

The Governance of the Global University: Leadership and Policy Challenges



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This paper takes as its starting point the argument that the ‘global university’ is better conceived as a complex hybrid than as a genuinely transformative type of institution. The fundamental challenges of governance which it poses are correspondingly conceptualised primarily in terms of the need to strike difficult balances across multiple, competing demands. The analysis is developed in two broad stages. The first part of the paper problematises the idea of globalisation as related to higher education policy, highlighting both the limits of the phenomenon and its intrinsic contradictions. The second part of the paper then explores the significance of this understanding for institutional leadership, looking in turn at issues of internal governance and the management of external policy congruence.

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For your convenience, all articles have already been organised by chapter and subchapter online at www.lg-handbook.info. This article, A 8-2, has been assigned to:

Chapter A: Contexts and Concepts
Subchapter 8: Changing external contexts

1. Introduction

The ‘global university’ has become a dominant reference point in contemporary higher education policy discourse. Although inevitably invested with multiple meanings, the term is virtually always associated with what is deemed to be a transformation. The global university, as an institution, is seen as qualitatively (if not paradigmatically) distinct from its historical predecessors. The structures and practices associated with traditional university models (such as the Humboldtian), or even those identified with the post-war ‘multiversity’ and the movement towards mass higher education (Kerr, 2001 [1963]; Fallis, 2007), are regarded as having been overtaken by a new set of globally defined challenges. This new type of institution is centrally defined by its place in ‘the great brain race’ (Wildavsky, 2010), a global competition for status and talent in which clear ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ will emerge in the battle for scarce resources.

Globalisation as ‘Disembedding’

Underlying this discourse of the global university is an understanding of globalisation as having a ‘disembedding’ effect on higher education institutions. This dynamic is well explained by Beerkens (2004, p. 13), who defines globalisation as ‘a process in which basic social arrangements ... become disembedded from their spatial context (mainly the nation-state) due to the acceleration, massification, flexibilisation, diffusion and expansion of transnational flows of people, products, finance, images and information’. This definition captures the broad structural changes that distinguish globalisation as a process which renders borders irrelevant from more limited forms of internationalisation connected with the growth of cross-border exchange (cf. Teichler, 2004). For higher education institutions, the implication is thus that they have ‘slipped the leash’ of national (or sub-national) control, albeit to be confronted with the different disciplines of an international marketplace.

Globalisation as ‘Disassembling’

Beyond an explicit concern with disembedding, much of the discourse surrounding the global university is also predicated on an implicit assumption of what might (inelegantly) be termed ‘disassembling’. The traditional university, and in a somewhat different guise its post-war successor, could be understood as forming a community. Teaching and research were understood as integrated activities, fundamentally dependent upon and enriching one another. This university community was, in turn, connected to its wider societal environment through a multiplicity of formal and informal channels. Many of the developments associated with the emergence of the global university, however, have the effect of fragmenting these shared communities. The management of research as a distinct activity geared to the maximisation of performance in global or national rankings risks increasingly disconnecting it from the classroom (and often societal engagement as well). At the same time, the growth of ‘for profit’ universities puts forward a model in which courses are delivered essentially as con-

sumer goods, detached from the scholarly environments which shape and sustain their content. In a different vein, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) pose the challenge of a virtual environment, relativising the role of the university as a physical place of interchange, and perhaps in the longer term even leading to the significant disappearance of this role.

While both the disembedding and the disassembling tendencies discussed above would seem to point to a progressive disembodiment of the institution, the limits of such globalising trends must nonetheless also be stressed. In this respect, Simon Marginson (2008) has drawn an interesting portrait of both the nature and limits of contemporary transformations in his model of the ‘Global Research University’ (GRU). Marginson explicitly distinguishes the GRU from the post-war multiversity, stressing that the impacts of both globalisation in general and the more specific emergence of the global knowledge economy have created a new type of institution. This institution is defined by its place in a ‘one-world knowledge system’, in which ‘research is central to the economic fortunes of leading institutions through its direct effect on revenues and indirect effects via status’ (Marginson, 2008, p. 12). Yet, he also stresses that, beyond research, universities continue to be primarily connected to their national and local environments. The environments in which such institutions operate are thus ultimately ‘glo-na-cal’ – i.e. differentially shaped by and connected to global, national, and local contexts (cf. Marginson, 2011, pp. 12 – 15).

