

Introduction: origins, purpose and an overview

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We didn't wait to look at one another. I took Irene's arm and forced her to run with me to the wrought-iron door, not wanting to look back . . . I still had my wrist watch on and saw that it was 11 p.m. I took Irene round the waist (I think she was crying) and that was how we went into the street. Before we left I felt terrible; I locked the front door up tight and tossed the key down the sewer. It wouldn't do to have some poor devil decide to go in and rob the house, at that hour and with the house taken over.
Julio Cortázar, *House Taken Over* (1967, p. 16)

The origins of this volume lie in our belief that the university as an academic institution is an essential ingredient of vibrant societies, and in our fears over the appropriateness of the development paths that universities and university systems have been taking over recent years. Most especially, we are concerned that people working in universities have had disturbingly little space to think about and shape those paths, perhaps partly because they have not been given the space, partly because they have chosen – consciously or otherwise – not to take the space for themselves.

In his short story 'House Taken Over', Julio Cortázar tells of a man and his sister Irene living in a large family house that 'apart from its being old and spacious . . . kept the memories of great-grandparents, our paternal grandfather, our parents and the whole of childhood' (Cortázar, 1967: p. 10). They spent their time in a routine of house cleaning and idle pursuit, obtaining income from farms that others worked. One day they hear the noise of intruders in the back part of the house. They rush to bolt an oak door that shuts off that area, opting to live in the parts of the house that remained. 'The first few days [that followed] were painful, since we'd both left so many things in the part that had been taken over . . . But there were advantages too. The cleaning was so much simplified that, even when we got up late, nine thirty for instance, by eleven we were sitting around with our arms folded' (*ibid.*, p.14). But then, 'except for the consequences' (*ibid.*, p.16), the same thing happened again. This time the brother and

sister heard noises in their area of the house, the front part, so they left altogether, locking the wrought iron front door to prevent intruders, even though the house was now taken over.

Some have interpreted the story as a comment on Peronism in Argentina, a possibility that Cortázar himself does not exclude.² Without wishing to push the analogy too far, we wonder if it has resonance in universities. Are we in academia tending to stand by whilst our houses are being taken over? This is a question of not only failing to reject unwanted intruders but also, for example, ignoring benefits from shared occupancy; or lacking the imagination to modify the architecture, so as to engage better with visitors.

We are at a point in history when, across the world, academic institutions are being questioned by their so-called stakeholders and pressured to change. We would assert that answering these questions and understanding these pressures require that everyone working in universities – including professional managers as well as academics – be in positions to think about their work, its value and organization. They need the space and stimulus to reflect on the responsibilities, roles and expectations that they identify for themselves, and that others place upon them. Then, they would not be bolting the doors and hiding away. They might be better able to understand and to act.

The purpose of this volume is to call for such space and provide stimulus for reflection.

The contributors are colleagues with whom we have shared thoughts on these issues over recent years. Some were participants in the Birmingham Workshops on Academic Freedom and Research/Learning Cultures, which we initiated in 2007 at the University of Birmingham (with Silvia Sacchetti, also a contributor to this volume). Those Workshops were conceived as a forum for rigorous analysis and thinking on academic cultures and environments. Some contributors joined in the 2009 EUNIP (European Network on Industrial Policy) Workshop hosted by Orkestra in San Sebastián; for us, this was an important point for debating aspects of university activity in relation to territory and policy stakeholders. Some were participants in the four-day programme on Cooperation and Leadership in Academia that we hosted in 2010 at the University of Stirling. This programme was designed explicitly with the prospect of the current volume firmly in mind. It was also intended to provide a space for those working in universities to reflect on their roles; on how those roles might be developed and on how they might be carried out more successfully.

In editing the volume we had no intention of requesting contributions that would be comprehensive on the key issues facing universities and those who work in them. Nor did we ask any contributors to be exhaustive

in addressing any one issue. We simply intended to cover an interesting array of topics and urged authors to do so in any ways that they thought would be stimulating for readers. Our objective is to leave each contribution to be enjoyed on its own merits, to speak for itself in feeding reflection about the roles and responsibilities of university faculty and management.

Accordingly, by way of further introduction all that we now offer is the briefest of overviews as a flavour of the material that follows.

The volume begins with a set of contributions focusing on conceptions and types of university. Gordon Graham (Chapter 1) contends that:

universities as we have come to know them do not have a single 'inner pulse'. Rather, there are at least three rationalized models of the university, all of which can be found to have played a significant part in the history of higher education. These are the university as college, as research center, and as polytechnic. (p.3)

Exploring these three types, he contemplates tensions in choosing between and ordering 'research, teaching and practical relevance' (p.8). Graham suggests that the main problem confronting academia 'is the difficulty of continuing to assert the university's valuable social role, while resisting two recurrent threats to its autonomy – "the state as social engineer" and "the student as customer"' (p.15). He argues for a revitalized notion of the university as college.

