally, the new movement seems more linked to the knowledge economy than knowledge society²².

As a new policy for knowledge development at least three tools can be emphasised as more or less common, but also as tools containing potential variation in how the universities and its academic community become involved in the centres, and co-govern them (in the name of knowledge):

The kind of *professionalism*, which is promoted, usually follows two, perhaps contradictory avenues: The avenue of “the researcher” (which for example the Norwegian Research council addresses) and the avenue “the professor” which contains a link between research and knowledge dissemination, particularly through teaching, which the German “elite university selections is open for.

The avenue of the researcher thus indicates a detachment from the educational system, more cross or even interdisciplinary identity, less belief in the values of science and stronger belief in the constant change and insecurity of knowledge

²² In Norway we have just left behind ”Norgesnett og knutepunktfunksjoner”, and we have had long discussion about the value of ”programme organised research from the top” (see Sejersted, Francis (1989) when the debate on SC came to us from the EU/OECD standards: “Forskningspolitikk i et forskningsavhengig samfunn”. I Nybom, Torstein (red) *Universitet och samhälle. Om forskningspolitikk och vätenenskapens samhälliga roll*. Tiden Förlag Stockholm.

production through (insecure) research, and finally a life long career system within the CE, less a (possible) university identity.

The avenue of the professor on the other hand indicates a commitment to the promotion of knowledge through the system of higher education, a type of research which is linked to education also when research is organised in CE (die Einheit von Forschung und Lehre), a belief in the ties and the persons who administrate the highest form of knowledge (science) and who are in control of the selection and promotion of new scientists, PhD programmes are here of primary importance as also shown in the criteria for the Norwegian CE, raising the question to what degree and in what way the CE contributes to the formation of the next generation of researchers

The *choice of network* will be influenced by form of organisation and kind of professionalism but also the other way around. A number of theories argue that we become similar to the ones we compare ourselves to (isomorphism). If a CE is to deliver excellent knowledge over time, the way it links within a network is crucial, also for how the CE delivers important research back to the network. They build their careers by jumping among centre of excellence, transforming the organisation to their desire, but at the same time disconnecting the CE from the organics connection to the system of higher education it is a part of locally. (The inability to connect knowledge to teaching contexts makes the independence of knowledge production vulnerable, and may lead to use of knowledge for destructive purposes under the control of non-academic interests, as the debate on CE in human-and natural bio- tech shows, is common argument). The debate since the 1960 in France about SE has also referred to the danger of “brain – drain”, that CE elsewhere becomes “recruiting pools” centralising knowledge resources to some cultures at the cost of others, but without explicating the global consequences. Other parts of the world are now

more in danger than France. Another familiar debate, about CERN, also shows the problem arising locally when the researchers of the CE move their activities abroad – or even to particular centres within a university: the local milieu deteriorates thus also the disciplines.

There are in other words tensions between ways of organising, types of professionalism and degrees of commitments in the network, which leads to different types of knowledge development. And what is the value of specialised knowledge compared to ability to synthesize²³? This is a question of understanding a division of labour, which is strongly embedded in any cultural system, including anything from disciplines to how universities are organised. “Researchers” as we know specialise more easily than professors whose honour probably is more in the field of generalisation, and the “national culture” may value generalisation more than specialisation. Or it could be vice versa. For example the French or Russian experiences focusing on independent research institutes, experts instead of professionals, research and centre leaders instead of professorial networks, etc.

In Europe, the driving force in the excellence debate is the Commission and its subcommittees on education, in alliance with both the European University Association and numerous representatives of the sector concerned about the future of the European economy and social cohesion. An academic summarises it like this²⁴: “The emergence of European network of centres of excellence that work together can provide a way to bring together top-expertise in the different

²³ The limits of specialisation is discussed by Robert Samuelson (1998): Commenting on Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan’s report to the US congress on the Asian crisis, Samuelson stated that despite all the data and the deductive theories available, neither he nor Greenspan knew what was going on. The source of their confusion lay in the seductive power of compartmentalized theories and disciplines that failed to account for the complex relationship between politics and culture. Samuelson, R (1998) “Asian boom + Asian crises = total mystery”. International Herald Tribune. 20 Mar.,p.12.

