The University and the Demand for Knowledge-based Growth

The hegemonic struggle for the future of Higher Education Institutions in Finland and Estonia

ADRIÀ ALCOVERRO
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Abstract
In recent decades, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been reformed worldwide so that they may exert a greater influence in the production of knowledge within Knowledge-based Economies (KBEs). This transformation is often explained in terms of how advanced capitalist economies need to secure a prosperous future within post-Fordist capitalism. These developments have occurred in Finnish and Estonian universities, which are conceived as spaces in which knowledge, technology and entrepreneurship are creatively combined in order to contribute to the realisation of a sustained economic growth. The study contextualises this demand for knowledge-based growth within the wider global capitalist system and views it as something that steers reforms. The central purpose of these reforms is to further deepen the process of market expansion. This process is understood as a totalising movement that intersects with existing relations of power and social hierarchies. In the study, a Gramscian framework is employed, in order to critically investigate, in two multidisciplinary university departments in Helsinki and Tallinn, the emergence, consolidation and reproduction of an order that is constituted by the contradictory relation between legitimating narratives, on the one hand, and the vertical implementation of policies, on the other. Methodologically, the study adopts a narrative analysis of a corpus of programmatic documents alongside work stories. Both parts of the study’s empirical material are explained and recontextualised within the wider global politico-economic system. Despite the tensions generated by HEI reforms, the analyses presented in this study bring to light the existence of a fragile consent based on a vague horizon of hope and freedom consolidated at all levels, from the programmatic documents to the academic workforce.

This vague horizon of prosperity steers and legitimises market expansion through the circulation of an optimistic techno-centric narrative, expressed in the concept of **solutionism**, which serves to de-antagonise those tensions present in the territorialisation of market forces, by promising a future in which science, technology and entrepreneurship co-operate for the good of society. The study also reveals how the deployment of reforms is legitimised through recourse to the exceptional status that the meritocratic order has in academia, specifically, and society, more generally. To understand how the market logic merges with academic exceptionalism, this increasingly “marketised” – or debauched meritocratic – order is analysed by re-defining some of Bourdieu’s concepts. Solutionism and “debauched meritocracy” provide a set of middle-ranging concepts that connect to the larger Gramscian framework, with the purpose of completing the critical investigation into the university order and its apparently central place within the Knowledge-based economies and post-Fordist capitalism.

**Keywords:** Totalising, Post-Fordist capitalism, KBE, Gramsci, Bourdieu, solutionism, debauched meritocracy, science, market orientation, relational, hierarchy, autonomy, de-antagonise, competitiveness, legitimation.
Sammanfattning (Summary/abstract in Swedish)

Universitetet och efterfrågan på kunskapsbaserad tillväxt – Den hegemoniska kampen om framtiden för institutioner för högre utbildning i Finland och Estland


Denna vaga välståndshorisont styr och legitimerar marknadsutvidgningen genom cirkulationen av en optimistisk teknik-centrerad berättelse, uttryckt i begreppet lösningsorientering (solutionism). Begreppet tjänar till att motverka de spänningar som finns i territorialiseringen av marknadskrafterna genom att lova en framtid där vetenskap, teknik och entreprenörskap samspelar till förmån för samhället. Studien visar även hur implementeringen av reformer legitimeras genom att åberopa den exceptionella status som den meritokratiska ordningen har i akademin i synnerhet och i samhället mer allmänt. För att förstå hur marknadslogiken smälter samman med det som utmärker akademin analyseras denna alltmer ”marknadsförda” - eller tygel-
lös meritokratiska (debauched meritocratic) - ordning genom att omdefiniera några av Bourdieus begrepp. Lösningsorientering (solutionism) och "tygellös meritokrati" (debauched meritocracy) tillhandahåller en uppsättning av mellanbegrepp som kopplas till det större gramscianska ramverket i syfte att komplettera den kritiska utredningen av universitetsordningen och dess centrala plats inom kunskapsbaserade ekonomier och post-fordistisk kapitalism.

**Nyckelord:** Totalisering, post-fordistisk kapitalism, KBE, Gramsci, Bourdieu,lösningsorientering, tygellös meritokrati, vetenskap, marknadsorientering, relation, hierarki, autonomi, av-antagonisera, konkurrenskraft, legitimering.
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## Contents

Preface ........................................................................................................................................... 19

Introductory Part:
Higher Education and the Knowledge-based Economy ......................................................... 23

1. University reforms: the constitution of a contradictory order ........................................... 25
   1.1. Finland’s university reform of 2009, another university reform in the world .......... 25
   1.2. Aim: Understanding HEI reforms in both its global and local dimensions within two university departments in Finland and Estonia .......... 26
   1.3. Academic capitalism and the chronicle of university reforms.
       State of Art ......................................................................................................................... 29
   1.4 Beyond the separation between the global and the local within
       a totalising process. State of Art ...................................................................................... 37
   1.5. Research Questions ................................................................................................... 43

2. A short history of the Knowledge-based Economy: the origins and dissemination of a global trend ................................................................. 47
   2.1. The origins of the KBE: The decay of the Fordist Regime of Accumulation and the becoming of the uneven post-Fordist economic order ................................................. 50
   2.2. The Knowledge based economy: Conception and dissemination of a global project ................................................................. 54

3. The constitutive material and discursive historical forces of contemporary capitalism beyond the KBE .............................................................................. 69
   3.1. The material force: financial power and the KBE ......................................................... 69
   3.2. The discursive force: technological optimism and its contradictions ................. 77
   3.3. The contradictory interplay between the material and the discursive historico-constitutive forces ................................................................. 81

4. Finland: From welfare to competition ................................................................................. 83
   4.1. Welfare for development and security. The swift consolidation of Finland’s welfare state during the Cold War ................................................................. 84
   4.2. Beyond the “Finnish Miracle”: The reorientation of Finland’s political economy ......................................................................................... 86
   4.3 Post-2008 Global Financial Crisis ................................................................................ 88
9.1. A playful place filled with creative people............................................................ 210
9.2. From Freedom to autonomy.................................................................................. 212
9.3. Uncertainty, the destabilising “might” ................................................................. 216

10. A frictionless narrative in times of “unparalleled change” and the concealment of the political........................................................................................................ 221

10.1. Summary of the narrative: Living in Unparalleled times and the tale of frictionless capitalism .................................................................................. 221
10.2. Conceptualisation: A post-political narrative to conceal a conflict-ridden reality to overcome the decoupling between structure and superstructure .......................................................................................................... 226
10.3. Solutionism meets Bourdieu: knowledge, markets and fields, a preview. .... 232

Part 4:
Ragnar Nurske School of Innovation and Governance in Tallinn University of Technology ......................................................................................................... 235

11. Tallinn University of Technology in the KBE: Schumpeterian dirigisme or the formation of state-market hierarchies ...................................................... 237

11.1. From laissez-faire to state-led market orientation............................................ 240
11.2. Market oriented competitiveness ........................................................................ 242
11.3. Horizontality within the hierarchy ................................................................. 248
11.4. MEKTORY. University-business partnerships: formation of hierarchies and solutionism. ......................................................................................... 254

12. Ragnar Nurske School of Governance and Innovation: Success and contradictions ............................................................................................................................ 263

12.1. Personal success and division of labour ............................................................. 268
12.2. The illusion of “normal science” in a besieged scientific field: A Bourdieusian approach to tradition in times of new demands............................... 271
12.3. The contradictions of the alibi, “playing the system” ...................................... 285
12.4. Work-life balance: some remarks on the informant’s academic existence ... 287
12.5. Concluding remarks. The balance between opportunities and hierarchies: the hegemonic keystone of the legitimation and survival of RNS ................ 293

Concluding Part ........................................................................................................................ 299

13. Conclusions. The order and its insides........................................................................ 301

13.1. Solutionism as a totalising hegemonic instrument ......................................... 303
13.2. Formation and validation of an open hierarchical order .............................. 315
13.3 About the apparent normal continuity of academia in an era of reforms .......... 323
13.4 Contributions to Academic Capitalism research .................................................. 329

Epilogue: “Totalising” from a bird’s eye view: Helmuth Plessner’s concept of “belated nation” in the Gramscian theoretical framework ............................................. 337
The problematic nature of the belated nation: Plessner’s argument...............339
Totalising movement Gramsci and the belated nation (I): the absence of a historico-democratic constitutive moment in post-Fordism.........................343
Totalising movement, Gramsci and the belated nation (II): a re-foundation of capitalism without the democratic means to enforce a political nation ..........345

References...................................................................................................................................351

Media Sources ..................................................................................................................................365
Empirical material Aalto University Block .....................................................................................365
Empirical TUT and Ragnar School of Innovation block.................................................................366
Work-life stories Ragnar Nurske School of Innovation and Governance ........................366
Abbreviations

AU       Aalto University
CDA      Critical Discourse Analysis
CDO      Collateralised Debt Obligations
CMBS     Commercial Mortgage-backed Securities (CMBS)
CPE      Cultural Political Economy
EU       European Union
FIS      Finnish Innovation System
HEI      Higher Education Institutions
ICT      Information and Communication Technologies
KBE      Knowledge-based Economy
LS       Lisbon Strategy
MEKTORY  Modern Estonian Knowledge Transfer Organisation
          for You.
NATO     North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OECD     Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OMC      Open Method for Cooperation (within Lisbon Strategy EU
          convergence method)
R&D      Research and Development
RNS      Ragnar Nurske School of Governance and Innovation
TNC      Transnational Corporation
TOM      Täna Ostustan Mina (Today I Decide)
TUT      Tallinn University of Technology

See abbreviations for informants and programmatic documents at the end of Chapter 7
Preface

Personal interest is what comes to mind first when considering the reasons behind the choice for a PhD topic in the social sciences and humanities. It is, to all intents and purposes, a personal decision which invariably sets the trajectory with respect to what you will be reading and writing for some years hence, and even for decades, if the PhD is to be the start of an academic career. It is, without exaggeration, a life decision and for that reason, the reasons behind this choice are multiple: it can be guided by a purely strategic outlook on the world, determined by the exigent or the convenient – whether this is because one has access to a research group or a well-financed research field, which thereby makes the securing of funding and future prospects easier. On the other hand, it can be steered by a latent intellectual curiosity. Whether the principal reason is either one or the other, or, indeed, somewhere in between, the overriding scientific interest and even the choice of a theory, in most cases engages with one’s intellectual and political values and even with one’s desires and emotional drives. As one of the senior scholars interviewed in this research admitted, the acceptance of the basic assumptions underpinning any theory, is a choice of both scientific and moral nature and it is to a greater extent defined by the life experiences and social upbringing of the scholar.

This reflection connects to the old topic of the impossible separation between subject and object in the philosophy of science. A condition that would be openly accepted in private by many scholars but, nonetheless, casts doubt over the scientific nature of the social sciences and humanities.

This aspect lays behind the need of mainstream social science to construct a methodological and theoretical apparatus mirroring natural sciences with the permanent search for causal relations and constants. During my bachelor years, positivist theories/rational choice theory were dominant in the study programmes of Political Science departments. Their theoretical basis and methodologies were perceived as a sort of necessary filter to separate personal values from our curiosity to produce “value free” research. We properly learnt theories and methods that were supposed to support scientific inquiry. The problem is that we only learnt to think through this theo-
retical approach and then the Global Economic Crisis of 2008 erupted. For me, this meant a turning point in my intellectual development.

The 2008 Global Economic Crisis meant, especially in Southern Europe, facing a completely different state of events. The categories and principles that defined our social and political worlds began to crumble in front of our very eyes; politics seemed to exceed the traditional institutional boundaries while democratic institutions showed an authoritarian face in this new political environment. In this moment of historical acceleration and political turmoil, it became clear that politics was largely determined by forces that were far from people’s reach, although concrete actions were hastily shaping our immediate contexts. The meltdown on Wall Street turned fast into the bursting of many global housing bubbles, leaving thousands evicted in our immediate surroundings. Troika austerity measures turned into draconian cuts on the welfare state, which were applied by national governments without hesitation but against the will of their citizens.

My research interests during my late bachelor and Master years in Turku (Finland) developed in this context and I felt that it could not be approached with much of the theories and methods in which I had been trained. Furthermore, during this same period, far reaching university reforms began to be implemented in Finland. Despite enjoying little support in the universities, the swift implementation of these reforms rapidly and dramatically changed the university environment, while the government of the time presented them as unavoidable for the economic future of Finland and its global standing. Once again, this contemporary relation between the global order and my immediate surroundings was tangible, and it held my interest to the point of considering to critically investigate these reforms as a dissertation topic.

This book is intimately connected to this context. The book was to give an interpretation of these university reforms as a contemporary phenomenon that operates both globally as well as locally, overlapping between different spheres, from global international organisations to the university workplace. To set the scene, let us now return to 2009, when this initial interest in ongoing events began to turn into an idea for a PhD research topic.

I was called to my master’s Programme coordinator office on a Monday morning of January 2009. It was just an informal meeting to know how I was doing with the courses and to deal with some paperwork. At that time, I was a first year Master Student of the University of Turku in Finland. She told me that the government was planning to make a deep reform of the
university system and it did not look good for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

The same month, I had a very interesting course on Human Geography in the Baltic Sea Region, taught by Professor Sami Moisio, in which he described Finland’s slow but persistent turn towards neoliberalism since the 1980s. This turn was marked by a distinct break from Welfare Keynesianism, in order to reroute state priorities and to ensure that the Finnish economy could compete globally to maximise growth. Innovation and knowledge were the cornerstones to sustain a competitive economy and to secure social prosperity for the future. This turn implied that state public spending would be directed to strategic sectors in a less egalitarian manner than in the past. Moisio indicated how, at this time, ongoing university reform was the latest chapter in a long drawn out process.

A few months later, I met again with the coordinator of the programme and she commented that, due to reforms, the financial situation in many faculties was starting to be dramatic, despite the merger with other institutions to reduce costs. Despair in the humanities was palpable and the unpopularity of the reforms in academic labour was widespread around the country (Rinne, Jauhiahnen Kankaanpää 2014. Jauhiainen, Jauhiainen, Raiho & Lehto. 2015). Nonetheless, there was little organised opposition and the reform could be swiftly implemented by the University board. Meanwhile, the government’s Minister for Education stated that the reform was “the best reform of the history of the country”.

Less than a month later, I participated in one of the students’ demonstrations against the reform. There I witnessed a very revealing scene that illustrated a general feeling of helplessness. Imagine a demonstration of a few hundred people peacefully moving towards the Finnish Parliament in the heart of Helsinki. Some of the parliamentarians and members of the government were waiting up on the top of the stairs, which led to the Parliamentary doors, with the intention of “speak[ing] with the demonstrators”. In the background, The Beatles’ Help! was playing through loudspeakers. The situation turned into almost tragicomedy when some of the politicians responsible for the reform began to dance along with the music, with the intention of melting into the festive atmosphere that the demonstration had generated. This move instantly hollowed out the political nature of the demonstration. In front of us we had nothing more than a display of phoney deliberation. This unsettled the demonstrators, who nonetheless showed no reaction. The dissenting nature of the demonstration was quickly quashed by means of an obscene display of banality: a protest against the
top-down imposition of what was, perhaps, the most important educational law in decades had turned into some sort of inexplicable faux show of “Nordic consensual togetherness”.

This experience gave some clues regarding the intriguing lack of opposition to the HEI reforms. However, to fully understand these reforms, one had first to visualise them as part of a global transformation driven by the so-called Knowledge-based Economy.
Introductory Part: Higher Education and the Knowledge-based Economy
1
University reforms:
the constitution of a contradictory order

1.1. Finland’s university reform of 2009, another university
reform in the world

The Knowledge-based Economy (Hereafter KBE) is a concept that began to
appear in some OECD documents during the second half of the 1990s. It
rapidly became a sort of blanket term to anchor a series of policy plans aiming at the consolidation of economies “directly based on the production,
distribution and use of knowledge and information” (OECD 1996, 102).
These initial plans later turned into defined reforms, systematically articulated by international organisations, such as the EU Lisbon Strategy (2000),
which were used as reform blueprints by governments worldwide during
the 2000s. Despite a lack of consistency in their definition and their output,
these reforms have in the name of the KBE developed worldwide.

Some of its central concepts such as “innovations” are very difficult to
measure and define. Consequently, it is especially hard to visualise the over-
all impact of the KBE and of Higher Education Institutions (Hereafter, HEI)
in their respective national economies. What is clear, however, is that its
actual outcomes lay far from the stated objectives of the original policy
directives (Nelson et al. 2014, Rodrick 2016). According to Eurostat mea-
surements (2018), this is also true in the case of Finland and Estonia.
Further discussion about the relation of the KBE and university reforms will
be provided later, but for now let us simply recall that Finland’s University
reform of 2009 occurred within this context.

The Finnish government’s policy initiatives were developed in constant
dialogue with both supranational entities and the private sector, but also
with common beliefs, conventions framed by loose ideas around tech-
ology, obscure benchmarking and data, all of which serve to constitute its
political programme as well as its ideological foundations. This is nicely ref-
lected in the excellent volume edited by Jessop, Fairclough & Wodak (2008),
The topic of university reform should not be explained by isolating the institutions from its context. A context often defined by a slightly nebulous constellation composed of political, economic and cultural elements that cross-cut different levels, from the global economic order to the university workplace. A constellation that shapes a historical force impacting on the material conditions of universities and its inhabitants.

I saw this close relation between the micro and the macro, between the local and the global in Finland; a country that, despite some recent setbacks, is widely regarded as a “successful welfare state-based knowledge economy”. This is an argument perhaps most notoriously stated in Castells’ and Himanen’s book (2002) *The Information Society and the Welfare State: The Finnish Model*. Unsurprisingly, one of my case studies is Finland, specifically Aalto University in Finland: a newly established university entrusted to bring to fruition the spirit of these reforms.

1.2. Aim: Understanding HEI reforms in both its global and local dimensions within two university departments in Finland and Estonia

Aalto University has fashioned itself as the “entrepreneurial” University of Finland and regards itself as the flagship of the 2009 reforms. This specific university was equipped with the resources, personnel and the vision to become a global university and incubator of innovative knowledge that would hopefully translate into growth. Beyond the establishment of Aalto University, the 2009 University Reform re-organised the whole university system, representing the culmination of a period of economic reforms in Finland that had begun during the mid-2000s. The reforms were underpinned by a progressive change of paradigm shifting away from a national

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1 I would like to highlight Chapter 1 in particular, which, written by Bob Jessop, provides a short history of the KBE, in which we see a process shaped by the combination of newly fabricated data indexes, key concepts coined by academics, and the unnegotiable push for competitiveness. Also, Chapter 4, written by Susan L. Robertson, which addresses the centrality of the notion of “securing” a new semiotic order to consolidate the Knowledge-based Economy in Europe. Chapter 5, by Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, reflects upon the clearly political orientation underpinning the knowledge-based language in the Bologna Process. Finally, Chapter 8, written by Terhi Nokkala, explains the importance of the narrative of “Finland as a small country”, which is used to legitimate Finland’s internationalisation of higher education.
to a global understanding of the state’s political-economy in what was a transformed context for Finland; in a Post-Cold War world, existentially Finland’s role in the globe had changed, with higher education now at the forefront of this transformation (Moisio & Kangas 2012, 2016). This came with a series of “governance” changes, often presented as part of the reforms carried out on Finland’s Welfare State, and that would ensure continuity and consensus with the Nordic Model (Pelkonen, 2008). Actually, the disruptive market-oriented changes to which universities were subject, introduced a new work culture underpinned by verticality, control and loss of autonomy (Rinne, Jauhiahnen Kankaanpää 2014, Rinne 2015).

The second case study is Tallinn University of Technology, the second largest university Estonia and key in the pursuit of both innovation and economic growth.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a newly independent Estonia consciously adopted economic policies that meant rapidly adapting to international economic standards; in part this meant keenly engaging with the KBE. This economic policy was part of the “returning to the West” political narrative, which, as is evident from their accession both to EU and NATO, guided Estonian politics (Runnel, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt & Reinsalu 2009). As in Finland, reforms were inspired by the OECD, while EU blueprints applied in each country in accordance with its “historic” heritage, which played an important role in the construction of identities and legitimations (Bohle & Greskovits 2007, 450–452.). Finland and Estonia are often presented as global forerunners that have intensively committed to the KBE, placing their universities at the centre of this far-reaching reform strategy (Tomusk, 2003, 91–95. Nokkala 2006. Moisio and Kangas, 2016. Pelkonen 2008, Aarrevaara, Dobson & Elander, 2009, 79–81. Rinne, Jauhiahnen Kankaanpää 2014, 214–218).

Despite being neighbours and sharing the Finnish language, Finland and Estonia are shaped by different political traditions (a Nordic Welfare State, on the one hand, and a liberal leaning government in a post-communist country, on the other) with very different historic paths and potentially different human experiences and expectations. Nonetheless, the two different governments generally aim at the same kind of goals. This similarity in the goals reflects how the dissemination of the KBE apparently walks on the waters of history and successfully takes roots in any socio-economic context, drawing an irresistible global convergence. This apparent capacity for different nation-states to adopt similar university reforms in such historic-
ally distinct backgrounds was the main reason behind selecting Aalto University and Tallinn University of Technology for this study.

Two departments from within these universities were chosen to ground the research into two manageable objects of study. This case selection was based on one condition, namely that any department chosen is recognisable as “the expected prototypical KBE-inspired research department” with a significant grounding in the social sciences and humanities. This means the merging of departments of different disciplines, which previously were scattered in different institutions, into a single multidisciplinary project, with the social sciences and humanities integrated in accordance with the KBE University logic. Both departments are comprised of disciplines that traditionally developed far from each other but now are part of a multidisciplinary strategy researching “relevant” topics that can deliver on “useful knowledge”. Hence, they transform knowledge into market value and prestige for the institution in a context of global competition with other universities. Narratively, these departments represented at first glance the most sympathetic picture of these university reforms: different people with different academic backgrounds creatively working together in an inspiring environment that transcended the old disciplinary barriers of the traditional university. A concise discussion about the background of the research centres will be introduced later in the book.

Policy plans linking global, national and academic institutions echo to the existence of an order. An order produced from a reform inspired by the nebulous concept of KBE, which abides by the implementation of an economic order on the verge of becoming. Nonetheless, this order articulates particular policies, such as university reforms, that enforce new logics foreign to universities in countries with very different backgrounds. This top-down implemented reform, inspired by international organisations in the context of present-day capitalism, gave birth to an order that despite being generally unpopular in the eyes of university labour, remained largely unchallenged. This reflects a rather complex picture in which the old idiosyncrasies of the university – e.g. its research autonomy, academic labour, local traditions, etc. – are somehow, in the mist of expected contradictions, integrated within this order. An order that, regardless of the imprecise fundamentals of KBE, organises people and resources by integrating them into logics foreign to the university.

This dissertation analyses the order that results from the top-down steered HEI reforms that redefine the character of university activities. The academic workplace is taken as the empirical terrain to situate the global and vertical
nature of HEI reforms – presented by its promoters as essential for the accomplishment of the Knowledge-based economy – in relation to their local implementation.

This general aim assumes the existence of a university order that can only be understood in relation to the broader politico-economic context, which has defined and steered the reforms of the last decades. A rich literature has emerged, which, from different perspectives, has explored these reforms in higher education institutions. In the following pages, this literature will be commented upon.

1.3. Academic capitalism and the chronicle of university reforms. State of Art

Higher education studies is a vibrant research field. Indeed, during the last decades there has been a growing number of investigations tackling the recent period of global reforms of higher education institutions. Peculiar to this field is the fact that scholars are researching their own environment; academics are researching academia. Given the important role of the university in society, professionals look directly to their immediate work and institutional surroundings in order to interpret from different perspectives a global event transcending these institutions. This means that we encounter researchers who are themselves like chroniclers; they help to document a process that exists in a permanent dialogue with a larger socio-economic context, one that is equally defined by local and global dynamics. This makes for a fecund research area, though undoubtedly one that grows in a rather chaotic manner and that makes it difficult “to draw the contours of the field”. Published works range from problem-solving based research to more critically oriented enquiries.

The general aim of problem-solving positivist research is to adapt the university to the reforms. This mainly means integrating the private sector’s demands as well as the changing mindset regarding public financing, in order to ultimately achieve “a win-win situation”. Some of this literature constitutes the intellectual bedrock of the OECD and key documents related to EU Knowledge Based Economy policy. They represent the transition from theoretical conceptualisations to “policy paradigms” based on innovation-based economic growth cycles. This is innovation living in a permanent process of expansion thanks to an endless exploitation of knowledge, an immaterial asset that would eventually lead to the subsequent integration of HEI in the innovation based economic cycle. Here we have for example,
Michael Porter’s (1990) widely circulated concepts of the “Diamond Model” and “Triple Helix” (see definition footnote page 63) and its underlying assumptions found frequently in the relevant policy discussions.

The research orientation that tasked itself with connecting KBE with HEI developed from these fundamental assumptions. Concepts like “learning region” (Foray and Lundvall, 1996; Lundvall, 1992; Lundvall and Johnson, 1994; Maillet and Kebir, 1999) sought initially to integrate education with the specific skills demanded by the market, and later became an important theoretical component of the KBE policy paradigm.

Therefore, we can say that the most prominent problem-solving literature targets the way in which, holistically, engineering, universities and the economy merge with one another. Drawing on Slaughter and Cantwell’s (2012) explorative article, this virtuous cycle narrative is essentially represented in the Triple Helix theoretical model that celebrates the emergence of win-win relations based on a smooth knowledge transfer within university-industry partnerships. Along similar lines, we have the entrepreneurial university approach, which considers that universities can become entrepreneurial institutions while preserving their traditional roles in teaching and research (Clark 1998. 2004. Van Vught 1999. Ruch. 2001. Birley 2002. Williams 2002. Kirby 2006. Hayter 2013 among many others). Not only do such theories have a too simplistic account of knowledge transfer, but more importantly, their assumptions regarding innovation-based growth as well as a university’ capacity to generate income proved to have limited validity (Slaughter and Rhodes 2015, 586).

Another important approach to higher education reform is neo-institutional theory, which takes its point of departure from the idea that organisations within a given field are similar and, despite narratives of competition, eventually stabilise (Di Maggio and Powell 1983). This perspective focuses on networks that are created to generate stability in a changing context. The problem with this approach is that it takes for granted the existence of clear institutional boundaries. For me, the university is an institution whose contours are blurred due to its market orientation. Furthermore, the emphasis on networks in neo-institutional theory makes it difficult to visualise the human dimension of institutions.

Critical literature within the field of higher education studies is presently flourishing; essentially transdisciplinary in scope, it often relates to different governmental levels and societal spheres. The main topics addressed in this literature cohere around the re-definition of the role of the university in society and the impact that this has both inside HEI and in society. From
1. UNIVERSITY REFORMS

this general interest, a varied set of aspects such as autonomy, research, teaching or the government of universities have been approached, often moving from the global to the national and to the level of university institutions themselves.

In mapping the field of critical studies on Higher Education, Sultana (2012) has identified five key areas: (i) the massification of education; (ii) the impact of material and ideological contexts; (iii) neoliberalism and new public management; (iv) the governance of academia, and finally (v) internationalisation and globalisation. These areas are not treated as separate objects; often, themes overlap in the literature. Particularly in Finland, several articles on the same topics and cases have been written from different disciplines and interpreted differently. (Moisio & Kangas 2012, 2016. Rinne, Jauhiahnen Kankaanpää 2014. Jauhiainen, Jauhiainen Laiho & Lehto 2015).² As a consequence, the constitution of any clearly defined subfields has generally not succeeded on point of fact of the vague definition of its boundaries, the nature of the empirical material as well as the lack of thick comprehensive theoretical work. Nevertheless, the prolific wave of HEI studies continues to provide shelter for those eager to construct concise subfields. This is the case for international higher education, a subfield that advocates methodologies departing from an international perspective in the study of HEI (Kuzhabekova, Hendel & Chapman 2015, 861).

The present research is not concerned with drawing boundaries within the field of critical HEI literature. Rather it views its undefined contours as a logical consequence of its rapid development. This is a literature that cannot be easily compartmentalised in fields and subfields due to its rich and multilevel empirical material. Therefore, instead of thinking about fields or disciplines, it is I think more appropriate to present the existing literature that employs the label “academic capitalism” as a sort of conceptual epicentre for HEI critical literature.

**Academic Capitalism**

Academic capitalism made its entrance as a concise theoretical concept in Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie’s (1997) *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies and the Entrepreneurial University*. The book explained the market-

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² Moisio & Kangas’ approach departs from the discipline of political/human geography whereas Rinne, Jauhiahnen Kankaanpää 2014 and Laiho & Lehto attack the problem from the perspective of educational policy analysis. As it will be later presented, these authors have some points of convergence and divergence in their respective critical approaches.
oriented reforms brought by globalisation in public university departments in the United States, Canada, UK and Australia. In the work that followed, academic capitalism was defined as “the multidimensional process of integration between higher education and knowledge-based economy” (Kauppinen 2015, 337).

Academic capitalism understands this integration as an uneven historic process (a part also of a larger transformation of the capitalist order), in which the boundaries of education, state, market, as well as the scales between the local, national and global, are dissolved. This general turn of events is met with organisational changes in institutions such as New Public Management and entrepreneurialism to commodify knowledge. This transformation has been analysed interdisciplinarily as a larger global phenomenon (Marginson & Coinsidine 2000. Deem 2004. Deem, Hillyard & Reed 2007. Dale 2008. Carey 2016. Cotton 2017), from a local perspective (as we have seen above with the Finnish authors) but also from the perspective of labour (Deem 2004). Some authors have also focused on the uneven impact that university reforms and its subsequent race for funding has had in the different disciplines focusing on the pauperisation of humanities, arts and social sciences, and the deep consequences that this has for higher education (Slaughter & Cantwell 2012. Mustajoki 2013. Kauppinen 2015).

As a concept, academic capitalism has evolved along different fronts, which makes it difficult to tackle. Some of its proponents have acknowledged weaknesses concerning academic capitalism working as a “theory” or a metaphor, plus a general need for further conceptual development. Some even question its validity and see it as a political programme disguised as a political theory (Collyer 2015, 3). The present research is not interested to develop “academic capitalism” as a theoretical concept. Nonetheless, I see it as a useful umbrella for the developments of academia within present day capitalism. Academic capitalism tells us about the complex historic transformation, which could be complemented by other concepts to gain greater theoretical and empirical depth. In this spirit, I will present the wider literature of academic capitalism. I have made some categorisations of the literature only for the sake of enumerating the most relevant texts.³

The first group I would like to address is the literature that has tried to comprehensively situate the reforms of HEI as an integral part of a “global

³ This should not be taken as a monolithic division of different traditions but only as a means to map the field.
move” under the auspices of KBE against the larger background of post-Fordist capitalism. This literature reflects upon this global move on the national level. Specifically, it considers a continuity, albeit uneven, between the global key KBE programmatic documents and the reforms taken in each of the states. Here we have a corpus of literature that developed out of a set of concepts associated with the regulation school, (Jessop 2008. Sum & Jessop 2013) or from early promoters of the concept of academic capitalism who critically tackle the OECD and EU blueprints and the new “forms of governance” adopted in the institutions (Powell & Snellman 2004. Slaughter and Rhoades 2004. Olssen & Peters 2005. Godin 2006. Marginson 2007. 2009. Larsen I. M. Maassen, P. & Stensaker B. 2009). In a similar vein we have critical discourse analysis (Nokkala 2006. Wodak and Fairclough 2008. Muldering 2008. Robertson 2008. Jones 2008. Wodak & Fairclough 2010). This body of literature has often found common ground, developing consistent explanations and mapping the different policy stages of development of the university reforms at different levels. This is well represented in the aforementioned book *Education and the Knowledge-Based Economy in Europe* (Jessop, Fairclough, & Wodak 2008).

There is a second group of literature interested in the relation between power and HEI reforms. It includes critical institutional and policy studies as well as literature on power and labour. From this body of literature, I would firstly like to refer to some descriptive literature that starkly illustrates the general process of deterioration of different universities around the world. A deterioration related to the impact of entrepreneurship and for-profit teaching and research orientation and the rise of an academic exploited class whose new identities emerge in a context of precarity. This literature agrees also on the decline of academic values and the consequences that this has had for universities. This is a topic that, from the very beginning, has attracted many scholars (Readings 1996, Chapters, 10, 11 and 12. Aronowitz & Giroux 2000, 334–337. Bok 2004, Chapters 8 and 9. Johnson, Kavanagh & Mattson 2005. Cantwell & Kauppinen Eds. 2014, Chapters 7 and 8). Human experiences in relation to structures have also been approached (Locke & Teichler. 2007. Enders, De Boer & Schimank. 2007, 12–13. Gill 2009.). Finally, themes surrounding consent and labour identi-

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4 In the book I will make reference to both a “global move” and a historical “movement”. In the first case, I am referring to a set of global strategic policy reforms that modify HEI institutions. In the case of the latter, I refer to a larger and longer historical process, bound up with the development of post-Fordist capitalism and capitalism’s expansion to ever new areas of exploitation.

Policies inspired by the same global models but implemented by governments of different political hues, local academic traditions and distinct structural forces represents another area of prolific research. Here we have the implementation of the Triple Helix model (university-industry-government) with all its contradictions (Etzkovic, Webster, Gebhard & Cantisano Terra 2000), which establishes the links between neoliberalism, globalisation and the shift in higher education policies at the national level (Olsen & Peters 2005), alongside the re-shaping of higher education within the rationality of the market and the reposition of students as customers and the university staff as contracted labour (Giroux 2009), as well as the imposition of an increasingly precarious labour system (Bousquet 2008). Tuchman (2011) analyses the impact of these reforms, from the articulation of policy to the student level, by focusing on notions of accountability and compliance as instruments of control. The aforementioned Moisio & Kangas (2016) can also be situated in this group in their attempt to connect the reforms undertaken in Finland to a general deterritorialising geopolitical reasseamblage of higher education. Here we can also place Wodak and Fairclough’s (2010) account of the implementation of the Bologna Process in Romania and Austria as a process of “re-contextualisation” of market-oriented rhetoric in higher education. Finally, we have Bérubé & Ruth (2015), who contribute with some precise insights about the changes in values inside the university with respect to the new nature of work and new labour conditions. Power relations appear in most of this literature and have been theorised by employing well-established Foucauldian and Bourdieusian frameworks. This brings us to the third group of critical literature.

Foucault’s concept of “governmentality” has been used to interpret the emergence of HEI orders, which hold a notorious presence in Finland. “Governmentality” is employed to understand in Finland the global geopolitical knowledge-based construction of material and immaterial learning environments (Moisio & Kangas 2012. 2016) and to comprehend the changes in the organisation of work in relation to academic labour in Finnish universities (Jauhiainen, Jauhiainen Laiho & Lehto 2015). On the other hand, the Bourdieusian framework has been used in order to re-think some of Bourdieu’s ideas in light of ongoing developments within HEI research. These discussions presently cohere around the concept of “field”

Finally, we have a fourth group of literature that identifies the reforms as an ideological conservative assault on the university by means of promoting neoliberal ideology as well as to diminish the influence of certain disciplines and approaches. This body of literature places neoliberal market “rationality” as the central transformative force in this global move towards HEI reform. An ideology that has shaped the assault on the profession’s autonomy and on the university as a societal common space ruled by egalitarian values, turning it instead into a competitive battlefield and transforms its value system (Bérubé 2006. Giroux 2007. Newfield 2008).

What ties this vast literature is the description of a “market oriented” change that, in terms of policies, is already a global fait accompli: governments, despite different strategies, have re-assigned a dual economic role to HEI. On the one hand, universities should strive to generate profit and on the other, they should produce knowledge to enhance economic competitiveness for the national economy. This dual economic role functions as an umbrella to integrate many of the approaches and topics – from the critique of the organisational NPM inspired reforms to research focusing on the impact of the reforms in labour, students, etc. Differences and contradictions are inseparable from a process of convergence of such distinct societal spaces, with their particular socio-economic and institutional contexts. Ideology is seen as the element that resolves this dual and problematic economic role. Ideological constructs (neoliberalism, entrepreneurship, competitiveness, etc.) lay at the heart of any HEI reforms and they appear fundamental to constitute the logics that steer this dual role. This ideology originates far from political institutions and transcends the “purely” materialistic economic logic of HEI’s dual role, touching upon wider topics such as personal existence, modes of living, etc.

Each of the groups of literature on academic capitalism presented above revolves indistinctly around both roles: the internal institutional market orientation and their general contribution to economic growth. But even more important is that these two roles are not solely tackled from either a purely materialist/functionalist or a strictly constructivist approach. As a result, we have an interesting communion of material and immaterial elements – the institutional, hence the local and the general (national, global) – that cannot be theoretically or empirically disconnected. Take for example research on NPM: it tends to focus more on the organisational changes made to generate revenue for the institution. Nonetheless, these changes are
undertaken with the assumption that the new organisational competitive logic serves the general aim of producing knowledge to enhance national economic competitiveness. The national aim is here employed to legitimate such a move.

Hence, it is frequent that academic capitalism engages different research domains and different scales (e.g. from the local to the global, from the material and to the immaterial). Academic capitalism views HEI transformation as a general shift from a regime of public good to an academic capitalist regime, which occurs within the ambit of the KBE, with all the ideological and material transformations that this entails (Rhoades 2004, 7). It involves different relational processes and junctures where the local and the global, the material and the immaterial, meet. Here we also find the main challenge for academic capitalism to develop comprehensive theories to interpret the overall process of HEI reforms.

Thinking in a relational setting within the temporality of a process means interpreting a global event with its historical trajectory along with well-grounded empirical national and local examples. The literature on academic capitalism has evolved within a wider general constitutive context that both explains and is explained by the reciprocal relation between the local and the global:

Worldwide higher education is a relational environment that is simultaneously global, national and local (Marginson and Rhoades 2002; Valimaa 2004). It includes international agencies, governments and national systems, institutions, disciplines, professions, e-learning companies and others. (Marginson 2013, 304)

This is a challenging reciprocal mode of thinking that demands richly descriptive accounts of local examples as well as a robust theoretical foundation to inductively or deductively anchor the relation between local and global. This is a complex relationship that according to Kauppinen (2015, 337) still needs to be theoretically and systematically addressed. Kauppinen considers that the main problem lays in the fact that despite the literature on academic capitalism generally viewing the transformation of global capitalism as a central element to understand the reforms, the studies themselves are generally undertaken within the framework of the nation-state. For this reason, Kauppinen defends the necessity to think within a “theory of transnational capitalism”, so as to come closer to a general theorisation of aca-
democratic capitalism. Slaughter and Cantwell’s (2012) systematic comparison of transatlantic academic capitalism between US and Europe goes in this line.

Kauppinen’s critique touches on the challenge of approaching a phenomenon that occurs simultaneously on different registers, at the same time as it takes different forms. This is both the strength and weakness of academic capitalism in its ambition to understand a phenomenon that is both universal and local in nature (Marginson 2004. Slaughter and Cantwell 2012. Collyer 2015, 316.). Its weakness lays in the fact that thinking “big” might also produce theoretically and empirically shallow research (Rhoades 2005 38–39. Ashwin 2011). Naidoo (2004, 457–460) makes a similar argument when he explores the problem of simplification built in the competitive mindset defining Bourdieu’s field concept in academia. In Jessop, Fairclough, & Wodak (2008), we can see the argumentative thread of a research in which local and global are allegedly treated commonly.

1.4 Beyond the separation between the global and the local
within a totalising process. State of Art

Beyond the local and the global

The main theoretical problem that emerges from this literature is how to convincingly relate the global nature of the reforms and their local developments. Some are of the opinion that global processes are assumed without really being approached. Conversely, others have acknowledged that research within organisations do not engage sufficiently with the human experiences of the immediate workplace (Collyer 2015, 317).

Regarding my own study, it is necessary to overcome the global/local dichotomy and thus approach academic capitalism from its local and universal features simultaneously. Academic capitalism should be thought, theoretically and empirically, as part of a whole and as such one should engage in establishing connections within and between different levels of analysis. Verticality is what holds this entity together. The larger process of HEI reforms is essentially the reconfiguration of an order via the extension and reorganisation of hierarchies. The connection between local and global is the relation between different scales that define a pyramidal continuum.

The view of academic capitalism within a larger order echoes Marxism. Marxism has to date not been such a common reference point in academic capitalism literature, mainly because of the difficulties to explain the constitutive role of cultural systems and social interactions in the academy.
A remark, however, that mainly refers to orthodox historical materialist Marxism, but does not apply to what we can refer to as more “heterodox” variants of Marxism. Heterodox Marxist approaches have devoted their attention to HEI transformations within the larger push exerted by capitalism’s market forces. This push represents the totalising logic of capitalism (Jessop 2003, 2008, 16–18). “Totalising” could be defined as the intention to complete what is incomplete by attempting to tie up the loose ends in an often contradictory process that does not per se lead to a clear cut hierarchical totality that finalises the process; dysfunctionalities and resistances will, nonetheless, remain. We could say that totalising is to take the term “capitalism” from academic capitalism in its own right, thereby recognising it as part of the history of capitalism.

Within this totalising move, authors think in terms of Cultural Political Economy (CPE), recognising the constitutive role of cultural changes (Jessop 2008). But does this resolve the problem of Marxism and cultural change? At the very least, it provides a starting point for thinking within a whole and connecting the local with the global. This is where the present research seeks to make its contribution on academic capitalism. The purpose is to interpret the contradictory and uneven relations between the local and the global with its material and discursive constitutive dimensions.

This endeavour is undertaken with a Gramscian framework that embraces the totalising nature of capitalism in its material and immaterial dimensions, so as to think academic capitalism within a vertical order. The development of this framework and its concepts will be introduced later in the theoretical section. For the time being, let us continue to position this research in relation to the current literature in the field. This brings us back to Collyer’s (2015, 317) assessment on the difficulties of addressing the role of cultural systems and social interactions within the academy.

The academic worker

Collyer (2015, 316–317) comments that accounts of personal experiences are rare in existing studies. While some attention is given to senior administrators and university boards in the creation of networks that re-structure academic work life, there is very little focus on actual life. With some notable exceptions (Deem 2004. Ivancheva 2015. Boud, Lucas & Crawford 2018.), the institutionalist interest in academic capitalism generally does not grasp the fact that academics like any other profession are “in a continual process of constructing themselves and their work, struggling for professional autonomy, legitimacy, power and status” (Enders et al, 2009 36–37
1. UNIVERSITY REFORMS

cited from Collyer 2015, 317). This is what connects the worker to the institution, as well as to KBE and capitalism, and thus helps to provide a grounded picture of how the order is both perceived and imposed.

The first question to consider is if the academic workplace can be understood like any other workplace or whether certain specificities hold. There is a rich literature, developed over almost a century of scholarship that analyses professional occupations in capitalism (from Weber, Durkheim to numerous Marxists and functionalists). With the development of capitalism, the labour market increasingly generated more types of employment with large wage disparities beyond the strict crafting of material goods or services (blue collar white-collar, etc.). These jobs reflected the capitalist division of labour, forming different waged cohorts who hold different interests, identities and existences.

Modern day post-Fordist capitalism generates highly skilled jobs based on the manipulation of information. However, this no longer guarantees decent salaries when real wages have tended to stagnate or even decrease since the 1970s in the US (Watson 2018). In the US, the real average hourly earnings are almost the same as in 1970 (around 20 Dollars) and the labour share of income has decreased from 65% in 1974 to 57% in 2017 (Shambaugh, Nunn, Liu, and Nantz 2017, ii and 1). The decrease in labour’s share in income is part of a global trend, with all economic regions falling below 57% in 2017, and slowly decreasing or stagnating altogether in the last decade. The world labour share of income has decreased from 54% in 2004 to 52% in 2017 (International Labour Office/Gomis 2019, 26)

Despite working in sometimes completely different contexts, highly skilled workers (often working from their computers scattered all over the globe) and low skill workers often share a precarious existence. Guy Standing (2009) coined the term “precariat” to theorise this “new emerging class”. Many others like the Italian Workerists (Negri 2001. Lazzarato. 2004. 2006. Blondeau et al. 2004) have focused on the immaterial dimension of these new jobs, introducing the notion of reproduction of consent through this very process of work as well as the possibilities of emancipation (via the concept of the multitude) for this new “cognitive labour”.

HEI reforms have brought degradation into academia to the extent that the situation of a portion of the academic workforce is in many aspects comparable with the precariat (e.g. non-paid hours, precarious contracts, internal benchmarking, etc.). Nonetheless, work in the universities has a long trajectory defined by rules different from any public or private sector job. The logic behind HEI’s governing rules might have changed the aca-
demic order but the old idiosyncrasies of the university to some extent remain (Courtois & O’Keefe. 2015. Kim 2017). What matters here is to understand this apparently unavoidable collision between “old” and “new” mentalities and how labour lives within it.

Foucault and Bourdieu in the integration between the local and the global

The Foucauldian concept of governmentality has been employed to comprehend the power order in HEI. It has had a remarkable following in Finland with scholars looking at the Finnish university reform as well as Aalto University through the governmentality framework\(^5\). This literature thinks by way of a unifying logic between individuals and power, which cuts across different scales. In order to illustrate the production of power, this literature is interested in human existence, identities and ways of functioning. The present book however has taken a different theoretical path, on account of the empirical material under study. Consequently, a Gramscian framework has been adopted, which places more emphasis on structures and verticality rather than a more immanent production of power (Foucault).

Bourdieu envisages the scientific order as a relational space covering the worker, the academic order and society as a whole. Bourdieu provided a sharp and consistent theoretical toolkit with the concepts of “field”, “capital”, “habitus”, in order to theorise the maintenance and reproduction of a highly hierarchical academic order in relation to the larger reproduction of inequalities within society (Bourdieu 1996. 2004). Nonetheless, critics have questioned some fundamentals of Bourdieu’s theory in seeking to interpret the historical specificity of our own present. These authors are concerned with Bourdieu’s difficulties in conceptualising the impact of HEI reforms within the institution. These can be summarised in three points. First, Bourdieu’s structuring of society in the form of semi-autonomous fields (the academic field being one of them) demanded a certain notion of insularity and predictability that contrasts to the present variegated and contingent transformation that blurs any clear distinction of fields (Naidoo 2004. Maton 2006). Second, Bourdieu developed his theorisation based on academia in France in the 1960s and 1970s, which raises the question of applicability of this framework elsewhere in different times (Deer 2003).
Third, it is not entirely clear how agency develops in Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, especially in a new context in which work practices and the formation of identities are constituted in a remarkably “less autonomous” academic field (Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor 2005. Marginson 2008).

Despite recognising these limitations derived from the context of HEI transformation, there has been some literature that continues to develop Bourdieusian concepts, especially from the perspective of practice. For example, works on contemporary academic management reflect how middle and senior management are located at the nexus between market, government and academic logics, and develop different roles. Roles that deteriorate their academic identities with little prospects for producing transformational leadership practices (Lingard, Hayes & Mills 2003. Zipin & Brennan. 2003). Also there is a body of literature working along similar lines, which considers the new working conditions within the terrain of educational practice, and which develops the Bourdieusian concept of the “field” as a primary site of struggle for power between agents within the hierarchies and its subsequent production of elites in the contexts of: (i) changing labour practices (Fitzgerald, White & Gunter 2012); (ii) institutional government (Thomson & Holdsworth 2003) and (iii) teaching (Lingard and Christie. 2003).

Wilkinson (2010) provides an interesting perspective that problematises Bourdieu’s concept of “field” as the primary site of struggle. The concept of field is itself based on an analogy with a board game, which presupposes competitive practices and thus runs the risk of narrowing the possibilities to think other logics. Drawing on Moi (2000), Wilkinson proposes that we conceive of other practices beyond self-interested strategies – such as companionship, empathy, and cooperation – that could develop within the field of contradictory relations between its inner and outer logics (Moi 2000, 329–330 cited from Wilkinson 2010, 44 and 52). For that purpose, Wilkinson (2010) suggests to re-think the Bourdieusian notions of practice, dis-engaging practices from the structured field in order to give voice to practices that have been marginalised by the dominant “strategic competition” for scientific capital in the context of “new managerialism practices” (Deem 2004. Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007). These new voices might serve to indicate hidden ways of relating between fields as well as, perhaps, even opening for the articulation of contending logics that can subvert the very competitive “logic of the field”.

Despite its limitations, Bourdieu’s work has been partially or in its totality employed to understand changes in academia. This is because of its
seductive relational strength in treating the academic order as part of a whole while providing tools to understand agency. Bourdieu’s concepts appear as a possible solution to the aforementioned problem of academic capitalism presented by Collyer (2015, 316), namely the problem of how to connect culture and social interaction operating at different levels of analysis, as well as how, in an effective manner, to address the issue of agency (from the global to the local). Academia has changed and, as a consequence, the notion of field as a semi-autonomous entity should be reconsidered, something that Bourdieu (2003, 67) himself has recognised. In emphasising “practices” that are not *per se* connected to the competitive logic of the field”, Wilkinson (2010) might indeed help us in this endeavour.

While acknowledging both its strength and limitations, Bourdieu’s work guides the present research. Bourdieu was applied inductively, meaning that the use of a Bourdieusian framework was a result of the empirical analysis. This “grounded” approach to Bourdieu acknowledges many of the aspects that can help in re-thinking the effectiveness of the Bourdieusian framework. As we will see later, Bourdieusian concepts are employed to interpret the coexistence of the old idiosyncrasies and the new demands in the formation of contradictory identities, thus emphasising the importance of practices within the field that go beyond the model of Hobbesian competition. Further discussion on Bourdieu’s theories, and the contribution it makes to an understanding of academic capitalism, will be presented later in the theoretical chapter as well as in the concluding part of this book.

**Concluding remarks**

This journey through the state of art in academic capitalism literature started by acknowledging the broadness of the concept of academic capitalism and the difficulties in drawing its contours. This inconclusiveness is understandable since academic capitalism explains a highly variegated and uneven process of reforms that are global as well as local, and that moreover extend from abstract political documents to the mundane daily life of academic labour. For this reason, academic capitalism is taken as an open critical category and not a closed theoretical concept; for this study, it refers to a vast number of aspects that are themselves part of a wider historical transformation in present day capitalism. These aspects need to be more concretely addressed in their context in relation to the global order of things. The problematical question regarding the relation between the local and the global, which needs to be tackled to accomplish the book’s aims,
represents one of the principal contributions that this study seeks to make to the existing literature on academic capitalism.

This problem is rooted, on the one hand, in the fact that research understands the reforms in HEI, either from a local perspective loosely extrapolated to the global, or vice versa, a global view lacking a consistent empirical basis on the micro level. On the other hand, personal experiences of academia are generally not approached, thus undermining the capacity of the literature on academic capitalism to directly address issues surrounding agency.

This problem resides in treating the global, on the one hand, and the local and agency, on the other, as separate entities. What I suggest is that despite all the contradictions and variations, there is a verticality that connects them. An order defined by relations of subordination developing unevenly in different levels, which should be conceptualised as a whole. A totalising whole that mobilises institutions and people within an order of things that in the present research will be understood within a larger Gramscian framework.

On the micro level, we have the question of how to approach the immediate context in which human experiences occur. Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of the academic field is employed in some academic capitalism literature to approach this matter. However, academia is today different than the semi-autonomous order on which Bourdieu’s theory was originally based. The idiosyncrasies of the university system, which represented the semi-autonomous order described by Bourdieu, coexist with new demands inserted from a market-oriented logic, thereby constituting a much more unstable terrain for understanding the order’s fundamentals as well as the human experiences that operate within it. Despite this, some of his concepts can be rethought from the perspective of practices. Thus, while the inductively grounded approach to human experience, which the present book in part explores, emerged on account of Bourdiesian concepts, this study nonetheless seeks to contribute to a “re-thinking of Bourdieu”.

1.5. Research Questions

Situating the present research in relation to the existing literature in the field, has brought with it an early foray into theoretical discussions, which gives this dissertation the flavour of a theoretical undertaking. The truth is that this discussion derives from the empirical cases and the aforementioned general aim of stressing the importance of the intertwining of different scales, narratives and ideologies. Having described the direction of
this research in relation to the state of art, it is time now to concretise it with this book’s specific research questions. Let us first recall the general aim:

This dissertation analyses the order that results from the top-down steered HEI reforms that redefine the character of university activities. The academic workplace is taken as the empirical terrain to situate the global and vertical nature of HEI reforms – presented by its promoters as essential for the accomplishment of the Knowledge-based economy – in relation to their local implementation.

The notion of order here comes to integrate a succession of scales (from micro to macro), narratives and ideologies present in the aim within a variegated, contradictory but nonetheless, totalising continuum. The nature of these bonds, and how they connect the parts in such a variegated empirical landscape, is tackled inductively.

This general aim can be concretised in one overarching research question:

- Which are the basic features of the university order in Finland and Estonia and how is this order maintained?

This overarching research question is broken down into two sub-questions, from which, by looking at the programmatic/institutional and workplace levels, the order’s constitutive insides are inferred.

- How is the order framed/presented in the programmatic documents?

- What ideological, political elements constitute the basis of the HEI order and how does this order operate in the academic workplace and how does the order manifest itself in every day university practices?

These research questions are situated in a juncture in which the general programmatic objectives and narratives do not correspond to the developments taking place concretely in the workplace. Hence the academic workplace emerges as the point in which the historic movement that the university reform is part of with all its multiple discursive inspirations, material goals and contradictions coalesce. The workplace is interpreted as the material representation of the order. Consequently, the research questions depart from two assumed premises:
First. The university order is defined by a totalising logic of a historic movement, which is to be defined by the contradictory relation between material and discursive forces within the present capitalist order.

Second and consequently, the nature of the university order needs to be understood from a perspective which understands the global and the local relationally within a whole made of material and discursive forces.

The first half of the dissertation consists of constructing a theoretical framework to heuristically integrate these two premises. Chapter 2 will give a historical tour of the KBE policies and HEI reforms. Chapter 3 will characterise the material and discursive historic forces behind the constitution of the KBE and HEI reforms. Chapters 4 and 5 will give a historical background of Finland and Estonian KBE and HEI in relation to the larger historical context. Chapter 6 resituates the aforementioned discussion within a Gramscian theoretical framework.

The second half of the dissertation consists of the empirical part. It starts with the method chapter (Chapter 7), continuing with the Design Department at Aalto University (Part 3: chapters 8, 9, 10) and Ragnar Nurske School of Innovation and Technology in Tallinn University of Technology Estonian departments (Part 4: chapters 11 and 12). The thesis ends with a concluding discussion (Chapter 13).
A short history of the Knowledge-based Economy: the origins and dissemination of a global trend

The concept “historic move” seeks to capture university reforms as a global process that cannot be solely approached within a concrete and synchronous socio-economic space. Having said this, the study developed here is not a longitudinal study. This is to say, the two departments and universities under investigation are not systematically compared to another historical period, neither is a genealogical approach adopted. All the same, this dissertation interprets an order that nonetheless is marked by historicity. The two university departments, which serve as the objects of study, have intertwined global and local historical trajectories that have a constitutive force.

Space is conceived in relation to time. The KBE framework and its reforms are seen as following a global historical trajectory while local historical trajectories are represented through the specific university reforms implemented in their respective socio-economic contexts. This means that the university order is the product of these intertwined forces, and which when taken together overcome the local and global divide and constitute a totality. These historical trajectories will be presented in this as well as the following three chapters. The aim is to describe the Finnish and Estonian cases as historic objects before we move on to their analysis. We start with the origins of the Knowledge-based Economy and the university reforms.

The KBE and the University: the EU as a catalyst of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) reforms

If, as KBE policies assume, knowledge is an economic asset, this implies that a material value is reinscribed within it. Thus, finding ways for measuring and defining its material or potential material value in the market is of crucial

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1 For that purpose, along the book references to this historicity are also provided in the analytical chapters when the documents and work stories are interpreted.
importance in any policy that aims to systematically produce this “market valuable” knowledge. Not surprisingly, for decades now this has been a well-researched topic.

This argument naturally leads to envisioning Higher Education Institutions as potentially the backbone for a knowledge-based industrial complex and as the principal site for knowledge production. Hence, HEI are conceived as a central pillar in this new virtuous economic cycle based on the manipulation of knowledge and the education of a skilful and employable workforce.

This in short is the underlining principle that triggered a wave of university reforms worldwide. Since my cases are EU member states, we will focus on the European Union’s Lisbon Strategy and more specifically on the Bologna Process: two policy initiatives that serve as a framework to encompass several reforms in the EU. As we will see later in the chapter, Bologna represents the beginning of an era in which universities subscribe to a comprehensive plan to produce “useful” knowledge. In order to understand the centrality of knowledge in present day policy making, we need to return to the transformations that capitalism underwent during the last quarter of the 20th Century.

The KBE is part of what Krungman (2007) calls the “Great Divergence”. It is a period of capitalism that extends from the 1970s until the present. A period driven by the financialisation of the global economy and characterised by the steady rise of inequality and poverty in the OECD countries. The process of the internationalisation of financial capital developed along with the historic rise of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). ICT opened new areas of exploitation for economic growth while they also provided the instruments for a global decentralisation of production. The main actors of this period are the Transnational Corporations (TNC) and the increasingly powerful banks capable of offshoring production, work and capital throughout the globe. During the Great Divergence, capitalism’s historical tendency for cyclical economic crisis has been aggravated, with the 2008 global financial crisis being the most notorious example. The KBE emerges as a sort of loose governmental artefact that would eventually minimise crisis and generate long periods of growth by exploiting the newly emerging knowledge-based sectors.

Both technology and knowledge have played a visible role during this period, but they do not solely explain it. Despite the flourishing of technological determinist accounts (Toffler 1970. Bell 1973. Fukuyama 1992. Ohmae 1993. Florida 2002), technological acceleration has not been the
principal driver for steering economic change. A point that applies to other
periods of capitalist development too. Rather, economic transformations
have been the consequence of political decisions, which have effectively
revised previous politico-economic arrangements. In addition, we must
recognise how the claim that technology drives history is itself a political as-
sertion, which underpins certain ideologies, and is itself an ideological pre-
cept of the politics of KBE.

Technology imaginaries will be a recurring topic in the book. At this
stage however, and with the aim of not losing the narrative thread, we can
present succinctly how this book understands technology. Technology is
not an invisible natural force determining the future of society. Technolo-
gies are created from society to accomplish certain purposes. Consequently,
technology is not the “cause” of economic change but rather an instrument
that embodies the political, that is the existent socio-political settlements
that constitute new socio-political conditions (Deleuze 1992, 5).

Looking back in time, we see that the social conditions of advanced
capitalist economies were very different when comparing the late 1960s
with the late 1980s. During these two decades, capitalism unevenly ad-
vanced at a different pace. Nonetheless, it followed a common thread, which
would irremediably change the distribution of capital, hence of power,
within the order. The origins of the KBE lay in this transition from one
capitalist model to another. This transition is referred by the Regulation
School\(^2\) as the transition from a Fordist regime of accumulation\(^3\) to a never
fully realised Post-Fordist regime of accumulation.

\(^2\) The Regulation School departures from the Marxist stand that crisis are inherent in the capitalist
system but at the same time it considers that the state can appease the self-destructive nature of
capitalism and secure long periods of prosperity. Regulation School concepts are used
descriptively to tackle capitalist evolution in its larger economic and socio-political dimension
within both the national and global scales.

\(^3\) A regime of accumulation is “the set of regularities that ensure the general and relatively coherent
progress of capital accumulation, that is, that allow the resolution or postponement of the
distortions and disequilibria to which the process continually gives rise” (Boyer 1990, 35–36).
2.1. The origins of the KBE: The decay of the Fordist Regime of Accumulation and the becoming of the uneven post-Fordist economic order

The post-war Fordist deal

The Fordist regime of accumulation organised the economic, social and cultural life during the post-war boom (the period known as the Golden Age of Capitalism) between 1945 and the early 1970s. The fundamentals of Fordism were based on balancing mass production of goods and the mass consumption of those goods in order to avoid the tendency of overproduction and under consumption, which had triggered the crises of the previous decades (Hefferman 2000, 3). Fordism depended on the rational coexistence of the economy at both the nation-state level and the international level. This could only be achieved by the parallel deployment of a strong institutional apparatus to regulate the global economy. The Bretton Woods system provided this function. The disruption between the national and the international levels is what ultimately sealed the fate of Fordism in the early 1970s (Hefferman 2000, 29–30; Peck & Tickell 1994, 289–290).

The national regulatory leg that sustained Fordism was the Keynesian Welfare State, which, with a less internationalised economy, aimed at full employment with a relatively high level of state intervention to redistribute the benefits of economic growth. The aim of redistribution was to balance the relation between mass production and mass consumption by delivering certain benefits to the consumer (the demand side), so as then to be reimbursed once more with generally higher levels of consumption throughout the economy. This was based on a rationalisation of the labour markets to reach a “class compromise” between workers, employers and in some cases with the direct participation of the state (a tripartite consensus). This compromise was coupled with a strong institutionalisation of wage bargaining, placing “central labour organisations in a role of agent of social control over the shop floor” (Lash 1985, 215).

Fordism was anchored in the stability provided by the Bretton Wood’s model, which allowed for a control in the degree of internationalisation of the national economy. In the early 1970s, this global economic order began to crumble. From an international politics perspective, the effective downfall of the Bretton Woods system is the consequence of its own success: the successful economic recovery of the devastated economies of Western Europe (especially West Germany) and Japan created a new world econo-
mic context that was not predicted by Bretton Woods. When Western Europe and Japan began to be competitive economically vis-à-vis the United States, the rules established in Bretton Woods were no longer adequate in a multi-polar world economy (Cox 1987, 224. Agnew, 2005, 169; Marichal 2010, 170). The option chosen was not to reformulate the rules but to abandon them without building a similar institutional structure. Bretton Woods remained as a politically empty institutional framework incapable of rationalising the world economy:

By the early 1970s its rules concerning gold parity and fixed exchange rates ceased to be operable and were abandoned, though the institutions continued as a framework for applying the residue of the system and for exploiting the possibilities for a reconstructed monetary order [...] Henceforth, a series of issues beset the economic relations of the major capitalist powers: exchange rate policy, interest-rate policy, the surveillance of international indebtedness, access to markets, and protection of market shares. There seemed to be no longer any effective overall means of regulating the world economy. (Cox 1987, 224)

The economic policies of states would be tied to these “series of issues” whose fate was determined by world markets effectively making the state a prisoner of this uncontrolled world economy (Cox 1987, 224). The state economic structure experienced a series of mutations on the very foundations of the Keynesian Welfare State. Owing to Bretton Woods’ inability to control monetary circulation, capital became extremely mobile and soon a global credit system emerged. One outcome was the emergence of Transnational Corporations (TNCs) as central actors on the global stage, which managed to escape the regulations of the Keynesian welfare state, and thus broke the finely balanced relation between capital and labour, the keystone that sustained the Keynesian edifice: TNCs demanded more flexibility in the negotiations of wages as well as jobs, threatening to move parts of production overseas. Consequently, real wages eventually began to decline. This affected the demand side of the economy, one of the essentials of Fordism (Peck & Tickell 1994, 292–293).

As a result of this turmoil, a new global landscape emerged, one that was characterised by the fragmentation of core markets in the major capitalist economies, and which had a subsequent impact on production: new standards of efficiency, new models of management, new high valued sectors, a new logic of production characterised by an increasingly complex division of labour, de-industrialisation and a boom in the service sector (Elam
THE UNIVERSITY AND THE DEMAND FOR KNOWLEDGE-BASED GROWTH

1995, 44–45; Hassan 2010, 304). This new order was, in its initial phase, pre-
dicated on de-regulation, both at the global and national levels. This effect-
tively consolidated the irreversible retreat of the global political institutions
from its regulatory position and represented the emergence of a new con-
tingent order.

Post-Fordist era: Uneven development
and unsuccessful rationalisation

The aim of Post-Fordism is to implement the “relatively coherent progress
of capital accumulation”. Accordingly, the post-Fordist regime of accumu-
lation would be based on a:

virtuous circle … [of] flexible and networked production; growing produc-
tivity based on some combination of economies of scope, economies of net-
works and process innovations; rising incomes for skilled manual and intel-
lectual workers […] increased demand for differentiated goods and non-
exportable (and hence also non importable) services favoured by the grow-
ing discretionary element in these incomes; increased based on techno-
logical and other innovation rents and the full utilisation of flexible capacity;
reinvest in more flexible production equipment and techniques and/or new
set of products; and a further boost to productivity owing to a new round of
creatively destructive innovation, economies and economies of networks.
(Jessop 2002, 99–100)

Nevertheless, the virtuous cycle of post-Fordism has in practice not estab-
lished an institutional fix to rationalise the accumulation process, as was the
case with Fordism: crises have been constant since the transition from
Fordism to post-Fordism in the 1970s (Jessop 2002, 97; Peck & Tickell 1995,
292). Governments have been striving to attain this virtuous cycle by trying to
bring together concepts such as innovation, ideas, creativity, knowledge, tech-
nology; a varied number of different ingredients for a cocktail that require a
new sort of statism in order to achieve the right combination. Hence, post-
Fordism “refers to the emergence of a new set of organizational, economic,
technological and social configurations that have arisen to replace those of
“Fordist” mass production” (Boynton & Milazzo 1996, 157).

The new social configurations of post-Fordism have not only framed
present day capitalist political economies, they have had a strong influence
on the configuration of everyday values, narratives and social relations. As
the abovementioned quote from Jessop makes plain, many immaterial and
extra-economic spheres, which during Fordism remained outside the pro-
duction and accumulation process, are now, in post-Fordism, an integral part of it: Knowledge, creativity, ideas, education are central in a “creative destructive” mode of economic growth both for the creation of new innovative products and also to boost productivity by the constant application of new machines, networked production, new organisational strategies, etc. Meanwhile, the increasingly powerful financial sector, with a model of capitalism disconnected from sites of production, exacerbated capital accumulation, and which unceremoniously contributed to a landscape of uneven and unequal development. In this context, the state should simply accept its subsidiary role and focus on enhancing competitiveness.

This competitive state is the Schumpeterian state⁴ and it is characterised by the transference of sovereignty from the nation-state both upwards to the global level and downwards to local sites. The necessity for flexibility imposed by the logic of the constant innovation in production implies a regulatory reaction reflected in local initiatives, often presented in the form of local clusters (e.g. university-technological parks) urban planning engineering, etc. This engagement between the local and the global, which outflanks the nation-state, has been labelled “glocalisation” and has often generated tensions between the regulations of different political bodies in the organisation of society. The shift from the Keynesian to the Schumpeterian state is far reaching; it truly marks a full-scale transformation of social behaviour and institutions, represented by the emergence of new types of governance (Amin 1995, 46; Swyngedouw 2004, 26; Peck & Tickell 1995, 299).

The KBE emerges as part of this new statism with the promise to decisively contribute to the materialisation of this competitive state, which will ride on this uneven and increasingly unequal and dynamic socio-economic landscape towards a concise regime of accumulation, bringing with it a productive relation between economic and extra-economic spheres such that a virtuous economic cycle.

⁴ Joseph Schumpeter viewed the constant creation of new consumer goods, new methods of production and new markets carried out by enterprises as the fundamental impulse of the capitalist economy. From this notion of constant creation where the new (products, methods of production etc.) replaces the old, Schumpeter frames the concept of creative destruction as a natural process to catalyse economic prosperity (Schumpeter 1942/1994).
2.2. The Knowledge based economy: Conception and dissemination of a global project

Conception

The Knowledge-based economy (KBE) arose out of a loose set of ideas and practices that, nonetheless, have evolved to become a constitutive force. Its definition, evolution and consolidation, needs to be situated within its immediate politico-economic context.

To begin with, and to situate KBE in relation to capitalism, we should say that the KBE was conceived as a form of statism, which, instead of following Keynesianism, and via pro-active regulation appeasing the most volatile elements of capitalism (mainly capital markets), it “creatively” exploits capitalism’s “natural” synergies and dynamism. For the KBE, capitalism is not conceived as an order that tends towards instability and crisis and that subsequently needs to be tamed. Rather, it is understood as a given order of things that needs to be strategically approached. Hence, the KBE represents the transition from the Fordist state constructive struggle against capital power to the Post-Fordist state “alliance” with capital power.

These “trouble free” ideologies, which put knowledge at the centre of the equation of prosperity and growth, originated during the 1960s in the futurist post-capitalist writers of Toffler (1970) or Bell (1973) (Warhurst & Thompson 2006; Webster 2002. Cited from Thompson & Harley 2012, 1369). Some of Toffler’s ideas, written almost half century ago, have contemporary resonance. For example, Toffler’s reflections on the professional as part of a non-hierarchical model of organisation:

A man who despite his many affiliations, remains basically uncommitted to any organization. He is willing to employ his skills and creative energies to solve problems with equipment provided by the organization, and within temporary groups established by it. He is committed to his own career, his own self-fulfilment (Toffler 1970, 142).

Toffler identifies the origins of this new man with the “death of economic insecurity for large masses of educated men”, thereby allowing people to take risks because “they cannot believe they will ever starve” (Toffler 1970, 141). Interestingly, Toffler associates this new mode of organisation to the prosperity of the last years of capitalism’s so-called “Golden Age”. This ideology re-emerged during the early 1990s, when appeals approximating
2. A SHORT HISTORY OF THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

the KBE gained prominence, i.e. the idea of knowledge as a natural resource and the brain as a central economic resource. This does not mean that the KBE developed directly from these premises, though technocentric explanations have been ever-present (Thompson & Harley 2012, 1369), that is, the idea of a systemic transition from an order that was based on a recognised antagonism to a system in which, in line with Toffler’s 1970 reflections on the “death of economic insecurity for large masses of educated men”, the fundamental antagonism between labour and capital was historically surpassed. As we will see in our own study, this initial premise is present in the statism of KBE at all levels.

The first definition of KBE that the OECD provided was still very generic: “knowledge-based economies are those which are directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information” (OECD 1996, 102). The consolidation of the KBE as a quasi-hegemonic policy frame was about defining more succinctly a new form of governance within these loose contours. This process lasted decades, from its initial references circumscribed in the private sector to its institutionalisation and global diffusion that began in the early 2000s.

