



11

Over the Cuckoo's Nest: Towards a Nordic Model of the Responsible University?

Rómulo Pinheiro, Lars Geschwind, Jouni Kekäle,
and Mads P. Sørensen

Introduction

This edited volume explored the 'black box' associated with the meanings, interpretations, tensions and dilemmas related to the notion of the responsible university in the Nordic countries and beyond. In the

R. Pinheiro (✉)

Department of Political Science and Management, University of Agder,
Kristiansand, Norway

e-mail: romulo.m.pinheiro@uia.no

L. Geschwind

KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden

e-mail: larsges@kth.se

J. Kekäle

University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland

e-mail: Jouni.kekale@uef.fi

M. P. Sørensen

Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

e-mail: mps@ps.au.dk

introduction, we reflected on the multiplicity of, and ambiguity inherent to, existing perspectives and proposed, rather provocatively, the exploration of the concept of the ‘irresponsible university’ as an antithesis to the arguments that have been laid out. From a historical viewpoint, we also reflected on the extent to which notions of responsibility have, in one way or another, shaped dynamics within higher education (HE) systems and institutions in the light of specific imperatives that are contextually bounded. Furthermore, we touched upon the prevalence of global policy initiatives, such as the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, that are intrinsically linked with the grand challenges facing world societies in the twenty-first century and beyond. We then contextualised how responsibility as a normative idea and hegemonic discourse within national systems and institutions manifests itself in the daily practices and formal and informal structures of universities at different levels, from the supra structure of government policy to the middle structure of administration and further to the academic heartland (Clark 1983). Finally, we concluded the introduction with a brief elaboration of some of the distinct features of, and recent dynamics within, Nordic HE. Among other aspects, we pinpointed how the four case systems have evolved during the last few years towards more stringent financial management, fiercer national and global competition and the concomitant rise of excellence and accountability regimes.

In this conclusive reflection, we take stock of the major elements, both empirical and conceptual, underpinning the case chapters. The chapter is organised in three distinct sections. First, addressing a largely scientific audience, the editors attempt to make conceptual sense of the findings from an organisational theory perspective. Second, we shift our focus to the wider community of practitioners (policy makers, advisers, university managers and administrators, etc.) by shedding light on the practical implications of the volume’s core findings for both policy and practice. Third, we once again address our academic peers by sketching out the road ahead regarding future studies in the area.

The Responsible University: Analytical Eclecticism Rooted in Organisational Science

The contributions of the volume are diverse and multifaceted and touch upon multiple elements characterising the ways responsible agendas affect the inner dynamics of higher education institutions (HEIs) and the strategic agendas and activities undertaken by multiple internal and external constituencies. By approaching the topic from a holistic and explorative perspective, the editors made a conscious decision to allow authors considerable leeway regarding the conceptual and analytical lenses adopted in the case chapters. This methodological strategy is known in the literature as 'analytical eclecticism', which 'seeks to explicate, translate, and selectively integrate analytic elements—concepts, logics, mechanisms, and interpretations—of theories or narrative that have been developed within separate paradigms but that address related aspects of substantive problems that have both scholarly and practical significance' (Sil and Katzenstein 2010, 10). Eclectic methods move beyond paradigms, seemingly combining elements belonging to different approaches and perspectives to 'develop a causal story that captures the complexity, contingency, and messiness of the environment within which actors must identify and solve problems' (Ibid., 22). In our view, this methodological approach seems rather fitting when investigating the ways in which ambiguous yet prevalent notions of societal responsibility and its various manifestations (impact, excellence, relevance, openness, accountability, etc.) permeate the inner life of universities and the academic, administrative and learning communities composing them (for the use of this method in the field of HE, consult Young et al. 2018).

Thus, to provide some analytical rigour to our analysis and discussion of the key findings, we structure the analysis around seminal concepts and perspectives emanating from the study of organisations and processes of organising. In our view, this strategic posture is justified due to the importance attributed in the extant organisational literature to the role played by formal and informal structures on the one hand and the interplay between environment, organisation and key agents on the other. Hence, we discuss the key findings against the backdrop of five distinct

stylised (ideal type) perspectives of the responsible university. Although certain perspectives play a dominant role in the empirical accounts, all of them can be identified throughout each of the individual contributions.

Responsibility as Strategic Choice

This perspective is associated with the *instrumental*, rationalistic view of organisations (Olsen 2007; Christensen et al. 2007) and pertains to the strategic efforts by managers and other rationalisers of the costs and benefits associated with developing and implementing a responsible agenda across the board. More specifically, it focuses on the processes, goals, incentives and outcomes to be achieved and emphasises the role played by so-called strategic agents such as university leaders and administrators to create the conditions for goal achievement and success. Hence, it follows what March and Olsen (2006) described as a ‘logic of consequentiality’ or outcomes best characterised by the prevalence of self-interested and rationally calculating actors and instrumentalism. Recent government-led policy reforms in the Nordic countries and beyond have attempted to transform universities from relatively decentralised organisations into more coherent and tightly coupled organisational forms (Pinheiro and Stensaker 2014; Pietilä 2018).