²⁴ De Wit, Hans (2005). Incentives to enhance quality and attractiveness” . University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Paper at the conference: Enabling European Higher Education to make its full contribution to the knowledge economy and society.” European commission February 10, 2005.

countries of Europe and by that bring the excellence on a higher , more competitive level. Such an approach will be more effective than an exclusive approach for a small number of centres in Europe; and although based on competition, such an approach will be more in balance with the traditional egalitarian approach in European higher education; and will result in a more regionally spread development of excellence within the European Higher Education and Research Area. The EU can stimulate by this approach both competition – only a limited number of networks and centres of excellence will be supported – and cooperation, linking different institutions and their centres in networks of excellence”. Thus every institution has to have a clear strategy as to how to compete, whom to promote and what knowledge to give priority.

We already see that this makes universities choose away non rewarding networks with the less fortunate parts of the world.

Quality

The debate about quality has emerged out of both the global growth in providers of educational serviced of more of less dubious character, and from internal changes in the education systems and its relation to the governance traditions of the state. The mass education, as well as the growth in kinds of higher education organisation has created a demand for quality control. This demand goes together with a the new “customer/provider” logic of the neo-liberal epoch. The state as a customer of educational services needs to know where to seek its service needs. How to create these services – and at what quality - will be up to the actors of the sector itself, and not necessarily part of a state policy for higher education.

Quality with its new institutions of evaluation and control, represents not only a new way of governing the individual units, but also a new focus on the content of the work of the “teachers” of the different higher education institutions: Certain pre-given criteria will guide the process of evaluation, whether this is done as self-evaluation, by external professionals, or as a mix between these. The governance through QA is shaped as a way of regulating the competitions between the singular institutions (for example the distribution of master degrees within disciplines, the possible upgrading of colleges to university, etc.) according to a hierarchy of values emanating from ideas about “good teaching”. The intervention in the teaching seeks to promote the mass-production of students, their pass rates and progress, and the priority of curriculum and disciplines linking the candidates to the working life.

The debate about quality which links the disciplinary distribution, the student through put, the teaching, to a number of reward systems is now a global debate, connected to the QA movements. It contains own organisations, has created its own expertise, and act on behalf of a general public first of all as a pãrotector of “consumer interests” or “value for money”. Some of these are specific to the nation state education traditions, for example the relation between universities and university colleges. But others are part of the ongoing debate about both Bologna and EU (which contains a number of QA initiatives, or even the global debate about how to assure that actors in the global market act at least according to some minimum standards, and have some kind of accreditation recognizable to external actors and customers (students) .

What is common for the QA rewards systems as well as QA as a control system is how they evolve out of the university as a teaching organisation, or rather, what is more usual; how they evolve out of the delegated authority of the state to control and change the universities as mass higher education institutions and

“youth hostels”. Research is delegated to the debate about excellence, as insisted on above, and only enters to the degree the universities themselves, r any quality criteria, indicates research as important for teaching, Although a university, as in Norway may become a university due to the number of disciplines being able to /allowed to award dr. degrees, the QA system emerges as a system of evaluating the teaching, curriculum and student handling of the individual organisation. An education policy now is the sum of the evaluations of the individual competing units given accreditation to serve the society.

Why excellence? Why quality? Why not excellent quality, or the quality of excellence?

It is not yet clear within the new politics for knowledge how excellence relates to quality, or when and why the one category is superior to the other. As a general trend, however, quality seems to have emerged out of the debate about the mass-university, excellence out of the debate about research, and particularly research for the knowledge economy. Quality thus relates to teaching, knowledge dissemination and professor/student relations. Excellence refers to the process of research, the product of research and the valuation of the different kinds of research by users of the “products”²⁵. Excellence, as a description of research, seems to rank higher than quality, but to what degree this makes excellence and quality part, varies between universities, country traditions and number of professors still defending the link between the two, even in times of mass higher education.

²⁵ Calhun (op.cit) p 19. “The first set of ideals –about the excellence of knowledge – is more closely tied to the research mission of the university and the second set – about access to knowledge – more closely tied to the teaching mission. But this is not a perfect correlation. Universities vary in the extent to which they restrict student admission in order to raise the intellectual standards or their teaching. (...) Excellence and access are each goals for both research and teaching, if perhaps in different proportions.