Similarly, Peter Scott (2011) has argued convincingly of the need to problematise the idea of the university as a global institution, rather than merely assuming that it has become such in a relatively undifferentiated fashion. Looking at the historical development of the institution, he appositely underlines that ‘the university has always been an important mediator between local environments and global, or universal, cultures’ (Scott, 2011, p. 74). Contemporary ‘globality’ is correspondingly understood relative to this historical continuity, i.e. as the most recent, and arguably the most complex form of the type of mediation which universities, given the nature of the institution, have always had to undertake between the competing demands of more proximate and wider environments.

It is this more contextualised understanding of globalisation, or of the cross pressures created by the ‘glo-na-cal’, that serves as the starting point for the present discussion of the governance of the global university. Central to the present argument is the affirmation that the global university should not be understood as a qualitatively transformed institution disconnected from its historical predecessors. ‘Globality’, in effect, overlays the pre-existing foundations of the university rather than displacing them. Like the post-war multiversity, the global university is thus best conceived of as a hybrid. While globalisation clearly poses new challenges for institutions (and re-scales many traditional

The Limits of Globalisation

A Hybrid Institution

challenges), those institutions at the same time continue to remain substantially rooted in local and national realities. The nature of the university itself, while evolving in response to new demands, also continues to be shaped by traditional practices and understandings – not least in terms of the sustained, and ultimately necessary interconnections of its various activities. As such, the governance of the global university appears as centrally defined not by a unidirectional adaptation to the demands of ‘the global’, but rather by the need for a careful, strategically oriented balancing of the multiple demands placed on the institution. Clearly, the character and intensity of these demands are contextually dependent; different types of institution, serving different constituencies, will be differentially affected by the pressures for change broadly associated with globalisation. No institution, however, may entirely isolate itself from this changing landscape. All are thus concerned with articulating a ‘global vision’ in the sense of crafting a well-rounded, inclusive framework for institutional development which effectively engages with the legitimate expectations of both internal and external constituencies.

The article develops this analysis in two stages. The first part of the paper looks at the phenomenon of globalisation itself in relation to the higher education sector, both examining its limits and seeking to understand the potentially divergent processes grouped under this rubric. The second part of the paper then looks at the implications of this analysis for institutional leadership, examining the challenges posed as regards both the internal governance of institutions and the management of congruence with the external policy environment. The conclusion draws an overall balance sheet, while further briefly drawing out implications for the wider framing of higher education policy.

2. Understanding Globalisation and its Limits

This section briefly outlines an understanding of globalisation and its limits as it relates to higher education policy. The relationship of the ‘global’ and the ‘local’ is first probed below, highlighting both the persistence of the university’s traditional roles and, in more novel ways, the strong territorial dimension of the knowledge economy. Second, the discussion moves to examine the contradictions that may be thrown up by globalisation itself. Distinctive forms of ‘academic’ and ‘economic’ globalisation are identified, and shown to place potentially significant cross-pressures on institutions.

2.1 The Global and the Local

The relationship between the global and the local in the sphere of higher education policy all too readily lends itself to caricature. Globalisation, in this regard, is often equated with modernisation, or rather serves as the vague background justification for a more specific agenda of ‘modernising’ institutional reform. Oppositions to that reform may in turn be equated with a simple parochialism, or are dismissed by the ‘modernisers’ as representing the self-interested reactions of entrenched faculties. It need hardly be added that reality seldom, if ever corresponds to this admittedly bald caricature. Rather, even as they assume more global roles, it must be recognised that universities continue to be rooted in their more immediate surroundings – demanding the skillful management of contradictory pressures and potential complementarities.

The most obvious connection of universities to their more immediate environs continues to be that associated with the production of an educated workforce. In this, the contemporary concern with ‘employability’ has a long pedigree. The founding of Europe’s first universities owed much to the need to populate the ranks of church and state with suitably qualified officials. Many of America’s leading public universities owe their existence to the Morrill Act of 1862, which initially established so-called ‘land-grant colleges’ in order ‘to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life’. This underlying reality has not changed. Policymakers continue to view universities as having a central role both in providing a generally educated workforce and in providing training for the professions in a manner responsive to the specific demands of the jurisdiction. Globalisation undoubtedly adds new dimensions to what might be expected of this education or training in a context of heightened mobility, but does not fundamentally alter the policy equation itself.