In their historical investigation of the transition from a Finnish Keynesian-based welfare state into a Schumpeterian competitive one, Kohvakka, Nevala and Nori (Chap. 2) described how Finnish universities shifted from being principal providers of regional stability to becoming engines for boosting national and international competitiveness. Whilst uncovering the efforts by leaders around HR-related issues and the development of a proactive model for recruitment, Kekäle and Varis (Chap. 9) demonstrated how the recruitment of researchers at the University of Eastern Finland is considered a strategic tool for achieving the university’s social mission of addressing global challenges. Vellamo, Pekkola and Siekkinen’s (Chap. 8) discussion of the risks posed by interdisciplinarity in a Finnish university merger indicated the importance of multidisciplinary structures as *the* solution for addressing wicked societal problems

(e.g., climate change), empirically demonstrating how the quest for acting as a responsible university affects strategy and structure.

In their discussion of the rise of English as the predominant language in Danish academia, Sørensen, Young and Pedersen (Chap. 4) referred to the adoption of bibliometrics and efforts by university management to shape academic behaviour. Similarly, while addressing the question of whether a responsible university really needs a third mission, Karlsen and Larrea (Chap. 7) referred to one variation of the instrumental perspective of organisations associated with power and politics and the concomitant role played by the formation of coalitions and interest articulation (Christensen et al. 2007, 29–30). Barman, MacGrath and Stoehr (Chap. 5) concluded that Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are used strategically to foster broader internal transformation within Swedish universities, with a privileged focus on cost efficiencies and external accountability. In a similar vein, Pulkkinen and Hautamäki (Chap. 6) argued that co-creation is a valuable tool or instrument for achieving universities' social responsibilities by 'applying the corporate social responsibility mode of thinking into a university environment'.

Beyond the Nordics, Benneworth's (Chap. 3) critical take on the topic stressed the government's strategic use of funding allocation models to shape university behaviours, including their response to societal needs. Given the fiercely competitive nature of the UK's and global HE landscapes, as rational actors, universities are expected to prioritise tasks that offer the highest returns in terms of funding and/or prestige. Finally, Berg, Pinheiro, Utomo and Nurhayati (Chap. 10) provided empirical evidence of how the expertise of universities in Indonesia is paramount in addressing local needs. Government and universities have taken steps to promote a socially responsive agenda, for example, in the form of financial incentives for university graduates to return to their localities of origin and by actively involving external stakeholders in devising educational programmes.

Responsibility as Tradition or Moral Duty

This perspective focuses on the normative and cultural–cognitive dimensions underpinning organisational structures and activities. It pertains to the notion of organisations as *institutions*, that is, as a collection of norms, rules and identities that, over time, become deeply embedded in the goals of the organisation and the motivations driving the behaviours of internal actors (Scott 2001). It pertains to the institutionalisation of organisational life, that is, the attitude that specific features that provide a certain organisation with a distinct character or culture are taken for granted (Zucker 1988; Selznick 1996). It basically means that organisations are denoted with a ‘life of their own’ relatively independent of, and oblivious to, events and strategic imperatives emanating from the outside. It is associated with the ‘logic of appropriate behaviour’ (March and Olsen 2006), where emerging circumstances (e.g., external events) are matched or addressed by adopting pre-agreed behavioural scripts or routines, often taking an implicit rather than an explicit form. In the realm of HE, these dimensions are intrinsically associated with the historical, path-dependent character of university structures and cherished values and activities (Clark 1992; Krücken 2003). In the context of this volume, this pertains to the internal meanings associated with responsibility as an integral component of academic norms and disciplinary cultures (Becher and Trowler 2001) and their local (university-embedded) variations in both time and space (Clark 1972).

Several of the volume contributors referred to the functional distinction (horizontal differentiation) between the old, research-intensive universities and more recent vocationally oriented institutions such as university colleges (Norway) or polytechnics (Finland). The former are often located in large urban areas and have traditionally catered to the socialisation of future political and professional elites (Castells 2001), even though they also aided the government with providing education to the masses (cf. Tapper and Palfreyman 2010). Not surprisingly, and despite variations from place to place, their general outlook is that of a cosmopolitan academic environment with the nation and the world as their points of normative and strategic reference. This contrasts with the

traditional role of more vocationally oriented institutions located in the geographic periphery (cf. Pinheiro et al. 2018), whose structures and activities (at least in theory) tend to cater to the needs and expectations of local stakeholder groups like government and industry.

