ACADEMIC AUTONOMY AND FREEDOM UNDER PRESSURE: SEVERELY LIMITED, OR ALIVE AND KICKING?

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Introduction

The core of academic life for a professor is professional or academic autonomy, often simply called academic freedom. This, in turn, is buttressed by the autonomy of the university, its freedom from political or other interference (Metzger 1978; Tight 1988). Academic freedom means that in the core activities or tasks of the university, teaching and research, decisions are basically up to the academic staff. In many universities it also extends to a role in 'shared governance', particularly as it affects faculty discipline, but also in regard to at least an advisory role in administrative and budgetary issues. This autonomy (both institutional and personal) is in most countries secured by formal measures, that is, by laws and rules, but also through cultural features, meaning a common understanding, for example among public and academic leaders, that autonomy is valuable and should be protected (NOU 2006: 19). We can say, in other words, that academic freedom historically is institutionalized.

There is, of course, some variety among countries and universities regarding autonomy, based on different traditions, but one can argue that the core autonomy is fundamental. This is also, at least partially, a reflection of the tasks at hand. To teach at university level has historically been an individual activity rooted in the discretion the professor has and the research activity he or she engages in. University teaching and research is also

widely understood to be a product of individual imagination and innovation.

During the last few decades there has been a development in universities the world over, of change that has several elements in common, not necessarily consistent across all countries, of course, but fairly dominant globally. A first tendency, 'a global reform script' (Meyer and Ramirez 2007) – is that the formal relationships between superior authorities and universities has changed, from formal direct control to greater autonomy (Paradeise, Reale and Goastellec 2009). But one can question what this means in reality. Does it mean that the universities are (even more?) independent of the authorities with regard to basic financing and extra research money, whether coming from ministries or research councils (Christensen 2011b)? This could be challenging in an era where public money for higher education is scarce.

A second tendency, related to the first, often called 'societal embeddedness', which historically has come later for European universities than those in the US (Ramirez and Christensen 2013). There are many aspects of this. One is the collaboration with stake-holders in the private sector and the business community, leading to units on the border of the university system doing innovation and patenting of products (Paradeise, Reale and Goastellec 2009). But there is also the establishment of research institutes or think tanks more or less loosely connected to ordinary university departments and schools, and partly competing with them. There are also collaborative bodies and networks, etc., not to mention establishing or developing units of fundraising or more systematically bringing in resources from public and private sources. In addition, there is increasing use of branding and positioning on university league tables related to attracting students by increasing in the number and quality of internal services for them (Christensen and Gornitzka forthcoming).

A third feature, connected to and influenced by the external ones, is internal and related to an increasing professionalization of the administration of the universities. The relative share of administrative staff compared to the academic staff has increased, partly to cater to needs such as relating to public authorities and other external stakeholders, but also for internal administrative reasons, like control and reporting (Paradeise, Reale, Goastellec and Bleiklie (2009). The professionalization of the staff has stimulated the use of modern managerial methods. Some also say that the administrative and academic hierarchies now are closer than before (Christensen 2011).

A fourth feature is that internal decision-making has changed considerably, from a professorial-dominated decision system to a much broader sys-

tem with representation of different groups, such as technical personnel and students, but also external representatives. There has also been a tendency to rationalize the number of decision-making bodies and give university leaders relatively more power (Paradeise, Reale and Goastellec 2009). Elected leaders have often been replaced by appointed leaders, changing the recruitment process (a rather recent development in Europe).

A fifth tendency is related to a change in the status of students. Not only does university life increasingly reflect the massification of higher education, but the student body has become less 'sub-ordinate' and more valued over time (Maasen 2008). This means that professors not only have to spend more time catering to students, and that universities must provide more in-depth services of different kinds to them, but universities must also be more active in an international student market in order to 'sell' their services.

> Our main research questions are the following:
- What are the potential effects of a set of dynamic internal and external developmental features on the core values of academic freedom and institutional autonomy and freedom of academic life at universities?
- How do structural and institutional perspectives taken from organization theory explain these effects?

We start by outlining theoretical perspectives and defining academic freedom. The empirical section discusses developmental features at universities and then uses two examples to illustrate some of the challenges to academic freedom and institutional autonomy. We conclude with an analysis of the main developmental trends identified in the text.