The traditional, localised roles of universities cannot, however, be reduced to the economic dimension alone. Universities have also historically played broader cultural, societal and political roles. They have, for example, often been key players in the emergence of distinctive national, regional or local identities. In terms similar to their role in the preparation of an educated workforce, universities are further concerned with the preparation of an educated citizenry. Here, they are charged with honing the critical skills required of ‘active citizens in democratic societies’, to use the terms of the Council of Europe’s (2007) recommendation on ‘the public responsibility for higher education and research’. These broader roles have, if anything, assumed increased importance in an era of globalisation. Universities emerge as uniquely well-placed sites for critical debate and innovation bridging the global and the local. This appears true, not least, in tackling complex, transversal policy problems such as climate change or social inequality.

The Persistence of Traditional Moorings

**The Territorial
Dimension of the
Knowledge Economy**

Not only the maintenance of its traditional functions, but also its relationship to the knowledge economy account for the persistent local rooting of the global university. This relationship is often cast in terms of the ‘triple helix’ (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000), or now sometimes that of the ‘quadruple helix’ (Carayannis & Campbell, 2012). The helix concerns the patterns of interrelationships that develop in innovation systems between government, industry, and universities, further including civil society in its more expansive recent forms. The model focuses, at its core, on exploring new modes of knowledge production, stressing transdisciplinarity, applied problem solving, and the interchangeability of roles among actors such as to foster both process and (attendant) product innovation (Gibbons et al, 1994).

The emergence of such innovation systems is, however, also dependent on the creation of appropriate ‘spaces’ (cf. Etzkowitz, 2008, pp. 75 – 89). The helix ultimately relies on a physical proximity in order to facilitate interchange and, with it, innovation. The underlying logic is essentially that of ‘clustering’ (Porter, 1990). Historically, this was often defined by the possession of particular natural advantages, though it is now predominately defined by the existence of particular forms of intellectual capital. In essence, the process operates through the progressive accretion of a set of mutually reinforcing activities. As the cluster develops, the actors within it benefit from the possibilities of productive interchange offered by the locality, while the locality in turn benefits from this enhanced productivity in a virtuous circle. Thus, in the archetypal case of Silicon Valley, a cluster of interrelated (and to some extent integrated) firms can be seen to have formed around a strong research nexus. This further facilitates, and is itself facilitated by, the emergence of a wider infrastructure of commercialisation, including specialist law firms and access to venture capital (cf. Kenney, 2000). Within this scenario, universities are centrally placed actors, not least assuming a role as a type of ‘knowledge hub’ that no other actor is equipped to undertake. Yet, it should be underlined that the performance of this role is dependent on the university being well connected to its immediate surroundings, at the same time as it develops an apposite (global) research profile.

The sum of these relationships connecting the (global) university to regional development has been well summarised by Richard Florida (2012, pp. 309 – 312) in his discussion of the factors which account for the emergence of ‘creative communities’. In Florida’s terms, the university is a distinctive ‘creative hub’, fostering ‘technology’ (cutting edge research and its applications), ‘talent’ (attracting and forming creative minds) and ‘tolerance’ (encouraging a wider climate of openness and diversity). The multiform connections of the university to the community are thus underlined, creating a complex ecology supportive of innovation.

2.2 Divergent Globalisations

There has been a tendency, both in the academic literature and in policy discourse, to conflate what are two intersecting, but nonetheless distinct forms of globalisation. On the one hand, there is a distinctive variant of globalisation within the higher education sector, essentially concerned with institutional or individual status in an increasingly formalised global pecking order. On the other hand, the wider forces of economic globalisation have also clearly had major impacts on the sector, increasingly reshaping priorities in terms largely defined outside of the sector itself. Both forms of globalisation point in the direction of a heightened competitiveness, and arguably do so within a shared, overarching neo-liberal framework. As discussed below, the specific terms of competition which they suggest are not, however, necessarily congruent – and may, in particular, throw up significant contradictions at the institutional level.