Kohvakka, Nevala and Nori's (Chap. 2) historical account demonstrated how, during the 1960s and 1970s, universities were expected to support the Finnish government in accomplishing its national mission of state planning, exercised, *inter alia*, through an emotional bond between the state territory and the citizenry. Fields like the social sciences played a critical role in adopting a state-centric view of regional planning and development with local and global dimensions subsumed into a national frame of reference. This normative posture was contested by the more outward-looking and market-prone technology universities and business schools that favoured institutional autonomy and tight interactions with industry.

Vellamo, Pekkola and Siekkinen's case (Chap. 8) demonstrated the importance of institutionalised domains of organisational life, often manifested in resistance to change. According to the authors, academics voiced their support for old structures, which, in their view, were already interdisciplinary in nature, with the new structures seen as a threat to existing arrangements, including cherished norms and values within specific sub-disciplines. The assertion by internal actors that 'the university has to be responsible to itself in order to be responsible to other stakeholders' is yet another manifestation of the inward orientation associated with the cultural perspective. Sørensen, Young and Pedersen's chapter (4) also reveals interesting elements associated with the role played by institutionalised traditions. During the eighteenth century, the use of Latin in science was associated with tradition, whereas Danish was linked to progress and modernity. Now Danish has become the tradition and English the progressive language for publishing.

Regarding institutionalised practices, Karlsen and Larrea (Chap. 7) pointed to the barriers associated with the linear approach (engagement as a product rather than a process), which is deeply rooted among internal and external actors alike. They also point to the challenge associated with moving from an individual towards a collective (shared) understanding of co-creation. Pulkkinen and Hautamäki (Chap. 6) described

co-creation initiatives at Helsinki university that acknowledge the cultural challenges involved with bridging various scientific communities and traditions. Deeply rooted norms and practices, such as peer review, are inadequate in the context of interdisciplinary collaborations where joint development of ideas, open mindedness and constructive dialogue (rather than criticism) are paramount. Barman, McGrath and Stöhr (Chap. 5) claimed that MOOCs are a means for universities to fulfil their societal obligations, as dictated by Swedish law. Through their global reach, MOOCs extend this societal role to the rest of the world, thus acting as a responsible university from a global perspective.

Regarding non-Nordic cases, Benneworth (Chap. 3) argued that the origin of public value failures in Dutch HE is intrinsically linked to policy reforms in the 1990s that had a negative effect (decline or de-institutionalisation) on the traditional democratic decision-making model at universities. Competition and other market-based mechanisms led to the institutionalisation of a 'culture of financialisation'. The prevalence of different versions of responsibility within a single university resulted in the rise of multiple sub-cultures: fiduciary, managerial, meritocratic and so on. Berg, Pinheiro, Utomo and Nurhayati (Chap. 10) highlighted the importance of 'TriDharma' in instituting a culture of moral duty and community service across different types of universities in Indonesia, including those located in large urban areas. Role overlap enabled the emergence of a hybridised culture, with academics acting as 'third space professionals' and connecting the university to the outside world.

Responsibility as Symbolism or Window-Dressing

This perspective is associated with the quest for mostly external, but also internal, legitimacy (Deephouse and Suchman 2008). When faced with external pressures seen as incompatible with organisational goals and/or traditions, internal actors often take proactive steps to protect or buffer core tasks or technologies from environmental influences, minimising the risk of *co-optation* (Selznick 1957). Hence, this perspective focuses on symbolic compliance to external demands and expectations or

window-dressing (Greenwood et al. 2011; Oliver 1991), for example, in the form of decoupling between internal activities and external imperatives (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2008). Such strategic postures have been widely documented in HE (cf. Pinheiro and Young 2017), not least around the third mission (Pinheiro et al. 2015). This process is facilitated by the endogenous loose coupling between units and types of activities (Birnbaum 1988).

Several contributions in this volume point to the symbolic role of strategy in addressing societal challenges. Kekäle and Varis's contribution (Chap. 9) demonstrated how the development of new recruitment models requires the active involvement of academics to secure the necessary input and internal legitimacy. Vellamo et al. (Chap. 8) referred to the fact that the case university's core mission is education rather than the resolution of wicked problems in society, which is an indirect consequence of the latter. In addition, their account suggests that embracing interdisciplinarity is, to a certain extent, associated with the need to secure external support (as well as resources) for the university's goals and structures. Sørensen et al. (Chap. 4) contended that embracing English as the scientific language of choice is in part due to its association with world-class excellence, progress and a global (cosmopolitan) outlook. They also demonstrated that when compared to the insurmountable pressures for (and prestige associated with) scientific publishing, initiatives aimed at increasing societal impact through dissemination or outreach often take the form of 'lip-service'. Karlsen and Larrea (Chap. 7) pointed to a mismatch between the actual (low) level of societal engagement by the University of Agder's academics and the (high) degree of expectation for societal engagement by external stakeholders. Further, they shed light on the fact that the presence of a formal strategy does not necessarily imply tight coupling or implementation. Pulkkinen et al. (Chap. 6) critically questioned whether co-creation has an intrinsic value (e.g., as a learning tool) or whether it is simply a mechanism for demonstrating accountability. Barman et al. (Chap. 5) indicated that the association of Swedish universities with the MOOC consortia, led by prestigious universities like Stanford and Harvard, raises the question of whether this, by itself, is a means of lifting universities' prestige and legitimacy in the eyes of important stakeholders such as students, funders and other HEIs. The authors

referred to the idea of MOOCs as a means of communicating to the outside world that the university is modern and progressive. Finally, outside the Nordics, Berg and colleagues (Chap. 10) reported that in the eyes of some external stakeholders, university-led outreach programmes are thought to be more beneficial to the universities themselves (in securing student graduations) than to their surrounding localities.

