



context matters

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- both in terms of *license to operate* and of *services to be rendered* a kind of *social contract* (both written and unwritten) underlies the system as well as individual institutions

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enablers

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enablers

- precisely because of this context dependence it is crucial that basic conditions ('enablers') are in place
- *autonomy & academic freedom* are among them
- why?

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why?

- *an independent, open and forward looking community of scholars dedicated to serve the education of future generations and the needs of society, at home and abroad*
- as one of the basic *institutional* provisions of any democratic society
- as partners in the *worldwide* community of scholars and researchers

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preconditions for quality

- so autonomy and academic freedom are *not* justifiable because of exceptionalism: a kind of ivory tower concept, a leading elite model or an enclave in a world of self interests
- rather they are preconditions for professional quality performance, the critical rigour of academic work and the crucial openness to new approaches and methods

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it is a program, not a given

- for universities these qualities are crucial, so
a) they must be granted to them,

societies (governments; political, religious or ethnic groups; businesses; private owners) should realize that without these qualities universities cannot be and deliver what they should be and deliver

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it is a program, not a given

- for universities these qualities are crucial, so
b) *they need good and regular in-house maintenance*
- independence and integrity should be practiced and protected at all levels
- faculty and students should realize freedom is *no excuse for 'everything goes'*

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Hosram Badrawi (Bologna
2007)

- 'academic freedom is the intellectual and creative foundation of the university'
- 'faculty are expected to pursue truth and knowledge and are conferred the right to research, teach and discuss any topic without being subject to university or system discipline or censorship. *However, teaching staff – as well as administrators – are expected to prize accuracy, to exercise appropriate self control, to show respect for the opinions of others, and thus ensure the academic freedom of students and their rights of access to the university'*

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responsibilities

- 'a college or a university is simply an institution of higher learning' ('not a business or an industry, not a political party or a social service, not a religion nor a mosque')
- this implies a clear set of responsibilities, partly to the positive, partly to the negative (go for fair analysis and unbiased inquiry, avoid conflicts of interest and personal gain)
- these cannot be maintained solely on a private moral base, but must have an institutional base

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real life challenges

- this may look like a rather self-evident *model*
- in reality it is quite a challenge to maintain a good degree of autonomy & academic freedom

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real life challenges

- this may look like a rather self-evident *model*
- *in reality* it is quite a challenge to maintain a good degree of autonomy & academic freedom
- it's a matter of *balancing*, in society as well as within institutions
- it's a matter of *culture* just as much it is a matter of structures and regulations

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some case examples

- the usual storyline on autonomy & academic freedom is about *law making, governance, funding and quality assessment*
- they are indeed of great importance, as in all of these domains a fair balance of freedoms *and responsibilities* must be established and maintained over time and under conditions that are not stable

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some case examples

- I won't repeat this part of the narrative in a modelling manner of speaking
- but rather add a couple of *real life examples* that spring from today's challenges to our societies, both in individual states and on a global scale
- they will show how basic values can come under pressure and why they need solid maintenance

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public funding

“white people my age are not going to vote to educate Hispanic kids or black kids”

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public funding

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as the population has grown more diverse support for open doors to higher education has dwindled

a clear example of how arrangements of the past can be losing their support base

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governance

- another domain where the ability to make autonomous decisions (on programme priorities, on curriculum design or enrolment strategies) can be seriously limited

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the good news is

- Higher Education / universities are in high demand, they cannot complain about a lack of interest in what they have on offer
- there is a multitude of benefits, claims, expectations, requests, stakes, uses, wishes about the university and most of these are increasing in most places
- apparently universities are seen as useful by many and for many uses

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complexity & diversity

- this multitude of demands reflects *competing* claims on ownership (whose university?)
- and *rivalling* concepts on the university (what university?)
- this *variety* of claims represent a broad range of rivalling underlying *values*

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e.g. research values at stake

- research universities are struggling to adapt their traditional ways of doing research, in terms of prioritizing, impact, dissemination, academic independence, integrity, and so on
- it is not easy to keep one's balance, integrity and freedom in situations where direct impact, quick wins and career interests are informing key demands

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e.g. setting educational priorities

- serving which student population? (educating global elites and/or fighting inequalities)

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e.g. setting educational priorities

- serving which student population? (educating global elites and/or fighting inequalities)
- on what basis to do your curriculum redesign? (marketplace skills and/or civic virtues)

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the *academic* version of 21st century skills

- *academic* skills, in terms of powers of thinking and argumentation, intellectual independence & drive to inquire
- scientific *integrity*, in terms of working with evidence, sources, methods & colleagues
- professional *ethics*, as part of socialization & the ability to handle risks and complexities
- *civic* qualities, in terms of public interest & world citizenship

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e.g. setting educational priorities

- serving which student population? (educating global elites and/or fighting inequalities)
- on what basis to do your curriculum redesign? (marketplace skills and/or civic virtues)
- how to be international? (recruiting the best and/or bridging cultures)

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crossroads

- all this results in a situation in which universities constantly find themselves at a *crossroads*
- of *various interests* (inside & outside, often contradicting each other)
- and *stakeholders* (ever more independent and demanding)
- each with their own set of *values and cultures*

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once more:
complexity & diversity

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Higher Education & Research
ready for this?

- based on observations of HEIs and HE&R systems in very different settings
- the question arises whether HEIs (and/or systems) are *ready to cope with the challenges of complexity and diversity*
- how to use the space of autonomy & academic freedom well?

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some rethinking must be done

- if *an independent, open and forward looking community of scholars* is what HEIs are and should be
- they must base their style on and remain truly faithful to their independent identity and mission, not out of self protection and as a privilege
- but rather as a duty, a service to the benefit of society and therefore seriously rethink their response to the complexities and diversities of societies

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implications (1)

- what does this analysis imply for university strategies and practices?
- *in terms of virtues* (in institutional and personal terms)
- crucial to not just preach the norms and pretend to stick to them, but discuss real dilemmas and mistakes made, and exercise individual and group attitudes and decisions

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implications (2)

- what does this analysis imply for university strategies and practices?
- in terms of *values*
 - in-house shared beliefs about what is important and acceptable, and what not
 - but as a base for role and responsibilities in society as well (profile and position)

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implications (3)

- what does this analysis imply for university strategies and practices?
- in terms of *trust* [cannot be bought, must be given]
- the road to trust starts at respect [for institutions acting with integrity and a keen sense of sharing]

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common and continuous
efforts wanted

- Magna Charta tries to find ways to promote serious thinking, talking, working on values and virtues
- it does not have the ready answer to all questions and challenges
- *but invites critical self-monitoring of universities*

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Magna Charta Universitatum

- in 1988 hundreds of European universities signed the Magna Charta
- since then many more have done so
- convinced of the value of autonomy, academic values and integrity for academia
- more than a conviction, a signature and a statement is needed: maintenance and regular updating

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- HE systems and institutions worldwide (should) engage in critical self-analysis and strategic value development
- the long time sustainability of academia is at stake
- highlighting these themes as part of the Bologna EHEA process seems to be of crucial importance