The ‘academic’ variant of globalisation is most obviously embodied in the growing prominence of global university rankings, such as those produced by the Shanghai Jian Tao University or the *Times Higher* (cf. Erkkilä, 2013). The preoccupation with such rankings both reflects and reinforces the emergence of an increasingly competitive global marketplace within the sector. Within this marketplace, institutions are pushed to devise strategies that maintain or enhance their global position relative to sets of uniform indicators. This, in turn, fuels an intensified competition for ‘talent’ in the form of ‘high-flying’ professors, students, or senior managers.

**‘Academic
Globalisation’**

If pushing universities in a resolutely more competitive direction, the terms of this competition nevertheless need to be underlined. These terms are essentially drawn from *within* the sector, representing those achievements that have traditionally accounted for the international status of universities or professors. At least thus far, the most influential international rankings exercises have been based essentially on indicators of research performance and institutional reputation in terms that broadly accord with the established norms – and largely reproduce the established hierarchies – of the academy itself. Figuratively, the currency of the realm has not been changed. Rather, incentive structures have been (pervasively) introduced which have made that currency more readily tradable or convertible in conditions of heightened international comparability and mobility.

This stands in contrast to the impacts of wider economic globalisation on the higher education sector. The global centrality of the ‘knowledge economy’ has seen higher education rise up the scale of policy priorities virtually everywhere. Here, however, it does so in terms that are largely dictated from the outside, generally focused on the development of forms of (more) applied research or technology transfer. Universities, in other words, are seen primarily as a (necessary) factor in a wider equation concerned with local/regional/national productivity and prosperity.

**‘Economic
Globalisation’**

The university's role within this new dispensation is perhaps best conceived in relation to the idea of the 'competition state' (Cerny, 1997). The driving logics of public policy in the post-war welfare state could be understood in terms of a focus on wealth (re-)distribution. The competition state, by way of contrast, replaces this with a central focus on maintaining and enhancing the conditions of national competitiveness in an increasingly demanding global economy. This should not be seen as marking a simple retreat of the state. Rather, policy instruments are retooled so as to allow for new, more flexible forms of state intervention. Typically, traditional, hierarchical forms of regulation are replaced with more decentralised forms of control.

The 'Autonomy-Accountability Two-Step'

This recalibration of policy instruments finds a ready translation in the higher education sector in the fairly widespread recourse to what might be termed an 'autonomy-accountability two-step'. On the one hand, universities in many jurisdictions have been granted considerable autonomy, loosening the historic bonds of what had often been very intrusive direct state regulation. On the other hand, the counterpart of this newly won autonomy is the imposition of new requirements of external accountability. These requirements are in part, of course, justified by the need to maintain transparent standards of responsibility in the use of public funds. Such accountability regimes also, however, generally have the effect of 'opening out' the university in terms consonant with the logic of the competition state. In this vein, new accountability standards may see the expansion of institutional objectives so as to incorporate a (fuller) range of economic or societal missions. Similarly, contacts with external stakeholders may be intensified, not least through establishing or reinforcing their role in the structures of university governance.

The European Commission's 'modernisation' agenda for universities provides perhaps the archetypal statement of this type of response to economic globalisation. The title of its most recent major document concerned with university reform unmistakably puts a competition state agenda in the shop window – 'Supporting Jobs and Growth: An Agenda for the Modernisation of Europe's Higher Education Systems' (European Commission, 2011). The development of higher education is plainly conceived in terms which subordinate the sector's own logics and priorities to those of a wider competitiveness agenda. The issue of 'autonomy' is also addressed in corresponding terms. If the Commission champions the case for greater institutional autonomy as regards governmental control, it does so with a view to allowing the sector better to serve a wider range of external actors and purposes. Thus, 'more flexible governance and funding systems' are called for, 'which balance greater autonomy for education institutions with accountability to all stakeholders' (European Commission, 2011, p. 9).

Coping with Diverging Demands

It is apparent that the two forms of globalisation described above correspond to potentially diverging logics. The existence of ‘world class’ universities in the terms defined by the academy is clearly of relevance to the capacity of those institutions to contribute to wider economic development. Nevertheless, one cannot assume a necessary coincidence between the logics of global competitiveness as defined within the academic realm and the wider demands of the global economy as mediated by policymakers. There are evidently forms of academically defined excellence that may, in themselves, be of little direct economic relevance. Equally, demands may be placed on universities as economic or societal actors that have little bearing on their global academic standing, or that may indeed divert inevitably scarce resources from core academic activities.

