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The steering of higher education systems: a public management perspective

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Abstract This article focuses on the steering of higher education systems in the light of political science and public management approaches. It first recalls that an important part of the existing literature on higher education is focused on public policies in terms of reforms and decision-making, while the other part is dedicated to discovering and understanding the policy network or the policy regimes producing these policies. Both perspectives tend to look at higher education as a specific field. By contrast, the authors state that the transformations experienced in higher education are similar to those experienced by other key public services, an can be understood as a redefinition of the role of the nation state in the public generally. They therefore suggest to look at the steering patterns in higher education by investigating the underlying 'narratives' of public management reform and their variation or combination from one European nation state to another. Three main narratives of public services reform are discussed: the New Public Management (NPM), the Network governance and the Neo-Weberian narrative. For each narrative, the authors try to predict some 'signs and symptoms' that should be observed in higher education. Drawing on this reflection, the authors finally suggest further research perspectives which could be developed.

Keywords Steering · New Public Management · Governance

Introduction

This contribution focuses on the steering of higher education systems, considering wider patterns of public sector 'reforming' and how they have been applied to higher education

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systems within the EU. It argues that although most higher education systems in Europe, but also in the US, are publicly funded, admit many more students than private universities and, by contrast with the US benefit from a higher reputation than many private institutions, higher education has rarely been studied as a public policy or management topic and so has not been one of the traditional areas covered by generic political scientists or public management scholars.

But bringing in more generic concepts from political science and public management more fully into the study of higher education institutions is a promising avenue to explore academically and may re-invigourate the study of higher education institutions. Often the higher education sector is seen as a stand alone sector which is not directly or easily comparable with other types of organisation, even within the public sector. The ideology of academic and institutional autonomy as described by Merton which is so well developed within the higher education sector supports this sectoralist approach. There may be some evidence to support this notion of difference even at the organisational level: for example, UK universities retain more self direction and less central control than some other UK public sector settings. Yet at a more fundamental level, the organisational similarities with other professionalized public sector settings such as health care are more important than the differences: European universities are largely dependent on the state for financing; the state is concerned to regulate their behaviour as they influence citizens' life chances significantly; they contain a mix of professional and bureaucratic elements and they operate within strongly structured institutionalised fields. There are many fundamental similarities with other public service settings such as health care. Within organisational analysis, they fit well with the more general archetype of the professionalized organisation developed by Mintzberg (1979).

Adopting this wider approach enables us to reconnect the micro world of higher education institutions with developments within the macro world of the state. We will also argue that there has been a move away from the traditionally Mertonian concepts of higher education autonomy: the State is now seeking to shape higher education systems more actively. The use of more generic perspectives is evident in some recent studies of higher education (Hood et al. 2004; Reed 2002; Maassen and Stensaker 2005): we here add to it through an analysis of system level steering which draws on three distinct narratives of public management reforming.

By steering, we here mean the externally derived instruments and institutional arrangements which seek to govern organisational and academic behaviours within higher education institutions. They are usually but not always emanating from the state. This article will highlight the role of the state in seeking to shape increasingly strategic higher education systems towards national policy goals through the use of reformed steering systems.

We will therefore argue:

1. The State increasingly seeks to govern and steer higher education systems as it does its other publicly funded services.
2. These steering patterns can be linked to underlying narratives of public management reform which apply to higher education subsystems as well to other public service subsystems.
3. Steering patterns vary considerably from one European nation state to another, reflecting attachment to alternative narratives, conditions of path dependency and localised reform trajectories.

How higher education governance has been analyzed

During the twentieth century, higher education was generally studied as a specific sector of state intervention. Education and research were thus considered as public goods so that the recourse to specific policies and instruments by essentially public authorities was justified.

On the one hand, an important part of the literature focused on higher education public policies in terms of public reforms and decision-making, in order to analyse (and also often prescribe) what the role of the state was and also should be in this specific domain. According to this tradition, state intervention in higher education is expected to be limited. But two alternative conceptions have more recently developed.

On the other hand, another part of the literature instead tried to identify the (collective) actors involved in the higher education sector, to describe the relationships they have one with another and to analyse the mode of regulation prevailing among them. Studying public policies and their content is here less important than discovering and understanding the policy network[1] or the policy regimes[2] producing them.

Higher education governance and higher education policies

When looking at higher education public policies and state intervention in this sector, we note that a first organising concept is strongly related to the Mertonian sociology of sciences which considers that the role of the state, if any, is to ensure the autonomy of higher education (or science more precisely). The higher education subsystem is here characterised by a high degree of autonomy and insulation from governmental steering, despite its dependence on the public purse. Some authors characterize this as "policy for science" (Rouban 1988) or "regulation by the community" (Paradeise 1998). The German idealist tradition built around the Humboldtian model, and the American functionalist sociology of professions[3] both idealised this conception. Academics are described as producers, users and owners of an esoteric knowledge whose quality or costs cannot be assessed or controlled by "profanes" (public authorities, members of the civil society, etc.). Academics therefore receive a monopoly from the state to exercise their function. The state agrees to protect them from the external influences, as long as the academic community implement norms, values and practices preventing an abusive use of their knowledge. This conception relies on an ideology of academic freedom and strong faculty control over key work practices in both domains of research and teaching. This has long been the dominant analytical and normative framework. The British higher education system until the end of the seventies provided a good example of this conception: the state allocated a public budget to the UGC (University Grant Committee), a purely academic body which then distributed it to highly collegial higher education institutions (Halsey 1992; Shattock 1999; Kogan and Hanney 2000).

A second conception attributes to the state an important role in mediating the interests of the society and orienting the development of higher education. The state is expected to

[1] The notion of policy network is used here in its descriptive heuristic meaning (following Rhoades and Marsh for instance) and not as an alternative model to pluralism and neo-corporatism to rethink state society relationships (as suggested by Lehmbruch 1995 for instance).

[2] As defined by Bleiklie (2000, p.54): "the network of patterns of influence that are particular to a policy area or an entire polity".