A theoretical frame – structural and institutional features of university development

A structural-instrumental perspective underscores that as any formal organization develops, change and reform will likely follow as a result of the actions of political, administrative and professional leadership (March and Olsen 1983). In this view, leaders will usually have relatively clear goals, problems and solutions, and they will basically achieve what they set out to do, i.e. they score high on rational calculation (Dahl and Lindblom 1953). Based on their structural resources, positions and expertise they will also be able to control change and reform processes, either through strong hierar-

chical control or through having the upper hand in negotiations between different stakeholders (March and Olsen 1983).

A crucial point of departure in such a theory is that leaders can control the environment, at least related to internal structural development, something which, however, one would find challenging when environmental forces, both nationally and globally, are said to become stronger. Olsen (1992) formulates the opposite argument of 'environmental determinism', meaning that the environment, in this case the 'technical environment' (Meyer and Rowan 1978), will have strong influence on what goes on inside the organization. This could be the 'task environment' (Thompson 1967), including important actors close to the organization, or actors in the global environment, or both.

Using this type of theory for studying university development features involves some typical foci. First, one focuses on central political-administrative leaders in the higher education sector and top university leaders as the main actors in developing universities, either through hierarchical steering or negotiation processes. Second, one should look into the significance of arguments that many of the current development features of universities are related to, accepting that the universities are important parts of the 'knowledge economy' and therefore economic development and growth. Third, more specifically, one would examine whether these instrumental and efficiency-oriented external trends heavily influence the internal development of the universities, both concerning decision-making structures and professionalization of the administration. Fourth, one should consider the hypothesis that there will be structural factors, like laws, rules and other special formal arrangements protecting academic freedom, but also that there will be challenges to this feature.

An institutional perspective stresses that organizations, like universities, are influenced more by societal-cultural processes than by structural and formal factors. One version, related to works by Selznick (1957), emphasizes that formal organizations, whether public or private, gradually develop, through processes of institutionalization, certain typical informal norms and values – unique identities – as a result of mutual adaptation to internal and external pressure. Traditions and path-dependency mean a lot for how actors behave and are also related to whether changes and reforms are culturally compatible (March 1994).

Another version delves deeper into broad societal-cultural processes, related to the institutional environment, where these macro-processes participate in developing structural and cultural similarities or standardization

through the use of myths and symbols (Meyer and Rowan 1977). It is taken-for-granted in this version that certain structural or cultural features are modern and efficient and therefore should spread quickly across types of organizations, levels and countries. The similarity between the two versions is that they point to cultural-societal processes instead of formal-structural ones, while the difference is that they emphasize variety and similarity respectively (Scott 2013).

Using an institutional perspective on university development and academic freedom points in different directions than does the structural one. First, according to the cultural version, one should look into some of the following questions: Are the traditional academic-cultural paths and identities of the universities about to change as a result of either changing internal values or changing external pressure? Or are the paths unchanged, while the cultural changes are primarily related to the changing administrative-economic cultures, which may be more accommodating to external change impulses? Second, related to the myth version one should emphasize the following questions: Do we see overall a global cultural-societal standardization in the ideas about university development? Are these ideas primarily related to the 'knowledge economy', efficiency factors and global market analogies in higher education? What are the more specific myths and symbols related to university development and academic freedom?

Features of academic freedom

The Global Colloquium of University Presidents defined academic freedom in this way in a common statement in 2005:

> 'Academic freedom may be defined as the freedom to conduct research, teach, speak, and publish, subject to norms and standards of scholarly inquiry, without interference or penalty, wherever the search for truth and understanding may lead'.

Academic freedom can be connected both to institutions and individuals (NOU 2006:19: 13–14). It can be a formal right, or acquired over time, or be subject to discretion or leeway or, in some settings, a slogan without effective impact. While the formal right can be an institutional or individual right, or both, real exercise of the right may have something to do with institutional and/or individual resources, ways of steering/controlling by uni-

versity administrators, other pressure from the environment, etc. So, on the extremes one may have formal rights of freedom, with real discretion, or few formal rights of academic freedom, but with high real discretion (or at the other extreme be without rights or discretion). Berdahl (1990) makes a distinction between substantive autonomy – the power of the university to determine its goals and programs – and procedural autonomy – the power to decide on the connected means.