Responsibility as Environmental Determinism

This perspective is associated with the role attributed to external imperatives in the inner dynamics of organisations. Advocates of such perspectives contend that ‘there is no alternative’ and that the lack of compliance to externally imposed demands is likely to result in a major loss or punishment in terms of resources, legitimacy or both (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003). In many respects, this represents the opposite of a strategic (instrumentalist) view and thus underplays the agentic role of internal stakeholders at the expense of the technical and institutional environments surrounding the organisations (Hrebiniak and Joyce 1985; Scott 2001). In the realm of HE, this means that universities are pushed to adopt certain features of their environment, such as market-based mechanisms, even if this may not necessarily be aligned with their formal and informal structures or profiles. The carriers of such features include but are not limited to: the state as the main funder and regulator of HE affairs, and influential ‘trend-setters’, such as supranational organisations like the OECD, the World Bank and/or the EU. The latter have been found to play a critical role in promoting hegemonic ideas or scripts such as ‘world-class’ and ‘best practices’ (Ramirez et al. 2016). Such ideas spread and circulate across jurisdictions and sectors of the economy, acting as rationalised myths (Ramirez and Christensen 2013) and are sometimes, but not always, adapted or translated to local circumstances (Sahlin and Wedlin 2008; Beerkens 2010).

In their account of the University of Eastern Finland’s strategy, Kekäle and Varis (Chap. 9) referred to the need to respond to a changing regulatory and market environment with a strong expectation of innovation and contributions to solving global problems. Similarly, Vellamo et al.

(Chap. 8) reported how, according to the internal stakeholders, the technical needs of industry require the university to keep certain structures (e.g., degree programmes) unchanged. In addition, the same stakeholders state the need to follow well-established and recognised (prestigious) models present elsewhere (MIT, Delft and Aalto). Sørensen et al. (Chap. 4) showed how Danish universities have been obliged to emphasise language as part of their internal policies as a result of changing regulative and competitive environments. They also point to the existing divide in terms of power and hegemony between 'centre' (the Anglophone world) and 'periphery' (national sphere elsewhere), with the former setting the pace for the adoption of new scientific norms and practices. Pulkkinen and Hautamäki definition of co-creation (Chap. 6) alluded to 'a phenomena in a rapidly changing environment' underpinned by a shift in the relationship between science and society and characterised by a change in knowledge regimes. In Chap. 5, Barman and colleagues showed how, as a means of covering rising costs, MOOCs providers are now moving away from tuition-free models towards closed, tuition-based systems. They also demonstrated how the regulative environment in which Swedish universities operate creates barriers to the development of more competitive business models. Beyond the Nordics, in Chap. 10, Berg et al. highlighted the challenges associated with low-quality secondary education (outside the control of universities), which introduces serious challenges to widening access to HE in remote regions. Finally, in the UK context, Benneworth (Chap. 3) showed how the need to respond to external demands (declines in funding and fiercer competition) has led to the modernisation of university structures and the widespread adoption of market-like postures such as managerialism and performance-based models.

Responsibility as Resilience

Resilience pertains to the ability of organisations to withstand or overcome internal and/or external shocks while retaining a sense of identity or stability (Kaye 2015). In other words, it is associated with adaptability within the context of a changing external environment. Resilience and

learning are interconnected as organisational actors exploit existing assets and competencies and explore future alternatives (March 1991). In the realm of HE, resilience relates to the ability of universities to maintain a sense of stability and continuity—in terms of structures, activities, norms and values, etc.—amidst changing external circumstances. Several historical accounts have shown that, as organisations, universities have been rather successful at adapting to changing external circumstances while keeping their essence relatively intact (Wittrock 1985; Meyer and Schofer 2007). This perspective thus views universities as complex, self-organising, evolving entities characterised by a multiplicity of forms, goals, values and sub-cultures (Clark 1983; Pinheiro and Young 2017). Among other aspects, it sheds light on universities' abilities to accommodate multiple and sometimes conflicting institutional logics (Berg and Pinheiro 2016), often resulting in new hybrid structures that are thought to foster long-term adaptability to an ever-changing and increasingly complex environment (Billis 2010).