The place where excellence and quality meet in the most explicit manner is in the so-called research university (taking for granted that organisations not doing research may be called university, which for example is not the case in Norway and other countries we compare ourselves to. Rather; more and more colleges are brought into the sphere of research, thus spreading research in the system). The research university will seek to optimize the combined rewards given by the new system of valuation: excellence in research and high quality in teaching, but will argue that the first is a precondition for the second. Thus, excellence in research is also primary to quality in teaching, usually despite the content of the research or the process leading to research results being motivated by problems and actors /rewards quite external to the knowledge developing processes within the disciplines. This priority of the values of research may thus hide that the universities have made themselves dependent on the income for commissioned work. Although much of the research may be irrelevant for - or outside the reach - of the student/professor relationship, it is counted as a precondition for quality in these relations. But there are also “indirect links”: not only money, but also the status of the researchers are important for attracting more students, better students and for adding to the commissioned research funding basic or long term research (the two kinds of funding complements each other, with external funding as the success criteria). In a number of quality assurance systems, it is even taken for granted that the research university has quality in its teaching; thus the one category totally dominates the other.

This, however – as the ideal research university situation - is less and less the case, and quality in teaching is taking its criteria from pedagogy (university pedagogy is invented), student evaluations (the consumer), production criteria (throughput), to mention some. The enormous industry now being established all over the world as Quality Assurance agencies, with powers delegated from the state, but also from the sector itself, an even as actors in a market for QA

services, has created its own professionals, with a type of knowledge which effectively purifies the category “quality” in teaching. The term excellence may be used, but only in relation to the more important quality. When quality prizes are given (a new habit of the QA agencies) reference to excellence is rarely used. The institutionalization of “excellence” is not that organisations specific, and is not linked to a growing profession. It evolves out of the research bureaucracy itself, in alliance with university leadership. However the political theory underlining this category also purifies the category: Excellence follows form the right process of selection of topics, researchers and networks, armoured with the right amount of resources, threatened (and controlled) with the periodical evaluations by units outside the university sector itself. And the excellent knowledge takes the shape of excellent knowledge; recognizable by the way it is published, by the kind of networks it is circulated in and by which part of the research community it is valued. The research bureaucracy and the international research community are mutually selecting one another in a process of evaluations of applications where knowledge values and policy values easily exchanges hands under the banner of “truth and certainty”.

How can excellence compete with quality, how do they complement each other as a system of pilitical governance of knowledge? Norway, where two major reforms of the system of higher education and research (HR) during the first decade of this century were termed the Quality Reform and the “Centre of Excellence reform”, this competitions – or this complementarities of governance - is very explicit . The “excellence” reform is the creation of new centres within the universities by the research council, to secure size, concentration, cross disciplinary cooperation or generally; “excellence” research at the international research front. The “quality” is linked to the “Quality reform”, considered the biggest reform so far of the university and university – college sector of Norway of all activities relating to the handling of the students. The main purpose of the

Quality reform is to adjust to the demands of the mass university. This reform is also seen as the Bologna reform in Norway. However, if not that explicit, this seems to be the situation in many countries. We also find similarities in a number of other reforms like the change in managerial ideas and kind of leadership (the need for professional leadership which can promote the competitive organisation), the change in funding formulas (to underline the need to compete for students), and ideas about external funding (to secure money and legitimacy among users of knowledge), and the ideas about internationalisation (in line with the de-linking between system and its nation-states).

These reforms create new kinds of hierarchies and criteria for competitions for positions in these. Excellence is usually (in Europe at least) valued above quality, as can be expected within a “research – university” tradition. But not unanimously, since it is not a question in most countries - as in Germany of creating “elite universities”, but rather elite units with the universities, usually through the control of the research councils or some other external funding units. Elite universities may still keep up the idea that research shall penetrate the teaching of the whole organisations. When certain units are chosen, they become privileged units which must be spared the burden of the mass university. The internal division of labour evolves. Those who are not selected defend themselves by help of the idea that excellence in research is a precondition for excellence in teaching.