Individual academic freedom may vary according to roles, such as one's role as a researcher, teacher or disseminator of academic knowledge and results. There may be different expectations about freedom between generations of academics, variety in views depending on whether there is stability or crisis, and some academics may base their academic freedom expectations on internal or external preconditions.

Ultimately academic freedom entails being able to decide on what one should teach and research; freedom *from* and freedom *to* have many aspects. One should be able to 'speak truth to power', meaning being able to participate in public debate based on one's own academic knowledge and research, without being censored by either leaders from one's own university or superior public authorities (Teichler et al. 2013: 13). Another aspect is the ability to move freely and to participate in scholarly meeting places, whether nationally or internationally. A third would be to have freedom from others' leadership in teaching and research, or eventually freedom from having to serve in an administrative capacity.

It is probably neither realistic nor preferable to idealize academic freedom in an extremely individualistic and 'context-free' way. Individual academic freedom is closely connected to institutional freedom. The institutional or organizational academic setting that academics work in is both a guarantee and a potential threat to academic freedom (Tight 1988). There are at least two collective settings academic actors in universities must relate to. One is, of course, that they have a work contract and are part of a university or an organizational unit, such as a faculty/school or a department/institute. Academic units may have systematic research plans or externally financed projects which professors are supposed to participate in, and to which they may be expected to contribute, and these may limit individual academic freedom, but also enhance it. Further, there is teaching to cover, whether more mandatory and general, or more research-based and self-generated, which is part of the duties as academic staff. Most universities also have rules about administrative duties, which means that academic staff must participate in academic decision-making bodies or perform administrative functions. And

many universities also formally state that their employees shall inform the public about their results and participate in societal debates. All these core activities may be enhanced or hindered by the resources that are available from public authorities or other sources.

In an ideal world, at least for some, academic freedom means getting a salary every month as a professor, but the obligations mentioned above are also part of the equation, meaning that in a realistic world parts of the working time must be used to contribute to the collective goals of academic units, without concluding that this will eventually undermine academic freedom. That depends, and will vary between countries and universities.

A second, and for some more important, collective or institutional frame of reference, is the professional or academic community one is part of. This community has the potential to regulate, restrict or sanction academic behavior, thereby interfering with individual academic freedom (Shils 1997). To get a job in academia, one is judged and 'certified' by academic peers based on professional academic criteria. The same is true for being promoted or getting resources for research projects. Once in an academic position, one has the obligation to be fair in judging others, whether in academic recruitment or in publishing. One can argue that as long as this system functions in a fair way, this will contribute to creating academic freedom. But academic rights are balanced by academic duties and embedded in academic ethos and ethic (Kennedy 1997). Inclusion in scholarly networks and collaborations nationally and internationally may enhance academic freedom in this respect. Or quite the contrary, when scholarly communities are biased and have dominant actors, structures and cultures, academic freedom may be damaged (Ziman 2000).

Looking into historical traditions, there are two major traditions of academic freedom, the German and the American one. The Humboldt-oriented ideal connected academic freedom to the concept of 'Lehrfreiheit', meaning that the professor should be able to freely carry out the duties of his position – teaching and research – without asking for permission or being threatened by sanctions from superior governmental authorities. Connected to Lehrfreiheit was Lernfreiheit, meaning that students could freely choose what type of teaching to follow. This tradition therefore reflects the problem of carving out a special arrangement for universities and professors in an authoritarian and hierarchical German state (Metzger 1978). The basis for both the principles is Freiheit der Wissenschaft, i.e. scientific freedom in 'pursuit of the truth', meaning that individual academic freedom rests on an institutional basis related to normative duties that are collective and goes beyond the sin-

gle university. Searle (1994) labels this the 'special theory of academic freedom'.

The American tradition of academic freedom originally reflected tensions in the system of lay rule of universities. Academic freedom guarantees the freedom of professors from interference in this work and expression of views from the administration and lay boards and from interference from outside the universities, i.e. the nominal employers – public authorities and the general public (Ben-David 1971) or by boards of trustees. Searle (1994: 175) labels this the 'general theory of academic freedom' condensed in this quote:

> '…[A] basic principle is that professors and students have the same rights of free expression, freedom of inquiry, freedom of association and freedom of publication in their roles as professors and students that they have as citizens in a free society.'