[3] We agree with the distinction by Bleiklie et al. (2000) between the idealist and the functionalist approaches but in this article we want to stress their convergent conceptions about the role of the state.

drive scientific activities, to control them, to command and control. Why should there be a trend to this alternative configuration? First, there is increased suspicion of the performance of traditional publicly funded service systems by publics, politicians and policy makers so that government may need to exercise its countervailing power to counter excessive endogeneity or to champions powerless consumers. From this perspective, higher education is no different from other publicly funded services (e.g. health care, criminal justice) where the State may put pressure on publicly funded providers to meet broad public policy goals (for example) to cut costs, improve quality or ensure social equity (Van der Meulen 1998). Secondly, the higher education subsystem is bigger, more expensive, politically more visible and economically more strategic and external and governmental pressures on the higher education subsystem may be expected to increase. Within the knowledge based economy, the connection between the HEI subsystem and policy goals of economic growth become sharper. The invention and diffusion of new science based technologies (e.g. recent emphasis on clinical genetics technologies) which bring together university science, venture capital, hi tech forms and government is a critical arena and this has led to an emphasis of the role of public authorities in commissioning such items as big equipment.

A third conception has stressed the role of the market in higher education governance (Dill 1996). The idea that teaching and research may be commodities rather than public goods gained attention and developed while traditional notions of academic freedom have been redefined and the image of the scientist protected from the world in an ivory tower condemned.[4] In the literature on higher education governance this is most of the time presented as a rupture with the "command and control" conception and as a drift from interventionist to "evaluative" governance (Neave 1986; Van Vught 1989, 1995; Neave and van Vught 1991, 1994): from dirigisme to supervision, from ex-ante control to ex-post evaluation, from rules to regulation (Amaral et al. 2000). This conception therefore does not herald a reduction of the state but argues for a state expected to stimulate the strength of market forces on the one hand but also to detect, prevent or repair market failures on the other. The first mission would encourage students to start to behave more like consumers. Such consumer pressure would in turn act as a helpful spur to greater quality and competition among higher education institutions would increase. With respect to the second mission, the state is here expected to set and defend broad principles (equality of access for instance) and to intervene if threatened by the increase in market-forces.

Whatever the prevailing conception, the academic works interested in higher education public policies and the role of the state mostly focus on two types of issues. On the one hand, they describe the measures included in the reforms and analyse the nature of the change at which reform objectives are aiming (for instance: is this reform a move towards the evaluative state?) (cf. for instance Goedegebuure et al. 1993; Teichler 2005a, b). On the other hand, they consist in implementation analysis in line with the studies led first by Cerych and Sabatier (1986). But, by contrast, few studies carefully reconstruct how such policies arrive on the agenda, the political entrepreneurs and the interest groups involved,[5] the way the problems are defined and constructed, how solutions are developed and the

[4] This includes politicians and university reformers but also the tenants of the "strong programme" (among many others Bloor 1976; Latour 1987; Lynch 1993) who fight against the idea of science as a different activity and of scientists as a group outside the society.

[5] In their analysis of the transformation of the British higher education system, Kogan and Hanney (2000) provide an interesting analysis of what they call the "co-opted elite", i.e. mostly academics who are recognised as interlocutors by the political and ministerial actors and contribute to the definition of the forthcoming reforms.

narratives attached to them (Radaelli 2000; Stone 1997). In brief, they rarely address the wider political economy of higher education reforming.

The study of higher education systems is often limited to state-university relationships

Looking now at the literature which is interested in the description and understanding of higher education systems, it is important to notice that higher education shares an institutional specificity with a few other public sectors such as health and justice for instance: they all consist of public institutions and a strong profession. This provides public authorities with two possible means of intervention: one focusing on universities and the other on academics.

Most publications analysing how higher education systems work and are transformed emphasize the first possibility and pay exclusively attention to the state-universities relationships. Two reasons explain such an orientation. First the content of recent public policies aiming at transforming higher education systems is salient: they often consist of reconfiguring the status, internal structures, governing bodies, field of responsibilities, decision-making processes, and scope of action of higher education institutions (Braun and Merrien 1999). Secondly, this is reinforced by the existing trends towards the devolution of more institutional autonomy to universities and the constitution of more governed, accountable and responsible institutions.

Less attention is paid to how this affects the relationships between the state and the academic profession, despite the fact that, in many European countries, faculty staffing was (or still is) not managed by universities but by the state, or at least, the state may have an impact on academic careers (cf. for instance Enders 1996, 2001; Musselin 2005). This, of course, influences the nature of the link developing between each academic and his/her institution.[6] In such cases the state may have developed more, and stronger, relationships with the representatives of the academic profession than with higher education institutions. This model, which prevailed (or still prevails) in countries influenced by the Napoleonic model like France, lead (leads) to a co-management of the system by the ministry and representatives of the profession. Consequently, the description, understanding and analysis of higher education systems cannot be reduced to the unique state-university relationships. Furthermore the relationships between the state and the universities and between the state and the profession, may be of a different nature. In Germany for instance universities have frequent, intense and at times constraining interactions with their Land ministry which are partly based on ad-hoc negotiation and partly on bureaucratic exchanges. The relationships which the Land ministry develops with the academic profession are completely different. They are rare and concentrated on a specific event: the recruitment of elite professors[7] and the negotiation of their hiring "start-up" fund. The Land Ministries then act as buyers on a market for professors.

[6] In a comparison between academic labour markets in France, Germany and the United States, Musselin (2005, Chap. 7) argued that French universities first of all work as shelters for French academics, while German universities (at least until 2001 and the progressive introduction of merit salaries) behave as investors betting on their professors when they recruit them, and US universities are engaged in a employer-wage earner relationship.

[7] This only happens for professors (Professoren), not for assistants (Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiter) and the ministry intervenes in the negotiation when extra-funding is needed to attract a top level academic. For others, the role of the ministry is to control the conformity of the hiring process. It can, and sometimes does, decide to modify the ranking established by the hiring commission.

Considering state-academics as well as state-universities relationships therefore leads to reframing the coordination triangle developed by Clark (1983). This is a call for a more complex understanding of higher education systems taking into account the fundamental potential tension they experience between organisational and profession-based forces and the way states are "coping" with this (Musselin 2001, 2004). It suggests we should not analyse only one part of higher education systems but rather emphasize their duality (organisations and profession). The too strong focus on the state-universities relationships also leads to a neglect of research on how ministries and also intermediary bodies such as agencies, research councils[8] etc. make current decisions, develop their activities, and interact on a daily basis with actors inside the sector.

Last but not least, the correlation between, on the one hand, the type of policy network/regime (which exists in each country and characterizes its higher education system) and, on the other hand, the type of public policies (in terms of content and impact) and state intervention prevailing in this country, is hardly discussed and analysed, with only a few exceptions (Kogan et al. 2000; Musselin 2001, 2004).