However, both of the reforms waves can mainly be characterised by silent consent from the professors, by strong push by the politicians, and with the students as their foremost allied. The ranking of research as an excellent activity above quality in teaching, the de-linking between teaching and research within the new Centres of Excellence (CE), the new types of funding from within the

universities to initiatives emanating from Research Councils, has caused little academic public debate, thus little debate about its consequences for knowledge. And much of it is seen as inevitable given international commitments and pressures. The research council in cooperation with the university sector is part of the broader EU/ OECD debate about the need to promote “excellence in research”, also within a university sector which is not, in general, excellent enough, it is argued on the one hand. The reform of the university teaching handles the Bologna expectations, but also takes care of a number of EU initiatives when it comes to linking student credential and labour market, on the other hand

Any cleavage between research and teaching will manifest itself in organisational change and new professional orientations. More and more we see separate organisational units at universities focusing either research or education. They have become separate hierarchies, partly produced by the need to mobilise extra resources and personnel to implement the Quality Reform, the Bologna Process or other similar changes linked to the handling of the student masses. And although we are still expecting these activities to reunite at the personal work level – this is not the case for the new CE. A new kind of hierarchy, which is (and will try) to subsume other hierarchies within the university under its domination, emerges from these centres. The hierarchy of teaching is subsumed under research (for example to the point that my own University of Bergen proclaimed it would be a “research university” from 2005). But also other hierarchies of research which are less international, less excellent (for example the links to the south and development research) are ranked in relation to the excellence logic. The networking internationally which is a precondition for being selected for excellence, also reproduces and strengthens the tendency of teaching and education to part. If this combined effect of the two reforms continues and is strengthened, the university as we know it will fall

apart. Specialised leadership for research and for teaching will follow competing and contradictory goals internally as well as internationally and globally²⁶, but will also be subsumed under a potentially mono-hierarchical structure, based on ideas of knowledge as primarily something which is “positively given” and “found” out there by the best qualified.

This (new) internal hierarchy also represents a strengthening of some relations to the surroundings at the cost of others, and perhaps is only possible due to the new external links to the hegemonic research funding institutions. The university and its research is to a large degree penetrated by the externally financed research organisations which not only influences how research and teaching is organised in separate units, but also, by the way the Norwegian Research Council, The European Council of Research, to mention some, interacts with the universities to create and support the CE structure. At both the national level, at the Nordic level, as well as at the European level, the language about CE is now the same, although the organisational solution differs (and the European research funding is growing quickly).

The CE as they usually are selected and partly financed by the research council(s) or EU framework programmes, are themselves considered to be “concentrations” of knowledge of “international high standing”, with a global knowledge approach in its choice of topics, and free from constraints which may be contrary to the impression of excellence. However, CofE are also expected to bring either the nation-state and its economy forwards to new heights (as is

²⁶ This hypothesis is based on a number of observations within (as of now) the University of Bergen (UoB), the system of research which the UoB is involved in as well as the changing practises in cross border linkages of both research and teaching. The observations of the university as a teaching organisation are primarily made through the interviews in Bergen (all together about 42 persons about the quality reform (QR). These interviews showed a reaction to the QR based on the impression that this reform will lead to more emphasis on teaching and a separate identification with teaching, which did not exist before. In other words, a reform inspired by international relations and perceived needs for international adjustments is at the same time highlighted as a possible fundamental change in the relation between research and education.

expected in Norway) ,or to be spearheading the future Europe as the Globes nr. 1 economy. When excellence thus attached to research, it is research of a particular kind. To formulate it carefully; it is less enlightenment, more results for other purposes, primarily growth in economy and national and regional powers, but with an international standing and as a product of international networking.

The problem of research is little – if at all - focused in the Quality reform, despite the purpose of the QR to transform the elite- university organisation into an organisation, which can handle the student masses. The link of this reform to the creation of the QA agency, the NOKUT and its system of evaluation of teaching and the link to the funding formula, putting premium on student throughput, has also create a new governance structure at the universities, a specialised administration of their duties as teaching institutions. In both the internal quality systems that are developed, in the funding formula and in the NOKUT criteria for institutional evaluation, internationalisation of the student and the teaching system as such is present and currently being strengthened as an activity worthy in it self. But the possible links to research and its internationalisation is not reflected on in the quality reform. The internationalisation, that is, the networks of the CE on the one hand, and the student mobility on the other, makes the two value systems more independent of one another.