The first references to an economy defined by information is found in Japan already in the 1960s. However, they did not appear elsewhere until the 1970s and they did not become policy plans until the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. These first glimpses of the KBE are found in the “information economy”, which began as a strategy of investment in the ICT sector, but which remained far from a full scale economic-driven strategy. This was then followed by some more comprehensive strategies in East Asia (e.g. Singapore, Malaysia, and Taiwan) in the first half of the 1990s, which for the first time encompassed extra-economic factors and a set of imaginaries that suggested a new economic order was on the horizon. These imaginaries would soon be on the table of many Western governments as a solution for the alleged lack of competitiveness of their economies. In parallel to this, the OECD began to embrace these imaginaries, trying with the help of some scholars to turn them, with varying degrees of success, into comprehensive policy frameworks that could serve as a sort of outline for policy making. At this time there emerged the notion of a “National Sys-

5 An important portion of academic KBE research was and still is directed in the construction and consolidation of the KBE state apparatus. Some of their analyses and theorisations have been employed by governments or international organisations as influential source material for their blueprints. The separation between the object of analysis and the researcher qua subject should not
tem of Innovation” (NSI), defined as “the flow of technology and information among people, enterprises and institutions that is held to be central to continuing innovation on the national level” (Jessop 2008, 23). The concept focuses on the complex set of relations (between regional and local levels alongside state-wide governmental agencies and public–private partnerships) as well as the importance of diffusing forms of knowledge and technologies that can be economically useful. This conceptualisation was conceived in the warmth of the OECD by central KBE academic figures, and from out of which concepts like learning economy or learning region were developed; these terms later became pivotal in actual policy making (Jessop 2008, 23).

The NSI, however, failed to deliver an applicable model. Problems arose surrounding the articulation of theory and practice in developing a more competitive innovation-based economy. What it did, nonetheless, was to set the grounds for the emergence of the KBE. The KBE emerged as a truly paradigmatic container for a political transformative agenda armed with an endless array of statistical data to measure several socio-economic aspects. These indicators and benchmarks, underpinned by the concept of competitiveness, constituted the empirical bedrock in order to delimit malfunctioning areas that were then to be fixed by knowledge-based policy prescriptions. The first comprehensive document was OECD’s (1996) The Knowledge-based Economy that recommended a model of institutional building within the public and private sectors based on knowledge management as the means to increase competitiveness. The impact of this document, alongside the new concept, was incontestable: governments worldwide began to create knowledge agencies, departments, as well as strategies, while the progress of these governments was closely “evaluated” by external bodies of experts and by global indexes. This included, for example: The World Competitive Yearbook, which, first published in 1989, ranked state competitiveness as well as OECD’s Oslo Manual (1997/2005), re-edited and modified several times, aimed at measuring “scientific and technologic activities”. These indexes conformed to economic variables based on busi-

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6 This is just some of the work of academics who while not being directly part of the OECD, had theoretical concepts that rapidly became the backbone of OECD reports (Foray and Lundvall, 1996; Lundvall, 1992; Lundvall and Johnson, 1994; Maillat and Kebir, 1999. Albert and Laberge 2007; Eklund 2007; Freeman 1995).

At a theoretical level, it is necessary to highlight Robert Reich’s book (1991) *The Work of Nations*, which grounded the idea of competitive advantage regarding skills and provided insights surrounding the idea of human capital. Reich was a close economic advisor to President Clinton, and later became Labour Secretary, during which time the views he explored in his book about the knowledge worker and its integral educational formation became especially prominent (Thompson & Harley 2012, 1370).

At the level of academic discourse, reference to Manuel Castells’ *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996), his first book of a trilogy entitled *The Information Age* (1996. 1997. 1998), is unavoidable. Here, the contours of contemporary global society are described and the becoming of a new global economic order is envisaged, one in which the manipulation of information will have an increasingly pivotal role. Castells sees globalisation as a twofold historic process: the emergence of the internet and the extension of global networks are contemporaneous with the internationalisation of the economy. Thus, globalisation cannot be defined only as a product of the re-structuring of capitalism; it is also a product of the emergence of information and communication technologies (ICT). The information age is said to mark the demise of hierarchical structures and the rise of networks that represent horizontal/relational patterns of organisation; a deep restructuring of societal processes and practices which gave birth to the Information Society.

Castells’ vision operates within a more nuanced framework than any vulgar technocentrism. And while not approaching capitalism uncritically, Castells’ argument on the demise of hierarchies and the realisation of individual autonomy was attuned to the general optimism of the 1990s, a zeitgeist that attracted many left intellectuals who, stunned by the collapse of communism and the public burying Marxism, were on the lookout for a new “progressive” account of society. There were also those who, drawing on Castells’ thought, understood the rising importance of knowledge as constituting a credo of “progressive oriented KBE” policy-making (Crabtree 2002); something still present today, where even within the present capitalist context, ICTs are entrusted with an emancipatory power. Castells follows this thread in *The Information Society and the Welfare State: The*
Finnish Model (2002) co-written with Pekka Himanen.⁷ There he asserts that as an economically competitive and highly educated society, the success story of Finland proves that it is possible to combine a functioning welfare state with an information society, in opposition to other less egalitarian and less democratic models of capitalism. This thesis of Castells had a certain influence on policy making, specifically policies surrounding the extent of the state’s role in creating the optimal conditions for competitiveness (Crabtree 2002, Thompson & Harley 2012, 1371). All the same, the real impact of Castells thinking has been in creating an intellectual ground within which ideas for a “new 21st century left” could take root.

Meanwhile, the quotidian public policy initiatives of the KBE continued on the terrain of numbers (e.g. statistics, benchmarks etc), which acted both as a steerer for reform as well as a means for producing credibility. Numerical data was used as a leverage to pave the way for the consolidation of KBE. This was accompanied by catchy buzzwords and indicators to measure progress produced by KBE gurus regularly published in OECD reports from the mid-1990s onwards (Olssen and Peters 2005, 333). The constant production of buzzwords played also an important role in attracting policy makers. These buzz concepts served as umbrellas that could synthetically explain socio-economic realities while at the same time they simply operated as slogans that were far from successful in grasping the complexities of society. Catchy concepts did not only have rhetorical significance, they also had a material impact on policy making. They functioned as constitutive containers employed to frame and explain, rather imprecisely, ambitious policy reforms (Olssen and Peters 2005, 333–335. Godin 2006, 19, cited from Jessop 2008, 26).

Since the 1990s, the OECD, has been publicising concepts like “New Economy”, “system of innovation”, “technology diffusion”, terms later employed in policy documents by states worldwide as a symbol of an “advanced” economy and as the bedrock for the creation of statistical indicators (Godin 2004). These concepts, which were developed by the KBE ideologues, were far reaching and open enough to allow for a wide array of ideological interpretations (from Castells’ progressive envisagement to plain neoliberalism implementation. As an illustrative example, consider innovation and knowledge, two widely deployed keywords in the politics of KBE

⁷ Pekka Himanen later became what Antonio Gramsci understood as “the organic intellectual” of the KBE in Finland. Himanen would progressively move to more conservative positions, finally leading him to defend the University Reforms of 2009 and the foundation of Aalto University.
which have now become commonplace in public discourse. These are words that, at first sight, do not have any succinct and determinate political content but, nonetheless, function like loose notions invoking a vague “idea of progress”.

Innovation and knowledge: strategic concepts in the definition of the KBE

The concept of innovation is very generic. It derives from the Latin word *innovare*, which means to renew, to alter. The *Webster’s Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1989) defines *innovation* as “something new or different introduced” and *to innovate* as “to introduce something new; make changes in anything established”. The *Cambridge Advanced Learners’ Dictionary* (2011) defines *innovation* as “[the use of] a new idea or method” and *to innovate* as “to introduce changes and new ideas”. Nevertheless, the most commonly employed definitions of innovation originate in business; words such as products, markets, technologies are often described as “innovative”, and are generally based on Joseph Schumpeter’s notion of innovation. All these definitions give us a wide array of options, e.g., the *Business Dictionary* (2010) defines *innovation* as “the process by which an idea or invention is translated into a good or service for which people will pay, or something that results from this process”.

*Forbes* (Slocum, 2014) published an article explaining the challenges that lay in wait when properly defining innovation for the purposes of a business strategy. Defining innovation has been an ongoing topic and business academics have created typologies of innovation in order to tailor specific understandings of the term to different needs. Thus, we have “incremental”, “radical”, “architectural”, “modular”, “technological”, “knowledge”, “product”, “process”, “disruptive”, “organisational and “marketing”… innovations. Despite the intricate construction of typologies, problems surrounding the elasticity of the idea continue. One reasonable answer to this is to situate any use of the word innovation in the immediate context of a given business activity (Slocum, 2014). If the definition of innovation is problematic for business strategies that are usually synthetic in nature, then one can imagine how challenging this problem becomes when innovation is placed at the centre of the KBE–inspired reforms of educational systems and labour markets.

Public institutions have adopted a Schumpeterian interpretation of innovation. In the EU’s Lisbon Strategy (2000), one of the KBE blueprints, “innovation consists of the successful production, assimilation and exploita-
tion of novelty in the economic and social spheres”. OECD’s Oslo Manual (2005, 46) defines innovation as “the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations”. Finland’s and Estonian’s governments, the two cases for this study, defined innovation in a similar fashion: the Finnish government defines innovation as “all the measures which produce or aim at producing technologically new or essentially improved products or processes” (FIS website 2011), but in an evaluative report by the Finnish Innovation System, the market oriented goal is inherent in the definition: “new creations of economic significance, primarily carried out by firms (but not in isolation). They include product innovations as well as process innovations” (Veugelers et al. 2009, 62). The Estonian government defines innovation as the “utilisation of new ideas in order to: 1) market a competitive product or service; 2) rearrange internal processes of the organisation (production, marketing, delivery, management, etc); 3) utilising a new or significantly improved technology in industry, services or public sector” (Estonian Government 2011).

Knowledge is an essential component of the innovation systems, an integrative part of the post-Fordist model of growth and also an essential piece in its imaginary: if Fordism was based on steel and oil in the manufacturing and fuelling of cars, in post-Fordism the basis for the economy is information and knowledge, in order to continuously innovate and to improve technologies and systems of production. It is no surprise then that the KBE is named after knowledge.

The Webster Unabridged Dictionary of English Language (1983) offers the following definitions of knowledge:

1. A clear and certain perception of something: the act, fact or state of knowing; understanding. 2. Learning; all that has been perceived or grasped by the mind. 3. Practical experience; skill; as, a knowledge of seamanship. 4. Acquaintance of familiarity (with the fact, place, etc.). 5. Cognizance: recognition. 6. Information: the body of facts accumulated by mankind. 7. Acquaintance with facts: range of awareness or understanding.

Jorys Toonders in Wired (2017) went a bit further affirming that “data is the new oil of the digital economy”.
Knowledge means skills, learning, accumulation of information, experience. There are thus many different kinds of knowledge. But in the KBE knowledge is generally perceived as tacit, “an asset” ready to be codified and benchmarked (Smith 2002, 3. Powell & Snellman 2004, 200). Knowledge in the KBE relates to applicability, and in OECD documents it represents a sort of unlimited raw material. Knowledge treasures multiple qualities, calibrating them for specific functions: there is “know-what” and “know-why”, representing theoretical and scientific knowledge that can be easily transferred to market commodities or productive functions; there is also “know how” and “know who”, forms of knowledge that directly refer to the skills needed for working in the new emerging labour market. Following the OECD logic, Smith (2002, 8) distinguishes four aspects: (i) knowledge as an input into all kinds of production and management; (ii) knowledge as a product; (iii) codified knowledge as opposed to person-incorporated skills, and (iv) ICT based knowledge (i.e. platforms for exchanging knowledge as well as systems for managing knowledge). Despite the effort to concretise utilitarian knowledge and the difficulties to measure it, the OECD urges us to learn this type of tacit knowledge in all the educational programmes (OECD 1996, 14 cited from Olssen and Peters 2005, 334).

When governments bring these general directives into practice, we see resources directed to enhance specific skills in education and in the private sector and how, in a context of scarcity, this results in redirecting activities to funds (Keep and Mayhew 2010, 570). This tendency is seen not only in the urge for reforms but also in the constant search to systematically measure knowledge. The urge to measure knowledge turns rapidly into the benchmarking of universities and centres of research according to bounded international parameters of evaluation (Olssen and Peters 2005, 334).

The constitution of the KBE: an ambiguous jargon that encompasses an order

These definitions of innovation and knowledge indicate that KBE’s initial ambiguity operates as the very means for developing a political agenda. These concepts are filled with political meaning and become part of a constitutive force, generative of mindsets that take hold at all levels of govern-

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ment and public institutions. It is therefore unsurprising that the KBE follows the same path.

If we recall the OECD definition of KBE, we see that it goes hand in hand with this view on knowledge and innovation: “knowledge-based economies are those which are directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information” (OECD 1996, 102). The OECD and to a lesser extent the World Bank (Peters 2001, 6) equipped the KBE with the core ideas of post-Fordist models of capitalist accumulation: The distribution of tacit and codified knowledge makes a greater amount of information available, and thus makes the continuous learning and exchange of information by users and producers critically important. Innovations in products and services can be produced from this fruitful and interactive exchange (OECD 1996, 102). In essence, the OECD understanding of the KBE boils down to the following definition: the KBE is the politico-economic grand plan for the materialisation of the post-Fordist economic cycle of uninterrupted growth, as we presented in the first section of this chapter.

In its general definition, the OECD does not seem to develop this point further. Instead, the KBE becomes a “blanket term” that sets the grounds for concepts that grow within, envision and eventually “operationalise” a new order of things.

There is thus a network of concepts emanating from the intersection between business-science and politics, and which have eventually become uncontested policy paradigms organising socio-economic life. This is the case for the “buzz” concepts forged by OECD scholars (Foray and Lundvall, 1996; Lundvall, 1992; Lundvall and Johnson, 1994; Maillat and Kebir, 1999), like “learning economy” or “learning region”, which have been developed in accordance with market oriented reforms. These are wide and far reaching concepts conceived to integrate education within the specific skill requirements of the market, to the point of even suggesting the formation of a new type of global worker (Moisio and Kangas 2016, 274).

These extra-economic factors, crucial in knowledge production, and presented by the OECD through its “New Growth Theory”, are also pivotal for the consolidation of the KBE as a political project and its continuity as a legitimate mind-set for reform (Olssen and Peters 2005, 333. Jessop 2014,

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10 The success in the expansion of the concept of KBE is explained by OECD typically by way of the think tank modus operandi. This is a strategy focusing on the creation and diffusion of ideational frames that eventually became truly paradigmatic blueprints adopted by OECD members worldwide. (Godin 2006. Mietinen 2002. Eklund 2007. Cited from Jessop 2008, 19)
2. A SHORT HISTORY OF THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

Imaginaries constituted at the intersection between rhetoric and “scientific paradigms” played an important role in declaring a moment of historical change brought about by technological acceleration.

Alongside the OECD steered jargon as well as the wider Schumpeterian grounds on which the KBE is based, other scientific theories and conceptualisations have also developed practically into “policy paradigms”. Theoretical foundations that spoke in terms of innovation-based economic growth sustained on the permanent expansion and exploitation of ideas followed by the subsequent strategic integration of new societal spaces. From Schumpeterian grounds, scholars such as Michael Porter (Diamond Model, Triple Helix), Kenichi Ohmae (Region state, Global city) or Richard Florida (Creative cities, creative class), became celebrated gurus, the “new

11 The Austrian-American economist Joseph Schumpeter viewed the constant creation of new consumer goods, new methods of production and new markets carried out by enterprises as the fundamental impulse of the capitalist economy. From this notion of constant creation where the new (products, methods of production etc.) replaces the old, Schumpeter frames the well-known concept of creative destruction as a natural process to catalyse economic prosperity (Schumpeter 1942/1994).

12 Porter is perhaps one of the most influential academics and theorists of innovation-based growth. In his book The Competitive Advantage of Nations (1990) Porter presents some theoretical models which have been carefully considered by many governments when planning innovation. The most popular of these is the diamond model: an economical model that attempts to understand why some industries become more competitive than others, depending on the region in which they are settled.

13 Ohmae’s concept “region state” departs from the idea that “the nation state has become an unnatural, even dysfunctional, unit for organising human activity and managing economic endeavour in a borderless world” (Ohmae 1993, 78). The borders of a region state are opposed to the state as such. Since in the case of the “region state”, economic borders are “drawn by the deft but invisible hand of the global market of goods and services” (Ohmae 1993, 78) and do not coincide with political borders. His ideas marry well with the idea of a re-scaling economy based on a global city and the accumulation of competitive industries in one place. These projects strive to switch from national to local scale (globalisation via glocalisation) as well as to reach a symbiosis between infrastructures, specifically with respect to competitiveness and closeness, in order to give rapid answers to global markets.

14 Richard Florida’s notion of a “creative class” is supposed to designate the emergence of a new class of workers, “the creatives”, who work in new knowledge-based jobs emerging in post-Fordism. The creative class needs the right kind of atmosphere, the creative city (with a high-tech sector, a vivid cultural life, gentrified downtown neighbourhoods, nice cafeterias, etc.) for its members to develop their ideas and identities, ultimately bringing growth and competitiveness (Florida 2002, 2005). In an emphatic way, Ross (2003) has defined Florida’s ideas as the practical “industrialization of bohemia”. Florida’s conceptualisation of the creative class and the creative city is also the societal/geographical representation of the symbiosis between idea and market profit (2002). Moreover, they are elements often regarded as one of the main cornerstones of policies surrounding innovation. These ideas have therefore served as the theoretical justification for the creation of knowledge clusters, the carrying out of city re-development, and the implementation of university reforms by governments.
pastoral experts” and main protagonists in this technocratic development of the KBE (see Rose 1996. 2007, 6. 2008, 76. Cited from Moisio & Kangas 2012, 209). They normalised and codified the idea of connecting extra-economic factors in a wider sense (from new identities to work organisation, private-public sector ventures and educational plans).

Used to speaking in influential economic forums, these authors often deploy metaphors not just as figures of speech to make policy recommendations but as a means to embody ideological positions that naturalise the effects of inequality and that serve to dominate the political agenda. Florida’s deterministic conception of the global economic system as a landscape of peaks, hills and valleys is a good example. The peaks are those centres chiefly responsible for the development of innovation, magnets for attracting talent, capital and creativity. Hills manufacture the goods designed by the peaks while the valleys, representing the largest part of the world, have little connection with the global economic centres; only a bleak future awaits them (Florida 2005, 48 Cited from Moisio and Kangas 2012, 213). There are other less imaginative metaphors deployed, like, for example, the idea promoted by the OECD that states must choose between “high-road” and “low-road” strategies, which, in a similar deterministic fashion, divides the world between knowledge-intensive innovative ideas (the high road) and areas for manufacturing (the low road). (Rantanen 2004, 10 Cited from Moisio and Kangas 2012, 218).

In this world of valleys and peaks the solutions that present themselves to states are principally about the need to increase their own competitiveness in the global economy, pointing towards a strategy that relativises the national scale by focusing only on the boosting of certain economic regions. This is the effective introduction of an economic imaginary into real policy making (Burton-Jones 1999, Smith 2000, 19. Peters 2001. Sum & Jessop 2013, 24.). It is difficult to ascertain the extent of this influence. What is clear, however, is that these imaginaries and policy paradigms have been: (i) the main source of inspiration for policy makers; (ii) the bedrock for statistical indicators (Godin 2001); (iii) the central support mechanisms for the general ideas underpinning the KBE as such (Sum & Jessop 2013), and (iv) the primary means by which policies about the so-called “creative class” are legitimated and steered (Peck 2005).

In its more concise materialist sense, the definition of the KBE underlines the idea that extra-economic factors seem to be closely related to the production of immaterial goods:
We define the knowledge economy as production and services based on knowledge-intensive activities that contribute to an accelerated pace of technological and scientific advance as well as equally rapid obsolescence. The key components of a knowledge economy include a greater reliance on intellectual capabilities than on physical inputs or natural resources, combined with efforts to integrate improvements in every stage of the production process, from the R&D lab to the factory floor to the interface with customers (Powell & Snellman 2004, 201).

The KBE and the University: the EU as a catalyst for the reform of Higher Education Institutions

From the early stages of the KBE, the OECD and its academic representatives wanted to “measure” knowledge and benchmark HEI, in order to recommend the implementation of specific reforms. The wave of market-oriented university reforms was tutored by the OECD, but also the European Union.

The relation between the university and the state shifts away from the balance between common interest and individual freedoms and towards a “positive” and simplified relation between individuals and market. This shift is rooted in the neoliberal ethos that views the state not as an instrument for containing the force of capital but for empowering it. Accordingly, OECD policy documents generally recommend the state to abandon protective regulations proper to the Keynesian model (e.g. redistribution, public ownership, intellectual autonomy), which restrain the advance of the market. At the same time, it urges the state to be proactive in galvanising the idea of a society whose individual members naturally organise around the logic of the market (Olssen & Peters 2005, 318).

For example, the OECD openly urges universities to internationalise and think globally and integrate their traditional pursuits with enterprise-related activities, enhancing both competitiveness and entrepreneurialism. This is a global development, which reflects how the compendium of neoliberal inspired buzzwords have turned into real policies and have transformed the societal role of the university (such that investments are now measured in terms of money not knowledge, learning or reasoning; students are no longer seen as being educated but as clients who have purchased a product, thus leading to a general demise of the democratic values universities are supposed to embody, etc.). Furthermore, it is striking how these higher educational policies have triggered a global process of homogenisation in and between Higher Education Institutions. In Europe, the EU played a
central role in creating strong discursive models that were applied indisci- minately within EU countries with very different socio-economic back- grounds and academic traditions, resulting in paradoxes and contradictions (Etzkovic, Webster, Gebhard & Cantisano Terra 2000. Olssen & Peters 2005. Wodak and Fairclough 2010).

The Lisbon Strategy (2000) or Lisbon Agenda, which is the umbrella document to implement the KBE throughout the EU, asserts how the EU aspires to “become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (European Council, 2000). The Lisbon Strategy follows the same jargon and adopts a similar narrative as the OECD strategies, that is, to enhance competitiveness and entrepreneurship, with knowledge production at the centre of economic strategy; to bring the private sector and HEI into close collaboration as the only way to survive in the era of globalisation. The Lisbon Strategy (LS) represents an all-encompassing narrative, connecting the upper tiers of government to the workplace and targeting even individuals (Nokkala 2006, 179–184). Despite being officially non-binding with its goals never fully achieved, the Lisbon Strategy became a key reference point in designing KBE policies in many of the old and new EU Member States (Nokkala 2006, 171–175. Wodak and Fairclough 2010, 19–21).

The Lisbon Strategy contains the EU convergence objective, which is represented by the Open Method for Cooperation (OMC). Even though it was originally inspired by a multilevel network imaginary that was infused with market concepts, OMC was presented as a “neutral instrument” for state collaboration, allowing states to work with their own policies as well as in coordination with other states (ESIB 2006, 23). Even if generally con- sidered a failure, the Lisbon Strategy served as an umbrella for the develop- ment of other more concise “sub-strategies” that materialised the spirit of Lisbon in concrete policies.

This is the case with the Bologna Process, which was conceived before the Lisbon strategy when 29 ministers of education in Europe signed the Bologna Declaration (BD) in 1999. The BD introduced a plan that initially aimed at making the higher education systems of EU member states more comparable and compatible. Only months later would the Lisbon Strategy take its first steps. In 2002, at the EU Summit in Barcelona, new goals were set for higher education, and discussions at the time reflected on how close the Lisbon and Bologna strategies were, even though the Bologna Process was never formally integrated within the Lisbon Strategy. The point is that
both “strategies” worked in developing the KBE for Europe; while Bologna directly involved the university institutions as well as other “stakeholders”, Lisbon was a European Commission project that acted more in an agenda setting capacity. However, with the demise of the latter, the Bologna Process became the most visible and tangible strategy, which, following the KBE spirit, systematically transformed and homogenised universities throughout Europe: flexibility; competitiveness; attractiveness; autonomy; internationalisation and convergence, which served to normalise exchange programmes (Erasmus) throughout Europe that many of my generation enjoyed. At the same time, the Bologna Process marked the actual and definite break with a societal compromise that HEI had represented (ESIB 2006, 51–53. Slaughter & Cantwell 2012, 19. Wodak and Fairclough 2010, 23–25).

The Bologna Process was a plan to finally turn ideas into actual infrastructures that could exploit knowledge, which was now re-imagined as a commodity, an unlimited raw material to generate profit. With Bologna, HEI becomes a kind of industry for “useful” knowledge production envisaged by the OECD in its earlier KBE documents: for example, entrepreneurial oriented research ascribes to students and scholars the role of competitive subjects who are in pursuit of delivering knowledge to the industry/business complex within the framework of “national innovation systems”; a rationale developed by states at the national level that aims to organise the production of knowledge in order to assure its usefulness in the marketplace. This organisation is accompanied also at the university level, by the creation of all type of statistics to measure, control, and benchmark knowledge production as if this is tacit and can be ranked according to its usefulness regardless of discipline. Nonetheless, the expansion of this rationale is contradictory because it regularly implies a clash with the university’s core values, such as equality, democratic decisions, emancipation or intellectual work. (Slaughter & Rhoades 2004, Chapters 2, 7 and 8. Olssen & Peters 2005 324–

15 Their common ground was progressively institutionalised. With the Prague Communiqué (2001), the European ministers responsible for higher education granted the European Commission membership to the Bologna follow-up structures. Since then the Commission had a grip on both the Lisbon Strategy and the Bologna Process, which it could now produce joint programmes, such as Education and Training 2010—a document endorsed by the Commission within the remit of the Lisbon strategy, which integrated all actions in the fields of education and training at the European level, including vocational education and training. (ESIB 2006, 52).

16 Mustajoki (2013) shows in his article how benchmarking knowledge according to bibliometric systems and journal categorisation favours medical sciences and undermines social sciences and humanities.

We presented KBE’s regime of capital accumulation as dependent on the extra-economic factors of producing knowledge. This move towards “unexploited societal spaces”, for which generic buzzwords paved the way, entails actual market expansion along with a narrative to encompass it. Here is where indexes, statistics, benchmarks, emerge and shape the conception and development of HEI reforms, creating also the powerful imaginary of constructed necessities that public policy needs to address. Imaginaries do not have a purely causal relation with policymaking; rather, they co-constitute each other. Thus, we see a sort of dialectical relation between the material deployment of the KBE reforms (including HEI) and the narrative that aids it.

Nonetheless, the implementation of these policies has not resulted in attaining the expected goals. Moreover, the material order that has developed differs notably from the narratives and promises that accompanied the reforms. Despite notions of “permanent change” and “rapid obsolesce”, the KBE in general and university reforms, in particular, operate within a productive economic paradigm; different stages of production that, while being extremely flexible and de-territorialized, are ultimately based on delivering a service to the customer. Contrary to this principle, present day capitalism seems to have headed in a different direction, inasmuch that neoliberal deregulation, which is said to unchain capitalism’s inherent expansive and innovative dynamism as a basis for new cycles of growth, seems instead to have favoured forms of speculative accumulation. Post-Fordist capitalism has been largely about the demise of the productive economy and the rise financial power. As a result, we have an increasingly contradictory landscape of material and discursive forces that even if they are not literally mentioned in programmatic policy documents are co-constitutive of the university order.
The constitutive material and discursive historical forces of contemporary capitalism beyond the KBE

The global financial crisis of 2008 shed light on the internal workings of the formerly obscure financial sector. Financial capitalism was generally absent in the KBE and HEI programmatic documents, despite their importance in today’s capitalism. Nonetheless, KBE development is not isolated from the rise of the financial sector. Both developed by riding on the same historic and expansive forces of capitalism. In addition to this, the importance of finance relativises the significance of the KBE.

3.1. The material force: financial power and the KBE

The GDP share of the financial sector represents today more than 20% of the GDP of the OECD. This sustained growth of financial services is grounded on the so-called financial engineering, which mainly means a re-orientation of the function of credit in capitalism. Credit does not ultimately rest on the productive economy but on the logic of capital markets. Thompson (2003) defines this model as “disconnected capitalism”, that is, a form of capital accumulation detached from the logic of production, which grew in parallel to the successive de-regulation of the financial sector, and which culminated in the derogation of the Glass-Steagall Act1 sanctioned by Clinton’s administration in 1999.

1 Glass-Steagall refers to a series of provisions from the Banking act of 1933, an important regulation that came to the fore during F. D Roosevelt’s presidency in the context of the Great Depression with the aim of rationalising the financial sector after the Crash of 1929 and its devastating consequences. The provisions of Glass-Steagall implemented legislation to separate commercial and investment banking, in order to prevent the volatility of investing banking and maintaining that the financial sector remains close to the productive economy and the needs of consumers. The Glass-Steagall provisions mainly dealt with matters of financial safety, leaving some grey areas that were exploited by banks as well as by governments who passed new legislations with the clear intention of hollowing out the pre-eminence of the provisions in the financial sector. The final hammer blow to the Glass-Steagall provisions was dealt at the end of Clinton’s second term in 1999; on the basis of ensuring the US economy’s international competitiveness, financial banking was catapulted to a
The traditional function of banks under capitalism was to finance firms, lending some capital with some interest, which later would be used to produce goods or deliver services. Today capital markets are not simply lenders; they are at the centre of the circuit of capital accumulation. Companies gravitate around them in the search of share returns. This has resulted in downsizing the importance of production:

Growth strategies for firms are directed to a simultaneous squeezing of labour and more active management of corporate assets, manifested in delayering, disaggregation, downsizing and divestment. This fuelled the wave of corporate restructuring that became prominent in the 1990s. In the context of the long bull market, 80 per cent of shareholder returns in the 1990s came through the rise in share prices that allowed companies to escape the limits of returns on earnings in product markets (Erturk, Froud, Johal, & Williams, 2004, p. 689). As Blackburn (2006, p. 43) notes, in such an economic context, the corporation becomes a ‘plaything’ of capital markets, ‘an accidental bundle of liabilities and assets that is there to be rearranged to maximise shareholder value… the corporation and the workforce are, in principle, disposable’ (Thompson & Harley 2012, 1373).

Work is no longer central in capital accumulation; with less waged workers and more powerful transnational banks, the benefits accumulate in fewer hands. Still, this speculative form of capital accumulation requires labour to craft and interpret data. Interpretation is a crucial human asset that demands skilled labour in the form of analytical competence to provide clues in a sector in which volatility is the norm and data quickly becomes obsolete. Many of the skills proper to the innovation-based productive economy could be put at the service of the finance and its speculative economy.

“Moral essentials of free market competition”, such as the need for firms to compete in offering competitive products to buyers, are no longer pivotal. In contrast, we have a system of accumulation driven by speculation, arbitrariness and an obscure language dressed in the attire of data, quantification and computational power, what Thompson & Harley (2012) have defined as “Shareholder Value discourse”.

position of hegemony. The new law that served to derogate Glass-Stegall was named the Financial Services Modernization Act (Stiglitz 2008. Markham 2010).
The 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the other face of “unleashed technological dynamism”

This specific form of capitalism was suddenly in the spotlight during the Global Financial Capital Crisis of 2008. During this period, we all became familiar with the intentionally complex terminology of the so-called “financial innovations” – for example, the Collateralized Debt Obligations (CDO) or the Commercial mortgage-backed securities (CMBS), that is, financial euphemisms referring to toxic bonds re-packaged, diversified and presented as part of “safe” subprime mortgage bonds. The “secure look” to the stocks was provided by corrupt rating agencies who rated junk bonds as completely secure. Weeks later, huge banks began collapsing, thus igniting the global financial crisis.2

The immense economic and moral meltdown of Wall Street not only occurred under the noses of public authorities; after decades of sustained de-regulation of financial services and blind trust in the growing power of Wall Street by successive US governments, public institutions were in fact complicit in the entire process.4 Immediately after the meltdown US government went fast to bail out the banks with taxpayer’s money on the pretext of saving what was left and to avoid its complete collapse. A decade after the outbreak of the crisis, we see that, despite some small tightening of regulations, “disconnected capitalism” is as present as ever in contemporary capitalism.

The global meltdown shone a light on the fact that the same bad habits and corrupt practices were present everywhere. In Europe, the bailing out of

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2 Thanks to the many excellent documentaries like Inside Job (Ferguson 2010) or films like “Margin Call” (Chandoe 2011) and The Big Short (McKay 2015)

3 It was in the interest of the Big Three Agencies (Standard & Poor’s, Fitch Ratings and Moody’s, who hold 95% of the market) to continue feeding the beast of the subprime mortgages and the bubble, because of pure greed and corruption: “an erosion of standards, a willful suspension of skepticism, a hunger for big fees and market share, and an inability to stand up to” the investment banks issuing the securities” (McLean, Bethany & Nocera 2011, 11)

4 The oligarchic nature of this entire period is represented by figures like Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve for almost two decades (1987–2006) who led an expansive neoliberal monetary policy. He was successively reappointed by Republican and Democrat governments and at the age of eighty, after retirement, was hired by Goldman Sachs as an adviser. This alleged revolving door between Wall Street and Washington has been a constant for decades, with a number of public offices taken by important figures of Wall Street (Ferguson 2010). The most notable case was perhaps Henry Paulson, Secretary of the Treasury at the time of the crisis, and one of the faces of the crisis who repeatedly denied the existence of a great recession until the very day of the meltdown. Paulson had only two years earlier, in 2006, left his position as the CEO of Goldman Sachs, one of the largest banks in Wall Street.
the banks and the restructuring of the financial sector with the use of taxpayers’ money was the path chosen out of the crisis. Consequently, private and public debt skyrocketed in Spain, Ireland, Portugal and Greece, triggering debt crises. Ironically, the rates given to a countries’ debt by those same rating agencies that had been responsible for the 2008 financial crisis was now taken as gospel. These debt crises led to draconian social cuts in states’ welfare expenditure. The problem was that these severe cuts did nothing to reduce the debt,\(^5\) they only further exacerbated levels of poverty and inequality.

Speculative economy and the KBE: contradictions and the benevolent view of technology

The same states and international organisations that allowed financial disconnected capitalism to grow out of control were meanwhile, in the name of a new stable “productive economy, implementing policies to put in motion the KBE. Yet the results of such diverging and contradictory policy action were far from the promised “virtuous cycle” of a new productive economy.

According to its promoters, this diverging policy action was compatible due to positive capitalist synergies that would supposedly steer growth and prosperity in times of technological change. The importance of technological change was an assumption largely shared by the architects of the KBE, neoliberal de-regulators and the wolves of Wall Street; the so-called financial innovations were meant to be illustrative of technological sophistications. Sophisticated financial instruments that in handling massive pools of information interpreted by highly skilled workers, could provide projections for speculative investments. Financial innovations are the work of a genuinely “KBE highly skilled labour force”; the problem is that their skills serve to undermine the productive economy.

As the financial innovations reflect, technology is not only a central vehicle in providing the “equipment and techniques” required for a very flexible and segmented process of production proper to post-Fordism. Technology is a pivotal asset for the financial sector’s speculative machin-

\(^5\) The most extreme case was the Greek debt crisis, which resulted in its complete loss of economic sovereignty, as represented by the series of memoranda published at the time, and the “men in black” coming from Brussels to supervise Greece’s economic policy. These supervisors represented the unelected bodies of three international organisations (the “Troika”: EU’s European Council, European Central Bank, and IMF). Their recommendations had to be followed regardless of the opinions expressed by citizens in electoral contests or referenda.
3. THE CONSTITUTIVE MATERIAL

ery. The rise of artificial transactions in today’s financial markets, which are enabled by large-scale derivative trading, would have been impossible were it not for technological advances in computer power: derivatives are bought and sold frantically to maximise benefits, while data is already worthless after 15 minutes. It is not an overstatement to say that “Disconnected capitalism” is related to the development of ICTs.

This does not mean that ICTs are “the cause” of the financialisation of the global economy. What it underlines instead is the ideological effort made to relate ICT and the KBE to an optimistic picture by separating the former from ruthless financial speculation. As Morozov (2016) puts it, “the “good cop” would be Silicon Valley and the “bad cop” Wall Street.

In advancing the argument that, as a political project, the KBE rises in parallel with the financialisation of economy, with the latter seemingly unstoppable during this period. Therefore, the material reality of finance capital is inserted in the KBE despite this is generally downplayed by the discourses surrounding the KBE. Thompson and Harley (2012) take this argument one step further: taken alone, the discourse on KBE not only exaggerates the significance of the KBE, it is simply a fiction that speaks to a great degree of an inexistent reality.

On this basis one should look at the material order. For this purpose, Thompson and Harley introduce the aforementioned “shareholder value discourse”, which in their view is a more relevant constitutive force than the KBE discourse, even if its circulation is more restricted. On this interpretation, the KBE would be a narrative taken too seriously by its critics, while the issue of finance would remain largely off the radar, leaving its trace through an unintelligible financial and technological jargon that constitutes the order by means of an absolute opacity (Thompson and Harley 2012, 1375).

Thompson and Harley’s assertion matters considering the weight of financial capital in contrast with the rather modest economic output of the KBE. The resulting picture is that we see a general contradiction between the material output from the policies, on the one hand, and on the other, the established narratives of progress that legitimise them.

6 Thompson and Harley refer mainly to Critical Discourse Analysis and its re-contextualisation approach to KBE discourse (Fairclough 2008. 2010) as well as those scholars coming from regulation theory (mainly Jessop) that developed the concept of cultural political economy. These approaches will be explained in the following theory chapter.
The relatively modest weight of the KBE in numbers

There is no index to systematically measure the real progress of the KBE. The problem mainly resides in how to quantify its widely defined concepts. For example, despite the copious literature produced on the topic, the quantification of innovation represents still a major challenge (Nelson et al. 2014).

In a similar vein, we see how international organisations have developed “input-based” indexes to measure the KBE and guide policy making. The majority of these indexes are not measuring the actual capital/labour output (e.g. number of innovations, growth derived from ICT sector, share of jobs etc.) but the input defined by the number of facilities (e.g. technopoles, start-up accelerators, R&D investment, market-university joint projects, etc.), as well as incentives (e.g. economic freedom, tax incentives, etc.) that “produce” the KBE capabilities of a given country. Therefore, Input-based indexes actually measure the “supposed means” of the KBE. Nonetheless, we can partially see the actual material output of the KBE when we investigate KBE’s share in the economy and the labour market.

Rodrik (2016) has reflected upon the existence of a “bottle neck” in the ICT sector in the US: despite the advances of ICTs, the economic flagship sector of the KBE, the ICT sector still accounts for less than 10% of the GDP, and it does not look like this will change in the near future. The situation in the EU does not differ much from the US. According to Eurostat (2014) the ICT sector represents less than 5% of the GDP in most of the 29 member states, with the exception of Hungary (5.69%), Malta (7.2%), the UK (5.79%), and Sweden (6.41%). The question surrounding how to measure new economic sectors associated with the KBE seems also to be problematic in the EU.

7 The widely employed World Bank’s Knowledge Economy Index (KEI) measures “country’s or region’s overall preparedness to compete in the Knowledge Economy” (World Bank, 2015). The index is based on four subindexes that measure the pillars of the KBE which are: Economic Incentive and Institutional Regime; Innovation and Technological Adoption; Education and Training Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) Infrastructure. The KEI index does not actually measure the KBE but the means to achieve it. The fact that this data is said to correlate with the results from the KBE is causally inferred but not empirically proven; though the index is employed as if it is.

8 Eurostat has changed the methodology of calculation of the ICT and the latest published data on ICT share of the GDP was in 2014. There was no data for some member countries known for having strong ICT sectors like Finland, Netherlands and Ireland.

9 Malta’s KBE is mainly the product of the jobs created by the undercover tax dumping inside the EU. Getting a residence permit in Malta can give you access to 15% income tax on the local Maltese income.
The EU has published updated KBE-related statistics in relation to the *Europe 2020 Growth Strategy*, a European Commission initiative that follows the usual framework of the KBE. This data does not take ICT sector as a reference but, among other indicators, focuses on Research and Development (R&D), investment and patents, and thus solely on inputs. R&D investment has been growing in the last decade, representing in 2005 little more than 1.7% of GDP and increasing to 2% by 2015. In 2002, patent applications were 105 per 1 million inhabitants, steadily growing and reaching a peak in 2006 with 117.5. By 2014, however, this decreased to 112 (Eurostat.2018).

Finland, as one of the leading EU countries, has R&D figures clearly above the EU average. Nonetheless, these numbers have decreased during the last years from 3.75% of GDP in 2009 to 2.9% in 2015. Estonian R&D has been generally below the EU average. Nevertheless, one can observe how R&D in Estonia experienced steady growth, from only 0.6% of GDP in 2000 to 2.31% in 2011, overcoming the EU average. Since then, investment has once more declined below the EU average to 1.49% in 2015. When it comes to patents, we see that Finland is clearly ahead of the EU average with an increase from 251 patents per one million inhabitants in 2011 to 341 in 2014, more than three times above the EU average. Estonian patents are clearly below the EU average (111 in 2014), increasing from only 4 patents per million in 2005 to 18 in 2014 (Eurostat 2018).

Despite a tendency of growth, these indicators still represent a modest share of the economy. Furthermore, the measurements do not necessarily reflect the existence of a new capitalist rationale; indicators such as investment, the ICT sector’s share of GDP, and the number of patents administered say little about labour share, even if highly skilled labour is pivotal in KBE plans.

Rodrik (2016) explains that the problem hinges on the assumption surrounding the centrality of technology in the present economic system. Irrespective of technological advances, less visible sectors in which technological innovations have had little impact – for example, health care services, trade, transportation – represent more than 60% of GDP (while, in the US, only health care and social services represent more than 25% of GDP). Thus the “economy of care” generates more jobs than the ICT sector. Most of these

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10 The Europe 2020 Growth Strategy aims at “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth as a way to overcome the structural weaknesses in Europe’s Economy, improve its competitiveness and productivity and underpin a sustainable social market economy.” (Europe 2020 Strategy, 2010)
jobs do not require any special qualification. This does not mean that the KBE does not create jobs. Only that the number of jobs it creates are not enough to be systemically significant. Much of the present-day workforce will spend their entire careers without having an archetypical KBE job. Even a significant proportion of the jobs provided for by ICTs need little qualification.

In recent years Eurostat has developed a new set of indicators to measure innovation. Such is the case with the European Innovation Scoreboard (2015). Of these benchmarks, labour impact indicators are the most substantial output quantifiers. These quantifiers vary remarkably depending on how a specific knowledge-intensive job is defined.

For example, the indicator “Employment in fast-growing firms of innovative sectors”, defined as the “number of employees in high-growth enterprises in the 50% most innovative industries”, tells us that the EU average is 4.7% of total employment. If we take “Employment in Knowledge intensive activities”, defined as “industries where at least 33% of employment has a higher education degree” the proportion is substantially higher, 14.1%. This data categorises knowledge-intensive jobs according to quotas. So, in the first case we do not know anything of the nature of the job, though we may assume that all employees of 50% of the most innovative industries have knowledge intensive jobs. In the second case, we know that at least a third of workers have higher education degrees, presupposing that all these workers were hired to work in knowledge intensive jobs. At the same time, we do not know anything about the other two thirds of jobs (Eurostat, 2018). Besides, knowledge intensive activities encompass a wide array of employment possibilities, from sectors directly associated to the KBE (e.g. high-tech knowledge-intensive services) to others we would not immediately associate with the KBE (e.g. accounting, public administration or even residential care).

The quantification of widely defined concepts or buzzwords might include very different sets of data that ultimately say little about the real impact of KBE in the workplace. Within this murky setting, many jobs can be counted as operating within but nobody –from the common citizen to

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11 Knowledge-Intensive services are divided into 4 categories, each of them with their own subcategories. The four principal categories are: (i) high-tech knowledge intensive services; (ii) knowledge-intensive market services; (iii) knowledge-intensive financial services and (iv) other knowledge-intensive services, which includes all kinds of work from, among others, publishing activities, veterinary activities, social work and even gambling and betting activities.(Eurostat, 2018).
3. THE CONSTITUTIVE MATERIAL

the policy maker – considers an accountant or a casino employee as examples of a knowledge intensive worker.

Eurostat indicators would thus come to confirm in Europe Rodrick’s arguments regarding a generalised statistical overstatement of the KBE. Nelson et al (2014) come to a similar conclusion, after a thorough analysis of the different methods employed to measure innovation in business. Another problematical aspect in this data is the causal inference made between higher education studies and employment within the KBE, in a context of precarity where it is increasingly common to have highly skilled workers labouring in low-skill jobs. Despite this, universities with increasingly less resources enhance the supply of graduates for the labour market, thus compounding the problematical nature of making any kind of casual inference between higher education and KBE jobs (Keep and Mathew 2010, 570 cited in Thompson and Harley 2012, 1371). Such an inference has defined KBE-inspired University reforms for years, especially in the programmatic aim to decisively contribute to the constitution of a knowledge-based economic cycle.

3.2. The discursive force: technological optimism and its contradictions

The exaggeration of the KBE confirms to a greater extent the thesis that the KBE is a “fabricated fiction” (Thompson and Harley 2012). Nonetheless, this fiction displays some powerful imaginaries, appealing to shared beliefs, commonplaces relating to a generic idea of living in an era of progress steered by technological acceleration, which is either shaking the ground under our very feet or opening the door to an endless sea of possibilities. These loosely connected ideas successfully adapt to different contexts worldwide and are generally welcomed and integrated within public discourse: few might know about the actual start-up share as a percentage of GDP, but many recognise the young successful entrepreneurs associated with start-ups. From this powerful image of the entrepreneur it can easily be

12 Nelson et al develop four theoretical mechanisms to identify the bias in three common innovation measuring markers (i.e. keywords, database index terms, and domain expert assessments). Their analysis leads to the conclusion that measurements are inconcise since they “lead to differing conclusions about the magnitude and timing of diffusion, organizational demography, publication outlets, and collaboration” (Nelson et al 2014, 927) They also add that there is extensive evidence of manipulation of results for the purpose of “greenwashing” certain initiatives.
argued that policy making should adapt to the rise of these “real agents of change”.

The entrepreneur, technological optimism and the platform economy

The image of a community of free entrepreneurs establishing start-ups is not just a discursive 
boutade to make a precarious job look more liberating\(^\text{13}\) but a frame to expand capitalism to new business areas, courtesy of digital technologies. These technologies, which require only indirect access with no costs to private assets – like cars, houses or even bikes – impose on the workforce the imperative of flexibility. Digital technologies that represent the organisational backbone of business models such as “the platform economy”, which constantly outflank tax laws, labour regulations, and so on and so forth. The success of these companies ultimately depends on labour that has little to do with technology. Despite this, a substantial though decreasing part of public opinion, would still define the platform economy positively.

The seductive rhetoric of the so-called “sharing economy” exploits by offering solutions to daily situations to which we can all relate. The satisfaction gained from ordering a car-drive with one click on a smartphone or the joy of ordering a book and receiving it at one’s home a few hours later, or even eating a take-away meal from a restaurant after having ordered it 20 minutes earlier. We are told that this immediateness is progress. The narcotizing pleasure of the immediateness of digital technology conceals the obvious: the book may arrive on one’s doorstep quickly, but it comes courtesy of a courier who is part of “the precarious entrepreneurial class”, a driver for Uber. Immediateness thus relies on a concatenation of precarious workers.\(^\text{14}\) This precariousness turns into crude exploitation in the manufacture and transportation of products from overseas. They are not tele-

\(^{13}\) In fact, with the law as it stands and thanks to the platform exchange logic, these precarious workers are technically hired as self-employed entrepreneurs offering a service.

\(^{14}\) In an article published in Le Monde Diplomatique, Jean-Baptiste Malet (2013) described what happens inside Amazon logistics centres. Inside these buildings, protected by security controls, labour functions almost secretly, as the material extension of an algorithm. The worker obeys algorithmic made orders that need to be processed as fast as possible in a dehumanised work environment that often lack basics like AC or proper heating. Workers are under permanent surveillance, their productivity constantly benchmarked. Workers must remain tight lipped about what occurs in the logistic centre. Consequently, unionisation or complaints about work conditions are generally silenced. Moreover, an important proportion of the workforce remains on temporary contracts with precarious salaries.
ported or flown by drones to the Amazon logistic complexes; they are transported by shipping companies in standardised corrosion resistant containers. Geography and materiality still matter in this publicised “shrinking world”, which fits on the screen of a smartphone.

The supposedly benevolent platform economy is itself a “fabricated fiction” that nonetheless defines very real economic conditions. This fiction is not crafted only by the policy-making blacksmiths but by a larger discursive context (by the ‘spirit of times’, one can say), which is determinant in the formation of the present-day economic order in general and the university order, in particular.

Programmatic documents and the general narrative of technologic optimism

The programmatic reform documents and policy-papers written by universities, governments or supranational institutions, demonstrate in their reasoning an interesting duality: on the one hand, they draw on the reinforced concrete of statistical data while, on the other, they suffuse their discourse with the soft and pleasant sound of buzzwords and present forecasts lacking in any substantial empirical evidence and strong intellectual grounds. Just mere clichés that echo freedom, opulence and prosperity, defining a moment of “existential awakening” brought about by technological change. This apparent collective harmony and boundless optimism contrasts with the increasing deterioration of material conditions, that is, with the stagnation of real wages and a general decline in labour’s share of income (International Labour Office/Gomis 2019, 26), with the transformation of work (Doogan 2009) and the systematic dismantling of the welfare state in parallel with a rise in policies oriented towards competitiveness that have strengthened capitalism’s natural tendency to exacerbate inequality and instability (Harvey 2005, Chapter 3. Piketty 2013).

The globalisation and the internationalisation of production moved the world’s manufacturing to East Asia, inevitably increasing trade and consequently ship transportation. This, however, declined abruptly with onset of the global financial crisis in 2008. The consequence has been that today the Italian MSC, the Danish Maersk, the French CMA CGM, the Taiwanese Evergreen and the Chinese Cosco own more than ¼ of the cargo ships and transport 43.2% of global tonnage. Today global trade continues to expand and in the last years the construction of mega-cargo ships, as well as the enlargement of Panama and Suez canals, seem to indicate that the transportation of products will continue to increase in the future. Maritime transport is a sector that today represents 0.5% of global GDP and, directly and indirectly, employs 13.5 million people. This overwhelming material evidence represents the fundamentals of sustaining global trade, and cements globalisation, even if it remains largely invisible to the public (Ferrer Morini March 2015).
In parallel to this, a sense of identity, of community, access to culture, all of which help to provide existence with a meaning, are also threatened by the enthronement of the “short-time frame”. This is a permanent race against time demanding flexibility in all spheres of life and dissolving the pre-eminence of existential moral grounds, a system that demands liquid identities resulting in hyperindividualisation (Sennet 2006, 4). This contradictory struggle between the concrete, often presented in the form of statistical data, on the one hand, and the morally inconsistent liquidity of narratives, on the other, draws a landscape in which indeterminacy holds sway. This rather chaotic picture is intimately related to the notion of “governing through disorder” (Pelizzoni 2011). Risk, liquidity, and indeterminacy as the spectre that haunts the everyday lives of millions of people, which nonetheless serves as that which stabilises the very order (Beck. 1992. 2000. Lipovetsky. 2005. Bauman 2007. Žižek 2010)

These ideas are reproduced from different positions. I undertook a micro study of two major daily newspapers in Spain, based on a collection of published articles on technology and society during a four-year period (2013–2017)¹⁶. These articles approached the relation between technology and society from a myriad of different perspectives (e.g. political, cultural, scientific, economic, and social). Generally, a narrative of technological optimism prevails. What retained in society is an optimistic technology-centred cyber-fetishist narrative rooted in post-political philosophies that tend to elevate the individual above the common in an imagined transparent world devoid of any systemic conflicts or structural constraints (Sennet 2006. Lipovetsky 2006. Rendueles, 2013. Byung, 2013. Morozov, 2013). Nonetheless, in between 2013 and 2017 we see a rising tide of criticism as well against technocentrism.¹⁷

This criticism departs from a grounded empirical picture, contrasting technological optimism to the everyday lives of citizens and grand economic plans. The result of this study revealed a constitutive discourse pregnant with contradictions and inconsistencies. These contradictions generally relate to the problematic effort of pundits and members of the commentariat to construct a technological narrative that harmonises with a society

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¹⁶ See this study’s method Chapter.

¹⁷ The arguments advanced in these and the following paragraphs are based on the conclusions of a study based on the collection and analysis of all the articles about technology and society published in two Spanish newspapers between 2013 and 2017. It might be published as an article soon but if the reader wants the reference it can always contact me directly.
forged in their own image. More specifically, the problem revolves around the logic of capitalist expansion in an increasingly complex global context that is at the same time reduced to a pool of potential users. Capitalist expansion, of which HEI reforms are a part, is driven by a constitutive but problematic relation between complexity and simplification that results in deep contradictions (See fn.38 below). These tensions moreover recall Wodak & Fairclough’s (2010, 23) diagram of a set of “antinomies”, which reflect a series of divergences operating on different levels (local-national-global), and which transform into deep tensions within politics, law, culture, and moral values etc.

Technology and technological optimism signal progress and prosperity embodied in a notion of expansion in material and in immaterial terms, and which becomes especially instrumental for market expansion. With the advent of ICT, time and space are relativised. This opens up new possibilities for the expansion of businesses and products of all types, requiring new organisational strategies that need clear and distinct answers in a complex landscape. In this context, data engineering and manipulation are pivotal in providing these answers. The social cosmos appears as a network of millions of “users” united by a centre that can be systematically approached by the massive deployment of algorithms that are in themselves the embodiment of ideologically constructed possibilities. This leads to a logic of centralisation, mimicry and reproduction at all societal levels: from state to city, with respect to data organisation, cultures, work, ways of living, journalism, etc. In short, while social relations are not themselves algorithmic, algorithms might reproduce algorithmic patterns of conduct in society. Conducts that clash with the emancipation of the “creative individual”, to which the KBE appeals when identities are simplified to consumer-based preferences. As a result, we have individuals who in the race to be unique, ironically choose the same lifestyles as everyone else at the same time as they still live in a state of atomisation.

3.3. The contradictory interplay between the material and the discursive historico-constitutive forces

When the material and the discursive constitutive forces are brought together, this basic problematical relation between complexity and simplification in capitalist expansion, which rides on new waves of technology, evolves into two diverging logics, both of which operate in a two-fold manner. The first is a logic of expansion and concentration, mainly of material
nature. The second is a logic of dissolution and atomisation, mainly of immaterial nature. Technology steers these two logics of expansion/capital concentration and dissolution/atomization but fails to become the “keystone” that could heuristically unite these divergent logics and guide them to a rationalised post-Fordist order. Contrarily, technological optimistic narratives are more successful in shaping consensual conducts. A consensual conduct expects from the individual to negotiate these two “unresolved” divergent logics of capitalist expansion/capital concentration and dissolution/atomisation.

The “discursive answers” from this study based on press articles (see fn. 38,) are in many cases quasi-identical to the narratives we see in the key KBE programmatic documents as well as in the university reforms. This tells us two things. First, that KBE policies and university reforms are closely connected to the general “spirit of the times” that pervades societies, more generally, and as such function as ideological artefacts. Second, HEI reforms are marked by historicity in a sense that they embody material and immaterial forces. These forces are not simply contextual but integral; a point that has some notable theoretical consequences.

It is time now to look at the historical background of these reforms to see how these historical forces have shaped the Finnish and Estonian higher education institutions.
Finland: From welfare to competition

It would not be an exaggeration to affirm that modern Finland represents a paradigmatic modern success story from the second half of the twentieth Century. A journey that paved the way for successful industrialisation, urbanisation and the construction of formidable welfare infrastructures in a redistributive strive steered by the state in which political interests were generally dominant over the interests of capital.

This implied the rationalisation (planning) of different developmental stages, which combined consensual politics (tripartite collective bargaining) and the strategic use of scientific rationalisation. Following the Nordic Model, the state relied on technological developments and human capital to achieve its developmental goals. Subsequently, Higher Education Institutions, which were small and elitist before WWII, developed closely within this modernist setting steered by the state. This spirit of scientific rationalisation was not only circumscribed in universities, but the idea of knowledge as a means of advancing societal goals was widely extended, thereby comprising an essential part of present-day Finnish identity. Unsurprisingly, the development of the KBE in the last decades has been understood as a national strategic development led by the state. The pre-existing structure of the welfare state, an export-oriented economy and a decisive policy orientation towards the KBE, propelled Finland to the top of KBE global benchmarks.

Finland had once again overcome a new “historic challenge”, this time globalisation. This it did by relying on its human capital, egalitarian values and correct integrative policy initiatives based on the intelligent use of knowledge and technology. All to enhance Finland’s competitiveness in the global economy. Thus, the old modernist success story was extended to the 21st Century. However, this came at a price: the national paradigm, which was once defined by an egalitarian socio-economic development, shifted to a global competitive paradigm. Higher Education Institutions, which had developed in accord with a vision of the welfare state, experienced this competitive shift and pushed universities towards realigned economic and
political goals. In order to provide the background for the university reforms of 2009, which gave birth to Aalto University, the following pages will present the history of this shift.

4.1. Welfare for development and security. The swift consolidation of Finland’s welfare state during the Cold War

In Western Europe and in North America, the 1990s meant the consolation of the modification of the post Second World War Keynesian settlement. Hence, this was a progressive institutional change that shifted the state away from a political manager of economic stability, now guided by the idea of the marketplace as the best and most rational space to allocate resources (Jessop 2002). Finland, a recognisable Nordic Welfare state, also modified representative aspects of the welfare state model, which had been established in the 1950s and developed in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. The story of the Finnish welfare state, though, has its particularities. It had developed in a haste unseen in other states. Finland was one of the poorest countries in Europe at the end of WWII. Four decades later, however, it was one of the most prosperous and egalitarian, comparable with any of the other Nordic Welfare states.

The context of the Cold War and the legacies of the Civil War (1918), the Interwar Period, the Winter War (1939–40) and the Continuation War (1941–44) were determinant in the formation of the welfare state. The seeds of the socially tumultuous decades after independence were still visible at the end of the Second World War: social and territorial inequality and economic underdevelopment aggravated by the destruction of the Winter and Continuation Wars. The preservation of Finland as a sovereign state came with a high price. In the early Cold War, the development of the welfare state was viewed as a matter of national security for a state standing in a delicate position of neutrality. This position of neutrality was imposed upon it by the Soviet Union, which represented a permanent threat to its sovereignty (Moisio 2010, 19–20). Finland managed, however, to turn its delicate position within the Cold War to its own advantage by signing profitable trade agreements with the Soviet Union. These were critical for the importing and exporting of raw materials as well as to place Finland in a privileged position to export manufactured products to the Soviet Union. At the same time, Finland maintained economic relations with the West, all in all to steer industrialisation and economic growth (Jensen-Eriksen. 2006).
The development of the welfare state went hand in hand with a rapid process of industrialisation guided by redistributive principles. This is reflected in the development of the peripheral areas of the country through the spread of state services to effectively conquer territorial and social equality, thereby ending a history of longstanding social and geographical disparities. This was a Nordic social democratic inspired development led by an agrarian party (Centre Party, Keskusta in Finnish).

Finland’s economic development was rooted on a corporatist system that assured long cycles of economic growth accompanied by sustained increases in wages, negotiated through tripartite negotiations between government, unions (labour) and the employers’ union (capital) that redistributed accumulated wealth. The Finnish social democratic path had a strong political realist accent; it was conceived as the means to reduce social antagonisms that would make the country vulnerable to the “spread of communism”. Hence, and in contrast to neighbouring Sweden that presented the welfare state as a social democratic project serving social justice and democratic values, the Finnish government presented the welfare state as a pragmatic strategy devoid of any emancipatory narrative (Kettunen 2010, 232. Riinne 2015, 2–3). By the end of the Cold War, Finland was a welfare state comparable to the other Nordic countries. In parallel, a highly agricultural society was transformed into a typical industrialised society. This success story is perhaps Finland’s most significant identificatory trait and is deeply rooted in Finnish identity (Moisio 2011, 19–20).

Science policy in the Cold War

As with many other states in the world during the first decades of the post-war period, Finland developed institutions dedicated to the research and creation of new technological assets. The Cold War defined a state-led innovation sector. Science was used by nation-states to reach political goals, such as improving the military or using science developments for mere propaganda (Finnemore 1996, 36–37). The Finnish state research-technology structures planned according to these principles but in contrast to Sweden, they put less emphasis on the military. The result was an Agrarian-Industrial-Export complex defined by scientific rationalisation and a strong

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1 Social reforms were approached as functional needs, simply the most rational path for development to adjust the conflicting interests on behalf of the national interest within the limits of resources present at that time. Therefore, Finland’s welfare state was also an instrument to depoliticise social policy (Kettunen 2010, 232).
national paradigm derived from the aforementioned Finnish historical background (Kettunen 2010, 238–241). The innovation framework generated during this period was then re-oriented to other sectors.

During the 1980s governments began to adopt the dominant principles of international finance. An important part of Finland’s legislation, which was passed in the 1980s, put emphasis on terms like “internationalisation” and “competition”, and was materialised in the creation of new institutions. Thus, the welfare state in Finland experienced a shift from its national scope of targeting the equality and development of the territory as a whole to a global scope that aimed at competitiveness in global markets (Moisio 2010, 21). The creation of innovations was a key aspect of enhancing global competitiveness, and this defined the development of the knowledge-based society project during the 1990s. Public-private partnership frameworks became commonplace in developing specific policies that could facilitate innovation (Pelkonen 2008, 53).

4.2. Beyond the “Finnish Miracle”: The reorientation of Finland’s political economy

The collapse of the Soviet Union caught Finland off guard. Unexpectedly, one of its main trading partners ceased to exist and the turbulences that this created, coupled with poor economic policies, meant years of re-orientation of an already exposed economy in a context of a deep economic crisis. Unemployment skyrocketed to 20% in 1993, GDP fell. In a blink of an eye, Finland went from quasi-full employment to unemployment rates similar to Spain. The first “competitiveness” policies had already begun in the 1980s, but the crisis experienced during the early 1990s marked a clear right-wing turn along with the consolidation of the idea of “competitiveness” and the need to “rationalise” the welfare state. The EU accession of 1994 and the subsequent adoption of the Maastricht Agenda came as the perfect political and economic frame to develop this policy turn and to construct a narrative for new times (Rinne 2015, 11)

This was the turn from a national to a global paradigm defined by fierce global economic competition. The Cold War’s invisibility and marginality as a means for survival turned into Finland’s complete integration and visibility within western political and economic structures. Therefore, and most importantly, Finland had to turn its open but also protectionist economy to an internationalised economy capable of attracting shares from global markets (Moisio 2008).
The goal of competitiveness became hegemonic while the welfare state now served the purpose of technological change and permanent innovation:

Finland presents an interesting case in this respect due to its rapid ICT-driven transformation into a high technology-based economy during the 1990s and its subsequent success in international competitiveness rankings. This has been accompanied by an explicit attempt to create a state strategy based on knowledge and know how in which technology policy has first been substantially strengthened and then developed towards innovation policy. (Pelkonen 2008, 37)

The Finnish economy experienced a steady growth during the second half of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. The success of ICT transnational corporations (TNCs) (especially Nokia) served to construct the image of a successful Finland in the global economy while the essence of the welfare state was preserved under the new label of “information society”. The Finnish information society was based on the creation of a highly competitive society through education and the spread of technology. This state-led project managed as well to redistribute part of the benefits of this steady growth and produced a highly educated society, thus proving that egalitarian principles could also be competitive in global markets (Castells & Himanen 2002).

Nonetheless, since the beginning of 2000s, the egalitarian principles underpinning the Finnish information society have not been prioritised. The Finnish government has legislated for the high-tech sector to be recentralised to the capital region, and this move has been accompanied by a far-reaching set of university reforms that prioritise “excellence” over territorial equality. This has meant, in more general terms, the re-centrallisation of competences from municipal to state level, in combination with cuts to the university budget while new universities and research centres have been created in the capital city. In addition to this, the government launched an ambitious plan to “metropolise” Helsinki in order to convert the capital region into a highly attractive economic region, thereby allowing it to successfully compete in the global arena (Pelkonen 2008, 39, 82. Moisio 2010, 22–23). This plan echoes Kenichi Ohmae’s (1993) concept of a “region state” and Richard Florida’s (2005) vision of a global economic system comprised of peaks and valleys in which global cities, not nations, play the central role.
The ongoing process of metropolisation of Helsinki and the subsequent economic re-structuring in Finland is an example of “glocalisation”. Glocalisation emphasises the importance of the “local” with the emergence of economic clusters networking with other centres in the world economy. Thus, global economic necessities re-territorialised governance onto a local scale (Swyngedouw 2004, 26). The process of glocalisation also includes all the changes and tensions that are generated in regulating between different political bodies and in organising society as a whole (Swyngedouw 2004, 33).

The relativisation of space that “glocalisation” makes possible relates to endogenous growth models in which innovation becomes indispensable for Finland’s competitiveness. Furthermore, the government emphasises that the future of the welfare state and the Finnish economy will depend on the success of its policies about innovation (Finnish Government 2009, 5).

The institutional organisation of the Finnish Innovation System (FIS) is a worthy lesson in the principles of competitiveness and marketisation. The FIS is an amalgam of different agencies, governmental institutions and public-private agencies. Even though all of them are connected to one hierarchical order, some of its elements have a great deal of autonomy. Developed within the framework of the welfare state, the FIS’ main goal has been not only to facilitate an optimal environment for generating economically advantageous technologies to penetrate all levels of Finnish society but also to create a good environment for the Finnish technological sector (Website of the Finnish Innovation System 2012). The prioritisation of market logics is reflected also in the corrections conducted during the last years by the governing of the FIS, resulting mainly in a deepening of economic centralisation.

4.3 Post-2008 Global Financial Crisis

Thus, a reasonable account of the “crisis” might conclude that the project of the welfare state lost much of its future-orientating power long before the end of the actual expansion of the welfare state (Kettunen 2010, 227)

The Finnish economy kept a steady growth from the second half of the 1990s to the Global Economic Crisis of 2008, with the transnational ICT giant Nokia as its flagship. However, the crisis of 2008 hit the economy of Finland hard, and this upheaval coincided with the quite unexpected collapse of Nokia on the eve of the smartphone era. The main telecommuni-
cution company, taxpayer and job provider went from controlling one third of the global mobile phone market in the first half of the 2000s to a marginal position in the first half of the 2010s. But more than the demise of Nokia, the Finnish economy suffered from the general slump in global demand for its exports, especially with respect to the European Union, which accounted for around a third of its trade. Moreover, problems with the domestic financial sector contributed to a deterioration of the real economy, thus aggravating the impact of the recession (Gulan, Haavio & Kilponen 2014).

Since 2008, the response to the crisis by successive governments in Finland continues to erode the fundamentals of the welfare state while further shifting the state towards logics of competition. These policy initiatives are being overseen by a new generation of politicians who actively promote neoliberal austerity policies, and who impose wage cuts without negotiating with the unions, thereby openly jettisoning the tripartite based consensus. Cuts to health care and regulations for a flexible labour market in the name of competitiveness and growth have also been systematically carried out (Spiegel 2015).

During the economic growth of the 2000s, Finland experienced one of the fastest increases of inequality of any OECD country, a trend that was further exacerbated by the recession and welfare cuts. Furthermore, during this period, Finland’s political system underwent some significant changes. In 2011, the extreme right party Perussuomalaiset (PS) (translated in English as the “True Finns” later “the Finns”) gained almost 19.1% of the vote and became a key actor in Finnish politics. After the 2015 elections, PS became part of the government coalition with 17% of the vote share. These political changes signalled the beginning of a new political era, according to which the stable five party system, which had characterised Finnish and Nordic politics, was torn apart (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014).

The rise of the extreme Right is an indication of the contradictions to which Finland, like many other western countries, has been subjected after its insertion into economic globalisation. Societal divergences steered by a culture of competitiveness that inescapably generates just a few winners and

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2 The party has recently (2017) split in two after a very close election of the new party leader when “The Finns” were in the government. The new faction led by 19 MPs has now formed a new party called Blue Reform (Sininen tulevaisuus in Finnish Blå framtid in Swedish) and remains in the coalition government led by the Centre Party while the rest of the MPs (17) have gone into opposition. Blue Reform adopted a more pro-establishment leaning discourse, softening the euroscepticism of the Finns as well as defending a liberal stand on economic policy, in opposition to the social conservatism and euroscepticism of “The Finns”.
many losers. Hence, inequalities coupled with the lack of any existential horizon for the working and middle classes, along with the demonisation migrants, has served as catalysts for the extreme right. The antagonism of Euroscepticism, xenophobic and populist nation-based discourses contrasts with the continuation of the deployment of the KBE and its cosmopolitan, trouble-free, de-territorialised and individualistic narrative. Finland represents this progressive widening of a socio-economic and existential divide brought about by globalisation in a relatively small society characterised during decades by a stability rooted in consensus within a corporatist framework.

The KBE is not the only ingredient of this divide, but its political strategic importance is undeniable in times of growing antagonisms. KBE governance often attempts to convey all these tensions by making use of an obscure terminology, which, despite its technical and consensual appearance, does not essentially speak about innovation, science or technology but represents an ideological arena in which an account of society is being defined (Tarkiainen 238–243, 2009).

Despite these economic turbulences and setbacks, Finland still heads KBE global benchmarks, such as, for example, in the Global Information Technology (2014), published by the World Economic Forum, which measures the economic output of the business sector, scholarly production and governmental assistance on ICT. Even if the impact on the real economy of these benchmarks is less than is suggested (see Chapter 3), they carry political and narrative substance for domestic politics and for “Finland’s branding”.

4.4. KBE’S “governance” in Finland according to Anntti Pelkonen: Innovation guidance and its tensions

The pursuit for the KBE has defined Finland’s progressive governmental reforms, which have aimed at a major integration of the different governmental bodies with innovation and competitiveness as its guiding principles. Antti Pelkonen (2006, 2008a, 2008b) reflects upon these processes and signals structural changes on those agencies dedicated to the promotion of innovation. This integration focused on constituting a heuristic and horizontal framework in order to produce integrated policies, since “innovation is seen as systemic, horizontal and increasingly complex phenomenon and, therefore, related policies need to be generic, broad and cross-sectorial” (Pelkonen 2006, 670). The problem here is that, for these policies to really work, innovation requires relations between many governmental agencies and stake-
holders, because, as the OECD puts it, it encompasses a larger part of social life. What is required, then, is a more horizontal approach to include all these actors under a deliberative model. At the same time, this deliberative model should be placed under the scrutiny of the public, so as to enlarge consensus, transparency and accountability (Pelkonen 2006, 270).

The Technology Policy Council of Finland is supposed to fill the role of mediator in this cross-sectorial model: it brings together high-level decision makers, science, business, trade unions and public administration. Hence, the Council is largely based on the tripartite system characteristic of the Nordic Model. The Council has been successful on the one hand, in building a nation-wide consensus on the importance of science and technology and, on the other hand, it has defined the policy lines used to create shared visions for policy making as well as for agencies that participate in the Council. The goal of reaching consensus means excluding certain ideas at the earliest stage of the deliberation, leaving only opinions that already enjoy strong support. Therefore, the broad consensus found in the policy documents is mainly the product of this pre-selective process. Consequently, the capacity to change the Council is greatly reduced owing to the difficulties of modifying dominant views. Moreover, the Council’s influence ultimately depends on the government’s will, since the Council’s own resolutions are not themselves binding. Besides, other actors such as Jorma Ollila (CEO of Nokia until 2006 and Chairman until 2012) could informally have influence on the decisions of the government outside the Council’s forum. For these reasons, the Council has not been able to construct an integrated frame to tackle challenges of the horizontal governance needed for innovation (Pelkonen 2008, 674–677).