University types, including university as college, are also addressed by Keith Tribe (Chapter 2). He studies the establishment of a set of new universities in 1960s Britain. Tribe suggests that, over time, those universities lost sight of their original purpose, which had been to be 'experimental, to provide scope for innovation in teaching and learning' (p.17). Instead they converged on uniformity, 'increasingly' reshaping themselves according to 'what were conceived to be the values and imperatives of the private sector' (p.23). Through this process there was an undermining of collegiality as a foundation for the governance of scholarship and teaching. Tribe's warning is that:

[r]eforms to a [university] system in the absence of any substantial understanding of the evolution and present structure of that system hardly ever turn out in the way intended. The only sure thing is that reforms of that kind merely prepare the ground for future waves of reform. (p.30)

In important respects Tribe is especially concerned with teaching, which can also be said for Gert Biesta (Chapter 3) in his consideration of balancing the core activities of universities. He questions 'what the university is *for*' (p.32), looking at the rise of the so-called global university and

considering the ‘different ways in which the university has emerged in differing (national) contexts’ (p. 33). He suggests ‘that the global university is mainly adapting to private interests rather than supporting *public projects* and *the common good*’ (p. 36). Distinguishing between three models – the economic, the professional and the democratic educational – he analyses ‘the difference . . . between a university that has a service-orientation towards private wants and a university that has a service-orientation towards the public good’ (p. 38). This takes him to the significance of teaching. Biesta argues ‘that if we want to conceive of the university as a public institution, that is as an institution with a public “task” and responsibility . . . we need to conceive of its first priority as that of *teaching*’ (p. 39).

A concern with public good is also central to the argument offered by Roger Sugden (Chapter 4). Having explored current reality, he challenges societies to evolve a new model of socio-economic development, one that would better accommodate the interests of publics. Consequently he suggests ‘that a task facing universities is to provide people with the creative space to meet that challenge’ (p. 43). He cautions universities against choosing business models that use large, transnational corporations as role models: ‘a university adopting such corporate logic would be unlikely to have as one of its broad objectives the serving of publics’ (p. 50). Rather, Sugden advocates ‘the possibility that a university might choose to adopt *public interests logic*; it might organize itself so as to enable people to think about, analyse and understand ways in which the interests of publics might be better satisfied’ (p. 51). That takes him to comments on values, academic freedom and creativity, thus to asides on Docherty’s (2008) analysis of sense and sensibility.

Thomas Docherty takes his earlier analysis of sense and sensibility further in this volume (Chapter 5), and in doing so considers the relevance of the economic model, notably its stress on achieving efficiencies in ways that, for him, actually result in *inefficiencies*. The reason for that outcome is the failure ‘to address the question of the regulation of sense and sensibility’, in particular ‘to recognize the value of sensibility, a sensibility that requires play, which “wastes time”’ (p. 58). He criticizes the ‘contemporary utilitarian and instrumentalist ideology of education’ (p. 64), and the free-market conservative thinking that rewards productivity and disallows play. For Docherty, play is:

a kind of radical release of the very energies that are required for committed learning and teaching in the first place. It is in play that we see the play of sensibility and that we therefore engage the body with the mind in embodied learning or sense-making. Without play, there can be no experience. (p. 65)

Moving to Chapter 6, Philip Cooke and Fumi Kitagawa maintain the concern with conceptions and types of university. In the context of UK experience, they describe and discuss three related agendas: ‘massification, marketization and privatization’ (p. 70); corporatization, based upon new public management; and ‘the questionable ethics associated with the global procurement of students and research income’ (p. 70). They argue that in now privatized universities ‘academic expenditure has risen at a far slower and lesser pace than administrative and largely administratively related expenditure’ (p. 85). These newly employed administrative staff are said to be ‘engaged in recruiting overseas, especially Asian students, managing financial flows, managing assessment procedures and auditing financial flows’ (p. 85). Most damningly, Cooke and Kitagawa conclude that:

universities over-rode basic ethical requirements in a democracy of denying support to non-democratic and repressive regimes by accepting major financial transfers from regimes that in some cases were, in 2011, to be seen to turn guns upon their own protesting citizens. (p. 86)

Marketization and new public management also concern Sonja Grönblom and Johan Willner (Chapter 7). They offer an appreciation of the historical development of universities and then explore impacts on work motivation, employment and performance. For them, ‘marketization has usually been advocated through economic arguments related to cost efficiency. In particular, the new public management is based on theories where employees are seen as driven only by a desire to earn money and avoid effort’ (p. 101). In contrast, they see it as realistic that people may have other motivations. Grönblom and Willner therefore use a formal economic model including intrinsic motivation to analyse universities with and without marketization, and thereby challenge recent developments. They conclude that their ‘formal analysis suggests that sticks and carrots can make sense only when the intrinsic motivation is weak, but in other cases they tend to reduce the work effort’ (p. 101). Grönblom and Willner also show circumstances in which, for example, a Vice Chancellor may gain from a weakening of employees’ intrinsic motivation.