This principle is broad in the way that it goes beyond the individual academic's special area of competence. But academic freedom is also broadened through the fact that academic staff has other tasks that are derived from core academic tasks, like participation in decision-making processes, administrative tasks and recruitment activities (Shils 1997; Tight 1987).

Specific external and internal developmental features at universities

Is increasing formal university autonomy good?
The traditional European way of organizing the formal relationship between universities and superior ministries, primarily ministries of education and research, has been to give the universities relatively low formal autonomy, but large real autonomy; executive politicians and top administrative leaders have interfered rather little. This seems to have been changing quite a lot, influenced by increasing overall formal autonomy for state agencies and enterprises inspired by New Public Management (Ferlie, Musselin and Andresani 2009: 14). During the last decade or so universities have increasingly been given the status as enterprises or other comparable forms, making them formally more autonomous from the governments, partly in order to be more competitive on a global education market (Boer, Enders and Jongbloed 2009; Olsen and Maasen 2007). In many countries, this has also been related to demands from the government that the universities bring in more money

themselves, and even cuts in their budgets, such as those experienced in Japan (Christensen 2011a). This means that they have to be more active in getting resources from external sources – often label 'market-based research funding' – both public and private, and have in this respect become more dependent of the environment than before (Paradeise, Reale, Goastellec and Bleiklie 2009: 233, 236). This may also have a differentiating effect on re-source allocation in the university system, as, for example experienced in Japan, where the research-oriented universities, like Tokyo University, have succeeded much more in the resource-competition than less research-based universities.

This seems paradoxical – increasing formal freedom, but potentially less actual autonomy. One argument is that the universities, in particular the pub-lic ones, have experienced less actual autonomy, in particular in economic matters, as a result of the NPM-inspired reforms in the formal status of the universities (Christensen 2011b). Taylor (2013: 24–28) argues that we see an increasing politicization of higher education, despite increasing formal with politicians paying more attention and attempt greater control in this sector because of all the resources used, massification of higher education, quality concerns from parents, the economic significance of modern univer-sities, and an overall growing public concern, awareness and accountabil-ity.

Increasing social embeddedness
Universities have become increasingly more socially embedded over time, more so in US, but with Europe following suit (Ramirez and Christensen 2013). This means that the 'ivory tower' metaphor – universities as elite in-stitutions shielded from society – is not that relevant any longer. The uni-versities are increasingly also seen as 'service enterprises embedded in competitive markets', adding to their other roles (Olsen 2007: 30). Now it is much more common for universities to attempt to have several and diver-sified ties with society, captured in the 'network governance narrative', i.e. universities diversify their contacts with stake-holders in their environment (Ferlie, Musselin and Andresani 2009: 15–17).

Two such connections have been mentioned before – being more attrac-tive to students in a student market and trying to get more resources from new sources, either public or private. The commercial aspects of this have been obvious in many countries, where universities have built up units to attract sponsors (like celebrities in the US or UK), built up units in the grey zone between the university and the private sector in an effort to convert re-

search to new products and earn money on licensing, or creating more courses catering to private stake-holders, creating "self-supporting" degree programs, and the like.

Parallel to this development universities devote much more effort to image and reputation building (Christensen and Gornitzka forthcoming). In connection with the steady stream of international university leagues tables, it is more and more common to stress that universities are excellent, innovative, commercialized, and cater to the business community. All this reflects the increasing globalization or internationalization of higher education (Taylor 2013). The big question is whether this is just a symbolically oriented competition or has some reality.

The days of professorial rule are gone

Another global trend in university governance is that the decision-making system has changed considerably over time, with some variety in pace between countries, combining a broadening in representativeness and an increasing hierarchization (Christensen 2011b). Traditionally, professors dominated decision making in most universities, with hierarchically high positions in the academic part of the university correlating strongly with influence in decision-making. Those days are long gone in most countries, with some variety. It started in the 1960s when other groups in the university system got representation in decision-making bodies on all levels, such as students and administrative/technical personnel, but also a wider range of academic staff like associate/assistant professors, post-docs and PhDs also became represented (Ferlie, Musselin and Andresenani 2009: 11–12). The last group to be represented, especially from the 1990s in Europe, has been societal representatives of different kinds. Overall, this has decreased the influence of full professors as a group in university decision processes, and is also a development where representative bodies have been weakened and become more advisory (Meek 2003: 22).