Governance is a central concept in the governing of Science and Technology and Innovation policies. Pelkonen understands governance as the changing relationship between the state and society and how the state interacts with its environment, i.e. how it governs or manages the society and the economy. In this connection, Pelkonen presents six different types of governance, which had previously been enumerated by Hagendijk et al. (2005): discretionary; educational; deliberative; corporatist; market oriented and agonistic. The Finnish governance of STI policies lies in between a corporatist, market model with educational strategies (Pelkonen 2008).

The corporatist framework had been present in the STI policies since the 1970s, following the consensus of the Nordic Welfare State model (labour-capital-state tripartite system). Nevertheless, in the last twenty years the capital has gained more strength in parallel with the emergence of high-tech
corporate giants, such as Nokia. The corporatist framework has been maintained but with an imbalance between its forces, resulting in a turn towards a corporatist-market oriented mode of governance with competitiveness as its major objective. As a result, the allocation of resources increased for research in IT, which meant cuts in other sectors, effectively subordinating some of the welfare state’s goals. This meant more territorial concentration of the investments in the capital region, thus resulting in increases in inequality. This new market oriented-corporatist model has included some new actors, which were not present in the traditional corporatist model, such as NGOs and other civil society organisations. The principle of inclusiveness has been often presented under a deliberative mindset. Nevertheless, far from an open debate within the public arena, deliberation remains restricted to a more exclusive corporatist model, wherein the preponderance of pro-market actors does not facilitate the empowerment of other voices (Pelkonen 2008, 410–417).

The educational mode of governance is also present in STI policies, though as a strategic instrument. Since the beginning of the Finnish welfare state, levels of trust in its institutions have been high and consequently, trust in the government has been a central source of legitimation in a rather exclusive system of governance; governmental institutions are trusted and obeyed because they know what is best for its citizens. In the last two decades, the rhetoric of the “information society” has been used as an instrument for legitimation to convince (educate) the Finnish citizens on the adequacy of welfare state reforms (Pelkonen 2008). The governance of KBE policies in Finland emerges as a neo-statism articulated within a neo-corporatist governance (that is, a mixture of corporatist and market modes of governance), according to which capital holds the preponderant position (Pelkonen 2008b, Chapter 5)

Pelkonen’s prolific work on Finland’s governance reflects three tensions: (i) the rise of technocratic models of government, (ii) inequality between regions and (iii) low transparency. The new strategies for higher education are implemented in this context.

4.5. Higher Education policy follows the country’s historical shifts

Higher Education policies in Finland have closely evolved with the welfare state. During the first years of industrialisation after WWII, universities were highly autonomous institutions that were guaranteed freedom in teaching and research and were provided with a civil servant workforce.
This typically Humboldtian, autonomous and elitist university system changed when the welfare programmes began to provide equality of opportunities regardless of socio-economic, cultural, ethnic background or gender. In parallel to this, during the 1960s, Finland was immersed in full scale modernisation reforms where the state saw HEI and knowledge as a resource for the nation as well as a vehicle for an egalitarian development of peripheral areas. As a result, the university student population increased dramatically. At this stage of development, the state took a more dirigiste role and applied the social democratic Nordic “State development doctrine”. This lasted until the 1980s. Rinne describes this model as “an inverted mirror image of the Anglo-Saxon model” (Rinne 2015, 4). This is a model that conceives Higher Education to be an important steering mechanism for economic development. HEI had also the mission to provide manpower according to the needs of the labour market, but always subordinated to the general development of education as a means for realising a proper egalitarian society where regional and social inequalities are levelled out. Despite the societal advances in different forms of equality (in the 1980s Finland had already more female than male students), this egalitarian model of HEI could not break the reproduction of educational stratification; the share of students in the university with parents with tertiary education is still today superior than the share of students with parents with vocational education. Furthermore, the social-economic background is still a determinant factor in university enrolment (Rinne 2015, 8–10).

With the progressive change in economic policy during the 1980s, societal needs were re-defined and universities began to be governed based on innovation output. This demanded a diversification of teaching and research that, in the context of EU accession, was developed closely with the EU’s key KBE documents. Rinne also identifies (2015, 14) the period during the 1980s when the cultural task of the university began to be replaced with a more utilitarian drive. The flow of students continued to increase during this period and despite the change of mindset, the territorial egalitarian standards were to a greater extent maintained with the promotion of technopoles in the peripheral areas of the country, albeit now lacking the modernist social democratic pursuit from earlier days. Still, Finland seemed

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3 The strength of vocational education in Finland and the reasonably good work prospects that historically are associated with it contributes, albeit not decisively, in these numbers. Almost the entire workforce in Finland has undertaken some kind of education (vocational, technical or tertiary) after finalising compulsory education.
to successfully combine social democratic equality with an increasingly innovative based economy.

Recent developments from the last decade seem though to indicate otherwise: the competitive mindset has further evolved, closely following EU blueprints, into a New Public Management regime, reaching its apex with the 2009 University Act (Rinne 2015, 20). The University Act of 2009 is an example of “roll out” neo-liberalisation (Peck 2011, 22) with a state steering not only market orientation but creating the conditions and subsequently imposing market-inspired models of governance in HEI: public funding decreases and private increases obliging the universities to compete in the market to fill the financial gap. Today private funding represents more than a third of the total when in the 1990s it represented around 10% (Rinne 2015, 16). Parallel to the opening up for funding competition, the new act implemented merging processes. As a result, the HEIs in peripheral regions decreased. As a consequence, the social democratic principle of territorial equality was dispensed with. University access today is therefore becoming more restricted.

When it comes to the governing of HEI, the new law shifts the onus away from direct government intervention, by transferring competences from the Ministry of Education to university boards. This newly gained “autonomy” is formalised in a new legal status, which turns universities into de facto private entities, thus making them more flexible in their internal organisation when competing for funding. Among other things, this new autonomy means that staff are employed by the universities themselves and not by government. As Piironen (2013) explains, the notion of “autonomy” defined in purely, financial and managerial terms is the result of a process of integration of an idea of university autonomy imported from international organisations’ blueprints that since the second half of the 1990s have progressively entered into policy making and the higher education context.

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4 This is the case with the polytechnic short cycle higher education institutions, Ammattikorkeakoulu (AMK) established in the early 1990s. AMKs (could be translated as University of Applied Sciences) were presented by politicians as “equal but different” to universities. In principle, AMK’s and universities were not meant to be combined since they served different purposes; it was a dual model of higher education with AMK being vocational and applied oriented. Nonetheless, with the Bologna Process and the harmonisation of European degree structures, the rhetoric of “equal” turned the still experimental AMK to second tier degrees. The 25 AMK in Finland offer bachelors and master’s degree programmes (Ahola 2006).
Quality has also been progressively redefined in higher education policies. In the 1970s, quality was not even mentioned in policy discussions, since it was considered a matter for the academic community. But already in the early 1980s, quality begins to be treated by policy makers as a problem that needs to be secured. Thus, goals and quality standards were established. The early 1990s economic crisis meant budget cuts in higher education and this brought policy makers to define quality in terms of the need (i) to internationalise, (ii) to compete with other universities, and (iii) to ensure a constant flow of students. In the context of the Bologna Process, this idea of quality has been institutionalised with increasingly delimited models of evaluation and auditing aiming at “quality improvement”. What has effectively happened is a shift towards a bureaucratic definition of quality (Saarinen 2005). Without hesitation, the University Act of 2009 continued with this market-oriented definition of quality and control.

A re-arrangement of hierarchies can also be traced through the implementation of a new salary system, which began in 2006. This system made it possible to directly control individual performance through new informatics systems that “count” performance (allocation of individual working time, electronic recording of individual work plans, etc.). Following this trend, the figure of “immediate superior” was introduced to assure that new measures were properly internalised (Jauhiainen, Jauhiainen Laiho & Lehto 2015, 397). Finally, as a result of the transference of competences as well as technocratic reforms on the governing of universities, university boards gained more power without democratic control.
5

Post-communist Estonia: A leap into post-Fordism

I have been consistently asking what is the Estonian Nokia? After several months this question has finally reached the pages of the popular media. It has become a part of Estonian folklore.

Lennart Meri, President of the Republic of Estonia speaking to business leaders in 1999.

Write “Estonia” in any newspaper search engine and you will most likely retrieve articles speaking about a digital vanguard, a country that almost has achieved a bureaucracy without papers and free Wi-Fi access everywhere. You might also find news about a state that has at its disposal highly advanced cyber defences, which were developed after it had suffered the first full scale cyber-attack in history, perpetrated by Russia during the Bronze Soldier Crisis of 2007.

Estonia: the little nation that, in less than two decades, effectively transitioned from a Soviet Republic into an ICT vanguard capitalist society at the margins of both the EU and NATO. A contemporary miracle, despite having “the Russian threat” on its doorstep.

This success story is corroborated by evidence, the most notorious piece of which is related to the digitalisation of society and an internet government: voting through the net and state bureaucracy is truly just one click away. Estonian government could implement such changes swiftly due its size (1.3 million inhabitants). In the era of knowledge-based economies, if smallness is used smartly it can be used advantageously for the economic and democratic development of the country (Runnel, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt & Reinsalu 2009. Kitsing 2011. Ukrainski & Varblane 2015, 9).

This entire process of transition was steered by plans imported from the West, which the young republic began to apply without hesitation. Later, Estonian governments proactively followed the foundational documents underpinning the idea of the Knowledge Based Economy, such as the
Lisbon Strategy; and it did so even before becoming an EU member. Estonia is the story of the good pupil (Ukrainski Varblane 2015, 5–7).

However, this “success story” has another face. Already in the late 1990s and early 2000s, some voices began to speak about two Estonias (Lauritsin 2003), underlining that the fast transition from planned to market economy came at a price: inequality grew in the context of the collapse of the Soviet industrial fabric, and was further aggravated by a succession of economic crises (1991–93, 1998–2000). The consequence was thus a divided society of “winners” and “losers”. More specifically, with respect to the KBE, despite advances in digitalisation and in the creation of a Western shaped university system, the Estonian KBE remains rather thin on the ground. (Tiits, Kattel, Kalvet & Tamm 2008. Saar and Helemae 2011, 33).

These recent historical vicissitudes are pivotal in understanding Estonia in relation to the KBE and its university system. The last decades of Estonian political history revolve around the swift and decisive transition towards a “laissez faire” model of market economy with an open embrace of digital technologies and its geopolitical repositioning towards the West. The “move” to capitalism and to the West was a guiding motto of transition narratives.

The transition from planned to market economy represents a “leap forward” to a post-Fordist model of capitalism. This meant the reduction of the state to a bare minimum, steering a process of liberalisation that unfolded with a speed unparalleled in any country within the former communist space. Liberalisation was the elegant antithesis of the planned economy, precipitating the complete demolition of the latter. Tiitt Kattel, Kalvet & Tamm (2008, 68) characterise the Estonian transition as a “Schumpeterian creative destruction” steered by the government with an iron fist. A “roll out” of neo-liberalisation where a proactive government strives to create from nothing neoliberal economic conditions (Peck 2010, 22).

5.1. Education, tacit knowledge and labour market in Soviet Estonia

The Soviet state was a centralised and highly bureaucratised government system that during more than four decades produced structures and a workforce that had to be trained to occupy specific positions. State socialism began in Estonia with industrialisation in the 1950s followed by a reasonable increase of welfare in the 1960s. However, already by the early 1970s, it had run out of steam. In the 1980s it was already evident that the
industrial fabric and the labour structure of Estonia could not cope with a hasty transition to capitalism. Despite the existential ostracism and lack of freedom caused by a rigid labour market, the Soviet state offered security; full employment meant that work, like many other life-aspects in the Soviet Union, was forcefully de-problematised, hence de-politicised (Saar & Helamae 2011, 41–43)

Within the totalitarian system, education was designed to constitute a type of citizen consistent with the ideological goals of the Soviet Union. One of the keystones was equality; education should serve the communist ideal of an egalitarian society, and thus offer an integral free education for everybody. The other less idealistic side of the coin is that equality was also closely related to a utilitarian conception of education and research; the educational effort was subjugated to the needs of the state with individual needs occupying a secondary position. Following this utilitarian logic, knowledge was meant to deliver technical and societal advancement. Accordingly, the state standardised and centralised any education where technical knowledge and the hard sciences were preeminent. Therefore, once a person had been trained to work in a position, it was very difficult to escape her destiny; locking people into specific educational paths was a way of facilitating labour market planning (Terama, Kõu & Samir 2014, 108–109).

Universities had considerably fewer students than today; there was rather a strong focus on vocational education. At the end of comprehensive school, the system was divided along two lines: (i) the vocational track (specialised professional, basic professional) and (ii) general secondary school. At the tertiary level, there were two vocational paths: a professional education consisting of three study years and a vocational programme based on secondary education and comprising of just one study year). Finally, there was university education (entailing at least five study years). Universities in Soviet Estonia had only room for 5000 new students every year, and a total of 20,000 students. Around half of them studied engineering while most of the other half studied natural sciences and medicine. Humanities and social sciences were taught for the purposes of teacher training (Tomusk 2003, 79). The resultant educational stratification was countered by established wage grids in which income differences between tertiary and vocational education were minimal. Nonetheless, and despite these efforts, the rural-urban cleavage mattered, especially when many university students were born in cities. Furthermore, many of the university students’ parents had previously benefited from higher education studies. Notwithstanding all the policies actively promoting equality, the result was

Parts of the highly skilled workforce laboured in a sectorial system of innovation in telecommunications. Aware of the increasing importance of ICT, Soviet planners developed large complexes, forming something like today’s ICT clusters. As was the case with Soviet industry more generally, for planning purposes these clusters, were based on an extreme vertical integration. This meant huge interdependencies within the system. Clusters would be dependent on the acquisition of components produced in other parts of the Soviet Union at the same time as they would themselves exclusively produce specific components for another cluster (Högselius 2005, 55–56. Tiits, Katel, Kalvet & Tamm 2008, 68).

5.2. Transition and the historic break: markets, liberal democracy and creative destruction

With the breakup of the Soviet Union, ICT rudimentary clusters collapsed due to their vertical integration; when one part of the value chain failed, it brought down the entire chain. Estonia lost its productive fabric in the process of rapid liberalisation. Exports were mostly oriented to the communist space with the West only representing 2% of total trade. In its reorientation to the West, Estonia demanded new infrastructures and access to Western technology. This was crippled, however, by difficulties in accessing capital. Nor was this balanced by a flow of foreign direct investment (FDI), which remained low. Up until the present day, enterprises in the former communist space remain in the lower end of the global value chain of innovations, with a modest expenditure in R&D and with innovation expenditure mostly dedicated to machinery and equipment for its productive essentials. The most valuable heritage from the era of Soviet telecommunications was a decent pool of skilled labour, which often ended up working for Western telecommunication companies (Högselius 2005, 100–101. Bohle & Greskovits 2007, 459. Tiits, Katel, Kalvet & Tamm 2008, 72–75 Saar & Mottus 2011, 11).

For the “old Soviet mass-production industry”, this was the end. But the expected leap forward towards a post-Fordist innovation-based economy was also crippled by shock-therapy liberalisation.1 The swift and open em-

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1 Estonia did not recuperate the industrial value it had in 1991 until 2005 (Tiits, Katel, Kalvet & Tamm 2008, 70).
brace of a new economic order did not consider the necessity for long term planning. Policies in science, technology and innovation were frail and this weakened the competitive advantages of the former communist countries (Tiits, Katel, Kalvet & Tamm 2008). The specific problem in Estonia was not only of a material nature, it also represented a major setback in the transition narrative, which sought to signal that the formation of a knowledge-based capitalist society was in the making.

In response, the government launched already in the 1990s a strategy called Information Society (IS). IS was presented as a direct consequence of the transition process, or even as part of the journey towards democracy and a market economy. The strategy not only sought to design an efficient and productive free-market economy but also to spread democratic values throughout Estonian society by fostering a close relation between the state and its citizens (Runnel, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt & Reinsalu 2009, 30). Policies surrounding innovation were justified with an explicit political tone, employing a mixture of economic principles and some doses of identity politics (Estonian Academy of Sciences 2006, 9–10).

This narrative began with the “returning to the West escaping the East” slogan, which was also a central argument during the transition. The East was about a “planned economy” based on “inefficient polluting industries” whereas the West was connoted with “technological progress” and “market competitiveness” based on “technological assets”. Thus, the quest for innovation was viewed as part of the transition from a technocratic planned economy to a fully competitive market economy (Dumbacher 2010, 5). The IS never succeeded in establishing the socio-economic fundamentals of an information society. The belief in the market as the most efficient allocating mechanism made the state pull away from actively investing in Research & Development. The state did not actively engage in the promotion of new innovation-based industries, just as it did not intervene to ease the collapse of the Soviet industrial fabric. Nonetheless, IS succeeded in legitimising the deindustrialisation that occurred in Estonia, leaving just an abstract notion of “the knowledge-based economy” as the only alternative to follow.

The economic policies of successive Estonian governments during the 1990s were inspired by Western models. This was accentuated when the EU accession was approaching (and finally formalised in May 2004) and Estonian public policy turned strongly towards innovation. The government took Bologna and Lisbon strategies as blueprints and as a natural continuation of the IS – this time with a more active state presence but still with policies that lacked the infrastructure and funding for their proper and
effective implementation. As in Finland, the Estonian government put innovation and KBE at the centre of policy making. This meant clear objectives on partnerships between private and public as well as a general strategy for the augmentation of a heuristic relation between knowledge, technology and private sector.

The Estonian government entrusted to civil society a role that it could not undertake simply because it did not have either an organised industrial-entrepreneurial-societal linkage or an existent high-tech market. These necessary conditions for the KBE were achieved in Finland by active state investment in strategic sectors, as well as in developing linkages between different societal actors. In contradiction to this picture, the Estonian state’s indirect measures did not encourage companies to invest in R&D, nor were companies attracted to invest in research. Rather, they preferred short term investments in more profitable sectors, thanks to cheap labour and low taxes. (Kattel 2004. Tiits 2007, 330–334).

This decisive policy turn towards innovation has had a modest impact in economic terms, importing an aggravated version of the usual paradoxes of the KBE. There has been modest economic output despite the grandiloquent tone of the policy proposals and the actual depth of institutional reform (Tiits, Katel, Kalvet & Tamm 2008, 76–77). But once again, Lisbon and Bologna and the EU were more important discursively when, in parallel to economic policies, the knowledge-based development incarnated the powerful imaginary of “returning to the West and societal change steered by technological change” (Runnel, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt & Reinsalu 2009, 32). A representative case of this is the TOM, Täna Ostustan Mina (Today I Decide), a project for participatory democracy using the internet as well as e-government and e-voting. The TOM project, beyond its practical advances, has been a success from a perspective of positive “branding”. Furthermore, the TOM project conveyed another powerful narrative, pairing perfectly with the KBE imaginary: the co-existence of a stabilised democracy, free market and individual freedoms could be based on technological change (Runnel, Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt & Reinsalu 2009, 36–38). As reflected in the quote from President Lennart Meri in the opening of this chapter, the importance of this KBE imaginary in Estonia transcended policy making, becoming part of the spirit of times of the country.
5. POST-COMMUNIST ESTONIA

5.3. The material context of the transition: the road to a flexible labour market

This optimism contrasted with the harsh socioeconomic reality of a country advancing towards the market economy in a bumpy process defined by the concatenation of economic crises (1991–93 and 1997–2000) that nonetheless did not stop the winds of change. In five years, the Estonian labour market was transformed into one of the most flexible markets with a job tenure comparable to UK or the US (Cazes & Nesterova 2001, 305). This occurred under the all-encompassing motto “road to freedom and democracy” and was represented by the disruptions effected through creative destructive, the antithesis of Soviet mass production. For the labour market, freedom and democracy meant the “freedom to choose”, the antithesis of the life-time job condemnation or the rigid Soviet labour market. These good/evil dichotomies served to narrate a transformation to a labour market regime that made possible flexible labour conditions to swiftly respond to the necessities of the newly privatised system. In this context, the line separating identity politics and economic policy becomes blurry. The deindustrialisation of Estonia not only met the most orthodox neoliberal premises of non-governmental intervention, but it also represented the end of economic dependence on Russia. Moreover, deindustrialisation disproportionately affected the Russian-speaking minority, who represented an important fraction of the industrial workforce (Bohle & Greskovits 2007, 451).

Rapid privatisation meant the immediate transference of the state-owned enterprises’ workforce to the private market. This “shock therapy” inspired transition, with some gradualist condiments (demanded by members of the government coalition at the time)² continued to apply similar blueprints for labour market policy (Eamets 2001, 19, Aidukaite 2003). Flexibility became the quintessential term in the policy-making of the post-communist labour market regime, a strategy that was supported by the re-election of governments that maintained the same politico-economic philosophy (Eamets 2001, 19, Aidukaite 2003, Bohle & Greskovits 2007, 449). Ironically, full employment during the communist period that had resulted in the de-politicisation of work, made it far easier to implement shock therapy policies, since the labour force was already politically passive (Saar & Helamae 2011, 42–43). Unsurprisingly, trade unions in Estonia are very weak, a fact aggra-

² Social Democrats participated in the governments during the late 1990s, introducing on the government agenda a slightly more generous social policy.
vated by very restrictive regulation that systematically marginalises unions making impossible any collective bargaining agreements and thus leaving unprotected a large portion of the workforce (Eamets 2012, 37).

The reforms consolidated a model of de-regulated capitalism with an internationalised and financialised service-based economy that boomed at the turn of the millennia. Estonia began to be known as a “Baltic Tiger” after achieving impressive growth rates. This period coincided with EU and NATO accession in 2004, which situated Estonia economically and politically in the West. The main geopolitical objectives set with Estonia’s independence had been achieved as well as the long-awaited sealing of its sovereignty.

The internationalisation of the Estonian financial sector left the country in a weak position when the Global financial crisis of 2008 began. The Estonian economy entered into recession already at the beginning 2008. GDP decreased by 15.1% in 2009. This had a direct impact on the labour market with unemployment reaching a peak of 19.8% in the first quarter of 2010. The Estonian government reacted to the crisis with a set of anti-crisis policies, which largely followed an austerity agenda: i) cuts on the public sector, lowering of wages and raising the tax burden ii) new legislation enabling more flexibility (New Employment Contract Act of 2009) with the objective to ease dismissal and hiring. The government did not raise unemployment benefits leaving workers even more vulnerable. Nonetheless, the Estonian government added to these neoliberal solutions some active labour policy, e.g. raising the expenditure on active labour market policies which, at that time, was one of the lowest among the transition countries (Eamets, 2001. Eamets 2012, 34–35. Brixiova & Ëgert 2012, 4–5).

The Estonian economy recovered relatively quickly from the blow of the crisis by relying on the capacity of labour to endure precarity. Unemployment decreased to 13.6% already at the end of 2010. At the end of 2012 the unemployment rate decreased to 9.3%. The average salaries in Estonia at the end of 2011 were similar to those at the beginning of the crisis (Statistikaamet 2013).

Estonia managed to maintain its image as a success story, despite the setback of the global financial crisis of 2008. Its e-government, fully connected society, some notable success stories of start-ups like Skype3 and the

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3 Skype, the application telecommunication software, was developed by three Estonians Ahti Heinla, Priit Kasesalu and Jaan Tallinn under the leadership of high tech Swedish and Danish entrepre-
relatively fast recovery from 2008 global financial crisis, makes Estonia a favoured example with respect to countries emerging out of the former communist space. The centre of Tallinn looks like a Western European capital hosting similar inhabitants and services: hipster cafés combined with transnational and franchise cafés in the beautiful old town; restaurants offering cuisine from everywhere; transnational fast fashion retailers combined with local and personal design shops, and so on. Even some of the old Soviet planned neighbourhoods have become trendy and gentrification processes are underway. While gazing at the glass skyscrapers from the Nordic banks, which dominate the city, it is difficult to acknowledge that once, less than three decades ago, this was part of the Soviet Union. The picture changes if one moves to the periphery of Tallinn, or to other cities like Narva, and rural Estonia. There “the losers” of the transition are clearly visible. But does this make Estonia very different from other Western countries without a communist past?

Yes and no. The transition from Fordism to post-Fordism in the West and the subsequent progressive dismantling of the welfare state has also thrown out millions of people from secure work, forcing them to adjust to an ephemeral existence and precarious life. It has pushed middle class youngsters into the precarious employment, and made the proud working class the working poor. Indeed, one could argue that the transition from the planned economy to capitalism and the dismantling of the Soviet industry represents the transition from industrial mass production Fordism to post-Fordism, which in turn resonates with the general challenges that the KBE poses globally (Tiits, Katel, Kalvet & Tamm 2008, 67–74). Nonetheless, the unparalleled frenzy of reforms implemented in a logic of creative destruction, and the social shock that these reforms brought with them, cannot be relativised. In the same way, it would be too adventurous to discard the significance of the communist legacy in Estonian society or in any of its historically embedded institutions.

5.4. University boom in transition: freedom and diversification
The post-communist higher education system developed in a context of historical acceleration. It developed the general idea of “freedom” in opposition to decades of centralisation, standardisation and political control. In—
eurs Niklas Zennström and Janus Friis, founders of Skype. Skype has its headquarters in Luxembourg but holds offices in Tallinn and Tartu.
parallel to this, and as per Western standards, HEI had to be integrated into the KBE, signalling a linear relation between knowledge and innovation performance. Ironically, this utilitarian linear relation resembles Soviet planning, which had years before established a linear relation between knowledge and industrialisation performance (Tomusk 1995, 2003. Tiits, Katel, Kalvet & Tamm 2008, 76).

Constructing a new university system, which would put an end to totalitarian political control and at the same time would integrate the institutions within a new economic structure, represented a colossal challenge. The importance of the university in “narratives of independence” was preeminent. In fact, institutional declarations about university autonomy were one of the first publicly announced political steps in the constitution of a new independent liberal democracy (Tomusk 1995, 116).

The new HEI system meant gaining autonomy and freedom in the departments. It also meant the liberalisation of tertiary education, while outside in the workplaces Soviet period skilled jobs for university graduates were simply disappearing in the mist of deindustrialisation. Engineers were either working for newly arrived foreign companies, e.g. financial services or becoming entrepreneurs or they were forced to work in low paid jobs that were not commensurate with their study level. Liberalisation increased the number of higher education institutions and enrolled students. In 1989 there were only six HEI. By 2002 this had grown to 46. Students went from 20,000 to 56,000 and from those around 20% were studying in private institutions, which flourished during this period (Tomusk 2003, 80). The boom of HEI is explained by the interest that free learning and intellectual emancipation generated after years of totalitarian rule. This was reflected in the humanities and social sciences, subjects that in many cases were not taught during the Soviet period in Estonia but now attracted many students (Terama, Kou & Samir 2014, 116).

This boom is also connected to general changes in the labour market and the deterioration of vocational education. Despite the changes in education policy, the Soviet-style two-track system in secondary education (vocational/university studies) was maintained. However, the dismantling of the Soviet economic fabric meant the destruction of the links between vocational education and the public companies that were no longer there. The new labour market had neither many opportunities nor good wages for skills associated with the “grey Soviet past”. The result was the systematic discrediting of vocational education, which pushed many towards a university that was no longer a secluded space for forming high skilled profes-
sionals for the planned economy and intelligentsia. This process accentuated the already existing inequalities between urban and rural areas and paved the way for a major stratification of education (Saar 2008, 240–242).

The massification of universities gave rise to a similar set of problems seen in other places. Liberalisation means more teaching combined with a general decrease of research funding, thus implying a deterioration of work conditions. The flow of students and the creation of new institutions occurred in parallel with the cutting of three quarters of research jobs in universities and research centres. Diversification came with low salaries and only the few at the top of the hierarchy managed to keep their jobs and their secure salaries. The status of academia was kept only by a few while the rest became precarious workers (Tomusk 2003, 80–82. Terama, Kou & Samir 2014, 114). Diversification did not come with a decentralisation of research since traditional universities kept their preeminent position. The centralisation of research is well reflected in the scientific articles during the publishing boom experienced after the fall of communism. For the period 1997–2007, University of Tartu, the oldest university in Estonia, founded in the 17th Century, was responsible for 59% of the papers published in the whole country, followed by Tallinn University of Technology, with 17.7% (Alik 2008, 261).

Tomusk (1995. 2003. 2006) has interpreted the contradictory dynamic between diversification and centralisation on the old academic order’s capacity to successfully adapt to the new “capitalist” demands and manage to keep the logic of centralisation and control of the Soviet times (Tomusk 1995, 121). This was materialised in the early transitional years, during which time a highly undemocratic and centralised university government, with almost no checks and balances, developed. This peculiar hybridisation grew intertwined with the key documents supporting global educational reforms, which allowed certain elites to remain in their positions at the top of the hierarchies.

Estonian KBE and Higher Education Institutions today
Sustainable Estonia 21 (SE-21) is a strategic document that lays out the steps that Estonia should take in the consolidation of a KBE. The strategy attempts to provide a framework following the established principles (see Chapter 1 Section 3 of this study) that can connect policy action with economic output. The strategy focuses on Research and Development (R&D). It first acknowledges the lack of investment at present and sets the goal of reaching R&D expenditure levels of 3% of GDP. Numbers, however, remain
very far from this objective⁴ and, more fundamentally, data reveals an imbalance in distribution of R&D intensive activities, concentrated in only 10% of companies. This tendency for R&D to concentrate in only a few companies was further exacerbated with the 2008 crisis, when the 50 largest companies in Estonia went from representing 30% of R&D expenditure to 85% in 2012 (Ukrainski & Varblane 2015, 38).

SE-21 also focuses on the correlation between R&D investment and economic output, in order to underline that here Estonia is succeeding. In contrast to Sweden (svenska Paradoxen), Estonia keeps a positive correlation between input and output. Nonetheless, it faces difficulties in connecting the university to the private sector. With this problem in mind, and after years of a clearly market oriented undertone, SE.21 actively encourages “applied research” with the aim of attracting the private sector.

The Estonian University Strategy 2006–2015 shows how Estonia has for years brought universities within the parameters of the KBE. Knowledge is an indispensable tool for the promotion of innovations as well as for the general development of society in the context of globalisation. In this quest for useful knowledge, Estonia must be competitive vis à vis other nations. The problem is that the orthodox non-interventionist model from the past has created uneven results and the proposed solution is the attempt by the Estonian state to directly use the EU Lisbon Strategy and Bologna Process as strategic blueprints. This translated into policies that impacted on the nature of work in the university. Firstly, there is the creation of quality criteria based on quantitative methods to measure knowledge; secondly there is the funding preference for strategic subjects that boost innovation, i.e. preferences for both the natural and exact sciences. Thirdly, the government has set the goal to adapt teaching curricula to the demands of the labour market with skill-oriented and life-long learning. Finally, the performance in strategic subjects has served as the central indicator for measuring the success of these policy initiatives.

The results have been uneven: biotechnology has proven a successful area, but chemistry, environmental science or informational technologies have not fared so well, mainly because the nexus with industry remains weak. Moreover, research generally remains unequally underfinanced: the Estonian government investment in the social sciences and humanities represents only 21% of the total budget whereas technological sciences, che-

⁴ As mentioned in Chapter 3, despite promising growth in the late 2000s, R&D has been decreasing in the last years from 2.31% of the GDP in 2011 to 1.49% in 2015 (Eurostat 2018).
mistry and molecular biology and the bio sciences stands at 43%. Another interesting aspect is the emphasis placed in business-oriented strategies (2002–2006) for researchers through the promotion of patents (Kattel 2004, 413). Beyond these results, it is clear that disciplines are financed according to their market potential. The problematic relation between research and business resides not on market-oriented research and education but on the lack of direct appeals to the private sector by the Estonian HEI. Companies do not engage in common projects; when they do, however, it is with foreign universities, due to a supposed lack of internationalisation in Estonian universities. Furthermore, the percentage of highly skilled workers employed thanks to university-private sector partnerships remains low (Ukrainski & Varblane 2015, 43–46). A disconnect between university and the private sector prevails, despite ambitious initiatives such as MEKTORY, an institution specifically designed to strengthen the relations between university-private partnerships. We will refer to MEKTORY later, in the empirical part of this study.

To conclude, we can say that the lack of R&D expenditure, as well as the relatively low number of knowledge intensive jobs alongside problems with cooperation between the public and private sectors, make the Estonian research system ineffective in contributing to the development of knowledge intensive activities. If one adds to this the general lack of public investment in the industrial fabric, then the result is a KBE project far from being realised, despite some notable successes.
Part 2: Theoretical Framework and Method
As we have seen in the introductory part, the general implementation of the KBE is the product of the problematic relation between the material action of governments and capital power alongside other discursive forces. The unevenness of these processes is reflected in the fact that it is very difficult to establish a straightforward causal relation between narrative and policy implementation. Narratives have been very important in HEI reforms and KBE in general. Nonetheless, HEI reforms are also the product of previously existing and extant conditions (both material and immaterial) that intermingle with the contingencies deriving from the implementation of policies and underpinned by larger constitutive forces we have already seen in chapter 3. As a result, the order that comes to establish itself often has little to do with what is forecasted by the more programmatic documents disseminated by supranational institutions and governments.

This, in short, would be the standpoint we have already, based on the premises sustaining our initial aim and research questions. What is required now is to present this study’s theoretical framework, one capable of situating the university departments within the following coordinates: 1) two intertwined constitutive forces (material and discursive) that contradictorily cut across different levels, from the global to the local and vice versa; 2) these levels and constitutive forces are to be placed within the context of the larger capitalist order—an overarching viewpoint that, nonetheless, should be resituated in the juncture between the constitutive forces and the local HEI institutions; 3) for this reason, this totality does not predetermine a closed order but is situated in its own historical context, comprised of contradictions, forms or resistance, consent, etc., all of which leave open the possibility of either variation or continuities within the system. Since this is neither a longitudinal study nor a comparison of two historical periods, the present order will be interpreted in light of its own historicity. This means looking at the order by means of the constitutive historic forces that have
forged it. These forces are represented in the history of KBE-inspired policies, more generally, and its uneven implementation in Finland and Estonia, in particular. These forces may indicate historical trends and tendential directions, but they carry with them a series of contradictions that might eventually alter the present course of things.

The first issue this chapter will tackle is how we are to think an order that constitutes a relational totality. This structural whole is neither atemporal nor an end in itself, but is in fact a totality that is always proper to and for a given time and thereby is always open to contradictions and change. A totality, as we shall conceive it, is made of material and immaterial forces within a larger field of relations of production.

The second part of the chapter will incorporate this “totalising movement” into a Gramscian framework, with the aim of interpreting this order in relation to both material and discursive forces – something we will see later in the empirical sections of this study. The forces themselves are made of a continuum of specificities, which are shaped by existing structures, narratives and more local contextual factors. An exploration of these particular issues will be presented in section 6.3. There, we shall proceed from the macro to the micro level, making use of a cluster of concepts from the writings of Antonio Gramsci (e.g. structure, superstructure, hegemony etc.) in order principally to theorise the larger historical movements underpinning the KBE, while leaving the analysis of the micro-level to be interpreted later when attention turns towards the two university departments. Section 6.4 is a succinct summary of the theoretical framework in the form of a diagram. Finally, section 6.5 introduces the central middle-ranging concepts that will emerge later, again in the empirical section of study.

6.1. Thinking capitalist constitutive forces and their contradictions in the formation of the present order

Governments worldwide design Higher Education reforms inspired by key documents produced by international organisations, such as the EU or the OECD. Each government tries to convey their local contradictions, peculiarities, and once everything is implemented, reforms seek to change and re-formulate the main pillars of the university (e.g. governance, teaching, research, etc.). Reforms are deepened regardless of the success in constituting a fairly rational knowledge-based politico-economic model. This is the way many of the social contradictions are generated in societies that live
under a technological narrative seeking to provide answers for all eventual outcomes, and thus naturalising the present order (See Chapter 3)

Cultural Political Economy (CPE) can help us to deal with this permanent but constitutive contradiction between the real existing economy and those discourses through which the complexity of economic processes is both understood and discussed:

CPE distinguishes the ‘actually existing economy’ as the chaotic sum of all economic activities (broadly defined as concerned with the social appropriation and transformation of nature for the purposes of material provisioning) from the ‘economy’ (or, better, ‘economies’ in the plural) as an imaginatively narrated, more or less coherent subset of these activities. The totality of economic activities is so unstructured and complex that it cannot be an object of calculation, management, governance, or guidance. Instead such practices are always oriented to subsets of economic relations (economic systems or subsystems) that have been discursively and, perhaps organisationally and institutionally, fixed as objects of intervention. This involves economic imaginaries that rely on semiosis to constitute these subsets. (Jessop 2008, 16)

Critical realists criticise this conceptualisation because CPE predisposes one to overstate the importance of the KBE discourse (Thompson & Harley 2012). They argue that, owing to the theoretical assumptions of the regulation school, CPE invites one to mistakenly observe a supposedly coherent relation between discourse and practices constituting an entire social formation. Critical realists, then, see CPE in a similar vein as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Both stand accused of wrongly dismissing the capital importance of extra-discursive elements in the formation of the order (Thompson and Harley 2012, 1364).

In defence of CPE, I think that the “regulationist view” on an entire social formation does not necessarily mean that this results in a reduction of the structure to the basic relation between discourse and practice. Indeed, one can even wonder whether this occurs at all. As the passage quoted above makes clear, the KBE would be a work of fiction. CPE and critical realists would agree that the actual existing economy is not the one that appears in programmatic documents about the KBE by governments and HEI. Far from being subject to calculation and efficient rationalisation, the economy is something much more complex. CPE does not deny that contemporary capitalism is steered by material forces that are absent in policy papers, even though, based on their prevalence in the public sphere, KBE
imaginaries matter. For this reason, the action of institutions combined with the projection of certain imaginaries, can help to formalise concrete economic relations that contribute to the constitution and reproduction of an order (“subsets, economic systems” in the passage above). These economic relations do not even have to provide a cohesive imaginary, they can simply “appear coherent”, and even though they fail to meet their assigned objectives and end up perverting the very imaginary they claim to represent (See the figure of the entrepreneur pp 64–65). Following this reasoning, CPE does not necessarily exclude the postulates of critical realism. In fact, one can be harnessed to support the other. For example, critical realism’s emphasis on material processes could help to explain the reason why “entrepreneur” or “sharing” could just as well cover the labels of “the precarious self-employed” or “non-paid labour”.

From constitutive contradictions to constitutive circularities

CPE provides us with an open approach to thinking the role that narratives play in offering future continuity to the capitalist system. Following this theoretical positioning, we should understand those policy initiatives developed under the umbrella of the KBE as a pro-active tool of social transformation, with respect to both its material and immaterial dimensions. The founding documents of the KBE are themselves part of an effort to imagine an order in a context of change; their function is to steer the making and remaking of that order (“construals and constructs”).

We have a material order (forces and relations of production) that unfolds within the local, national and global scale. The imaginary that fuels and legitimises the order is intertwined with this process, and this entwainment appears at all levels: from the OECD/ EU /IMF documents down to the boards of the faculties, and equally across society at large (e.g. popular culture and everyday practices). At the same time, other pivotal forces, such as financial capitalism, are not discussed in the steering documents. It is no exaggeration to say that under the KBE umbrella a problematic circularity is presently in the making: it materially organises economic relations and

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1 The concept of construal and constructs derives from critical semiotics. Semiosis “refers to all forms of social production of intersubjective meaning (which includes oral, textual, visual, musical, practical performance, etc)” (Jessop 2008, 16). Semiosis steers “material” change in the social world (construals) but it also explains and solidifies them (constructs): semiosis constitutes and legitimises, it is in the origin and at the end of the social process. Jessop, Fairclough and Sayer (2004, cited from Jessop 2008, 16).
generates the imaginary that justifies its resultant hierarchies. Even though this imaginary is a fictionalised reality it nonetheless constructs and reproduces its conditions.

Orders, whether imagined or real, are circular by definition: material conditions and discursive supports are interwoven, they feedback into each other, they constitute a mutually reinforcing order. Here, in fact, we would have two superimposed circularities: on the one hand, an imagined circularity that narrates and co-constitutes the really existing material processes and, on the other, a circularity tied to the logic of financialisation. The former has its echoes in the KBE society, with HEI institutions taking up a central position, while the latter reflects an order defined by inequality in an increasingly ferocious period of capital accumulation based on capital returns within a materially marginal but discursively dominant knowledge-based economy.

### 6.2 KBE as a totalising driver

The ultimate goal any order wants to achieve is, we can say, the liquidation of history: to stop the clock and become an eternal circle, so that, grounded on constant variables, the system can endlessly reproduce itself, such is the case with Fukuyama’s End of History thesis.\(^2\) “Really existing capitalism” could be interpreted as such a circularity. But the truth of the matter is that this order based on inequality and capital returns, which the discourses surrounding KBE narrative uncritically repeat, is only a snapshot of a moment. For this reason, in order to visualise the full complexity of the picture, the present order needs to be placed within a longer history. As one of the best critics of Fukuyama put it, “there is no end of history because there is history beyond the end of history” (Fontana 1992). This means that circularities may well form, but eventually they will break. No order or system is beyond history but, precisely, is a product of history; history is not composed of a limited set of fixed variables. Following this reasoning, any really existing circularity represents an order striving towards a perfect circle, a closed totality, one that aims to outflank all resistance and halt the beat of history. An order might come close to realising this final aim. However, being close to achieving this objective is not the same way as doing so, just

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\(^2\) This is the idea underpinning Fukuyama’s (1992) End of History thesis: after the apparent historical defeat of any alternatives or resistances, liberal democracies together with the market economy begin their eternal reign because of the.
as the process of totalisation is not merely synonymous with the idea of totality *tout court*. Indeed, the difference between totalising and totality will be discussed in this part of the study. The difference at stake is here between a notion of an order riveted to temporality, which develops towards either a presumable end or a finalised end.

**From totality to totalising**

The idea of KBE as an interconnected whole in which universities are seen to be part of a greater endeavour emphasises the totalising logic of capitalism. This means the capitalist order can be explained through how different positions within the hierarchy relate to one another. This way of thinking capitalism recalls *relational realism* (Kalb 2018, 305), i.e. its constitution, legitimation and contestation, as well as its reproduction, occurs in those relations established between the different parts that constitute it. This is not *per se* a top-down pre-existing set of static relations. Rather, these relations operate as the keystones sustaining this edifice, comprising both the pinnacle and the base of the order.

As we have already seen in Chapter 2, the history of KBE policy initiatives is driven by a teleology of societal progress, one shaped by a technological determinism that goes hand in hand with globalisation and the market economy. From this standpoint, many segments of society are mobilised, and thus it can be said that the undertones of a teleological reading of history are not just figurative adornments but, precisely, are an essential part of how the KBE is understood. The extent to which all these sectors are actually mobilised is not at this point central. What matters is that, based on the global extent of the reforms, *the will to do so exists*. The idea of mobilising new sectors within the existing politico-economic framework engenders some degree of social engineering, since it visualises and shapes a new society on the verge of becoming. Finland’s and Estonia’s KBE histories both follow this vein (See Chapters 4 and 5): different societal sectors and even individuals are integrated in their respective positions within the logic of global competition.

Nevertheless, as Jessop and Bourdieu have, for example, cautioned, the idea of totality is problematic. It risks both functionalism and determinism. Bourdieu calls this “the functionalistic of the worst”, according to which the

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3 Bourdieu specifies what he means about “the functionalism of the worst” in Réponses. Pour une anthropologie reflexive (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992. Cited from Sobre el Estado Bourdieu, 2014 19.): “I am very hostile to the concept apparatus, to me it represents the Trojan horse of the
state administration is conceived as an infernal machinery working flawlessly to meet specific objectives. Such an approach leaves little space to acknowledge resistance, plain dysfunctionality or an endless list of elements that might not be working according to the grand plan. Instead, Jessop suggests the idea of a “totalising” order, in order to underline the hegemonic move behind KBE’s teleological undertones that attempts to cover any possible contingency. Hence, the act of “totalising” can be defined as the intention to complete what is incomplete by attempting to tie up the loose ends (dysfunctionalities, resistances etc.) within a stable rationality. Nonetheless, this can never be fully achieved, given the complexity, contingencies, dysfunctionalities, and resistances that any socio-political rationale confronts at all levels. The complete enclosing of society, such that a permanent and fully stable socio-economic order obtains, is thus itself a utopia.

The act of totalising does not deny the existence of structures and power relations. Rather, in contrast to a closed and static “totality”, it indicates that the order is in a permanent process of (re)-constituting itself. Its inner dynamic derives from its own contradictions and resistances. It is constantly re-creating the grounds for consent in a field of contingencies striving to integrate new sectors and strategies for the pursuit of economic growth. What emerges from this contingent and often dysfunctional process is a complex and vast social phenomenon that needs to be treated in relation to the development of its immediate context. For our present purposes, this means investigating different local specificities without losing sight of the larger totalising drive embedded in the KBE. It means viewing university departments not as static bodies but as spaces with their own internal rules, albeit spaces integrated within a larger order where a multiple set of struggles are being waged (from competing conceptions about science up to struggles for workers’ rights, as well as everything in between).

Totalising and relations of dependence

In trying to understand capitalism, Marx, in the first volume of Capital (2010), adopts an especially enlightening approach. He describes relations
of production not only as a system of production but as a set of social relations. These are built into the structure, associated with a superstructure that extends far beyond what is strictly the production process. Capitalism is the result of the relation between different hierarchical positions, which hold different material and immaterial assets, and which mutually reinforce each other over time. Inequality represents capitalism’s “primary order of things”. Hence the conditions by which a dispossessed and dependent majority have to exist, having no option other than to sell their labour-power for a wage. These embedded relations are what Louis Althusser calls the *deep structure* – the very conditions that produce and reproduce the capitalist order (Daldal 2014, 158).  

The concept of deep structure means that, to comprehend relations of production, one must view capitalism beyond the strict borders of production and see it as the "production of goods and services and the production of life are part of one integrated process" (Vogel 1983. Cited from Bhattacharya 2013, 2). Following this reasoning, the unseen expansion of the market logic of contemporary capitalism suggests a parallel expansion of relations of dependence that demand further re-structuring. This is to encase capitalism within a reasonably stabilized political economic and social order (or to put this in Jessop’s terms, as described above, it is to offer a “spatio-temporal fix”).

Relations of dependence or subordination suppose hierarchies. Hierarchies in advanced capitalist societies are not solely grounded on the fear of direct violence and the perpetuation of material inequality through the

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5With an insightful example from colonial times, Althusser explains the pivotal role that the “conditions of production” have in constituting the deep structure and the relations of subordination and dependence that comprise it. A British mainland factory owner wants to open a new factory in a colony because of its unfettered access to raw materials, thus reducing his production costs and increasing his own benefits. After managing all the paperwork needed with the colonial authorities, he travels to Southampton with all the machines needed for production as well as some of his workers who he knew how to manipulate. He hires them with better salaries than they use to have. To the owner’s amazement, when the ship arrives to the colony, the workers decide to break their contracts, go inland, grab some acres and become farmers and small landowners.

The corollary of this is simple: the conditions of production changed. On the mainland the workers did not have any alternative other than to sell their labour power, since they did not own the capital to open their own factories, businesses, or to buy land. However, in the colonies, in a context of an empire expanding its borders, new possibilities open up, i.e. they have the opportunity to move behind or with the colonial armies at the expense of the native peoples, and thus to free themselves from their previous relations of subordination. The primary order of things, capitalism’s deep structure (e.g. the social conditions that generate an army of people with no alternative other than selling their labour-power), was no longer there: thus capitalist relations of production could not be fostered (Fernández Líria, 2015).
direct exploitation of workers in their workplaces, nor are they based only on new models of “governance” to secure the economic establishment’s pre-eminence. Certainly, all these elements are pivotal, but on their own they are insufficient. They are usually surrounded by a dominant imaginary that legitimizes existing inequalities and even prescribes the proper forms of personal existence. As we discussed in chapter 3, these imaginaries are not solely “produced” by governmental apparatuses. When these imaginaries turn into solid all-encompassing narratives, entailing certain models of existence that eventually become naturalized and reproduced, then we can speak of hegemony.

A nominal definition of hegemony is “leadership or predominant influence” (Random House Dictionary of English, 1979) or “leadership, autonomy or influence; usually applied to the political dominance of one state or government in a league or confederation”, while hegemonic pertains “to the leadership. Principal: ruling; predominant” (Random House Webster Unabridged Dictionary, 1983) or the “ruling part, the master principle” (The shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 2007).

These definitions suggest that hegemony relates to some sort of dominance; that is, ideas that, associated to a largely undiscussed set of “master principles”, constitute an order. Hegemony lives in between the immaterial (the discursive) and the material (the forger of an order). It generally favours the existence of a ruling elite, but this does not necessarily mean that hegemony is directly produced by and through the locus of governmental power. As we have seen, technological narratives are not solely present in policy documents, they are constituted on different scales by different social sectors. This leads us to a set of important theoretical and methodological questions: Where is hegemony located? From where does it originate? In what forms is it represented? Is it relational?

In orthodox Marxism, hegemonic narratives are produced from within the superstructure. It applies to more or less institutionalised domains, which are apparently disconnected from the immediate production process (e.g. the rule of law, religious institutions, the familial structure, the social mores adopted by anyone in their daily relations with others, popular culture etc.). These superstructural domains are constantly adapting to the historical changes steered by the structure, that is, the immediate levers of political power (e.g. the state and the means of production controlled by the politico-economic elite) that maintain and organise the relations of production. According to this view, the superstructure is determined by the structure. Hence any revolutionary attempt to overcome capitalism must by
necessity pass through the deep structure, either by means of destroying or capturing the power levers of the structure (e.g. the state apparatuses, the means of production). Accordingly, any struggle waged at the superstructural level is regarded as a subsidiary to the “real” struggle operating at the structural level (Cospito 2016, 3–27)

This view, however, seems inadequate in understanding the formation of dominant narratives in present day capitalism, generally, and at the level of the university, more specifically. The problem is that it downplays the importance of the superstructure. The superstructure is not just a subsidiary to the structure’s grounding mechanisms. It is constitutive in its own right, and as such it steers and directs both thought and practice beyond that of the politico-economic establishment. As we see in KBE, narratives discursively convey the inherent contradictions of capitalism in a convenient but often fictionalised manner. This is a dynamic process, and, for something to become hegemonic, narratives must constantly be re-written to overcome problems and resistances of various kinds. For something to be hegemonic, it must achieve not just substantial support in society; people must also act according to its prevailing principles, or as Gramsci would say it becomes the common sense in society. Hegemony is also produced and reproduced at lower positions of the social hierarchy. The superstructure signals the direction of structural transformations in all its stages and generates constitutive dynamics that reinforce the capitalist order: it prepares the terrain for new areas of exploitation as well as extending existing relations of subordination. Understanding the superstructure as a constitutive entity means thinking within a theoretical frame that positions imaginaries, narratives and the subsequent struggle for hegemony at the centre of our analysis. The writings of Antonio Gramsci afford this possibility.

6.3. The Gramscian framework: situating the HEI order within a larger totalising process

The idea of “totalising” introduces time into our analysis. It allows us to view the HEI order as a historical movement. Second, it both generates as well, conceptually, allows us to visualise how through time relations of subordination converge towards a terminal point, even if this point is never fully reached. To understand these dynamics is essentially what this study’s research questions seek to address.

Antonio Gramsci is read in this spirit. We shall situate all these totalising premises within a general theoretical framework, and as part of this we will have reason to consider “local” and “real work life” aspects, both of which
represent the dynamics of the order. Here we will present the Gramscian framework by descending from the general (the central and overarching concepts) to the local (e.g. to consider issues surrounding work and agency). Thus, the first part (6.3.1.) of the theoretical framework will introduce Gramsci’s main conceptual tools that can, I will contend, capture the totalising movement of the KBE. The second part (6.3.2) will seek to articulate these concepts, so as to present in a systematic way the extent of this totalising order. A consideration of both “power relations” and “hegemony” will be pivotal in working out how the order as such operates within and between every societal and governmental level, and thus effectuate the totalising movement. Finally, the third part (6.3.3) will consider Gramsci’s understanding of human existence, with the purpose of opening up the theoretical space for indexing the scope for political agency within this larger framework. The theoretical framework is summarised in a diagram (6.4.)

6.3.1. A totalising movement: structure, superstructure and “historic bloc”

War of manoeuvre, war of position and the nature of the capitalist power order

Antonio Gramsci was a Marxist theorist, a revolutionary and a founder of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). His entire intellectual life, especially his last years spent as a political prisoner, was guided by the will to understand the Western capitalist order. The question, of special importance in the Prison Notebooks, was why had revolution triumphed in Russia while in the west the proletariat had not only suffered indisputable defeats but had, despite the presence of large working-class organisations, been defeated by fascist dictatorships? Gramsci offers an answer by accounting for the different ways in which power operates in civil society in the East and in the West. In the East, power was mainly concentrated in the state while the civil society was “primordial and gelatinous”. In the West, on the other hand, the state was only an “outer ditch”; behind it was “a powerful system of fortresses and

6 Gramsci was present as a representative of the PCI during the Third International congresses. In his attempts at drawing up an effective global revolutionary strategy he had debates with other prominent revolutionaries, like Trotsky. He experienced the gravity of defeat when he was forced to spend the last years of his life in prison in fascist Italy.
earthworks” that could, in case of a major political economic crisis, withstand a hypothetical revolutionary assault (Anderson 1976, 49–50).⁷

Following this reasoning, the revolution in Russia was a swift and decisive blow that crushed the state’s foundations. Using Gramsci’s military analogy, it was a war of manoeuvre, according to which state institutions were captured without facing any organised opposition from an almost in-existent civil society. Later, once the state had been captured, the strategy had to change to a war of position, in order to face down the counterrevolutionary forces during the Russian Civil War. Invigorated by the triumph of the October Revolution in Russia, revolutionary socialist and communist movements in the west adopted a similar strategy. However, the war of manoeuvre strategy resulted in devastating defeats (e.g. German Revolution 1918–20). Gramsci associated this downfall with the pursuit of maximalist actions, which while decided by vanguard parties were not shared by the bulk of the proletariat, thereby cutting any possibility of a grand alliance between different sectors of civil society. Gramsci accounts for this strategic failure in terms of the Left’s underestimation of civil society’s role as a “powerful system of fortresses and earthworks” (Anderson 1976, Thomas 2009. Cospito 2016).

From this historical viewpoint, Gramsci theorises the relation between the state and civil society beyond the former’s coercive forms of domination and its monopoly on violence. Instead, he draws attention to a series of formal or informal public or private institutions and practices embedded within civil society, such as the familial sphere, political parties and trade unions, newspapers, cultural and educational organisations, etc., all of which serve to produce consent and help to buttress the wall that stands strong in front of any revolutionary blitz. Consequently, the very erosion of this consent represents a central task in achieving a revolutionary triumph in the west. This struggle is waged on the terrain of ideas and requires a long-term strategy, that is, a war of position anchored in civil society. It is not as though Gramsci discards the war of manoeuvre entirely. Simply, he sees it more as a tactical resource than a central strategy.

Gramsci’s main contribution is in understanding consent as a central element in the maintenance and perpetuation of relations of domination:

⁷ Gramsci’s writing is the one of action and it is characterized by the strategic confrontation with the power resorts of the capitalist order. Therefore and not surprisingly, he often employs military analogies to explain his theories like some of his contemporary revolutionary theorists like Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin or Trotsky).
consent as a long-term source of legitimacy for an order beyond the threat of direct violence. The cultivation of consent is based on a complex relation between state and civil society that operates on the terrain of ideas, which find their translation in the material world. This places ideology at the centre of social relations.

Ideology, power and neoliberalism

Antonio Gramsci understands ideology in its more Machiavellian sense, namely as a set of ideas that justify the acts of rulers. Thus, ideology is an instrument to extend the rule of power and serves as the cement for civil society’s “powerful system of fortresses and earthworks”, which stand strong against any attempt to overturn the order. In this sense, what matters in ideology is not whether it is an intellectually honest description of society but whether in the eyes of society it presents something cohesive. As we can see in the KBE programmatic documents, ideology’s “cohesive appearance” is the product of a body of ideas that can range from fairly consistent philosophical principles to popular morals and cultural forms, represented in the form of clichés or prejudices, which transmit a sort of “common sense” that eventually becomes naturalised in people’s everyday practices (Squires 2008, 162; 2014, 150). Here, then, cohesive should be taken in its most cynical sense: ideologies appear to be credible by large parts of society even though this does not mean that ideologies are per se coherent. In fact, incoherence can be a very powerful resource, something that neoliberalism has shown during the last decades.9

8 Gramsci reads Machiavelli’s Prince as the culmination of the will of the people. A will defined through the identification of the people with a “good logic of governing”, an ideological construction that maintains this virtuous order and to which the ruler is also bound. Hence, governing is perceived as a collective reflection on popular consciousness. People and ruler are identified with a praxis of government that turns into action and affection: a truly transformative force (Gramsci 1993, 66 cited from Britos 2007, 2).

9 Stuart Hall reflects on this in The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left (1988). Thatcherite neoliberalism managed to convince large swathes of the British public by an effective equalisation of freedom and modernity with free market capitalism while invigorating existing forms of conservative Victorian morals that managed to conscript a significant share of the British middle- and working classes. The wave of privatisations of public housing, the de-industrialisation and the subsequent financialisation of the British economy were the result of policies that clearly undermined the majority’s welfare in favour of a powerful and extremely wealthy minority. Paradoxically, this came under the banner of “popular capitalism”. It presented itself as a form of modernisation, even as a form of emancipation from the old “greasy” order of the Fordist industries and trade unions. The Tories understood that the interests of the masses did not always respond to a coherent analysis based on material reality but interests that were defined in more
Neoliberalism is a nebulous concept that is difficult to handle. According to Plehwe, it “is anything but a succinct, clearly defined political philosophy” (Plehwe 2009, 1). There are several definitions of neoliberalism, though none are totally accurate and thus each is problematic to employ. David Harvey (2005) describes neoliberalism as a restorative project, which aims at consolidating the power of economic elites through an upward redistribution of wealth accumulation by dispossession. According to Crotty (2003, 361), neoliberalism “is built on deregulation, liberalization, privatization and ever tighter global integration”. Jamie Peck’s definition of neoliberalism emphasises its ambivalent nature: “neoliberalism has always been about the capture and reuse of the state, in the interests of shaping a pro-corporate, freer-trading “market order”, even though this has never been a process of cookie-cutter replication of an unproblematic strategy” (Peck 2010, 8). Neoliberalism has turned the absence of a coherent ideological core into a virtue, successfully extending itself to different societies and overcoming all sorts of resistances.

What is widely shared by scholars is neoliberalism’s opposition to the Keynesian regime of accumulation. In this way, the resilience of neoliberal ideology is not because it aims at coherently countering the systemic contradictions and contingencies underpinning the late capitalist social world (economic crises, the “risk society”, the figure of the “precariat”, increasing levels of inequality and social exclusion, etc.), as was the case with Keynesianism, but rather because it does the opposite; it catalyses them, using unpredictability as a tactical resource to extend market rule. The more undetermined an environment is, the easier it is to impose the neoliberal oligarchic agenda (Klein, Shock Doctrine, 2007); any so-called “thick” ideology would only generate self-constraints for the order, and it would become burdensome. Contingency creates a void; neoliberal ideology is permanently re-constructing itself for the neoliberal project to be reproducible through time (Pelizzoni 2011, 797).

The neoliberal project reflects the instrumental role of ideology under capitalism: fictions, exploitation of prejudices, even plain incongruencies and lies, can be very useful in building up a common sense that ultimately justifies the acts of the rulers.10 At its core, ideology in Gramsci resembles

contradictory ways. Incoherence was the leverage to successfully legitimise a reactionary social program.

10 Laclau and Mouffe’s important concept of the “empty signifier” lays within this understanding of ideology. The word “post-truth” popularised by the press as a result of the victory of Trump in
the above described “narrative”: a fictionalised account that explains the vast complex world by making use of a whole variety of resources, narrating and constituting a powerful imaginary that justifies the ruler’s actions.

Structure and superstructure: reciprocal relations and the formation of a historic bloc

The superstructure, i.e. the immaterial elements (such as the ideological practices and grand narratives) that comprise the ideological/moral bedrock of capitalist society, is not per se determined only by the structural ruling elite (for example, institutions that hold the keys to the corridors of power). If we are to understand in what way the capitalist order endures than the superstructure needs to be approached in its own right:

[…] as long as ideologies are accepted as historical necessities to organize and direct human masses, they have a psychological validity and determine the consciousness of men and this determination may have a long-lasting effect vis a vis the structural relations. This can be accepted as a major contribution of Gramsci to traditional Marxism (Daldal 2014, 154).

With this assertion, Gramsci, in contrast to earlier Marxists, establishes that structure and superstructure co-constitute each other in an organic relation. They form a “unity between nature and spirit”, between the materiality of the structure and the immateriality of the superstructure:

Material forces are the content and ideologies are the form, though this distinction between form and content has purely indicative value, since the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would be individual fancies without the material forces. (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 200)

From this quote it can be deduced that any ambitious political change steered by a government cannot be consolidated without having previously prepared the ideological terrain. In the same way any revolution needs to prepare the ideological terrain, to forge alliances, and to develop political

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2016, would come to represent an extreme but natural continuation of this cynical use of language politics by consciously propagating false facts to construct narratives. This strategy was epitomised by the phrase “the alternative facts” pronounced by Counselor to the President Kellyanne Conway in January 22, 2017 to defend the White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer’s false statement of attendance numbers for Trump inauguration as US president.
consciousness, so as to inflict a decisive blow to capitalism (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 190).

The goal of an organic relation between structure and superstructure is a problematic process, one that is never fully finalised due to the existence of different historic tempos. At the level of the structure, we have the swift transformative power of capital accumulation steered by political and technological change, which cannot be properly followed by the ideology in the superstructure and the alliances that support the tentative consensus (common sense) of the majority. This occurs for several reasons but mainly this relates to changes in the production process causing a deterioration of the social conditions (the proletarianisation of the general workforce, or today with the emergence of the precariat). As a result, often the aim of governing is not guided for the immediate facilitation of capital accumulation but to respond “to the need to give coherence to a party, a group, a society.” (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 192)

Although “this decoupling” is never fully resolved, at some point resistances are outmanoeuvred by the imposition of coherence. Once this resistance is overcome, the putative coherent relation between structure and superstructure is further strengthened. This signals the terminal point, “the closing” of the reciprocal relation between structure and superstructure. This is what the concept of the historic bloc (see model at the end of the chapter) captures. In a heuristic fashion, it defines the relation between ideology, politics and the economic conditions in a specific socio-economic formation capable of implementing its political agenda. The consolidation of the historic bloc depends on the ruling elite’s ability to form strategic alliances to extend consent throughout society (Gill 2002, 58). Gramsci formalises this “consent alliance” of the historic bloc with the concept of the

11 The concept of “precariat” (Standing 2011) re-instates class in present day capitalism. The figure of the precariat is formed mainly by traditional working-class expellees, migrants and young educated people. The precariat spends a great part of his time planning his next job, owing the lack of secure employment contracts. It is this adaptable workforce produced by decades of de-regulation and reregulation of the labour markets. As a result, they are not able to develop a proper professional career and despite of being in a permanent learning process of ephemeral skills, they do not enjoy job security. Life of the precariat worker is characterized by anxiety, identity crisis and no stable social relations.

12 The idea of governments constructing coherence recalls descriptions we find in Jessop (Fairclough & Jessop 2008, 16) regarding institutional action in relation to the capitalist order, discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Institutional action is mainly directed to formalise economic relations relying on powerful imaginaries regardless of their actual success in terms of their rationalisation or calculation of economic output.
“Integral State”, representing the de facto conjunction between ideology, politics and economic conditions.\(^\text{13}\)

Interestingly, the historic bloc is a teleological notion; it pinpoints a closure of a bumpy process, and in this way, it relates to notions of circularity expressed above when discussing order and the liquidation of history. The consolidation of a historic bloc is not the end of history, since no order resolves all contradictions, and invariably new ones will arise. Accordingly, the historic bloc should be treated as a historically embedded totalising moment in which contradictions are partly “rationalised”, within “a system of ideologies” that are taken up and reproduced by a majority of social groups within a given order.

Finally, the historic bloc represents the finalisation of a historical process in which ideology plays a central role. In the reciprocal relation between structure and superstructure, the latter signals the historic trajectory of the former. This principle is ontologically and methodologically central when discussing the capitalist order from a Gramscian perspective. This sheds light on how, in an effective way, we can look at the contradictory narratives defining the present. Since case studies are objects with their own historicity, and the Estonian and Finnish cases of Higher Education reform in the context of the KBE constitute our empirical material, we need to approach them accordingly.

Gramsci introduces this notion when discussing the necessity of the philosophy of praxis. His purpose here is to place culture and moral leadership

\(^{13}\) The integral state is the equation: State = political society + civil Society. On the one hand, Political society is made up of state institutions (e.g. the judiciary, the military, higher governmental bodies and higher public servants) and, on the other, civil society is represented by more or less institutionalised organisations common in people’s daily life from parties or other forms of political organisation, such as trade unions, cultural organisations, religion, family and the educational system. The totality of the integral state is formalised once the political society co-opts its otherwise autonomous associations by integrating them, either formally or informally, within the hierarchical logic of the state. The distinction between civil and political societies is not real but analytical. This means that the border separating them is porous and their interrelation is constant. The distinction is nonetheless important for Gramsci, and for two reasons: (i) it is a way to avoid the liberal dogmatic view of a civil society populated by free individuals living their lives entirely divorced from the state and (ii) it avoids the functionalist reductionism in which anything in civil society is portrayed as belonging to the state and serving its interests. Gramsci does not consider everything in civil society to be free and autonomous nor does he seethat not everything in civil society responds to the interests of the ruling class (Anderson 1976, 12–13 Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 224). The integral state represents a mature form of domination in which the threat of violence does not disappear, but it is seen as a last resort. Instead, the task of establishing a common sense within the general population of society is occurs within civil society. Thus, the state is integral because it forms a dialectical unity with civil society (Fontana 2002 168. Thomas 2009, 137–138. 162 Davis 2011, 103.).
in a more prominent position, along with established economic and political categories. He refers to Croce's\textsuperscript{14} concept of "ethico-political history" but considers Croce's own opposition to a philosophy of praxis\textsuperscript{15} an error, resulting in him failing to recognise the different fundamentals of a given order that include both the ideational and cultural. Nonetheless, Gramsci recognises the value of Croce’s thought:

Croce’s historiographical conception of history as ethico-political history must not be judged as futile, as something to be rejected out of hand. On the contrary, it needs to be forcefully established that Croce’s historical thought, even in its most recent phase, must be studied and reflected upon with the greatest attention. Essentially it represents a reaction against ‘economism’ and fatalistic mechanicism, even though it is put forward as the destructive supersession of the philosophy of praxis […] It [Croce’s thought] has forcefully drawn attention to the importance of facts of culture and thought in the development of history, to the function of great intellectuals in the organic life of civil society and the state, to the moment of hegemony and consent as the necessary form of the concrete historical bloc. That this is not futile is demonstrated by the fact that, in the same period as Croce, the greatest modern theorist of the philosophy of praxis [Lenin] has – on the terrain of political struggle and organization, and with political terminology – in opposition to the various tendencies of ‘economism’[…] For the philosophy of praxis the conception of ethico-political history, in that it is independent of any realist conception, may be adopted as an ‘empirical tool’ of historical research, one which needs constantly to be borne in mind in examining and understanding historical development, if the aim is that of producing integral history and not partial and extrinsic history (history of economic forces as such, etc.). (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 195)

\textsuperscript{14} Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) was an Italian idealist philosopher and a liberal-conservative who was concerned with separating aesthetics from history and practical activity. Croce was an ardent critic of Marxism. Gramsci considered Croce as “the organic intellectual” of the Southern Italy’s (Mezzogiorno) agrarian order and consequently he was very critical of Croce’s historical readings in which struggle between social groups was never placed in a central position. Nonetheless, he admired the way that Croce placed important emphasis on culture and ideas in the constitution of social orders laying outside the governmental machinery. Thus underlining the primacy of civil society. (Thomas 2009, 73)

\textsuperscript{15} The philosophy of praxis, therefore, redefines the previously established fields of knowledge not as ‘component parts’ but as ‘moments’ of its own dynamic and overdetermined constitution. It is the ‘unitary synthetic moment’ of the new concept of immanence that makes such relations of translation possible. It is only by means of such a method that the theoretical significance of ‘relations of force’ can be grasped and subsequently ‘universalised’ ‘in an adequate fashion to the whole of human history. (Thomas 2009, 360)
Gramsci signals the importance of the evolution of ideas within civil society and the state, not simply as a way of decorating the order but as a constitutive force that gives a historical context to the order’s actualisation of certain possibilities. Without the evolution of the ideas, values, and the “organic intellectuals,”\(^{16}\) which, taken together, frame the spirit of times, any inquiry on capitalism might degenerate into an all-encompassing casuistic reading that operates in a historical void (as is the case with “economistic tendencies”)\(^ {17}\). A snapshot of a moment cannot grasp those elements that signal historical directions. Therefore, and by way of concluding this part of our argument, the study of the superstructure in combination with the raw power of the structure (“state-as-force”) reveals “the hints” in the form of values, culture, ideas, forecasts that signal the historical movement of the structure.

**Hegemony**, Gramsci’s most influential theoretical concept, is conceived within this setting. Before we move onto the concept of hegemony, let us first situate the KBE within the Gramscian framework we have thus far described.

**University and KBE within the reciprocal relation between structure and superstructure**

The KBE is firstly a political project for introducing a new type of statism, steered by the ruling part of the order and, regardless of its success, is directed towards the transformation of the production process by extending capitalism to new areas of exploitation (*endogenous growth*).\(^ {18}\) Secondly, the

16 The organic intellectuals represent the specialised and highly educated who are formed in connection to all social groups but especially within the dominant groups. Their activities consist in assimilating the different intellectual groups that might contest the order’s moral legitimacy as a means of erecting an intellectual dominance (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 304–305)

17 Gramsci is critical towards “historical economism” and its causal understanding of history, according to which generally everything can be explained through the prism of economic self-interest. On such an interpretation, the origins of historical change are mainly due to technological developments as well as the discovery of raw materials that change the machines of production and thereby production processes (214–217). Historical economism can be related to today’s technologism and positivism, both of which are dominant in the discourses surrounding KBE and also in the social sciences, more generally speaking.