Three possible redefinitions of the role of the nation state which affected higher education

We will now develop the argument that European nation states are increasingly seeking to steer their higher education systems, along with other key public services, in directions which are consistent with national policies. There are three possible redefinitions of the role of the nation State evident since the 1980s, which may play out differently in different jurisdictions.

A stronger management of the public sector

A first redefinition consists of the transformation of the public sector into a more restricted and managed sector. In the UK, where this redefinition had a large impact, it might be called the New Right or Thatcherite reform strategy. But, such a trend affected all European countries and led to reforming the public sector and to a departure from the preceding period. Between the 1940s and 1980s, a number of European countries substantially increased the size of their public sector and welfare states (de Swaan 1988). The massification of higher education was one part of this wider trend, usually financed through public taxation and free to the student. At this point, the Mertonian concept of higher education autonomy in some countries and the interventionist conception in others, remained strong. From the late 1970s onwards, however, political pressure to reduce the burden of taxation associated with the large welfare state led to concerted efforts to reverse this long term pattern of public sector expansion and to ensure greater value for money, privatise nationalised industries, reduce trade union power and to increase productivity in the extended public sector. There was now a political desire to shrink the size and power of the public sector. Given the presence of well organised producer interest groups within the public sector (trade unions; professional associations), these changes were strongly resisted and led to a strong top down and confrontational management style. So there is here a

[8] The research led by Lamont with other colleagues on how some American research funding bodies make decision and select the project to be funded shows the interest such "internal" studies can have (Mallard et al. 2002; Guetzkow et al. 2002).

reinforcement of hierarchy and of command as a mode of governance. Power was being concentrated at the top of the State and indeed firms and other organisations in order to reduce the governability deficits of the 1970s. While the UK remains the index case of the New Right reform strategy, aspects of such a radical redefinition may be seen in other countries such as Sweden and even the Netherlands. Even in countries where this strategy had less impact, large reforms of the public sector were launched (see Bezes 2001, 2005 for France; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004 as well as Page and Wright 2006 for a comparison of diverse European countries) in order to improve its performance and efficiency.

High profile student unrest, the post 1968 long march through the institutions of Marxist groupings and trade union strikes put universities firmly on the radar screen of the New Right. Efficiency, value for money and ensuring strong management were concerns for politicians and policy makers in the university sector as in the other public services. Universities were asked to increase their productivity, to develop new missions and in particular to achieve a leading role in technology transfer and innovation, to reduce their operating costs, to improve their drop-out rates, to match the demands of the job market, to pay attention to the societal needs (Dill and Sporn 1995), etc. Increasing the autonomy of more strongly governed universities has repeatedly been affirmed as the best option to achieve such objectives. Reforms, e.g. those led in the Netherlands (de Boer et al. 1998; de Boer and Goedegebuure 2001), therefore aimed at reinforcing the executive leadership of universities and reducing the power of deliberative bodies and collegial governance (Braun and Merrien 1999; Braun 2002; Stölting and Schimank 2002). Such universities were equipped with managerial instruments (strategic plans, audits, etc.), tools (management software for instance), indicators (Cave et al. 1991) and practices.

As can be seen, the effects of these reforms led to significant changes in the balance of power within the higher education sector. Senior management and non executives' power bases were strengthened. On the other hand, public sector trade unions and rank and file faculty lost power. The State intervened more actively in the higher education system and in a more self confident manner.

In parallel, the role of the state in the provision of higher education has been redefined in various ways. In some countries, like Portugal, the development of the private sector has been encouraged in order to cover the lack of capacity in higher. In others, reductions in public funding occurred (in 1981 for instance, deep and very visible cuts were made in the budgets of some UK), leading to reducing the number of academic positions despite the increase in student numbers (in Germany for instance, according to Enders 2000). This led universities to search for other forms of funding, while some countries (the United Kingdom again, but also Germany and Austria for instance) stimulated the participation of family funding by increasing or introducing fees. In all countries except perhaps the UK, finally, the balance between the ministry and higher education institutions has been modified in favour of the latter.

This redefinition of the role of the state in providing and funding higher education has been accompanied by attempts at transforming the modes of action of the ministers. As highlighted by Bleiklie (2000), the traditional tools did not disappear: governing by rules remain current in higher education and many countries but many new instruments of governance also flourished. Some of them aim at delegating decision-making to new kind of bodies: this lead to the creation of intermediary bodies such as agencies of all kind. Others, like contracts for instance, aim at introducing ad-hoc negotiations. Still others consist in abandoning ex-ante control in favour of ex-post evaluation: this provoked the irresistible expansion of assessment/evaluation bodies all over Europe (Campbell 2003; Schwarz and Westerheijden 2004).

Rather than a disengagement of the state, this reflects a new form of state engagement in higher education. Universities are being increasingly identified as "key actors" (as knowledge diffusers, research producers and innovation inducers) in "knowledge societies", European governments have never been so attentive to higher education and research than today. Universities are on the policy agenda in every country and governments search for means enabling a less expensive and more efficient management of the sector.

The "hollowing out" of the nation state

A second redefinition consists of the "hollowing out" of the nation state (Rhodes 1997; Pierre 2000; Frederickson 2005) and the emergence of network governance mode of public management. In this account, the nation state is losing functions, legitimacy and authority to an increasing range of alternative actors: Multi national corporations (such as British Petroleum) have long acted as alternative power centres to the nation state, now reinforced by conditions of economic globalisation and the rapid move of capital across borders. New electronic systems of communication also pay little attention to national borders. Functions move from the nation state upwards to the EU level (including the Lisbon process) or downwards to strong regions. In many countries, the regions received more prerogatives through decentralisation Acts. As a result the number of public actors directly involved within the management of a public sector increased. Furthermore, routine service delivery functions are contracted out to a range of non state providers. Political parties are in decline; but social movement organisations (such as Greenpeace and Oxfam) grow. Legitimacy deficits lead State actors to consult with non State actors and to form coalitions to secure political support. Command led control systems give way to network based forms of management.

While in many European countries, the Post Second World War period has been characterized by quasi monopolistic relationships between the national authorities and their higher education systems, profound changes occurred in the eighties and upwards. Higher Education is one important function which may be devolved from the national to the augmented regional level, but which also operates at a EU level. The role of regional/local public authorities in higher education increased.[9] This move has been allowed either by the devolution of prerogatives on higher education to specific territories (United Kingdom, Spain), by an increase in autonomy on these issues to already decentralised units (Germany; see Kehm and Lanzendorf 2006) or by the voluntary action of some local actors to be recognised a say[10] (France).