Kohvakka et al.'s historical account of system evolution in Finland in Chap. 2 showed how old and new features coexist (at least for a period) despite the changing policy landscape. In spite of considerable change in the Finnish economy and society, the domestic HE landscape remained relatively stable between the mid-1990s and 2010. In a similar vein, Kekäle and Varis (Chap. 9) associated responsibility with the complexity inherent to different disciplines and cultural orientations, referring to the coexistence/integration of disciplinary cultures as a key element in addressing society's manifold problems. Similarly, in Chap. 8, Vellamo et al. contended that interdisciplinarity (a form of exploration strategy) is an integral aspect of the university's ability to address the needs and expectations of multiple stakeholder groups. Sørensen et al. in Chap. 4 offered evidence of academics, particularly but not exclusively of the younger generations, adapting to new circumstances by shifting their research focus from the local to the global. Further, they stated the importance of keeping Danish journals alive as a prerequisite to 'maintaining a public intellectual space' in the country (p. xx).

In Chap. 7, Karlsen and Larrea highlighted a key feature of resilience systems, the possibility for fostering experimentation and for diversity (heterogeneity), by allowing individualised practices and informal norms

to emerge organically (bottom-up) rather than by imposing stricter rules and guidelines from the top down. They also contended that the context specificity and complexity surrounding universities' third mission requires the adoption of multiple definitions and perspectives of engagement rather than a single view or policy. Co-generation rather than linearity is thought to provide a more sustainable (and resilient) alternative for solving societal problems. Pulkkinen and Hautamäki in Chap. 6 highlighted the ability of the entrepreneurial university model to respond innovatively to societal demands without changing the character of universities from public goods into private businesses. Somewhat surprisingly, they found that firms are seeking long-term partnerships to address problems rather than short-term solutions and that co-creation nurtures a 'living lab for experimentation' (p. xx). Barman et al. (Chap. 5) shed light on MOOCs as a disruptive practice in HE. They found that in Sweden, they are being used primarily as mechanisms for driving internal change or adaptation (through innovation) within universities as part of a 'paradigm shift' (p. xx). Benneworth in Chap. 3 warned against the pervasive effects associated with centralised decision-making structures within universities in the quest for reducing ambiguity and complexity, leading to failures and dilemmas. Finally, Berg et al. in Chap. 10 pointed to the Indonesian government's inability to adapt to shifts in student demand across certain fields, compounded by limitations regarding the autonomy enjoyed by universities and individual campuses.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Having grouped the analysis of core findings along five conceptual perspectives, largely addressing a social science research audience, it is now time to reflect on the implications of the volume's empirical insights when it comes to policy and practice. For several decades, universities have been increasingly expected to demonstrate short-term social relevance and to react to external demands for accountability. This trend has manifested in different steering mechanisms; funding is connected tightly to results; and ministries have introduced diverse assessment mechanisms. However, freedom of research and enquiry has remained, in

principle at least, unchanged. The discussion of a ‘responsible university’ is yet another attempt to clarify universities’ role in changing societies to provide added value to society. Academic freedom is embedded in the concept, as responsibility includes the notion of volunteerism and free will. If forced, one cannot be held responsible. So, the question remains: how can universities provide added value on a voluntary basis?

One could argue that universities have always provided additional value to society and fulfilled certain moral and strategic expectations. However, societal expectations of HE systems and providers have changed in the Nordics and elsewhere. In the 1960s, the overall expectation by (Western) societies was that the brightest minds should come up with new ideas and solve problems relatively freely; that is, they were given considerable freedom without much external interference and guidance from the government or university managers. The 1970s harkened the introduction of centralised planning to HE steering, reflecting the spirit and beliefs of the era. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the market economy, management by objectives and a hegemonic neoliberal economic doctrine replaced centralised planning as the basic philosophy of HE policy (Rinne 2004). The rise of the evaluative state has been well documented (Neave 1998, 2012): accountability and value added in return for public funding has been expected. The expectations of short-term evidence have increased as the economic value in a quartile economy is perceived as increasingly important and as the once-high trust in the long-term outcomes from HE has apparently deteriorated, or at least transformed.

If we take Finland as an example, the 2000s saw an intensified discussion in which the business sector and many politicians expected increasing contributions from HE to the economy, most notably regarding employment. Such discussions appeared to contribute to the new university Act of 2009, where universities were given more freedom but were also subjected to a stronger accountability regime. However, as the national HE budget was cut by several hundred million euros in the forthcoming decade, the new, legally established ‘independent universities’ faced the task of having to adapt to a rather different environment. Similar trends can be detected in other Nordic countries (e.g., budget cuts in Denmark), but pressures on short-term relevance have been

present elsewhere. Reorganisation of HE systems in the form of mergers has occurred across the Nordics, centred on fewer but larger and more globally competitive institutions (Pinheiro et al. 2016).