18 Endogenous growth theory is based on the investment of human capital and innovation as the keystone for economic growth. The 1980s consolidated the service sector, making clear that human capital and labour could become an accumulative and reproductive good, and thus a beneficial source in itself. The theory was reformulated, constituting the intellectual backbone of present-day KBE. Endogenous growth is meant to generate permanent growth thanks to the constant production of innovations, hence resolving the problem of diminishing returns inherent in any perfect competitive market. As a result, endogenous growth models attempt to integrate externalities (normally information, knowledge or other reusable immaterial goods) produced outside from what is strictly economical or marketable, in order to generate technical progress. Endogenous growth is
KBE conveys narratives that span an array of ideational sources, ranging from fairly consistent ideologies to naturalised clichés that together form a powerful imaginary and translate into policies. Such narratives are, we can say, potent breeders of consent. In other words, as a historically situated project, the KBE embodies the reciprocal relation between structure and superstructure.

In contrast to the view of orthodox Marxists, Gramscians underline the importance of ideology. And rather than maintaining the factual separation between relations of production and ideology, they assert the importance of the latter on the first: Ideologies and imaginaries in capitalism with real and fictional elements refer to many aspects of the social world beyond the production process. Hence, ideologies and imaginaries are linked to material goals even if they do not directly interpolate them (Daldal 2014, 158). Hence, for the matter at hand, the superstructure dimension of KBE in HEI is related to relations of production, it aims at both organising and explaining new changes in the general production process as well as in the introduction of market-oriented models in the universities. Thus, HEIs are to a certain extent brought into the orbit of a larger scheme of relations of production, which is itself a part of the larger setting of global capitalism.19

The new order aims at a general shift in the organisation of HEI, from government to labour, signalling a re-inscription of the relations of subordination that impact on academic working life. In addition, situating HEI within a larger societal frame of relations of dependence requires that we take into consideration the possibility that imaginaries (or ideologies), which originate not only in the cumbersome language of KBE politicking but elsewhere in society, can contribute to the formation of the university order. These narratives suggest specific conditions of existence for academic labour as well as for society at large. Hence, HEI are an integral part of a move towards what the regulation theorists would call a stable model of capital accumulation. This is a stable historical fix that comes very close to Gramsci’s concept of historic bloc20 (see the transition between moment two and three in the theoretical model presented at the end of this chapter).

19 See model at the end of the chapter.
20 Gramscian saw fascist Italy as an example of historic block. This does not mean that all historic bloc are totalitarian regimes but it underlines that they are totalizing in the sense that they attempt
Thus, the historical movement within which at the beginning of this book, we situate KBE inspired HEI reforms can be interpreted from a Gramscian perspective as the move to the formation of a historic bloc. This historic bloc would be an order defined by the continuation of capitalist expansion to new sectors, while financialisation is dressed in the attire of a consensual knowledge society. However, the move towards this horizon is by no means smooth, and carries with it contradictions that can be interpreted as the decoupling of structure and superstructure, such that the particularity of the superstructure narrates something which seems not to be yet in place. Understanding the order means to study how coercion and consent are actually practiced within the gap between the actually existing order and its narratives.

This is essentially the way in which the study’s aim and its research questions (see section 1.5) are to be read through the prism of Antonio Gramsci’s important work. The ambition in this study is to describe first the order as a whole and second to investigate how the order prevails by looking at its inner logics, essentially comprised of the practices of coercion and consent. These practices develop from within the logic of relations of dependence, which themselves are derived from the inherent material inequality of capitalism as well as through narratives by hiding or justifying the existence of relations of dependence.

### 6.3.2. Hegemony and practice

At the heart of the relation between narratives, practices and consent, lays the concept of hegemony. Hegemony is like “the glue” that unites the superstructure and the structure. It encompasses the symbolic resources and narratives though which every social group recognises itself. Gramsci draws on Marx’s idea that the ruling ideology is produced by ruling class so that it maintains its advantageous position. From this initial position, Gramsci

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21 The utopian horizon of a resolution of this decoupling – specifically, here, the historic bloc that narratives of KBE signal – would look like a hybridised circularity, made up of two superimposed circularities (as represented in the diagram at the beginning of this chapter). The superstructure heuristically narrates the structure and helps to co-constitute a strong and legitimate order.

22 The theoretical point of departure coheres around the disentangled relation between the material conditions and the discourse that narrates them. This idea recalls Laclau and Mouffe, who place discourse as the main creator of subject positions within the capitalist hierarchy in contrast to material interests generating ideologies (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985 cited from Anderson 2016, 90). We will return to Laclau and Mouffe later, once we have begun to unfold our theoretical findings.
develops the concept of hegemony, with the aim of explaining the nature of bourgeois power. Following Fontana, Gramsci’s conception of hegemony can be summarised under four notions

1) The economic pre-eminence of civil society over the state;

2) The supremacy of the private sphere over the public sphere;

3) The increasing importance of consent and persuasion as instruments of political legitimation and social integration;

4) The consequent perception of the decline in the role and utility of force/violence as the necessary instruments of state action. (Fontana 2002, 158):

Hegemony is not solely the dominant public discourse, constituted at the upper echelons of the capitalist system (as encapsulated by points one and two above), but as a set of social practices assumed and internalised in people’s daily life. So, hegemony involves notions of discipline in order to uphold a consensual form of existence (see points three and four above). The decline of visible uses of coercion does not mean that they have disappeared; they remain a resource. Thomas (2009) telegraphically reminds us this when he situates hegemony at the centre of the dialectical unity between civil and political society in the integral state:

Consent and coercion are not “either/or”. They are in fact “moments within each other”. Civil hegemony is not an alternative to political hegemony. A bid for ‘civil hegemony’ has to progress towards ‘political hegemony’ in order to maintain itself as itself (Thomas 2009, 194).

Thus, a dominant ideology turns hegemonic when it is capable of expelling or modifying previous social ensembles by becoming naturalised in society’s daily life with a parallel development of mechanisms of coercion that remain there as a resource. Following this argument, Jessop (2003, 144) understands hegemony as a mechanism of social formation that frames formal adequacy and strategic selectivity. If we situate Jessop’s mechanism of social formation within a temporal order, we can assert that formal adequacy is when hegemony signals the limits of the possible in the present and strategic selectivity underlines how these limits should be overcome and recreated in the future. These limits are not arbitrarily drawn in the sand.
Their existence resides not only on a set of norms imposed from above but on a story, that is, a fictional ideological narrative, produced and reproduced from different hierarchical positions. Precisely, it is the narrative that invests these norms. A narrative can thus be understood as a story to explain human existence within the vast social world.

A narrative simplifies the social world into a manageable cosmos in which existence can be structured (Jessop and Fairclough 2008, 17). Therefore, a narrative with all its rhetorical constructions circumscribes the limits of the possible. Hegemony is indeed about narrating, but more needs to be said. We speak about the practice of hegemony not just as a dominant set of rhetorical instruments that help to explain the world. The practice of hegemony is itself a source of power (with its coercive mechanisms) that structures borders capable to frame societal formations. The resultant social formation is an order made of disciplined individuals who know what their position. Therefore, without discarding coercive force, order ultimately resides when agents accept to live within the condition of existence framed by the dominant ideology/narrative.

Hence, power is to a great extent about practice and as such it can only be localised within a relation of forces that often lay behind a naturalised set of practices. In this respect, one could say that Gramsci’s conception of power resembles Foucault’s. Nonetheless, Gramsci locates power in those relations of force that ground the “tendential laws of a determinate market” as practiced by institutions and individuals, whereas Foucault sees power as immanent in any relationship of force. (Thomas 2009, 355–356. Dadal 2014, 155. 161)

The concept of a “determinate market” structures the configurations of relations of forces within the market order. Gramsci developed this concept from the English classical economist David Ricardo. Gramsci sees in Ricardo’s thought on market mechanisms the bedrock for formulating immanent relations of forces grounded on a particular historical formation. He calls it “historical realist immanence” in opposition to the speculative-metaphysical immanence of Plato, the Scholastics, Spinoza and Hegel. Gramsci’s reading of Ricardo’s classic economic principles introduces in Marxism an argument that grounds orders within their immediate socio-economic surroundings. Gramsci speaks of relations of force as “tendential laws”, and precisely because they are grounded on a specific historical social formation are also modifiable. Therefore, historical realist immanence necessitates a grounded reading of the relations of force that require one to
look at the constitution and naturalisation of automatisms (Thomas 2009, 349–351).

Since relations are dynamic, their reading is not intended to theoretically confirm what is observed, but rather to underline the possibilities of modification. Consequently, Gramsci recommends a methodology capable of grasping the concrete traits that are in constant evolution because of the historicity of the relation of forces. The naturalised automatisms that frame the relation of forces can refer to common-sensical forms, such as more or less secularised religious principles found in popular culture that “appear coherent” to society, even if they are detrimental for the common interest. Here coherence does not refer to any general rational criterion but to a specific form of dominant rationality that steers the relations of forces (Thomas 2009, 365–367).

Hegemony, materialisation and the relation of forces
Gramsci’s discussion on the location of hegemony (i.e. where it originates, its active promoters, how it expands, etc.) follows the logic of historical realist immanence and as such it is theoretically and methodologically engaged with the frame of reciprocity between structure and superstructure, as well as between political and civil society. This is undertaken from several anchoring points, making it sometimes a bit difficult to follow his lines of reasoning.23 Nonetheless, there are passages in his Prison Notebooks where the location of hegemony is discussed with remarkable lucidity. This is the case with his definition of hegemonic apparatus:

A class’ hegemonic apparatus is the wide-ranging series of institutions (understood in the broadest sense) and practices – from newspapers to educational organisations to political parties – by means of which a class and its allies engage their opponents in a struggle for political power. This concept traverses the boundaries of the so-called public (pertaining to the State) and private (civil society), to include all initiatives by means of which a class concretises its hegemonic project in an integral sense. The hegemonic apparatus is the means by which a class’s forces in civil society are translated into power in political society […] (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 226)

23 If in addition to this theoretical complexity we add that Gramsci deliberately adopted obscure formulations in order to outflank the Fascist censors, then from time to time his thinking falls into contradiction and aporia.
Gramsci’s hegemonic apparatus is constituted by a wide array of actors that transcend the societal division between the civil and the political, which form a consistent unity to keep the order upright. The actual realisation of this alliance vis-à-vis its “material translation” is found in the “initiatives by means of which a class concretizes its hegemonic project in an integral sense” (as cited above). Gramsci’s relational logic is pivotal in the material definition of hegemony: Hegemony is a practice and hegemonic practices, like all practices in a relation of forces are relational.

Individual existence occurs in relation to this complex integral hegemonic project. This relation is analytically interesting because the micro contexts live in a permanent interaction with the macro context and this means that human agency acquires a central role in the analysis of the order (Johnson 2007, 97. McNally & Schwarzmantel 2009 79–80). Furthermore, this integral understanding of an individual – ideological/hegemonic – order is dynamic since all its elements evolve within the totalizing drive of capitalism itself. This means understanding the making of hegemony as an uneven process that occurs within the problematical convergence between structure and superstructure (See moments two and three in the model: the move towards the historic bloc).

The hegemonic move in its contradictions: the two souls of the KBE policies

The apparent incongruence between the KBE’s optimistic narrative and the material reality represents the conflicting temporalities of the structure and the superstructure. The hegemonic move that the KBE-policies and HEI subsequently embody is one that seeks to domesticate resistance and isolate any kind of dysfunctionality emerging from the temporal decoupling of the structure and the superstructure, in order thereby to consolidate the politico-economic order (See moments two and three in the model).

We could say in fact that the KBE-inspired policies have two souls: on the one hand, the fully discursive creative destructive soul, which represents the optimistic technological centrist leap towards the future, and, on the other, the hybrid material/discursive disciplinary soul, which represents the creation and consolidation of hierarchies by means that have little to do with technological optimism. The narratives produced and reproduced from inside and outside the KBE-inspired policies ought to be placed in this struggle to convey the two souls that constitute the hegemonic narrative. Despite the contradictions that exist between them, the two are in a permanent dialogue, converging around a fairly coherent whole that comprises
the hierarchical structure. Nevertheless, these souls do not reveal themselves in the same positions of the order nor do they refer to the same issues. The progressive optimistic creative soul frames the spirit of the times and projects how the future should look like. While this is present in programmatic policy documents, it is also reproduced outside the sphere of government. The disciplinary soul displays a certain narrative geared towards outlining the conditions of existence for an individual, something especially apparent in the workplace and in the work stories told by individuals.24

6.3.3. The question of Man: Man and discipline in Gramsci

In one of the stories in The Jungle Book Rudyard Kipling shows discipline at work in a strong bourgeois society. Everyone obeys in the bourgeois state. The mules in the battery obey the battery sergeant, the horses obey the soldiers who ride them. The soldiers obey the lieutenant, the lieutenants obey the regimental colonels; the regiments obey a brigadier general; the brigades obey the viceroy of the Indies. The viceroy obeys Queen Victoria (still alive when Kipling was writing). The queen gives an order: the viceroy, the brigadier generals, the colonels, the lieutenants, the soldiers, the animals, all move in unison and go off to the conquest. The protagonist of the story says to a native who is watching a parade: ‘Because you cannot do likewise, you are our subjects.’

Bourgeois discipline is the only force which keeps the bourgeois aggregation firmly together. Discipline must be met with discipline. But whereas bourgeois discipline is mechanical and authoritarian, socialist discipline is autonomous and spontaneous. [...] The discipline imposed on citizens by the bourgeois state makes them into subjects, people who delude themselves that they exert an influence on the course of events. The discipline of the Socialist Party makes the subject into a citizen: a citizen who is now rebellious, precisely because he has become conscious of his personality and feels it is shackled and cannot freely express itself in the world (Gramsci 1917/2000, 31 –32).

24 Hegemony in Gramsci is constituted by coercion and consent (Anderson 1976, 41). Here, the idea of KBE’s disciplinary and coercive souls departs from Jessop’s distinction between formal adequacy and strategic selectivity (Jessop 2003, 144, see above). Thus we have: coercion (formal adequacy) /consent (strategic selectivity).

The creative destructive soul refers to strategic selectivity in that it frames the borders of the possible as well as prescribing how the future should be, in order to establish a shared and consensual viewpoint. The disciplinary soul refers to formal adequacy, that is, in a manner of speaking, the elements that formally institute the order, or, put otherwise, the power practices that position the subjects within the hierarchical order.
Gramsci quotes Kipling to underline his awareness of capitalism’s capacity to materialise both hideous and positive achievements, the like of which had never been seen before in history, and how discipline played a pivotal role in this process. Kipling, who can safely be labelled as an “organic intellectual” of the British Empire, glorifies discipline as the central means by which the empire remains dominant and is accompanied with the colonialist’s racism that speaks of the moral triumph of Western civilization over the colonised peoples. Gramsci does not despise discipline in its practical sense (he considers it necessary to achieve revolutionary goals). Nevertheless he is critical about capitalist discipline, which is not conceived as a means but as an end in itself, and which, with its authoritarian morality, turns the citizens of the metropolis or the colonised peoples into subjects who, in contrast to revolutionary man, “delude themselves that they exert an influence on the course of events” (see quote above).

This quote from the young 26-year-old Gramsci does not develop the origins of subjectification (this will come much later), rather he simply relates subjectification to an “imposed” discipline. This passage remains instructive, however, since it signals discipline as a remarkable practical and consensual instrument that transmits the expansion and solidification of capitalism from tip to toe. Therefore, when we think about disciplinisation and man in Gramsci, we think about the reproduction of power within human relations, that is, the point at which a person submits to being disciplined. This principle was enriched further with the development of the concept of hegemony alongside Gramsci’s historico-realist and immanent approach to social phenomena, all of which help to explain how subjectification is not solely the product of a coercive imposition but is the combination of both coercion and consent. This thereby made it possible for Gramsci to appreciate the extent to which a subject’s allegiance or devotion to specific traditions and certain practices could strengthen the grip of dominant narratives. Hence, a disciplined individual more than the incarnation of plain coercion is central in any hegemonic operation.

Man is constituted by a “complex of social relations” that are dynamic and thus changes within his immediate social relations. “Man becomes”, as Daldal puts it (Daldal 2014, 155. Italics in the original). Gramsci departs from Marx’s idea of social reproduction, viewing the becoming of man in capitalism as essentially marking his integration into the relations of production. This is realised through a complex relational fabric that extends beyond either the state’s formal coercive or educational means:
Educative and formative role of the state, whose aim is always that of creating new and higher types of civilization; of adapting the ‘civilization’ and the morality of the broadest popular masses to the necessities of the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production; hence of evolving even physically new types of humanity. But how will each single individual succeed in incorporating himself into the collective man, and how will educative pressure be applied to single individuals so as to obtain their consent and their collaboration, turning necessity and coercion into ‘freedom’?

Question of ‘right’: this concept will have to be extended to include those activities which are at present classified as ‘juridically indifferent’, and which belong to the domain of civil society; the latter operates without ‘sanctions’ or compulsory ‘obligations’, but nevertheless exerts a collective pressure and obtains objective results in the form of an evolution of customs, ways of thinking and acting, morality, etc. (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 232)

The idea of a human (or, as Gramsci expresses it, a “collective man”) that properly integrates itself into an order “guided” by multiple actors (e.g. the state, family, traditions, common sense etc.) subscribes to a consensual or passive existence. This is the analysis of the nature of power related to the political in the context of its long history and its mission “to produce” an individual that becomes detached from history but intricated within a net of relations of forces. Gramsci situates this understanding of power within a particular historical setting (hence his historico-realistic immanence) in which relations of force crystallise and through which the individual expresses his political capacity and perceives the order in its permanent mystical supremacy:

Moreover it needs to be recognized that since a deterministic and mechanical conception of history is very widespread (a common sense conception which is connected to the passivity of the great masses of the people) each individual, when he sees that despite his lack of intervention something happens all the same, is led to think that precisely above individuals there exists a phantasmagorical entity, the abstraction of the collective organism, a sort of autonomous divinity, which does not think with a specific head but which thinks all the same, which does not move with the legs of specific men but which moves all the same, etc. (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 244)

One of the most interesting features of the collective man as a consensual subject is that it accepts the relinquishment of its own political citizenship (demos) despite the claim to have individual political rights being both the origin and destination of the system. This is the puzzle Gramsci grapples
with when, for example, he talks about how the meaning of political freedom and individual rights, which, while not actively rescinded by the state, are nonetheless not used “politically” by the individuals themselves. (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 232) This is the effect of the immanent relations of force that operate as a “collective pressure” on a civil society based on particular traditions, beliefs etc., and grounded on a particular historical moment.

In present day capitalism, man’s existence becomes in this very puzzle. On the one hand he is bound up with an increasingly unequal, exploitative capitalism, and which critical realists lucidly describe (Thompson & Harley 2012). On the other, he is inundated with narratives that speak of freedom, rights, creativity, and democracy.

6.4. Gramscian model
We will now, from the theoretical viewpoint developed above, theorise the historical totalising movement shaping the order of the university. In the following pages, the main ideas will at the end be summarised and represented in the form of a model. This general framework represents the process of a hegemonic formation of an order (i.e. a totalising historical movement that is constituted by the reciprocal relation between structure and superstructure.

KBE-inspired policies as a narrative about, and constitutive of, the totalising movement of capitalism
The actual existing socio-economic landscape is the result of the complex sum of economic activities and all the societal relations built upon them. However, even if it has significant visibility in policy-making and public discourse, the socio-economic model represented by KBE-inspired policies does not represent this socio-economic cosmos (for one thing, much of the world’s economic growth is not knowledge-based while most workplaces are not knowledge-intensive). For this reason, the KBE is, on the one hand, a fiction that simplifies and explains, both in positive and cohesive terms, an otherwise chaotic reality that cannot be fully mastered. On the other hand, this fictional narration acts as a constitutive force that filters through state policies, acting upon specific economic relations that have strategic importance in either formally (via policies and reforms) or informally (via discourses that institute social practices) buttressing the present capitalist order. Thus, KBE-inspired policies, such as HEI reforms, respond to the re-
constitution of the material grounds of capitalism in its present expansive phase, no matter whether or not the resultant order is a faithful representation of its narrative. These policies are inspired by global guiding principles that while in their formative years functioned as a succession of ‘blank’ concepts (OECD 1996), were only later integrated in more concise terms, and were conceived as a way of integrating education into the specific skills demanded for the market and facilitating the formation of a new type of global worker (Moisio and Kangas 2016, 274). This new type of worker would accordingly inculcate discipline and consent, two prerequisites for the constitution and maintenance of the new order. As part of this operation, required is the strategic re-definition or hollowing out of some concepts to legitimate the institution of relations of subordination, with the aim of both fixing the norms of the order and to dissolve or isolate resistance and to overcome any dysfunctions. All these elements suggest that KBE-inspired policies spearhead this totalising movement. Hence, the leap to a heuristic model of the capitalist hierarchical relation between the politico-economic establishment and society that resolves political conflict. Gramsci’s understanding of capitalism provides us with tools that allow us to interpret how this totalising movement is possible and how it is realised.

The model

In this section, we will present a model that seeks to capture the larger totalising historical movement driven by the reciprocal relation between structure and superstructure towards a horizon of a historic bloc.

The logic of capital accumulation is conflictual, volatile and arbitrary. Therefore, at the top of the structure (where we can locate, for example, the politico-economic establishment who hold the keys to the corridors of power), there is a need to address disturbances that occur within society, and it cannot simply rely on its monopoly on violence to achieve this. Thus, the robustness of the capitalist order is found in the superstructure: hence the immaterial elements (ideological practices, grand narratives) that constitute the ideological and moral bedrock for a capitalist society.

This moral bedrock is not simply designed by a ruling elite. It is constituted by and through civil society (e.g. education institutions, media, cultural organisations, companies, family etc.). Furthermore, the superstructure is not simply a subsidiary of the structure. It has a constitutive force (which is to say, values constitute relations, narratives that delimitate conditions of existence, etc.). For this reason, structure and superstructure form a reciprocal relation, “forming a unity between nature and spirit”. This reci-
procedural relation is not complete, because of the different “historic” tempos that mediate it: the logic of capital accumulation and its swift transformative drive generates disturbances and resistances in the structure, which cannot be easily incorporated into any legitimating narratives emanating from the superstructure. All the same, the fusion of structure and superstructure remains the goal. This is what defines the historic bloc understood as the relation between ideology, politics and the economic conditions in a specific socio-economic formation. The ultimate goal of reaching a perfect coincidence between structure and superstructure accounts for the ruling elite’s indefatigable attempt to form strategic alliances in order to extend consent. The realisation of a consensual society depends on dominating the ideological/moral terrain by outmanoeuvring any instances of resistance and halt history. This is represented in the model by the transition from the second to the third moment.

Ideology is pivotal in the formation of a historic bloc. Gramsci sees ideology as a set of ideas conceived to justify the acts of the rulers. Thus, ideology is an instrument to extend power. It is also the cement that establishes a level of consent within civil society that stands strong against any attempt to overturn the order. Ideology is itself malleable: it is the product of a body of ideas ranging from a fairly consistent set of philosophical postulates to superstitions and culturally embedded practices, as well as, at the furthest extreme, plain. Irrespective of its particular form, the function of ideology is to transmit a certain feeling of coherence to wider society. Relations of force are situated within this specific historical context.

KBE-inspired policies are understood to be part of a transformative political project within the capitalist order that, at the structural and superstructural levels, unfolds with the aspiration of becoming a historic bloc. HEIs are part of this KBE political project, which, on the one hand, is steered by the higher echelons of the structure as they respond to an expansion of capital accumulation into new areas. On the other hand, KBE-inspired policies are an ideological container comprised of more or less consistent accounts of the benefits of technologies, which both shape policies and foster societal consent. The way in which these ideological constructs become consensual can be elucidated through the operating logics of hegemony.

Hegemony is largely about an ideological construct that becomes dominant by connecting civil and political society, the individual citizen and the ruling elite. Nonetheless, this dominance is not only framed by a quasi-uncontested dominant public narrative, but its consent is represented in the
form of social practices too. A given hegemonic order indicates the limits of the possible. Tied to this circumscription of its own limits is the notion of discipline as well as coercion; coercion makes the hegemonic operation not simply a product of consent, but of consent backed by coercion. By “the possible”, I broadly refer to a consensual form of existence assumed by the individual. A Hegemonic narrative is one in which these limits are not only expounded, but how they should be developed in order to either exclude or modify previous social ensembles.

In relation to the larger capitalist order, hegemony is the product of the reciprocal relation between structure and superstructure produced and reproduced within society as a whole. Hegemony is the means to resolve the problem of the different temporalities and rhythms that exist between the structure and superstructure, and thus is the main ingredient for the formation of a historic bloc. The materialisation of hegemony lays in the notion of discipline, and discipline is a relational category. Hegemony presupposes a set of relations that through practices establish linkages between the formal and informal institutions and the individual. These hegemonic practices allow us to observe the precise ways in which structure and superstructure converge.

In essence, this captures the guiding spirit of the research questions. We are seeking to investigate how hegemonic relational practices ultimately address the issue of academic labour. This accounts for the significance of Gramsci’s understanding of agency: we must think the becoming of man within its given and immediate social context and then to relate this to the wider and larger order. The disciplined individual in capitalism is the “collective man”: a notion of man detached from history, where the effective use of his citizenship rights is stripped and annulled, and he is entirely accepting of his role within the “collective organism” of capitalism. This subjectivity is constituted by a “complex of social relations in the intersection between the consent, which derives, on the one hand, from an allegiance to traditions, practices, and customs that underpin dominant narratives and, on the other, the state’s monopoly on violence, which maintains the existing order through the threat of coercion. Therefore, when we reflect on Gramsci’s understanding of man’s becoming, we think foremost about the reproduction of power within human relations.
6.5. Hegemony in HEI: Solutionism and meritocracy. A preview of the middle-level theoretical concepts important for the second half of the thesis.

Hegemony represents the juncture uniting the superstructure and the structure, the immaterial and the material. Hegemony anchors the order heuristically by uniting divergent historical forces under the auspices of consent and specific practices. For these reasons, hegemony expresses the existing order in its different aspects. This theoretical standpoint will be concretised in in the second part of the present book. In addition, our understanding of a concrete manifestation of hegemony is grounded with the deployment of some middle-level theoretical concepts. These include “solutionism” and “debauched meritocracy”, which operate within a Bourdieusian framework. These middle-ranging concepts are inductively derived from closer analyses of the empirical material. Like proper hegemonic artefacts, they both embody the immateriality of the narrative and the materiality of the disciplinary practices derived from the consent proper to academia. While solutionism and debauched meritocracy are present in both Finnish and Estonian institutions, the former is more visible in the Finnish department and the latter in the Estonian department. At this point, I would like to anticipate some of their insights in relation to the concept of hegemony.

**Solutionism**

There was a strong presence in the Finnish department of technological optimistic narratives. These narratives dovetail with the notion of “solutionism”, defined as “the idea that given the right code, algorithms and robots, technology can solve all of mankind’s problems, effectively making life "frictionless" and trouble-free” (Morozov 2013, 5). Solutionism encompasses a whole set of features. First, the principle of solutionism is based on a tabula rasa idea of the social world, one comprised of constant variables that allow a policy framework defined by scientific management to be deployed while keeping some of the mystical futurism proper to technological optimism. This futurism dissolves the “mundane problems of the present” as well as the notion of the collective and pushes society to compete in a permanent race towards a future that never arrives.
The contradictory relation between the rationalisation of scientific management and the mysticism of technocentrism is at the heart of the order. Solutionism is, we can say, a post-political concept that encompasses these two elements while concealing their contradictory character. What it neglects are the order’s inherent antagonisms. This appears in the forms of clichés referring to the endless capacity of adaptation of knowledge, skills, as well as other technocentric claims that neglect core material problems.

Debauched meritocracy within a Bourdieusian framework

Even though “solutionistic” narratives were present in the Estonian department too, in contrast to the Finnish case, the order is openly defined by a kind of verticality (present as well in the Finnish case but not as visible). This difference can be interpreted from out of a Bourdieusian framework. The concepts of “field”, “capital” and “habitus” are grounded in the two empirical cases wherein one can observe an amelioration of autonomy by the logic of the market. Some authors (See introduction) have considered the recent historical developments of capitalism problematic for Bourdieu’s framework, arguing that Bourdieu’s structuring of society in the form of semi-autonomous fields (academia being one such field) cannot account for a notion of an all-pervading market drive that has eroded their autonomy. To Bourdieu’s credit, though, his later work acknowledged the need to re-think the concept of the field in the advent of market expansion (Bourdieu 2003).

Nonetheless, recent literature continues to work with Bourdieusian concepts, arguing that the positions of the “old” academic field, which is now located within the nexus between market, government and academic logics, still matter in the formation and reproduction of hierarchies (Lingard, Hayes, Mills & Christie 2003. Zipin & Brennan. 2003. Thomson & Holdsworth 2003. Gunter 2004). This book argues along similar lines: notions of autonomy and a capital based on prestige still play a central role, albeit partly fabricated, as we will see later in the empirical part. The upshot of this is that the traditional academic order is not swept entirely away by the market, even though the asset (prestige), which had been the determinant instance vis-à-vis the other elements in the hierarchy, is today not what it appears to be. The meritocratic order, which is meant to steer academia, is thus debauched; on the surface, things continue as usual when in actual fact everything has already changed. The key Bourdieusian concepts of “cultural capital”, “field” and “habitus” are re-thought through this new context. Moreover, the concept of “solutionism” is also integrated within this re-
defined Bourdieusian framework, so as to heuristically integrate all the middle theory concepts within the two case studies.
Methods in a worker inquiry within a larger political economic context

For the sake of presenting this study’s method, let us first recall the general aim that serves as its point of departure alongside the overarching research question.

This dissertation analyses the order that results from the top-down steered HEI reforms and that redefine the character of university activities. The academic workplace is taken as the empirical terrain for situating the global and vertical nature of HEI reforms – presented by its promoters as essential for the accomplishment of the Knowledge-based economy – in relation to their local implementation.

- What are the basic features of the university order in Finland and Estonia and how is this order maintained?

This overarching research question is broken down into two sub-questions, both of which aim at drawing out the order’s constitutive features by looking at, on the one hand, the programmatic/institutional level and, on the other, the concrete workplace setting:

- How is the order framed/presented in the programmatic documents?
- What ideological, political elements constitute the basis of the HEI order and how does this order operate in the academic workplace and how does the order manifest itself in every day university practices?

The research interprets these specific questions in a way that leaves the micro level open, that is, to let the cases speak for themselves, with the aim of understanding how concrete human experiences develop in actual universities as well to understand the formation of an order. Hence, the workplace emerges as a knot where the system meets the quotidian, policy plans
and dominant narratives encounter actual working conditions and daily work experiences that often go beyond the locus of the workplace.

The concept of “critical junction” comes close to this complex empirical landscape, and is defined as “relations through time, relations in space, relations of power and dependency” that are found in the material world by looking at “the intestinal relations between nominally distinct domains such as economics, politics, the law, the family, etc.” (Kalb & Tak 2007, 3). This is a terrain in which the material and the immaterial are often intertwined, a terrain surrounded by tensions between policies, grand narratives and personal experiences. The aim here is, precisely, to understand this knot, and accordingly I have decided to work with two data corpora: firstly, programmatic documents from universities, ministries and legal university acts and secondly personal work stories.

Programmatic documents produced in HEIs as well as related governmental ministries reflect the overarching governance of Aalto University and Tallinn University of Technology (TUT). Programmatic documents operate on the “meso level”; they are inspired by the EU and OECD blueprints and implement concrete policies in the governing of HEI. The data was selected based on it assisting in the description of the institution’s developmental plans in relation to society, research, teaching and knowledge. Programmatic documents build upon this relation by adopting a highly rhetorical tone and vivid language. These specific documents thus use figures of speech, narratives, commonplaces, as well as new concepts and slogans, all of which circumscribe the limits of the possible and define positions. In short, they serve to outline the field as a whole. In addition to the programmatic documents, I have analysed some key institutional documents covering labour practices, such as “tenure track plans” and “human resources reports”. These documents were supplemented with interviews with high officials. Finally, I also selected key documents from the research departments (the Aalto department of design, and Ragnar the Nurske School of Innovation and Governance (RNS) at TUT). A descriptive table of the documents used is provided at the end of this chapter.

The second type of empirical material compiled for the study are personal work stories. They aim at reflecting “the micro”, that is, the experiences of the workers and researchers from the chosen departments. I selected informants who hold different positions within the respective departments, from doctorate students up to professors.

Documents are texts carefully produced by a well-oiled institutional machinery; they thereby reproduce narratives and values which are filtered
through an institutional and technical jargon. A programmatic document is a finished text. Contrarily, personal work stories are comprised of experiences, opinions, moral judgments, personal values, all of which are part of an individual existence transcending the confines of the workplace. Because of the different nature of the material used, a researcher should be careful not to undermine the sincerity of the personal experiences that are relayed. Plainly put, the aim was to avoid predisposing the interviewees to already anticipated answers that would thereby not cover their multifaceted experiences. Based on the above, the idea is to describe how the systemic and the quotidian unfold in the workplace by means of (i) the narratives identified in the documents and (ii) the personal work stories. Embarking on this path took the research closer to ethnographic methods. Here the concept of narrative is at the centre of things.

Narrative inquiry: theoretical backgrounds and methodological consequences

The definition of narrative varies depending on the discipline. In anthropology and sociology, narrative is usually linked to a story that gives access to the identity constructions of individuals (based on first-person experiences, opinions etc.) which otherwise would not be heard. Such approaches to narrative would be appropriate for this study, since a principal interest is to access experiences at the workplace. According to this approach, a narrative is simply defined as a story, which, made up of different voices, is structured with a beginning, middle and end (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994. Cited from Larsson & Sjöblom 2010, 274). Another definition underlines that, in sequential form, narratives provide meaning; they are “discourses with a clear sequential order that connect events in a meaningful way” (Hinchman & Hinchman 1997, 16. Cited from Larsson & Sjöblom 2010, 274). Here we can add that narratives communicate meaning to an audience (Kohler Riessman 2008, 11). Meaning here is whatever connects disconnected elements to concrete events in a given sequence. Thus, a narrative has an existential function: it structures personal experiences that, constructed around concrete “daily” events, provide them with an existential sense. The terms narrative and story are often used interchangeably. However, they are not straightforward synonyms. A personal story can convey a narrative when it transcends and lives beyond the individual who signals shared identities or common beliefs. It also might be a story of the cult of the self, which while cannot be considered a narrative, could nonetheless be relevant as a representation of contemporary society. Institutions
like governments or leaders also produce stories to promote themselves, but since these are public, they are necessarily expressed in the form of narratives (Kohler Riessman 2008, 7).

With that general setting in mind, it is not surprising that narrative research encompasses a wide range of methodological and analytical practices. These often work within the interpretative paradigm and take the consciousness of the subject on its own terms. People are active subjects living in contexts in which their curiosity and expectations might not be encouraged. Subject narrative research is also combined with “meta-narratives” to distinguish the “cult of the self” from the stories that signal narratives proper. Narratives are widely shared societal beliefs that circulate within determinate spaces and times, developing closely with and defining the “spirit of the times” (Kohler Riessman, 2008).

Czarniawska (1998) understands the relation between the individual and its social context by understanding the narrative as a linkage between people’s actions and their legitimation and accountability. Czarniawska’s references to legitimation and accountability recall the notion of social control: a narrative construct an existential meaning in which individual actions should, or at least appear to, accommodate social conventions. The notion of “appearance” indicates that the narrative is not per se a vehicle of social control but an instrument that provides actions with a righteous veneer of fairness, regardless whether this comes from an individual or an institution. Institutions, though, because of their size (e.g. a party, a government, trade unions or employer unions), have the capacity to steer far reaching policy actions and produce the narratives that legitimate them. Hence, institutions have the capacity to create new societal conventions to legitimate their actions. In essence, this is the struggle to establish a hegemonic ideology and thus become a constitutive and legitimating force, something that was presented in Chapter 6. Hence, the heuristic combination between the immaterial (conventions, social norms, etc.) and the material (policy action) within a dynamic order, which reproduces itself through time by delimiting the possible and signalling conditions of possibility in the near future. In this struggle, the narrative tends to bring together characters, places, events, institutions, social groups, all of which help to constitute a complex social landscape. The function of a “grand narrative” is to simplify this landscape and provide an explanation. And while the elements that constitute an order would still be there without the presence of a grand narrative, the elements themselves would be discursively arranged, that is to say, narrated differently.
The point of a grand narrative that aspires to be hegemonic is not only to situate itself in society, to explain or legitimise actions, it is also to exclude alternative narratives that could defy the bases of its own authority. Narratives are first and foremost artefacts that have a central place in the political battlefield. This occurs when certain norms and conventions, which are introduced by the narrative, become naturalised. The result is the establishment of consensual frames for policy implementation that defuse antagonisms, which define the political (Rancière 1999. Rancière & Panagia 2000. Žižek. 2005. Mouffe 2005. Fernández Liria 2015. Mouffe & Errejón 2015). In short, narratives aim at setting the rules of the game; they establish the contours of the political. We will see how the programmatic documents are part of this effort, offering descriptions and prescriptions for the social landscape.

Narrative research emerges as a mode of critical inquiry exploring the imposed rules that delimit the political as well as underlining the elements of society that resist them. This mode of inquiry operates beyond and against forms of positivism, which largely conceive society as an ahistorical object constituted by fix norms or evolutionary constants that generate a stable frame in anchoring research. From this stable frame dominant analytical models, such as rational choice theory, could ground a causal methodology inspired by the hard sciences and by mirroring industrial scientific management (Czarniawska-Joerges.1995, 15–19. Patterson & Renwick Monroe 1998, 317). The problem with such an approach is that it ends up reproducing the assumptions of the dominant narratives (Cox 1986, 207. Kohler Rießman 2005, 2).

Not that narrative analysis rejects systemic logics. Both French structuralism (Lévi Strauss) and Russian formalism (Bakhtin, Lutman) depart from different ontologies that see narratives built on some formal and universal elements. Thus, the study of narratives could be used to indicate some universal characteristics of human existence. Post-structuralism (Derrida, Foucault) challenged this idea, arguing that narratives cannot represent any sort of totality. Paradoxically, narratives have been widely used by postmodernists to signal the distance between, on the one hand, hegemonic cultural forces that constitute grand narratives and, on the other, the small “daily” stories of the common people linked to popular culture. In these gaps one can locate the means to “deconstruct” totalising frames and to subvert orders (Patterson & Renwick Monroe 1998, 318). Post-structuralist/postmodernist approaches, with their focus on concrete stories (“the cultural turn”), have resituated the category of narrative on a
different terrain entirely, far removed from the universalistic and formalistic proclivities of the structuralists (Cziarniawska-Joerges 1995, 19–20).

This study is interested in narratives as a way of comprehending the relation between the micro level and the capitalist order. Hence, I work with “the assumption of an order”, more specifically a totalising order, i.e. one that aspires to be a totality. This might seem contradictory considering that narrative research, generally construed – and thus not just postmodernism – aims at deconstructing “the story of the one, the idea that societies develop and grow organically”, which is often represented by constructions like national identity (Säfström 2012, 12). Following Säfström’s argument, let us briefly discuss that there no such contradiction exists here.

Drawing on the theoretical critique of the post-political condition offered by Jacques Rancière (1999) and Chantal Mouffe (2005), Säfström states that “the idea of the one” operates as a naturalising fiction that legitimates relations of inequality around which society is organised; it turns political discourse into something moral and apolitical. This is the case with concepts like citizenship or democratic rights, which, despite their ascendancy, cannot develop within this totalising idea of “the one”. As a consequence, such notions are turned into depoliticised empty receptacles, which serve to blunt, if not negate, antagonisms that would otherwise contest the idea of the “one” upon which economic and civil inequality are naturalised (Säfström 2012, 11–12).

In a similar vein, this study problematises this “idea of the one” and equally sees forms of narrative analysis as a “subversive” tool that “deconstructs” this post-political totality, thereby signalling contradictions and revealing deceptive constructions. Plainly put, both perspectives share a critical stand on post-political/de-antagonising narratives. The difference here is that this research is not a deconstruction of this totality but about the understanding of the relations of force that derive from it, regardless of its constructed nature. In any case, once one moves beyond all theoretical debate, the point around which we all meet is that this totality is not a “natural order of things” but a “politically” imposed order and as such needs to be “deconstructed” “subverted” or “denounced”. For this reason, we equally see the centrality of the often deceptive and fluid tales that circulate within a given order. We agree also on how the narrative method can help to interpret and see how this order is “enacted” within this erratic context by looking at how institutions and subjects relate to each other.

It is important to recall the argument that a totalising order does not mean that the subject is conceived as a passive entity helpless in front of
structures. Despite the capacity for a grand narrative to influence, its complete legitimation ultimately rests on the consent of political subjects, the outcome of which is not determined by any monolithic constants but is a situation that is constantly changing. From a Gramscian perspective, the subject has autonomy and this condition of autonomy constitutes itself in a permanent dialogue with the structure that needs to be approached without specifically assuming any constants (a presupposition of Gramsci's historic-realist and immanent approach to political and social phenomena, see chapter 6). This means that we can claim little about the subject until we investigate the subject’s embeddedness in a set of relations within his or her immediate context. Like more constructivist approaches, the narrative inquiry advanced here focuses on revealing those relations that produce power within a contemporary context of contradictory constructions and fictions.

Narrative and relationality: from the general to the concrete

The study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin 1990, 2)

Narratives help us understand ourselves as political beings, narrative becomes an invaluable tool in navigating the myriad of sensations that bombard us daily (Patterson & Renwick Monroe 1998, 315)

The strength of a narrative to convincingly encompass a complex societal landscape rests on its capacity to narrate this very landscape. Convincing is about seducing, creating pleasant horizons. Hence, the principal way in which this research understands narrative is no different from the postmodernists: narratives are verisimilar fictions, which means they are made to transcend the dichotomy real/fiction.1 What matters here is that they create the measures and codes that frame a “coherent and natural order in appearance”, reconstituting and reproducing it. Despite the importance of discourse, we should not disregard the fact that plain coercion is often entrenched and lurks imposingly behind seductive

1 It has always surprised me that mainstream social science is often allergic to reflecting on fiction (e.g. cinema and literature) as a resource for exploring social phenomena. Culture is placed on a lower ladder of knowledge and is immediately outcast from science. This often results in a troubling mediocre but proud ignorance that lives behind a supposed academic rigor, but which is nothing more than anti-intellectualism disguised in academic jargon.
narratives, as an instrument that decisively contributes to the formalisation and solidification of a “coherent and natural order”. Fear armed with violence can be a powerful “relational instrument” to enclose an order (Kalb 2005).

In the context of the workplace, the ties that bind narratives, relationality and the solidification of an order are especially strong. Through work one experiences the materiality of one’s position and the imagined properties that come with it. This is because work does not only “materially organise” people within a productive/exploitative logic but in itself creates identity groups that exist simply because of the existence of “others” underpinning solid societal positions that transcend the workplace (Coe & Jordhus-Lier 2010, 220).

The descriptive and interpretative strength of narratives resides in the duality between the general and the specific, the abstract and the concrete. The narrative translates general notions into concrete arguments and practices (Flyvberg 2006, 237). The strengths of this duality are many. However, here I would like to underline three. First, narratives give voice to people that otherwise won’t be heard. The empowering of these voices might reflect a different perception of what is taken for granted. On this basis narratives can have emancipatory effects. As part of their emancipatory potential, these voices are expressed through means that differ markedly from the usual scientific communication or policy jargon. A second strength is that narratives above all, are a vector that “connect (however unstably) parts to a constructed configuration or a social network (however incoherent or unrealizable), composed of symbolic, institutional, and material practices” (Sommers & Gibson 1994, 59). Narratives make possible the uniting of spheres that are apparently difficult to connect, they represent a sequence connecting concrete events to larger processes (Pentland 1999, 713). Thirdly, and as a consequence of the other two, narrative based research does not escape the inner complexity of cases by isolating them. Narratives are themselves dense and underline their multiple connections with surrounding reality (Flyvberg 2006, 237). The density or depth of a narrative case study rests on tracing the generative elements (e.g. concepts and words) that signal the (political) direction of their sequentiality (Pentland 1999, 719–21).

The main challenges involved in tracing this narrative depth consists in designing a convincing method that does not denaturalise the aforementioned strengths within which any interpretation is itself to be rooted. Finally, any interpretation should be consistent with the data, theoretically
sophisticated and ought to be presented coherently (Larsson & Sjöblom 2010, 277)

As stated earlier, programmatic documents and personal work stories constitute two different empirical materials, and owing to their distinguishing features each requires the use of different methodological tools and practices, even if in both cases the main task is to extract a narrative. Despite their differences, the model of thematic analysis will be applied to both parts of our collected material. Thematic analysis is one of four models of narrative analysis, according to Kohler Riessman’s classification (2005, 2–5)². This model of narrative analysis emphasises the content of the text. Simplifying we can say that a thematic analysis is based on “what” is said rather than on “how” it is said; language is thus considered a resource and not a topic for investigation. Thematic analysis is closely related to methods generally associated with grounded theory: it is based on a collection of stories from which one inductively creates groups of data based on the identification of themes key to understanding a narrative as a whole (Kohler Riessman 2005, 2). Thematic analysis and grounded theory methodologies are thus the common denominator. However, due to the different nature of the material, it is necessary to design two distinct methods for our thematic analytical work, one specific for the programmatic documents and another for the personal work stories. Let’s begin with how we shall undertake a thematic analysis for the programmatic documents.

7.1. Grounded Theory and the emergence of concepts in programmatic documents

Generally, programmatic documents present a grand plan. At the same time, they present a narrative thread that situates plans both in the present as well as in the future. Thus, we can say that programmatic documents act as a sort of umbrella for direct policy implementation. The nature of these documents combines the obscure technical language of policy papers with

² In other models, language is a topic for investigation. Thus, the structural approach emphasises the function of the story in relation to the listener (by focusing on the choice of words, types of expression, etc.). In interactional analysis the focus is on the dialogical process between teller and listener within settings, such as medical, social services, and court situations. The interactional model thus requires transcripts that include non-linguistic features, which might be determinant in the outcome of the conversation. Finally, the performative model views the spoken word as an act, a performance situated within a larger context of socially “performed” constructions (Kohler Riessman 2005, 3–6).
“the narrative tempo” and rhetoric of a political document. Therefore, concepts, figures of speech, metaphors, vaguely expressed dichotomies (good/bad, worthy/unworthy, inefficient/efficient) are all deployed in the documents as ways of situating the institution in relation to society. The programmatic documents’ narrative constructs a societal frame by positioning subjects and institutions in relation to their domains while appealing to collective ideas (e.g. fear, guilt, shared problems). It helps to bring to light the essential features that support and encourage the furtherance of actual institutional policies (Hajer 1997. Maynard-Moddy & Musheno, 2003, 31.).

The analysis of these documents should trace the concepts, figures of speech, perceived problems, the descriptions of the social, which entail presuppositions that ultimately constitute the backbone of the narrative’s relation with the larger politico-economic structure. After all, programmatic documents are sustained through following a dramatic plot, which by its very nature is both temporal and directional. Giving a direction to things is the *raison d’être* of any narrative. It is a matter of orienting ourselves within, and giving an understanding to, the world surrounding us, as well as prescribing how we are best to conduct ourselves within it (Connelly & Clandin 1990, 2. Kohler Riessman 2008. Chapter 2). Programmatic documents are thus the conveyers of how, from a certain ideological viewpoint, humans are said to experience the world as well as expressing the grounds of “legitimacy” for the concrete implementation of a series of policies.

**Method and working process**

Sommers & Gibson (1994, 60 cited in Patterson & Renwick Monroe 1998, 324–325), define narrativity from a social science perspective drawing on Ricoeur (1981) and Lyotard (1984). This definition is divided into four sequential parts:

1) The relationality of the parts.

2) Causal emplotment, explaining the relationship between the elements of the plot, according to which causal relations are drawn in constructing a significant network of relationships.

3) Selective appropriation. The selection of those potential elements that comprise the narrative and the omission of those deemed irrelevant.
4) The organisation of the plot with respect to how the elements operate internal to a narrative, bearing in mind temporality, sequence and place.

Roe Emery suggests a way of analysing a narrative that essentially draws on the defining characteristics adumbrated above. This is essentially an exercise of thematic analysis and grounded theory comparable to Kohler Riessman’s proposal we mentioned above (2005, 2–5). Emery’s sequencing is as follows (Emery 1994, 155–156):

1. Definition of stories: begin by identifying beginnings, middles, ends. If dealing with arguments, identify premises and conclusions. Here one also must identify the dominant assumptions, underwritten in the statements

2. Identify those narratives that do not conform to, or even directly counter, the dominant narrative.

3. Compare stories and non-stories (as well counter stories) in order to generate a meta-narrative. Base this comparative operation semiotically, by describing a thing in terms of what it is not.”

4. Make sense of the reconstructed meta-narrative in relation to “the general context of the problem” (in my case this would be capitalism)

The analysis of the narratives of the programmatic documents undertaken in this study will broadly follow Emery’s sequencing. Having said this, some adjustments have been made for the purposes of our research, in order to facilitate the reconstruction of the narratives present in the empirical material. Here the analytical process can be broken down into three steps. The first step is to collect and select key concepts, dominant assumptions, metaphors that recur in the text. The second step is what Sommers and Emery identify as constructing the “causal emplotment”, by which they mean the identification of the argumentational line that (i) connects the selected concepts and (ii) locates any contradictions that might be incubated within the narrative. Finally, the third step is to ascertain how the narrative relates to the larger context, that is, how do the emerging concepts/ideas constituting the narrative relate to the Gramscian theoretical framework adopted in this study?

For the first and second steps, I apply grounded theory techniques to interpret the textual material, using line by line coding to signal the
emergence of words that help to constitute the nodal points of the narrative and that also guide the development of its argumentational structure.

The third step principally encompasses the writing process, a central element in any narrative analysis. Inspired by Fraser 2004, Maynard-Moddy & Musheno. 2003, Kohler Riessman 2008, I have subdivided these three steps into the following sub-phases:

First step: Line by line coding: extract key concepts, nodal points and story lines

1. Collection of concepts extracted from the text via line-by-line coding to signal those words and terms emphasised the most and that thereby indicate the nodal points of the narrative. In this process, one can also begin to trace the directions and contradictions of the different inner stories (layers) in the narrative.

2. The second phase involves assembling the pieces of the narratives from each of the documents, looking at how the different inner stories help to constitute the larger narrative. In this process, one reflects more on the types of conventions and cultural clichés that are reproduced and whether or not they are responsible for generating contradictions. At the same time, one can analyse which aspects of social reality are being neglected and/or supressed. At the end of this process, a conceptual map is drawn to represent the narrative direction of every document.

Second step: Narrative Emplotment

3. The third phase consists in connecting the narrative of each document to a “grand narrative” that can encompass all of them. This is realised, on the one hand, by acknowledging the literal references and citations present within the documents. Since programmatic documents often cross-reference other key policy documents from the same institution, government or the EU, any such references can help to indicate how specific arguments often migrate between and permeate through the various sectors and parts of the hierarchy of the social order. On the other hand, the grand narrative is constituted by the existence of pat-

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3 By node or nodal point, I mean a word that succinctly summarises the ideas inductively extracted from the line-by-line coding. The nodes or nodal points, once connected one after the other, represent the key concepts driving the narrative as a whole.
terns that transcend more than one document. Similar patterns might emerge regarding the presence of conventions and contradictions, or with respect to the institutionalisation and reproduction of structures, social practices, etc. This process will lead to a final conceptual map representing one single narrative that attempts to encompass all the nodal points operating on different levels.

Third Step, writing the narrative in relation to the larger context.

4. Once one studies the final conceptual map, it is possible to see the narrative’s skeleton with all its nodes, connecting vectors and contradictions. From here one will be able to relate the synthesised empirical material to both the research questions and the larger Gramscian theoretical framework. The research questions and the initial theoretical point of departure can be broken down into three claims: i) KBE is an instrument of power that enacts a social order within the larger capitalist order; ii) KBE is reasonably efficient at organising people despite achieving little material success and not fulfilling most of its own promises, and iii) the constitution of this order occurs within the contradictory logics of narrativity and reality, the immaterial and the material, which nonetheless make possible some degree of coherence and thus a totalising whole.

Does the emerging grand narrative shed light on this process of constituting a coherent order? Does it suggest how these contradictions are conveyed within the various institutional levels of higher education institutions? Are there contradictions operating between different narratives that make it difficult to make out a whole of any kind? Does this mean that perhaps there is no whole and, accordingly, the Gramscian theoretical assumptions that have so far guided the study, would lay in tatters? At this point, let me here open up a parenthesis on the problem of “saving theory”, which derives from this last question and looms over the writing process as a whole. How is it possible to work with theoretical assumptions that remain unreflected upon, and how can a theory develop, if this means challenging its founding axioms? (Yanow et al 2006, 121). Here we must address the question of the positionality of the researcher in the field when precisely the analytical task is to unite the different narrative nodes. Fieldwork on feminist ethnography has addressed this question: when a field of research reproduces values that oppose those posited by the researcher’s chosen
theory, the researcher needs to understand the wider context from within which the informant thinks and acts. She must thus resist reproducing pre-existing assumptions about the opinions of informants that too readily end up judging certain practices or views as regressive or reactionary when in actual fact these very views could, within specific contexts, be the only means available for contestation and emancipation (Meadow, 2013). In the case of the present research, we approach people who live within hierarchical formations that, as is the case with feminist ethnography, represent values opposed to the theoretical positions held herein. For this reason, the problem of positionality expressed by feminists can be transposed onto the present research.

5. The connections drawn in the conceptual map are not fully realised until the narrative is written. Connelly & Clandinin (1990, 7) mention that it is not clear when the process of writing-up the narrative structure starts because, in gathering and organising the most important elements, the writing process is to a certain extent already under way. Maynard-Moddy & Musheno (2003, 30) state: “in narrative analysis, writing is itself a methodology”. Writing is thus the materialisation of the researcher’s own interpretation of the narrative. What is therefore required is a writing style that remains close to the original text without losing the critical eye of an inductive exercise. The researcher co-constructs stories with the informants but also translates the concrete and personal into the general (Kohler Riessman 2008. Chapter 2). The writing process of connecting the nodal points needs to stay true to the spirit of the method and to its informants, keeping the narrative tempo proper to a story while developing the theoretical insights or concepts that might be emerging.

6. The final phase is to re-theorise the theoretical framework by integrating the new concepts that emerge from the narrative and reformulating the theoretical argument of the dissertation. This final phase is undertaken not in the empirical part of the book but, for structural reasons, is undertaken in the study’s conclusion.
7. METHODS IN A WORKER INQUIRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1: Line by line coding</th>
<th>Phase 1: Line-by-line coding. Emergence of concepts, narrative nodes and layers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 2: Assembling nodal points and concepts. Identification of recurrent metaphors, conventions and contradictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Narrative emplotment</td>
<td>Phase 3: Formulation of a grand narrative from the assemblage of nodal points encompassing all the documents. Represented in a conceptual map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: Writing of the narrative: Connecting theory with empirics</td>
<td>Phase 4: Connections with the theoretical framework: Theoretical translation of the narrative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Phase 5: Writing. Co-constructing a narrative close to the literality of the empirics as well as the generalities of the theory.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 6: Re-theorisation, reinterpreting and revising the theoretical framework in light of what the narrative shows.</td>
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</table>

7.2. Grasping experiences: personal stories and narrative analysis

Building a guiding frame for the story tellers

The things we experience at work transcend the workplace, for the simple reason that work in capitalism does not only provide the basic means by which to sustain day to day existence, it also can be the space in which an important part of one’s own hopes and expectations are realised (career, personal creative realisation, social life etc.). Furthermore, it is also a space where values develop. The workplace is a living space delimited by norms that workers often assume to be theirs. The prominence of work in the life of a person is named “embeddedness of labour agency” (Mitchell 1996) and it reflects the material reality of people’s daily lives as well as their position in the social structure (Coe & Jordhus-Lier 2010, 220). The deterioration of working conditions is not simply a material issue but cultural too, and it is important to account for how these two dimensions intertwine. When working conditions deteriorate, social distress can result. This is something we have learnt with the collapse of Fordism and communism, and we can say that, today, it serves as one element that explains the rise of the populist right (Kalb 2009, 2018)

Personal stories seem the best way to dig deep into these layers because, contrary to interviews, the informants are not forced to respond to pre-mediated questions but have the opportunity to speak about themselves.
This might be a truism, but it is no less important. We are not interested to learn aspects from a known background, but rather to learn about a context from the perspective of their own work/life experiences. Experiences made of morals, values, successes, failures, work etc. Some personal stories offer a diverse often coherent and detailed picture of the relation between the self and the context while others just provide vague clues. In any case, “stories not only describe the world, they also shape it” (Maynard-Moody & Musheno’s 2003, 30): the self is described in relation to its surroundings and this relation is what the researcher needs to interpret. For that purpose, as a researcher, one must open up the space for the interviewees to speak, to let them create categories, norms, beliefs, etc. (Yanow et al. 2006, 205). At the same time some general guidance needs to be provided. Ricoeur and Lyotard (cited from Sommers & Gibson 1994, 59) understand the story as a conundrum of different “narrative scales”. These narrative scales are used to place these distinct layers within the relation between self and its context, in order to produce the anchoring points for the story. These narratives levels are:

a) Ontological narratives: we use these to function as social actors. The ontological narrative is the product of the relation between identity (an understanding of the self) and agency (conditions for action). Do people understand themselves as autonomous individuals acting to uphold a principle? Do they feel any existential need to change or to escape from established conventions?

b) Public narratives: these originate in institutions or social formations with which people are in daily contact. A person’s ontological narrative is in a permanent dialogue with public narratives (both co-constituting and/or contesting). In the present research these narratives are represented in the universities’ programmatic documents.

c) Conceptual narratives: these are “theoretical abstractions” and are constructed based on the assumptions underpinning the public narratives. A “scientifised” abstraction thereby turns the contingent fundamentals of a public narrative into fixed social norms. For example, the “truth motto” that states how the private sector is always more efficient than the public, or that competitiveness is always positive.

d) Meta-narrative or master-narrative: The grand narrative of our time, or put otherwise, the zeitgeist. It is a discourse that suffuses both institutions
and persons. For example: teleological narratives that re-define the meaning of social progress. Like conceptual narratives, they are abstractions turned into far-reaching naturalisations that organise society, often tapping into dualities like good/bad, success/failure, etc.

Any questions posed to the study’s informants were formulated by means of these different narrative scales. Such questions needed to be open and free of categories or concepts that could predetermine answers. In addition to this, I presented the questions in chronological order, thus inviting the interviewee to tell her experiences in the form of a story, with a beginning, middle and end. Below you have a representation of the frame. The grey part represents the narrative scales inspired by Ricoeur and Lyotard:4

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4 The informants received the frame without this grey part.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>The world (ontological perspective)</th>
<th>Anonymized</th>
<th>The action of the discourse (conceptual perspective)</th>
<th>Socially shared (general social sense of self)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time in categories (work stories)</td>
<td>Beginning (part) How has your work been</td>
<td>First emerging What was your profession</td>
<td>First emerging How do you think your work is generally appreciated by others; How do you think your work is generally appreciated by others</td>
<td>First emerging How are people in your field generally appreciated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle (presets) How is your work</td>
<td>Work disorder What are the prescribed role expectations for the middle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End (presets) Future, prospects of the</td>
<td>Work disorder What are the prescribed role expectations for the end</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you think your work will relate to the field of sociology in the future?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you think your work is generally appreciated by others?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you think your work is generally appreciated by others?</td>
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<td>How do people in your field generally appreciate you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do people in your field generally appreciate you?</td>
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</table>
As one can see from the above table, the questions posed mainly cohered around relations within the workplace. Here I have adopted a strategy similar to those found in other notable works, especially those working within the framework of workerism (Lazzarato & Negri 2001. Blondeau et al. 2004. Lazzarato 2005.) as well as in the literature focusing on the post-Fordist digerati workers (Terranova 2000, Heffernan 2000. Fisher 2011), all of whom attest to the fact that talking about work generally guides one to talk about one’s life. As I mentioned above, work is central for material survival and in the case of academia it is also key for developing a meaningful existence around knowledge and labour that transcends the work realm.

Selection criteria and recording the stories

I collected seven stories from the Department of Media from Aalto University and six stories from Ragnar Nurske School in TUT. The criteria of selection were to cover different positions in the hierarchy of the departments with different contracts (e.g. doctoral students, senior researchers, professors). The selection was gender balanced and concerted attempts were made to represent different nationalities in what were very international departments. Finally, age was also considered in the choice of informants. The informants for this study, though, are considerably younger than the university average. This is principally because these two departments were created only relatively recently.

The case selection of these two university departments responds to their apparent representability as “KBE raw models”: that is, multidisciplinary and international departments with many of their workers dedicated to research (applied oriented design), while part of their working lives is spent outside academia. Moreover, both university departments are part of two HEIs that represent the vanguard of the KBE, both in Finland and in Estonia – countries geographically very close but with different historical backgrounds. There will be a more thorough description of the respective departments in the following chapter. At this point let us present the work positions of the informants interviewed.

Department of Design Aalto University (DDA):
DDA PhD1: PhD Student
DDA PhD2: PhD Student
DDA PhD3: PhD Student
DDA PhD4: PhD student
DDA Sen1: Senior: Senior researcher  
DDA Sen2: Senior Researcher Lecturer  
DDA Prof. 1: Professor  

Ragnar Nurske School of Innovation Governance (RNS) at Tallinn University of Technology:  
RNS PhD1: PhD Student  
RNS Sen.1: Senior Researcher/lecturer  
RNS Prof. 1: Professor/head  
RNS PhD 2: PhD Student  
RNS Prof. 2: Professor  
RNS Prof. 3: Professor/Head of the department  

Work positions entail different responsibilities, though the responsibilities themselves do not necessarily correlate with their nominal position. For example, a PhD student might teach or work in the department as well as be a part of certain projects that have little to do with their ongoing research, or it might be the case that they are involved in projects outside of the university altogether. Such jobs often lay outside of their work contracts. Due to reasons of anonymity, this is not specified in the informant list above, although it will be part of the analysis later.

For the recording of the stories I largely followed the recommendations given by Maynard-Moddy & Musheno’s (2003). The frame for questioning was sent to each informant ten days before recording, so that they had time to organise their thoughts in the form of a story that would follow the frame, though not in a literal sense. There were no set limits with respect to content or in terms of recording time; the aim was to collect stories that were rich in experiential content. The length of the stories varied; from 30 minutes to more than 100 minutes. The personal story was told in a private space of their choice without interruptions. Only at the end of each story were questions asked by the interviewer, in order to clarify some aspects.

Maynard-Moddy & Musheno’s (2003) Cops, Teachers and Counselors. Stories from the Front Lines of Public Service served as a methodological inspiration for the personal work stories, because the purpose of their research, which was “to collect and examine street-level workers’ everyday work stories to uncover their judgments as they see them” (Maynard-Moddy & Musheno’s 2003, 25), comes very close to my aim of examining researcher’s work experiences in relation to their immediate and larger contexts.
The analysis of the stories and the emergence of narratives

These personal work stories are set in relatively large organisations. This means that they refer to hierarchies, internal work norms, administration, contracts, etc. Consequently, the analysis of the stories is complemented with references to the institutional order provided by the programmatic documents and the contextual chapters. The informative interviews undertaken with higher officials, occupying positions immediately above the research departments, provided a valuable background to understand both personal experiences and their immediate hierarchical contexts.

The ways in which the personal stories have been analysed is similar to the programmatic documents presented above (coding, emerging of concepts / narrative emplotment / writing of a narrative). This analysis, though, considers the human dimension of the personal story. This means evaluating each of the stories in their respective personal contexts, while trying to find common cross-references that indicate similar themes, values, and arguments that could constitute narrative nodal points. All these elements are refined during the writing process, which is always the actual “materialisation” of the narrative.

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*See list of interviewed officials at the end of the chapter*
THE UNIVERSITY AND THE DEMAND FOR KNOWLEDGE-BASED GROWTH

170


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of document</th>
<th>Title (key documents in bold)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Institution/Author</th>
<th>Synopsis, Choice criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governmental Plan</td>
<td>National Reform Programme &quot;Estonia 2020&quot;</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Estonian Government</td>
<td>This document establishes the objectives for competitiveness and the main lines of action to achieve them. The two central objectives are increasing productivity and employment in Estonia by bringing education and the labour market closer together, as well as by developing the skills of the unemployed. This is a document that touches upon the archetypical lines of action of a KBE-inspired reform in which HEI are central.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estonian University Strategy 2006–2015</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Estonian Minister of Education and Research</td>
<td>This document analyses and develops the past, present and future of Estonian HEI. It defines and situates HEI in relation to knowledge production in a context of globalisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General University Programmatic Documents</td>
<td>Strategic Plan of Tallinn University of Technology 2011-2015: Academic Quality</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Tallinn University of Technology Council</td>
<td>This document defines what academic quality is and how it should be developed during the years to come, within the context of governmental plans and global developments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research and development strategy 2005-2015</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Tallinn University of Technology Council</td>
<td>General university strategy, programmatic document. TUT’s main strategic goals for the years to come in relation to the governmental policies and the general socio-economic context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports on Labour and work life</td>
<td>Personnel strategy of Tallinn University of Technology 2012-2015</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Tallinn University of Technology Council</td>
<td>General description of the relation between jobs and their relation to the general objectives that the institution is pursuing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TUT Management System Manual</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Tallinn University of Technology</td>
<td>Thorough description of the “management of the institution”, which mainly describes the relation between the different levels of the hierarchy within the institution as well as the external actors’ “stakeholders”. Plainly put, this document tells how the institution works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEKTORY: Knowledge transfer organization</td>
<td>MEKTORY. Presentation electronic leaflet</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>MEKTORY</td>
<td>This is a knowledge transfer organisation, which is part of the university; &quot;where businesses, students, professors, schoolchildren and investors from all over the world meet to generate new ideas&quot;. The choice was made owing to the importance given to knowledge transfer in HEI policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEKTORY business Model Competition</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>MEKTORY</td>
<td>This is a contest for the best start-up business model. This document is purely descriptive, informing participants what is indispensable to know before entering the competition. The document is written by MEKTORY, the jury for the knowledge-intensive start-up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with MEKTORY high rank administrative</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>MEKTORY</td>
<td>Informative interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE UNIVERSITY AND THE DEMAND FOR KNOWLEDGE-BASED GROWTH
Part 3: Aalto University and the Department of Media
Aalto University, the jewel of the crown

Aalto University, named after the famous Finnish architect and designer Alvar Aalto (1898–1976), was founded in 2010. It is located in Greater Helsinki, mainly on the Otaniemi Campus in the municipality of Espoo. While some schools are in the centre of Helsinki, it is expected that all the university’s activities will be on campus by 2020. Aalto University (hereafter AU) is the product of the merger of three old universities: Helsinki University of Technology (founded in 1849); Helsinki School of Economics (founded in 1904) and University of Arts and Design (founded in 1871). Aalto is comprised of six university schools: the School for Economics; the School for Art and Design; the School for Chemical Technology; the University School for Engineering; the School for Electrical Engineering and the School for Science. AU has become the third largest university in Finland with 17,500 students and 4,000 staff members, almost the same size as University of Turku, though significantly smaller than the 35,000 students from Helsinki University.

The idea to merge these well-established institutions was conceived in the mid-2000s at the height of the debate surrounding university reforms, and which culminated in the University Act of 2009. From its embryonic phase Aalto was bred to become a “super university” for new times, the flagship university for a knowledge-based economy; a university that, with its emphasis on multidisciplinarity, would be well equipped to produce “useful knowledge” and to train skilful individuals, preparing them for specific needs on the present day labour market.

Aalto University projects are partly financed by foundations that are seeking to strengthen the links between the private sector and the university. AU has also start-up incubators and regularly organises meetings with big corporations to design partnerships, to discuss labour recruitment as
well as the financing of start-ups, etc. On this matter, AU is the Finnish university to have benefited most from the new legal status introduced by the University Act of 2009. This made it possible for universities to compete for private funding, thus rewarding those institutions most adept at attracting funding with more funding. AU has today a budget that no other university in Finland can match. Furthermore, not only does AU command a significant amount of public and private funds, it also participates in some Centres of Excellence, thus it represents the top research institution in the country and is financed directly by the Academy of Finland.¹

Aalto University was ranked 133rd by QS World University Rankings (2017). This makes AU second only to the University of Helsinki, 91st, as the most highly ranked HEI in Finland. It is an outcome that, despite only having recently been established, can be explained on account of AU ranking high on benchmarking that reflects Aalto’s own specific idea of excellence. Nonetheless, Aalto remains very far from the top of those global universities who enjoy, beyond a history of prestige and excellence, copious budgets way beyond the reach of AU.

In the following sections, the general strategy of AU, which was published in 2012, will be scrutinised. This is a long programmatic document that draws together the general guidelines for all the institutions. This analysis is accompanied by some interviews with higher officials that were undertaken on Otaniemi Campus.

8.1. A general vision of a progressive change towards a sustainable world: first the user, and then the world. “Think Glocal!”

The general directives for Aalto University point towards a positive relation between, on the one hand, the main activities of the university (teaching and researching) and, on the other, wider processes of globalisation and the Knowledge-based Economy. Broadly speaking, this means that the newly created university can produce knowledge relevant for science and highly skilled individuals who are competitive on the market. This represents a narrative of change and modernisation in unparalleled times, where knowledge will be central in promoting social prosperity, and where there

¹The Academy of Finland (Suomen Akatemia in Swedish Finland’s Akademi) is the main public funding institution for scientific research in Finland. The Academy administers over 260 million euros for research every year.
exists unwavering respect for the researcher’s autonomy and creativity in a multidisciplinary, collaborative environment:

Our Mission

Aalto University works towards a better world through top-quality research, interdisciplinary collaboration, pioneering education, surpassing traditional boundaries, and enabling renewal. The national mission of the University is to support Finland’s success and to contribute to Finnish society, its internationalisation and competitiveness, and to promote the welfare of its people through research by educating responsible, broad-minded experts to act as society’s visionaries and change agents. (Aalto Strategy 2012, 7)

Our teaching will foster creative scientific and artistic thinking and the development of an entrepreneurial mindset. We encourage and defend proactive and constructive critical thinking. We explore the interface between disciplines and challenge traditional working by providing new solutions. (Aalto Strategy 2012, 8)

In these times of an “unparalleled digital revolution”, the causal relation between technical knowledge, innovation, growth and general prosperity, is established. The drive for technological innovation is what connects the different disciplines: new products need engineers to programme them, new designers to bring these products closer to human need, etc. Here, different methodologies heuristically merge:

We are learning from each other a lot. At the beginning I was a bit sceptical with the whole thing but the experience is very valuable. Now we are even planning to write articles together (Aalto University. Professor of software engineering service design, April 2013)

Nevertheless, this is not a frictionless integration. There are also constraints:

The project has had a top down perspective rather than a bottom up one. It would be nice now to have more of a bottom up approach (…). Moreover, the School of Arts does not have resources for organising many courses, so they need us in order to organise more courses. (Ibid.)
These constraints are related to the expected difficulties surrounding the merging of but also to the re-definition of responsibilities at the workplace. The overarching narrative is loosely defined. Nonetheless, it still prescribes responsibilities, constraints and ways of labouring, all of which appear at different levels of the university hierarchy. The narrative delimits, it also connects ideas and structures, as well as forecasts. It is relational in nature, i.e. it establishes positions that are shaped by relations between structures (e.g. institutions and companies) and peoples within a given totality. In the present chapter, we will describe the narrative that governs Aalto University by analysing their programmatic documents. Chapter 9 will explore the work experiences of academic labour in relation to the overarching narrative of the institution. Finally, Chapter 10 will bring the two analyses together.