The implication of supra-national actors in higher education is somewhat more complicated as the European Commission formally has no competence on this issue. Nevertheless, as clearly and precisely shown by Corbett (2005), it does not mean that there exists no European policy on higher education (cf. for instance the Erasmus programmes and the creation of ECTS). Furthermore the European Commission has competence over research and has developed for more than 20 years Framework Programmes, which impact

[9] In many countries this recreated the situation prevailing before the Second World War when the development of universities was deeply intertwined with the trajectory of the local territory where they were located.

[10] In France the laws of decentralisation did not concern higher education which remains a national issue. But since the mid 1980s, local actors (regions, departments or cities) claim involvement in decisions pertaining to higher education and affect part of their budgets to fund equipments, buildings, fellowships, research projects and even some faculty positions.

on European universities through the funding of collaborative research projects. Last, but not least, intergovernmental initiatives such as the Bologna process, even if not led by the EU,[11] affected the national systems of the signing countries (Alesi et al. 2005; Krücken et al. 2005; Witte 2006; Musselin forthcoming) and cannot be ignored by the national education ministries. To these rather direct influences, one could finally add the more indirect role of actors such as the OECD in the development of international benchmark and good practices.

Consequently, higher education institutions operate in regional, national and international networks simultaneously and have to engage with a wide range of different stakeholder groups. The distribution of power is diffuse and pluralist. Indeed the proliferation of different networks may become bewildering, leading to a sense that there is no one actor who can be held effectively accountable. There is no crude concentration of power in the hands of the upper echelons or disempowering of public sector trade unions or academic faculty who remain important stakeholders. The State *holds the ring* rather than intervene directly within the sector. Further analysis is needed to discover whether some higher education network actors are nevertheless more powerful than others: this may be linked to control over finance or the possession of a central or nodal position within the network. Networks may also be dominated by closed social elites rather than being open to democratic forces.

The democratic revitalisation

A third redefinition of the state concerns attempts to ensure the *democratic revitalisation* of pathological and over bureaucratised traditional forms of public administration. In many South American countries, for example, writers on the post military governments which have emerged over the last 20 years stress the importance of the democratic basis of the state where the individual is seen as a citizen and not an object (see Bresser-Pereira 2004 on developments in public management in Brazil). DeLeon (2005) sees the development of more participative forms of public management as a strategy for responding to falling levels of trust in government. This argument is close to that of Manin (1996) who explains the rise of the deliberative democracy through an experience of the limits of the representative democracy.

Consequently, the monopoly on expertise previously recognized to public servants has been discussed and critiqued as well as their capacity to define public interest. This leads to a stress on more participation from various stakeholders in the construction of public decisions. Profane knowledge was recognized as a form of expertise in its own right while new devices were created to multiply the opportunity of participation and deliberation in the direction of larger circles. Such trends are observable in comparable public services arenas: technology assessment arenas in such areas as evidence based health care, consensus conferences (Joss and Durant 1995), hybrid forums (Callon et al. 2001), and deliberative bodies at the national level (for instance the "Commission nationale du débat public" in France) have all expanded.

Within the University context, this democratising redefinition would suggest strong staff and student and stakeholder's participation in the governance of the institution. This took different forms. Some countries (e.g. Germany, Netherlands and Norway) passed new laws

[11] But the EU, and more precisely the Commission, is part of the process and Racké (2006) for instance argues that this process, although intergovernmental, facilitates the (indirect) intervention of the Commission on higher education and legitimates the production of "commission papers" on this topic.

and created university boards (Mayntz 2002), consisting partly or exclusively of non-university members, expected to play the role of the American board of trustees and to set priorities, approve the budget, validate strategies etc. Others, like the United Kingdom introduced non-academic members in their national research councils.

Democratising would also lead to a stress on the social function of the University as a key part of local civil society and strong interactions with local stakeholders. Teaching may be delivered through non traditional modes and research is likely to include a strong applied and useful emphasis. Some authors (Gibbons et al. 1994; Novotny et al. 2001) announced a transition of knowledge production processes from "Mode 1" to "Mode 2", i.e. a drift from research agendas defined by academics according to their discipline to research agendas defined in order to solve multidisciplinary societal needs and problems.

In terms of the distribution of power, there is a strong scepticism about according too much power to senior leaders and a demand for traditional forms of democratic accountability (including elections of Rectors). The base becomes more important vis-à-vis the apex. Universities also become more connected to influence from their local publics and less endogenous. Elected representatives become more assertive in higher education policy making, locally as well as nationally. Higher education institutions become less bureaucratised and more vital as the development of active systems of externally facing dialogue influences and broadens the well developed and inward facing organisational apparatus located within higher education institutions. So power may shift to those with political skills and bases, and those able to engage in acts of collective organisation.

Three main narratives of public sector reforming and how they apply to higher education

In the previous section, three principal redefinitions of the role of the state were outlined, which can be observed in all European countries and affected all their higher education systems. Each nevertheless occurred with more or less intensity from one part of Europe to the other. They also combined in a different manner. While the hollowing out of the state often happened along with some concerns for democratic revitalisation, countries more focused on reinforcing the management of their public sector were less affected by the two other types of redefinition. Finally the same transformation may have taken different forms. For instance, the transformation of the public sector has been strongly associated with managerialism in some countries and with modernization in others.

In order to make sense of these diverging implementations and analyse the transformations experienced by different countries and their higher education systems, it is suggested that we should link them to three main narratives of public services reform: the New Public Management, the Network governance and the Neo-Weberian narrative.[12] They are called narratives because they are not pure analytical frameworks aiming at comprehension (in the Weberian sense): they all mix technical and also political and normative elements. They each tell a policy and management story, which has been more or less influential in each country. Each time, the manner in which the narrative applies the higher education sector will be developed.

[12] The perspective adopted in this third section is close to Braun's (2006) contribution and analysis of different rationales in of S&T policies. In particular what he calls the "modernisation cluster" can be associated to the NPM narrative while the "postmodern cluster" can be related to the network governance narrative.