Differing patterns of opposition or tension may be imagined between these competing demands. In its simplest form, as suggested by the one-dimensional European Commission policy template, a direct opposition may be engendered between an ‘academic globalisation’ on the one hand and an ‘economic globalisation’ on the other. In this scenario, the university sector is placed on the back foot, having to defend its core missions against demands for a predominately or exclusively ‘applied’ orientation.

The more probable scenarios, however, are marked by rather greater ambiguity, if not a degree of confusion. Policy frameworks are likely to target both ‘world class universities’ and ‘economic relevance’, though in terms which suggest little concern for or awareness of the complex patterns of relationships between the two objectives. The two goals may, indeed, even become conflated. Policymakers have, for example, come to equate rankings success with direct economic impact.¹ Unpacking these goals is thus devolved to the institutional level. As with the balancing of the global and the local, it is institutional leaders who principally face the task of reconciling the potentially competing demands of divergent globalisations. The navigation of this complex terrain is the focus of the following section.

¹ The discursive construction of what might be described as a ‘Shanghai shock’ in France around the time of the adoption of the 2007 Law on the Liberties and Responsibilities of Universities (LRU) offers an interesting example in this regard. The presentation of government policy significantly focused on the question of academic rankings per se – i.e. concerned both to improve the performance of French institutions in existing rankings and to challenge those rankings through the development of a ‘European alternative’ (that which became U-Multirank). The link between institutional performance and wider societal or economic impacts, though a starting point for the reform, appeared – at least for a time – to be correspondingly obscured. See further Leroy (2007, pp. 95 – 107).

3. Challenges for Institutional Leadership

Globalisation, as outlined in the previous section, cannot be understood as an undifferentiated or necessarily homogenising phenomenon, to which the only response is the internalisation of narrowly defined external (rankings) criteria. Rather, globalisation creates complex, and to some extent contradictory pressures, which demand carefully calibrated, institutionally specific responses. As argued in the introduction, the global university is very much a hybrid, drawing together multiple missions and having to respond to a plethora of internal and external stakeholders. Institutional leadership in this context is correspondingly a question of striking apposite balances – of sustaining the institution's distinctive foundations, while at the same time effectively (if not proactively) responding to novel demands.

These leadership challenges are discussed below with reference to issues of internal governance and external policy congruence, respectively highlighting the importance of the 'academic core' and the 'academic bundle'. The idea of the 'core', drawn from the literature on the entrepreneurial university, emphasises the central place of the university's traditional missions and the need to ensure the engagement of this 'heartland' with the institution's expanded contemporary functions. The 'bundle', conversely, derives from a sociological literature concerned to understand the distinctive advantages that the university as an institution derives from the breadth of its activities and stakeholder communities. Together, they point to an inclusive and expansive governance model.

3.1 Internal Governance

Cultivating the 'Academic Core'

The challenge of internal governance may to a large extent be understood in terms of striking a balance that allows for the cultivation of the institution's academic core (the traditional nexus of research and teaching), even as the university assumes progressively larger external and global roles. It is with this traditional academic core that the members of the university community centrally identify, and in which they invest their efforts and their talents. It is equally this core of academic activities that mark out the institution's comparative advantage in organisational terms.

The enduring centrality of this traditional core has perhaps been no better underlined than by leading proponents of the 'entrepreneurial university'. As such analyses have recognised, the university's capacity to act as a primary progenitor of organisational and technological innovation is fundamentally dependent on establishing strong, well-articulated links between its core academic activities and its wider societal or economic missions. Successful 'entrepreneurship' does not displace the academic core, but rather should sustain and engage it.

This point is well made by Burton Clark in his widely cited 1998 study of five ‘successful’ cases of entrepreneurial universities in Europe. Among the key properties held to account for this ‘success’, Clark notes the existence of a ‘strengthened steering core’ bringing together central management and the academic departments, as well as a ‘stimulated academic heartland’ in which academic departments are engaged with the university’s ‘entrepreneurial culture’. Each of these elements bears explanation. If strengthened (and professionalised) management is seen as a necessary ingredient for successful institutional reform, Clark is clear that such management structures must also allow for a commensurate representation of academic interests in decision-making procedures. Such structures ‘must operationally reconcile new managerial values with traditional academic ones’ (Clark, 1998, p. 6). Similarly, at the departmental level, he speaks of a ‘blending’ of academic and managerial values (Clark, 1998, p. 7). In this view, it is the department that remains the ‘academic heartland’ of the university, and as such a key mediator of whether real change will take place.