In recent years, triumphs of right-wing populism in global politics have changed the landscape and increased overall unpredictability. The civic university, as a concept, stresses civic involvement, which appears to be lacking, especially in new settings. Universities are increasingly expected to take responsibility for this function (Goddard et al. 2016). The emphasis on public attention and expectations has increasingly turned to global problems, such as climate change, that threaten humankind and our collective way of living, including eternal economic growth with traditional industry and the production of goods. Universities are again called to contribute to a changing set of expectations. However, there remains a high political responsibility in public engagement and global problems.

This description of external changes is simplified. However, it highlights some of the general developments. Given the independent nature of academic institutions, the outcomes in which responsibility is practised are bound to vary according to each institution and individual. An institution can identify its own strengths and is expected to communicate the value it can best produce for science, the society and external stakeholders; this also applies to individual scholars. The term 'responsibility' also encapsulates the capacity for one's own (moral) decisions, rational thought and action, which are crucial in HE. Organisations typically aim to have positive impacts in all areas; this approach can be considered responsibility, and it includes orientations towards business (research, instruction and the third task in the case of universities), people (employees and stakeholders), the environment, the community and more.

In this volume, our cases and discussions mainly dealt with responsibility in basic tasks for society and stakeholders. As shown, there are variations to the basic approach: Sørensen et al. discussed responsibility for local communities through language policy; Pulkkinen et al. discussed social responsibility in terms of employability; Kekäle and Varis discussed leadership and HR implications to solve problems; Benneworth took a critical stance towards the concept of responsibility and its most crude implications. The basic approach of responsibility in basic tasks

demonstrates that the tasks of a university, the relevance the institution produces and the attached funding schemes are much discussed at present.

In recent decades, there has been a growing pressure for accountability when it comes to the basic tasks of universities. However, the best foreseeable contribution to society—demonstrated responsibility—from universities depends on the strengths and capabilities of each institution, faculty, department and individual scholar. Universities' contributions to society may also be slow to materialise, and it is important for society to be patient. It takes a long time to become an expert in a field, and changes in institutional and individual profiles are not easy to carry out. Moreover, academic behaviour is, to a large extent, determined by long-established professional and disciplinary norms as a result of socialisation in a given field. There are also more localised norms and ethos that pertain to the immediate local settings, such as university, department, geographic location, and so on. These norms and traditions are not always aligned with the needs, expectations and values of external stakeholders, often resulting in a 'clash of logics'.

Institutional profiling may help to make various expectations more manageable and thus reduce the burden of expectations that some scholars and institutional leaders may experience. In recent years, we have seen a constant 'add on-process' when it comes to university tasks. Clark (1998, 131) spoke of a crossfire of expectations on a global scale. Enders and Boer (2009) refer to the 'mission overload' facing modern universities as they attempt to address multiple and ever growing external demands. More recently, Fumasoli et al. (2015, 1) noted that 'public organizations face two seemingly contradictory pressures: on the one hand they have to handle more diversified demands from their environments; on the other hand, they are increasingly required to act as strategic organizations and display coherent behavior'. They argued that organisational identity can be designed to reduce the risks of uncertainty about the future and issues related to evaluation and assessment. That said, identities are difficult artefacts for managers to work with, and most universities, as shown in many of our accounts in this volume, have multiple, often competing, identities and sub-cultures. This makes it difficult for managers to align internal characteristics and external dynamics and demands, but the main lesson here seems to be that 'one size does not fit all', and different approaches are

required in the light of specific circumstances and local, normative and strategic postures. Whereas one could argue that, in principle, all university staff should take responsibility seriously, in practice this implies flexibility in allowing each individual academic or sub-unit considerable leeway in interpreting how this can be done in real terms.

In deciding what aspects, initiatives and expectations an institution should react to, leadership at all levels is crucial. Institutional leaders have a special responsibility to allocate resources and enable a cultural environment that is conducive to responsible behaviour whilst respecting sub-disciplinary norms, values and traditions. Yet, academics also have a responsibility to carry out teaching and research activities in a scientifically sound way for the benefit of the scientific community and society at large. These are not mutually exclusive dimensions, and there are plenty of examples, including from the Nordic countries, of the important role that academic groups have in addressing issues of social relevancy, such as climate change, whilst simultaneously excelling at their research endeavours. Following Perry and May (2006), it is indeed possible to be both relevant and excellent.

Concluding Thoughts and One Way Forward

This volume set out to provide clarity on the widespread notion of responsibility within HE and its manifold manifestations, largely within the context of Nordic HE systems. The empirical contributions show clear evidence that there are multiple ways to demonstrate responsibility, and this is likely to prevail so long as universities continue to remain relatively independent or autonomous actors. Responsibility, autonomy and accountability are intertwined and must be assessed against the backdrop of a performance management regime that has become an integral part of Nordic HE systems (Pinheiro et al. 2019). Greater institutional autonomy results in increasing oversight *ex post* (regarding outputs and outcomes). External expectations of accountability and responsibility are not likely to disappear anytime soon. Politicians and other external stakeholders will continue to place their expectations on universities so long as these remain publicly funded, as is the case in Nordic countries. The gradually growing dependency on external forms of income is likely to

exacerbate the degree of influence by certain external actors and their particular conceptions of and claims to responsibility.