The New Public Management

The NPM is a well known public sector reform wave emerging in the UK under the Thatcher governments of the 1980s but which has also been influential internationally in such jurisdictions as Sweden and New Zealand (Hood 1991, 1995; Ferlie et al. 1996). The UK has exported some NPM reform instruments globally (privatisation; devolved executive agencies) so the NPM was more than a narrow UK trend. The NPM relies on (1) markets (or quasi markets) rather than planning, (2) strong performance measurement, monitoring and management systems, with a growth of audit systems rather than tacit or self regulation and (3) empowered and entrepreneurial management rather than collegial public sector professionals and administrators (Andresani and Ferlie 2006). The NPM seeks to produce a smaller, more efficient and more results orientated public sector. It is influenced by ideas in organisational economics such as principal agent theory which stress incentives and performance. There is a concentration on goals of efficiency, value for money and performance rather than democracy or legitimacy. There is a suspicion of monopoly public sector producers (including public sector professionals) and a desire to shift power to consumers and managers and to increase the strength of hierarchy, either directly through line management or indirectly through strong contracts within a principal/agent framework. Here the centre sets the strategic framework and governance instruments (steering not rowing); and the periphery is given operational freedom to deliver but only within this strategic framework. NPM ideas are often *owned* by the Ministry of Finance or the Prime Minister's/President's office rather than the spending departments such as the Ministry of Education and are imposed on public services at the field level in a top down fashion.

There may be some tension between these three underlying principles and different NPM subtypes have emerged (Ferlie et al. 1996) but contrary to the institutionalist view that public sector reforms have only superficial impact, Ferlie et al. found that at least in the sector of UK health care, the impact on NPM reforms on intermediate indicators of organisational process had been considerable.

Furthermore, a recent overview (Ferlie et al. 2005) found substantial evidence of NPM breadth and depth and concluded that it would as yet be premature to conclude that the era of NPM was over. Even late comers as France finally adopted NPM reforms, without using this labelling nevertheless: the recent introduction of new public budget procedures (the LOLF: "loi organique sur la loi de finances") follows the main principles described above.

In terms of the application of NPM ideas to the higher education sector, we would predict the following signs and symptoms:

(a) Market based reforms: stimulation of competition for students and research funding between higher education institutions; role of the state is to develop the *thin* higher education market; policy stress on diversity and choice rather than integration and planning; encouragement of private sector providers to enter the market; market exit of failed public providers is acceptable;
(b) development of real *prices* for teaching fees and research contracts as a basis on which trading in this market can take place;
(c) a hardening of soft budgetary constraints: stress on financial control, recovery from budget deficits, efficiency and value for money;
(d) introduction of higher student fees to empower students as consumers and drive up teaching quality levels;

(e) elaboration of explicit measurement and monitoring of performance in both research and teaching; development of audit and checking systems (auditisation variant of NPM);
(f) concentration of funds in the highest performing higher education institutions (incentivisation of the supply side);
(g) the Ministry and its agencies attempt to steer the system vertically, through setting explicit targets and performance contracts;
(h) development of *strong rectorates* and non executive members drawn from business; move to appointed rather than elected senior posts; reduction in the representation of faculty and trade unions in higher education institutions' governance; reduction in influence of local government (Reed 2002);
(i) development of stronger and more overt managerial roles by senior academics at vice chancellor and the head of department level (Jarrett 1985; Reed 2002); development of 'management must manage' doctrines and practices (liberation management NPM subtype);
(j) growth of performance related pay for faculty and private sector style Human Resource Management;

The UK remains a key index case for NPM and an exporter of NPM reforms. Within the UK, specific public services varied in the timing of the importation of key NPM ideas and in the capacity of the centre to impose them on the field while health care can be seen as an early mover (e.g. Griffiths 1983 on NHS general management; Jarrett 1985 on strengthening the executive role of the Vice Chancellor) with a lower capacity of the centre to impose change. Nevertheless, the capacity of the planning council to incentivise and persuade individual higher education institutions is considerable and should not be underestimated.

Nevertheless the influence of NPM goes far beyond the UK. Some of the "signs and symptoms" described above are observable in other countries and some (as the "a") in almost all. Just to take a few examples, the higher education system in the Netherlands has been strongly influenced by the NPM narratives and meets at least six of them (c, e, g, h, i and j) and some partially (b, for example). In a country like Germany, where the NPM narrative had less success, five signs (c, d, f, g and j) are present nowadays, while many of the measures of the recent Norwegian "Quality reform" meet the NPM symptoms.

Network governance narrative

Political scientists in the 1990s pointed to the hollowing out of the traditional nation state as functions moved upwards or downwards (Rhodes 1997) away from the national ministerial level, or had to be negotiated with many social actors within the implementation phase (thus often relying on more deliberative democracy). Understanding and indeed reconceptualising *implementation deficits* through the development of more bottom up and emergent models of implementation was an early contribution of this literature.

But the creation of the *hollow state* raises a governance problem (Klijn 2005). Given an outsourcing of direct responsibility for production through privatisation, outsourcing and agentification, the State now had to steer through contract, alliance building and partnership and persuasion rather than hierarchy. The concept of multi level *governance* emerged to make sense of these new conditions. *Governance* was a deliberately looser term than the old concept of *government* (Le Galès 1995; Borraz and Le Galès 2001; Kooiman 2003). It not only refers to network based forms of organising -which were already emerging in the

private sector (Pettigrew and Fenton 2000)—but also to allow more balance among the involved actors, more deliberative democracy and, consequently, the co-production of public policies among more numerous, more diverse and more equal actors.

Some writers saw this as an emergent post NPM organisational form (Newman 2001), better able to cope with high levels of social complexity and uncertainty than the top down, *silo based* and state centric approach of the NPM.

Within this later analysis, the NPM was poorly adapted to coping with complex or *wicked* policy issues which cross traditional boundaries and demand lateral working (e.g. anti drugs policy). Increased policy complexity may be characteristic of later modern governmental systems (e.g. climate change and food safety). The network governance model builds on other criticisms of the NPM. Building linkages across public policy actors in order to deliver complex change is a key theme (Klijn 2005). There were excessive transaction costs associated with escalating and often substantively pointless NPM driven audit systems (Power 1997) which also led to a dangerous disengagement of public sector professionals (doctors, teachers, and academics) from the official change agenda.