In his seminal overview of the ‘triple helix’, Henry Etzkowitz (2008) similarly emphasises the need for innovation strategies to draw centrally on the distinctive traditional core of the university. The ‘triple helix’, as noted earlier, involves a certain interchangeability of roles across government, universities and industry. It is this permeability and flexibility that facilitates both procedural and substantive innovation. At the same time, however, Etzkowitz (2008, p. 9) underlines that ‘each institution maintains its primary role and distinct identity’. In the case of the university, this ‘core mission’ is defined by its role as an institution for ‘the preservation and transmission of knowledge’, as well as by its specific role concerned with ‘the socialization of youth’ (Etzkowitz, 2008, p. 9). The university thus continues to be defined by its traditional educational and research nexus. Even more, it is this core that gives the university a pride of place within the innovation triangle. For Etzkowitz (2008, p. 147), the university emerges as ‘the predominant organizational format of a knowledge-based society’, as it alone is institutionally defined by the pursuit of knowledge.

The translation of these lessons from the ‘entrepreneurial’ to the ‘global’ university is not a difficult one. A global agenda too must be built on the foundation of a strong academic core. If an institution is to project itself successfully at an international level, it must do so on the basis of solid foundations within. Globalisation should not, in other words, serve as a simple shibboleth to leverage a perhaps otherwise unacceptable internal ‘modernisation’ agenda. Rather, a global role must be built through the skillful articulation of internal strengths and external demands. An integrated strategy is demanded, creatively balancing the demands of differing stakeholders in line with an overarching, inclusive institutional vision.

The Risk of ‘Decoupling’

The failure to achieve such an institutional balance in relation to the academic core may, in more extreme cases, provoke severe backlashes destabilising institutional leadership. The more probable scenario, however, is one of a more or less pronounced ‘decoupling’ (cf. Meyer & Rowan, 1977), as the formal institutional agenda becomes progressively disconnected from the reality on the ground. While an ‘organised hypocrisy’ (Brunsson, 2006) of this type may have a functional dimension, it is unlikely to be a sustainable strategy in the intrinsically critical environment of academe. In effect, the university may come to project a ‘global vision’ that reflects little beyond the unrealised aspirations of its senior management. Academics on the ground will, in this scenario, show little ‘buy in’ to the redefined institutional mission – and, indeed, are likely to display a more than customary share of cynicism.

The ‘Wannabe University’

The ensuing institutional climate has been poignantly captured by Gayle Tuchman (2009) in her account of the ‘wannabe university’. Based on several years of participant observation, Tuchman documents the progressive ‘managerialist’ drift of an American public research university as it seeks to move up the national rankings. Core academic values are gradually displaced by managerial ones, while the faculty role in the governance structures of the university is also correspondingly reduced. Ultimately, these changes produce a ‘transformation’ that is reasonably successful on its own terms. The institution’s ‘mission’, however, appears increasingly disconnected from (if not at odds with) its historically entrenched core values. The climate is one of an underlying (cognitive) dissonance, though not one of overt opposition. As Tuchman laconically concludes, ‘Wan U will remain a conformist university doing what must be done to elbow its way up in the rankings, to survive in and to serve the neo-liberal state’ (Tuchman, 2009, p. 208).

‘Wan U’ appears a rather (tellingly) insular creature, exclusively concerned with its national position. It does not, however, take a great leap of imagination to extend this scenario to (many) aspirant global universities. A similarly conformist scramble for place, disconnected from the institution’s academic core, is likely to produce similarly dispiriting results.

3.2 Managing Policy Congruence

The second dimension of governance is that of ensuring a congruence between institutional objectives and the wider policy environment. Here, the rather positive picture of the university’s pivotal place within the ‘triple helix’ as portrayed by Etzkowitz proves unfortunately not to hold up under closer scrutiny. The university as an institution may well have a distinctive role as a driver of innovation. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the asymmetries of power and resources with which it is often institutionally confronted in its relationships with both gov-

ernment and industry. Universities remain largely, if variably dependent on external resources. They must also operate within the margins of manoeuvre given to them – or withheld from them – by the relevant national or sub-national legislative frameworks. As institutions, all universities must thus engage in perpetual balancing exercises between internal and external demands, from positions of greater or lesser vulnerability.