The cases included in this volume, whilst not exhaustive, are nonetheless representative of the complex realities facing contemporary HE systems in the Nordics and beyond. The examples provided in this volume demonstrate the multiple ways and attempts of taking responsibility into account. Some effects are already being felt in universities' structures, activities and cultures, while others will take much longer to materialise. Responsibility is a process that is constantly evolving (a moving target) and is shaped by temporal and geographic conditions. It is a process laden with normative meanings and positions and, if not handled carefully, may have the unintended consequence of exacerbating the cultural divisions already present within the university as a heterogeneous fiduciary institution whose primary public values are being challenged by the rise of the marketplace and critical voices regarding the role and legitimacy of knowledge and experts in world society.

Future research could, for example, investigate how different stakeholder groups within and outside the university make sense of the rise of responsible agendas in HE. It would also be interesting to shed empirical light on the long-term effects (e.g., as regards institutional profiling, performance, resilience) associated with the implementation of responsible strategies in universities' primary functions and the ways universities and other HEIs adapt to new emerging circumstances.

References

- Becher, T., & Trowler, P. (2001). *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of Disciplines*. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.
- Beerens, E. (2010). Global Models for the National Research University: Adoption and Adaptation in Indonesia and Malaysia. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 8(3), 369–381.
- Berg, L., & Pinheiro, R. (2016). Handling Different Institutional Logics in the Public Sector: Comparing Management in Norwegian Universities and Hospitals. In R. Pinheiro, F. Ramirez, K. Vrabæk, & L. Geschwind (Eds.),

- Towards a Comparative Institutionalism: Forms, Dynamics and Logics Across Health Care and Higher Education Fields* (pp. 145–168). Bingley: Emerald.
- Billis, D. (2010). *Towards a Theory of Hybrid Organizations*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How Colleges Work: The Cybernetics of Academic Organization and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Boxenbaum, E., & Jonsson, S. (2008). *Isomorphism, Diffusion and Decoupling*. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin, & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Organisational Institutionalism* (pp. 78–98). London and Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Castells, M. (2001). Universities as Dynamic Systems of Contradictory Functions. In J. Muller, N. Cloete, & S. Badat (Eds.), *Challenges of Globalisation. South African Debates with Manuel Castells* (pp. 206–233). Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.
- Christensen, T., Lægread, P., Roness, P. G., & Røvik, K. A. (2007). *Organization Theory and the Public Sector: Instrument, Culture and Myth*. Milton Park: Taylor & Francis.
- Clark, B. (1972). The Organisational Saga in Higher Education. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17(1), 178–184.
- Clark, B. R. (1983). *The Higher Education System: Academic Organization in Cross-national Perspective*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Clark, B. (1992). *The Distinctive College*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Clark, B. R. (1998). *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities: Organizational Pathways of Transformation*. New York: Pergamon.
- Deephouse, D., & Suchman, M. (2008). Legitimacy in Organisational Institutionalism. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin, & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Organisational Institutionalism* (pp. 49–77). London and Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Enders, J., & Boer, H. (2009). The Mission Impossible of the European University: Institutional Confusion and Institutional Diversity. In A. Amaral, G. Neave, C. Musselin, & P. Maassen (Eds.), *European Integration and the Governance of Higher Education and Research Higher Education Dynamics* (pp. 159–178). Den Haag: Springer Netherlands.
- Fumasoli, T., Pinheiro, R., & Stensaker, B. (2015). Handling Uncertainty of Strategic Ambitions—The Use of Organizational Identity as a Risk-Reducing Device. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 38(13–14), 1030–1040.

