Higher Education Governance and Academics’ Social Movements in European Countries: New Players on the Field?

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New actors in higher education governance?

• Self-organized disciplinary communities and the role of academic elites in shaping research and higher education policies (Whitley et al., 2010)

• Collective resistance platforms spanning across disciplinary boundaries as new players on the field of higher education and research governance
Research questions

• What new forms of collective responses do academics undertake in order to reclaim their positions as influential actors within the higher education and research governance systems?

  - To what extent does the collective response bear the characteristics of a social movement? (Definition, organization, action repertoires and strategies)

  - What has prompted the creation of the collective resistance? (Theories of social movements)
Puzzles to be solved

• Why so late?
  • The policy change and the resulting structural changes in universities have started back in the 1990s, collective resistance platforms are a recent phenomenon

• Changing academic identities?
  • Strong disciplinary identity boundary maintenance among academics (Leisyte, 2014)
  • Collective resistance at national level is likely to go beyond disciplinary boundaries
Definition of social movements

• “Collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities” (Tarrow, 1998: 4)

• “Networks of groups or organizations prepared to mobilize for protest actions to promote (or resist) social change” (Rucht, 1996: 186)

  – Conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents
  – Shared distinct collective identity
  – Framing as a mobilization strategy
Theories of social movements

• The theory of ‘grievances’ (Gurr, 1970; Müller, 1980; Klandermans, 1997)
  – Feeling of injustice and discontent which are initiated by social-structural changes in the society
  – Criticism: “Grievances are everywhere, movements are not”

• The concept of collective identity (Van Zomeren et al., 2008; Klandermans, 2014)
  – Shared grievances
  – Information
  – Social support
Managerialist reforms in HE institutions

• New Public Management (NPM) reforms in the public sector
  (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; Sultana, 2012)

• Managerialism in European HE institutions: More ‘complete and ‘corporate organizations’ (Krücken and Meier, 2006)

• Characteristics of managerialism:
  - Accountability based on performance & target setting
  - Funding based on results
  - Marketization & commercialization of higher education and research
  - Bureaucratization & centralized HE governance
Shifts in HE governance

**Academic Self-Governance**

- Academic logic (based on peer review, public good, principle of collegiality)
- Professional and institutional autonomy
- Disciplinary communities
- Collegial decision-making practices

**Managerial Self-Governance**

- Quasi-market logic (bureaucratic control, external stakeholders, financial returns)
- Institutional autonomy (power to top management)
- Professional managers and administrators instead of professors
- Centralized decision-making processes

**Consequences:** Weakening role of academics in shaping university decision-making, changing academic work, performance pressure, decreasing academic freedom...
Expectations

GRIEVANCES
(Managerialist reforms →
Marketization, commercialization,
loss of professional autonomy...)

COLLECTIVE IDENTITY
(Changing academic identities →
Cross-disciplinary collaboration in
collective resistance)

ACADEMICS’ POLITICAL
MOVEMENTS
(Collective resistance
platforms)
Case Studies

CDBU
Council for the Defence of British Universities

HNU
Platform Hervorming Nederlandse Universiteiten

Actiegroep Hoger Onderwijs

Jonge Academie & Dia
Policy context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UK</th>
<th>BE-Flanders</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>„Hard NPM country“</td>
<td>„Soft NPM country“</td>
<td>„Soft NPM country“</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managerialism since early 1980s – Thatcher reforms – strengthening managerial self-governance within universities</td>
<td>Managerialist reforms in 1990s (Decrees of 1991 and 1994) – In 2008 the Decree on the financing of HE</td>
<td>Managerialism introduced mid-1980s (increased self-regulation), since late 1990s and early 2000s also increased accountability &amp; strengthened market orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong top-down policy process: Government → Funding Councils → University</td>
<td>State steering with laws and decrees / Intermediary institutions provide some buffer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centralized research quality assessment for the allocation of public funds (Performance-based funding)</td>
<td>Financing of HEI according to research output and number of student credits</td>
<td>Performance-based government funding based on student numbers</td>
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# Structure of academics’ resistance platforms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CDBU (UK)</th>
<th>AHO (BE-Flanders)</th>
<th>H.NU (Netherlands)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Launch</strong></td>
<td>November 2012</td>
<td>Summer 2013</td>
<td>November 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>Membership-based organization</td>
<td>Loosely structured, supporter-based</td>
<td>Loosely structured, supporter-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
<td>Membership fees &amp; donations</td>
<td>--</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Membership</strong></td>
<td>67 founding members</td>
<td>&gt;150 founders</td>
<td>25 founders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 steering group members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 trustees, &gt;600 members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Links</strong></td>
<td>Linked to other movements &amp; campaigns in the UK</td>
<td>Linked to similar national and international academics' platforms</td>
<td>Linked to similar national and international academics' platforms; soon to other movements</td>
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# Action repertoires

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<td><strong>Mobilization</strong></td>
<td>Becoming a member, donations, sharing own stories, joining or starting up local groups, promoting the council, volunteering</td>
<td>Online petition action „Open Letter“</td>
<td>Online signature action for supporting the manifesto of H.NU „Towards a Different University“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media presence</td>
<td>Social Media presence (Twitter, Facebook, Blog)</td>
<td>Social Media presence (Twitter)</td>
<td>Social Media presence (Twitter, Blog)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Newsletter, journal articles and newspaper columns, policy documents on website</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization of events such as lectures, conferences</td>
<td>Organization of discussion rounds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Political Action</strong></td>
<td>Contacting politicians (Public hearing at House of Lords)</td>
<td>Contacting politicians (Public hearing at Flemish parliament)</td>
<td>Flyer action at the event „Gala of Science“</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Social media presence: Twitter

CDBU
Council for the Defence of British Universities. If you'd like to become a member please see our website.

UK
CDBU.org.uk
Datum: november 2012

Actiegroep Hoger Ond
Actiegroep Hoger Onderwijs - Tweets en RT's over academie.

HNU
Platform Hondering Nederlandse Universiteiten

PLATFORM HNU
Platform Hondering Nederlandse Universiteiten

Tweets Tweets & replies Photos & videos

## Topic framing

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<td>Academic Freedom</td>
<td>Performance pressure and research quality</td>
<td>Commodification of research and the emphasis on financial criteria</td>
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<td>Precarious work conditions esp. for young academics</td>
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<td>Performance pressure and research quality</td>
<td>Inclusive academic self-governance</td>
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<td>Equal opportunities, student fees, early career researchers</td>
<td>Precarious work conditions esp. for young academics</td>
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Founding members per discipline
Summary and conclusions

• All three platforms resemble social movement organizations in many aspects (structure, topic framing strategies, activities), but differ in terms of organizational structure, activities, as well as the effects of grievances and multidisciplinary collective identities.

• Grievances (the NPM-based higher education reforms and the fundamental changes in university organization and academic work) seem to be the main drive of academics’ collective resistance platforms.

• A politicized collective identity might have been fuelled by the grievances, but no clear evidence on the extent to which collective identity has played a role on the emergence of academics’ political movements.
Where do we go from here...

• What are the predispositions that lead academics towards forming the action platforms? → Social movement theories → Interviews with founding members

• What other theories apply to the emergence of academics’ movements? → Relationships of founders with other actors of governance (Unions, professional organizations, lobbyists…)

• What are the motivations of academics who support the protest platforms? Do they differ on the basis of social characteristics (gender, age), academic level, or academic disciplines? → Theories of protest participation → Interviews with participants
Thank you for your attention