The first component in this development is a change in the concept of representativeness marked by an increase of internal democracy, based on the notion that different groups in the university community should be represented, something that eventually leads to full professors being part of the minority in decision-making bodies. So representation in these bodies has become more complex and hybrid, and probably also less predictable in the content of decisions made by these bodies.

The second component, external societal representatives, is more of an ambiguous element, especially in public universities. Their representation

can be interpreted in different ways. First, they can be seen as representatives from the superior public authorities; as part of a hierarchical system of control and scrutiny (Christensen 2011b). Second, they can be seen as a kind of virtual representation from the society, contributing with their professional knowledge from different societal fields, broadening the basis of the university. Third, and the most controversial interpretation, is that they often represent knowledge from private sector and business, something that is seen as very relevant for universities if they are to become players in an international university market.

Adding to the broadening of representation in university decision-making, two other trends seem evident, both of which have more of a complex relationship to the main trend of changing influence. Increasing representativeness and hybridization seem to be combined with rehierarchization, which is growing stronger over time. One trend is that the number of decision-making bodies is decreasing and a smaller number of people are represented in each body. This indicates a stricter hierarchy in decisions, meaning fewer actors having influence, which may collide with the principle of broadening representation. This means also that the academic (and administrative) leaders – presidents, deans and chairs – overall have increased their autonomy and power, more and more using a broad set of steering instruments (Meek 2003:22; Paradeise, Reale and Goastellec 2009: 220). This also relates to the second trend, where Europe seems to have imitated the US, the fact that an increasing number of academic leaders are appointed; not elected, challenging the traditional principle of electing the 'best among equals' (Larsen 2003). So the trend, in particular in Europe, is from less powerful leaders who are elected to more powerful leaders who are appointed. As with the administration, one can say that through this the leadership positions are professionalized. Or one can say that this reflects an increasing rationalization and globalization of universities and their leadership positions, inspired by modern public reforms like NPM, where the main thought is that universities should be run, like any public (or private) organization, according to certain economic and management principles (Ramirez and Christensen 2013).

A more professional and managerially oriented university administration
A global trend in university governance is that university administrations have become relatively larger and more professional then before. There are many feasible explanations for this trend. First, it may be a reflection of a more general formalization and rationalization trend of both private and pub-

lic organizations, some call it a bureaucratization process, i.e. the fact that more systems have been established, requiring resources and personnel related to planning, reporting and control (Ramirez and Christensen 2013). Some see this trend as increasing with the establishment of the reform wave New Public Management, even though many NPM entrepreneurs promised that it would result in greater efficiency and simplification. One could call this development 'turning universities into organizations' (Paradeise, Reale and Goastellec 2009: 203).

Second, and related to the first trend, over a long period of time universities have been relatively underdeveloped concerning administration, probably related to the traditional 'professorial regime', which was more informal and personalized. When universities increased their administrative staff and made it more professional, this may well be seen as a kind of 'catching-up', meaning that universities are becoming more 'normal' and like any formal organization, i.e. a generic view that fits into the view that universities should be more a part of the knowledge economy and economic growth (Meyer, Drori and Hwang 2006; Ramirez 2006). This makes universities more exposed, as well as vulnerable to managerial reforms (de Boer 2003). Accordingly, an increasing set of managerial tools – strategic plans, new budget allocation models, performance management systems, reporting systems, incentive systems, audits, etc. have been implemented at universities around the world, often reflecting demands from superior ministries for more fiscal control and efficiency (Ferlie, Musselin and Andresani 2009: 8, 14; Paradeise, Reale and Goastellec 2009: 213).

Third, looking more closely at the activities of the universities, there are both internal and external reasons for developing a larger and more professional staff. Universities are developing more complex teaching systems, with more demands on systematic organization of those activities in order to plan the allocation of resources, to secure predictability for professors and students, to secure the students' rights, etc. Research activities are no longer 'simple' and related to the activities of single professors, but often collective efforts where the administration plays a role in providing information and support for academic staff applying for research grant, and for reporting and informing about research results (Paradeise, Reale and Goastellec 2009). Administrative resources are also increasingly related to external stake-holders, whether related to research units with commercial potential, or to getting support and resources for teaching and research from outside, etc.