- Goddard, J., Hazelkorn, E., & Kempton, L. (2016). *The Civic University: The Policy and Leadership Challenges*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Greenwood, R., Raynard, M., Kodeih, F., Micelotta, E. R., & Lounsbury, M. (2011). Institutional Complexity and Organisational Responses. *The Academy of Management Annals*, 5(1), 317–371. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19416520.2011.590299>.
- Hrebiniak, L., & Joyce, W. (1985). Organisational Adaptation: Strategic Choice and Environmental Determinism. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 30(3), 336–349.
- Kayes, D. C. (2015). *Organisational Resilience: How Learning Sustains Organizations in Crisis, Disaster, and Breakdown*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Krücken, G. (2003). Learning the ‘New, New Thing’: On the Role of Path Dependency in University Structures. *Higher Education*, 46(3), 315–339. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1025344413682>.
- March, J. G. (1991). Exploration and Exploitation in Organisational Learning. *Organization Science*, 2(1), 71–87.
- March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (2006). Elaborating the “New Institutionalism”. In R. A. Rhodes, S. A. Binder, & R. B. A. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions* (pp. 3–22). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Meyer, J. W., & Schofer, E. (2007). The University in Europe and the World: Twentieth Century Expansion. In G. Krücken, A. Kosmützky, & M. Tork (Eds.), *Towards a Multiversity?: Universities Between Global Trends and National Traditions* (pp. 45–62). Berlin: Transcript-Verlag.
- Neave, G. (1998). The Evaluative State Reconsidered. *European Journal of Education*, 33(3), 265–284.
- Neave, G. (2012). *The Evaluative State, Institutional Autonomy and Re-engineering Higher Education in Western Europe: The Prince and His Pleasure*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Oliver, C. (1991). Strategic Responses to Institutional Processes. *Academy of Management Review*, 16(1), 14.
- Olsen, J. P. (2007). The Institutional Dynamics of the European University. In P. Maassen & J. P. Olsen (Eds.), *University Dynamics and European Integration* (pp. 25–54). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Perry, B., & May, T. (2006). Excellence, Relevance and the University: The “Missing Middle” in Socio-Economic Engagement. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 4(3), 69–92.
- Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (2003). *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Business Books.

- Pietilä, M. (2018). *Making Finnish Universities Complete Organisations: Aims and Tensions in Establishing Tenure Track and Research Profiles*. PhD dissertation, Helsinki: University of Helsinki.
- Pinheiro, R., & Stensaker, B. (2014). Designing the Entrepreneurial University: The Interpretation of a Global Idea. *Public Organization Review*, 14(4), 497–516. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-013-0241-z>.
- Pinheiro, R., & Young, M. (2017). The University as an Adaptive Resilient Organization: A Complex Systems Perspective. In J. Huisman & M. Tight (Eds.), *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research* (pp. 119–136). Bingley: Emerald.
- Pinheiro, R., Langa, P., & Pausits, A. (2015). One and Two Equals Three? The Third Mission of Higher Education Institutions. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 5(3), 233–249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2015.1044552>.
- Pinheiro, R., Geschwind, L., & Aarrevaara, T. (2016). *Mergers in Higher Education. The Experience from Nordic Countries*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Pinheiro, R., Geschwind, L., Hansen, H. F., & Pulkkinen, K. (Eds.). (2019). *Reforms, Organizational Change and Performance in Higher Education: A Comparative Account from the Nordic Countries*. Cham: Palgrave.
- Pinheiro, R., Young, M., & Sima, K. (2018). *Higher Education and Regional Development: Tales from Northern and Central Europe*. Cham: Palgrave.
- Ramirez, F. O., & Christensen, T. (2013). The Formalization of the University: Rules, Roots, and Routes. *Higher Education*, 65(6), 695–708.
- Ramirez, F., Byrkjeflot, H., & Pinheiro, R. (2016). Higher Education and Health Organisational Fields in the Age of “World Class” and “Best Practices”. In R. Pinheiro, L. Geschwind, F. Ramirez, & K. Vrangbæk (Eds.), *Towards a Comparative Institutionalism: Forms, Dynamics and Logics Across Health Care and Higher Education Fields* (pp. 35–57). Bingley: Emerald.
- Rinne, R. (2004). Searching for the Rainbow: Changing the Course of Finnish Higher Education. In I. Fägerlind & G. Strömqvist (Eds.), *Reforming Higher Education in the Nordic Countries: Studies of Change in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden* (pp. 89–135). Paris: UNESCO.
- Sahlin, K., & Wedlin, L. (2008). Circulating Ideas: Imitation, Translation and Editing. In R. Greenwood, K. Sahlin-Andersson, & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Organisational Institutionalism* (pp. 218–242). London: Sage.
- Scott, W. R. (2001). *Institutions and Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Selznick, P. (1957). *Leadership in Administration: A Sociological Interpretation*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Selznick, P. (1996). Institutionalism “Old” and “New”. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41(2), 270–277.
- Sil, R., & Katzenstein, P. J. (2010). *Beyond Paradigms: Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics*. New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tapper, T., & Palfreyman, D. (2010). *The Collegial Tradition in the Age of Mass Higher Education*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Wittrock, B. (1985). Dinosaurs or Dolphins? Rise and Resurgence of the Research-Oriented University. In B. Wittrock & A. Elzinga (Eds.), *The University Research System: The Public Policies of the Home of Scientists* (pp. 13–39). Stockholm: Coronet Books.
- Young, M., Pinheiro, R., & Šima, K. (2018). Conclusion: University Ambiguities and Analytic Eclecticism. In R. Pinheiro, M. Young, & K. Šima (Eds.), *Higher Education and Regional Development: Tales from Northern and Central Europe* (pp. 191–212). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Zucker, L. G. (1988). *Institutional Patterns and Organizations: Culture and Environment*. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Co.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter’s Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter’s Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