This balancing act has, moreover, undoubtedly attained new degrees of difficulty in the age of the global university. The potential sources of tension described in the previous section – concerning the pulls of the global and the local, as well as of divergent visions of globalisation itself – all contribute to heightening external pressures on the university. Correspondingly, higher education policy has broadly tilted from an ‘inside out’ to an ‘outside in’ centre of gravity (cf. Shattock, 2006), i.e. priorities defined inside the sector itself have become progressively overshadowed by priorities imposed *on* the sector from outside in line with wider public policy goals such as economic productivity or social mobility. Even as they retain or gain formal autonomy, universities consequently find themselves ever more externally driven as regards the expectations placed upon them.

In balancing these multiform missions, there is clearly no ‘magic formula’. Insofar as a generalised rule of thumb might be identified, however, it returns us to the importance of developing an inclusive and integrated institutional strategy. Inclusivity in this respect implies the existence of decision-making procedures that appositely draw in both internal and external stakeholders. This, in itself, should provide for a broadly representative process and well-informed decision-making. It also allows the institution to project itself externally as being responsive to the full range of demands being placed upon it, potentially building up important political capital. Simply stated, the more that the institution is perceived to be attuned to its diverse constituencies, the more autonomy it is likely to be given to strike difficult balances on its own terms rather than having those balances imposed from outside.

This logic of integration may perhaps best be understood with reference to what Parsons and Platt (1973) referred to as the ‘academic bundle’. Writing in the 1970s, the two sociologists saw the American research university of the time as distinctively characterised – and advantaged – by the ‘bundling’ of a range of functions which included teaching, research, and community service. While a macro-sociological perspective might have expected these activities to be progressively differentiated, creating more ‘efficient’ single-purpose institutions, they argue that the institution has been particularly well served by their ‘hanging together’. The maintenance of the bundle, in effect, creates a dual advantage: providing for fruitful synergies across activities and ensuring sustained connections with a broad range of stakeholder groups.

The ‘Academic Bundle’

This logic of ‘bundling’ may now also be seen as of central relevance in the wider context of the contemporary global university. Spanning its internal and external constituencies, the ‘academic bundle’ suggests the existence of a complex meso-level system drawing together the full range of the institution’s diverse activities and stakeholders. These activities and stakeholders are, moreover, drawn together in a distinctive ‘space’, providing a uniquely rich environment for interchange. It is, indeed, as a site for such interchange that the university draws its distinctive institutional advantages and capacity for innovation. This underlying logic also provides the most important buttressing argument for the claim that the university requires a distinctive mode of self-governance. In effect, it is only by having a mode of governance which itself is reflective of its uniquely interconnected institutional ecology that this ecology may be sustained over time.

The alternative is, quite literally, an ‘unbundling’. If the university cannot itself sustain an integrated vision of its institutional purpose – a sense of a broadly defined university community – then there is little to support its claims for a distinctive institutional autonomy. In effect, if institutional leaders themselves see only a largely unconnected set of activities and objectives, there is no particular reason why these cannot be (micro-)managed in line with detailed, externally set priorities. At the limit, the very idea of a meaningful institutional governance would disappear, effectively replaced by task-specific, subaltern management roles.

‘Losing Your Balance’

Fortunately far from such extremes, the recent experience of a major Canadian research university may nonetheless be used to illustrate the basic dynamics at play. The university had set itself an ambitious agenda, seeking to win a place in the top twenty public universities worldwide within a relatively short time frame. This goal, however, appeared to run into a rather different set of priorities established at the level of the responsible ministry. As part of a province-wide exercise in institutional rationalisation and budget-cutting, the university received (like all of its provincial counterparts) a ‘letter of expectation’ from the minister. This set out a series of priorities essentially focused on the development of a province-wide lifelong learning strategy, and the need for a stronger emphasis to be placed on research relevant for the provincial economy and its commercialisation. The university’s global aspirations appeared shunted to the side, with the minister being publicly critical of the institution’s claim to be the ‘flagship’ of the provincial system.