Historically, and more so in Europe than in the US, it has often been said that two separate hierarchies exist at the universities, one academic and one

administrative/economic/ technical (Christensen 2011b). The purpose of the administrative has been to serve the academic. Not that this feature has disappeared, but the administrative hierarchy now seems to be both relatively more influential, in its own right, as well as more closely connected to the academic. In a critical version, this will be seen as administration 'interfering more in academic matters', while a more positive angle would be to say that this is a necessarily close collaboration and that it is important to look at administrative and economic consequences of academic activities.

A traditional concept in US academic life is for professors to say that they have 'gone into administration' when they have become chairs/heads of departments, deans of schools/faculties or have other positions where they both deal with administrative/ economic matters as well as interacting closely with the academic staff. This labeling is also increasingly coming into use in Europe, something that reflects a change in the relationship between academic and administrative leadership. It is now, for example, more and more common in Europe to see candidates with 'administrative experience' in addition to their academic credentials prevailing in the recruitment processes.

Students – from subordinates to important users

Traditionally, students have had rather low importance in universities, more so in Europe with universities without tuition or with low fees than at US universities. They were definitely subject to the will of the central professors concerning the course of their studies, grading and their further career opportunities. This seems to have changed quite a lot, partly because of growth and massification (Taylor 2013), partly as a result of more people in the professorial ranks and removal of the 'Lehrstuhl' system[1] in many countries, and also reflects the decreasing importance and influence of full professors.

The current attitude towards students, where European universities are clearly imitating the US, is that students are valuable customers or users in a global student market. They have to be treated well and given different types of incentives, without which they will 'take their business elsewhere' (Ferlie, Musselin and Andresani 2009: 14). This coincides with a more differentiated set of services for the students, like student housing, child care programs, health care and counselling, and better and more varied food at the students' canteens. The social relationship between professors and stu-

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1.   A system where there are one or few professors hierarchically at the top as full professor with designated personnel and financial resources.

dents is also becoming closer and less hierarchical. At many universities, students traditionally would not dare to talk to the professors before several years had passed, to exaggerate somewhat, while they now connect more easily through such things as barbequing after introductory courses or at student festivals.

Another and more typical academic aspect of this is that professors are now more often expected to cater to the students continuously and give them feedback on their papers, as an integrated part of teaching or through responding to complaints. So the academic staff has become more and more a kind of 'academic service-provider'. This is of course challenging, adding to the time professors spend with students. Increasingly international university rankings seem to reflect this latter aspect, in addition to academic excellence, so it is becoming more important. The social aspect of studying also seems increasingly important, for example reflected in national student surveys evaluating and comparing universities.

Analysis and conclusion: academic autonomy and academic freedom

The trends outlined relate in different ways to institutional autonomy and individual academic freedom. If we focus on institutional autonomy first – what are the consequences for academic freedom when there is increasing formal autonomy of universities, but decreasing actual autonomy? A pessimistic view, informed by a structural-instrumental perspective, stresses that an increasing reliance on external resources (whether public or private) with strings attached will make academic freedom more challenging. External stake-holders, whether ministries or research councils providing research money, will likely have more interest in certain 'politicized' research areas than others, and will interfere more in the research process, in internal university governance, and in teaching and curriculum matters. And private donors may wish to allocate resources to research and activities that interfere in internal resource allocation processes. A more optimistic view would stress that many governments, at least for the public universities, will continue in their current cultural path to be the main guarantors of academic freedom broadly conceived and for 'free' research, particularly through resources from research councils.

The big challenge for universities when social embeddedness is increasing is whether this will influence academic freedom and university autonomy in a negative way. One instrumental argument supporting this would

emphasize that the applied and commercial aspects of research will become strong, and basic research will suffer. In many universities, applied natural science research and medical research seem to rake in the most external research money by far, suggesting strong prospects for increasingly biased development in favor of the hard sciences, and research with strong prospects for contributing to the economy (Ramirez and Christensen 2013). Again, the attractiveness of yields from commercially exploitable research makes it extremely tempting, especially when the prospects of additional financial resources from other sources are more limited than before. Another view is that there may only be a loose coupling between the symbols of societal embeddedness and what is going on in most universities, suggesting that the effects are not that obvious for academic freedom and university autonomy.