The narrative that emerges from the programmatic documents touches on a broader re-conceptualisation of time. The subtext would be that we are living in unparalleled times, in the digital era where, crucially, knowledge and innovations are pivotal for society. This narrative can be broken down
into two parts. The first develops on this reconceptualisation of time, drawing on the unlimited transformative power of utilitarian knowledge\(^2\) that envisages a certain future (Section 8.2 and 8.3). The second part addresses values, specifically the positive synergies created by entrepreneurship. For this part of the analysis, the point is to show how this narrative, comprised of two parts, gestates contradictions and irresolvable questions which then materialise at the level of the academic workplace (Section 8.4.) Overall, this chapter identifies those elements that define the context in which the main characters of this story – e.g. the researchers – experience their work lives.

Knowledge plays a critical role in these unparalleled times. The university is to be part of the vanguard of change by producing knowledge and training “change agents” (Aalto Strategy 2012, 7. School of Art, Design and Architecture 2014, 1). The relation between knowledge and society is conceived in terms of “human centred” and “user centred” knowledge, two terms that are used synonymously. User/Human centred literally refers to knowledge primarily directed to fulfil the needs of users/humans:

The cooperation and interactions between the different fields in the New Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture will challenge technology-driven thinking, putting greater emphasis on human-and user-centred approaches in creating a humane living environment. (Aalto University Strategy 2012, 10/School of Arts and design “Mission”)

“Challenging technology driven thinking” implores researchers to understand their work not only in terms of improving technical knowledge and expertise but, thanks to the methods of the School of Arts Design and Architecture, by appreciating research in a broader sense that extends beyond the traditional domains of engineering with an objective to visualise a solution that accommodates the user: “engineers understand the solution as a concept that we reach following a clear methodology whereas graphic

\(^2\) Utilitarian means to direct every effort to utility maximisation as the “natural” path to follow in any human endeavour. This departs from an essentialist view of Man that understands a human being as steered by p “utility maximization, logic of preferences, decision making under conditions of uncertainty, and more broadly, the centrality of individuals in the explanation of collective outcomes” (Green & Shapiro 1994, 13). To be rational is when objectives are pursued by means that are efficient and effective for achieving these ends (Green & Shapiro 1994, 14). In this case, utility is mainly about market-oriented knowledge or problem-solving oriented knowledge and university reforms are guided by this form of maximisation. Nuccio Ordine (2013) perhaps provides the best critique on the impact of utilitarian dogma in academia, in his book L’utilità dell’inutile translated as the Usefulness of the useless (2017).
designers visualise the solution by playing with images” (Tarja, professor of software engineering service design. April 2013).

The multidisciplinary approach is meant to encourage artists and designers to focus on concrete functional aspects and to deliver the visualising skills that engineers miss in refining technical solutions for solving complex problems. This does not mean moving away from technocentrism, but rather extending it to a larger societal context: “The creative fields (…) will be able to renew themselves and to tackle global challenges, such as promoting ecology, building a sustainable future and developing services.” (Aalto University Strategy 2012, 10)

Societal needs are generally reduced to “services for the users” canalised through the market. Non-profit making channels are largely absent from the text, and researchers should direct their work to private firms. Therefore, the aim of changing society for the better must be compatible with profits as the means of ensuring economic growth, indispensable for any durable social changes. The close relation between research and the private sector appears throughout the document. For example, it is evident when the notion of “societal impact” is addressed (Alto Strategy 2012, 19):

Principles of Developing Societal Impact

The University’s in-depth, explorative expertise and commitment to long-term cooperation to promote favourable development of existing companies and provide opportunities for the creation of new business. In return, a close collaboration with business enriches the operations of the University. The expertise generated by an internationally competitive university also attracts foreign investors, serving to diversify domestic business life.

User centred knowledge presupposes that problems surrounding the digital society can be tackled at an individual level, courtesy of an alliance between university researchers and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, research is undertaken from the assumption of a close relation between human needs and technology. Needs and solutions are rooted in the “intersection of mobile technologies, services, games and entertainment” (School of Arts Design and Architecture Strategy 2015).

The common is mostly eclipsed by the user-centred focus, a circumstance that enables an individualised problem-solving approach to be adopted, which is couched in a language that avoids recognising any structural constraints. Knowledge is produced for a society of “stakeholders” that confronts “challenges” and requires “solutions”; it is an understanding of
knowledge that aims at developing “interaction”. Little is said about knowledge directed towards other goals, such as cultural emancipation, solidarity or social justice. Not surprisingly, words that would underline structural needs are rarely employed despite a context of increasing social disparities in Finland. The word “equality” is mentioned twice in the document, once to refer to “boosting” gender equality (Aalto University Strategy 2012, 14) and the other time to refer to the equal evaluation of performance at work (ibid, 8). There is, however, no reference to social equality.

Sustainability: a structural problem conceived as a problem of utilities

Environmental sustainability is the only problem recognised as common/structural that receives attention. Here, Aalto’s intention is to ensure the proper institutional integration of sustainability and sustainable practices:

Aalto University’s mission to build a better world and a stronger Finland, and sustainability is at the core of this mission. It is an essential part of what and how we conduct research, study and teach, and it determines the kind of impact that our scientific, artistic and educational activities will have on the society around us. Our intention is to integrate sustainability into all our teaching and research by 2015 and become Finland’s leading sustainable university campus by 2020.” (A passage from the foreword written by the Rector, Tuula Teeri. Aalto University Sustainability Report, 3.)

There are similar references to sustainability in the general strategy, though no clear definition is given. One can discern a little better the meaning of sustainability from the specific strategy presented by the School of Art, Architecture and Design (Website 2015):

- Ecological sustainability: development is in harmony with natural phenomena and takes the preservation and sufficiency of natural resources into account.
- Economic sustainability: production and consumption habits will change to become more efficient – more from less: the economy will grow, but at the same time, the use of natural resources and emissions will be reduced.
- Social sustainability: everyone has equal opportunities for well-being, respect of their fundamental rights and the ability to acquire
the basic requirements for their lives (Rights defence/capacities to acquire not right to secure).

- Cultural sustainability: development is built on the cultural traditions and value system of each nation (Multiculturalism, respect for every nation’s culture).

Sustainability is understood from different dimensions, which transcend the general principle of balance between environment and human activity. By underlying the societal aspect of the problem, it apparently recognises the idea of the common. Yet, this general understanding of sustainability does not challenge, in line with the Brundtland Report (1987), dominant liberal political economic models: firstly, economic sustainability is viable only through growth; secondly, the rights of everyone to have a basic standard of living are not provided directly; rather it is assumed they will be secured through the provision of “opportunities or abilities” alone.

Though recognised as a common objective, sustainability is treated with the aforementioned problem-solving approach, and thus solutions develop in a similar user-driven fashion: it is about sharpening or assuring abilities or making more efficient the production system; it is a matter of providing technical solutions, where localised or individual differences can change the global situation without clashing with capitalism’s dominant structures. The Aalto University Sustainability Report (2013), which aims at integrating sustainability values throughout the institution, adopts a similar tone. This report is divided into three principles: Principles one, two and three.

The first principle states that environmental sustainability begins in the university (Aalto University Strategy 2102, 26–27): “to demonstrate respect for nature and society, sustainability considerations should be an integral part of planning, construction, renovation and operation of buildings on

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3 The Brundtland Report, named after former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, Chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), and also known as Our Common Future, is a joint report from the United Nations World Commission and the WCED, published in 1987. The report authored by scientists, experts, senior government representatives, NGOs and industrialists aimed at constituting a “realistic” sustainable development path based on international cooperation. The report placed economic growth at the centre of sustainable development by supporting the relation between ecological sustainability and capital accumulation; for the authors, both could be properly combined in a way that contributed to the satisfaction of human needs, especially placing emphasis on both the human and sustainable development needs for the so-called “third world”. The Brundtland Report is one of the intellectual origins of an ecologist ideology commonly known as Green Capitalism, which since then has tried to pursue ecological goals through market means, e.g. carbon trading (Perelman, 2003. Swyngedouw, 2007)
campus” (Aalto University Sustainability Report 2013, 10). This is followed by the second principle that aims at “ensuring long-term sustainable campus development, campus-wide master planning and target setting should include environmental and social goals” (Aalto University Sustainability Report 2013, 25). Finally, the third principle aims at integrating sustainability in all teaching and research “to create a living laboratory for sustainability” (Ibid. 30). Nonetheless, principle three does not develop a strategy for integration. There is no guidance in terms of depicting the methods, organisation, and concrete objectives, only literal references to the General Strategy’s generic recommendations of multidisciplinary methods and human, user/driven research (Aalto Strategy 2012, 5. 10). The report closes with a full-page slogan: “Think and Act Glocal”. It encapsulates the generic insubstantiality of the report (Aalto University Sustainability Report 2013, 54).

Hints about the direction of research are given in a pool of data presented in principle three, which summarises the work on sustainability. This in part includes list of events related to sustainability, which the university will organise/chair or attend (Ibid. 30), but mainly it gives a meticulous statistical account of existing research being carried out on sustainability, making some interesting comparisons. The data reflects some disparities between faculties, and reflects the lack of any integrated research strategy on sustainability.4 It also shows that more advanced research is the least interested in sustainability: bachelor and master’s level have a higher proportion of theses on sustainability (Ibid. 38 Fig. 11 and 12).

The most telling piece of data comes at the end of the report, in the form of “word clouds”. These series of word clouds, one for each School, were developed by Aalto University Library in close collaboration with the Schools. The aim was to identify the most common topics and words used in sustainability research to create a pool of concepts for future multidisciplinary research (Aalto Sustainability Report 2013, 42–44). The method

4 Overall the data reflects this point, even though, between 2011–13 there was an increasing number of PhD theses focusing on sustainability (Ibid. 39. Fig. 14). The problem is that, when taking the data generally, it is difficult to claim that sustainability is being integrated in any systematic and uniform way. In 2013 the School of Art, Design and Architecture did not publish any PhD theses on sustainability, although 28% of the PhD theses published by the School of Engineering were related to sustainability. Between 4 to 20% of the theses published by the other four Schools were related to sustainability (Ibid. 38, Fig. 13). The percentages are lower in the case of publications (articles, book chapters and proceedings): the School of Engineering again led the way with 19%; Business, Art Design and Architecture around 10% and Science and Electrical Engineering with less than 5% (Ibid. 39, Fig. 15).
used to generate the word clouds consisted in matching title and description words in MA theses and doctoral dissertations with “selected keywords in areas describing sustainability and responsibility” (Ibid, 42). The selected keywords summing up sustainability and responsibility in research (more than one hundred) were chosen by representatives from all Aalto University Schools (Ibid, 40).

The keywords indicate a very wide area of approaches, ranging from the consensual political economy of green capitalism (“(eco) labelling” or “process efficiency”) to more radical and critical tendencies (“de-growth” and “social justice”). For the most part, concepts and prescriptions revolve around business, efficiency, management and services, that is, concepts resonating with clear cut solutions that are put forward by means of manipulating resources through existing means. Therefore win-win “solutions”, guided by technical knowledge not conflicting with the established politico-economic system, are favoured.

Technocentrism remains present when sustainability is approached. It reduces the question of sustainability to a problem that can be solved thanks to the strategic deployment of “conciliatory” technical knowledge. Knowledge, this magnanimous irresistible instrument for progress that narrates and organises the present and the future, is the main catalyst for the narrative (See Step 2 in method’s working process, section 7.1.) The narrative is developed in the following three sections (See Step 3 in method’s working process, section 7.1).

8.2. The tools to forge the change: “Clear cut” management for producing clear cut solutions. Scientific management in times of creativity

The technocentrism of Aalto University echoes what Evgeny Morozov (2013, 5) names “solutionism”, namely “the idea that given the right code, algorithms and robots, technology can solve all of mankind’s problems, effectively making life "frictionless" and trouble-free”. Global problems are treated on an individual scale in a static and concrete context defined by independent variables. Accordingly, knowledge acquires the form of an algorithm or a technological device created within the rules established by

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5 “Solutionism” is a pejorative term that originates in architecture and urban planning, referring to appealing but narrow-minded (and short-termist) solutions to complex problems (Morozov 2013, 6)
these immovable independent variables (often without them being directly referred to, thereby naturalising structures and strengthening an imagined frictionless order. Consequently, problems are interpreted as a matter of assembling pieces of a puzzle. Knowledge-production becomes a process of accounting for different combinations, of finding patterns and elucidating causal relations that can be turned into algorithms and finally into innovations, which can systematically solve these puzzles and turn the solutions into profits. In essence, this is what the institution understands as “useful” knowledge.

On the other hand, solutionism appears in “useful knowledge research” to simplify the intricacies of society by subsuming them under abstract and generalising variables that draw a clear line between problem and solution. In this way, research becomes a systematised process, which, organised at different stages, steers research towards innovative solutions:

Recent assessments e.g. by the Academy of Finland and the Research Innovation Council chaired by the Prime Minister, have identified key actions to develop the Finnish strategy for research, innovation and higher education. These reports highlight the requirements for an internationally competitive research system, where the role of high-risk and top-quality fundamental research is increased, better academic career systems are created, the division of labour in the university is clarified, the research and education infrastructure is improved, and integrated development of technological and social innovations is promoted (Aalto Strategy 2012, 6)

The “division of labour”, i.e. the allocation of work to maximise the potential of individuals, is analogous to industrial production, thereby evoking more the Fordist rationalisation of production than the post-Fordist “untameable logic of creativity” rooted in the free interaction between different disciplines.

The production of knowledge coheres around the relation between solutionism, rationalisation and creativity and the “user” as the destination of this knowledge once it is transformed into a product. The utilitarian direction of knowledge depends on creative abilities rather than creativity as such. The next quote clearly reflects this distinction:

Principles of Developing Artistic Activities

Artistic activities are integrative in nature. Solutions to complex problems, in addition to analytical research, require a holistic way of working and thinking which is typical of artistic activities and design thinking. Commu-
nication is also an important dimension of art where visualisation, sound and touch are required to comprehend many problems.

At Aalto University, artistic activities include not only the study of societal and cultural heritage but also the formulation of a worldview through creating and experiencing art. Art tends to be cerebral where the main criterion of skill is defined by an individual’s experience and the connection a work of art creates to and between other people. The central component is the experience which is created through a meeting of the worlds of art and those who experience it, and where new definitions, new adaptations, creativity and innovations are born.” (Aalto University Strategy 2012, 17)

What matters in art is not the creative process nor the artwork itself; rather, art is evaluated according to what it generates in the people: “the main criterion of skill is defined by an individual experience and the connection a work of art creates between other people”. The emphasis on “experience” and “people” could be interpreted in terms of how the experience of art can serve emancipatory ends. Nevertheless, experiences are not the final goal of “artistic activity”, they are in fact the corner stone: they are the necessary pool from which innovative ideas are sourced. Hence, what derives from an art experience can be useful for the creation of innovations. Immediately the purpose of artistic activity is re-routed in order to satisfy the utilitarian goal of innovation. The understanding of knowledge expressed here engenders almost an inevitable dialectical relation between creativity and the demand for utilitarian goals (i.e. “solutions”).

This conception of knowledge as a tacit asset, which can be rationalised, echoes the progressive shift towards a utilitarian market-oriented definition of “quality” experienced during the 1990s and 2000s in the hands of policy makers and bureaucrats (Saarinen 2005. See section 4.5). This tendency continues. Programmatic documents indicate what good research is and signal which areas of the subject and aspects of creativity contribute to produce it. Moreover, they assume the existence of precise methods to produce and evaluate knowledge. Today auditing and evaluating continues, just like a decade ago, only that now the practice has become even more institutionalised and internalised.6

6 Saarinen (2005, 13) comments that he does not have evidence to know if the departments adopt this definition of quality. Considering the utilitarian tone of the programmatic documents, the expansion of auditing and benchmarking and the power accumulated by the university boards, which act as transmitters of the policy plans, the definition of quality not only has shifted from the
8.3. Making of the future or the making of the present? The unfolding of hegemony through a conflict of interests

Khrushchev: On the horizon, we can see communism
Journalist: Comrade Khrushchev, what is a horizon?
Khrushchev: Look it up in the dictionary:
Horizon: an imaginary line that separates the earth from the sky and moves away when being approached

Knowledge and “renewal” for a knowledge-based society
The “art” experience appears as a way of elucidating individual needs. This is not simply a strategy to uncover invisible problems of the “newly born” digital society but to anticipate their existence. This reasoning is enigmatically reflected in the quote above: “the formulation of a worldview through creating and experiencing art”. The “experiences” generated by the artwork on the people serve the purpose of re-creating this world. Re-creating the world does not refer to “solving problems” by overcoming structural constraints, but rather to look at things with new lenses in order to visualise new interests and needs that demand “new definitions or new adaptations”. This reasoning emerges as the benchmark for new innovations.

Unsurprisingly, while these “demands” may well be mentioned three times, they are never described. Nonetheless, some glimpses indicate how these needs are constructed:

Strategic impact
Aalto University is an advocate which understands, anticipates and influences the needs of society. Aalto University prospers through being an active part of Finnish and international life. Our work is inspired by the needs of society and we seek to contribute to the development of society. This requires systematic and inspiring dialogue between Aalto and many different stakeholders, businesses as well as the public sector” (Aalto University Strategy 2012, 19)

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academic community to the bureaucrats, but managers today decide upon the organisation of disciplines and their workers to ensure that “quality standards are met”.

187
It can be deduced that by “anticipating and influencing” these needs, Aalto University is placing itself in co-defining these very needs from its privileged position. In this vein, the “strategic impact” is not formulated as the result of a dialogue with society in order to elucidate societal needs; strategic impact is understood as way of framing or forecasting these needs. In this way, necessities are constituted and re-constituted, mirroring the interests of pro-active actors (e.g. the stakeholders, interest groups) and the university. The leading role of the university is assigned to the researcher who, as “a responsible expert, an agent of change and a visionary “(Ibid. 7), embodies technical expertise and is recognised as the main driver for social change. The expert researcher should engage also in a task of “renewal”, though we know little about what this means (Ibid. 7). The term “renewal” is an abstraction that can be filled with all manner of content. And indeed, it is precisely this rather broad notion of “renewal” that constitutes the red thread for the concept of the Creative Economy:

**Creative Economy**

The competitiveness of cities and regions is increasingly dependent on their capability to develop high-quality residential, service, business and cultural centres. Such centres are essential in supporting the development of a creative society, attracting a skilled workforce and inspiring the foundation of new enterprises. The multidisciplinary operating environment of Aalto University is a vital springboard for such a development. As a flagship project for urban development, Aalto University will cooperate with the cities and other stakeholders in the Helsinki metropolitan area within the World Design Capital 2012 project aiming to develop a competitive creative and inspiring urban area (Aalto University Strategy 2012, 20).

In this quote, the university situates itself not as part of the creative economy but as an active promoter. All its efforts are concentrated in extending and consolidating the creative society by educating a skilled workforce and fostering the conditions under which these skills can grow. Aalto University arrogates to itself, to entrepreneurs, to researchers and to highly skilled workers this task of “renewal”. “Renewal” becomes, for example, related to the development of a new urbanism as a means of furthering the prosperity of society. This line of argumentation follows mainstream literature on the Knowledge Based Society, particularly the theses developed by Richard Florida (2003, 2005). Florida sees the “creatives” as the embodiment of talent and creativity, critical for economic
A young and dynamic workforce can only flourish in urban areas, for it is only the metropoles that are capable of attracting and educating cohorts of creative workers. As we will see later, Aalto’s ambitious societal model surrounding the role and status of knowledge-workers, suffers from problems similar to those bedevilling Florida’s writings.

The journey towards a better future, one that rides on the back of the knowledge-oriented economy, recurs throughout the document. For example, in a forecast of the labour market for 2050:

The measures we will undertake in order to achieve a more sustainable economy include increasing jobs and raising the productivity and quality of work. Our goal is a high employment rate. We will develop our education and social security systems in accordance with the need for new expertise, the needs of the employment market and the measures needed to secure an adequate livelihood. We will support the employment of young people, harness the expertise of immigrants and provide employment opportunities for those with a reduced capacity to work. We will promote entrepreneurship and innovation and develop the service sector. We will help the industrial sector in its regeneration process, aiming at more value-added and high-productivity jobs. We will improve the quality of employment by increasing the opportunities for employees to have an influence on their work and on developments in their work environments, and by providing opportunities for flexible working methods and schedules. Sustainable development will be integrated into all sectors of education.” (Sustainable Development Strategy Group 2014, 3).

This is a complex passage that will not be fully scrutinised at this point. At this stage, however, what is key is the reciprocal relation between education, entrepreneurship and urbanism in the pursuit of sustainable work (we will return to the references to welfare later).

The quote above develops the idea of the university as an “agent for change” responsible for steering the transformation of the labour market. A transformation led also by entrepreneurs who will change the production process by exploring the possibility of creating new high-added value products to compete in knowledge intensive markets. This would create well-paid jobs for a highly skilled workforce educated at the university. The university thus positions itself as an architect of the future society by producing both knowledge and the highly skilled agents of change. The university and its experts stand as the spearhead of creating the new society.
We observe here a circular reasoning: renewal depends on the empowerment of Aalto’s experts, who will become preeminent in the “new society”. This comes close to a conflict of interests: when an actor steers change with the aim of creating new needs to make herself indispensable. In this case, AU targets the changing of the needs of consumption in order to transform production to satisfy the new needs. The new workforce trained by the university will demand new changes to urban settings as well. This concatenation of changes thus makes indispensable everything that Aalto University offers. This circularity represents the inherent impossibility of separating out production from consumption in capitalism, on account of its totalising drive (Marx 1993, 90–91)7.

The conflict of interests also serves as a useful analogy in interpreting a permanent confusion between means and ends: a (tactical) misrecognition that signals the way in which discourses of change can result from the imposition of an agenda. In Gramscian terms, this would be the heuristic relation between the unfolding of the reforms internal to the structure, on the one hand, and the circular narrative of time in the superstructure, on the other, which signals not just the direction of these reforms but the inevitability of their totalising advance. Hence, we have a hegemonic setting.

Unfolding the conflict of interests (I): the organisation of the institution

A reassessment of the role of universities is taking place in Europe and throughout the world. Economic development based on expertise, environmental change, globalisation and the rapid development of technology have emphasised the importance of universities as producers of new knowledge and expertise. Academic institutions have learned to define and comprehend their role in society; many universities have repositioned themselves to better interact with and serve their surrounding communities and to learn from such interactions (Aalto University Strategy 2012, 4)

7“Production is then also immediately consumption, consumption is also immediately production. Each is immediately its opposite. But at the same time a mediating movement takes place between the two. Production mediates consumption; it creates the latter’s material; without it, consumption would lack an object. But consumption also mediates production, in that it alone creates for the products the subject for whom they are products. The product only obtains its “last finish” in consumption” (Marx 1993, 91).
The conflict of interests is closely related to the determinism of technocentrism. New needs emerge because of technology and the solutions are thanks to technology and their technical experts. In the context of present-day capitalism, this determinism naturalises globalisation steered by technological change and predicts the future organisation of society. The passages we quoted earlier on page 185 is very telling in that it presupposes (i) that improvements in job quality and efficiency depend on the promotion of innovations and (ii) that knowledge developed in AU will be crucial for the regeneration of the industrial sector. Though one could perhaps argue that programmatic documents are by nature deterministic, in this case the predictions are not simply describing the future but are seeking to directly forge it: the institution understands itself as the guarantor of this future. Here the institution is trapped in the circularity of a conflict of interests: the “new needs” constructed in the present push AU in a cycle of internal renewal. This circularity is represented in the definition of workplace that appears in the 2013 Human Resource Report. A short report that amounts to 21 pages and divided into the following four sections: Development of leadership and culture; supporting professional competence; renewal of organisational structures and career systems and, finally, smooth HR processes. The following quotes are from the opening and closing paragraphs of the sections “supporting professional competence” (first and second) and “renewal of organisational structures” (third and fourth):

Solid expertise and motivation are the premise for the university to succeed. With regard to competence development at Aalto University, we actively try to support initiatives that align the strategic competence needs of Aalto with the employee’s own motivation. We create development opportunities that support career advancement, flexible job rotation, or taking your career into a different direction. The central role of pedagogical training is to both support multidisciplinary teaching and advancement of our learning-centred culture, and create new networks of pedagogical cooperation (Human Resource Report 2013, 9).

Change takes courage

The path towards the strategic goals of 2020 requires change agility and embracing new approaches from the entire organization. Seeing through the change process is supported by, for example, providing supervisors the tools necessary to deal with change and manage their teams. Our guide for supervisors includes an extensive collection of information and support materials, such as instructions, examples, and different kinds of instruments.
to aid teamwork. In addition, the leadership trainings discuss change management. We will also help supervisors to find the best solutions for each situation (Human Resource Report 2013, 11).

The career systems at Aalto have been created to support the long-term, goal-oriented development of personnel. They support individual career advancement and the development of a personnel structure in line with the university’s strategy. In addition to the personnel structure, the overall organizational structures of the university are being reviewed and reworked to provide better resources to research areas that are strategically significant (Human Resource Report 2013, 12).

**Changes in the department organizations**

As the university evolves, the organizational structures adapt too, either by merging departments or by refocussing research areas. During the past year there have been discussions with personnel in many departments to prepare for the kind of organization that best allows the strategic goals to be reached. We have supported our management in these talks, and we have also had an active role in realizing the organizational changes in practice. Any change, organizational or otherwise, requires continued support to address all issues. We provide the support needed to everyone within the organization, especially those who manage the transition (Human Resource Report 2013, 14).

Both sections open by enumerating the needs for the future and close by advising how to cope with the imminent changes. Following these lines, professional competence is defined by permanent learning, multidisciplinarity, agility for change, and capacity for adaptation. All these are qualities needed in order to achieve the targets for 2020. This is institutionalised through the tenure track system, a meritocratic career itinerary aiming at offering prospects and job security, but employment positions that are always tied to the active realisation of the institution’s general goals (Tenure Track 2013. Aalto University). This system introduces liberal elements into the academic system without breaking away entirely from the social democratic onus on job security.

In order to keep pace with the transition, organisational structures seem to be in a permanent process of transformation: “re-working”, “re-focusing”, “merging”, “transitioning”, “re-viewing”, “adapting” are just some of the words that point to the necessity of a contingent existence in this transition towards a bright future. Interestingly, an actual description of the staff is not provided in the main part of the report. It is hidden away in one
of the appendices (Human Resource Report 2013 18–21). The appendix comprises of a succession of diagrams, graphs and tables that quantify the present situation of staff. Significantly, these details are narratively disconnected from the hopeful tone of the rest of the report.

Unfolding a conflict of interests (II): A predictable future is an interested projection of the present

The promotion of the creative economy is predicated on a trust in knowledge. Knowledge elucidates society’s main constitutive variables, predicting how it will develop in the future and what challenges lay ahead. Furthermore, knowledge is immaterial and malleable, and is capable of “solving” any of the challenges encountered. Knowledge, either in its transformative or solutionistic forms, operates with a steadfast belief in what the future holds for us, and this certitude defines how knowledge production is to be organised in the present.

But where is the present in this argument? The origins of Aalto University might give an answer to this question.

Aalto University was created on 1st of January 2010 from a merger of the Helsinki School of Economics, the Helsinki University of Technology and the University of Art and Design Helsinki. The purpose of the merger was to strengthen the Finnish innovation system by creating a new university concept that combined world class expertise in technology, business and design. The initiative is part of an extensive university reform in Finland and backed up by significant investments by the Finnish Government, the business sector and private benefactors (Aalto University President Tuula Teeri’s foreword of the Teaching and Education Evaluation 2010–2011, 1)

The very foundation of AU represented a rupture with the old and the embracing of a new multidisciplinary organisation to strengthen Finland’s economic capabilities. Heimonen (2011) studied this process in his doctoral dissertation, published by the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management:

When discussing the impact of external interest groups on Aalto University, it has to be remembered that the whole university would not exist without a concerted effort of the government and the Finnish economy. Furthermore, the larger framework of national university reform came largely as a response to broader needs of the whole higher education sector, with Aalto spearheading the entire reform. Therefore, the whole essence of Aalto was to
have a broader societal impact, not to simply exist in isolation. This meant that there existed a broad range of interest groups with a stake in Aalto, and that there were a lot of external expectations that Aalto struggled to fulfil. (Heimonen 2011, 87).

These characterizations seem to describe rather well the old universities, particularly TKK and HSE, and are supported by the accounts of the informants. Nevertheless, it seems that Aalto University has been able not only to challenge and break many of the institutionalized models, but to actually make the system follow its own example. This sounds like a decisive breakthrough for the proponents of Aalto as the spearhead of national higher education reform (Heimonen 2011, 150).

Aalto University incarnates the future at the same time as it spearheads university reform. The materialisation of a wider societal rupture with the past is not yet realised outside but in AU this has already occurred—“Aalto University has been able not only to challenge and break many of the institutionalized models, but to actually make the system follow its own example”. AU both incarnates and pioneers a rupture: inside the university, there is the optimistic future, and outside, there is the present resistant to the new era. AU exists to put remedy to that. The present disappears when the notion of rupture cuts off the vicissitudes inherited from the past and enclosing them in the “old” world outside the institution. Consequently, the future emerges like a “bolt from the blue”, from which the inherited problems of the past are not to be faced with the instruments of the present; instead they are to be re-defined and confronted in this future in the making. Personal planning reproduces this logic:

**Personal Planning as a part of Aalto’s resource planning**

Personnel planning is an established part of the process of strategic planning and it goes hand in hand with the general resource planning. Our strategy and the goals set for our actions largely define the extent of what kind of expertise we will require in the future and what kind of personnel will support the actions based on the strategy.

We supported the change in the personnel structure further by, for instance, taking the career systems into account when recruiting, and guiding doctoral students by offering them support for career planning. We paid special attention to planned recruitment, especially in the service units (Aalto University Human Resource Report 2013, 13)
It is very telling in this passage that the needs of the present in personnel planning *are* the hypothetical needs of the future: what is needed now is “what will be required” or “what kind of personnel will support these actions based on the strategy”. The present becomes an extra-temporal void, which can only be filled in by an unswerving pursuit of the future. As with the Soviet joke that opened this section, the present is a future in which everything changes to reach an unattainable horizon. Transformations for the future thus set the rules for developing knowledge in the present. This means that the hollowing out of the present by means of a continuous journey towards the future has little to do with the future but actually ends up perpetuating the present. The naturalisation of an extra-temporal existence, defined by and through the unattainability of the horizon, prevents any alternatives from flourishing as well as any possibility to think both the present and the future differently from the one already visualised.

**Unfolding a conflict of interests (III): Discipline and creation of needs**

Determinism and discipline go hand in hand in any conflict of interests. To suppress any alternatives that would change its expected development, the extension of variables to control the pace of history is disciplinary *per se*.

Don Corleone’s “I am going to make an offer he cannot refuse” (*The Godfather Part I*) summarises this basic disciplinary mechanism inherent in any conflict of interest. Don Corleone’s statement is employed to “persuade” for the purposes of extortion. The members of the Corleone family are not being metaphorical; they literally mean that this offer cannot be refused on pain of losing one’s head. A ruthless threat elegantly conveyed through business language.

We can see that these actions follow a sequence: i) Deviant offer/threat. This is the push to a relation of force through the offer/threat that both frames and fixes the variables that will remain the stable co-ordinates through which in future is set. ii) Enforcement of condition. The victim has no choice other than to accept the offer, hence to submit to what has been prescribed from above. And 3) Consent backed by coercion. The victim continues to accept its submission since he perceives that pleasing the master even beyond what is established, might eventually lead to compensation in the near future.

These conflict of interests we have traced as this specific chapter has unfolded follow this sequence, albeit with a different degree of violence though forging similar relations of inequality. In this case, the inescapability
behind any disciplinary order is defined by a present that is turned into an extra-temporal void.

“The offer cannot be refused” (step 1 of the sequence) is represented by how the institution governs, i.e. how it imposes upon its workforce work principles that should be unanimously followed. This is enforced (step 2 in the sequence) by an NPM inspired model of governance, which concentrates decision-making in the hands of the university board, comprised of members appointed by external bodies and by the Academic Affairs Committee. This technocratic model converts faculty representatives as nodes in a chain of command that implement the plans decided by the seven members of the University Foundation Board. There is practically no clear institutional mechanism for rejecting the decisions taken by the top (Aalto University Foundation Constitution, 2010). On the other hand, it imposes constant evaluations and tasks to be “fulfilled” to assure flexibility and constant adaptation in this transition to the future. We will leave for later how consent (step 3 in the sequence of the conflict of interest) is performed beyond the document’s promise of a society made of creative individuals (this will be the principal focus of the analysis of the work stories, presented in the next chapter).

The creation of needs is a logic that pervades present day digital capitalism. Solutionism creates ever larger mental frames that anchor an endless body of needs. Big Data, for example, provide many business opportunities, not only because of its ability to systematically accumulate information about every aspect of human life, but by fabricating the idea that human well-being can be reduced to quantifiable data and algorithms. Accordingly,

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8The Academic Affairs Committee is a joint multi-member administrative body of no more than 50 members that represents students and staff (from 2017 this became the committee). The Student Union, who can potentially represent almost 12,000 students – 75% of the total of people working or studying in Aalto – are represented by only 21% of the members of the Academic Affairs Committee. Teachers, researchers and personnel, who represent 14% of the total number of people working or studying at the university, have 31% of the seats in the Academic Affairs Committee. Professors, representing only 2.4% of the 16,000 people working or studying account for 47% of the seats in the Academic Affairs Committee (Aalto University Foundation Constitution 2010 Aalto University Website 2017). Clearly, the Academic Affairs Committee is very far away from being a democratically representative body, properly speaking, when 368 professors out of 16000 people working or studying in Aalto University hold almost half of the seats! A professor’s vote is worth almost 70 times more than the vote of a student. This under-representation of the students is aggravated by the very little influence that they can exercise in the election of the 7 members of the University Board, given the correlation of forces inside the representative body. Thus, 75% of Aalto University have practically almost no influence in electing the main governmental body of the institution.
the more quantification there is, the closer we are meant to get to the “ideal”, namely autonomous individuals who presumably take control of their lives based on techno-scientific rationality (Morozov, 2013). If happiness, well-being, health, being a good lover or having a good diet, can count, and indeed depend on, algorithmic causality, then one needs the applications to make sense of all this information. In this way, “app products” are not just a commodity but become a necessity for living.9

8.4. Values of the leaders and architects of the future: The post-material and entrepreneurial autonomous expert

Our own present culture has harnessed these forces in ways that have yielded extraordinary wealth and comfort and personal freedom. The freedom to be lords of our own tiny skull-sized kingdoms, alone at the centre of all creation. This kind of freedom has much to recommend it.

But of course, there are all different kinds of freedom, and the kind that is most precious you will not hear much talked about in the great outside world of winning and achieving and displaying. The really important kind of freedom involves attention, and awareness, and discipline, and effort, and being able truly to care about other people and to sacrifice for them, over and over, in myriad petty little unsexy ways, every day. That is real freedom. (Forrester Wallace’s commencement address at Kenyon’s College, 2009, 7–8)

In a frictionless society, technology and knowledge deliver solutions that benefit everybody, a win-win realm sustained by creativity, passion, expertise and pioneering initiatives. Values proper to a litigious realm such as sacrifice, compromise or solidarity, might be still respected, the problem is that technological makes them obsolete. In this frictionless context, do references to values that were forged in the emancipatory struggle with power, really mean anything? This section will scrutinise how autonomy and freedom are interpreted. The forecast of the Sustainable Development Strategy is a good start:

The measures we will undertake in order to achieve a more sustainable economy include increasing jobs and raising the productivity and quality of

9 The rise of the applications to quantify every aspect of our daily life to guide us to “the perfect balance between body and soul” recalls the song “fitter, happier” from the English rock band Radiohead. This song, from the album OK Computer (1997), foresaw accurately our times (Radiohead, 1997).
work. Our goal is a high employment rate. We will develop our education and social security systems in accordance with the need for new expertise, the needs of the employment market and the measures needed to secure an adequate livelihood. We will support the employment of young people, harness the expertise of immigrants and provide employment opportunities for those with a reduced capacity to work. We will promote entrepreneurship and innovation and develop the service sector. We will help the industrial sector in its regeneration process, aiming at more value-added and high-productivity jobs. We will improve the quality of employment by increasing the opportunities for employees to have an influence on their work and on developments in their work environments, and by providing opportunities for flexible working methods and schedules. Sustainable development will be integrated into all sectors of education. (Sustainable Development Strategy Group 2014, 3)

Earlier (see page 185), I described only part of this quote, since it was especially rich in its depiction of several aspects of the future sustainable society. The Finnish labour market in 2050 is regarded a safe labour market (now re-named as the “employment market”), offering generous quality jobs, which manage to deliver social sustainability for the majority thanks to higher productivity. At the same time, the promotion of entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation will serve as the cornerstone in developing these new jobs by regenerating both the industrial and service sectors. The squaring of the circle: keeping the “best of Fordism” with its social stability, its sustained industrial productivity, while supplementing it with the best of post-Fordism, namely the integration of flexibility in a knowledge intensive labour-market, led by highly competitive and autonomous creative entrepreneurs. This frictionless narrative suggests a reciprocal relation between materialist and post-materialist values. Let us now disambiguate this relation, starting with the “individual”, and then relating it to its contexts.

The leading expert individual

In the programmatic documents, the individual is understood as the main political unit of society. Prosperity is built on an individual’s leadership, entrepreneurship and expertise. State expenditure should promote both individuals and their ideas. Nonetheless, the pre-eminence of the individual is not meant to sacrifice entirely the collective, here represented by the “old” but “essential” social democratic bedrock. This idea is expressed with the concept of “social sustainability”. Here, the general well-being is not invisible, it exists and will be safeguarded by a new form of welfare state;
perhaps not as universal, but it will still offer a safety net for the disadvantaged ("immigrants, youth and those with a reduced capacity to work"). The rest of society will follow the principle of responsibility, bringing together personal interest and technical expertise:

The key research areas of the School of Science include computing and modelling, material physics, energy science, software and media, technology-based business and enterprising as well as brain research and imaging technologies. The societal impact of the School is based on close-knit international networking with high-standard research units and business life as well as educating responsible experts to serve society (Aalto University Strategy 2012, 11).

Passion for Exploration

Our aim is to create a culture which fosters a passion for pushing boundaries, reinforcing the commitment of the whole community not only to world-class research but to exceptional teaching and learning. Our University is recognized as a pioneer in responding to significant national and global challenges.

Responsibility to Accept, Care and Inspire

Our multidisciplinary community educates individuals who understand and accept and are inspired by diversity. Aalto University's leaders at all levels lead by example: they are inspiring and active drivers of change. Aalto University brings the best of Finland to a genuinely international and multicultural environment for its students and employees.

Integrity, Openness and Equality

The Aalto University community is founded on honesty, fairness and objectivity. The University measures individual success with clearly defined criteria in order to recognise good performance without bias. We embrace an open dialogue and cooperation with universities, industries and other sectors of the society in Finland and worldwide (Aalto University Strategy 2012. 8. Section 3 titled Mission, Vision and Values)

Success is said to come from leadership, flexibility, that is, the values that define the “entrepreneurial” self. Societal success derives from the individual’s struggle to achieve his own goals that will indirectly benefit the rest of society. “Care, openness, integrity, respect of diversity, fairness or objectivity” should always be paired with the pursuit of personal goals. By incar-
nating all these values, the individual becomes a role model who can positively contribute to societal progress. According to these programmatic documents, “freedom” and “autonomy” are defined by and through notions of leadership and entrepreneurship.

**Autonomy and freedom from an entrepreneurial perspective**

**Autonomy**

In post-war Europe, national governments actively started to develop their national education and research policies. As the volume of public funding increased, the research communities formed by independent researchers were organized under state administration. As a result of this, universities inherited administrative routines that do not support the creative, progressive and constantly changing development of research and teaching (Aalto University strategy, 4).

We are thus informed that the “old” higher education system was unable to “support the creative, progressive and constantly changing development of research and teaching”; throughout there is an implicit comparison with today’s modernised system. This is not just rhetoric. As stipulated in the University Act of 2009 (the legal embryo of Aalto University), Aalto University is a private entity freed from public sector bureaucracy. As a flexible internal organisation, it has free hands to procure direct financing from the private sector. The “autonomous” and “flexible” is associated with the new while the “rigid” and “bureaucratised” public sector connotes the old. Nonetheless, the actual autonomy of academic labour is essentially left undefined in this section. Indirect references to researcher’s autonomy can, however, be found elsewhere; like, for example, under the title “Freedom to be Creative and Critical”:

**Freedom to be Creative and Critical**

Our teaching will foster creative scientific and artistic thinking and the development of an entrepreneurial mindset. We encourage and defend pro-active and constructive critical thinking. We explore the interfaces between disciplines and challenge traditional working methods by providing new solutions (Aalto University Strategy 8).

Critical here is understood as an ingredient in dismantling the *old* to construct the *new*. This will be achieved, we are told, “by providing new solu-
tions”. With its modernisation subtext, the critical researcher becomes a kind of forerunner for the university’s general strategy to nourish its competitive capabilities. Aalto University implies that a researcher’s autonomy is almost synonymous with individual freedom. To be autonomous is commonly understood as the capacity to live according to our own principles, to freely pursue our own goals, irrespective of whether these principles and goals are collective or individual. Freedom is a concept with infinite interpretations, as David Forrester Wallace puts it.10

The programmatic documents do not describe Freedom and autonomy as natural rights. They are often defined in contradistinction to an old order that restricted HEI to strive for private funding. Private funding is the source of freedom or autonomy, we are informed, and, by extension, freedom and autonomy become the product of entrepreneurialism. While the entrepreneurial mindset shapes freedom and autonomy, it is the former of these principles that has a more prominent position, since it encompasses a vast array of different interpretations, incorporating aspects of autonomy as well. The entrepreneurial definition of freedom is reflected in the following conceptual map from the Human Resource Report. The report presents the nodal points around which leadership is to be understood, a central feature of what it means to be an entrepreneur.

10Freedom and autonomy are concepts in political and moral philosophy. Defined and interpreted differently, they should not be considered synonymous. Autonomy tends to reside, although not exclusively, as “capacity”: “autonomy is an idea that is generally understood to refer to the capacity to be one’s own person, to live one’s life according to reasons and motives that are taken as one’s own and not the product of manipulative or distorting external forces” (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2015). Autonomy in operaismo (workerist Marxism) emphasises the independence of social movements vis-à-vis the hierarchical centralised control proper to the majority of political organisations. This independence is said to make resistance movements respond better to the daily needs of the immediate social context as well as the expansion of democratic practices as an integrative part of the revolution. Autonomy relates to self emancipation as a means for class emancipation.
Freedom is regarded as an ingredient needed for leadership; it is deemed to be an entrepreneurial value, alongside courage, passion, responsibility and ethics. In the documents, freedom appears in relation only. Freedom is only explicitly mentioned in the documents when connected to the entrepreneurial imaginary (specifically, with respect to “leadership culture”). The fact that there are no other references to freedom suggests that freedom is not an inalienable right in the present but an asset that needs to be acquired in the future. Second, and derived from the first, is that freedom and autonomy are part of a circular reasoning, exclusively bound up with an entrepreneurial narrative, which cuts them off from all other possible interpretations. These suggest a vision of individual existence largely driven by the passionate pursuit of goals at work and equated to the realisation of individual interests.

If we put in perspective autonomy in Finland’s HEI, we see that AU’s reasoning on institutional autonomy follows this transnational idea of university autonomy. Originating in international organisations, this idea began to creep into higher education policies during the 1990s. In the late 1990s, the Rector for “Helsinki School of Economics” (formerly its own institution before the mergers that established AU), would be the first to publicly speak about autonomy in terms of diversifying funding sources to meet international standards (Piironen 2013, 139).

Since the 2000s, autonomy has had its meaning further narrowed, defined now in terms of efficiency. The dual imperatives of academic qua-
lity and financial survival have steered policies, and these in fact became firmly institutionalised with the New University Act of 2009. This legislation essentially redefines autonomy, shifting it away from a capacity belonging to the academic community, as a whole, to an instrument that is now in the hands of the HEI leadership to ensure competitiveness, innovation and growth (Piironen 2013, 142). Once autonomy is redefined in this way, the academic community is also called to enact this reformulated idea by for example adopting the values presented in the above diagram. To a significant degree, the redefinition of institutional autonomy implies the redefinition of individual autonomy. Many will say that the intellectual dream of autonomy in the hands of a “community of enlightened emancipated subjects” perhaps never existed. This may be so. But, in the early 1990s, the Finnish university strategy in would not have considered defining autonomy almost exclusively in entrepreneurial terms.

Materialism with post-materialist individuals

The university has embraced a novel organisation that aims at the “creative” mobilisation of manpower in the pursuit for “useful knowledge”. This is steered by quantifying the impact of any work produced:

Societal Impact

Reflecting Aalto University’s impact on and contribution to society, the university received funding from non-academic partners totalling €73 million (€93 million). The decrease was mainly due to the transfer of commercial continuous learning activities to Aalto University Executive Education, and cuts in Tekes funding to University sector. Aalto University offers a selection of innovation, commercialisation, and start-up services to the university’s researchers, students, and other stakeholders. The university processed 145 (150) innovation proposals, filed 30 (53) patent applications, and supported the formation of 6 (6) new companies started by researchers and students. A joint AppCampus project in collaboration with Nokia and Microsoft approved 187 (157) funding grants. In addition, approximately 8 100 (7 700) students attended courses arranged by Open University (Annual Board Report, 2014, 34).

Research

A total of 2 970 (2 888) refereed articles were published at the university, showing a 3% increase over the previous year. The number of articles and their impact is expected to develop positively as the university continues to implement its strategy. Highly competitive research funding decreased by
3%, mainly due to exceptionally many Academy of Finland projects ending during the year. The majority of highly competitive research funding was received from Academy of Finland €31 million (€34 million) and European Union €14 million (€13 million). Highly competitive research funding includes Academy of Finland funding, Tekes FiDiPro funding and EU research funding programmes. Aalto University participated in seven (7) national Centres of Excellence during 2014 and two (1) Academicians of Science worked at the university. The 16 (13) recipients of European Research Council (ERC) grants, 7 (7) Academy Professors, 34 (34) Academy Research Fellows, and 13 (14) Finland Distinguished Professor Program (FiDiPro) Professors and Fellows” (Annual Board Report, 2014, 33)

Research is quantified in terms of the number of grants gained and/or by the number of published articles that a research project has yielded, as well as by its societal impact, which is measured by counting patents, by the number of companies created, or the extent of private investment received by the university. Measuring research and societal impact is largely based on variables that have been conceived from outside the university, “evaluating/counting” knowledge in purely utilitarian terms (e.g. the quantity of funding received, and students attracted, as well as the extent of market success). The idea of measuring knowledge derives from the assumption that society and the individual can be quantified. Market logics are interminably bound up with this assumption. This is best represented in a growing interest in massive pools of information, known as Big Data, that seeks to measure the individual in all its spheres. Big Data became universally known to the public after Edward Snowden leaked classified information from the National Security Agency (NSA). However. Big Data goes beyond state security agencies and can be used for multiple and divergent purposes. Unsurprisingly, Big Data is one of the priorities of Aalto University:

Products are not independent anymore, but they are connected, you know, and in fact people used to talk years back about products in a kind of integrated sense now they talk about products embedded within intelligence. The kind of cloud systems are going to create a foundation for independent … or, well, let’s say, individual products to be interacting with one another and also, you know, to be part of the bigger systemic structure. You know, they have a lot of innovative options. Knowledge and data have accumulated and are now being processed, you know, to another kind of … how would I say? … a knowledge layer on top of the traditional and industrial levels (High administrative rank at Aalto University 15th of April 2015).
The general rise in quantification is one of the constitutive parts of a process of expansion of the market-rule. The institution itself is constantly quantified and evaluated through an NPM mindset, extending to areas that had never been evaluated before. These areas ruled by non-market norms become quantified, adopting a materialistic form ready for market expansion.

Paradoxically, the values of this entrepreneurialism, which are described and affirmed in the textual material, and which are said to make their mark in a clearly materialistic order, would seamlessly connect up with Inglehart’s writings (2008) on the post-materialistic individual condition or even Toffler’s work (1970, 142) about the professional educated men, i.e. people who are not moved by profit but by a passion for their professions. In fact, the relation between entrepreneurship, innovation and the maximisation of societal benefits is expressed very subtly. The same goes for the relation between well-being at work and material needs:

4. Entrepreneurship Promoting entrepreneurship, developing the associated commercial skills and supporting the foundation of new knowledge-intensive businesses are essential facets of Aalto University’s societal influence. Creating an entrepreneurial spirit and culture forms an inherent element of the University’s research and teaching activities. The University invests in championing entrepreneurship that is based on top-level academic knowledge and expertise. This will be achieved by reforming the education and by collaborating with financiers to develop flexible systems for supporting the creation and development of growth companies. Aalto University’s students are the key target group and partner in entrepreneurship education (Aalto University Strategy 2012, 20).

The well-being circle describes our way of thinking on this matter. It assembles various areas of occupational well-being and highlights their dynamic nature and interactions. The circle model reminds us also of the employee’s own responsibilities regarding well-being and the work-life balance. By providing different kinds of opportunities for flexibility and pre-emptive measures we promote the well-being of all at Aalto.
Entrepreneurship and a healthy work environment are mainly defined through a sense of self-realisation. Self-realisation is the product of the recognition of a working environment characterised by the balance between competence, responsibility, motivation, flexibility, leadership, health. And yet, beyond this, almost no reference is made to either wages or working hours. The definition given by Aalto on entrepreneurship, “the development of growth companies”, is the only reference made to profit. The overall picture here is twofold. On the one hand, the realisation/success of the institution is mainly based on a materialistic value-system, in which meritocratic goals (e.g. “the quality of excellence”) are also defined in market oriented materialistic terms, while, on the other hand, the realisation of an individual’s well-being is essentially defined by post-material values. As we will see in the following chapter on the academic workforce, the redefinition of these values represents the impossible unification in the individual’s body of the structural market oriented demands and the superstructural “spirit of the times”, which gets internalised by individuals and often orientates them to the market.
Some remarks on the latest Aalto University Strategy (2016–2020)

The current university strategy (2016–2020) continues in the same direction, deepening on the defining features of the period between 2012 and 2015. The current strategic document is emphatically entitled “Shaping the Future”, and it begins with the following statement: “our vision carries a strong commitment to building a sustainable society driven by innovation and entrepreneurship” (Italics in the original). This strategy, sharper and more concise than earlier iterations, develops around a technocentric narrative shaped by solutionism; it envisages a conflictless future that conceals the problems of the present.

Innovation, entrepreneurship and competitiveness still represent the nodal points of this argumentational thread. These three terms appear indistinctly in many of the disciplines, managerial plans, forecasts, societal accounts, to round off a strategy that without reservations pivots around the market. The assumption that knowledge from different disciplines can be strategically segmented into parts, assembled through a multidisciplinary strategy, and finally turned into market products, remains more vivid than ever. Art matters because of the skillsets and “perspectives” it can offer to other disciplines in the pursuit for business products (Aalto University 2018, 13). The strategic document is even more categorical about how the acts of creating, researching and designing must be related to the business world, to the extent that it is difficult to conceive of any university research, teaching or internal organisation beyond the horizon of businesses and the private sector.

Benchmarking research continues to develop hand in hand with the premise of fierce global competition between universities for conquering the best positions in this race for the knowledge-based society. It is a situation defined squarely in market terms. Therefore, key performance indicators continue to be defined by the same principles: excellence, multidisciplinary, entrepreneurship and societal impact. Business and entrepreneurship constitute the impermeable juncture for all these performance indicators (Aalto University Strategy 2018, 20. Diagram pag.21).

Finally, AU continues to situate the institution, along with those “individuals” educated and university staff, as agents of societal change. This means that the main strategic objective of education is “educating game changers” (AU University Strategy 2018). Society continues to appear as a sort of a passive grand algorithmic entity that needs AU expertise to solve its problems and signal the steps to be taken in the immediate future.
The Department of Media is situated at Otaniemi Campus, the home of Aalto University, on the border between Helsinki and the neighbouring municipality of Espoo. It is surrounded by water, islands, and forests and, from above, migratory birds can be seen to land on the campus’ green and open fields. This idyllic Nordic landscape is at the heart of the booming metropolitan area of Helsinki. The core of the Department of Media was moved last year to Otaniemi Campus from the old headquarters located in the singular Arabia building in central Helsinki. Still some units of the Department of media –like, for example, graphic design – are between the two places.

When you enter into the department’s facilities in the Arabia building on Otaniemi campus, one feels the playfulness of the space: there are sofas, functional furniture, with some random vintage objects, 3D printers, a PlayStation 3, TV Screens, projectors, pocket rec-rooms and other manufacturing machines. Many of these facilities can be used without having to book them in advance. There are also some meeting rooms for discussing new ideas; the cradles of future start-ups. As I wander around the spaces, I see sticky notes and headed-note paper glued to the walls. Amid the captivating atmosphere of the place, I realise that I am standing alongside some kind of workshop with 10 students holding their papers, armed with their markers, tablets and their ecological smoothies.

It is difficult to ascertain where the limits between offices, classrooms and common spaces are, when everything looks so random, joyful and recreational. It is the opposite of a bureaucratised and hierarchical space. At first glance it is also difficult to identify who exactly is a MA student, PhD or a senior researcher. Yet, with all that said, it is a palpably productive place, and looks like the much-vaunted spaces filled with creative people depicted in the programmatic texts. My informants spend their working life there. Many of them have flexible schedules, they travel, or work from home. Nonetheless, it remains a vibrant space with common activities and an engaged work community.
The analysis of the stories presented in this chapter will shuttle between and across the different scales of the narrative (See chapter 7.2.). The aim here is to present the stories as close as possible to the way the informants told their stories to me. Much of their content engages in self-reflection (ontological narrative), and they are in constant dialogue with their immediate surroundings (Institutional narrative). The informants’ experiences and positionings vis-à-vis wider society are also an important feature (Conceptual narrative).

9.1. A playful place filled with creative people

This workplace attracts different people and voices who nonetheless share the same environment. Let’s commence with their backgrounds:

I applied for the United Nations program and altogether I worked 7 years abroad on different United Nations and UNESCO projects, starting as a volunteer then as a young professional and finally I was a UNESCO expert in Africa. And everything that was involved with the development of educational materials and so on (DDA Prof.1)

I’ve been working for about 2 decades in the area of media and ICT, in national and international companies and as a consultant. My sort of topic area is… would be brand design and the methods of design in creating new products and services. Ok? And I’m teaching in various universities in Finland. Why did I become a researcher? I found out that there’s a specific area that I didn’t feel… I felt that it didn’t have a layer of analytics in it and it was decision making. And I was amazed to discover that products and services were developed, including brand knowledge, competitor analysis, market analysis, user analytics, a huge amount of data, etc. (DDA, Sen 1)

I don’t have a specific idea why I became a researcher … sometimes I still have some difficulties to define myself as a researcher because I am also doing other things besides research. But I suppose the main reason was that I was interested in knowing more and after being a graphic designer for about 12 years, I wanted to broaden my expertise somehow and research seemed to be like a good option. (DDA PhD1)

We have before us three individuals with somewhat heterogeneous backgrounds; they are experienced people with much of their working life outside academia. They have been employed in the private sector, in some cases far from “the discipline of media”. Some of them are entrepreneurs
and they combine their academic careers with free-lance work or other activities. The first quote is from a veteran researcher with a considerably long career that moved between different disciplines, interests, and countries. Educated as a graphic designer he turned to ethnography, and became a UN developmental expert, only later to return to Finland where he began an academic career and ended up in Aalto University. We are facing a group of people who, whether they are Finnish or come from abroad, have had sizable periods of time working in other countries, and, precisely, it is a curiosity for research that serves as one of the central motivations for them moving into academia. The reasons for choosing this path are varied. For some it is about gaining expertise useful for their entrepreneurial careers, for others it is just another stop in their long career. It is also a job that offers a salary in times of precarity:

So, and there was a point in which I thought there was the right combination of things: I was in a quite precarious situation in Italy and also I met some people from here and I got to know that there was a position open. So, I applied, and I got the position, so it was a bit, like, by chance. Before I could realise it, I was already kind of here in Finland starting a PhD. (DDA PhD2)

Work Stability is also addressed. But there are also cases where research is seen as aside job:

At the moment there is really quite little connection between what I do in my day job but I would not have considered starting my research project if I were not really interested in the topic, because I do have an alternative to working in the place where I am now. So, I don’t really consider doing research and being an academic as a career, it is not really so much a career choice rather than me being interested in the topic. (DDA, PhD3).

This person does not even get remunerated at the university. The backgrounds are varied but one can appreciate a general relentless commitment to curiosity and a sincere affection for their profession. Furthermore, they know that, in pursuit of their personal professional interest, they must be open to knowledge and have the social skills to work together with other people from different backgrounds.

At first glance, the majority of research topics seemed to resonate with what we discussed in the previous chapter as user-guided and demanded research: brand design (DDA Sen1); research on product packaging (DDA
PhD1) or the application of technology in education (DDA PhD2). Moreover, informants who are more art oriented know how to dress their work in utilitarian attires.

Overall, the experience, skills, cosmopolitanism, entrepreneurship, passion and research interests pair well with AU multi-skilled, passionate, “useful-knowledge”-oriented researcher, as described in the programmatic documents. Furthermore, their working identity is often constituted at the crossroads of the entrepreneurial/private sector and the researcher/public sector. The private and the public should not be taken as two separate dimensions but as two settings used by the interviewees as a means for comparison; their stories move instinctively from one to the other. They generally conclude that the university is a workplace that provides the requisite life-work balance.

The notion of a life-work balance is rooted in a relaxed work environment that allows the interviewees’ interests to be properly fostered. Their work activities surmount the formal limits of their employment and serve to define other aspects of their existence. The interviewees’ statements indicate that this positive relation between work and life is ascribed firstly to a multifaceted idea usually summed up with the word “freedom”. And secondly, it is related to a pleasant relation with their colleagues in a collaborative work environment.

9.2. From Freedom to autonomy

Multifaceted freedom

I enjoy having a big amount of responsibility as well as freedom. When they are combined well then all goes well. And the worst: I have met good and bad managers within the area of... design-related knowledge, intensive business development, or service development. (DDA Senior1)

But that freedom I was mentioning before and the possibility to really think about what I’m doing, taking the time for reflecting and being critical with

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1 Locating Aalto University either in the public or private sector is not an easy task. Aalto University is a foundation, hence a private entity, which is thus legally independent from the public sector. Also, the management structure of the university is closer to that of a private company. On the other hand, it remains publicly funded (approximately up to two-thirds of the total budget) and some seats of the board of directors are appointed directly by the ministry. As far as the interviewees are concerned, however, Aalto University belongs to the public sector.
myself and with others. And the fact that being critical is something that is a... how to say- it’s appreciated in my work. So, in that sense well, from other experiences that I’ve had before, if you’re in industry or if you are in a -how to say- in another type of private business, being critical is something that is not necessarily appreciated. So, and here it’s a key component of what you are doing. So, that’s... I would say, and I think that’s something, that not only because it’s academia, but I would like to keep that value in everything that I do. I think in society, well, in education, critical thinking is something that is valuable, because it affects other things that are happening, other spheres. I mean social, economic... So, that’s something that for me... I would... I want to keep it as a central value or at least I try, let’s see if I manage. (DDA PhD2)

Aalto University has been established but at the same time I think there is a lot of freedom, especially if I compare to other working places. But at the same time things are quite structured and maybe I would like to do something that requires a different kind of freedom; this I am lacking now ...but in general, well, maybe my values as a designer, work related values... truth is very subjective, but I will say it anyway: beauty is very important to me. Even if it is, like, as research: it should be done beautifully, but not just a visual expression to me. When something is beautiful it means there is some quality to it. (DDA PhD1)

Of course, working in the private sector it was that, you know, you really must do the design work, there was not much... there was no time for research, as such. And it was also that I was very much involved in the bidding for contracts, and because I had a unit, we had to get our funds by selling our work. And in this way, the university, it is ... in the public sector, so it is probably to some extent different. Yeah, and of course there’s still much more to work in the university, it’s a very independent type of work. And it gives a chance really to decide like each field, which kind of research you do or what kind of books you write and what kind of articles you try to get through and so on. (DDA Prof1)

In this succession of quotes, freedom refers to the high and unchanging degree of autonomy needed in the designer’s profession. Freedom is also the right to reflect on oneself during the research process, it is about critically reflecting and thinking how one’s reasoning can affect the larger societal context. Freedom is also the means to realise “beauty” in the very process of work, as well as to decide what to study and how. Finally, freedom is having the time to have meaningful life outside work.

The interviewees tend to differentiate two domains: freedom in relation to work and freedom to constitute an existence beyond work. These two
domains are in many cases intertwined. For example, DDA PhD1’s freedom as the realisation of “beauty”, DDA PhD2’s freedom as the exercise of one’s critical faculties, and DDA PhD4’s freedom as having the time and the resources to pursue a career as a novelist, indicate how freedom at work responds and constructs an existence outside work.

Collaborative work

The importance and the joy of collaborative work is shared in a multidisciplinary context:

I think it moves well, it gets to be this but it is a new aspect and, especially in a profession like mine, people are used to, you know, and researchers, all researchers they are used to working on their own, only in the research room and quietly; going to seminars and so on. And not really in a working place where you have 10 people working with the same things, and so on. And I don’t know how this then comes about… or what the methods are but I think that’s what they are trying now in Aalto to do: to get people to work together more. And the skills for collaboration, co-creation, and so on. (DDA Prof1)

In my work with a research group, I think, the best experience has been we made an interactive installation. It was called the ALAN O1 project. I was basically the programmer and the technician and interaction designer. It was a really good project that got some international attention and we have been taking it to a couple of different locations: London and Florence. (DDA PhD3)

The use of the intellect means learning to combine different methods, and experiences. Labour is thus placed in an environment where constructive discussions are the norm. Some associate this new work environment with horizontal working relations:

In general, I will say that people are… well, the communication is very direct and relations are quite horizontal. So, even if I’m with my superior, if I don’t agree with something I feel totally confident and will say it straight (…) If people ask what’s your opinion on that it’s because you can say… you are totally free to say if you don’t agree or if you don’t like something and there’s nothing wrong. I mean, if your superior thinks different, he or she is going to find out the decision because he or she has the responsibility. So, it’s no problem, I mean I’m also not taking it personal if later on my comments are not taken into consideration or don’t affect the final decision. But I know it’s benefiting the process. (DDA, PhD2)
Horizontal relations represent a basic aspect of any trustful communication between human beings. Along these lines, collaborative work can lead to a sense of togetherness:

It is always interesting when you find some connections, some useful things, some connections, some ideas that you can write about it but mostly what is more interesting is when you find some people with whom it is easy to discuss about something that is related to your subject. This is maybe the most interesting part of this work: sharing and discussing things, meeting people. But that mainly happens at conferences; of course, it happens at seminars and other types of meetings too, but I think I like more this type of interaction because most of the work is quite lonely: you read alone, you write things alone, you create something alone and maybe after that you get the chance to go to a meeting and ask for some feedback. But it takes quite a lot of time to work on things alone and I feel that I miss the social aspect of working practices, I mean something where I am able to do the same things but in a more socially interactive way. (DDA PhD1)

DDA PhD1 values the process of deliberation, of sharing ideas, of spending time with people, not just because of work but because this can create social bonds. This is further reflected in how she bitterly refers to the lonely side of her work. In another quote, these bonds are defined in terms of care, that is, of helping one another, since personal matters should be part of a good work relation:

I think university life is very, very competitive. And the competition is… on, the one hand, we should make like teamwork, and group work and work in teams but I think in the commercial field we are mostly for… “I had a team” It was 15 people, designers and so on. And I think our group work was much better, in a way that you know, if somebody was sick the other one… we kind of work more together, in a team, than what is the case at the university. (DDA Prof1)

Consequently, collaborative work surpasses the strict work dimension; collaborative work is not just a methodology to produce knowledge. It also carries values of care, a sense of equality and camaraderie with one’s workmates. There is a certain notion of the “common” underpinning this reflection based on care, which goes beyond both the playful interior and the state-of-the-art resources on offer. Indeed, in some ways, the sense of the “common” here connects up with Hardt & Negri’s (2001) argument regard-
ing the emancipatory potential in both the organisation and the production of immaterial goods.

To recapitulate, the life-work balance is linked first to freedom. Here freedom is defined as the possibility to work on knowledge based on shared values or ideals, or on one’s own personal principles. Freedom means also the guarantee of a decent salary and the time to enjoy a decent life. The life-work balance is about the synergies of collaborative work that vibrate with a sense togetherness and care. As we can see, freedom extends to many aspects of life. It is for this reason that I suggest autonomy is a better descriptive concept, where autonomy is understood in a twofold way. First, autonomy is the capacity to work with knowledge according to one’s values. Second, autonomy means leading a life not determined by dehumanised and exploitative work, both inside the workplace –by referring to the human dimension of collaborative work – and outside, by having the means to live a decent life.

Up to this point, the informants’ accounts resemble the institution’s own portrayal of the workplace. There are, however, some notable differences. Unlike the institution, the workers’ views on freedom and cooperative work are defined, more or less explicitly, by the recurrent presence of an indeterminate force that threatens their work-life balance, and that shows itself in different forms (e.g. the invasive manager who is part of the impatient and selective private sector, the fact that one has no time for other activities, a previous experience in another country, individualism etc.).

The twofold autonomy described above represents the tension that derives from the problematic unification of the structural market orientation, on the one hand, and the values present in the superstructure, on the other, that cannot be swiftly re-defined to accommodate the market logic. This tension is embodied in the workers themselves who must ultimately deal with this irresolvable problem in their daily lives. This reflects the totalising and relational nature of the order, according to which the contradictions that are generated within and between the structure and superstructure trickle down from the systemic level and directly affect people in their daily work practices.

9.3. Uncertainty, the destabilising “might”

Uncertainty is the result of deep contradictions that emerge from within the totalising movement of the structured order. This uncertainty shows itself in different ways:
I have family here, so my mobility possibilities are more reduced; also, I don’t want to go anywhere, just anywhere: I had enough with having to learn Finnish, so I don’t want to start with a fourth language at this time of my life. So, having a career means being here in Finland or in my country of origin and at the moment I think for family reasons it makes much more sense to stay here in Finland. But work opportunities are limited in both places for several reasons, but in Finland I have a position but it’s like a researcher position and there is no… not many places like a Professorship that would be open (…) with the new changes in the school and Aalto, they had had… they want to develop tenure tracks in a much more specific way and they also want to have younger people and people who’d have PhD’s much faster than I did so… I’m not so sure how this will play out. Separately, I have to do some kind of career move. Not because I don’t like the salary or the options, just because I probably need to do something different, and it has been enough time for doing things in my department. (DDA Sen.2)

The first time I established a company was in 1993. At that time, the hourly based fee was 50€ per hour. And my customers and the companies that I was working with were happy to pay that. The consulting companies in the end of the 1990s would easily ask from 100 to 200 or even 150 to 250€ per hour. Then, as I understand it, technology came into advertising and brand development, so both working opportunities and fees went down. By 2003 - it had already gone down- but in 2006 to 2009, just before the banking crisis, the hourly basic fees were somewhere between, I would say, 90 to 150€, at a strategic level (…). Then it declined greatly in 2009. Just recently I talked with the director of Finnish Foreign Design and I talked with one CEO of a designer agency, just a few days ago, last week. The company director said that their lowest fee is 34 and the director of Finnish Foreign Design said that the lowest prize he heard at the moment or currently is 24€/h. So, you cannot pay your electricity, you cannot rent an agency place with that amount of money. (DDA Sen.1)

Even if I graduate as a Doctor of Arts, it is not a profession in itself. So I somehow am interested in doing design work, keeping my contacts and my practical skills by using certain programmes; that’s another reason why I want to keep that because these are, I do not know, things that create some kind of safety and continuation for me, because I do not really trust that the university will offer me work after I have graduated… it is quite difficult, and in general the options are to become a post-doc researcher or some kind of teacher-professor or continuing working as an independent designer or artist but in the university. The only good option financially would be to become a professor, but it is still like…it used to be a really good position, but I don’t know … I have seen that it is quite a stressful position and I have seen that professors in the university are the only people that can actually get
like the kind of salary considered to be ok and maybe worth all the stress, because there are a lot of people who work in the university and they are doing a lot of work with a lot of stress but they are not really being paid much of anything or just on the minimum or something, and I don’t really think it’s fair. (DDA PhD1)

The reasons for uncertainty are varied – from the dramatic decrease in wages, the difficulties in balancing family life and an academic career due to work mobility and the scarcity of secure positions. The response to this uncertain situation is to diversify career paths, though always bearing in mind their intellectual interests and life needs. In short, it is a matter of finding ways to maintain their autonomy. When uncertainty grows, though, treating work and life as though they were two separate entities becomes more difficult. The feeling of uncertainty expressed by the informants provide us with the first glimpses of structural constraints. Ulrich Beck’s (1992) concept of “risk” helps to describe the specific relation that interviewees have with the future alongside the idea that risk can only be dealt with through more competitiveness.

What is interesting at this point is it to comprehend how a competitive landscape relates to the informants’ perceptions about the impact of these structural constraints on their own existence. These perceptions principally touch upon the relation between competitiveness and autonomy.