Within the network governance narrative, a greater range of actors and interactions emerges, and the central state plays more of an influencing and less of a directing role. It governs with society and not above it (Padron 2006). There is a shift from vertical to lateral forms of management. There is devolution of power downwards from the centre of the nation state to lower tiers and also upwards to higher including European tiers. In such systems, coordinating power is shared between social actors, possibly operating at multiple levels of analysis. Knowledge and *best practice* spreads across the network, based in high trust, repeated interactions and a *clannish* culture. There is dense interaction and inter dependency between network partners. The network develops self organising and self steering capacity. The role of the State is distinctive only as a relationship facilitator: it brings actors together, builds trust, arbitrates and verifies interactions (Padron 2006; Klijn 2005). *Joined up* policy needs to bring together various executive agencies and other non governmental actors as co producers of a complex good. Accountability relationships are a way of *giving account* to local publics are not an ex post state driven system of checking. This narrative builds on the pioneering work of a number of French and Dutch public policy scholars on network based forms of public management (Le Gales 1995; Kickert et al. 1997; Klijn 2005).

Instead of the NPM policy mix of hierarchies plus markets, the public management network becomes within this narrative the prime instrument of coordination. There are some strong similarities with the science policy literature on so called Mode 2 knowledge production (Gibbons et al. 1994; Novotny et al. 2001) which stresses co production of knowledge between the higher education institutions and an extended range of non traditional actors. However, some networks form integrated and cohesive *policy communities* which are captured by a narrow range of powerful interest groups (Rhodes 1998).

In terms of policy and management implications for the higher education sector, the network-governance narrative implies:

(a) there is little emphasis on the market based reforms, price setting or hard budgetary constraints found in NPM; rather the development of higher education networks between higher education institutions and between higher education institutions and other social actors is an alternative policy instrument which is used rather than markets or hierarchies;
(b) these networks are not simply managed from above, but develop substantial self steering and self organising capacity;

(c) leading edge knowledge, organisational learning, joint problem recognition and solving capacity and *best practice* diffuse through these networks and drive up quality across the system;
(d) there is a damping down of the audit based control systems found in NPM and a move back to lighter touch systems of regulation and even reformed systems of professional self regulation;
(e) higher education institutions are located within an increasingly complex multi level governance system; they relate not only to the national ministry and its agencies, but increasingly to tiers of regional and local government and also up to the EU level; these tiers also seek to steer higher education institutions;
(f) higher education institutions increasingly relate to a range of non governmental stakeholders such as firms and civil society as well as governmental agencies; some of them may also seek to steer universities towards commercially helpful forms of teaching and research;
(g) the ministry of education and its higher education agencies adopt an indirect and shaping role: it holds the ring between many different actors as the ultimate guardian of the public interest;
(h) there is the development of collaborations, consortia and strategic alliances between higher education institutions which can be hybrid states between stand alone status for each higher education institution and mergers;
(i) higher education institutions governance systems are recast to become more pluralist, participative and less directive; notions of accountability as *giving an account* to other stakeholders through face to face dialogue;
(j) in terms of senior management style, there is an emphasis on softer leadership skills, visioning and networking based approaches; there is an emphasis on distributed leadership and team based approaches rather than the highly individualised management typical of NPM;
(k) HRM systems reward high performing teams rather than individuals; there is only limited salary differentiation in order to preserve collective purpose within the network.

As mentioned above, no country can be described as an index case, but some signs can be found in different cases. In France, for instance, four symptoms are present (a, b, c, and h) and two are partially observable (e and g). In particular, the recent possibility for French higher education institutions to join into a common super-structure called PRES (pole of research and higher education) is very typical for sign "h". In Germany the emergence of various accreditation agencies provides a good example of the development of an increasing indirect role of the state ("g"). And sign ("e") is relevant to most European countries with the development of higher education and research policies at the European level and the strengthening of infra-national levels (regions, *Länder* etc.) in many cases.

The Neo-Weberian narrative

The New Weberian narrative may be seen as an operationalising of the principles of democratic revitalisation within public management reform. Within European public management, Pollitt and Bouckeart's (2004) discussion of public management reforming suggested that there was a subtype of so called Weberian or *Rechtsstaat* States (such as Germany and France) which were characterised by a well developed civil service with special legal status and an elaborate body of administrative law. These conditions led to a

high degree of bureaucratisation of the public sector, which became inwards facing and emphasised procedural rather than substantive rationality. At the same time, there was an underlying attachment to the procedural equity and attachment to due process which this form also provided. Under these conditions, Pollitt and Bouckeart (2004) argue that so called Neo-Weberian reforms have tried to combine a reassertion of some fundamental Weberian principles:

(a) reaffirmation of the role of the state as the main facilitator of solutions to new social and political problems; in the higher education system, this implies that the state should continue to steer the higher education sector strongly as it is of strategic significance to society as a whole
(b) reaffirmation of the role of representative democracy (central, regional and local) as the legitimating apparatus in the state apparatus; in the higher education system, this implies enhanced scrutiny and debate by elected politicians at al these three levels of higher education policies and budgets; internally, this implies the use of elections for senior management positions such as rectors and heads of department and also non executive advisory roles within the higher education institutions' own governance structure;
(c) reaffirmation of the role of administrative law—suitably modernised—in preserving basic principles in the state-citizen relationship; in the higher education system, this would imply a rejection of top down leadership and a retention of strong notions of due process, albeit in a simplified and less juridified form;
(d) preservation of the idea of a public service with a distinctive status, culture and terms and conditions; in the higher education system, this implies restrictions in the move of senior personnel from the private into the higher education sector; the protection of a tenured academic *core* and limits on the use of a contract based and flexible academic workforce; the upholding of academic *honour code* and effective self regulation; and the preservation of a distinct and protected HRM system.

With *Neo* elements such as:

(e) shift from an internal orientation towards bureaucratic rules to an external orientation in meeting citizens' needs. This would imply in the higher education system the development of *outwards* facing service planning and quality assurance systems mechanisms which have academic ownership but also refer to citizens' (as well as students) needs and preferences; it also implies the development of citizen focussed academic faculty or new professionals who look beyond internal reference groups;
(f) supplementation (not replacement of) representative democracy by a range of devices for consultation with citizens; this would include the creation and use of focus groups, stakeholder fora and more elaborate consultation processes which feed into strategy making;
(g) a modernisation of laws to encourage a greater achievement of results rather than the correct following of process; shift from ex ante to ex post control systems; within the higher education systems, this implies a streamlining of rules and regulations and a greater results orientation (there may also be a link to NPM here);
(h) a professionalisation of the public service so that the bureaucrat is not just a legal expert but a professional manager, orientated to meeting the needs of citizens; similar effects may be expected as with indicator (a) above;

The progressive growth of the regional governmental level in France since the 1980s—with competence in the higher education sphere—is a good example of this type of

reforming, as is the enhanced politics of higher education policy making (linked to a debate about public finance) apparent in the newly devolved UK territories of Scotland and Wales.