In the present case, the university was able to redress the situation. Mobilising political support and working through its board of governors, it was able to secure a much broader and more balanced ‘mandate’. The province-wide budget cuts were also later substantially, though not entirely restored. The lesson, however, remains. A percep-

tion had been allowed to grow that a narrowly defined institutional agenda, concerned with global rankings, was being pursued at the expense of wider missions. While that may never have been true, the perception mattered. The university had failed to project an integrated vision of its own role, connecting the global and the local, and had rendered itself politically vulnerable as a result.

4. Conclusion

The present argument has been developed in two broad stages. The first part of the paper developed an understanding of globalisation and its limits as these relate to higher education policy. This analysis demonstrated that globalisation does not displace the local and national attachments of universities. Rather, these continue to be of relevance both in traditional ways (connected to local labour markets and societies), and in new ways associated with the (territorialised) development of the knowledge economy. The analysis then proceeded to examine the divergent logics of globalisation which affect the higher education sector, drawing a distinction between a specifically ‘academic globalisation’ concerned with the emergence of a global marketplace *within* the sector and the impacts of a wider ‘economic globalisation’ *on* the sector.

From this, a portrait emerged of the global university as a hybrid entity, demanding an institutional leadership fundamentally concerned with striking difficult balances across its manifold functions. In the second part of the paper, these leadership challenges were then discussed, looking both at the demands of internal governance and the maintenance of external policy congruence. The former was explored in relation to the need to sustain a strong and engaged ‘academic core’. The latter was conceptualised in terms of an ‘academic bundle’, including a broad stakeholder involvement intended to allow for the internalisation of external demands on terms favourable to the overall maintenance of institutional autonomy.

Clearly, as noted in the introduction, the balancing act suggested above will assume different forms and intensities in different types of higher education institutions, even if no institution can entirely escape these dynamics. These tensions are, however, likely to exhibit themselves most fully in the case of broadly mandated public institutions. Essentially reliant on public funds, such institutions will continue to be called upon to perform a wide range of missions encompassing extensive undergraduate teaching, professional training, high-level research and community service. It is, moreover, universities of this

type that constitute the overwhelming majority of the institutions which currently figure on global rankings lists or which may reasonably aspire to do so.²

Although the intensity of the pressures may vary, university leaders across the board would nonetheless be well-served by the development of a critical awareness of globalisation – understanding its multiple usages, differential impacts, and ultimate limits. It is all too easy to invoke an undifferentiated need to respond to ‘globalisation’ – all too often articulated through some form of international ranking – as a driver of institutional strategy. It is undoubtedly more difficult to arrive at a fine-grained, contextual understanding of the specificities of a given institutional context, its distinctive place at the intersection of differing environments, and the distinctive opportunities which this might offer. Yet, it is undoubtedly this latter route which offers greater scope for the full realisation of institutional potential, avoiding the trap of a simple mimetism that, by its nature, is unlikely to produce genuine innovation.

This, nonetheless, raises a final question, largely beyond the scope of the present analysis. In effect, the discussion here has dealt with only half of the equation – focusing on institutional responses to globalisation, without looking at the national (or sub-national) policy frameworks within which these responses remain embedded. Further research and reflection are no doubt required at this surprisingly neglected interface between institutional strategy and wider higher education policy in order to understand their differing articulations and potential misfits. Tentatively, however, it might be suggested that policymakers must display a greater awareness of how the incentive structures which they create are likely to shape institutional strategies, privileging or discouraging the striking of particular balances (cf. Codling & Meek, 2006). In particular, if policymakers wish to sustain diverse higher education systems, they must design policy frameworks that provide institutional leaders with the means to pursue those diverse objectives.

² Fallis (2014, p. 253), for example, calculates that 57 % of the universities occupying the top 30 places on a composite index using the Shanghai and Taiwan rankings are ‘public’ insofar as ‘the government provides substantial operating funds for undergraduate education’. One can reasonably presume that the percentage of public universities, in the sense of being significantly or largely dependent on public funds for core structural expenditures, increases the further one goes down most rankings, given the strong presence of the limited number of uniquely structured elite US private institutions in the top tier. See further Iacobucci & Tuohy (2005) for a discussion of the public university.

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