From uncertainty to flexibility and market shaped competitiveness

The informants are multitalented, with experiences of university work as well as life in the private sector, either as wage workers or entrepreneurs. Flexibility is their work life’s bread-and-butter:

How do I combine work and personal life? It has been quite easy for me. Combining work and personal life has been easy for me for like… always and I’m… it occurs that my profession has been… has not been a 9 to 5 profession. So, it comes easy for me to work in the evenings or during the weekends, if necessary. Sort of having like an entrepreneurial attitude towards my work. I’m not that tight, I’m flexible. (DDA Sen.1)

The interviewees’ autonomy has been about adapting to the changing context of their profession; working in their specific research fields at the
university, as well as in the private sector, needs constant updating. Interestingly, the informants relate economic survival with autonomy in a similar way to the programmatic documents, which understand autonomy as an instrument for the institution’s survival (Piironen 2013, 142). This reflects how the pre-eminence of autonomy, supported by economic and financial imperatives, trickles down to become inculcated by individual workers with the outcome of vertically enforcing existing norms and positions. Even people who are used to being resilient in their profession have difficulties to deal with today’s unparalleled degree of contingency and competitiveness:

Yeah, well, at the moment I have small children, and a husband that also has a lot of work. So, I guess even though we are supposed to be equal in many things it’s always me who ends up coming and picking up the girls if they’re sick or whatever. So I guess a little bit of gender issues arise even though this is such an equal society; there’s still a lot of things that are difficult if you’re a woman and have children (…) having more time to write papers or to make applications or to, you know, advance my career… is less because I have a family. But well, I also knew that when I decided that I wanted to have children anyway. But it’s not easy to organize that part of the work, you know, trying to be as proactive as everybody else when, you know, they always have chicken pox or ear infections or whatever and you have to stay there and take care of them. (DDA Sen2)

DDA Sen2 discloses how flexibility and competitiveness do not match up with household work; having an open schedule means shouldering more of the responsibility when it comes to caring for the children. Furthermore, at work she cannot be as competitive as those colleagues of hers that are without children, since they can be more flexible with their schedules. Therefore, the attributes of “competitiveness” and “flexibility” simply reinforce existing gender roles, as well as eroding life-work balance and, by extension, personal autonomy. An academic career does not combine well with family-life unless one has “unseen time-management skills”. Other interviewees like DDA PhD3 also are very aware that an academic career today does not bring the best prospects for a balanced work-life. Informants with no children complain to be the prisoners of work at home via e-mails and calls at weekends, something that especially applies to those working in the private sector. The difficult relation between autonomy and compe-

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2 Some of the informants are graphic designers, a profession that requires constant research in the mapping of emerging trends.
titiveness, and the exacerbation of existing inequalities entailed therein, is a central issue in today’s knowledge production.

Flexibility and competitiveness here do not appease the original tension between the structure (e.g. the expansion of the market rule) and the superstructure (e.g. the reproduction of prevailing values), as explained above. Rather, flexibility and competitiveness exploit the resulting inequalities, risks and uncertainties. Flexibility and competitiveness are thus hegemonic instruments that end up naturalising the practices derived from these inequalities to re-define the value system from below and establish the heuristic relation between structure and superstructure, as well as consolidate the totalising movement of market expansion.
10

A frictionless narrative in times of “unparalleled change” and the concealment of the political

Aalto University’s programmatic documents construct a narrative by re-conceptualising our lived time: We are all “living in the unparalleled times of the digital society in which knowledge and innovations are crucial”. This chapter brings together the presented narratives emerging from the programmatic documents and the work stories, in order to make one narrative (as detailed in Step 3 of the method’s working process – see section 7.1– in relation to the conclusions derived from the story telling framework – see section 7.2). With its constitutive nodal points, the broader narrative is summarised in columns 1 and 2 in the table below. Column 3 represents the tensions that the narrative conceals, especially within the workplace. This introductory section for the chapter is divided into two parts. The first part serves as a summary of the present chapter as a whole (10.1) while the second will introduce the central antagonisms that the narratives seek to conceal in their attempt at constructing a post-political narrative (10.2).

10.1. Summary of the narrative: Living in Unparalleled times and the tale of frictionless capitalism

AU represents the vanguard for a profound societal change, producing knowledge and “changing agents” (Aalto Strategy 2012, 7. School of Art, Design and architecture 2015, 1). The relation between knowledge and society is conceived in terms of “human centred” and “user centred” knowledge, both of which are deployed synonymously.

User centred knowledge presupposes that in the digital society, social problems can be tackled from an individual perspective with an alliance between university researchers, entrepreneurs and technologies. Hence, it exists as a relation between human needs and solutions rooted in the “intersection of mobile technologies, services, games and entertainment” (School of Arts Design and Architecture Strategy 2015).
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The university and the demand for knowledge-based growth:

1. Knowledge-based economy: its defining nodes
2. Learning/Department of Media
3. Systemic tensions concerned by the

- The creative and entrepreneurship society
- The intellectual sector as a major force of innovation
- The transfer market power of knowledge production and property
- The knowledge-intensive production of new products and services
- Knowledge-based production as the key for growth and prosperity
- The human brain as the source of knowledge

- The core of the innovation and creativity cycle
- Knowledge-intensive production
- Co-citation production and consumption
- Innovation
- Natural/Other
- Documents
- University
- Relations from the

Conclusion:

- The central role of the
- The creative and entrepreneurship society
- The intellectual sector as a major force of innovation
- The transfer market power of knowledge production and property
- The knowledge-intensive production of new products and services
- Knowledge-based production as the key for growth and prosperity
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- The core of the innovation and creativity cycle
- Knowledge-intensive production
- Co-citation production and consumption
- Innovation
- Natural/Other
- Documents
- University
- Relations from the
The common is invisible in this individualistic technocentrism. Technology-based problem-solving employs a language that does not recognise structural constraints; knowledge is produced for a society of “stakeholders” that confronts “challenges”, and since society is in need for “solutions”, what is desired is a type of knowledge that is “interactional”. Little is said about forms of knowledge that, for example, are directed towards cultural emancipation, solidarity or social justice. Words that would suggest the existence of unequal, unjust and oppressive structures are seldom employed. This is quite remarkable for a country that, from the 1950s up until a few years ago, operated under a political settlement predicated on egalitarian policies.

The formula for solving everything: Solutionism + scientific management

This individual oriented technocentrism echoes what Evgeny Morozov (2013, 5) names “solutionism”: “the idea that given the right code, algorithms and robots, technology can solve all of mankind’s problems, effectively making life “frictionless” and trouble-free”. Global Problems are located at the individual level, within a static and concrete context defined by independent variables. Knowledge should adopt the form of an algorithm or technological device based on immovable independent variables. While these variables are not natural, they still serve as the basis for the structure, which over time, and by way of relations of force, become sedimented and are reproduced within an imagined frictionless order. Consequently, problems are conceived as a matter of assembling pieces of a puzzle, and knowledge here is understood as making combinations, finding patterns and especially elucidating causal relations that could be sold for profit. These assembled pieces of knowledge are, in essence, what the institution defines as “useful” knowledge.

Another dimension of solutionism is that it simplifies the intricacies of society, turning it into the foundation of positivism to systematise its research: the problem-solving logic draws a clear path between problem and solution, a controlled process that can be organised in different stages to steer research towards innovative ends. Therefore, the production of knowledge is based on the scientific management of creative abilities, rather than on creative individuals as such. In this way, multidisciplinary strategies aim at bringing together pieces of knowledge from different disciplines and assembling them in the form of concrete solutions. Consequently, multidisciplinarity is not about developing research based on shared theoretical frameworks and methods but about tactically working on concrete pieces of
knowledge. Design, for example, becomes a complement in improving marketing, and for enhancing the “visualisation” of engineering projects. The paradox of solutionism, and by extension of knowledge production, is that these strategies resonate more with the old Fordist rationalisation of production “than to the untameable logic of creativity”, which the KBE claims to enhance.

Living in a future to be

Aalto University’s mission (Aalto University Strategy 2012) is to define society’s needs for the future along with other pro-active actors (that is, “stakeholders”). Researchers are the active transformative agent of society: “a responsible expert, an agent of change and a visionary “(Ibid. 7). The expert is a visionary who renews, often with a grand but vague utopian horizon (Ibid, 7). In practice, renewal means the realisation of a creative economy that will empower researchers as knowledge producers and renovators. Their empowerment, however, contains within it, a conflict of interest, i.e. when the motivation for change seems to create new needs that can only be met by the knowledge produced by those who promote this very change.

This particular conflict of interests is a product of technocentrism. In this new order, new needs emerge because of technology and solutions come thanks to technology and their technical experts. Finally, technocentrism continues to boost the narrative of globalisation and of a vision of social progress steered by technological development.

Aalto University’s suppositions and predictions are not simply part of an optimistic forecast of how things will be. They impose upon all its institutions a permanent transition to the future. Ironically, the university is the first victim of this cycle of renewal since AU must incarnate the future and serve as a model to guide the whole university system towards modernisation. This implies that outside we have a wider societal rupture with the past that is still to happen while in AU it has already occurred. Here, lays a potential antinomy: society is the past and as such needs to make a leap into the future. Nonetheless, this leap is not led by an empowered society; it is instead initiated and carried out by a fleet of trusted experts and a raft of technological advances. What is sought is a promise of a frictionless future. Rupture is a permanent feature of the journey towards the future, with the expert as an indispensable actor. This temporality of change sets the frame for the implementation of reforms within the institution.
These reforms are canalised through a technocratic model of governance that aims at market goals, which run through the different faculty representatives. A chain of command that marginalises student organisations, and thus makes the formation of alternatives virtually impossible (Alto Foundation Constitution, 2010). In short, the government of the institution is about mobilising manpower to produce market-oriented goals, thanks to the use of a centralised but all the while networked structure.

Values for times of historic acceleration

Aalto University sees neither society nor the institution as a space of struggle. We could say that Aalto University does not stand against anything and by extension nothing substantial can oppose it. AU projects a frictionless order that can be approached from two closely intertwined dimensions.

First. Values that frame the coexistence between the individual and the collective. The individual here is a pro-active subject and the collective is a vaguely defined passive entity. The relation between these poles is sustained, firstly, on a state that creates the conditions under which individual initiatives can prosper, and secondly, on an individual who is an entrepreneur and innovator as well as a responsible and ethical being who can function as a role model for society. This, however, represents the overcoming of the dialectical relation between the individual and the collective: the collective is annulled as a political concept, since the pursuit of personal interests naturally inclines towards societal prosperity.

Second. The political end of the collective represents the re-inscription of freedom and autonomy. Concepts that previously were part of the academic collective and the individual realms are now redefined in terms of individual self-realisation associated with the capacity to create innovations and cope with the pace of change. Hence, this structurally defined “market” oriented autonomy (Piironen 2013, 135) trickles down, along with material necessities forcing the workforce to embrace it in order to survive.

This interpretation first engenders that, in the context of governing society, the conflictual and constitutive force of autonomy and freedom as ideals lose their political and critical potency once they have retreated to the private/individual terrain of “self-realisation”. Second, this frictionless order also engenders a contradictory relation between materialistic and post-materialistic values. The individual is defined by post-materialistic values in a context of the expansion of the market-rule, which pushes the apparent
post-material self-realisation, fuelled through passion and creativity, towards a market-driven strive for innovation.

The workplace: The struggle for self-realisation

One of the first aspects that came across from the informants is that work and life are two realms difficult to separate. On the one hand, work defines their existence in a more materialistic sense: salary, free time for passions and interests, family life. On the other hand, work constitutes social bonds: a good work environment, a capacity to work with people, the forging of friendships etc.

In this context, freedom is a recurring word deployed by the informants; it becomes a specific way of approaching knowledge creation in accordance with the actual ideals (identity, values, taste etc.) that define a person. Freedom means also having the time and the means for a decent life. Finally, freedom relates to the positive synergies of collaborative work that vibrate with both solidarity and care. The concept of autonomy, which was employed throughout the previous chapter, aims at representing all these aspects of work that appear to transcend the workplace.

*Autonomy* is firstly the capacity to work with knowledge according to one’s values. Secondly, autonomy means leading a life not co-opted by the work logic. This applies to the workplace, underlining the human dimension inherent in collaborative work. It applies as well to outside work in terms of having the means (time, resources, salary, etc.) to experience a life beyond the job (See section 9.2).

*Uncertainty* is the destabilising “might” that can shatter this sense of autonomy. The response to this context by the informants is to diversify their career paths, so as to secure their welfare, but always mindful of their intellectual interests. Uncertainty develops in close quarters with the contingent logic of competition, the latter of which imposes a material horizon on a postmaterialist identity (See section 9.3).

10.2. Conceptualisation: A post-political narrative to conceal a conflict-ridden reality to overcome the decoupling between structure and superstructure

Technological optimism and solutionism turn the present into a permanent race to a glorified future in the making, and this sets the tone for the policy reforms adopted. The suspension of the present is a way of concealing conflict by positing that their solution is to be found in a future already in the
making. In this way, all forms of resistance are neglected in the embrace of the relentless pace of reform. This, however, results in a nebulous, timeless and overwhelming notion of change. Therefore, by suspending time, this futuristic narrative seems to overcome the inherent problem of the different tempos of the structure and superstructure in capitalism; which is to say from the perspective of the narrative itself, there is the decoupling of the swift pace of reforms at the structural level, on the one hand, and, on the other, the lagging behind of those ideologies and alliances, which, at the superstructural level, are the conveyers of consent in the minds of the masses). In order to ensure that the capitalist order prevails and extends itself, these different temporalities are in need of some form of holistic reciprocity, which could re-synchronise the implementation of the reforms at the structural level with the formation of consent needed to consolidate and guide these changes at the level of the superstructure. This is, in short, the logic that defines the co-constitutive role of structure and superstructure under capitalism (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 192, See section 6.3.).

The narratives of change overcome this problem by proselytising the motto “change and trust in the future” as an extra-temporal and empty discursive resource that makes possible the permanent accommodation of the speed of HEI reforms. The importance of a cohesive consensual narrative, based on the co-constitutive relation between structure and superstructure, means reducing in one fell swoop the complexities of the system to a simple matter of trust in the inevitability of change. These changes, wrought through structural reforms, only serve however to solidify the existing social order (this is the horizon of the historic bloc, or the perfect communion between structure and superstructure. See moment 3 from the model presented in Chapter 6). This is an apparent and tortuous solution, which neglects the real problems any cohesive consensual narrative should be addressing. As a result, the narrative runs inevitably ahead of the immediate reality, something we could identify in the design department. Contradictions, which remain unaddressed by the narrative, end up widening the extent of the decoupling between structure and superstructure. Nonetheless, this empty receptacle of change is defined by competitiveness and solutionism which, along with the material formation of hierarchies, makes possible the articulation of a cohesive looking narrative around the figure of “the leading expert”. It is this figure of the expert who represents the fundamentals of the hegemonic narrative and puts in place the grounds for garnering individually based consent in support of the new order.
From the perspective of this technocentric and technocratic narrative, the mechanisms used to formalise consent can be reversed: no longer is it about a process of integrating different groups, making some material concessions and formalising consensual narratives and subjectivities to erect a solid order. On the contrary, here we see an imposition of a model from the top-down: the reforms are to be eventually adopted at all levels by the eventual emergence of the mystified figure of the leading expert as a consensual subject. Reforms do not address any resistance, nor is it the aim to form alliances; they instead unfold as a series of *faits accomplis* that materialise the actual order. This new order has little to do with the promised technocentric future but prevails as a “fact that cannot be undone.”

The gap between this narrative and reality is rooted in the aforementioned suspension of the present, which is itself a way of overcoming the different tempos that exist within and between the structure and the super-structure. This discursive operation has post-political undertones, in that it neglects, and even denies, the existence of antagonisms. These neglected antagonisms are disambiguated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overcoming the decoupling of structure and superstructure by the extratemporal concealment of constitutive antagonisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-political narrative:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <em>Solutionist utopia:</em> individuals sharing a frictionless existence thanks to knowledge and technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-political narrative nodal points</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Absence of the notion of collective compromise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Endless space for creativity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Post-materialist individual self-realisation disconnected from both material and social needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The left column represents each of the nodes comprising the political narrative. In the right column are presented each of the respective concealed antagonisms in the form of dialectical pairs.
10. A FRICTIONLESS NARRATIVE IN TIMES OF “UNPARALLELED CHANGE”

The dialectic oppositions, in the right column, emphasises the inherent conflict-ridden relations in contrast with the frictionless reality depicted in the programmatic documents. Hence, the dialectic shows how in any social order there are opposing but at the same time constitutive poles. This is to say, to understand an order from a relational perspective is about recognising and examining these conflicting poles. Despite its philosophical and conceptual depth, the dialectic is here used in a descriptive sense, that is, it is deployed more as a figure of speech than as a theoretical tool. The following paragraphs will explain the framework presented above, by following the enumerated post-political nodes and their corresponding concealed but constitutively dialectical form.

1. The absence of the notion of collective compromise vs Individual/Collective dialectic

Solutionism is the tool that aims at naturalising forevermore Jeremy Bentham’s positivist theoretical foundations: a win-win situation in a subliminal extratemporal kingdom, wherein technologies bring about change without creating tensions in the hands of skilled individuals. When, for example, “sustainability” is approached, it is initially acknowledged as a complex societal problem. Later, though, sustainability is disambiguated as a technical problem waiting for a solution based on “conciliatory” technical knowledge, which adapts to the pace of the global economy and the permanent need for economic growth. Solutionism offers the promise of a better society without sacrifices having to be made for the collective good. Why is it necessary then to discuss de-growth or redistribution of wealth? With the advance of technology, all need for collective compromises are virtually overcome.

Compromise defines a constructive moment in the dialectical relation between the individual and the collective. Compromise is the moment at which the individual agrees, willingly or not, to cede his individual claims for the betterment of the common. César Rendueles (2013, 103–105) places compromise at the centre of any cooperative relation: compromise is con-

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1 Jeremy Bentham’s Theory of Legislation (1896/1802) avidly attempts to realize a “value free” philosophy to conceive society starting from the essentialist view of Man as a pleasure-seeker/ pain avoider and extending it to all social relations. His pleasure-pain dichotomy is clearly “operationalized” when he suggests a model of legislation system based on reducing to the minimum pain and maximize pleasure represented by utilities. In this model, change can only be good if the total of the utilities of a society is increased and pain is not created regardless the actual structural distribution of them. Hence, change must be frictionless, depoliticized, otherwise it is not desirable.
stituted through enforced norms, not necessarily by an authoritarian institution but often by very elementary forms of social control, which, since the first primitive societies, have guaranteed the care of one’s fellows for the survival of the group; as is the case with respecting the red light when a pedestrian is crossing the road, remembering to wash the dishes when, in a shared apartment, it is your turn to do so, or to pick up your tray in a canteen, or to give up your seat to the elderly on public transport. There are other, more institutionalised, mechanisms to enforce compromise, such as the corporatist system in the Keynesian Welfare State or accepting the state’s monopoly on violence.

Compromise is a form of agreement that is constructed on the basis of the collective-individual dialectic. This dialectical relation is *per se* antipositivistic; not everything can be a “win-win”, individual sacrifice is always part of it. A question that remains, though, is who will make these sacrifices and for what collective purpose? This is a central political question, which for centuries has been analysed and reflected upon. Since the Enlightenment, socialists of different sensibilities (Utopian Socialists, Anarchists, Communists, and Social-democrats), as well as liberals, Cristian-democrats or conservatives, have all constructed central elements of their ideological worldviews around a consideration of this question. It regards the longstanding problem of how the state is effectively to regulate for the good of the collective with all its social implications. Different priorities have been scrutinised: should the state prioritise equality or growth? Can they be combined? Is it, economically speaking, a more stable state that has strong preferences for the common or one in which the state solely targets the accumulation of private goods? Can individual oriented policies indirectly create more wealth for the collective? All narratives suggest that this debate belongs to the past; such political choices are not necessary when technology provides win-win situations without sacrifice.

In this way, technological solutionism comes close to the neoliberal argument, which equates the cessation of individual *claims* – something necessary in any form of larger social cooperation – to the suppression of *individual rights and freedoms*. This neoliberal and anti-political claim, which was designed to combat Keynesianism, neglects the fact that any

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2 Jamie Peck emphasises that neoliberalism has never been a succinct political project: “neoliberalism has always been about the capture and reuse of the state, in the interests of shaping a pro-corporate, freer-trading “market order”, even though this has never been a process of cookie-cutter replication of an unproblematic strategy” (Peck 2010, 8). Neoliberalism’s raison d’être has always
polity – be it an anarchist assembly or a liberal parliamentary democracy – is based on a set of rules, whether written or unwritten, institutionalised or not, that, in constructing a social order, delimit individual claims (not necessarily rights). With its technological determinism, solutionism continues the tradition of the neoliberal denial of the common, and, by implication, the annulment of the political.

2. An endless space for creativity and development vs. Autonomy/domination

The solutionistic narrative claims that progress is forged by autonomous individuals with both creative and entrepreneurial skills. The task of the state is to provide the tools for this endeavour. Individual self-realisation, propped up by knowledge production, will steer economic growth and naturally benefit society. Solutionism assumes that clear cut solutions for complex social problems exist. The point is to find patterns, causalities, and methods to facilitate the production of solutions. Thus, any production of knowledge should be systematised, and this demands that one exerts control over the creative process.

Creativity is tamed by rationalised plans, which divide the production process into different stages. In this sense, it resembles the division of labour associated with Fordism: an assembly line in which each department and discipline specialises in certain stages of the process. Furthermore, these rationalised models of production are followed by “output evaluation” according to standards that are supposed to enhance both efficiency and competitiveness (e.g. market impact, citation impact, etc.). Creative autonomy is thus limited, and therefore antagonised, by this “rationalised model of production”. Creative autonomy should be unleashed unconditionally. At the same time, though, the solutionistic narrative defines limits that should remain.

3. Post-materialism vs precaritisation and class

The post-materialist values promoted by the narrative, alongside its practical materialistic application, show a materialist order composed of post-materialistic individual identities. The informants fit within the narrative of — been its opposition to the Keynesian Welfare State. Soviet communism was more of a rhetoric antagonist in the battle of ideas against Keynesianism rather than its ultimate ideological rival.
“creative worker or researcher” owing to the fact that their identities develop through their work. For the academic workers, freedom means the capacity to produce knowledge according to their own creative will. It also means the exercising of autonomy in order to lead a life free from the immediate work logic. Nonetheless, this desired existence is constantly eroded by a strictly materialist logic that steers research along the determinate path of so-called “useful knowledge”, according to which funding opportunities are tethered to utilitarian criteria. This translates into short contracts, competition for funding with colleagues, non-paid work etc. In short, uncertainty rules. When the full force of the market is unleashed then basic material needs for a decent life are threatened, and along with it the entire post-materialist edifice crumbles. Post-materialism melts into the materialist magma of the capitalist order. These post-materialist individuals are now highly skilled precarious workers, pulled into the orbit of the precariat (Standing, 2011) by the same system that claims to steer their post-materialist existence.

10.3. Solutionism meets Bourdieu: knowledge, markets and fields, a preview.

Solutionism is part of a technocentric narrative that glorifies utilitarian knowledge and entrepreneurship. From this starting point, the existence of a useful, hence marketable knowledge, is assumed and consequently its production is rationalised and the reforms necessary for this rationalisation are steered. Solutionism’s algorithmic optimism complements its ahistorical narrative of change. With its rhetorical flair and capacity to draw a clear direction for reform, solutionism embodies a top-down reform of universities, transforming central academic concerns (such as scientific autonomy, knowledge production or societal role of the university). This reform is mostly steered by actors foreign to the university system, though they pursue it without hesitation. Once striped of its attire, solutionism is a device that steers and represents the formation of an order driven by the verticality of the market and directly erodes the capacity for science to self-govern.

This is what Bourdieu calls the loss of autonomy of the scientific field, and that leads to the “commercialisation” of knowledge. Bourdieu’s concept of field refers to the semi-autonomous entities that structure society (e.g. the economic field, the scientific field, literary field, etc.). The nature of the field is like a board game delimited and governed by its own laws, wherein players compete for prominent positions. The nature of the hierarchical
relations, which constitute the scientific field, and which Bourdieu has systematically and meticulously theorised, is nonetheless mutating with the advance of the market. These market advances have resulted in a new verticality, the presence of which Bourdieu had conjectured but nonetheless did not have time to fully analyse (Bourdieu 2003, 67). Nevertheless, this transformation does not represent the complete removal of the current order. It is more the case that the old coalesces with the new, in its solutionistic/utilitarian form.

The Estonian case, inspired by the hierarchical nature of TUT policies, will be interpreted through the lens of Bourdieu’s scientific field by looking at the relation between the market organisational logic and its merger with the previously existing forms of the academic order. This does not mean that the solutionism we identified in AU is not present in either TUT or RNS. In fact, TUT presents us with a good example of the combinatory logic of solutionism and market enforced vertical relations we will discuss in the following chapter, namely MEKTORY: a knowledge transfer institution affiliated to TUT.
Part 4: Ragnar Nurske School of Innovation and Governance in Tallinn University of Technology
Tallinn University of Technology in the KBE: Schumpeterian dirigisme or the formation of state-market hierarchies

Tallinn University of Technology (TUT) is aspiring to become the chief oarsman, the flagship university in the Estonian KBE-inspired plan. This is the last chapter of the story of a centenary institution whose evolution has mirrored the historical vagaries of Estonia.

TUT was founded in German occupied Estonia in 1918 by the Estonian Engineering Society in cooperation with local intellectuals at the height of a tumultuous period of state building after Estonia gained independence (1917–1921). This period defined not only by the triumph of the Russian Revolution and the end of the First World War but also the collapse of the German Empire, which still had armies in the Baltic, generally, and in the nascent Estonian Republic, specifically.

The new state was in need for engineers, architects and technical professionals. In response a new private institution, named the Tallinn College of Engineering (TCE), was established. However, owing to its strategic importance, the college was in 1920 put into public hands, and integrated into the higher education system of Estonia. During the interwar period, TCE dedicated itself to the applied science in order to satisfy “the needs of the nation”. Despite its rise in prominence, financial difficulties haunted TCE, so much so that the government investigated the possibility of merging the institution with the University of Tartu. This option was finally ruled out, and the institution remained in Tallinn as Tallinn Technical Institute until the outbreak of WWII.

The Soviet period was characterised by deep ambivalence: a mixture of intellectual repression and institutional expansion – renamed Tallinn Polytechnic Institute (TPI). TPI grew, with respect to both student intake and research production, along with its strategic importance in the planned industrialisation of the country. In the 1960s, the institution finally moved to its present location, on Mustamae Campus in West Tallinn, becoming
one of the most prestigious universities of technology in the Soviet Union and a key institution for Estonia. TPI participated in movements associated with Estonian independence during the late eighties, for example the Singing Revolution. In 1989, the institution acquired its present name, Tallinn University of Technology (hereafter TUT). After the collapse of the Soviet Union during the 1990s, TUT, now the second most important university in the country after Tartu University, embarked on internationalisation, modernisation and strategic market orientation. Here it studiously followed the KBE international blueprints. Study programmes expanded and consolidated TUT as a key institution for the country as a whole.

TUT has always been a university with a clear utilitarian ethos defined by the vicissitudes of its immediate socio-political context. Without downplaying the ideological imposition and centralisation of the Soviet period in comparison to other periods, TUT has generally lived far from the “Humboldtian ivory tower ideal”. The significance of engineering made “applicability” and “adaptation” constant demands for the institution, two principles whose ways of functioning have been reproduced at TUT ever since.

General Societal envisagement from the TUT today

The social and economic development of modern society is greatly determined by its innovative capability and its ability to cope with the risks of a globalising world. Central to such a society are free and educated individuals, with the organisation of society and the economy being knowledge-based and proceeding from the principles of human rights and social justice. (Estonian Higher Education Strategy 2006–2015, 1) Overall, the Tallinn University of Technology shares certain fundamentals with Aalto University: TUT understands the university as a critical node in establishing the KBE. Hence, similar to AU, TUT also considers technology, knowledge and creativity as the core of any reliable prospect. Moreover, like AU, the strategic documents have references to the future, a commitment to horizontal methods of production and innovation, alongside a major integration of Estonia into the global economy. At the same time, there are some notable differences. TUT lacks a deep description of what the future KBE socioeconomic order will look like. Instead, TUT programmatic documents present objectives and forecasts grounded on concrete indicators, numbers and a vertical organisation that ultimately serves to strengthen Estonian competitiveness in the wider context of globalisation. TUT programmatic documents project an institution working organically with the University Board, in strict adherence to quantitative evaluative indicators.
Overall, the tone of TUT resonates with a *dirigiste* project, and this extends outwards, covering the institution as a whole. One could say that the strategy adopted by AU is to a greater or lesser degree also dirigiste, but this is more clearly stated in the case of TUT. This has some interesting implications. *Firstly,* TUT champions a form of technocentrism, with expertise and knowledge as the key factors for prosperity. However, contrary to Aalto, this does not give rise to a “frictionless” narrative but rather a narrative of “commitment”: TUT legitimises its project by “inviting” everyone to collaborate on the reaching of general objectives. *Secondly,* this “invitation” comes across in the programmatic documents as vertically imposed, a fact that nonetheless does not seem to contradict the implementation of a horizontal multidisciplinary strategy from below. The resulting vertical organisation is closely related to its dependence on direct private financing (only 20% of the budget is publicly funded). Thus, the strategy of TUT deals with publicly acknowledged constraints and consequently, the narrative has fewer rhetorical adornments.

The first part of the present analysis will look to the narrative of TUT programmatic documents while the second part will present the experiences of workers engaged in academic labour.

**Dirigisme**

**Mission:** Tallinn University of Technology creates and mediates values that ensure Estonia’s development in the globalizing world.

Committed to its mission, the University fosters research, academic and applied higher education and technical culture. TUT creates synergy between engineering, technology, exact, natural, health and social sciences that promotes societal development. (TUT, 2011, 1)

TUT’s grand objective is to become a central agent in the KBE in Estonia. The path leading to this goal, “the commitment” in the quote above, coheres around three narrative junctures: *vertical organisation; multidisciplinary-

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1 Dirigisme, from French diriger, can be translated into English as “steering” or to direct. It is a term employed to define a political economic model in capitalism developed mainly in France after the Second World War. The state in dirigisme has a strong role in directing the economy to incentivise, and in some cases even finance, certain economic areas to complement the market economy, with the aim of securing economic stability and growth. Dirigisme can be conceptualised as a form of Fordist capital accumulation.
horizontal based excellence and a permanent relation with society (principally the private sector). The resultant hierarchical order emerges from out of these three intersecting nodes. Unlike Aalto University, TUT consistently articulates and adopts a vertical strategy, often referring to higher ranking governmental policy documents in support of its own strategic goals. Let us start with one of these documents: the Estonian Higher Education Strategy. It serves as a key programmatic document, reflecting the policy background of TUT’s other programmatic documents (Estonian Higher Education Strategy 2011, 2).

11.1. From laissez-faire to state-led market orientation

1. Need for strategic choices

Looking at the previous development of the Estonian higher education system, which after the reestablishment of independence has essentially been characterised by a laissez-faire attitude and quantitative growth, it could be said – in the conditions of a transition society and in comparison to the international situation – that the result has been good but extremely uneven (Higher Education Strategy 2011, 3).

The “laissez-faire” attitude refers to the uneven results of the IS strategy launched in the late 1990s. The new strategy proposes to bring the state into the centre of things, so as to define the direction of Estonian higher education. The turn to a more dirigiste model represents Jamie Peck’s (2010, 22) two temporal dynamics of neoliberalisation: roll-back and roll-out neoliberalisation. It marks out the transition from a pro-active deregulatory neoliberalisation (roll-back) to a state-steered, hence more, regulatory, “dirigiste” neoliberalisation (roll-out), carried out through the framing of new expectations and norms, which added greater risk on the labour market (Saar & Helamae 2011, 37). The beginning, then, of new regulatory era:

2 Neoliberalism’s regulatory character in the name of the market is not new but is in fact a constant in the history of capitalism. This is one of the central ideas of Gonzalo Pontón’s major historical work “The struggle for inequality” (2016) (La Lucha por la Desigualdad). The book is a history of the western world from the 18th Century and narrates the origins of modern capitalism’s inequality, introducing a nuanced interpretation of the enlightenment not as a liberating force but partly the guiding light for inequality. The book presents a socio-economic order that was rapidly transforming to completely new forms of wealth creation in times of technological acceleration and how the establishment from this early capitalist period set in motion the regulatory conditions and
We need a critical mass of vital development both in R&D and innovation “production” as well as for ensuring financial mechanisms to support young and innovative enterprises. Increasing demand for R&D&I outputs has key importance, but this cannot take place solely by implementing one or two measures, it requires a full solution that would take into account the processes in the field from start to finish, in other words, from studies and experiments all the way up to the marketing of a finished solution. (National Reform Programme 2020, 2 Estonia 2020, 20)

This regulatory turn is also expressed in the TUT programmatic documents, where it is described as a vertical integration between government and university:

In compiling the Strategy and its subsequent amendments the following three principles will provide the starting points:

2.1 Estonia bears responsibility as a state for the structure of its (higher) educational system, implementing it in cooperation and coordination with the other member states of the European Union and considering the standpoints of the European Commission and other European institutions and worldwide trends.

2.2 The development of the Estonian higher education system is based on the continuity of the national higher education system, and, in setting the goals, account has been taken of the common policies of the EU, including primarily the Lisbon strategy and the creation of a common European higher education space formed by the Bologna process, and of the European research area.

2.3 The development of the Estonian higher education system must support Estonia’s socio-economic development and increase its competitiveness and capability for international cooperation, simultaneously guaranteeing Estonia’s continued national existence. The Estonian Higher Education Strategy supports the realisation of other state development plans, in particular the "Knowledge-based Estonia“ strategic development plan. (Ministry of Education and Research 2013, 2)

The starting points for this second quote are clearly inspired by the EU strategic policy guidance (Lisbon Strategy, Bologna Process). They reflect a will, on the side of the Estonian institution, to develop within the EU framework. This becomes a “state mission” when the literal relation between morals, often ground-breaking, to ensure that this wealth would be unequally distributed. The “invisible hand” happened to be a visible iron fist, we could say.
higher education, competitiveness and the survival of “Estonian national existence” is established. The grandiloquence of this rhetoric paves the way to a more intrusive systematised (and regulatory) plan for HEI, since education is openly regarded as a leverage for the greater good of the country.

The plan was based firstly on the creation of quality criteria predicated on quantitative methods to measure knowledge. Secondly, there was a clear preference for funding the technical, natural and exact sciences. Thirdly, a teaching curriculum was drawn up that placed emphasis on skill-orientation and life-long learning to meet labour market demand. Fourthly and finally, the accomplishments of research in these strategic areas will serve as an indicator to evaluate the higher education policy. (Ministry of Education and Research, 2013)

These plans for Higher Education Strategy are closely adhered to in TUT’s key programmatic documents. This continuity is enacted via the principles of competitiveness and horizontal governance, two “transmission nodes” 3 that define the all-encompassing narrative (Step 2 of the method working process see frame section 7.1.), with its causalities, its forms of organisation and ideological postulates. The following two sections build upon the transmission aspect of these nodal points, situating them within the institution, specifically, and in relation to the larger ideological principles they reproduce (Step 3 of the method working process; see section 7.1).

11.2. Market oriented competitiveness

Research and teaching

Entitled “Curriculum Development, the most important courses of action and expected results”, the TUT Research Strategy document summarises the direction of research and teaching in the following way:

1. Integrated research, development and education. The curriculum development and provision of education are based on internationally acknowledged research and development.

3 “Node” or “nodal point” is the name I give to those words that succinctly summarise the narrative’s central ideas, inductively extracted from the line-by-line coding (See Method chapter, section 7.1.). Competitiveness and horizontal governance here come to represent the “mother nodes”, that is, the overarching concepts representing the essence of the narrative. “Transmission” is a term in strict continuity with the vertical chain of order that underlines the definition of order, which occurs from top to bottom.
2. **Output-oriented curricula.** Curricula of TUT, including in-service curricula, are output-oriented, developed jointly with all key partners and in conformity with the expectations and needs of all stakeholders (students, employers, society). The main course of curriculum development is student-oriented and interdisciplinary education. In-service curricula provide the graduates of all specialities a chance for professional development.

3. **International and joint curricula.** Curricula are developed in cooperation with other institutions of higher education in Estonia and abroad. Each faculty has at least two international curricula which are mostly followed by international students. In cooperation with TUT’s key partners, international joint curricula have been established. In order to develop international curricula, there are support systems helping to improve one's skills of teaching in a foreign language, development of curricula and marketing in faculties and colleges.

4. **Competitive education.** Curriculum development is based on the analyses of stakeholders’ (students, employers, alumni) feedback and future prognoses, enabling students to obtain an education that helps a graduate to remain competitive all over the world. All Master’s study curricula include an economics and business module which ensures the graduate’s conformity with the needs of the labour market, the economic situation and competitiveness.

5. **Up-to-date teaching methods.** Lecturers shall be provided necessary trainings, teaching environments and educational technological support to enable them to update their teaching activities and to actively participate in curriculum development.

6. **Estonian language as a study and research language.** Estonian language as a study and research language shall be developed concentrating on the expression skills and terminology of lecturers and students.

7. **Support system for curriculum development.** Curricula shall be developed and administered at faculty and college level. Curriculum development shall be effectively supported by a support system in the areas of provision of education, internationalization, human resources development, etc. In faculties and colleges there shall be curriculum committees, curriculum coordinators and counsellors dealing with curriculum development. Faculties and colleagues shall have necessary means and central support for curriculum development” (TUT 2012, 2)

The subheadings are instructive: “2. Output-oriented curricula”, “4. competitive education” and “7. Support system for curriculum development”. First, “output oriented” research operates as a euphemism for market-
oriented research, while multidisciplinarity and competitiveness respond to
the need to check and standardise the research process as a whole. These
three elements constitute the three different sides of the same narrative:
universities need to produce and teach “useful knowledge” (hence “multi-
disciplinarity”) to respond not only to the specific “needs” of various stake-
holders but also to a competitive labour market in demand for skilful labour
and useful research:

Provision of education in the international research university combines
provision of education, research and innovation. Research and technical
achievements are quickly integrated into the study programme which
ensures the development of young lecturers and research fellows as well as
specialists who value innovation and are necessary for the society. (TUT
2012, 1)

From these initial quotes, competitiveness emerges as the overarching con-
cept; it is a transmission node connecting general political economy with
higher education institutions. Unsurprisingly, higher education has a critical
role in the National Reform Programme, another key programmatic docu-
ment that aims at improving competitiveness in Estonia. Competitiveness in
HEI appears connected to a strategic “national” competitiveness. Inter-
nationalisation, for example, is necessary to compete with other higher edu-
cation institutions, in order to attract talents “to areas that are important for
the Estonian economy” (National Reform Programme 2011, 14). This is
expressed in similar terms in the Estonian Higher Education Strategy (2011,
2): “higher education must support Estonian socio-economic development to
increase its competitiveness and capability for international cooperation,
simultaneously guaranteeing Estonia’s continued national existence”.

Just as in AU, in order to promote specific disciplines, the competitive
strategy employs terminology proper to the rationalisation of production in
a typical Fordist factory:

The division of labour and competences between higher education institu-
tions is one of the most major higher educational system objectives. In the

\footnote{National Reform Programme, “Estonia 2020”, is a strategic document approved by the Estonian
government in 2011. It establishes the objectives to improve competitiveness and describes the
main ways to achieve them. The two central objectives are increasing productivity and employment
in Estonia by bringing education and labour market into closer alignment, as well as by developing
the skills of the unemployed.}
long-term perspective, the new institutional accreditation procedures to be adopted in 2011 will contribute to a clear differentiation between educational institutions. It will require educational institutions to more clearly define their role in Estonian society and promote specific areas accordingly. (National Reform Programme 2011, 11)

The concluding sentence, “defining the role of the education institutions in Estonian society and promote specific areas accordingly”, resonates with the “output oriented curricula” from the TUT strategy presented above, which mainly means organising according to key societal interests. These interests are defined a few pages later:

**Primary reforms to be carried out during the year (commitments for Euro Plus pact)**

1) **Carrying out higher educational reform.**

Quality will become the overarching objective in the higher education system. In 2011, the number of state-funded student places at public universities or institutions of professional higher education for 2012–2014 will be increased, thereby ensuring tuition-free studies (...). To increase the quality of academic work and to better bring the educational system’s outputs into conformity with economic needs, the structure of the state funded student places will be reviewed and changed with more attention devoted to the educating the specialists necessary for increasing competitiveness. (National Reform Programme 2011, 15)

The budget allocated as part of state-commissioned student places does not currently cover the actual costs per student place in doctoral study. Thus, it is important to review the cost of a student place, devoting greater attention to performance of education and effectiveness of state-commissioned student places. Secondly it is necessary to ensure that state-funded education would be aimed at fields of key importance to the Estonian economy (...). More effort should be invested in fields where competitiveness results can already be seen, and which are important for the development of a higher value-added generating and knowledge-intensive economy. (National Reform Programme 2011, 22)

The enforcement of these needs is realised by linking public funding to results measured competitiveness alongside market value. In a context in which the state barely finances 20% of the university budget, this recommendation signifies determining the totality of research funding (private
and public) by means of market criteria. This derives from the internalisa-
tion of competitiveness in most aspects of research work.

Hierarchies and competitiveness

Research topics are imposed not so much because of directives (after all, there is nobody controlling research work in the office) but due to indirect financial constraints and the competitive practices that come with them:

To allow young people to adapt better to later working life, general educa-
tion needs to not only instil knowledge about facts but to shape students’ social key competences, and to develop creativity and entrepreneurship. It is important to create for schools specific (monetary) incentives to shape students’ key competences. Teacher training must ensure the ability to fulfil the general goals of the curriculum and to shape students’ key competences. The teachers’ salary system must promote initiative, creativity and professional development of the teachers. (National Reform Programme 2011, 12)

This quote is a good example of how, in a context of scarcity of public funding, and under the pretext of competitiveness and entrepreneurship, a culture of competition can be extended to everyday work practice. This is simply based on binding teaching curricula or salaries to indicators of competitive performance based on the general strategic goals. As a result, teaching and research develops in close quarters with competitiveness and entrepreneurship, resulting thereby in the internalisation of competitive and entrepreneurial logics in the work itself. Such a strategy has been imple-
mented by the governors of the institution; they have followed the simple premise proposed in the National Reform Programme:

We should integrate more and more problem-based learning in our univer-
sity. At the present time there are too many old-fashioned lectures and that should be… during the next 5, 10 years there will be some changes. We are directed – our aim, our goal, is that learning, research and innovation should be in parallel with each other at the university. And MEKTORY was the first successful project that is now going on here. And in our university if you are talking about entrepreneurship, yeah, to be innovative you should be first of all entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurial people are innovative people. We are now from the next academic year, 2015–2016 in all our bachelor, master programs, having subjects related to entrepreneurship. For everybody, at the present time, are academic here, at least on most of our study programs: first cycle and second cycle from next year. In all programs. It is our aim to be
more and more entrepreneurial as a university. (Interview with high TUT official 2015)

As we can see in this quote, the directive of competitiveness is implemented under the aegis of entrepreneurship-innovation: “to be innovative, one should first of all be entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurial people are innovative people.” From this circular premise, entrepreneurship is extended to all parts of the teaching curriculum. The indicators for measuring and evaluating entrepreneurial performance come along with this extension:

One of the aims of my viewpoint is to be more entrepreneurial than we are now. We are trying to evaluate how entrepreneurial we are: for example, this one professor came to our… and we evaluated how entrepreneurial we are; we tried to measure it some way. There was a meeting two weeks ago here and that was a self-evaluation by our people, at the university. This kind of evaluation, self-evaluation is something new. It took place for the first time in my life, but I don’t know anything about it. If you see the questions and the fields of evaluations you see that they are both important: entrepreneurship and also studies in internationalisation, yeah. All these aspects are very important. Now you see that all aspects are evaluated very high, yeah. It means that there is a room for development. (Interview with high TUT official 2015, 11)

Competitiveness is the thread that joins together governmental bodies and concrete workplaces. Competitiveness is nothing short of a national objective. With competitiveness as a principal aim, the key programmatic documents introduce directives that must be fulfilled by the departments. These are “the outputs” or the “needs for society”, as phrased in its strategic jargon. These outputs, though, cannot be easily measured, thus echoing the persistent problem of measuring that generally haunts all KBE indicators at every level. On the other hand, scarcity of resources in combination with the competitive-based systems of evaluation shape and impact upon not only on research funding but teaching design (e.g. a shift towards “problem-based learning”, innovation or entrepreneurially oriented research and teaching). Therefore, competitiveness is not just a “national” objective for a more competitive economy, it is also the means for aligning the country’s workforce towards the goal of “national competitiveness”, thereby an extension of a competitive culture permeating all facets of Estonian life. Competitiveness has always existed in academia but now this has shifted specifically
to a market-oriented competitiveness, which, as we will see in the following chapter, introduces some new elements.

On a narrative level, the merging of means and ends resonates with what we identified in the Finnish case as “Aalto’s conflict of interests”. The achievement of an aim in the future implies in both cases the transformation of the present to create the needs and the solutions for the future. The present is accordingly turned into a future to be.

11.3. Horizontality within the hierarchy

“Vertical horizontality”

Naming the higher education strategy as “dirigiste”, that is, vertical or hierarchical, while these strategies are implemented through horizontal forms of governance, might sound contradictory even if this still closely resembles reality.

The programmatic documents place great emphasis on words that evoke horizontality. For example, under the subsection on “values” from the TUT’s Strategic plan, we read:

Values

*Transparency and spirit of renewal* – TUT is continuously open to organizational changes, renewal of academic staff and leaders is continual, the University is open to new international academic staff and students. University membership is open to new knowledge, skills and innovative ideas and engaged in setting and implementation of goals and priorities.

*Collaboration* – competencies in different areas and structures create synergy, supported by mutually enriching free discussions, horizontal collaboration of structural units, congenial and supportive environment, active networking with partner universities and enterprises.

*Professionalism* – University staff is motivated, committed and ambitious, engaged in consistent development of their knowledge and skills to enhance their qualification standards; high professionalism is a determining factor in staff recruitment and promotion, activities focus on increase of academic quality and effective performance of the University. (TUT Strategic Plan 2011, 2)

The superstructural horizontal spirit (e.g. collaborative work, sharing, a good work environment, transparency and co-decision) are said to be defin-
ing features of the institution. The spirit is, once again, ultimately oriented to improve the structural competitiveness of the institution (“networking with other parts of the university, enterprises, and openness to organisational changes etc.”). Competitiveness thus steers the horizontal spirit, but, and here is the catch, the horizontal spirit cannot be conceived without competitiveness, since it is readily supposed that the latter is the true initiator – as “an effective performance”, competitiveness is what motivates companionship and progress. This reasoning derives from a rational choice ethos, which presupposes that cooperation is always steered by self-interest; one cooperates as long as this collaboration delivers some tangible gains to the self, benefits that could not have been achieved individually. In this context, companionship and sharing is a pragmatic choice, and not a value underpinning the existence of a common living space. Structural competitiveness and the horizontal spirit – to put this in Gramscian terms, we have here the order’s body and soul co-constituting each other.

When translating this reasoning into the sphere of governance, we have what Jonathan S. Davies critically names an example of a network narrative. The network narrative argues that horizontal relations sustained by networks are not just means to achieve efficiency but, in contrast to the old hierarchical models, they carry liberating effects for the worker (Davies, 2011). This “liberation of the self” is a product of the new work methods of post-Fordism, and not the consequence of a struggle to improve working conditions. A network narrative elegantly conceals the fact that the whole idea of competitiveness clashes with horizontality, especially when the former acts as a vector for a vertical organisation. For example, we can see how this works in the “Implementation of the Strategic Plan”, from the same document:

Implementation of the Strategic Plan

1. TUT Strategic Plan 2011–2015 shall be approved (adopted) by the TUT Council. Five-year development plans of the faculties, research institutions and colleges shall be adopted by the councils concerned and approved by the Rector. Fulfilment of the objectives set in the development plans shall be ensured by a step-by-step implementation of one- or two-year activity plans.

2. To ensure implementation of the Strategic Plan, the Rector will assign a steering committee for drafting of one- and two-year activity plans for all subjects included in the Strategic Plan. The steering committee will evaluate the fulfilment of the plans and report to the Rector within the whole five-year period.
3. TUT (administration) annual activity plans will be composed by the Vice-Rectors, the Finance and the Administration Director and approved by the Rector. Activity plans of faculties, research institutions and colleges will be drafted by the dean/director, coordinated by the council concerned and endorsed by the Rector.

4. For the implementation of the Strategic Plan amendments and additions to the documents associated with developments in the area concerned (strategy of research and development activities, basics of study activity plan, personnel policy, internationalization, regional policy, etc.) will be introduced.

5. The Rector will report on the performance results of the Strategic Plan to the TUT Council annually. The results will be subject to evaluation and approval by the TUT Council.

(...). The Strategic Plan will be implemented in close collaboration between the leaders, each member of staff and student, and the public and private sector (TUT Strategic Plan 2011, 7)

This quote reflects an institution organised in a traditional vertical fashion, divided into two parts. The first gathers information and works on the general strategy goals by delivering performance measurements and creating new institutional bodies to discuss and improve working methods (Point 4). This work is undertaken by the departments or other mid- and low-level administrative units at the institution. They are essentially “developers”, or, perhaps more accurately, skilful “foremen” loyal to the highest governing bodies at the university (e.g. the university council, the steering committee) and the Rector. The second part of the strategic planning involves higher governing bodies that act as the decision makers and planners. The most important aspects of the strategy are either conceived by them or need their endorsement. The authority that these governmental bodies possess is hardly commented upon; there is virtually no democratic control and as such no alternative that might emerge from within the institution. This authority is extended via appraisal systems, which are decided by the university governing bodies, often inspired by market-oriented consumer performance criteria. This inserts a series of competitive logics into the day-to-day running of the university, and this invariably harms workers’ collective spirit (Türk & Roolaht 2007, 211).

Turning now to our initial discussion, horizontality relates to an organisational strategy, it functions as an “instrument” to increase overall “performance” (a buzzword often used synonymously with competitiveness). Far, then, from overcoming a vertical order, horizontal organisation is
inserted within the heavily hierarchised and centralised order of decision making, the pinnacle of which is the Rector (“as the Process Owner”) with the University Council holding the steering wheel (TUT Management System Manual 2014, 13). The lower horizontal levels are monitored through a systematised accountability system:

1. Implementation of strategy in the university shall be arranged by the Rector, Vice Rectors, Directors of the responsibility areas, Deans, Directors/Heads of academic structural units, and Directors of institutions, Research Department, Department of Studies and Human Resources Department.

2. Rector’s Office and the heads of faculties and institutions shall be constantly monitoring the implementation process of the personnel policy and take managerial decisions required for the implementation thereof.

3. Human Resources Department shall collect performance indicators related to the strategy implementation.

4. Twice a year a discussion of the strategy implementation shall be arranged in the Rector’s Office and once a year in the TUT Council. If necessary, the Rector’s Office makes a proposal to the TUT Council for current adjusting and modification of the strategy.

5. General principles of the strategy shall be communicated to all University members via webpage of TUT, the newspaper “Mente et Manu”, information hours and workshops. (TUT Personnel Strategy 2015, 3)

The “horizontal values” of the network narrative do not steer actual governance. Rather they are discursive artefacts used to sweeten the bitter pill of top down management, which permeates the entire institution. TUT programmatic documents, like the EU innovation policy guidance documents, often employ horizontal jargon in opposition to a “hierarchical” approach. In this opposition, horizontality carries within itself a sense of individual emancipation, equality, creativity, etc. However, these positive connotations and their “natural” oppositions to vertical hierarchies go beyond its strict meaning. For, the horizontal is not the opposite of hierarchical – as is the case, for example, when we understand horizontal as that which is “parallel to the plane of horizon” or “occupying or restricted to the same level in a hierarchy”. Rather, in the policy documents and within society at large we locate a series of “additional” meanings; precisely, it is these broader set of connotations, which get attached to the notion of “horizontal values”, that are a vital part of the discursive construction of its narrative.
The strict meaning of “horizontality” is proffered when presenting the “technicalities” of horizontal strategies in knowledge production. Its additional meanings arise when horizontality is said to naturally strengthen collaboration, creativity and cultivates a situation in which a major part of the workforce can participate in collective decision making, which, in turn, is meant to feedback into the horizontal spirit. In a way, the horizontal spirit does not pre-exist the KBE setting, rather they mutually co-constitute each other: the horizontal spirit is analogous to the nutrients that feed the KBE tree and also present in the fruits produced by it. Here it would seem that the horizontal spirit is entirely produced and reproduced within the work process itself, thus disconnecting it from all other spheres of life. Consequently, work does not just produce knowledge, it is also the moral space in which a better society can be cultivated.

The transmission nodes of “competitiveness” and “horizontality” embody the structural movement in its full totalising character: connecting scales and institutions, as well as connecting the public and private for the latter’s benefit. The discourse surrounding “horizontality” speaks as well to the superstructure, one of the functions of which is to provide a legitimating collective aureole that evokes a better future.

For this reason, the horizontal spirit, like the culture of competitiveness, should not be dismissed simply as a phoney discursive construct but as an effective instrument that, on the one hand, makes possible the implementation of general policy goals, and on the other, provides a rationale that, while claiming to reproduce horizontal values, in actual fact only serves to sustain and further entrench existing hierarchies. We see this, for example, in the merger of two departments and in the imposition of horizontal work methods that are meant to mobilise more manpower “to enhance competitiveness”. These changes are, of course, presented as a positive way to “empower” individual creativity and teamwork. But there is no getting around the fact that horizontal work methods are themselves the vector by which a hierarchised order is further extended and entrenched; like in the case with “competitiveness”, this has often the imprint of a university/business joint venture. The necessity for public-private partnerships is justified once it is supposed – that businesses represent society, a general perception the strategic documents themselves perpetuate. Indeed, this assumption recurs throughout TUT’s Strategy, where it takes on different guises: from a “partner” to a “stakeholder” or “interest group” in decision making, funder or even adviser (TUT Management system Manual 2014, TUT Strategy 2011).
In this manner, the orientation of teaching and research around the needs of Estonian society generally means accommodating the preferences of the private sector (see a few pages above when describing “output oriented curricula”). Along these lines, the TUT strategy introduces not just a re-orientation of research but also promotes the participation of the private sector in its production (TUT Strategy 2011, 5–6).

The university-private sector integration, often presented within the general framework of a “horizontal” narrative, partly obeys the logic of refining useful knowledge production, but also the very practical need of attracting private funding (TUT Research Strategy 2015, 1). Likewise, this integration is often related to the aim of encouraging companies to invest more in R&D, in order to increase their productivity:

To achieve these goals, the current policy must be continued and developed further for the purposes of raising the skills of employees, increasing the workforce, increasing the volumes of research and development in the private sector, developing infrastructure that supports enterprise on the international level and promoting foreign direct investment (especially in the fields with export potential and higher value added. (National Reform Programme Estonia 2020, 8)

2 Vision for 2015

By the year 2015 TUT has:

1. created in most key areas of R&D research groups acknowledged in the EU with the critical mass of qualified academic staff required for international cooperation and research infrastructure;

2. created a modern R&D infrastructure, core labs in our excellence areas; the University’s situation in terms of research staff replacement rate, researcher motivation and recognition given to researchers will be comparable to that of successful countries;

3. gathered the majority of doctoral studies into the doctoral schools;

4. developed the capacity, in all R&D areas, to perform a large part of the research services needs of the Estonian businesses and the country’s public sector, either on its own or with the help of its spin-off companies, research and development centres and co-operation partners;

5. Successfully integrated into international R&D networks. (TUT Research Strategy 2015, 1–2)
The quotes above reflect the high degree of integration between the general direction of the economic policy described in the *Estonian National Reform Programme* (first quote) and the university strategy (second quote). As in previous cases, what appears to be a simple dialogue between university and the private sector is elevated to an integrative piece of general politico-economic strategy, the aim of which is the attainment of “national societal goals” where the main – and sometimes the sole – societal actor is the firm. This does not only impact on the orientation of research but also begins to relativise and blur the borders between university produced research and the private sector. The factual representation of this relativisation of the borders in TUT is MEKTORY, an acronym for “Modern Estonian Knowledge Transfer Organisation for You”.

11.4. MEKTORY. University-business partnerships: formation of hierarchies and solutionism.

MEKTORY is located at the TUT’s Mustamae campus a few hundred metres away from the main building. MEKTORY’s building can be sighted from far away; one of its units is painted in yellow and black with “MEKTORY” superimposed in big letters. The interior of the building is a succession of rooms for “knowledge transfer” activities: “brainstorming rooms” and start-ups rooms, all of which are well designed and equipped to bring ideas to entrepreneurial ventures. The building also holds large lecture halls to host corporate events. MEKTORY defines itself as “a networking environment where businesses, students, professors, schoolchildren and investors from all over the world meet to have new ideas and innovation together as one team” (MEKTORY website presentation electronic leaflet, 1, 2016). Hence, MEKTORY is the physical space in which the concepts of innovation, university-business partnerships, creativity, are supposed to meet. MEKTORY’s counterpart at Aalto University would be Aalto’s Start-up Sauna.\(^5\) Though any similarities between them belie some significant dif-

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\(^5\) Aalto’s Start-up Sauna is MEKTORY’s counterpart. Established in 2012 at Otaniemi Campus, shortly after AU had been founded, Start-up Sauna is a foundation, created with the participation of entrepreneurs and “investors of the community” with the aim of creating “a more longer-term entity to support its 20-year mission of building a functioning startup ecosystem in the region” (Startup Sauna Website 2015). Start-up Sauna has rapidly become one of Aalto’s most publicised institutions. As well as being home to many startups, it holds important startup international conferences, it offers internship courses for students as well as a wide international network of startup incubators. It even gives grants to individuals who want to collaborate in strengthening this ecosystem.
ferences. For one thing, MEKTORY is organically part of Tallinn University of Technology, in contrast to the Start-up Sauna, which is a foundation based on Aalto University Campus. In fact, the Vice-Rector for Innovation and Business Relations is also the director of MEKTORY, underlining not only the vertical integration of its strategic model but also the importance that knowledge transfer has within the university’s overarching institutional structure and strategy.6

On the one hand, MEKTORY wants research to be directly geared towards answering business challenges by providing new solutions in mobile services, product development and business models. On the other hand, MEKTORY aims at educating students in business skills that the labour market is said to demand. This means uniting “theoretical studies at the university with the practical side to the maximum possible extent” (MEKTORY website), as well as encouraging entrepreneurship and providing help for the creation of start-ups. All of this takes place in an environment with a decent infrastructure that is ready to attract companies and to “commit maximally to internationalisation, because these days, success is only guaranteed by combining different cultures, working habits, ideas and interesting solutions” (MEKTORY Website). MEKTORY offers facilities, services and events with an interdisciplinary approach to bring TUT students and companies closer together: start-up incubators; 7 rooms for initiating start-ups; funding procured from the private sector (mainly banks), and the organisation of a business model competition.8 It also offers lectures on

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6 Tallinn University of Technology has three vice-rectors: the Vice-Rector for Research, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and the Vice-Rector for Innovation and Business Relations and Director for Innovation and Business Centre. These three vice-rectors, along with the rector and directors, are part of the “Management Team”. The Management Team along with the Board of Governors and the University Council are the bodies that operate at the top of TUT’s institutional organisation. (TUT Website, Organisation. 2016)

7 A start up incubator is a company that helps new and startup companies to develop (through a product development business model) by providing services such as management training or office space. The startup incubators, contrary to the technology park, are focused exclusively on bringing business and research in direct collaboration. MEKTORY attempts to get the best of both worlds: on the one hand, for its size and infrastructure, it is closer to a technopole. But, on the other, it is decisively directed towards business. In practice this means that facilities, offices or training, which normally are the responsibility of a company, are here offered by MEKTORY.

8 A business model is the presentation of a reasonably detailed plan for the creation of a start up or company. A business model presents the organisational and product strategies in which this newly created organisation expects to create value and benefits. A business model competition is a contest between business models presented to a jury. The jury evaluates each of the models according to different standards (e.g. viability, originality etc.) and chooses a winner, who then receives a prize.
entrepreneurship programming for companies as well as conferences with known entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, MEKTORY is more than just the connective node between university and business; it also provides education and invites faculties to use their facilities, both for docent and research purposes, as well as provides assistance for faculties in their design of teaching curricula. It also offers courses for primary and secondary schools.

All in all, MEKTORY is an open space offering cutting-edge tools, networks, coaching, teaching and funding for varied initiatives: different disciplines, all levels of education, students, docents, companies … it is a space where everybody, regardless of discipline or position, can develop their interests. The only requirement is that knowledge must be related to entrepreneurship or business. Consequently, any relations established with external actors made by students, researchers, professors will be normally be companies and the private sector. As stated in the strategy, the pursuit of corporate objectives, including capital accumulation, is the drive for technological change and growth that would naturally bring collective prosperity. Business, then, is both at the beginning and at the end of the work process:

MEKTORY methodology (Fetched from MEKTORY electronic leaflet 2016)

In the case of MEKTORY, this prize is a trip to Sillicon Valley for 2–3 members of the winning team (MEKTORY business Model Competition, Mektory 2016).
This diagram represents the methodology that brings together all the different actors which help firms to succeed by mobilising and developing university work and research. The expected “win-win” situation is not always so easily achieved. When companies finance a project or service, they expect results as if they were contracting out a service to the private market:

HR: They think it’s cheaper but it’s… we have to educate them, that this is not cheaper, this is not… Also, the bachelor students are not a workforce which is working for free, so they sometimes have the idea that university is financed by the state, so everything has to be without any charge.

I: Yeah, but this is not exactly true in this case/

HR: No, no, no, no. No. But the business sector doesn’t know it. That’s why they want to get it cheap.

HR: They have very strict schedules.
I: Yeah. How do you manage this?

HR: It is, yeah. You have to be, you have to master it, so, when you know these people, then you know already what to expect and they don’t give very short deadlines, and so on and so on. And you have to explain to, also the business partners, that… that the academic world is a bit different. They have their freedom of doing whatever they want, or whenever they want, so they are… some of them are not very easily managed, but you have to take it into account. (MEKTORY, high ranking administrator)

The interviewee addresses the post-Fordist paradox we had already noted in the Finnish case, namely the unescapable tension between creativity and the scientific rationalisation of knowledge production oriented towards capital accumulation. Most importantly, what we see here is that once the university is contracted out, it becomes subordinated to the business imperatives of the firm. We will come back to this question later on. Despite some setbacks, the general opinion is that a “business friendly” strategy brings positive outcomes for firms: it offers a potentially highly qualified workforce, infrastructures and refined knowledge. In return, this business activity generates “positive spill over effects”. These are summarised in the following diagram:
This diagram reflects the positive impact that business-university partnerships generate to other “stakeholders”: the students enjoy better career opportunities as employees or entrepreneurs; professors benefit from research funding and have better access to “hot or relevant topics”; furthermore, academics have the opportunity of integrating their business partnership experience into the teaching curriculum. Society, presented as a passive entity, will benefit once a portion of the workforce (the highly level educated) will find well paid jobs in successful firms, thereby increasing tax revenues for the state.

This diagram also shows that both MEKTORY and TUT voluntarily cede their leadership to the private sector. This cession is couched in “horizontal buzzwords” like “cooperation” and “partnership”. However, cooperation occurs when two entities collaborate under conditions of equality: they decide together the objectives of the collaboration, the working method and the choice of the personnel to develop it. Once the compromise is reached each of the parts have to deliver on what has been agreed. But here, in this context, the strategy is quite different. It establishes a relation according to which the university is subordinate to business. This relation of subordination can be better reflected with an example from the so called “creative industry”.

TUT University-Business Partnership model. Fetched from MEKTORY electronic leaflet (2016)
Imagine a company interested in a production of a musical theatre play that aims to become a commercial success and yet lacks the means of production. This company searches for possible partners and settle on the perfect choice: a public theatre company (here representing TUT and MEKTORY). This public company has a workforce comprised of professional actors, scriptwriters, musicians and students (here representing the university staff and students). The public theatre company accepts the private company’s proposal, and all the workforce assemble with the hope of producing a successful musical. The workforce is not only “contracted” for performing the play, but they will also compose the music, sort out the musical arrangements, the choreographies, as well as write the script, etc. In short, the workers undertake all the activities that will turn the original idea of a musical theatre hit into an actual play. Furthermore, the production costs will be to a great extent financed by the public theatre, which offers for free all its facilities. Thus, the company, which has invested modestly in the project, decides how the play will look like and furthermore collects most of the benefits from this tripartite project. The students do most of the actual work in exchange for some experience, and get paid far below the market average without enjoying full creative autonomy.

One could argue that the subordination of creativity to project goals is usual in any work venture. In this case, however, the problem is not so much the point at which one has to cede creative control– for sure, this is the nature of any collective project – but on the fact that one of the interested parties (the private sector) cedes and risks very little. This imbalance could be corrected, for example, by ensuring that firms use public facilities as well as the pool of skilled workforce on the condition that they fund non-profit projects or contribute with answers to concrete social problems. Another initiative would be to make sure that the use of the university’s facilities and workforce is only acceptable on the prior condition that young graduates are provided with longer term contracts. It is telling that such conditionality is generally absent from MEKTORY’s strategy. Hence, MEKTORY does not fully act as a public entity that mediates with the private sector in prioritising the interests of students, professors and researchers but as a networking institution that assumes that what is in the market’s best interest is also what is best for students, university staff and society.

This resonates once more with the concept of solutionism, that is, the belief that a frictionless coexistence between the collective and the individual, between private and public, naturally exists without pre-settled compromises. The question becomes one of finding the correct balance in
realising this virtuous relation. The relation between knowledge production and solutionism has been widely discussed in the Finnish chapter. For the present purposes, though, the interest is to address the relation between hierarchy and solutionism.

MEKTORY as a solutionistic dispositif for a hierarchical order

The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage labourers (Marx & Engels 2006, 11)

Marxism establishes that labour relations in capitalism originate on the simple fact that the worker’s need to subsist forces her to sell her labour to the capitalist. The surplus value expropriated by the capitalist from the results of that labour and the subsequent exploitation, is the key to capital accumulation. As presented in the theoretical chapters, the knowledge worker in the KBE does not escape from this basic hierarchical principle of labour relations: the relation between capital and labour puts the latter in a subordinate position to the former. This does not negate the fact that MEKTORY is perhaps better than most for anyone interested in working in the private sector: there are palpable advantages, such as the legal protection that MEKTORY provides for the creation of patents (High Official Interview MEKTORY), as well as providing better security for start-up companies by making available key facilities and networks at virtually no cost. MEKTORY is thus a space in which market forces are mitigated but at the same time, and with an air of inevitability, the institution quickly develops according to the competitive culture proper to the private sector:

It is, still, because you have to be up to date, or contemporary, if you’re too free so you’re not competitive anymore. You have to… you have to take into account the world around you, if you want to be successful, even in the academic world (MEKTORY High administrative) Hence, it is not incorrect to state that MEKTORY promotes creativity initially by rooting it in the idea of a cooperative mobilisation of the intellect, since it offers a common space that fosters the conditions under which some degree of creative freedom is possible. However, this possibility quickly recedes once MEKTORY accepts to collaborate with the private sector without changing the firm’s only goal, namely the maximisation of profit. This places MEKTORY in a subordinate position, which to a large extent means transposing the hier-
architectural logic of labour relations in a market economy onto the university system.

According to this logic, autonomy is at first strengthened, such as when the student or the researcher is welcomed to develop ideas and to cooperate with other colleagues, and even firms within MEKTORY’s own walls, using its facilities for whatever the student or researcher deems both appropriate and convenient. Autonomy, however, quickly begins to deteriorate once corporate interests begin to re-shape the results of this collective work, subordinating this work to market goals. The transition between these two moments does not mean that creativity evaporates; the imperative and desire to create might remain until the end. What it does means, though, is that this the impulse to create is tamed by and through market needs, and the success of a particular idea will depend on understanding the limits of one’s creativity and autonomy.

The role of MEKTORY could be interpreted as “rationalising the creative”, existing as the point of confluence between intellectual and business drives, based on the promise of attractive opportunities for university staff and serving as an accessible and cheap pool of brains for the private sector. The difference is that the success of the first is not guaranteed while the second is; in all circumstances, the fruits will be mostly collected by the private sector. MEKTORY is an entity that combines the functions of a recruitment agency of highly skilled human capital as well as an incubator for nurturing new companies and would-be entrepreneurs.

To bring this chapter to a close, MEKTORY’s mission resonates with solutionism and “the idea that given the right code, algorithms and robots, technology can solve all of mankind’s problems, effectively making life ‘frictionless’ and ‘trouble-free.’” (Morozov 2013, 5) MEKTORY is the “technology” to solve the complex problem of a disconnect (technology transfer) between the private sector and the university, by offering a “win-win” and frictionless solution for everybody. MEKTORY is a pool for the reproduction and recruiting of human capital for the KBE. It promises good jobs or real opportunities for entrepreneurial endeavours. Public and private interests are met by rationalising the positive spill overs of intellectual work within the frame of today’s post-Fordist capitalism and its demands.

This results in a hierarchical order that reflects the insurmountable contradiction of solutionism in capitalism: frictionless solutions do not exist because labouring within the market logic is conflictual per se. Labour under capitalism remains in a subordinate relation. MEKTORY appeases forms of exploitation by offering better opportunities within the KBE’s eco-
nomic structure, and thereby extending the capitalist order to new areas. We can then affirm that MEKTORY is a hegemonic instrument that clearly aims at resolving the Gramscian decoupling of structure and superstructure.

Concluding remarks: solutionism and hybrid hierarchies
We can trace some overlaps between TUT’s strategic documents and those from Aalto University. For example, the shared belief in establishing the perfect frictionless cycle that KBE is meant to represent, with the university having a key role in this process. In the TUT case, though, we have seen the dirigiste nature of a vertical process; hierarchies that articulate relations between state, university, business and work. Here we have seen how integrated the TUT strategy is with respect to the wider economic plans of the government. This is further facilitated by means of the technocratic nature of the university’s own governance. The vertical strategy characterising it combines market-oriented state dirigeisme from the top with a market inspired order that aims at re-structuring the middle and lower parts of the institution. At these levels, hierarchies appear in different, more acceptable guises, so as to mobilise labour for profit-oriented knowledge production.

In this part of our investigation we have reflected on the fact that competitiveness is not only a means but an end in itself. According to this view, it is only by reorienting around the market that the university’s existing culture of competitiveness—e.g. indexing salaries to output—can be fully liberated, labour effectively steered and national competitiveness improved. Secondly, we have seen how, at one and the same time, horizontality operates as a discursive artefact that legitimises the order and as a working method for the mobilisation of the intellect (from different disciplines and different regions of society) to generate ideas indispensable for achieving competitiveness.