Further perspectives

As shown in the preceding pages, questions of steering and governance in higher education, and its recent transformations have already been frequently addressed. But we also highlighted some missing or promising issues. In this last section of the article, three main perspectives will be suggested. The first relies on the hypothesis that public/political governance of higher education will remain influential and important but tries to analyse how it will evolve. The second also builds on this hypothesis to question the outcomes of higher education governance. The third and last point, on the contrary, suggests the potential emergence of other forms of regulation of the higher education sector, escaping the control, steering and political influence of any levels of public authorities (regional, national or supra-national) and proposes the development of further research on these interstitial changes which are already observable.

Deepening the reflection on the three narratives

The first perspective consists in further developing the reflection based on the three narratives presented above into three directions.

Alternative long term tracks of change in higher education governance narratives

Both the NPM, network governance and Neo-Weberian narratives can be seen as ideal types of public sector organisation. In empirical cases, on the other hand, there may often be found to be a mixture of the three at the same time within a hybrid form. In terms of theoretical emplacement, Hinings and Greenwood's (1988) (also Hinings et al. 1999) work on "organisational archetypes" and alternative tracks of organisational change in such sectors as accounting firms is useful here and we draw on some of their thinking.

- There may be *hybrids*: a mixture of NPM, network governance and Neo-Weberian forms. One question is whether such hybrids are stable or whether they contain internal contradictions, so that eventually there will be movement back to one pure form; can there be *sedimented* as well as transformational organisational change which involves movement from one archetype to another (Hinings et al. 1999)?
- *Oscillations*: over time, a system may oscillate from one narrative to another and back again. For example, the UK may have moved from a NPM towards a network governance form and then back again more recently with the revival of quasi market forces in higher education.

These two first points plea for reconsidering the existing studies and interpreting them in the light of the three preceding narratives (rather than only one) and over a long time period.

A further issue raised from Hinings and Greenwoods deals with the prospect of radical change (vs) superficial adoption: these authors suggest that systems which move towards a pure form are more likely to experience rapid and simultaneous change to structure, systems and ideology alike (Barnett 2003). An institutionalist perspective (Meyer and

Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; March and Olsen 1989) would by contrast suggest that only superficial adoption of reforms is likely. The professional bureaucratic *core* of higher education institutions insulate themselves from external pressures by decoupling the centre of the University from policy demands. The limited diffusion of reforms from the macro to the micro level was one of the main conclusions of the Norway-Sweden-United Kingdom comparative project on the transformation of their respective higher education systems (Kogan et al. 2000).

This last point stresses the need for more ambitious research looking simultaneously at structure, systems and ideology, but also at different levels (policy regimes, institutions, actors) and different dimensions (practices, identities, relationships) in trying to explain how and why some reforms may affect all forms, levels and dimensions while others provoke decoupling between the different aspects.

Instruments and tools pertaining to these three narratives

In many countries, higher education has been an important substantive field for the introduction of new tools for public management and governance pertaining to the three narratives reviewed above. Looking more closely at these instruments in terms of the theory they incorporate (Foucault 1998; Lascoumes and Le Galès 2004), and of course in terms of their (expected and non-expected) effects would be very interesting. At first approximation, these new instruments can be organised in different categories and related to different narratives.[13]

Among the more interesting instruments, those linked to evaluation occupy an important place. Within this category, the introduction in the mid/late 1980s of QAA (teaching) and RAE (research) in the UK can both be seen as classic NPM based instruments of steering. Both have remained up to the present and were not abolished with the change of government in 1997. While the transaction costs around escalating QAA systems (Power 1997) led to increased disquiet amongst Vice Chancellors and were damped down in the early 2000s in favour of lighter touch reviews; RAE has continued and even accelerated.

A second category concerns the new formula developed for the allocation of budget and human resources. They are also mostly NPM based but some (based on contractual relationships and compatible with the network governance narrative) intend to better acknowledge the specificity of each institution, while others first of all relies on formalised formula acting as economic incentives, aiming at transforming individual behaviours. Among this category of tools, one can find rather atypical instruments aiming at identifying a very small number of winners to which large amounts of resources are dedicated: for instance, the on-going *Excellenzinitiative* which will identify the 10 best German universities[14] and allocate to them huge amount of resources.

A third group consists of good examples of network governance. The devolution of responsibility for higher education policy making to the newly devolved assemblies in Scotland and Wales after 1997; the stress of academic leadership development and the more recent encouragement of inter higher education institutions' strategic alliances and collaboration by the funding council (HEFCE) would be good illustrations for the UK. In France, one can mention the PRES ("Pôles d'enseignement supérieur et de recherché")

[13] It is again close to Braun's (2006) approach when the author questions the link between the instrument link in S&T policies and the mix of policy rationales.

[14] But also the 40 best graduate programmes and the 30 scientific clusters. 1, 9 billion Euros will be allocated.

and their ambition to enhance cooperation among higher education institutions located in the same territory.

A last category of new instruments deal with the institutional creation of intermediate bodies in charge of new missions or of existing ones previously achieved by public authorities. They can either be understood as a tribute to the NPM, the network governance or the Neo-Weberian narrative, according to the rationales and the concrete implementation they lead to in each national context The development of national research councils in many countries but also at the EU level with the recent implementation of the ERC (European Research Council) is typical of this move. The creation of accreditation agencies is also a good example.

By looking more carefully to instruments two different research perspectives may be opened.

First, following the paths opened by Lascoumes and Le Galès (2004), this multiplication of instruments could lead to the following questionings.

- *Instrumentation and the re-composition of the state*: what can be learned about the redefinition of the state, public action and public management in higher education through these instruments?
- *Change in public policies*: how far do discussions and agreements about instruments de-politicise the debates on higher education in making the construction of consensus on formal apparently neutral equipments easier?
- *Instrumentation as implicit incorporated theory*: what are the political stakes hidden behind new instruments listed above? What do they tell us about the exercise and transformation of political power on higher education institutions?
- *Instrumentation and its specific effects* (i.e. unexpected effects: inertia, production of a specific representation and problematisation of the issues at stake): how do the new instruments produce new conceptions/representations about higher education, what are their unexpected effects, how do they empower some actors weaken others?