The focus on motivation is maintained in the contribution by Silvia Sacchetti (Chapter 8). She also explores motivation in the context of current changes in academia, which she sees as including a mimicking of business and the prioritization ‘at a growing rate across national systems of’ an incentive system that serves the aim of revenue increase (p. 122). In particular, Sacchetti aims at ‘providing a way of understanding whether enquiry-led academics are an endangered species and how motivations can

be kept alive (p. 122). To analyse motivation she draws an analogy from physics, exploring the idea of thermodynamics. Sacchetti calls for peer support in academia, rather than peer evaluation, as a way to ‘respectfully encourage enquiry and the development of new ideas. In this way, researchers can renew their intrinsic motivations and, as a consequence, their commitment to academic enquiry’ (p. 114). She suggests that the role of senior staff and leaders be that of giving support and of upholding the support network among peers.

A particular aspect of peer relationships is addressed by Steve Fuller (Chapter 9). He argues that in the context of ‘calls for academic inquiry to be more “open sourced” and “publicly oriented”, it has been common for academics who either uphold or oppose the neo-liberal mode of knowledge production to agree on the inviolability of “peer review” as a core academic value’ (p. 128). However, for Fuller ‘the value of peer review in the larger political economy of knowledge production is rather circumscribed and typically conservative in effect’ (p. 128). He is quite damning of its use, and thus calls for change. For example, he writes of an ‘authoritarian appeal to peer review, so alien to the early modern science societies, that needs to be ended, and preferably replaced’ (p. 143). Fuller’s analysis leads him to wonder about playing ‘the natural openness of entrepreneurial publishers against the natural public-mindedness of Humboldtian scholar-teachers’ (p. 145). He even contemplates ‘bringing publishers into the governing structure and staffing of the university’ (p. 145).

In Chapter 10, John Rogers and Eileen Schofield shift our attention to the role of non-academic staff, and to their relationships with academics. They point to a ‘deep and unhelpful divisiveness within university communities’ (p. 147) that has tended to be emphasized and perpetuated by the literature. They argue that the functions and activities of non-academic staff ‘are not generally discussed in terms of their nature, merits or contribution. Rather, they tend to be portrayed as an impediment to the pursuit of scholarship’ (p. 147). Looking to present a more balanced view, Rogers and Schofield consider the rise of managerialism, the professionalization of university administration and the criticisms that have been levelled at non-academic staff. They endorse the prospects for working in the so-called ‘third space’ – i.e. ‘between academic and professional domains, across and outwith boundaries and hierarchies’ (p. 156). They identify the role of the leader as that of ‘ensuring that all of the talents available within a university are engaged effectively in pursuit of shared goals’ (p. 159).

Whilst maintaining an explicit concern with the contributions of all talents, Elspeth Jones (Chapter 11) moves our attention to what has commonly become, albeit in often limited respects, one of the more pressing issues for universities over recent years: internationalization. She advocates

an integrated approach, suggesting that internationalization can facilitate ‘an inclusive, intercultural dimension to the teaching, research, service, and the commercial and entrepreneurial pursuits of a contemporary university’ (p. 162). She argues that this approach implies that a university’s “global reach” involves not only international undertakings but also local, regional, national and, crucially, internal systems, processes and organizational culture’ (p. 162). Jones sees a consequent need to engage all university staff in the internationalization agenda, and her view is that ‘an internationalization strategy that does not give sufficient attention to the leadership and development of staff is unlikely to achieve its aims’ (p. 165). She suggests how to evaluate progress in achieving such integrated internationalization, and offers possible indicators of success.

Another pressing concern for universities over recent years has been the funding of higher education. That is the subject of David Bell’s contribution (Chapter 12). Concentrating on the ‘almost unprecedented fiscal austerity’ (p. 184) following the 2007 financial crisis, he presents a somewhat bleak yet varied picture of the realities in the US and Europe. For example, in 2009/10 alone, the state’s contribution to the University of California’s budget fell by \$813 million and approximately 1900 employees were laid off. Bell observes that, ‘as it should be within a democratic state’ (p. 184), government/higher education relationships have tended to be uneasy. However he also perceives that ‘the new financial pressures are leading to realignments of these relationships and a consequent redistribution of power that will affect both higher education itself and, through it, society in general’ (p. 184). Which is not to imply a necessarily negative outcome: ‘in some sense, these changes provide an opportunity for those who can use a time of significant change to effect improvements in the system’ (p. 196).