MEKTORY is a fine example of how all these elements come together in order to form something tangible. This is an institution that has as its raison d’être the bridging of the university and the private sector. As such, it is understood as a space that holds together all these contradictory vectors. It operates under the logic of solutionism and assumes that within the market logic of frictionless solutions (“win-win”), one can extricate oneself from unequal and subordinate relations otherwise inherent in capitalism. Consequently, despite constructing a space of opportunity for researchers, MEKTORY pushes them further into the hierarchical order of capitalism, by transposing the competitive logic of the market onto the university system.
Most of the individuals involved in mass education and research are by definition not unusual but usual. They are involved in routine work under routine conditions and should for all good reasons be considered as knowledge workers, representatives of a mass production profession. (Tomusk 2006, 149)

Voldemar Tomusk (1995, 2003, 2004, 2006) has followed with a critical eye and a sharp caustic prose the evolution of Estonian universities since its independence. He is interested in the continuation of authoritarian habits inherited from the Soviet Union in HEI and how these were adapted in the turn towards market relations. Tomusk holds that the Bologna Declaration has eroded the concept of “academic autonomy”, turning it into an entrepreneurial brand for all manner of neoliberal policies. This coexists with the sacred veneration of the Humboldtian university myth, incarnated by the “aristoscientist”: a respected, value-free, autonomous and respected scientific elite (only 5% of Estonians trust politicians while 65% trust scientists) dedicated to the noble mission to pursue the truth. Tomusk strips this myth naked when he argues that

The only element in science which requires an ethical position is choosing a problem to solve. Soviet scientists did not choose their problems, and post-Soviet scientists can only accept problems that fit their established profiles. Even globally, funding agencies choose the problems leaving to scientists, even the most aristocratic ones, merely technical work. (Tomusk 2003, 90)

The notion of the “aristocracy” refers to an academic order designed to provide shelter for a few privileged scientists who can live close to this scientific ideal while the majority spend their careers doing routine work as foot-soldiers for a global economic war where knowledge is synonymous with money (Tomusk 2006, 150–154). Here, Tomusk touches on the close rela-
tion between a \textit{dirigiste} promotion of competition accompanied by selective public funding and the formation of hierarchies. Tomusk draws our attention to the reality of the academic workplace, he disrobes the façade of a mystified scientific existence, which conceals how in fact the scientific order not only relies on academic merits but on pre-existing positions of power.

The following section on Ragnar Nurske School (RNS) of Governance and Innovation explores the nature of this mystified autonomous existence in relation to the wider totalising order. RNS is anchored in a complex set of relations between material and immaterial elements, which are conceived not as a way of directly protecting an elite of “aristoscientists” but of securing the means of prestige accumulation. These are “tactics of militarisation of knowledge production”, securing spaces for autonomous scientific work that demand labour, but which have little to do with free and autonomous intellectual work. Let’s then open the doors of this institution to see how the threads that make up the fabric of everyday academic life are actually sewn together.¹

Ragnar Nurske School of Governance and Innovation (hereafter RNS) is located in the main building of TUT. The floor is minimalistic with elegant clear-lined furniture, it is both well-lit and spacious. A central corridor is encircled by offices and meeting rooms with a communal kitchen at its centre. The central corridor is silent and tidy, some could say even a bit impersonal. In contrast to the Design Department at AU, there are no TVs or PlayStations, and coffee cups are notable by their absence. What there is are unpopulated furniture. “Innovation” seems to be approached rather differently than in Aalto University, with no trace of the stereotypical “creative spaces”. It looks like the standard modern humanities-social sciences faculty. RNS is also a cosmopolitan place with students and researchers coming from different parts of the world, many of whom are attracted by the interesting approaches on innovation offered on the master’s program-

¹ In contrast to the disposition adopted for the AU case study, where three chapters were dedicated to both Aalto University and the Department of Media (Chapter 8 for the programmatic documents, Chapter 9 for the work stories and Chapter 10 for uniting them into a single narrative), Tallinn University of Technology and RNS are presented in two consecutive chapters to map HEI’s openly vertical nature, from the pinnacle of its management structure to the workforce. The emphatic rhetoric of the AU documents, with little explicit references to verticality or the workplace, made the relation between informants and the institution more discursive in character. This gave the analysis, with its constant shifts in the narrative scale (See section from the Method chapter, 7.2.), a different form, requiring a last chapter to unite the programmatic documents and the informants’ narratives.
me alongside a recognised prestige that, despite its relative infancy, RNS has acquired.

But what perhaps is most striking is that RNS is based in TUT. RNS is a *rara avis* in TUT. Firstly, because TUT is mainly a technical university dominated by engineering disciplines and business. Even within the Faculty of Social Sciences, RNS is the only pure “social scientific” department – the others being the Law School and Industrial Psychology. Moreover, RNS adopts a heterodox and multidisciplinary approach that brings together philosophy, political-economy, and public administration. A short history of RNS through the experiences of the interviewees can help us to understand its singularity.

**The origins of Ragnar Nurske School: academic intrigues in a new country**

I was the first Estonian, in the end, full professor, not from Russia or Estonia since 1938. So this is how I made it to Estonia and here because of this background what now happened is that… although by then public administration was just a side interest of mine, here it was one of the main interests. The reasons were that for all other disciplines you could find exiled Estonians or some people here would upgrade themselves who’d do public administration, who would do sociology or political science or law or economics, but no PA person. There was no PA person. No senior Estonian PA person existed, at all. And so, while I only had in the beginning one class, I was like the person asked to, if you will, re-establish public administration as a scholarly discipline in this country since before World War II. While it was a side interest of mine it was the central interest of the country. (RNS Prof. 1)

The origins and development of RNS are found during the transitional years, when a group of relatively young senior researchers and professors built the institution. It is remarkable how often young people are given higher responsibility posts in post-soviet Estonia. The transformation of the Soviet to a Westernised educational system created the conditions for foreigners and émigrés educated in the West to return. The transition also

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2 For example Mart Laar, Prime Minister between 1992–94 and 1999–2002, took his first mandate after the transitional government when he was only 32 years old. More recently, Taavi Roivas, took the Prime Ministerial office in 2014 when he was just 34 years old.
gave opportunities for a first generation of Estonian educated students in post-Soviet Estonia, who often had undertaken part of their studies abroad in order to take up some important posts. Still, some of the old Soviet elite managed to keep themselves at the top (Tomusk 1995, 2003, 2006). The backgrounds of some of the interviewees are closely connected to these times of change: they are representatives of this young generation of students who began successful careers within research fields relatively unexplored in Estonia. They were also helped by the fact that there was at the time a sitting government in need of consultations in order to lead a rapid state building process. This attracted students and young professors with different backgrounds. This is what partly explains both RNS’ heterodoxy and its presence in TUT. This, and also the academic intrigues and institutional decisions of a small country, brought together the people that made the backbone of RNS and later established RNS in TUT:

I got very, very bored at Tartu because this is a horrible provincial town, very far from everything, no airports and so on and I really didn't enjoy it. Also, it had a really horrible Rector. A nightmare person, the administration went bad, and in the end I’m a foreigner here. (RNS Prof. 1)

But in Tartu I couldn’t do it because the economists saw public administration as a threat, they didn’t like this taught as a discipline. They were of the opinion that you shouldn’t study that at a proper university and anything like that. And my first PhD student in Estonia, (Professor RNS prof 2) had gotten a professorship here at Tallinn University of Technology, which was the most unlikely place of all the places in Estonia to study PA, because why at an engineering school would you do PA? (RNS Prof. 1)

Tartu University, founded in the 17th Century, is today the largest university in Estonia. It was probably the most logical place to accommodate the only department of Public Administration in the country. Nonetheless, because of academic intrigues (often related to the capacity of some to metamorphose from obedient Soviet academic elite to power thirsty authoritarians, as well as a lack of interest in the subject at Tartu, in addition to the courage of young researchers at the beginning of their academic careers), the department of public administration, the embryo of RNS, was instead established in TUT. The exodus to TUT was at first small, but rapidly almost everybody moved to Tallinn. Tartu's Public Administration department soon closed down:

So, we have a transition of a PA department from one university to another, lock, stock and barrel. So, this became extremely embarrassing for Tartu
because it had many study places, with a lot of grant money, and so on. And so, why are they all leaving? Because they wanted to depict it as if it were just an individual thing but everybody – Professor MM, of course – left. Everybody left. All the students, most of the PhDs, and Tartu tried, after this guy left and became minister again; the new rector tried three times to formally win me back and said why don’t you come back even if it’s just on the side. Of course, I didn’t do it, and nobody else did, and in the end the PA in Tartu closed.” (RNS Prof. 1)

During this period, the old rector left to become minister while the newly appointed recto tried to restore the PA department, but to no avail. It was too late, nobody returned (RNS Prof1.). Once established in TUT, the public administration department had still some way to walk before it became RNS. This path has been sustained by a smooth equilibrium of excellence and the capacity to attract funding. In the beginning TUT only obtained 3% of the budget, but today is around a 68%, which made possible an aggressive recruitment drive (RNS Prof. 3).

Long before the department of Public Administration would acquire its current name in 2012, it enjoyed some prestige thanks to the academics heading it. This, coupled with an effective machinery that attracted funding, allowed the department to grow in its ambitions – such as opening up for different disciplines, establishing a master’s programme and PhD students, constructing its current multidisciplinary and heterodox profile. Ragnar Nurske School’s success is a product of an excellence embedded in autonomy, as some informants are keen to stress. This was not only the product of state policies or generous private funds, but mainly an endeavour steered by people eager to protect their autonomy and originality in a context of increasing contingencies. Funding and publishing were indispensable to make this happen, but the protection of autonomy became the point around which this well-oiled machine coalesced. Autonomy not only as the means for pursuing original approaches but also as the means for a distinguished publication output, for prestige, for government evaluations and for the RNS’ capacity to attract funds.
12.1. Personal success and division of labour

Excellence and applications for funding

It’s one of the three leading PA departments in the former Second World until today. Number one or number two you can say, but top three is the more polite thing to say. By any indicators: by funding, by PhD output, by citations and so on. The other ones are Corvinus University in Budapest and University of Ljubljana.” (RNS Prof. 1)

Funders normally do not like multidisciplinary projects; they want very concrete things but if we think in terms of the department then it is good to have people from different disciplines because you can apply for different things. The way you present your application, how you frame the problem, is what matters in the end. RNS Prof. 2) What, we may ask, does protecting autonomy by attracting funding mean? Let us look a little closer into how this well-oiled academic machinery actually functions.

RNS’ strength to attract funding rests on RNS’ capacity to work on different fronts (e.g. consultancy, mainstream research that is generously funded, and more original research). A diversification of topics facilitates financing, but on many occasions, work is undertaken on projects that have little to do with the multidisciplinary and heterodox spirit for which the centre is renowned. Filing applications is a tactical task that nonetheless requires many hours of work, and it is essential to preserve the viability of RNS, as well as its prestige and its autonomy. What comes first is the capacity to attract funding; then comes the strategy to turn these funds into research outputs that have made RNS a respected institution in the academic world.

The task of applying for money has little to do with autonomy. It is often subjected to strict norms and preconceived strategies that have little to do with the “spirit of the centre”. Besides, RNS has also teaching responsibilities essential for funding:

Yeah, I don’t know the exact numbers but basically one third comes from teaching, and two thirds from research and out of that research we have some base funding, from the university… (RNS Sen. 1)
Lots of work in need of a clear division of labour! Who does the “hunt for funding”? Who teaches? Are these tasks taken collectively? These questions have varied answers:

So, there is this… we’ve been cooperating in a sense with another university and there is really this conflict of the working contracts. Every meeting we are planning here, with another research school, research teams in school. I think we are thinking, you know, one hour is a maximum to spend. There are so many backgrounds, you know, we know each other’s competences, weaknesses and so on and we can really do things very quickly but with this other university, even their inner-meetings I think they are like 3 hours for the meeting or something (…) the project writing I think that’s again, kind of the informal rules that we have to bring in the funding, we know that everyone will have to know that. Otherwise it’s going to be tough decisions. (RNS Sen.1)

I have followed the funding but then it turned out to be interesting research. A lot of Estonian and EU funded research is about my area of expertise. I do my own topics but sometimes I research in other topics because of funding.” (RNS Prof.2)

So, this year it was a little bit difficult, I assisted 3 courses, one course was 60 students, another course was 50+ students, and no it was 60+ students. And recently I had a course with 120 students or 115. And every course assumes some grading, some communication with students regarding different issues and you can never plan in advanced what kind of load you will get. And there is also an assumption that you treat these as your responsibilities. That this is not your extra work, this is your responsibility. I had a discussion with… not really a discussion, very brief discussion with a professor when he said "well, if you think this is part of your responsibilities then you don’t get paid for this job. If you don’t think so, then you say it explicitly that I don’t think that these are my responsibilities then we can figure out how to pay you for this job. But then the implicit assumption is that if you shirk from this job, I mean if you say that this is not part of my responsibilities, then you end up not being kind of a good dedicated employee, not part of the team and, you know, everything relates to this. (RNS PhD 1)

In a way it would be nice, because I have been here now for 20 years and to be nudged to go away might be not so bad, because this is a very cosy place, very well fitted out, very good people; there is, in this department … no fights. Literally, no fights. It’s one of the very few academic institutions that I know where there are no serious conflicts within the leadership at all, and with the other people. This is incredibly homogeneous, there is no back-stabbing going on in this department, at all. But of course, it has something to do with this very organic history and with this influence. Everybody here
is either a student of Maria or of myself, traditionally speaking, most of them of both.” (RNS Prof. 1)

The interviewees underline different and often contradictory aspects of the working environment and division of labour. Some are very satisfied to work in a place free of deep conflicts in which respect and teamwork reign. One of them seems very comfortable undertaking more mainstream oriented research. In contrast to this, there is also the opinion that lurking behind this convivial environment and “good vibes” there are areas of discomfort. Working more hours and taking responsibilities beyond what is stipulated in the contract, essential in RNS’ logic, lays the origin of this discomfort. If these responsibilities would not be undertaken, then the institution’s capacity to attract funding would be seriously crippled. Some of the informants are aware of the existence of unwritten disciplinary rules, forcing them to take on these extra and unremunerated responsibilities, otherwise “you end up not being kind of a good dedicated employee, not part of the team and, you know, everything relates to this” (RNS PhD 1). These complaints remain private grievances; they have thus far not turned into open conflicts. But if they would – well, this would not be, as one of the interviewees commented, not a case of career “backstabbing” but, strictly and simply, a matter of labour conditions. Furthermore, as the quotes above reflect, complaints come from the PhD students while the praise comes mainly from the professors. Hierarchical positions matter in the evaluation of one’s working conditions.

TUT is part of a vertical order, as we traced earlier in the programmatic documents. It operates as a governmental organization (see summary in the frame below) moved by the need for further competitiveness in global markets. This orientation is legitimised in the policy and programmatic documents by urging everybody to embrace a narrative of commitment. In the previous chapter, we also explained how MEKTORY, an institution for private-university integration, developed hierarchies by speaking of an apparent equally beneficial relation with the private sector that, despite some advantages for students and researchers in terms of visibility and spaces to work, was ultimately based on accepting market leadership (hence private sector interference). Finally, over the last few pages we have seen how RNS, even when having a heterodox and successful take on research pluralism – and apparently not determined by the market drive of TUT – nonetheless develops a division of labour as a means of tackling the competitive logic of funding which invariably reproduces a vertical order. Nonetheless, the asymmetries of RNS
also seem to respond to certain logics inherent in academia. The following frame summarises the different discursive and material aspects of the unfolding of this vertical order, from the top of the management structure to the general workforce and its immediate context.

12. 2. The illusion of “normal science” in a besieged scientific field: A Bourdieusian approach to tradition in times of new demands

I mean, you know, the exploitation of mid-career, junior and mid-career scholars that they have to both teach and do research more than they can, that this is the essence of the Western university. We have been doing that since the University of Bologna was founded in the 12th century. If you’re not exploited, something is wrong. This is a system that compared to others, is living on exploitation and the reason for that, on the other hand, is the incredible privileges and beauty of that thing. That’s why so many people want to go into this profession while it doesn’t pay particularly well and why in many countries it still has a fairly high social prestige, such as in Germany. (RNS Prof 1.)

The scientific field in the KBE University

Western universities are pyramidal institutions. As Bourdieu’s systematic reflections on the subject attest (1996, 2004), the positions within the institution are determined by the distribution of prestige that occurs within a competition also defined by tactics and stratagems that have little to do with the strict production of knowledge. Hierarchy is conspicuously present when the interviewee above seeks to dampen down complaints regarding the “exploitation” of junior researchers with the argument that this is nothing new but a continuation of a long tradition that dates back from the first universities! He summarises it with the formula exploitation of the young in exchange of social prestige and career prospects. This argument questions directly the argumentational thread of the present chapter, namely the close ties binding university hierarchies with the logics of the market. The informant above would doubtless minimise the importance of this point, since “academia would continue as usual”, reign by the Humboldtian principle: hierarchies exist because there is prestige.
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To begin with, it is important to state that the necessities brought by KBE-inspired reforms are not homologous with the demise of the old vertical idiosyncrasies of the university. The old gerontocratic idea that junior researchers have to undertake tasks like application and teaching to secure their finances seems very much alive, as the informant above is quick to point out. The problem is that these tasks are not rewarded with academic prestige. In line with Boud, Lucas & Crawford (2018), what we see in RNS is that a great part of academic workload today is not about creative research carried out by cool professors but about innumerable and often invisible tasks essential for the university’s survival. Hence, the academic order distributes prestige according to scientific output, but it also organises academic labour to secure the finances of the institution:

No one kind of cares how many hours I need to grade papers. They just have to be done. You know. And the same applies with other things of the same sort... well maybe if professor... It doesn’t happen very often, but it does happen if a professor asks me to find some... I don’t know, do some statistics for him or something like that. Of course, he would say “oh, it’s no rush, you can send it to me in a week”. But again, it’s not in the contract, you know. There is some learning vault there as well, you know. (…) Still what counts is my output in terms of my primary tasks. But I thinks it’s not the only, it’s not... these norms and unwritten rules I guess exist in other places as well. (RNS PhD 2)

Teaching or applying for funds are tasks taken by people at the bottom of the hierarchy; it is these people who absorb the problems surrounding the scarcity of public financing and the increasing demands of a lecturer’s workload. As stated in the quote above, these jobs are often not paid and will count little in their academic careers since they are not recognised within the scientific field. The allocation of these tasks is often done informally, and this is not always to the liking of everybody:

…more like horizontal communication and informal means of communication: this I find also quite difficult to live with because well it’s certainly different from my culture but in this setting I sometimes do need, I do feel the need for more formal address, more formal means of, you know, solving some questions. But this is also because this department is so small. And I do find it disturbing many times. Quite often. Because there are some things and issues that are of purely formal nature but since the communication is sort of… is more like a friendship. There are some reasons for this of course because for example the people who started this department, they kind of
came at the same time together. (...) But as a Junior I think I would like to see more hierarchies. (RNS PhD 2)

“I mean, if the hierarchies are not clearly established then some of the people assume that it is still there. Like we have one professor who is… who feels a little different, feels a little bit higher than everyone else and he shows it. So implicitly there is no hierarchy, but then you end up… or explicitly there is no hierarchy but then implicitly you end up in situations when you say something or you do something in a way that is not entirely conforming with his idea of how things should be conducted. Yeah. So, I had once this kind of situation when I thought that this kind of behaviour would be a profit, but I ended up in a kind of problematic situation. I just thought that the way I do it might be a little bit more efficient. He felt offended that I questioned his idea about how things need to be carried out. So that’s a little bit difficult. I mean, when there’s no hierarchy established, there is no clearly established way of doing things and you are left alone to understand how it should function.” (RNS PhD 1)

The alleged “horizontal communication” coexists with an enduring vertical order. This causes issues for some informants, since hierarchies’ rules behind this veil of “friendship communication”. All these conundrums of reflections paint a multifaceted work order in which tradition and newly introduced competitiveness coexist with a horizontal spirit, which conceals relations of subordination. It is at this point that Bourdieu’s concepts of field and capital can help to shed light on these intricacies.

The concept of field, one of Bourdieu’s most important theoretical concepts, generally refers to the semi-autonomous cosmos structuring society (e.g. the economic field, the scientific field, the literary field, etc.). The nature of the field is like a board game in which players compete for prominent positions. The field is sustained, delimited and governed by laws proper to it but nonetheless the field is not isolated from its surrounding context. Hence, we are not dealing with closed settings. Rather, fields interrelate with other fields as well as with the larger politico-economic structure. The laws that govern the field are often unwritten and constitute an “institutional idiosyncrasy” that organises, stratifies and fuels a symbolic imaginary shared by the actors. The recognition of these laws by the majority legitimises the positions within the field and its very existence (Bourdieu, 1998).

The university is traditionally a social cosmos that apparently reunites the characteristics of the field (i.e. it has its own governing institutions and practices, hierarchies that are established through meritocracy etc.).
opening quote of this section would come to represent the rules of the traditional university. Contrary, though, the second of the quotes indicates the existence of the horizontal informality proper to market-oriented network governance. The question we have to ask ourselves, then, is whether in times of KBE-inspired HEI reforms, we consider the university and the scientific field as autonomous, following the singular laws proper to its field? Is it still “autonomous” when market forces, which in the past where foreign to the university, are today determining research, teaching and the governance of the institution? In case universities are no longer autonomous, are then Bourdieu’s concepts outdated?

Bourdieu underlines that a field’s autonomy is not an incommensurable end and it can be shaped by the demands from other fields or from larger political economic structures. In fact, a field’s autonomy depends on the capacity to integrate these foreign demands into the field’s own laws and idiosyncrasies. Bourdieu calls this process refraction (Bourdieu 1998, 19. Cited from Nase 2016, 33). The question of the loss of autonomy of the field is also approached in Bourdieu’s late reflections in Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market (2003). Bourdieu expresses here how market forces are determining production in the cultural field (“commercialisation”), thus deteriorating the autonomy of the cultural field to the point of making them dependent:

I have always stressed the fact that this process is not in any sense a linear teleological development of the Hegelian type and that progress toward autonomy could be suddenly interrupted, as we have seen whenever dictatorial regimes, capable of divesting the artistic worlds of their past achievements, have been established. But what is currently happening to the universes of artistic production throughout the developed is entirely novel [...]. The hard-won independence of cultural production and circulation from the necessities of the economy is being threatened, in its very principle by the intrusion of commercial logic at every stage of the production and circulation of cultural goods. (Bourdieu 2003, 67)

Although Bourdieu does not explicitly refer to the university, I think that our own study has widely argued, both empirically and with reference to other theoretical works, that the scientific field is facing similar challenges to the cultural field. The question to be asked at this point is if TUT and RNS are refracting the demands from the political economic structure or, on the contrary, whether the field’s autonomy has already been overrun by the “logic of commercialisation”.

275
As we have seen above, the question of autonomy is crucial for RNS' success. RNS is sustained by its hard-won autonomy and this stands on its capacity to attract funding to give room for independent and heterodox research. However, this hard-won autonomy rests on a vertical division of labour, which suggests that some are more “independent” than others. The constraints conditioning scientific practice, wrought through the need for competitiveness, are somehow integrated (“refracted” in Bourdieu’s terminology) into the very laws of the field. This is one way in which, to some degree, autonomy is safeguarded.

Considering the opinion of some informants, this holistic coexistence looks more problematic than the programmatic documents written by the university itself would have us believe; market-shaped competitiveness seems in fact to hollow out the scientific field’s autonomy. Here we have to establish the extent to which the logic of the market, which shapes and sharpens the logic of competitiveness, is determining the other positions of power within the field. Bourdieu’s concept of capital can be very useful in this endeavour.

The constitution of academic capital

Capital is largely understood as the asset that determines the position of the actor in the field. Capital does not solely refer to economic capital, it has other forms: economic; cultural; social and symbolic. Cultural capital is represented by the skills, knowledge, and savoir faire proper to a high social status, normally transmitted by parents to their children. Social capital comprises of the immaterial resources that a person can access, which might be convertible into other forms of capital (like economic); for example, the access to an institutionalised and influential network based on the principles of mutual recognition between its members. Finally, symbolic capital is what legitimates the actor’s possession of any of these three capitals (economic, cultural, and social), in the form of social recognition that the holder is worthy of his distinction.

Academic capital is a type of symbolic capital proper to the scientific field, and it is this asset that recognises and legitimates the positions of the actors in the scientific order. Academic capital is constituted on the basis of a meritocratic system. A prestige gradation based on originality, its scientific impact establishes the merits of an academic’s work, and this will determine his or her position in the scientific field.

This recognised prestige and position might be translated into having influence on science (e.g. being a recognised expert on a popular topic, part-
ly as a means “to gain control of it”), and this can maximise her capacity to accumulate more academic capital, hence more prestige. The position within the field is not solely determined by the merits of academic capital but also by the politics of the field. This is about holding key positions in the administration, being in visible positions of authority during social events or having contacts with influential actors foreign to the scientific field who could directly or indirectly determine the governing of the field. Bourdieu names this political strategic asset *temporal capital* (Bourdieu 2004, 57). Considering the expansion of logics foreign to the scientific field (e.g. the logic of the market shaped by competitiveness) and the impact they have had on the organisation of the departments, a position in academia today is the result of the combination of academic and temporal capitals.

With all this considered and returning to RNS Prof. 1’s quote that opened this section, we can say that he is not entirely right when he assumes that positions are assigned on the basis of academic prestige. He ignores the implications that foreign demand for market shaped competitiveness has had in the distribution of time to produce “independent” research. Any time free of non-research tasks, which is critical for the capacity to accumulate academic capital, is unequally distributed. Furthermore, the *separation between academic capital and temporal capital* is not clear when research work is from its early stages a path of strategic/political choices to meet demands (e.g. funding, publishing) often foreign to the scientific field *per se*. Academic capital is not forged by scientific noble metals. Consequently, one’s positioning within the scientific field does not depend on the combination of two separated forms of capital, one representing prestige (academic) and the other political stratagems (temporal), but *by a form of capital coined from both*.3

This is not a trivial question since the fundamental meritocratic ethics of academic capital are both contradicted and contested by temporal capital, which appears determinant. On the other hand, the fusion between temporal and academic capitals would come to represent the scientific field’s actual loss of autonomy embodied now by a newly debauched form of academic capital.4 This is no peaceful synthesis; the forge of academic capital is

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3 Fernanda Beigel (2013, 6) acknowledges the similar problem on the separation between temporal and academic capital in her research about academic autonomy in Latin America.

4 Bourdieu wrote about the political “contamination” that the symbolic power of authority, which is not entirely product of intellectual capacities but also of their institutional stratagems, has on the evaluation and guidance of research (Bourdieu 1998, 19–20). In the matter in hand though, this “contamination” remains but it is joined by market oriented based competitiveness, a much more
problematic because academic and temporal capitals originate from very different value sources. We can observe the conflict between these different capitals in the very labour process.

Research work in RNS often starts with the struggle for funding, a competition for money ruled by institutions, which are foreign to the scientific field and which nonetheless have within their power influence over the choice of topics and academic beneficiaries. The second stage begins once the actual research work has begun. Here one can distinguish between three types of research: consultancy work that needs to meet specific demands of the funder, scientific research work that should meet also a funder’s indications – these are often less rigid, though they still serve to delimit a topic, research area, the extent and scope of the research, etc. And finally, there is independent research work that is not obliged to meet any demands foreign to the scientific field.

The first stage of the process is not recognised as eligible for gaining academic capital within the scientific field. It is the second stage of the research process that secures the possibility for accumulating academic capital, but only the second and third types of labour (e.g. a delimited research project or fully independent research) are rewarded. While perhaps convenient for gaining prestige in other fields and as a leverage for future funding, consultancy work is not in itself eligible for gaining academic capital. Therefore, just a small proportion of the total workload undertaken in RNS accumulates academic capital, and only a fraction of this small portion is produced from a position of full scientific autonomy.

Hence, part of the work rewarded with academic capital obeys logics foreign to the scientific field. As a result, academic capital partly absorbs the strategic logic of temporal capital. But even more importantly, a highly significant workload in academia, indispensable and sometimes even an integral part of the finalised scientific work, is not rewarded with academic capital. Such work is virtually disconnected from the academic field although indispensable for its survival.5

5 Work that goes unrecognised in academia recalls social reproduction theory and feminist approaches to women’s reproduction and care of labour power: a colossal workload indispensable for the persistence of the capitalist system but, nonetheless, is produced outside the immediate capitalist productive machinery. Work largely invisible to society is undertaken in conditions of
Regardless, the scientific field perceives academic capital as if all these changes had never occurred. Hence the epitome of the academic meritocratic system – the prevalence of the old gerontocratic formula of exploiting the young in exchange of prestige – does not correspond to the present: junior researchers undertake a considerable workload not rewarded with prestige capital.

Another interesting feature is that because academic capital is symbolic it does not automatically derive economic gains. However, this does not preclude the fact that prestige might be an asset that can be converted into economic capital (with respect to better funding, salaries, contracts, etc.). Therefore, engaging in tasks not rewarded with academic capital does not just hamper career prospects but also wage prospects. Nevertheless, the invisibility of money in the scientific field conceals this as well as the prevalence of precarious labour.

One junior researcher defines this three-fold problematic of prestige, non-recognition and precariousness, in a clear and decisive manner:

Yeah, it’s purely from a materialistic perspective. I mean, the value of Academia that society gives is not very high. But, in general, if you want to have a decent life then you will be overloaded with the job. I mean, you will have to take many different tasks, you know, maybe teach more, have more hours, I don’t know. I mean, of course it’s not even comparable to working in the private sector. But at the same time, you know, if you are successful. If you are kind of… gifted, well not gifted but you have this, you know, you have a passion for your job and you’re kind of good at what you’re doing. I guess it can work even better maybe. That sometimes Academia can be seen as actually a path into the middle class. But then again it depends on a number of arrangements that should go right for you. Imagine your professor, well, here it’s not like in Germany that you have to wait until someone dies to get a professorship. I mean, it’s possible to get the full professorship. So, in that sense maybe the system is more liberal but it’s just not well paid. Unless you are entrepreneurial enough to secure project funding for whatever, right? Your marketplace would be the entire world, I guess. Well, given maybe certain… I don’t know, maybe if there are some ideological things that you may want to consider maybe they should be limiting exploitation, exerted not directly by the establishment’s repressive apparatuses but by the family. (Bhattacharya, 2013)

Bourdieu stresses that the semi-autonomous logic and the horizontal relation between the fields allows a type of capital to mutate into another form of capital. A person holding a position of advantage on a field might give access to capitals from other fields that later can be employed to improve the person’s position in her own field. (Bourdieu, 1986)
your… availability of the funds. But in general, there are so many sources so it’s possible. Yeah, but it’s pretty much volatile. Comparing maybe to, you know, when I go to some conferences or some other events where I meet my peers from other countries, they do have more secure and stable environments. Yeah” (RNS PhD 2)

“Material” survival, prestige and career prospects are interrelated topics in this reflection, but interestingly the interviewee struggles to separate them in two domains: material (that is, economic) capital and prestige (that is, academic) capital. However, by the end of her reflection, they turn out to be intertwined. Let us observe how her argument unfolds.

The material/survival necessities. These point to the fact that wages for researchers and university staff in Estonia are generally low. As a result, it is common that researchers engage in competition for funding. At the same time, the interviewee is slightly optimistic about his career/prestige prospects. Estonian universities are less bound to gerontocracy and more to results (publications) than other well-established traditions from other countries. However, this also depends on “a secure and stable environment”, which, in this case, is not in place. Therefore, survival and career prospect depend on uniting entrepreneurial and scientific capacities to secure funding so as then to be capable of producing research. This might require sacrificing research autonomy, that is, “consider[ing] ideological things that end up limiting your… availability of funds”, as one informant expressed it.

Competing for academic capital facilitates the formation of relations of subordination. These are underpinned by a twofold deception:

On the one hand, by conceiving the nature of academic capital as uniquely scientific when this is the product of a work evaluated both according to entrepreneurial and scientific standards. Part of the work needed to produce it, it is not recognized, thus not rewarded.

On the other hand, labouring for academic capital goes hand-in-hand with the pseudo-monastic conduct of academia in which material matters are invisible or directly excluded despite the fact that having a safe job, as

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7 As of 2014, the monthly full-time base salary for a PhD student at Tallinn University of Technology is €865. The base salary of a researcher (PhD) is €989, €1174 for a senior researcher and €1483 for a research leader, and the same for a professor (TUT Töötasu astme alammäärad alates 2014). The average monthly salary in Estonia in 2014 was €1005 (Statistikaamet, 2016). It is important to state here that this refers to permanent or long-term contracts. Many employees have short contracts, which are generally more precarious.
the informant expresses, is very important. This reflects the impact of sym-
[359x653]bolic power on academic capital, and how an academic’s work is closely
related to the belittling of material questions despite the fierce daily engage-
ment for funding. This invisibility of the work that is not rewarded with
prestige and its normalisation has led to the deterioration of the material
conditions.8 Interestingly, the apparently honest disinterestedness of academia
surrounding material questions, and its devotion to knowledge, ends up
ultimately undermining the very creation of knowledge.

This twofold deception that lurks behind the production of academic
capital builds up on the misconceived idea that “science continues as usual”,
thereby denying the loss of autonomy in the scientific field. This naturali-
sation is enacted by an unrecognised internalisation of the foreign culture of
competitiveness, embodied in the creation of academic capital. This decep-
tion decisively contributes to fix existing positions within the academic field,
solidifying extant hierarchies in a time of change.

Nonetheless, unavoidable incongruencies grow within this deception,
which is constructed on problematical grounds. Let’s see how these incon-
sistencies unfold in daily work.

The masquerade of the scientific field as a pure
intellectual competition space

An analysis which tried to isolate a purely “political” dimension in struggles
for domination of the scientific field would be as radically wrong as the (more
frequent) opposite course of only attending to the “pure”, purely intellectual
determinations involved in scientific controversies. (Bourdieu 1998, 21)

One of the informants breaks down the strategy for choosing specific
research topics that can maximise prestige:

There are two types of work financed directly by the state: pure research
funding in which the government does not have so much to say, and this is
where you can present an alternative view. And consultancy funding which
lasts for a few months and you advise them in what they tell you.

8 Bourdieu refers to this conduct when he underlines “that the operation of the scientific field itself
produces and presupposes a specific form of interest”, disinterested from other interests proper to
other fields (Bourdieu, 1998, 20–21).
One has to be careful in balancing what you really want to do and what they ask you to do. Sometimes because of ideological reasons, the job becomes something very far from what is scientific knowledge. I think it is not intelligent to compete with Ernst & Young or other big consulting firms because we work differently here and, in the end, we are evaluated by the publications that we make for peer-reviewed journals. (RNS Prof. 3) In the end, prestige is evaluated by indices proper to the scientific field (e.g. citations in peer-reviewed journals). But even here the criteria for these journals is not isolated from politics. Prestigious periodicals are often dominated by mainstream paradigms which are not so keen on publishing critical research. This makes the separation of temporal and academic capital all the more difficult to maintain:9

Well for me there is something unavoidable to look at, which the huge gap is existing between the technology economy and society (…). The same system makes it very difficult because of all these financing needs for research. Heterodox approaches, like the ones we try to pursue here, are published somewhere but the impact we have is rather small. (RNS Prof.3)

Yeah (laughs shortly), I find it difficult to talk about academic… I mean, you see you have academic freedom. But then we come to performance evaluation. This system of performance evaluation really restricts your academic freedom to a significant extent. Because in a way you are expected to publish in mainstream journals and mainstream journals don’t accept non-mainstream work. So, what kind of academic freedom do we have if you are expected to publish mainstream work? I mean, your thinking doesn’t matter. What matters is that you do research according to a certain set of rules, a certain set of expectations in order to produce the work that is expected. And if you produce different kind of work of course you can do this. I mean, no one is going to punish you for that. But then your academic prospects are much lower. I mean, in an academic environment. If you are not planning to stay in academia it’s going to be different. But if you are planning on staying on academia then you obviously have to do things that probably conflict with the set of ideas you have.” (RNS PhD1)

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9 Afful & Janks’ article, entitled *The Politics of Citation* (2013), shows that young researchers tend to cite authors with higher citation impact to relate their work with the one of the “big names” and with renowned journals. The era of benchmarking, fierce competition, and reference lists are not just part of “normal” intellectual practice but an instrument to ascend climb academic hierarchies. Furthermore, the political motivation of strategic citing reinforce academia’s own intellectual/ideological order.
The challenges for publishing research work within the scientific field are many but this struggle begins with the strategic choice of topics and theories. In this context, doing critical research becomes almost a crusade: “There is space but very little. This can only be done by enthusiasts who really love their topics and theories and they do not care one jot about all this pragmatic things”, says a junior researcher.

In a context of low public financing, pragmatism means sharpening entrepreneurial/strategic skills to secure a career. The internalisation and naturalisation of this order is exemplified when academics define success in terms of funding, citations, indicators, all of which represent the competition for the spoils of war determined by forces foreign to the scientific field. As RNS Prof. 1 stated a few pages before:

It’s one of the three leading PA departments in the former Second World until today. Number one or number two you can say, but top three is the more polite thing to say. By any indicators; by funding, by PhD output, by citations and so on. The other ones are Corvinus University in Budapest and University of Ljubljana.

For reasons of academic survival and (maybe) success, work develops around strategies that first of all target the meeting of demands that are imposed from “outside”– one interviewee, quoted earlier, calls it “balancing”. The problem is that both the implementation and logic of these stratagems are already internalised within the governing of the scientific field. This reflects the extension of the logic of competitiveness at all stages of the research process, including the evaluation of research outputs. “Balancing” seems ultimately to aim towards research autonomy, yet, even if it appears plentiful and unthreatened in some cases, the preservation of autonomy in the scientific field, does not guarantee equal distribution. As we have seen, the extent of one’s autonomy is assigned according to one’s position in the academic hierarchy. Nevertheless, in the context of a besieged scientific field, even those academics perched at the apex of the order are not completely shielded from the crosswinds of competitiveness when, precisely, prestige and autonomy need to be constantly cultivated and proven:

I should say I’m really tired because of this jet lag thing, so I’m not half as modest as I usually would be, but the modesty is, of course, fake. That I am with a considerable distance the leading non-hard scientist at this university by output, by citations and things like that. So, I was a real asset for here. RNS Prof.1 But excellence is not immune to university intrigues. The same
informant imparts a thrilling story about his personal experience with the aforementioned rector in Tartu:

If you have seen this cross in the middle of the main square in Tallinn, this cross which looks like decorations for 1938 Germany that was his idea when he was Minister of Defence. That is his idea, and I think it’s a very perfect fitting monument to him. And he had a very, very, very serious issue… with me having a quarter professorship at what he defined as the main competition to Tartu. I was then getting so tired of being in Tartu and being in this provincial place and all of this that I thought, okay, I need to leave Estonia. Then, the Tallinn people said, and, you know, what was I doing here anyway? And then the Tallinn people said, no, no, no, you should stay in Estonia but come here; we will make you a much better offer. You’re in the capital, you’re 15 minutes from the airport, you have a nice environment, not these bureaucratic idiots … and I thought maybe this is a good idea. Unfortunately, the Tallinn rector leaked that to the Tartu rector who got really upset about this … this guy, and … well, I had the biggest conflict in my life. He then tried to fire me, only there was no reason (…). So, this is an interesting story, but this is what you get, you know, these are typical academic intrigues

So now there are rectorship elections and one of the four candidates is my old friend from Tartu (laughing) who was first Defence Minister then Education Minister and now he’s nothing and he didn’t get into the new coalition so he is now trying to be the rector of this university although he hated this so much for the competition reason.” (RNS Prof.1)

What is remarkable about this story is that, despite all the reforms, these hoary political university intrigues with revolving doors between government and academia remain. They have just been followed with new demands, imposed by market-oriented competitiveness and the endless need for funding and research applications.

(Parenthetically, guess who finally was elected as rector? Yes, the interviewer’s old acquaintance, who remains a relevant political figure in Estonia.)

10 Jaak Avisskoo was elected as TUT’s new rector on the 22nd of May 2015 by the Board of Governors of Tallinn University of Technology. Avissko is a man of the Estonian political and academic establishment, ex-rector of Tartu University, Minister of Education and Research in two different terms and Minister of Defense during another term. His long political career was clearly a strength, not a weakness in support of his candidacy. Sandor Liive, Chairman of the board, praised his “long-term and effective experience in education leadership both, at the University of Tartu and as a Minister of Education and Research, were to Avissko’s credit”.

284
The same interviewee refers to the usual recommendations in dodging all these risks: flexibility; devotion to work; determination; responsibility and excellence:

you have a problem and only doing research if you can’t teach, or if you’re only a lecturer, you’re do not have what it takes to be a professor. If you have the gift that you need for a chair, you can do both. Not everybody does it exactly the same. There are more researchers who are not that good at teaching and there are more teachers who are not that good at researching. Or not that good, less good. This is absolutely normal. But I do think that the balance is more or less fake. Especially after a certain while when you have your lecturers and you update them. I enjoy speeches, I enjoy classes, I enjoy PhD advice, more or less, and I enjoy the research. So, I’ve never seen a problem there. The eternal whining about the fact that people need more research time… and again, I have the highest citation index of any non-engineer or scientist at this university (…), you know, you either have it or you don’t.” (RNS Prof.1)

The argument adopted above falls within the umbrella of individual responsibility in an alleged meritocratic system. These are moral notions that are often paired with the individualisation of “structural risks” in an increasingly contingent labour market (Mythen 2005. Woodman 2010).

12.3. The contradictions of the alibi, “playing the system”
I would rather not project an image of the informants as puppets, victims of a “false consciousness”, who simply act out within their discursively sophisticated frames. They are generally aware of structural constraints, and it looks like their struggle within the field is justified as part of the righteous cause to outflank the system in order to achieve research freedom (autonomy):

The first words of Aavisko as a Rector indicated his intentions, in line with the governmental and university strategic documents, to develop research and educate in accordance with entrepreneurial demands: “it is also important to enhance research, in particular in the classical areas of technology, and focus on the problems in Estonia and to bring TUT development into compliance with the preferences of the entrepreneurs, so that our graduates would meet better the expectations of the employers”. The market oriented utilitarian line of his speech was topped off with the slogan “Rather less, but better!” (TUT Website, 2015). His words do not augur a smooth relation between RNS and TUT’s governing body.
Some universities and science research centres are strong, and I think they have space for critical research. Our institute is very critical for example. If you are good, you will play the system. It is the Matthew effect.” (RNS PhD 2)

The “Matthew effect” is a concept coined by the sociologist Robert K. Merton (1968) to explain how, due to accumulated advantage, a prestigious scholar will always have more chances to have their discoveries or arguments recognised by the scientific community, even if these are objectively less ground-breaking than the ones of an unknown scholar. This “effect” reproduces schemes of subordination and unjust outcomes that nonetheless make it easier for already established academics to maximise their prestige and status. What the informant above offers is a strategic take on the Mathew Effect in relation to the right to be critical. This is only possible once a privileged position that provides autonomy is achieved.

Gaming the system is also implied by other informants (“balancing the system”, “embracing benchmarking” etc.) Becoming a good player means to completely melt with the order, to internalise the rules within the work process and within the organisation, so as to later “trick” the system. The problem is that by playing the game one actively keeps reproducing the inequalities, proper to the order that wants to be outwitted. This is the paradox of consequentialist ethics: the strategic acceptance of a “necessary evil” that results in mimicking the logics of subordination within the institution:

… You don’t do the work that is intellectually engaging or just recently I kind of did 13 interviews and then…. obviously I had then to transcribe but then as this is an international project, I had to translate the interviews from Latvian into English. And translating 13 interviews it’s kind of…well, it’s a lot of work. It was 120–140 pages of text translated from one language to another language and then you think “ok, this is not really…”. And then you feel like “this is really dumb to do it”. And feel a little bit exploited. And no one tells you that, well, you can just procure your services, you can go for a translation firm and do this instead. The assumption is that I conduct interviews and I also translate interviews. Obviously… okay, I got a bonus for this, like… and then the general feeling… I mean, within our institute we object to this kind of new public management and most of the people actually object to the new public management intellectually. Because this is not productive, because performance pay has shown not to work. And this and that. But what we have within our institute is exactly performance-pay. You work hard you get more money; you don’t work hard you don’t get more money. And that was the case with me, I did all the translations, everything
and then I got a bonus. But for that you have to actually do some sacrifices [...]"

(... it’s not imposed from above. It’s just within… whatever it takes… a lot
of things within our institute are unwritten rules. So, it’s not on paper, it’s
not in your contract. It’s just assumed and then everything is constructed on
these kinds of assumptions. And then everything becomes somewhat dif-
ficult.” (RNS PhD 1)

Researchers at the bottom of this order pay the price of safeguarding their
autonomy by “playing the game.”11 Consequently, RNS protects its own
autonomy as much as it maintains those hierarchies that unequally distri-
bute academic autonomy inside its own walls. The result is a work situation
that mimics the logics of NPM.

12.4. Work-life balance: some remarks on the informant’s
academic existence

Professorships are really, really cool assignments. In spite of all the pressures
through neo-liberalism and everything like that. But still, the thing is, and
this was so in my case, that at a very early age you don’t have a real boss any-
more. You have coordinators and everything like that, but you don’t have a
boss. You don’t need to obey. You need to align yourself with deans and
rectors and so on, more or less, in my case partially less, but basically, you’re
by yourself. You don’t get a very high salary, but you have a lot of oppor-
tunities. If you’re a comparatist you get to travel a lot. For me this is not a
major asset because I do it so much. But on the other hand, for many people
this eternal travel in nice places and in nice ways, and if you have a certain
prominence then you travel very much in style. (RNS Prof.1)

The profession of an academic has its fair share of privileges (e.g. travelling
a lot in comfort, working with interesting people, flexible schedules, etc),
but on the condition that one learns to navigate in risky waters. In aca-
demia, like any form of intellectual work, one cannot separate working and
non-working life. Career performance is often related to life outside work.

11 Project based research is an efficient way to attract funding, but it was often criticised by some of
this study’s informants because it obliges them to work for projects where they have not partici-
pated in its initial design. This fact delivers them very little prestige. Furthermore, such projects
often have little to do with their research topics.
Hereunder, two developments of this intricate relation between work and life are presented.

Family and Academia? A dialogue

Balancing work and family life are a recurring topic:

I think that there is, it depends on the professions you have, but all together it is true that the work never stops, and you take it back home. That’s so with all scholars. But on the other hand, you’re so much the master of your own fate. You may say I don’t want to teach before ten. You may say I don’t want to teach on Fridays and Mondays. This is all up to you, so this works very well. The academic part is not an issue at all. The issue with me is that I live half the time in Germany and half the time in Estonia. That has family issues… Although, call me cynical, but I always say that if you don’t spend too much time with your family, the chances that you’re staying together are much stronger. In reality that’s the case, you know. And in Estonia that’s also very much acknowledged. You might know that the Estonian divorce rate is 87%. You might know that Estonia’s the only case where sometimes somebody introduces somebody to you and says this is my current wife. Because, you know, she’s not going to be your wife forever. I mean, this is a totally different attitude. So, I like stable relations, but I have no problems with being away for large periods. You know, in the age of Skype this is not an issue. But still, my issue as far as my private life is concerned, is one of changing countries. That has nothing to do with scholarship. If I would be a normal Estonian professor living here, I think it’s one of the most family-friendly professions you can possibly have. Especially in an issue like that. So, this is not an issue. What makes the difference is my specific case of two locations. And then in addition to the two locations, a lot of travel. (RNS Prof.1)

So that kind of… really motivates me and I can also see kind of finding a balance between my work and personal life through this path. So, in the first jobs of course what you are doing is… or what I’ve been doing is basically really overworking. You try to outperform; you try to be really excellent. And of course, when the family conditions change, when you get children, and so on, things start to shake a bit. You’re not sure if you’re delivering still you know, if you have to finish work at 5 you know, pick up the children and so on. But then you get used with the idea and you’re balanced. And so, I found really a balance there and then I still seem to be accepted and thought to deliver. But most of the environment has also changed. Before none of us had children. Each of us was contributing a lot and very hard-working and now many of us have had children and it’s again a new normality, new reality we have all adopted to. So, that is a thing. (RNS Sen. 1)
In the case of the first informant, a prolific career and family are compatible. He argues that academic labour makes “you master of your own fate” but “work never stops and you take it back home”. Then he proceeds to describe the challenge of living between two countries, a situation that has “nothing to do with scholarship” but a wise personal choice for the sake of stability, especially if we consider the high divorce rate of Estonia! For the second informant, balancing work meant a decrease in work output, notably when the children arrived. Colleagues without children or family have a competitive advantage over those who do not, and this has also some implications in work relations:

So, she’s very nice friendly and we share really the same values, you know. She has also family, big family and her scientific output has decreased as well with the course of time due to family conditions and so has mine. But, you know, it’s ok. Then of course we have RNS Prof.1, who’s a very charming, very charismatic person and he’s been my advisor for the master thesis as well as the PhD thesis. So, in a sense we have this… it’s a tricky relationship, you know, many people call it a kind of love and hate relationship. But it is I think… with big egos.

Still after so many years. Yeah, you know, we have grown a bit apart. Because you know, he doesn’t have family and children so it’s a kind of a…

How to say it? (laughs). You know, the values are different. (RNS Sen. 1)

The informant here (RNS Sen.1) directly refers to RNS. Prof.1, who, as we saw, regards being away from his family a kind of blessing. RNS Sen.1 says that RNS. Prof.1 “has no family or children”, insinuating that they grew a part because RNS Prof.1 did not have much empathy with family issues. These personal recriminations indicate first, that having children, is often a handicap for academic careers especially for women (Crabb & Ekberg 2014. Mirick & Wladkowski 2018).

This problem is compounded by the contractual conditions and weak family policies in Estonia, although these have recently improved, But

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12 The informant’s ironic reference to divorce rate is factually correct (Estonia Statistikaamet, 2016). This is one of the aspects of Estonian society that draws the attention of outsiders for the naturality, at least on the surface, of how divorce is handled.

13 The Strategy for Children and Families 2012–2020 has been the first consistent policy in Estonia to face the demographic crisis that Estonia has undergone since its independence, i.e. problems regarding children poverty, work reconciliation, little parental benefits etc. While the situation has
beyond the legally and culturally entrenched forms of gender discrimination, what we see is how the traditional idiosyncrasy of academia, owing to an academic’s devotion to his or her job (RNS Prof.1), results in a lack of empathy about essential aspects of life, such as martial affairs or fatherhood. On these accounts, the ideal academic worker is not so different from the perfect highly skilled post-Fordist worker: flexible, passionate for the job to the extent that his personal life is mostly subordinate to advancing his career. He turns a blind eye to established inequalities and like the prototypical ideal flexible worker, adapts to the liquidity of social relations (Bauman 2003, Standing 2011).

The high divorce rate in Estonia is part of this individualistic drive. This is not because of the collapse of Christian patriarchal values (Estonia has been one of the most secularised countries worldwide for decades), but because of the way in which capitalism was introduced into this secularised space, which has accentuated individualism. An individualistic outlook has found further support in its direct opposition to communist collectivism, to the extent that today it is difficult to make compromises, as is the case with matrimony. On the issue of divorce, it is not as though its prevalence in Estonia erodes the patriarchal order. If anything, it does the opposite; many divorces are because of the husband’s refusal to take care of their babies, leaving parental care in the hands of their wives, resulting in Estonia having the highest rate of single mothers. It is significant, then, that those informants who minimise the problem of reconciling life and work, hold the higher positions in RNS. It is perhaps little coincidence also that those with the most important institutional roles are men with no children.

certaintly improved (at least according to some indicators), it is still early to know if all these indicators are showing sustained improvements.

14 The association of collectivism to the Soviet Union and individualism to the Estonian protestant ethic has been a useful weapon in Estonian political discourse, where governing liberal parties use the latter to legitimise their pursuit of neoliberal policies.

15 Estonia has the second highest rate of single mothers in Europe (roughly one out of five families in Estonia are single mothers with their children). This is closely tied also to the fact that into the single mothers living are at the highest risk of living in poverty. Only Latvia has a higher rate (Statistikaamet, 2015, cited from Estonian Public Broadcasting Website 2015).

Belinda Probert (2005, 70–71) research show divorce and separation as one of the explanatory factors accounting for unequal outcomes for women’s academic careers.
Scholarly work for a fulfilling existence

It’s intellectually stimulating, and this is what really drives me because I always had this desire to figure out “ok, what is this world out there”. I mean, really. So, it was actually a simple decision. It was not kind of a very rational thing, I just felt like I wanted to try. So, from there, I guess, come the values. Well, that I will be able to satisfy my curiosity with for example these administrative routines, even though I wish they would exist …at least, they will not take all my soul away, you know. And so far, I have been enjoying this.

Yeah, and also that I will have this freedom. In terms of time, in terms of space as well. I don’t have to sit in this office. I can take my computer, which is actually mine … they offered me the office computer, but I said, “I don’t need to”. I just want to think of myself as I have my ideas, my thoughts, my, you know, these things that I wrote. And this is just in one place. And if I feel like I have one hour of work here at this table today, for like ten hours I can do this. Or I feel like I want to stay at home, and maybe take in my own rhythm, then I can do that as well (…). So, this is of course kind of a luxury, it requires some self-discipline, but it has more value than… more positive effects than negative.” (RNS PhD 2)

Intellectual work is in principle not subordinated to strict schedules and predetermined office routines (9–17h job). This “freedom” is positively valued by most informants. Freedom relates to leading an intellectual life, a sort of glorified scholarly existence. Nevertheless, the same informants who enjoy say to be living this glorified scholarly existence complain about their non-intellectual workload. This is not necessarily contradictory; a deep-seated interest in research and knowledge weighs more than the negatives; “they will not take all my soul away”, the informant says. Despite this bullet-proof motivation, non-intellectual work takes its toll. Constant demands reduce intellectual work, while their existence is filled with hours dedicated to simply meeting pre-established obligations:

Combining work and personal life… it’s a little bit hard but I think everyone in research struggles with it. But it seems that people who end up in research, I feel, are very kind of… particular; we’re interested in what we do, and we don’t really care much about anything else. Really, really into one thing and, you know… And I don’t think of myself as this kind of person. I’m the kind of person that is interested in many things and so maybe actually a PhD is not my thing because working towards a PhD assumes that you are focused and go deep. And yeah, I’m interested in economics, and I like reading different things. So, yeah, I get carried away with some things and I
read something, and I try to catch up with this. So, my recent thing that I’m interested in is urban theory, urbanisation, from a critical perspective. So, I start reading Neil Brenner and all these critical theories about my own theory. Yeah, so maybe PhD is not my thing now (...). (RNS PhD 1)

This is the kind of cyclical thing like within an economy. You have a paper that you have to finish, you have a deadline and then you struggle until the deadline and then you have this moment when you feel really nice, when you finish the paper, you submit the paper. This is the kind of good moment. So, I’m rather like a boom-bust cycle, like in an economy (laughing). Then you have these really nasty moments where you are struggling with understanding something, maybe older arguments, or other difficult points. I mean, those are not bad moment but those are difficult moments. I don’t know this is the kind of thing. I’m not sure that there are... there is only kind of not nice moments in work. I mean, apart from research I also do teaching assistance, as most of the PhD students do. The nasty moments: when you have a deadline, you have to write a paper, but then you have a pile of papers to actually grade” (RNS PhD 1) Academia driven through specialisation is not keen on broader conceptions (e.g. political economy, urbanism etc.). What is demanded is research that is very much disciplinarily grounded, says the informant. We can situate his worries in the post-Fordist paradox, namely the decline of creativity because of a constant effort to measure knowledge and to systematise production within concrete and clearly delimited borders, something closer to the spirit of Fordist scientific rationalisation.

The second part of this informant’s narrative tells us more about moments of accomplishment. For example, when “you struggle until the deadline and then you have this moment when you feel really nice, when you finish the paper, you submit the paper”. These moments are in stark contrast with those periods when he has to reconcile his own research with correcting and grading “piles of exams”.

It is very telling from the quotes that no distinction is made between work and non-work. The problem here is not about doing a lot of non-paid work, as long as this helps to attain scholarly existence. Here we can appreciate how autonomous work and existence are intimately related, according to which any deterioration in intellectual autonomy is a threat to their very existence.
12.5. Concluding remarks. The balance between opportunities and hierarchies: the hegemonic keystone of the legitimation and survival of RNS

RNS is a prestigious public administration research institution that has heterodoxy as its insignia. In the context of low financing, living far from mainstream science, there is a constant struggle for funding. This successful struggle is sustained by a vertical division of labour, which optimises applications for funding as well as the ensuring that original contributions are made to the scientific field. The top of the institution’s hierarchy holds more autonomy and time to produce these distinctive scientific contributions than those at the bottom, who must shoulder the workload for attracting funding. This unequal division of labour is legitimized openly or implicitly by evoking the traditional meritocratic model of the university, wherein positions in the hierarchy are determined by accumulated prestige.

Prestige is an immaterial asset, named “academic capital” by Bourdieu, and it is defined according to specific norms proper to the scientific field.

However, this order does not take into account that, on the one hand, the work undertaken to secure funding, although crucial both for financing and for research, is generally not eligible for accumulating academic capital. This element undermines the credibility of the meritocratic order. On the other hand, academic capital today is not an asset exclusively shaped by the laws of the scientific field when research, from its conception up to its publication, has to accommodate demands heterogeneous to the scientific field (Bourdieu’s temporal capital).

Hence, the legitimation of the order is based on a twofold deception, which can be summarised as “science as usual”. On the one hand, RNS successfully integrates the needs for competitiveness foreign to the scientific field as an integral part of academic work while at the same time it maintains a meritocratic evaluation based solely on published work. On the other hand, the adulation of academic capital, an immaterial form of capital, conceals the material deterioration of academic labour. Everything seems to continue as usual.

The deception of “science as usual” is the product of the problematic internalisation of the transmission nodes – e.g. competitiveness, vertical and horizontal governance, which are imposed from larger governmental and institutional plans. These act as vectors for the constitution of an order partly instituted on the logic of market competitiveness. The asymmetries we see at RNS are partly rooted on a division of labour often presented as
teamwork that nonetheless unequally allocates unworthy tasks. This reproduces in small scale similar falsely cooperative imaginaries that we see in the "vertical-horizontal-network" jargon, this time hidden behind the meritocratic rhetoric of "science as usual".

The “deception of science as usual” recalls once more the collision between, on the one hand, structurally steered market expansion and, on the other, the traditional idiosyncrasies of academia that are reproduced at the superstructural level. From a larger theoretical perspective, the deception of science as usual is a hegemonic narrative instrument that naturalises the resulting contradictions and, superstructurally, legitimates the larger market-oriented totalising movement (Moment two in the diagram page 146).

A researcher’s very existence is affected by this unrecognised overlapping of fields, mindsets and idiosyncrasies, which result for one thing in difficulties surrounding the separation of life from work. Those interviewees who are not in top posts are fairly optimistic about reaching a future point where they will finally enjoy intellectual autonomy, even though they remain alert to the obstacles:

Financing does influence the scientific interest. Basic science, mainstream sciences prevails. If the financing is limited, you will not do something new because the funding will die out. The advances of technology open new areas for research that seem to attract funding more easily. The excellences in sciences produce this kind of system. If we think about EU funding is a good example. You have to balance what you want to research with what you have to research, or you have the possibility to research. The new technologies will bring new interesting topics to research, so young people will also have space for that. (RNS PhD 3)

Research is linked to researchers funding but, in my case, I have never done any uninteresting research. I have followed the funding but then it turned to be interesting research. A lot of Estonian and EU funded research is about my area of expertise; I do my own topics but sometimes I research in other topics because of funding. Normally these projects are publicly funded: Estonian government and the EU. These projects often have many partners. I recently made a research on the financing of the universities” (RNS Prof. 2)

“So, here we are, in 2015 and of course in my work life I’ve always had these 6- or 7-year cycles, that you get bored with your previous work in 6, 7 years. And in a sense, it’s a (compliment 09:52) for me, it’s a kind of breaking point, it’s the question whether this job gets too boring for me. And in a sense, it has, especially in the teaching part, you know. In the end, that questions are all pretty much the same from the students and so on, so there is this path which is pretty boring. And administrative aspects, you know, as
well, you could find some fascination in doing some, you know, project-
planning and carrying them out, and solving the problems, the challenges
and so on, but it felt that sometimes in the end it gets very, pretty boring.
But the research aspect, you know, it remains interesting because we have
this liberty to do (10:40) the projects, you can work with a lot freedom there.
You can develop your own proposals and then one of the things which kind
of motivates me to continue really here is that I received a grant earlier this
year. Highly competitive grant from the Estonian National Funding Agency.
I won’t go into the topics probably, not that interesting, but basically a lot of
competition there – only ten to fifteen percent of the applications were
funded and out of this whole university very few received funding … only
one in social sciences, which was me. So, it’s kind of, you know, it puts some
responsibility (laughs) to do the job properly.” (RNS Sen. 1)

Informants believe that all this effort with extra tasks will be eventually
rewarded with the autonomy needed to produce interesting research that
will finally be recognised. This is sustained by actual personal achievements
or by recalling technologic optimism:16 “new technologies will bring new
interesting topics to research, so young people will also have space for that”
(cited from the first quote just above).

These reflections indicate that, to a certain extent and for different
reasons, there is an acceptance to play along as if the meritocratic order
were still in place. The will to advance their work life within this deceptive
meritocracy produces shared experiences, challenges, ideas of success and
failure that all help to configure the “expected conduct” within the scientific
field. This “expected conduct” of the person within the field, sustained by a
cosmos of beliefs and unwritten expectations, is what Bourdieu names
habitus (Bourdieu 1977, 78–79).

The informants’ shared habitus would be one of overcoming, through
their passion for research, all the obstacles internalised within the research
centre while evaluating themselves within the meritocratic order based on
the accumulation of prestige (represented by academic capital). The inter-
viewees generally admire a model of intellectual life defined through a
certain fetishism of prestige, knowledge and the idealisation of the scholar’s
life. This desire is sustained by means of strictly separating out temporal
and academic capital, which, in the eyes of the interviewees themselves, is

16 This reflection is in line with Morozov’s solutionism (2013, 5): “the idea that given the right code,
algorithms and robots, technology can solve all of mankind’s problems, effectively making life ‘fric-
tionless’ and trouble-free”
also the difference between alienation and self-realisation. The interviewees try to separate the strategic but disaffecting work (temporal capital), in which all their criticisms are concentrated, and the work related to their research interests, which directly connects to this scholarly meritocratic existence (academic capital). By “compartmentalising” alienation interviewees end up living in conformity with the habitus that flourishes under the deceptive motto “science as usual”, the slogan of which ultimately legitimates and stabilises the field’s order. Nonetheless, ultimately this strategy of enduring alienation depends on the number of opportunities available to reach their desired scholarly life. This association between alienation and opportunities pinpoints the weak link of the deception: this is the troubled relation between habitus and meritocratic ethics.

Debauched meritocracy, habitus and hegemony

Any meritocratic order has a contradiction at its ethical core. Meritocracy establishes that positions in an order should be given according to the talent of the individual. The individual has to prove via evaluation whether she indeed excels on the field’s selected abilities; if so, she will be accordingly promoted. Hence, doing a good job is the means by which one climbs up the ladder. The problem, of course, is that meritocracy does not take into account the fact that orders are not constructed from a tabula rasa; they are instead composed of pre-existent elements, which already hold varying degrees of power and determination. Individuals, who already occupy high positions because of their previous achievements, will always have more opportunities than the newcomers to accumulate prestige and shield their status. Even the uncorrupted meritocratic orders do not guarantee equality of opportunities, since the newcomer’s promotion will always be more difficult than one of the more established scholars. This problem can be mitigated, though never resolved, by introducing norms to guarantee opportunities of promotion and to keep the meritocratic spirit alive. Nonetheless, this is rarely the case and the legitimation of a meritocratic order normally depends on its capacity to offer opportunities to satisfy the newcomer prospects to progress without undermining the position of those already established. Therefore, only with certain “opulence of opportunities” can a fairly predictable meritocratic path be drawn.

17 This is essentially the Matthew Effect explained a few pages above
The problem that we see in RNS is that because of the blend between academic and temporal capitals, the opportunities, as well as the measuring of talent that determines the position of its actors, are fuzzy or are quickly deteriorating. Consequently, the meritocratic path is not clearly defined, and prospects remain uncertain. The complaints of those interviewed are related precisely to this aspect; they are not against a meritocratic order *per se* but are despondent by the lack of opportunities they have to climb up the order. They are willing to “perform” a “meritocratic habitus” but, under their feet, they do not feel the real bedrock meant to be supporting it. This disorientation is expressed by the interviewees who speak about the unclear assignation of responsibilities or the contradictory relation between vertical and horizontal relations.

This discussion brings us back to the notion of deception: the meritocratic order in which this habitus rests does not correspond to a reality of scarce opportunities. Indeed, this is why there is no pre-defined ladder with which to climb the pyramid. The absence of a defined ladder represents a crack in the meritocratic ethical core. Arbitrariness enters the breach, where temporal capital becomes increasingly important in any career prospect. Furthermore, arbitrariness deteriorates existential prospects and reinforces alienation. All this casts serious doubt over the meritocratic-based legitimacy of the scientific field.

A narrative of legitimation sustained by such a deception commits to its purpose when there is the residue of some truth within the veil of untruth. A narrative of consent cannot live completely apart from the reality that it narrates. Gramsci tells us that instead a narrative with all its derived norms is truly hegemonic, hence consensual, when it conveys fairly well-grounded prospects of progress, so as to sufficiently balance – which in any case means to equally redistribute- the unequal distribution of assets proper to any hierarchy to deliver some prospects of progress for its inhabitants. An order sustained by an empty narrative cannot simply impose the veil of false consciousness upon its inhabitants; no, the lack of material and existential prospects cannot only be concealed under “imaginative deceptions”. If this occurs, the order can only be sustained by plain and pure coercion. In the context of our specific investigation, coercion would be represented by the eventual turn from meritocracy to arbitrariness, a turn that would mean the complete dissolution of the academic habitus known as the meritocratic order.

Therefore, all the legitimation of the RNS and its operability as a research centre, rests on the hopes that at least a part of this meritocratic
edifice remains truly meritocratic and safeguarded from the forces that are hollowing out its essence. Only with this protection, RNS workers will have reasonable prospects of promotion and realisation, thereby keeping alienation and discontentment in a controllable level. Suffice it to say, it is a delicate balancing act.
Concluding Part
It is time to return to the general aim and the overarching research questions:

This dissertation has analysed the order resulting from the top-down steered HEI reforms, and that have redefined the character of university activities. The academic workplace has been taken as the empirical terrain for situating both the global and vertical nature of HEI reforms – presented by its advocates as essential for the accomplishment of the Knowledge-based economy – in relation to their local implementation. From this purpose, we were led to consider the following question:

- What are the basic features of the university order in Finland and Estonia and how has this order been maintained?

This overarching research question was to be broken down into two sub-questions, from which two internal moments – the programmatic/institutional discourse and concrete workplace practices – operative in the order could be addressed. These two sub-questions were:

- How is the order framed/presented in the programmatic documents produced by the universities?
- What ideological and political elements constitute the basis of the HEI order and how does this order operate in the academic workplace as well as manifest itself in everyday university practices?

The first thing to underline is that after having investigated two different universities, we do not stand in front of two cases that offer opposing answers to the above questions. Aalto University and the department of Media in Finland and TUT and RNS in Estonia represent how present-day capitalism continues to expand its market logic to cover new areas of capitalist exploitation. Both universities are inspired by the same key international programmatic documents and for this reason the resultant orders
are similar. In line with general global trends, HEIs are increasingly more authoritarian; with the rise of technocratic forms of governance and boards dominated by externally appointed members there is the further abandonment of any effective exercise of democratic control by students, administration and academics alike.

Taken together, the documents and informants indicate that this order mostly defines the ways in which academic work (teaching, researching, creativity, the furtherance of one’s career) should be understood and undertaken. These “ways” are the aforementioned nodes of transmission, that is, those catalysts to which the documents explicitly refer and that are responsible for generating new forms of hierarchies as well signalling certain forms of existence transcending the physical workplace setting.

These nodes of transmission are generally the conductors for a competitive market-oriented logic that impose new relations of force and in turn entail the diminishing of both autonomy and research freedom. Nonetheless, these new relations of force are accompanied by a consensual apparatus that attempts to legitimise and facilitate the extension of these nodes, by inviting every person to actively participate and thereby conjuring an illusion of equality.

Authoritarianism and horizontality: this combinatorial logic recalls Gramsci’s claim that coercion and consent both have a constitutive role to play in maintaining an order. Here we are in front of a technocratic order, which is defined by material asymmetries and sustained through an overarching narrative that projects a future frictionless and harmonious order meant to be the very antithesis of authoritarianism. This image of an order hearkens back to Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, wherein the body of the structure meets the soul of the superstructure.

TUT and Aalto are in Estonia and Finland respectively the flagbearers of a global move to integrate the university within the economic productive machinery. Both institutions invest heavily in the idea that a market-oriented university will serve as a catalyst for economic growth and social prosperity for all.

Given, then, the fact that TUT and Aalto operate along the same premises and within the one capitalist world system, offering answers to our research questions by way of a comparison of our two cases would only yield marginal differences, and thus would potentially obscure the larger picture. For, these two orders ultimately derive from the same global movement, and therefore it is more helpful to see the TUT and AU departments as two sides of the same coin, which while revealing distinctive legitimation stra-
tategies in dealing with their specific contexts, they do so against the same back-
drop of challenges and systemic pressures. The specific souls of these two
orders are comprised of the de-antagonising solutionistic model (AU
design) and the hierarchical/market shaped meritocratic model (TUT and
RNS). Both solutionism and this form of “debauched meritocracy” are
pivotal elements in answering the central research question animating this
study, though taken alone they do not say anything substantial about the
true nature of the order. Only once they have been hooked back up to global
power structures might they give us a more precise representation of the
KBE as engendering relations of force through both its structural and
superstructural dimensions.

Relations of force are determined by laws proper to specific social his-
torical formations (Gramsci’s tendential laws), which develop their coercive
capabilities and most importantly their ideological constructs, uniting the
different positions within these socio-historic formations. These relations of
subordination are materialised in and through daily practices. Indeed, it is the
daily practices that tell us how hierarchies and hegemonic legitimation
narratives sustain and co-constitute the power edifice of the KBE.

With all the aforementioned in mind, this chapter completes the inter-
pretations of the findings made in the empirical chapters, by resituating
them within the larger Gramscian framework. In addition, we will further
deepen the discussion in light of other recent literature, and in doing so will
hopefully lay out the general contribution this study can be said to make
regarding academic capitalism.

13.1. Solutionism as a totalising hegemonic instrument.

Programmatic documents steering the reform from the top: Solutionism as
a post-political coercive and consensual artefact

The University Reform of 2009, which gave birth to Aalto University, is
the result of a gradual historical shift in Finland, from a welfare state,
defined by a national paradigm aiming at accomplishing certain “national
objectives”, to a global paradigm based on the mobilisation of public
resources with the aim of enhancing competitiveness. In practice, this has
meant the progressive abandonment of the social democratic spirit of the
welfare state to a model of economic prosperity based on competitive
market-oriented innovation. This process meant fully embracing the KBE-
inspired policy blueprints so as to promote competitiveness not only within
the university system but society in general. An ambitious transformative
agenda was narrated as a historical necessity to face the challenges brought first by the end of the Cold War and later by competition unleashed through a period of so-called globalisation. The high levels of trust shown in state institutions by the Finnish people have allowed the government to depict this transitional movement as a natural evolution that need not sacrifice the essence of the Finnish welfare state. As Ari Tarkiainen (2009, 238–243) concludes in his dissertation, Science Technology and Innovation policies in Finland are not about a dispute regarding science, innovation or technology; rather, they represent an arena in which society and politics at large are being re-defined.