Secondly, these instruments are not higher education institutions' specific but may well reflect wider patterns and allow for fruitful inter-sectoral comparison.

Narratives and new levels of governance

Most of the time the analysis of public governance modes in terms of narratives focuses on public policies, reforms, decisions made at the national level. Yet, as described above, higher education as a public sector has experienced the development both of regional and European forms of governance along side the nation state. This raises new issues. In particular, we consider the debate on Europeanization as a promising route because it seems to summarise most of the debates touched upon above. To begin with, the very notion of (multi-level) governance has been devised to make sense of this strange entity called EU. Empirically it is our aim to see how the impact of Europeanization on higher education institutions will be played out. It is difficult to underplay the importance of this process in view of the key significance of higher education institutions for national systems of innovation and the wider European political economy.

But such a perspective should also deal with other issues. First the analysis of European governance on higher education within the framework of the three narratives developed above has yet not been conducted. At first glance, and at first approximation, one could suggest that, in this sector, intergovernmental processes (such as the Bologna process; see

Ravinet 2005), the recourse of methods of coordination (Gornitzka 2006) and soft law (Abbott and Snidal 2000) illustrate forms of network governance, while some of the policies led by the Commission would be closer to NPM or Neo-Weberian narratives.

Qualifying and analysing the narratives of higher education governance emerging at the European level raises two further issues:

- the combination of these different narratives pushed by (at least partly different) actors should also be studied, and
- the interplay and combination between the narratives of the European level and those characterizing higher education governance in each EU country, and their impact on Europeanization processes.

The higher education governance reforms and a research base

The Public management *reforms* often associated with normative assumptions from their political sponsors and interested sponsoring reformers (e.g. NPM is more efficient than the traditional bureaucracy, a strong university government is better than a weak one, governance is better than exclusive relationships between the state and universities). They are calls to political and collective action as well as evidence based *solutions*, and have to be to survive in the political arena. Many critics of NPM similarly engage in normative rather than empirical argument: NPM will destroy participation and collegiality and emphasises quantity rather than quality.

There is an international industry in public management reform which brings together buyers and sellers of reforms. Why do some reforms diffuse internationally while others remain of local significance? Within general public management reform, Mathiasen (2005) points out some of the key international diffusion agents such as the OECD and World Bank (the EU may also play an important role). For developing countries, for example, World Bank loans may be conditional on the adoption of an approved public management reform strategy. Management consultancy firms (Saint Martin 2005) also diffuse favoured reform strategies across public sector organisations. There may be think tanks or high profile politicians, civil servants or indeed academics who act as diffusion agents internationally. This would be an interesting theme to look at within the higher education context. So the adoption of higher education reforms is not just a rational process but also contains elements of managerial 'fads and fashions.

Nevertheless, one important question which can legitimately be raised from the point of view of evidence based policy is: do these higher education reforms *work*? This is a vast question which raises theoretical, methodological and empirical issues. What are the criteria and theoretical framework for deciding whether a reform *works* or not? How can the impact of a reform be isolated from many other confounding variables? How can we gather appropriate evidence? What do high quality research designs look like in this field? How do we compare before and after? How can we measure the effects of reform, not only quantitatively but also in terms of quality?

The development of a high quality research base in higher education reforming is then an important long term objective which needs further thought, coordination and investment. The higher education research base appears to be less well developed than the research base in health care management where we see the development of initiatives such as the Campbell Collaboration to codify high quality knowledge. In the absence of a strong primary research base, policy level reflection would be a shorter term way forward,

drawing on a search of the literature which has been published and interpreting it in terms of its relevance for policy.

Towards the dismissal of public governance in higher education?

A last research perspective to be developed relies on a hypothesis which is the opposite of the assumption on which the two preceding points were based. It questions the capacity of public governance to maintain its influence and role over all or parts of higher education systems. It therefore focuses on facts, areas, and events which could potentially escape (are already escaping) local, national as well as supra-national governance.

Such research should focus on new forms of internationalisation. The first one concerns the type of relationships such institutions are developing among themselves. It is based on "coopetition" as some form small clusters of highly reputable institutions which cooperate and at the same time compete on the same markets for top students, top academics and resources. As a result, selective networks of elite institutions (such as the Russell group in the United Kingdom) are no longer national, they tend to develop within a regional area (the League of European Research Universities, LERU, for instance) or at the international level (for instance Universitas 21 or the Worldwide Universities Network).

The second element to mention is that most of these international networks are rather recent and based on self-selection. They are also multimodal. Along the multi-continental clusters, there also exist some inter-regional networks developed by regional public authorities or more focused agreements among two or three institutions on joint-programmes or degrees.

All these initiatives cannot be compared and further studies would be needed to see whether they are pure windows or active supra-national structures. How far are they used by some of the concerned institutions to develop curricula or degrees which then escape the national regulations? How far do they contribute to the production of highly qualified international manpower trained for international or supra-national organisations rather than for national purposes? How far can national public authorities or supra-national bodies (the EU for instance, or the GATTS) exercise control over these networks and the institutions belonging to them? Are multinational higher education institutions, comparable with multinational corporations (BP or EDF for instance) emerging? Looking at this process from the other way round, how far do these clusters of institutions, or universities playing on a global rather than on the national market, have an impact on national governance.[15] These are further issues to study in order not only to focus on governance but also on potential ungoverned policy and organisational 'territories'.

Concluding discussion

We hope to have connected the study of changing patterns of higher education institutions' organisation and management with wider concepts drawn from political science, organisation theory and an emergent body of work in public management. We have argued:

– that many of the organisational and managerial reforms apparent in higher education cannot be studied in isolation but have to be considered as part of a broader pattern of

[15] Empty or real threat? Some British observers mentioned the possibility for Oxford and Cambridge of threatening the British government to recruit only overseas students if no increases of fees occurred.

public sector reforming; the State seeks to steer higher education subsystems as it does other publicly funded service delivery subsystems;
- that individual reforms should not be considered in isolation or as one off tactical responses but instead relate to narratives of reforming. We have highlighted the NPM and network governance as alternative narratives of public sector reforming and drawn out some researchable indicators;
- that alternative long term tracks of change can be distinguished;
- that national conditions of path dependency continue to have impact and that convergence onto one track is unlikely;

We have also drawn attention to the lack of a well developed research base in this field—a first step would be to codify what has already been published by academic teams across the EU but high quality longitudinal and perhaps comparative (both cross national and cross sectoral) studies are also needed to generate primary data.

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