Aspects of the relationships between universities and societies are taken up by Roger Normann and Hans Chr Garmann Johnsen (Chapter 13). They argue that understanding what happens when university and society meet is underdeveloped, because ‘this meeting is not of one type only, but rather represents a plurality of interaction forms’ (p. 197). For them, such meetings are ‘very context-specific’ and ‘can put many different role dimensions into play, such as institutional, communicative, power, identity and culture, as well as more formal and structural elements’ (p. 197). They denote this plurality the ‘third place’. Their concern is to improve understanding of the third place, what happens there in terms of knowledge development and learning, and how it is organized and managed. Normann and Johnsen explore these issues from the perspectives of, on the one hand, universities and, on the other hand, business communities and regions. They do so by drawing on data from a particular region in Norway, namely Agder.

Mari Jose Aranguren, James Karlsen, Miren Larrea and James Wilson (Chapter 14) also contribute to the debate about university–society relations, especially regarding territorial socio-economic development. Addressing their concern that ‘there is little written around the practical aspects of achieving more “relevant” research that is at the same time independent and academically rigorous’ (p.216), they analyse three long-running cases of ‘action research’ involving researchers and regional development agents in the Basque Country. Their contention ‘is that action research can contribute to opening up the black box of interactive learning processes between academic research and regional actors’ (p.217). Reflecting on the cases, Aranguren et al. stress that ‘[k]nowledge co-generation is a social and an emotional process’ p. 229 that demands change: from practitioners, who need to get away from wanting ‘to get knowledge from the researchers in a linear way as a recipe of what to do’ (p.230); from researchers, who need to appreciate that their theoretical knowledge is ‘not enough to have real-world impacts’ (p.230). Aranguren et al. emphasize that such change necessitates time, among other things.

David Blanchflower (Chapter 15) takes up the issue of relevance, depicting the absence of academics in periods of social need. Reflecting on recent macro-economic crises and the ‘need for engagement and involvement of the economics profession in the problems of our day’ (p.237), he asks academics: where were you? Blanchflower observes, for example, that for him ‘sitting at the Bank of England as a member of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) from 2006 to 2009, trying to make interest rate decisions every month, was a lonely task; there was little or nothing academic economists had to contribute’ (p.235). The consequence of their absence is said to be ‘some of the worst economic policy errors in a generation’ (p.265). He wonders if ‘the great fear’ is due to lack of self-confidence, or possibly worry ‘that they will be forced to move outside their comfort zone and be asked questions about something else’ (p.237). In certain respects his chapter is a call to arms, his aim being ‘to discuss the policy mistakes’ and, most importantly, ‘look for help’ (p.238).

To conclude the volume we move away from the particular illustrations provided by economics and economists to a more general issue that is a recurring theme across the chapters: leadership in universities. We finish with a contribution on this topic because of the especial importance that we believe it has not only in explaining the successes, failures and development paths that universities have experienced, but also in determining their future.

Thomas Docherty (Chapter 16) begins with a discussion of the meaning of education, drawing examples from the literary work of Muriel Spark and Seamus Heaney to suggest ‘that leadership and followership are

charged with meanings well beyond the simple idea of being at the head or tail of a race, or of an army, or of a group or institutional body' (p. 271). He explores these meanings, thus issues of responsibility, answerability and experience. For him, '[p]erhaps above all, to lead means to assert a particular kind of break; and, in this, it is clear that the leader, insofar as she or he leads, cannot be simply the agent of another, more powerful force' (p. 271). He sees 'a crisis of leadership' in higher education, 'provoked' by a managerialism implying 'that instead of leaders, we have managers; instead of followers, we have resources' (p. 277). For Docherty, 'leadership is leadership if and only if it enhances freedom and extends it. It is not enough simply to protect existing freedom; the point of leading is to offer freedom more widely' (p. 281). Asking what that might mean in a university, he points to the necessity of 'encouraging dissent rather than conformity' and of 'challenging authorities, especially those that are illegitimate' (p. 281).

We urge that you, reader, use not only Docherty's contribution on leadership but also each of the following chapters as a stimulus to your thinking about the work, value and organization of universities. On such foundations we hope that there might be a bright future for our houses.

NOTES

1. Thanks to Mari Jose Aranguren for comments on an earlier draft of this introduction.
2. Interview of Julio Cortázar in 'A fondo', 20 March 1977, accessed on 16 April 2012 from *Escritores en el archivo de RTVE (Writers in RTVE Archive)* at www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/escritores-en-el-archivo-de-rtve/entrevista-julio-cortazar-programa-fondo/1051583/. In the interview Cortázar also says that he dreamt the story – it was the result of a nightmare.

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- Cortázar, Julio (1967), 'House Taken Over', in: Julio Cortázar, *Blow-Up and Other Stories*, New York: Pantheon Books.
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