Further, what are the implications of institutional trends of changing decision-making systems in universities, in order to increase academic freedom? A skeptical view, based on a structural-instrumental perspective, stresses that too much power to internal leaders will weaken internal university democracy, for example related to resource allocation and recruitment, and may therefore also potentially weaken academic freedom and decision-making premises based in academic knowledge, because the leaders represent other roles and logics (Christensen 2011b). A supportive view would stress that universities need professional leadership and an opening up to the broader society. A more laissez-faire view would stress that these changes in decision-making processes have rather little to do with everyday life for the academic staff, and that they may even unburden professors from non-academic activities, and thereby strengthen their academic freedom and research opportunities. Such a view is based on an institutional perspective.

What are the arguments supporting the idea that a larger and more professional university administration limits academic freedom? One would be simply that we see an unnecessary bureaucratization of universities, parallel to what we see in all public organizations under New Public Management, eating into professors' time, freedom and core activities (Christensen 2011b). Another argument is that administrative actors, through their increasing influence, are now 'interfering' more and more in academic matters where they do not have enough competence. But there are also counter-arguments, namely that a professional administration is necessary to facilitate both teaching and research in academic institutions, and as such it provides an important precondition for academic freedom. A more cynical view is that professors, regardless of the strength of administrative-professional leadership, live their own lives within universities much as they please, which is

a view based on a hopeful institutional interpretation. (Paradeise, Reale, Goastellec and Bleiklie 2009: 230). Perhaps beneath the seeming isomorphism of fashionable managerial reforms in universities around the world there is a lot of actual variety in the significance of the university administrations (Amaral, Fulton and Larsen 2003: 279).

Finally, what about the significance for academic freedom of the service-oriented trend and of the increasing catering by universities to students? One view stresses that increasing interaction with students will negatively impact the time professors can use on research, and that it therefore indirectly influences academic freedom. But a more positive view would emphasize that a close relationship between academic staff and students will further both a good learning environment and research, and therefore improve academic life. One can, however, imagine a lot of variety here between the preconditions in this respect when comparing a low cost or free tuition public university and a private university with high tuition and higher expectations related to 'value for money'.

Summing up, one can use a structural-instrumental perspective to connect most of the developmental trends in a NPM-like narrative with negative connotations for the academics. First, externally, governments in reality influence universities more and more to enact the university policies they prefer, as do other stake-holders that provide resources. Second, internally academics are losing influence on decisions because of stronger administrative leaders and a more influential student body.

An institutional perspective has two arguments that suggest more positive connotations for academic freedom. One is that universities are very old and very resilient institutions, and that the developmental trends shown may, in the end, have rather minor impact on core individual academic freedom, especially related to research. Following Berdahl (1990), one can argue that the trends are mainly procedural rather than substantive. One can also argue that the trends are mostly about global rationalization and standardizations, and function as symbols rather than having much effect on the realities of everyday academic life.

As shown, there are different interpretations of how academic freedom is affected by political interference from outside of the academy, from stronger powers for internal university leadership and from pressures to cater to the perceived needs of students (as customers). This also goes to the core of the relationship between institutional and individual autonomy. Will the academic faculty be able and willing to meet the challenges these trends represent, challenges concerning resources, expertise and time, when efforts

to meet them can eat into valuable research time? Or do they imagine that they can keep the benefits of institutional autonomy and especially of academic freedom, whatever happens in the world around them? In one view, professional leaders and administrators will organize, handle and 'fend off' external demands so that the academic staff can be relatively uninfluenced and retain its academic freedom. In another, these groups will be more likely to adjust and reorient the academic staff to a new reality with more limited freedom than before.

It is also worth pointing to the fact that the academic staff is not homogeneous. Some have a need for more resources, such as in natural sciences, and for closer relations to external sources and stake-holders. They may well have fewer worries about academic freedom, while social science and humanities professors overall seem to be more skeptical about the trends outlined (Seeber 2013).

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