But also due to internal processes is the separation of these hierarchies growing. While the university is struggling to handle the growing student masses in line with the tools suggested by the Quality reform, other parts of the university is at the same time given special status in the research community detached from the problems the student masses create. Contrary to the newly selected German elite universities, the universities of Norway, or partly England, seizes to be a

guaranty for quality in itself; or a place for excellence and quality. It is either quality in teaching and handling of students, or it is excellence in research. The historical model, implying that the university was a “centre of excellence” by definition, and that knowledge attained at a university through its teaching also by definition had high quality, is exchanged with qualities controlled from the outside; from QA agencies for teaching and the Research Councils for excellence in research. And this tendency is, as argued above, forcefully strengthened by the international linkage of excellence and quality in cross national and international promotion units, professions and institutional values. Both these reforms are justified by our need to be part of a global community. While the QR, and its links to the new organisations called QAs²⁷ focus ideas about quality in teaching and curriculum development (and links internationally and globally)²⁸ so as to be fit for attracting students from abroad, are the CofE’s linked to ideas about how research has to be organised, professionalized and become nodes in networks at the frontier (or at the research front), supported by research funds both nationally and internationally

They are the nodes (created through a process the university does not necessarily control) through which the university may link on to the global research front²⁹. University leadership is also supposed to create a “trickle down”- effect (which show how excellence values dominates quality values) from this research. High quality research-based teaching is to secure that what is best within the global knowledge community also guides our student/teacher relations, but by help of a more extensive division of labour, or a longer chain between those that do

²⁷ The Norwegian quality assurance and evaluation agency started its work from 2002, but fully only this autumn (2003). (...example of latecomer.)

²⁸ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its St.meld 19 (2002-2003) reports on the CofEs (see chapter 5.2) and argues that they are important means for improving competition between nations through basic research.

²⁹ Among the criteria for evaluating and selecting Centre of Excellence in Norway, the following indicates the strong “borderless” approach: national and international status, the possibility of international influence, ability to connect to leading international networks, international researchers in the national research team; see “Kriterier for evaluering av vitenskaplig kvalitet og nærings – eller samfunnsmessig nytteverdi”. Forskningsrådet, Sentre for Fremragende Forskning.

research and those that mediate this research to the students. This is justified by the fact that there is one front, and a strait road leading to it.

For central actors within the research community, the argument of size is in addition to “competition” is probably the most important. This also makes the Centres into units of more value for knowledge production than the disciplines. Most evaluations of the disciplines concludes that research groups generally are too small when limited by their disciplinary affiliations, and that CE will have to remedy this lack of concentration of brains and resources³⁰. University leaders need to be pushed in this direction since disciplines often have too much power and too few incentives for change.

Size will also, it is indicated, solve the problem connected to the bad training of PhD students as well as the possible critic of CE as detached from teaching. The strategy (all over Europe and through Europe higher eds policy at least) is to link PhD training stronger to research groups – or rather, in the future, PhD students should only be recruited as members and close collaborators of such research groups, not by disciplines. The understanding is that this training has so far been unsystematic and not necessarily at the frontier of knowledge due to lack of internationalisation³¹, size, and concentration of resources. The Apprenticeship model seems to be less important than the Laboratory model (and the medical laboratory where professor and PhD student publish jointly article which are turned into a PhD is often given as example to be studied also in other disciplines).

³⁰ Forskning 5/02.p.2.

³¹ The debate about the relation between quality and size is as old as research itself, and it is interesting to notice that the “Senter for grunnforskning ved Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi” in Informasjonsblad nr. 2 November 2002. Årgang 10, strongly advocates the “small is best” principle. See interview with Seljelid: “Da jeg reiste rundt til nobelprisvinnere og andre internasjonale toppforskere for å diskutere hvordan eliteforskning skal organiseres, var alle sammen enige på ett punkt. Alt virkelig nytt kommer fra små miljøer” (p.6).

This focus on the PhD candidates, usually educated to replace professor within basic research, is another expression of how the two hierarchies are pulled apart, or how the one dominates the other. There have been voices warning against the split between researches and discipline by making the Centres into “doctor schools”^{32 33}, but with little public support. The consequences for the disciplines and the teaching is of course manifold. A new kind of researchers will over time be employed at the disciplines, new ideas about what is good knowledge will evolve, and of course, what is disciplinary based quality in teaching will no longer be linked to QA criteria – at worst.(...)

Size is linked to the third most important slogan, which also has consequences for how teaching is to be perceived, given the dominance of excellence. And this is multidisciplinary. C&E are created as multi-disciplinary units, often as cross institutional initiatives, even as cross national centre with a large number of researchers involved. And over time it develops a need to shape its own master and PhD candidates as products of and clogs in the project machinery.

All this makes the external governance important. It is the selection through research councils with close links to interests in society which have to select and direct, and feed in some of the resources. The money as seed- money or fertilizing money presupposes commitments and contributions from the universities, but the evaluation remains external also when the universities use more resources than they get. . (...)

³² In the much discussed analysis by Stern, Porter, and Furman (2000) “The Determinants of National Innovation Capacity” NBER Working Paper 7876. National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, Mass, it is shown that “countries that have located a higher share of their research and development activity in the educational sector have been able to achieve significantly higher patenting productivity (p.25)”. In other words, when it comes to relationships between excellence and use of the excellent knowledge (and sometimes the proof of the pudding is in the eating) the link to postgraduate programmes (that is to teaching) is crucial.

³³ The presently “hottest” debate seems to go on in Denmark in connection with “Bedre uddannelser, Handlingsplan” (Regjeringen 2002, Danmark) but particularly the debate about the new university law on ownership and leadership of higher education institutions, see Dyre, Jeppe “Universiteternes faglige nedtur” in RUGnyt Jan/Febr, 7/ 2003 s.

A fourth observation is that these CE gives priority to some disciplines, the hard sciences, at the cost of the humanities (.....).

Conclusion (preliminary)

Scarce resources lead us into a new epoch focusing more strongly on “value for money”³⁴. We are going into a period of reorganisation of this system *according to criteria of quality and evaluation*. And a system of fairly egalitarian mass higher education will diversify as a consequence of the new governance system focusing the singular institutions. We will experience types of hierarchisation, and we will experience segmentation between types of education, levels of education, “usefulness” of education, *and perhaps most important; types of research based education*. We will also see new kinds of networking of the different knowledge societies pushed by scarce resources and positioning in a more stratified research and teaching system. Systems of knowledge production and dissemination of a size unpredicted only a few years ago will be restructured according to criteria of *quality*, no longer created or controlled by the Higher Education system alone (as the establishment of NOKUT illustrates), but by the so called “audit society”³⁵, and this will generally lead to stronger centralisation of powers in the organisation, uniform types of interpretation of reward criteria, and a segmentation according to different demands from the environment; like demands for teaching – and demands for research. *Quality in knowledge production and dissemination will to a larger extent in the future be evaluated according to its research base on the one hand, and the system of higher education on the other.*

³⁴ The most debated case is England where, according to WWW.prospect-magazine.co.uk/University “Public Funding has halved since 1980, and academic salaries have fallen sharply. Total UK public spending on tertiary education (1.1. per cent GDP) is now well below the OECD average and less than half the US level”.

³⁵ See the title of Michael Powel’s (1997) famous book “The Audit Society. Rituals of Verification”. Oxford.

It is perhaps fair to say that talent (research) and resources (money to support students) are the only limits on demands for knowledge. But, when talent and resources are scarce, a broadening of the access to knowledge must **not** lead to diminished quality demands³⁶. *The new knowledge society as a mass-based society must not undermine the role of research based knowledge.* If knowledge dissemination and knowledge creation are in contradiction to one another, knowledge creation must have the priority for the sake of the common good. The QR , however, is shaped in the image of student consumerism and as such tailored to these customers desire. *The answer to a situation where (democratic and socially motivated) access to knowledge and creation of new high quality knowledge may be in contradiction with one another seems to be Centre of Excellence organised fairly separate from the teaching structure based on the interaction between departments, faculties and university.*

This will also guide how the new field of higher education organisations is diversified; and what new hierarchies are being created.

(...)

³⁶ This is of course a highly contested statement as underlined by the traumatic experiences of our minister for education and research, see Forskerforum, 1,2003.p.14.