In Gramscian terms, this historic process defines a profound rearticulation of the structural order which goes hand in hand with those narratives signalled by the superstructure. Not without setbacks and contradictions, there is today the emergence of a new historic bloc, a formation principally defined as a market-based knowledge society (See Model in Chapter 7).

This would be the context surrounding Aalto University and the Department of Media. In this case, the empirical material reflected an overall construction of a hegemonic narrative in the superstructure that depoliticises what is none other than a historico political move. This narrative is not directed merely to legitimise grand policy plans but rather to frame a conflictless (de-antagonised) social order, including here the institution’s work life. AU stands at the pinnacle of a totalising frame, circumscribing the limits of the possible while employing a language that suggests the opposite. The language harnessed by AU strategically exploits digital era clichés: it brings together a combination of technological optimism and individual empowerment, building a vision of societal progress guided by passionate and creative people. An order that de-naturalises the “litigiousness of the political” (Rancière 2000) and sets limits: as long as one is not political, one operates within the bounds of the “acceptable”.

The concept solutionism, defined as “the idea that given the right code, algorithms and robots, technology can solve all of mankind’s problems, effectively making life "frictionless" and trouble-free” (Morozov (2013, 5), summarises closely this de-antagonising frame. Solutionism appears in the documents when the answer to all social or ecological problems is that these issues will be “solved” thanks to clear-cut solutions augured through technological progress in an indefinite but near future. This solutionism opens the door to ignoring all larger societal compromises, as well as not recognising the indissociability of antagonism to the political. Instead, it places “solutions” on the terrain of tacit knowledge, meaning that “the solution” of
any problem is a matter of producing or assembling bits and pieces of knowledge. Aalto University presents itself as an integrative part of the KBE machinery, thereby steering this knowledge production towards the production of “useful” innovations, aligning this process to the needs of students and researchers – who are now generously renamed “societal transformative agents”.

Solutionism connects the global, national and the individual. This solutionist setting unfolds in the programmatic documents based on three interconnected elements: (i) an ahistorical conception of time; (ii) an optimism based on technological opulence and (iii) scientific rationalisation.

The ahistorical conception of time fixes history in a present defined by technological acceleration. This engenders a circularity: new needs emerge because of technology and the solutions are thanks to technology. Therefore, the institution redescribes itself as being in a permanent state of transition towards the future, according to which the university is pushed into a permanent cycle of renewal so that this desired future can be finally attained. The problem is that this end state never fully materialises, evoking a timeless existence. The future is nothing other than an abstract goal on the horizon that nonetheless conditions the present.

The notion of a historic break turns the present into a tabula rasa from where both the societal optimism and economic reality described in the documents can look verisimilar, despite a blind eyed being turned towards endemic problems – such as precarity, rising levels of inequality, the destruction of the welfare state and the planet – that grow in parallel with the digital revolution. Within this tabula rasa, collective problems are meant to be solved by innovative solutions, hierarchies do not matter, and the individual emerges as the main unit of society, empowered as the principal “agent of change”. An individual liberated from hierarchical material chains, thanks to the reinvigoration of knowledge – an immaterial good residing in the brain not in his wallet. The historic break serves also as a platform for governments and HEIs to launch knowledge-based market-oriented policies, since “solutions” for social problems will naturally derive from the policy “inputs” that are developed in tandem with market imperatives.

This historic break resolves, at least in theory, the inherent problem of the different historic tempos of the structure and the superstructure under the capitalist mode of production (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 192). The notion of time disappears, and accordingly narratives produced within the superstructure can be reduced to a vague futurism of solutionism instead of addressing a great variety of issues with which to forge the consent of the
masses. A nebulous notion of change, though, can be easily defined by optimistic solutionism, which calls for the transformative pace of reform. The problem of a decoupling between structure and superstructure is resolved in the documents by turning a co-constitutive relation between structure and superstructure into a relation wherein the latter becomes subordinate to the first as the means of constituting a historic bloc: the perfect communion between structure and superstructure (See section 10.2 and the frame from section 6.3.).

In practice though, the suspension of time and the subordination of the superstructure to the structure only accentuates the gap between discourse and reality. This gap is countered through an optimistic narrative that de-antagonises an antagonistic reality: a horizontal narrative that constructs an optimism based on a sense of opulence for all. This post-political standpoint is framed by overcoming the oppositions of individual/collective, autonomy/domination, and the relations of production (i.e. class struggle). In an era of technological opulence collective compromises are no longer needed, since technology will provide solutions that no longer demand individual sacrifice. The individual is an autonomous being who engages in advancing new ideas in a context of an ever-expanding set of material needs (see frame page 219). As we will see later, these conflicts are revealed in daily work relations at the department.

The narrative of optimism materially puts down its roots in the world of work. It makes use of scientific management, which, inserted in solutionism and its problem-solving logic, draws a clear path between problem and solution. This process can be organised at different stages in the disciplines. With this setting, creativity, autonomy and knowledge are defined as skills and instruments to assemble the pieces of “a puzzle”. This requires a reorganisation that has as a final objective the production of market-oriented products. A process enforced by funding based on results which are evaluated according to market criteria. It is precisely at this point, when solutionism smoothly meets market competitiveness embracing relations of dependence, that precarious contracts and a general feeling of unsafety become normalised.

If we look at solutionism through Gramscian lenses, what we see is a hegemonic instrument that engenders consent (in the form of a post-political optimism) as well as a certain degree of coercion, which through new organisational models used in the production of knowledge, pushes people into competitive practices and further entrenches unequal labour relations. Solutionism, then, is a hegemonic instrument, but of a peculiar kind: con-
sent is mainly sustained through immaterial narratives (e.g. ‘feel-good optimism’, ‘trust’ regarding the pace and nature of technological change, ‘creativity’ as a means of realising the potential of KBE etc.), but still its coercive dimensions have significant material effects, (e.g. increases in precariousness and a deterioration in conditions of autonomy).

The absence of any existing material grounds for consent –the fact that, for example, there are no effective public or private welfare transactions – brings us to a central question, namely how is all of this perceived by people in their workplaces? In the following paragraphs, we will discuss the question of consent in relation to other recently published literature –mainly Foucauldian inspired –on the Finnish universities after the 2009 reform, to which we have already explicitly referred in this study’s introductory chapter (See: 1.3 and 1.4) and in the theory chapter (See: 6.3.3). This discussion will be presented by looking at the subject first from the perspective of the programmatic documents and then second from the perspective of the work stories.

De-antagonising, discipline and the subject from the perspective of the programmatic documents: a dialogue with Moisio & Kangas

Moisio & Kangas (2012) have conceptualised the globalising drive to innovate in knowledge-based economies. They present this drive as a “re-scaling of higher education”, or in the terms adopted in our study, a totalising force that intersects different hierarchies – from governmental institutions to individual workers – generating ways of governing modes of living (subjectivation). Aalto University is exemplary of this “geopolitics of higher education”, understood as “an assemblage through which the functioning of the ‘borderless’ and ‘deterritorialising’ dynamics of the global knowledge economy are re-spatialized”. (Moisio & Kangas 2016, 268)

The geopolitics of higher education would capture those embedded processes from which the present global economic project discursively steers and (re) constitutes local higher education intuitions. Simply put, we are in a position to understand how this global project places its roots in local contexts. Sharing a similar analytical approach with the present research, Moisio and Kangas identify and analyse the unfolding and re-constitution of global dynamics at Aalto University via interviews with higher officials alongside analyses of some key documents. There are no direct interviews with either workers or students in their study. Nonetheless, the article places great emphasis on how workers and students are constituted as sub-
jects through the governmental practices of the institution. The authors approach this task from a Foucauldian perspective.

The conclusion they reach is that “the subject” forms a central element in practices of governmentality that are characterised by assemblages\(^1\) tied to global economic dynamics. The global knowledge economic subject emerging in the case of Aalto is the “global engineer”. This global engineer relates to both the state and society through the idea of entrepreneurialism, a person who is equipped with interdisciplinary skills – from business, technology, and design – and who internalises creativity as a way of life. Finally, this subject is placed within a culturally “global” context characterised by large scale market competition between states to attract TNC’s value chains (Moisio & Kangas 2016, 280–81). Moisio & Kangas’ “global engineer” is similar to the rise of the “leading expert” which appeared in the analyses of documents undertaken in this study: a skilful and adaptable individual whose existence is detachable from national realities.\(^2\)

We can here advance Moisio & Kangas’ argument a little bit, and connect the “leading expert” and the “global engineer” to the extra-temporal post-political condition underwriting AU’s solutionism: the “borderless crowned expert” emerges as the maker of history. A figure who is ready to reformulate the malfunctioning algorithms of what has become a passive, ahistorical and de-territorialised society (parenthetically, it is worth recalling that Finland as a historical social formation is almost invisible in the documents).

As Moisio & Kangas also underline, competitiveness and entrepreneurship are attributed to the subject. Nonetheless, the present book has sought to go further, in order to reflect on how entrepreneurship and competitiveness appear de-antagonised in this ahistorical present. The subject is not characterised in the documents as a fierce competitor fighting to avoid the smear of becoming a loser. On the contrary, the subject is a free individual who on its way to realising its own human potential, contributes also to collective well-being in a context free of antagonisms. Competitiveness is acted out by the entrepreneur who is described as someone passionate for innovations and unmotivated by money. The entrepreneur’s competitive

1\(^{1}\) Assemblage is a concept borrowed from Deleuze that understands the world as a becoming (Moisio & Kangas 2016, 268)

2\(^{2}\) The “leading expert” narrative continues with equal potency in the 2016–2020 Aalto University Strategy. To offer just one quick example: at the beginning of the education section, the opening strategic objective regards “Educating Game Changers” (AU Strategy 2018, 15), understood as the architects of tomorrow.
essence is disguised behind a façade of creative existence that is made to resemble the “Renaissance Man” of the 15th and 16th Centuries rather than the pragmatic competitor in the 21st Century global economy.

Hence, the conflictual nature of the market is hollowed out. What emerges, according to the narrative, is an alleged competition without losers. The very idea of being subjected to the market order blurs within a sea of optimism, opulence and free choice. Competitive social mores are simply ignored in the narrative: there is no explicit trace of neoliberalism to justify inequalities while informants generally have a negative opinion about the imposition of market-oriented research.

Nonetheless, people and resources are handled according to a market inspired logic that aims at solidifying the extant order. Although this is not something literally stated in the documents, the point was consistently revealed by the informants. It is precisely here, on this juncture that the tactical discursive strength of the documents relies; entrepreneurialism and competitiveness do not appear as generators of a new order, nor do they define ways of functioning. Instead they appear as abstract catalysers of prosperity envisaging a world of tomorrow, led by the practical and moral supremacy of knowledge embodied in experts and creative individuals.

Therefore, and in contrast to Moisio and Kangas, I think it is difficult to consider competitiveness and entrepreneurship as dispositifs operating on the “biopolitical terrain”. Rather, once its de-antagonising disguise is removed, competitive and entrepreneurial logics are better understood as highly institutionalised systemic instruments (nodes of transmission) that represent the material unfolding of the hierarchical logic of the market at all levels. Rather than shaping individuals, they are instruments of direct subjugation reducing academic labour to simply a logic of capitalist relations.

Moreover, the de-antagonising disguise, which conceals this hegemonic operation, does not directly target individual subjectivity but rather aims to conceal the conflictual essence of the very order. This hegemonic move is conveyed via a post-political narrative that dissolves any political or other contingent bases for the KBE (and capitalism, more generally speaking), in order to better naturalise the given order of things. Gramsci argues that subjectivities are immanent to the “tendential laws” that shape a particular historical social formation wherein power resides (Thomas 2009, 279–81. See section 6.3.2). These laws might change and with them the relational nature of the structure.

If we consider the logic of market shaped competitiveness as the tendential law that shapes the KBE order, then we are face to face with a
strategic move that aims at naturalising relations of force, not by directly internalising a culture of competitiveness in the subject but by denying its negative consequences (e.g. the fact that there are “winners and losers”, systemic asymmetries and inequalities etc.). In other words, we are confronting a narrative that denies the existence of tendential laws, and thus we are presented with an order that appears as an ahistorical de-hierarchised social formation.

The alleged existence of a de-hierarchised social organisation frames an interesting duality. On the one hand, the advance of concrete coercive instruments is circumscribed in the individual’s immediate work surroundings. On the other hand, the dominant narratives speak of an abstract technocratic arcadia on the verge of becoming. At issue here is how the materiality of the workplace lives disconnected from its narrative, which, nonetheless, stands as a mystical promise. Consent is engendered in this trip to a Promised Land, which will reunite the best of entrepreneurialism and an innovation-based economy with a vision of social emancipation based on the glorification of endless choices and solutions. The systemic importance of coercion for the system is concealed while uncertainties and risk surrounding work and everyday life become increasingly individuated, thereby harming the possibility of finding any collective answer to change what is deemed an “irreversible” process. Therefore, despite the fact that many informants identified how market logics were responsible for a categorical a deterioration of working conditions and increasing disempowerment, they still hold onto the ever-narrowing possibilities offered in search of an abstract conflictless race for choices, which the programmatic documents present.

By individuating work responsibilities and collectively disguising the conflict-ridden nature of entrepreneurship and competitiveness, relations of subordination and inequality further coagulate within the workplace. Henceforth, the conflictual extension of relations of subordination, despite being absent in the superstructural narratives, coalesce around the figure of this individual who adapts to material changes while clutching to the possibilities offered by the narrative. This is another aspect that, similar to the “leading expert”, reflects how, in this situation, hegemony is not constituted on the basis of a neoliberal competitive biopolitical subject but is built on a promise of a fully liberated future. Thus, the subject is “not asked to be anything concrete but he can, with a strong belief in his own strengths and trust in the prospects of prosperity, become anything she wants and thereby escape from this increasingly coercive order.
13. CONCLUSIONS. THE ORDER AND ITS INSIDES

The subject who lives in a de-antagonising abstraction rooted on a materialist reality: a dialogue with Jauhiainen, Jauhiainen, Raiho & Lehto from the perspective of work stories

Our consensual subject is not a fierce competitor moved by rational egoism (neoliberal *homo economicus*) but a subject who lives within a postmodernist “solutionistic” utopia: a deep net comprised of contacts enacted by the free will of individuals, who have the capacity to fulfil their needs thanks to an array of intersecting meeting points, which technology provides in times of deep rupture (Rendueles 2013). The informants do not fully buy into this view presented in the programmatic documents. And yet the elevation of knowledge as the main source of wealth and empowerment connects well with certain aspects of a shared and idealised notion of intellectual life. Here again we refer to the idea of the “leading expert”, which connects well to the vision of a glorified academic who relentlessly strives for knowledge. This idealised academic existence connects well to a post-material identity, and its appeal to informants contributes, in part, to this consensual de-antagonising spirit. Nonetheless, this de-antagonising spirit lives in contradiction with the difficulties experienced by the informants, who embark on their post-material existences in a context where their material conditions are deteriorating.

This problematic setting begins to reveal itself when the informants refer to “freedom” to define their existence and their work life. Freedom is the capacity to produce knowledge according to one’s values and to have the autonomy to lead a life not co-opted by the immediate work logic. Freedom is also defined by the human dimension inherent in collaborative work, and finally, freedom is meant as having the time and the economic means to work for living, in contrast to living for working. Nonetheless, this desired post-materialist autonomous existence, although constantly evoked, is eroded by a strictly materialist logic of production, which is imposed in order to steer research to “useful” knowledge, and where funding is the precondition for intellectual outcomes. The result of all this is that academics are forced to exist in an increasingly precarious situation of short-term contracts, permanent competition for funding based on outputs, competition with one’s peers, increased workloads, etc. Once market forces

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3 By Post-materialism I refer to values that became influential during the 90s and early 2000s, which run in parallel with the rise of the techno-science and neoliberal capitalist expansion. Precisely at this point, the question of identity and self-realisation become central elements in the political-economic system (Inglehart 2008).
have been unleashed and there is the threat to basic material conditions, the post-materialist edifice crumbles and with it the post-materialist identity melts into the materialist magma of capitalist relations of production, predicated on inequality, insecurity and precarity, and hierarchies.

Uncertainty has always been a defining mood in the lives of this study’s informants. It is also important to remark, as we have seen in the last pages of Chapter 9, that uncertainty is not just an effect of the KBE. Rather, uncertainty generates a circular logic: uncertainty obliges people to be flexible and competitive in order to fight for their autonomy, and this logic ends up reproducing more uncertainty. Despite all this, informants seem to indicate that these conditions do not represent an insurmountable obstacle to lead an emancipated existence, since the informants seemed less inclined to connect material conditions with a fulfilling existence.

Consent is mainly constituted on this artificial separation between materiality and a fulfilling autonomous existence. This is itself post-political in nature. The lack of consistency and actual content surrounding the future promised in the programmatic documents is filled by the informants’ post-materialist will to lead an autonomous creative life. This bulletproof resilience is fuelled by the fact that for the informants’ work is not just the means for life but of existence itself. What they do at work determines their personalities. Consequently, they take up the material consequences of a structural problem without identifying their political nature and, like the abstract positive horizon projected by the programmatic documents, this de-antagonises the coercive dimension of the new market order: there is suffering but this is not caused by any one defined subject or entity. Thus, there is no clearly defined antagonist, no collective struggle to be undertaken. There are only difficult circumstances that need to be individually dealt with.

This tendency to understand freedom as if it were disconnected from the material and collective grounds generates contradictions, not only on the strict material level, with respect to a sharp deterioration in workplace conditions, but also at the level of human relations. Workerists (Hardt & Negri 2001) stressed that, in late capitalism, the call for multidisciplinary and networked teamwork might generate synergies of care and solidarity to generate a new historical subject, the multitude, which could reverse the exploitative logic of capitalism. My research shows first that the division of labour of multidisciplinary work prompted by HEI reforms undermines solidarity. Labour becomes a compartmentalised process in which work is individually assigned in accordance to positions within the hierarchy.
consequence, feelings like uncertainty are simply interpreted as problems that individuals must work through. Thus, the logic of atomisation continues despite networked processes.

Jauhiainen, Jauhiainen, Raiho & Lehto (2015) discovered in their research that, despite university workers in some Finnish universities being overwhelmingly negative to reforms, they developed a “culture of fabrication”, clinging to the last vestiges of hope that they can individually escape from coercion. By using the concept of “performativity”, they describe workers “performing” an appearance of excellence by fulfilling all the indicators. They develop a sort of “tactical I” needed to accomplish the demands that are sent from the market order, while the “true I” is the one defined by more emancipatory values. The problem is that this separation is not tenable, and moral dilemmas quickly soon begin to emerge. This is the moment when the new competitive environment exceeds the “tactical I” and surmounts into the “true I”, generating feelings of envy, guilt and humiliation.

Despite operating with different theoretical frameworks, the present study echoes the finding that workers are not properly attuned to both the material difficulties and the expansive nature of the values that are packaged with the order’s new demands. This said, there remains a slight difference with respect to how these authors understand the institutionalisation of consent: Jauhiainen’s performative “fabricated personality” comes as a consequence of the person’s tactical adaptation, which ends up devouring their “true I”. On the contrary, my cases (expressed more vividly in RNS) reflect that the decision to actively “play the game” is taken because of a pre-existing trust on the informants’ capacity to grasp the “existing” opportunities so as to reach a level of autonomy that can guide them to a fulfilling intellectual life.

In a previous article, Jauhiainen (2014, 228) refers to the naivety of some researchers, who, on the hand, are contemptuous of the latest changes to the but, on the other, still think that everything will continue as usual. Jauhiainen does not come to any specific conclusions regarding the origins of this attitude, however. Given the attitudes of my informants, I do not see this attitude rooted in some sort of “virgin apolitical innocence” but on a

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4 The research analyses how, after the 2009 reform, higher education workers in Finland confronted these changes. They also use a Foucauldian framework but this time the inquiry confronts directly the subject via a survey of open-ended questions. The survey made in 2008 was answered by 1315 workers (including researchers, lecturers, administrators, etc.). The sample was pooled from Turku and Joensuu Universities. University workers were asked to respond to questions on new managerial techniques.
consciously chosen consensual position that grows within this de-antagonising post-political and individualistic grand narrative.

Riding on individual endurance in this struggle for autonomy – overseeing a better future based on a creative existence – but all the while doing so within the limits of the established order: this is how the subject becomes entirely consensual. Here, the reason I think workers are moved to believing they can escape the precarity of the given order is not constructed on their capacity to play “the game of an NPM” they openly despise but on individual self-realisation. It is this, so to say, “self-belief” that gives them the optimism needed to confront any odds backed by a narrative of promise.

The subject in Gramsci is “the man detached from history”; the man who rejects his role as a political actor to transform his social surroundings and who becomes passive in the presence of power structures. In the present research the subject becomes politically irrelevant, not because of an internalisation of precise ways of functioning but because antagonisms are concealed behind the post-material optimistic self. Therefore, the subject also participates in this denial of tendential laws projected by the programmatic solutionistic narrative. This is translated at work: when, for example, the academic searches for the time and spaces to exercise autonomy, partially freed from market expansion or when he or she chooses to tactically adapt their interests to what the market – in the form of funding bodies – demands. Hence, “our man detached from history” gathers together some of the societal hegemonic values and clichés constituting the core of this escapist post-political consent. This can be summarised as a fetishism of intellectual life and its freedom, as well as a contempt for materialism and a trust on one’s own individual capabilities. But surrounding it all is a feeling of growing insecurity.

For sure, the generalised feeling of insecurity brings us closer to the concept of precariat. Nonetheless, our informants do not represent a completely immiserated precariat, since issues like permanent migration or zero-hour contracts are not part of the work life of the informants. They perhaps lay closer to the concept of denizen. Denizen refers to the de-politicisation of the precariat, as represented by its contrast to the concept of citizenship. The category of denizen would thus underline the close relation between insecurity, individualisation and the lack of involvement in political or civil society organisations, all of which reflects a lack of political consciousness (Standing 2011).

There is, then, no “false consciousness”. Instead consent coalesces around self-confidence about one’s own individual skills, a fact that underlines
13. CONCLUSIONS. THE ORDER AND ITS INSIDES

another paradoxical aspect of precarity linked to the post-material condition, and which directly contributes to the order’s pre-eminence. Recalling César Rendueles’ (Capdevila 2016) observation on post-material identities, we can say that the strive for an intellectual existence becomes a personal investment for uniqueness devoid of any collective bond. As a result, this strive constructs and naturalises asymmetries with the irony that this effort often does not even guarantee a well-paid jobs or public recognition.

Still, the order sits on shaky fundamentals. Consent is based on subjects fighting for their survival, to whom little tangible prospects are offered. There is no KBE subject that this narrative is seeking to represent. Rather, it is a subject whose consent stands on the absence of alternatives. An absence that lets these abstractions, which nobody truly believes in, construct a vague hope for a better future, drawn from the warm embrace of technology and an unwavering trust in individual capabilities.

13.2. Formation and validation of an open hierarchical order

In TUT and Ragnar Nurske School we see a narrative that aims at materially formalising an order around market logics. Documents provide a description of a top-down plan in which commitment to (i) the established strategic organisation, (ii) internal competitiveness and (iii) entrepreneurship, is clear. TUT’s programmatic documents continue on the path that post-communist Estonia has ardently followed, namely a dirigisme that mobilises resources to aim at “national goals”. The goals themselves have generally been defined by a commitment to global economic competition as a path for modernisation.

Contrary to Aalto, TUT does not conceal in the programmatic documents its own vertical nature. It states that all must commit to the goals it has set. When the order exerts its power downwards, we see how this commitment to its general goals is transmitted through a combination of market enforced and academic-based hierarchies. TUT programmatic documents, in contrast to AU’s future projections, indicate the regulations to be implemented and the limits to be upheld in the present. In Bob Jessop’s terms (see chapter 4),5 the TUT narrative attempts to construct its

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5Hegemony is a mechanism by which the social formation is formed. It comprises of two moments: formal adequacy and strategic selectivity. If we situate Jessop’s mechanism of social formation within time, it can be asserted that formal adequacy is when hegemony signals the limits of the possible in the present while strategic selectivity highlights how these limits could (and should) develop in the future (Jessop 2008).
hegemony by relying more on “formal adequacy” while at AU, the hegemonic order relies more on “strategic selectivity”.

TUT mainly reflects how the formation of hierarchies of KBE can be closely followed by a consent formation. In Gramscian terms, contrary to AU, where there appears a significant distance between structure and superstructure, TUT represents an example of how structure and superstructure are more closely intertwined, where structure and superstructure, directly co-constitute each other, from the beginnings of the very order’s formation up to its material implementation. In the following pages this will be presented from a top down perspective following the hierarchical order.

Programmatic documents: Entrepreneurship and competitiveness as nodes of transmission of a hierarchy within a narrative of commitment

TUT’s programmatic documents of TUT function as a synthesis of references to higher ranked documents, whether these are from the ministry of education or the EU. TUT wants to show that TUT and Estonia are part of an unavoidable global challenge, a challenge that requires swift top-down regulation. Therefore, the way in which the KBE gets articulated by TUT is as a dirigiste project grounded on market-oriented axioms. In this specific context, to reinforce this regulated order means developing a competitive environment. This is firstly implemented by measuring the output of research according to market standards, regardless whether it is publicly or privately financed. Considering that 80% of research is financed from the private sector it can be assured that competitiveness rules.

This general regulatory background, which is permanently oriented towards the private sector, represents a totalising manoeuvre that takes the triadic form: competitiveness-entrepreneurship-innovation. These three terms appear interlinked (innovation is a product of entrepreneurship and both define competitiveness) and represent the thread that runs throughout the hierarchy, thereby serving to define and evaluate state policies, the programmatic plans of TUT and the workplace, accordingly. Competitiveness is not only the means to reach prosperity, it is an end to be materialised in the present.

This solid hierarchical order is sustained through a formidable coordination between institutions, which situates TUT as part of the governmental machinery to meet its strategic goals. This is accompanied with a certain horizontal strategy for knowledge production that, as is the case of AU, is
tactically employed as a legitimation narrative; horizontality is often equated with emancipatory values. Nevertheless, on the ground, notions of horizontality, which were represented by and through multidisciplinarity and teamwork methods, end up contributing to the logic of competitiveness. In contrast to AU, the relations of subordination that result are not accompanied by a grand de-antagonising narrative but by a narrative of commitment to a dirigiste project.

Until this point, we see commitment as a narrative grounded on a rather simple but solid vertical logic signalling a harmonious relation between structure and superstructure. Nonetheless, commitment is not solely sustained by appealing to common responsibility with narratives that after all praise the individual and largely ignore the collective. Instead, commitment to the project is given in exchange for better career prospects. Prospects are not rhetorical figures but are grounded on physical institutions, such as MEKTORY, where structure and superstructure heuristically meet.

**MEKTORY: a material solutionist instrument and a hegemony device**

MEKTORY exists to reduce the gap between knowledge production in TUT and the market. It provides professional opportunities in the private sector for students as well as acting as a shelter for entrepreneurial projects, such as “start-ups”, providing equipment as well as a platform for attracting investment from private companies or venture capitalists. In return, the private sector has access to a pool of ideas and a skilled workforce at little cost. MEKTORY appears as an organically integrated part of the university, serving as a relay by which university objectives are tested in the trenches of the market economy.

MEKTORY represents an alleged win-win strategy. Here, we can say that MEKTORY transforms the rhetoric of solutionism into an actual solutionist material instrument, that is, the gear that, courtesy of a public-private partnership, meshes the produced knowledge and the expectations of academia and students with a devout trust in the logics of the market. Therefore, despite being a shelter for students and researchers, MEKTORY accepts a position of subsidiarity vis-a-vis the capitalist order. From this position MEKTORY, aims at harnessing the “positive spill overs” generated by the market, as well as being a convivial working space, manifesting the most positive ingredients of the New Economy imaginary (e.g. starts up, teamwork, creativity, etc.).
MEKTORY is a sophisticated hegemonic instrument. First of all, it acts upon the constructive relation between structure and superstructure in order to solidify the new economic-political order, not just through the glib rhetoric of commitment but by offering facilities and opportunities to university staff. Second, MEKTORY augments bonds between market and university which, in turn, reproduce a culture of competitiveness and entrepreneurship. It is a cultural reproduction that ends up having a real existence within the established power order.

Ragnar Nurske School: Deception of Science as Usual and the formation of hierarchies: Bourdieu within a Gramscian framework

The show of commitment in exchange for career opportunities supported by MEKTORY represents an important part of the order’s scaffolding. However, this is not really tested until the promised reforms confront the actual experiences of workers in the workplace. There is great awareness in Ragnar Nurske School of the existence of a vertical order and the fact that one must constantly adjust to survive. Everything starts with the need to attract external funding, an institutional imperative that implies a workload directed to meeting demands heterogeneous to the academic field. Once funding is secured, RNS can engage in impressively heterodox research and once more revert to looking like a contemporary example of an institution steeped in scientific autonomy. However, the resultant “division of labour” reflects that work and consequently autonomy are unequally distributed. The heavy lifting of applications and teaching is undertaken by workers at the lower echelons of the RNS hierarchy, while the workers at the top have more time to focus on their scientific work. The legitimation of this unequal order is based on what I call the “deception of science as usual”. A deception based on (i) the idea that the scientific realm, even in times of competition for funding, follows a meritocratic system ruled by scientific laws; and (ii) on the invisibility of material matters (salaries, contracts) in public discussions.

This two-fold deception legitimises an order hollowed out by market forces, according to which structures standing on the old serve to reproduce the hierarchies of the new. Market competitiveness meets academic meritocratic competitiveness with all its inherited idiosyncrasy. Bourdieu’s concepts of scientific field, academic capital, temporal capital and habitus have been used to interpret the nature of this hybrid order. The catalyst of this
deception is the competition for academic capital (prestige): the immaterial asset defining the positions in the scientific field.

The meritocracy that supposedly rules the process of accumulating academic capital hides the fact that, from its early stages, this process already obeyed market logics: a large portion of labour goes into financing RNS; however, this labour is not distributed equally and more significantly, much of this work is left unrecognised by the scientific field, thus ineligible to count as academic capital. Thus, the system already undermines its own meritocratic principle, as well as undermining the work conditions and career opportunities of those workers at the base of the institutional pyramid. Therefore, power relations, which have little to do with scientific meritocracy (Bourdieu calls them temporal capital) are determinant in the accumulation of scientific capital. Nonetheless, so long as meritocracy is praised and the centrality of temporal capital remains invisible in the public debate, the illusion of science as usual prevails, along with the legitimation of the present order. The “illusion of science as usual” is then a hegemonic instrument that manifests consent (through perpetuating the illusion of meritocracy) and naturalises the existence of unequal and exploitative relations defined by temporal capital.

These observations provide a deeper engagement with the Gramscian decoupling of structure and superstructure, as well as the constitution of hegemony as the means to resolve this problematic and to legitimise the totalising movement already underway. This study contends that Bourdieu’s concepts complement Gramsci’s understanding of the praxis of hegemony, to provide a grounded conceptualisation of hegemonic formations within academia.
The deception of Science as Usual and the formation of hierarchies: Bourdieu within a Gramscian framework

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of analysis</th>
<th>Bourdieu</th>
<th>Gramsci</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Initial basis: Debauched meritocracy</td>
<td>Academic capital in a perverted Meritocracy:</td>
<td>Perverted Meritocracy as a hegemonic instrument:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The logic of the market is instrumental in the production and distribution of prestige.</td>
<td>- The supposedly prevailing meritocratic ethics acts as a superstructural consensual horizon defining the present.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- This fact places the tactical nature of temporal capital in a prominent position in the definition of the order.</td>
<td>- Temporal capital as a tactic that enforces relations of subordination to solidify the order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Power Praxis in the workplace: Passion for science and prestige that hides relations of subordination</td>
<td>Competition for academic capital as if it were purely scientific:</td>
<td>Competition for this redefined academic capital as the materialisation of hegemony in the structure:</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- Hides the instrumental force of market orientation in scientific work by naturalising an increasingly unequal order</td>
<td>- The glorification of scientific work hides the unequally distributed and disaffecting unpaid and un-recognised workload that lays behind it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Naturalises an increasingly market oriented scientific field that privileges certain theories and topics.</td>
<td>- Solidification of the order by naturalising its inequalities through laws that legitimise this new set of relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Power Praxis and the subject: “Playing the game”</td>
<td>Academic habitus is characterised by passionate will to overcome the obstacles to produce scientific work within a perverted meritocratic order based on a problematic separation of academic and temporal capital:</td>
<td>In a context where scientific rationality is glorified and yet academic working conditions continue to deteriorate, the Bourdieusian notion of <em>Habitus</em> can be equated with Gramsci’s idea of man as a contradictory consensual being:</td>
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<td>- Temporal capital relates to alienation represented on the tactics, the unpaid and unrecognised work related to temporal capital.</td>
<td>- A subject that supposedly can tactically abstract itself from market steered competition and realise within a defined meritocratic setting:</td>
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<td>- This workload though does not supposedly overshadow their passion for science and the prestige they are after.</td>
<td>- The disaffecting work appears as part of a workload that can be tactically overcome by being inventive and still capitalise on the possibilities afforded by working at the research centre.</td>
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The second point discussed in the table describes how supposedly scientific meritocratic competition results in an unequal quest, which keeps this illusion operating on the surface while underneath hierarchies are strengthened and inequalities naturalised, resulting in the practical integration of external demands within the research centre’s order. We could say that this is the moment when a new context of competitiveness bleeds into the manners and respectability of the old order and re-arranges the scientific field (Bourdieu). Put in other terms, we could also say that it is the moment at which the new structure materialises riding on the idea of “science as usual”, itself deployed for hegemonic ends (Gramsci).

In the third quadrant of the table above, the researcher is confronted with the contradiction that disenchanting work is a way of realising research work. Work transcends the workplace to become a defining aspect of life. These contradictory feelings, which endure within relations of inequality, help to constitute a varied set of subjectivities, whose reaction to the present situation depends on their existing position within the hierarchy. Those at the top of the hierarchy speak about RNS as a success story: thanks to collective determination and teamwork, the institution manages to secure funding. On the other hand, RNS has become a scientifically respected research centre thanks to it cultivating a creative and heterodox approach to public policy. In contrast, at the lower strata of the hierarchy, attention shifts to the workload needed to secure funding and how this will affect their research autonomy and working hours.

Both opinions recognise the success of the research centre. The acknowledgement of its success and the wisdom of their most successful colleagues renders the other disaffecting work an unavoidable evil that needs to be dealt with effectively. They consider this work, despite their different hierarchical positions, as part of “a grand science game”, one that must be played, in order to open up for the production of real “scientific work”. Playing the game means to see the self as a subject that can be abstracted from daily disaffecting work while at the same time creatively advancing one’s possible career as a researcher in the future. Furthermore, it means recognising the given context as it is and endure in this struggle for success. There is a shared belief on what both success and failure mean, a fact that results in shared conduct.

This conduct is what Bourdieu calls *habitus* and in the present case this is defined by coping with a problematic work life within a perverted meritocratic order. An order with its practices and relations of power, epitomised (as
well as naturalised and accepted) in the notion “playing the game”, in which many of the negative aspects, essentially those placed within temporal capital, show themselves through the cracks of an academic’s self-confident exterior. These are cracks and chinks in the armour that get expressed through feelings of alienation and resistance, as they continue negotiating a way through the order. This coexists with an ardent will for research, which entails trusting the glimpses of opportunities that might lead to a fully-fledged career. The resulting existence does not exactly correlate with what Gramsci will call “the collective man”. This is not the man that consensually integrates himself within the capitalist order but a being whose consent is rooted in a meritocratic scientific order that nonetheless is hollowed by the expansion of competitiveness. A being yearning to live a post-material existence but who needs to be battle-hardened on this terrain that encourages tactical and strategic thinking. Thus, in contrast to the passive attitude exhibited by researchers from Aalto’s Department of Media, the RNS school informants recognise the existence of a struggle but this is perceived within a meritocratic battlefield that despite its complications or unfairness, provides the semblance of a prospect for a scientific career. If in Aalto the keystone of the order’s power lies in a de-antagonising narrative that de-politicises power relations, in RNS the order operates by and through the incorporation of market driven competitiveness while living as if this would be defined purely in scientific terms, a fact that steers a well-oiled competitive department based nevertheless on an unequal division of labour.

It is like a ship in which each crew member has its own specific tasks as part of a common war effort but where the sequence of events is beyond their collective control. Tasks and ship crew are vertically organised, some are dedicated to carrying out mundane tasks, like cleaning or cooking, with the hope that they might climb up in the ranks, while others are responsible for designing the general strategy. Every victory in a sea battle is the product of collective work. Nonetheless, the glory and the spoils of war are unequally distributed. RNS is an order within an order. A ship riding the waves after this romantic idea of “a great common enterprise” in which some have better chances to survive than others.

The so-called meritocratic order of RNS speaks directly to the initial research problem since it bridges the distance between promises and plans and their daily realities. If we bring together the AU design department and TUT and RNS we can assert that de-antagonising and “debauched meritocracy” are consensual artefacts that first and foremost signal the material extension of relations of force and that keep in place positions of the domi-
nant and the dominated. Legitimation, a central aspect of any strategy of consent, reaches, with promises to be kept and horizons to be conquered, the subject’s need for self-fulfilment. These discourses do not provide any material transactions to people in terms of autonomy, participation or their own careers. The seams that bring together the hierarchical fabric indicate the possible unravelling of the order’s legitimacy, which is not seen as a protective structure that provides a secure future but as a site of struggle between individuals who all strive for an intellectual existence unbound from any collective ties. In an all-out Hobbesian battle, too many are left behind. In this desert, there remains no attachment to anything beyond personal investment.

13.3 About the apparent normal continuity of academia in an era of reforms

Despite the remarkable change of paradigm ushered in by the reforms, contradictions are to some extent negotiated thanks to the hegemonic trinity of “solutionism”, “entrepreneurship”, and “competitiveness”, which are meant to align with a new vision of the university order. This confirms the basic axiom of any order, namely that for an order to establish itself it must consolidate the vertical alignment of its components, while ensuring that its contradictions are reasonably “bridged”, and its resistances “cornered”.

The reading of the inner part of the order, the academic workplace, shows a greater deal of complexity. The embrace of new reforms has structurally not implied the withering of the old; academic work continues to deliver research, publishing, teaching, etc. Hence, what is most remarkable here is perhaps that the academic order can still transmit the idea that, to an important extent, business continues as usual once new demands have been successfully negotiated within the academic order. Nonetheless, its intestinal relations reflect that nothing has changed at the same time as, precisely, everything has changed: the academic hierarchies stand upright but the adaptation to market orientation means the partial subversion of the moral bases and purposes for which the academic order is meant to represent.

This could lead to a misleading overstatement, one of considering the academic order as a governing carcass with no real power when in fact the daily academic life is still governed from within, even in the context of a loss of autonomy and even when this leadership has adopted multiple roles that deteriorate their academic identities.
We see in RNS how all its contradictions, which have derived from these multiple roles, are mostly shouldered by those at the bottom of the academic order, resulting in a profound transformation of their daily work. Nonetheless, at the top of the academic fortress the flag of “science as usual” continues to wave as if nothing especially ground-breaking has happened.

**Academic Gattopardism? (I). The impossibility of an immutable continuity**

This situation recalls the legendary quote: “for everything to stay the same, everything must change” from Giuseppe Tomasi Di Lampedusa’s (1958) novel *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*). This sentiment is voiced by the character, Tancredi Falconeri, a young Sicilian aristocrat, to his uncle Don Fabrizio, who is the central protagonist in the novel. Tancredi, an aristocrat of Sicily during the twilight of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (1860), realises that, in the context of political transformations brought about by *Risorgimento* and the Italian Unification, the only way out is to accept the integration of Sicily into the new liberal Italian-nation state. In doing so, he might be able to keep his dominant position within the new order. Accordingly, this quote has become the quintessential representation of the resilience of power in times of change. Nonetheless, many fail to recall that *Il Gattopardo* is not a story of resilience but of inexorable decay. It traces the eclipse of the Ancient aristocratic Regime in Sicily.

Tancredi Falconeri represents the pragmatic character who puts his aristocratic savoir-faire in the service of the emerging class, in order to safeguarding his own class position. He is aware that the *Risorgimento*, this armed historic force that will set about the abolition of the Bourbon Monarchic order, is unstoppable. For this reason, he actively participates in the revolution and joints Giuseppe Garibaldi’s Red Shirts – the military arm of the *Risorgimento* – once they landed in Sicily to enforce the revolution. With this literary allusion, I do not mean to draw a too close link between the academic order and the Bourbon *latifundum* nor to compare the nature of the KBE with the *Risorgimento*. Simply, I underline the idea of a historic shift and the will of the elites to keep its privileged position within the emerging new order. Nonetheless, and in contrast to academia, there is no aureole of normality in the novel; things will never be as before once the societal consent, upon which the old order was based, sinks along with the empty carcass of the aristocracy. The idea of normality in academia stands because despite the changes, the peculiarities of academic life are still, by many, generally recognised as holding sway. This is a source of legitimacy.
very much related to the symbolic power of academia, a form of noble respectability recognised both from inside of the academic order and outside, within wider society. The meritocratic academic order, which despite its flaws has enjoyed its own ascendancy in society more generally, mediates market demands with its aura of respectability (only 5% of Estonians trust politicians while 65% trust scientists (Tomusk 2003, 90)). This is a challenging task given that it is academic freedom, the central plank of the authority of scientific knowledge in the eyes of society that is being eroded. Academia thus appears to mediate the daily consequences of the shift between the old and the new.

Tancredi’s character comes close to represent the contemporary neoliberal notion of choice. That is the individualisation of a collective responsibility assuming that there is always a correct choice that depends on the ability of the person to seize it (Mythen 2005. Standing 2011). In the case of the dilemma that Tancredi faces, the correct choice is to sacrifice the old order in order to secure a position of dominance within the new structure. Don Fabrizio, on the other hand, despite being aware that there is no other way out but to compromise, is emotionally too connected to the moral standards of the feudal order to just embrace the new values. He is a man of his time and as such he incarnates the existential impossibility that underlines the paradox: “for everything to stay the same, everything must change”. But precisely because of this, he supports Tancredi over his son, who is the grotesque image of a young man fanatically defending a decadent order. Tancredi is what Fabrizio could never be in this class struggle: he can overcome this paradox by becoming the aristocrat who joins the rising capitalist liberal bourgeoisie, seamlessly merging into the new order. The aristocratic order disappears but Tancredi succeeds as he becomes a senator.

*Il Gattopardo* represents a class shift: the fall of the aristocracy and the rise of the bourgeoisie, the replacement of the absolute Bourbon monarchy with a modern liberal state predicated on citizen rights but dominated by capital. The shift in HEI does not have a progressive direction: it neither empowers the lower echelons of the academic order nor does it put an end to verticality. Still, there is a unique “gattopardism” at play within it. In contrast to the decay of the moral standards, along with the disintegration of the material order in *Il Gattopardo*, the peculiarities of the academic are still recognised as legitimate despite the changes. This is closely connected to the culture of solutionism and its boundless optimism, which has no patience for tragic decadent characters. Instead, it embraces the unlimited capacity of humans to find solutions without sacrifice. In this realm of solutionism, it is
possible to be Tancredi and Don Fabrizio at the same time: there is future without the humiliation of becoming a Red Shirt. So, playing one’s part in the game of market enterprise (tactical I) without sacrificing academic prestige under the yoke of market utilitarianism, in order to live a proper academic existence (True I), is possible (Jauhiainen, Jauhiainen, Raiho & Lehto.2015).

Academic Gattopardism? (II) The irreplaceability of the academia’s ascendance in light of the university and its co-optation.

Unlike the Rissorgimento search for a wholesale replacement of the aristocratic regime, the academic order does not face a total eclipse brought about by revolution. For the Sicilian aristocracy either you became Tancredi, and embrace the new liberal order and values, or you decide to perish with the Ancient Regime. There was no real middle ground.

In contrast, the shift in KBE and academia represents an example of a passive revolution, an example of Transformismo defined as the ideological co-optation by the dominant classes of new emerging intellectual means that serve to challenge the existing order. The dominant class manages to assimilate these progressive ideas, but in doing so cancels or hollows out their emancipatory and subversive potential. Transformismo strengthens dominance not via substitution but by the strategic co-optation of certain parts of society to expand its consensual social base (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 387). In our study, we encounter an institutional transformismo that seeks to redefine the entire institutional and symbolic coordinates of the university. When the academic order waves the flag of continuity, it annuls the possibility of employing its principles and specific practices to resist the new demands the system imposes upon it. This pseudo-normality (wherein academics speak of “science as usual”) represents the partial co-optation of potentially dissident academics and thereby secures the subsequent assimilation of academia into the material and ideological substrata of the prevailing politico-economic order.

This does not mean that contestation and challenge within the university is tamed, such that a perfect communion is established between the traditional ways of academia and the new market-oriented order. What is preserved from the past is the academy’s normative sphere, with its meritocratic norms. Academic meritocracy is today re-deployed to maintain and govern the logic of “scientific competition”, resulting in a debauched
meritocracy. While this normative façade, with all its seductive idiosyncrasies, might indicate otherwise, it today serves entirely different demands and imperatives. It points out that what we are dealing with today is a transformed academic workplace that deals, in turn, with a very different kind of labour and career. Here, real moral dilemmas begin to emerge. This is the moment when the new competitive environment exceeds the “tactical I” and begins to make incursions into the “true I” (Jauhiainen, Jauhiainen, Raiho & Lehto 2015, 400–404). The glorified past, based on meritocracy and intellectual autonomy, remain alive only for a few. And yet for all that, the university remains dressed in its noble and sophisticated normative garbs, now serving as instruments for governing the present.

The collapse of the aristocracy in Sicily did not mean the death of its local identity. Cultural Identity – this important superstructural element, – which no longer served as a support for the defeated aristocratic order, nonetheless had within its power the capacity to instil a sense of belonging among the local population: living in Sicily is not the same as living in Lombardy. This is not only because of a romanticised sense of identity but because of a sense of lived community, which has very factual and material conditions of existence. A sense of commonal belonging that arises primarily from informal government and specific modes of social control, from forms of solidarity, etc., all of which are carved out from complex social relations that draw together a particular way of being in the world. Likewise, being an academic is not the same as any other highly skilled profession. Working in academia occurs within a particular order carved out by many generations. It is a way of being that holds a certain prestige and represents a particular mode of existence. A habitus, then, that despite its denaturalisation and subsequent precaritisation, defines a shared or at least a desired way of living within the established academic order.

The modern Italian state has struggled to effectively set foot in Sicily owing to the lack of a new liberal consent, which could accommodate the Sicilian existential identity, and which might have cushioned the speed of reform. After unification, much of the land owned by the aristocracy was redistributed with an exponential increase of landowners. This needed a new set of norms and law enforcement, something that a weak state administration could not provide. As a result, disputes rapidly turned into violent confrontations. Furthermore, Sicily experienced an economic crisis caused by the Sicilian economy’s lack of competitiveness vis-à-vis the industrialised Italian North. This resulted in generalised impoverishment and massive migration (Riall 1992). This structural weakness came as a
result of sweeping changes which lacked any new superstructural legitimacy that could have re-instated consent. What was missing was the negotiation of a new form of consent that could, in turn, provide the local structural tools to stabilise these radical changes. This unresolved decoupling between structure and superstructure marked the dawn of a local power that arose from within. This local power would be later known as Cosa Nostra or the Mafia.6

The experience of the ill-equipped Italian state administration failing to incarnate the values of the island is not the result of the abolition of the decadent Bourbon monarchy but is rather the result of the incapacity to construct a liberal democratic Sicily that could be integrated into Italy as a whole. This explains the shared interest of academia and the upper tiers of HEI institutions who are at pains to stress today that everything is running as usual. Hypothetically, a sudden and complete dissolution of the old would turn knowledge and academic labour as human and data assets to be governed exclusively in market terms. A purely market technocratic government of academia could never incarnate the prestige and the ascendant position that academia still holds in societies. A situation of no-return would fundamentally exacerbate the decoupling of structure and superstructure, and would no doubt result in an unpredictable outcome, posing a serious threat to the viability of KBE.

A progressive transformation, which retains some standards already operating within academia, looks attractive. But, can anyone assert that in ten years time these standards will still be respected? Or, to put things otherwise: could someone have thought twenty years ago that academia would be as it is now? Contradictions and conflict will continue because the historical forces of KBE lead to a continual re-shaping of its own standards. Hence, we are in front of a long and ongoing struggle between freedom and the “dictatorship of the useful” (Ordine 2013) concealed by the widely reproduced myth of a continuity composed from the relatively peaceful coexistence of market forces and university autonomy.

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6 The fall of the Ancien Regime, and the subsequent power vacuum that was never filled by the administration of the new Italian state, plus the entrance of capitalism, made the perfect context for determined ruthless small landowners, bandits and opportunists, to consolidate power for themselves. They filled the state vacuum with a strategic deployment of violence but especially because they were actors deeply rooted in the territory. The state, strategically inadequate and but often brutal in its retaliations to counter the insipient Cosa Nostra, helped to buttress the legitimacy of the latter in the eyes of the local population (Riall 1992).
13. CONCLUSIONS. THE ORDER AND ITS INSIDES

The cognisance of decadence might be subjective, inasmuch that the inherent contradictions living within this staged continuity can erupt as a conflict at any given moment when today’s passive revolution stumbles on hidden or misrecognised obstacles. Contradictions remain because there is no such thing as the “real continuity” of an academic order. Academia prospers on the basis of its ascendant and idiosyncratic position; a self-made image that still has traction in society at large. This ascendancy exists as long as it is associated with values irrevocably connected to freedom and autonomy. The issue today is that these values cannot survive unscathed under the totalising empire of market utilitarianism.

13.4 Contributions to Academic Capitalism research

The discussion on the global and the local

Academic capitalism refers to “the multidimensional process of integration between higher education and knowledge-based economy” (Kauppinen 2015, 337). This is an uneven historical process that dissolves the boundaries of education, state, as well as the market, between the limits of the local and global.

Against this background, the literature on the subject coheres around the dual economic role that governments have assigned to universities. On the one hand, universities should strive to generate profit; on the other hand, they should produce “useful, hence market-oriented knowledge”. These two roles are intimately related and as such academic capitalist literature moves between these two poles. These assigned roles are connected, steered, fuelled and justified by strong ideological apparatuses, but also by policies that intimately bind them together (Clark 1998. Marginson & Coinsidine 2000. Deem 2001. 2004. Hay, Butt & Kirby 2002. Dale 2007). As a result, we have a communion of material and immaterial elements (the institutional, hence the local and the general) that can neither be theoretically nor empirically disconnected. Academic capitalism is then relational. It simultaneously thinks at the global, the national and the local levels (Marginson 2013, 304).

The intention of the research presented in this monograph was to think about higher education institutions within the analytical unity that academic capitalism proposes. This unity is presented within a larger totality inspired by Cultural Political Economy (see Chapter 3 on material and historico-discursive forces), in order to understand HEI as part of a his-
torical totalising movement. This is the process of integration of HEI within the circuits of the market. It represents a significant leap, and thus integration, into the capitalist order. This integration means accepting new demands and conducts that re-constitute the previously existing order. The resulting university order is constituted at the intersection between the old and new, the global and the local. To think academic capitalism relationally demands a richly descriptive account of the cases at the local level combined with a robust theoretical framework that permits one to excavate the local in light of the global and vice versa.

This relation between the global and local has posed one of the most important challenges for academic capitalism. Despite recognising a global process, it is the nation-state level as well as specific HEI institutions that have commonly constituted the research objects for studying academic capitalism. The upshot of this has meant not only that the global level has appeared simply as a background, but also that very little has been written about the personal experiences of workers within HEIs (Collyer 2015, 316–317). It is in meeting this challenge of seeking to connect the local with the global that this research has sought to make its contribution.7

What we proposed was to surpass the dichotomy the global and the local by situating both within a relational and hierarchical continuum. HEIs are understood by the way in which their positions relate to each other in a context defined by structural and political asymmetries. An integral part of this is to recognise the continuities at play in the overarching dynamic order, which has been defined in and through a series of contradictions and consensual practices. It is within this picture that we can locate the university. So as to be equal to this challenge a theoretical and analytical framework was prepared to situate this continuum. We began by positing the idea of a totalising movement, which was subsequently developed by putting

7 As presented in sections 1.3 and 1.4, academic capitalism is an interdisciplinary concept treated as a larger global phenomenon. Nonetheless, authors have normally taken global and national institutions as their main object of analysis (Marginson & Coinsidine 2000. Deem 2004. Deem, Hillyard & Reed 2007. Dale 2008. Carey 2016. Cottom 2017). These among other authors have focused on many aspects of the transformation of universities, such as the changing roles of institutions in the race for funding and the pauperisation of the humanities, arts and social sciences, alongside the deep consequences that this is having for higher education today (Slaughter & Cantwell 2012. Mustajoki 2013. Kauppinen 2015). Human experiences have been modestly addressed. There is no doubt that academic capitalism operates on different levels, but research tends to use the concept on specific and delimited scales. This thesis has from the beginning attempted to understand the phenomenon from a totalising perspective, in order to dissect the phenomenon from the perspective of its global and everyday aspects.
together a bespoke Gramscian theoretical framework. This framework makes possible an understanding of relations of subordination, shaped by material and discursive forces, that criss-cross different scales and levels, uniting different structural positions. For the purpose of unity, the first half of the book took the term “capitalism”, or, more specifically, “academic capitalism” in its primordial form, recognising both its hierarchical but dynamic character. It has sought to situate those spatio-temporal elements defining the HEI order within capitalism as a world system. Later, through an empirical analysis of two departments, we developed some concepts that seek to capture the way in which positions interrelate within this totalising order.

Here we have developed nodes of transmission. These nodes include competitiveness and hierarchies described through their horizontality. Both acts not simply as discursive instruments, they also represent the very material mechanisms by which the market order and its logics of relationality have expanded. Furthermore, we have identified technological optimistic solutionism, which envisages a future of boundless prosperity. This specific node operates as an extra-temporal abstraction. This means that, from the optics of solutionism, we face a present that relates principally to a market or user-oriented form of vertical knowledge production. Within this logic, researcher autonomy is subordinated to the production of “useful knowledge”. The narrative of the “future to be”, ends up grounding today’s policies in a post-political terrain. This facilitates, first of all, the legitimisation of market reforms and second helps to create the material conditions driving the development of a solutionistic future.

Some literature has tried to address this unity between the local and the global, for example Kauppinen’s (2015) “theory of transnational capitalism” (TAC). TAC aims to construct a robust theoretical ground beyond the extra-temporal picture of different snapshots of HEI around the globe. Largely drawing on Slaughter and Cantwell’s (2012) concept of “transatlantic academic capitalism”, Kauppinen urges for a transnational comparative framework in order to establish relations between the global and the local. Nonetheless, TAC recognises its own limitations:

[...]my aim is to construct a theory of TAC that explicitly recognizes it cannot, by any means, constitute a totalizing framework that would allow the incorporation of all forms of transnational higher education within it. Thus, the scope of this theory is necessarily limited and partial in relation to all actual forms of transnational higher education.2 One simple reason for this is that the logic of higher education cannot be reduced to that of aca-
demic capitalism, or such activities, networks and practices that characterize profit-oriented higher education and academic entrepreneurship (see Marginson 2004). Indeed, the academic capitalist regime coexists with the public good regime. (Kauppinen 2015, 240)

The present research has had similar goals, but employing the very totalising strategy that Kauppinen explicitly rejects. In my view, this rejection is based on a narrow understanding that sees the notion of “totalising” as a sort of theoretical imperialism that simplifies the global logic of academic capitalism to market orientation tout court. Accordingly, any differences, or the presence of other existing logics, would be theoretically neglected by recourse to any totalising framework.

Contrary to this argument, the present research has indeed reflected upon the existence of different logics of higher education, which co-exist with the totalising advent of market expansionism. This is a unifying force that expands regardless of its success in each and every country. Differences comes as a result of a collision between this unifying and relational market drive, on the one hand, and the specific contextual features of each HEI, on the other. Nonetheless, this collision in its own way marks out a certain integration, via the global extension of certain conducts, similar mechanisms of consent, coercion and subjectivation. Hence, the Finnish and the Estonian departments are doubtless different by virtue of their distinct contexts. However, they are also similar because they construct hierarchies that gravitate around the same demands and targets. In this way, the research presented in this monograph has sought to reflect on different HEI orders, giving rise to two different faces of a multifaceted but vertical whole. Hence, and contrary to Kauppinen’s view (2015, 240), a totalising approach does not inevitability lead to the neglect of differences and variations.8

Nonetheless, the theoretical approach of this book falls far from a “Theory of Transnational Academic Capitalism”, which provides a theoretical overview of a global phenomenon. Instead, the study advanced within these pages is a relational theoretical inquiry that engages in a vertical dissection of the global situation. Its aim has been to learn the ways in

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8 This coexistence between the whole and the is represented in the universality of consumerism. The fact that consumerism has successfully rooted itself in completely different cultural contexts (from the Islamic totalitarian absolute monarchy of Saudi Arabia to the secular democratic Iceland), does not make these two countries similar but reflects that consumerism is so irresistibly universal (totalising) that it is capable of constructing similar social practices in two completely different countries.
which a global phenomenon becomes enforced in our immediate university surroundings by extending its asymmetric relationality and melding it with locally situated orders. Thus, what we have shown through analysing two departments in this study are two vertical segments that are part of a wider continuum of positions. These positions are delimited by unclear contours that, nevertheless, are related to one another, thereby helping to constitute a multifaceted whole.

Bourdieu: still appropriate in theorising present-day universities.

The second area of contribution for this study has been the academic workplace, which intimately relates to the larger totalising context. This particular terrain, however, has been addressed only by a few working on labour practices (Deem 2004, Ivancheva 2015, Boud, Lucas & Crawford 2018). Researchers within this area have acknowledged that a significant part of academic workload today is not about creative research undertaken by cool professors, rather it amounts to innumerable and often invisible tasks that remain essential for the university to function. The workplace is a complex empirical space in which the blurring of boundaries between research, education and the market makes itself felt. In our study, the workplace has been understood as a “critical junction” (Kalb & Tak 2007, 3), a space in which the larger historical forces coalesce with the traditional idiosyncrasies proper to the academic order. This part of the study has been interpreted with a Bourdieusian conceptualisation, and then re-integrated into the larger Gramscian framework. What the use of Bourdieu helps us to appreciate here is how a loss of autonomy in the scientific field takes place at the same time as it sinks further into larger capitalist relations of subordination.

The empirically grounded theoretical discussion of the workplace also contributes to a debate surrounding the applicability of Bourdieu in the present university context. Arguments against Bourdieu’s applicability often cohere around the problem of seeing academia as an autonomous field that enjoys certain insularity, especially in a context where, due to HEI reforms leading to the integration of the university system into the KBE, old boundaries are quickly dissolving. Following Bourdieu’s framework, what would become quickly evident is that today we would remain bounded to a field

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9 This is defined as “relations through time, relations in space, relations of power and dependency”, which are found in the material world by looking at “the intestinal relations between nominally distinct domains such as economics, politics, the law, the family, etc.” (Kalb & Tak 2007, 3).
structure with very little autonomy given the fact that the competitive logic within the field is shifting towards a market logic foreign to the academic field (Naidoo. 2004, 457–460. Marginson 2008, 312. Collyer 2015, 328).

The present research steps into this debate after having re-deployed the relational strength of Bourdieu’s concepts of field, capital and habitus to this new increasingly market-oriented academic workplace. In the study, we have reflected upon the fact that, despite its loss of autonomy – a point consistent with other literature focusing on the increasingly vertical change brought by labour reforms (Fitzgerald, White & Gunter 2012), institutional government (Thomson & Holdsworth 2003) and teaching (Lingard and Christie. 2003) – our research underlines the fact that the academic field still remains a primary site of struggle for autonomy. Now, however, it is part of a nexus between market, government and academic logics. To show how this is the case, our research has developed on these multiple roles and practices. But, not in order to observe and theorise the moral and material implications for the establishment of new material conditions, which are steered by middle and high managerial positions via secondary sources (Lingard, B. & Christie, P. 2003. Zipin & Brennan 2003). Rather our study has looked at academic work practices and spoken directly to workers. In doing so, we have seen the faultline between market needs and so-called autonomous scientific research.

An important portion of the workload in academia today is about fulfilling the needs derived from the loss of autonomy (e.g. funding applications, consultancy work, teaching etc.). Certain necessary tasks are not rewarded with academic capital (prestige). Indeed, in the case of RNS, we saw how these tasks were unequally distributed: senior researchers would do less than junior researchers and consequently would have more time, thereby gaining disproportionately from the work of others and having greater access to academic capital. Following Marginson (2004, 190–92), we could thus conclude that this unequal division of labour secures the position of senior academics and gives a certain continuity to their profession in times where everything changes around them. Nonetheless, in contrast to Marginson (2004, 182) “four hierarchical layers of competition”, we have noted, from within a Bourdieusian framework, that consent stands on “the deception of science as usual”. This is a meritocratic order impregnated with the logic of the market that formally stands as if it could be the promoter of purely scientific capital-based order within an autonomous scientific field. Furthermore, even if academic capital is the result of purely scientific labour, often this is labour that from its beginnings, adapts to market-
friendly standards and metrics, established and standardised by and through criteria adopted by scientific publications.

Bourdieu’s concept of academic capital is pivotal, then, in understanding “the deception of science as usual”. All the same, we have deemed it necessary to re-think the concept of academic capital, in order to acknowledge the presence of logics foreign to the scientific field throughout the process of its accumulation. Bourdieu considered these factors, which while having little to do with scientific work, are nonetheless determinant in the accumulation of academic capital. He called these factors temporal capital. In the present research, temporal capital is comprised of those needs and power-based stratagems that derive from market demands. Temporal capital is not just a strategic/political element separated from the accumulation of academic capital. The two are in fact united, inasmuch that temporal capital is a part of the very production of the work that leads to academic capital.

Thus, one of the contributions made in this study has been to show how the alleged loss of autonomy has actually been enacted. This is an integral part in the production of academic capital, which situates the power-based stratagems proper to temporal capital. Here, inequalities due to the unequal distribution of temporal capital, concentrated as it is in the hands of academic elites, are accentuated. Consent regarding this loss of autonomy, which exacerbates already existing asymmetries, occurs within “the deception of science as usual”. This is also the way in which the blurring of the contours between market and research results in a re-definition of the very assets that are meant to rule the academic order. This newly shaped academic capital represents more than the blurring of market and academic logics; it means also the actual dissolution of the borders between temporal and academic capitals, as well as the naturalised fusion of scientific and market-oriented principles in the production of knowledge in science. The asset of “academic capital” is, to an important extent, converted into “capitalist academic capital”.

The scientific field in the Media Department in AU, as well as in RNS, remains a primary site of struggle, and as it has been rightly shown by some (Wilkinson 2010, 50–52), there are practices within the field that lay beyond “the game” of market induced competition. For its part, the present research has shown how this struggle is embodied in agents when they are defined by competitive practices –a competitive individualistic soul – but also by a collective soul defined by cooperation and solidarity. Informants think that these two souls can be held separately, so that they can strategically pursue their career and personal life. According to this presumption,
the competitive soul relates to the alienation caused by labour practices and thus tactics are needed to climb the ladder (associated with temporal capital), whereas the collective soul is associated with a common source of creativity, and a passion for collective work etc. The problem is that, when it occurs within scientific and market logics which shape academic capital, the informant’s academic habitus is made from the intertwining of the competitive and collective souls; their separation is purely often artificial. The resulting contradictions are dealt individually, a fact that reflects this artificial division, which injures the collective soul more than its competitive counterpart.

The last general reflection I would like to make is about the formal divisions made in the university, such as the idea of the university as a public good regime. Or, for that matter, the idea that academic labour is essentially distinct from the highly skilled workers from the private sector. To a certain extent, these divisions remain, and consequently we should be careful to overemphasise market expansion, since this would end up simplifying a complex space. Yet, what difference does this formal division make if the university is run like a private company and, mutadis mutandi, reproduces labour conditions that are both precarious and alienating?

After going through the literature for writing this thesis, I think that often the distinction between university and the outside responds to the need for self-fulfilment, sharing a sort of uniqueness in thinking wherein academics have still privileged jobs. Meanwhile, universities keep deteriorating due to the same forces that are attenuating work conditions outside of the university walls. It is not necessary to write a doctoral dissertation to acknowledge this convergence. From an analytical perspective, keeping these divisions do not necessarily mean having a more precise look: when the formal is an empty shell perhaps it is better to acknowledge that it no longer exists. Acting as if the university is autonomous, as it has allegedly always been, will not bring back autonomy, rather the opposite. If one really wants to keep the university’s autonomy and critical spirit alive, it is perhaps better to forge alliances outside universities and think of common strategies that we can all begin to act on.
Epilogue: “Totalising” from a bird’s eye view: Helmuth Plessner’s concept of “belated nation” in the Gramscian theoretical framework

The analyses of the Finnish and Estonian cases have reflected upon the internal mechanisms of moment two in the theoretical framework diagram (see page 146). They represent different layers of a totalising move to resolve the decoupling of the structure and superstructure. The totalising move generally complements the further expansion of capitalism to ever new areas of exploitation (HEI), riding on the back of an extra-temporal (the “future to be”) conflictless and de-politicising narrative (“solutionism” and “debauched meritocracy”, respectively). This comes at the price of the erosion of autonomy and freedom as well as the precaritisation of the workplace.

All of these observations could lead to offering the following reflection, which would end up defying the core of Gramscian thought: present day capitalism would not be defined by the co-constitutive dialectic between structure and superstructure but by the pre-eminence of the structure that no longer addresses emergent contradictions but instead actively revels in them. Consent would no longer be cemented on guaranteeing basic material conditions and offering citizens existential prospects for improvement in the present and for the future. On the contrary, the veneration of a vertical order that only offers the vacuity of an optimist horizon suggests that a stable order can be consolidated with little more than vague promises that contrast starkly with the increasing deterioration of actual material conditions in the present, steered from the top of the structure. The superstructure would not be this pillar made from a historical stratification of morals, with idiosyncrasies conforming to specific ways of living. Rather, these specific modes of being and doing would be sequestered in front of the impetuous advance of the optimistic narrative that would be adopted by the majority. A historical look at this development can help to unpack this reflection.
To begin with, the totalising movement in which the KBE stands as a central element is not to be understood as a “leap forward” steered in the present by the structure, it is part of the long drawn out historical process of the internationalisation of capital and the decay of the productive economy. This process amounts to an oligarchic development, intimately related to the progressive dismantling of the welfare state, which has brought with it the rise of inequality and the demise of civil society’s influence, the consequence of which is the enclosure of political life within institutional party politics. The KBE reforms bear within them this development, as their “apparently” liberating narratives show.

For example, solutionism continues to feed on the neoliberal idea of the competitive individual as the primary unit of society and rejects any notion of compromise undermining the common while disassociating the individual from the political. HEI’s direct contribution to some sort of common ground is to equip students and researchers with competitive skills and trust that their search for useful knowledge and rational choice ethics in a competitive market context will inexorably lead to common prosperity. This positioning adjusts well to a weak civil society that atomises, leaving individuals to face on their own dominant discursive forms; the “collective pressures” (Gramsci 1929–35/2000, 232) that frame a depoliticised existence based on the belief of a general new becoming. More than consent, this narrative demands allegiance to those changes enacted from above, promising the advent of a prosperous new order.

This allegiance calls for a certain type of individual attuned to the spirit of the coming times. These are the “leading experts” in the programmatic documents or, as Moisio and Kangas speak of them, “global engineers” (Moisio & Kangas 2016, 280–81): a messianic hero who will become the maker of the world and is already at one with the spirit of tomorrow. Figures of speech aside, the appeal to the leading expert is, first of all, a call to become a well-trained competitive subject and, second, to accept the withering away of the nation-state and embrace the global as the principal frame of reference. The pleasant aesthetics, along with the quotable clichés, about the global, which are reproduced from multiple positions in society, go hand in hand with solutionism. Here we can add that KBE’S global outlook, along with its optimistic narratives imposed on the subject, do not just serve an instrumental use in the global economy but are essential in the construction of a post-national constellation in which a collective identity consolidates and is integrated into the new order.
This constellation would represent the re-foundation of the capitalist order’s legitimacy, recalling the formation of a political nation that brings into being a new collective subject which would recognise itself in the authority of that order. This new political nation would, nonetheless, have a flaw that ultimately distances it from Sieyès’ conception of the political nation. The flaw lies in its constitutive verticality; it thus lacks a constitutive people, as reflected in the distance that separates an unquestioned instituted power from the ruled, which results in the absence of any true legitimacy. Still, and despite the lack of any constitutive power exercised from below, the KBE, with all its contradictions, signals a new beginning without politics, a new era that naturalises a return to oligarchic governing, through which present day capitalism operates. The combination of these elements constitutes today’s historic bloc (Moment 3). This enduring “flawed political nation” is what Helmuth Plessner calls a “belated nation”. This concept can be harnessed to situate the totalising movement we have described in this book – a totalising movement that lacks the ultimate form of consent to properly build on the real, material and existential possibilities of the present. It is hoped that a consideration of Plessner’s ideas will further fine-tune the Gramscian theoretical framework we have adopted for this study.

The problematic nature of the belated nation: Plessner’s argument

Helmuth Plessner’s (2017) genealogy of fascism in Germany coalesces around the concept of the “belated nation”. A “belated nation” (Verspätete Nation in German) is a political nation that lacks a truly constitutive people. Plessner employs this concept in his genealogy of fascism in Germany to comprehend its origins. He situates its beginnings in German Reunification during the second half of the 19th Century. A process that succeeded in producing a modern nation-state in a context of fast industrialisation. With

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1 Sieyès understands the political nation as a nation for which the constitutive power of the people is the first and ultimate source of sovereign authority (Villacañas 2017, 220). In other words, the freedom of the people is the beginning and end of the sovereign nation-state.

2 Helmuth Plessner (1892–1985) was a German philosopher and father of philosophical anthropology, which was extensively explored in his book The belated Nation. On the Political Seduction of the Bourgeois Spirit (1959) (German Die verspätete Nation. Über die Verführbarkeit bürgerlichen Geistes. Spanish translation in the references). The book offers interesting insights in the historical formation of fascism in Germany. Plessner situates the historic failure of making civic liberal values dominant as the pivotal factor for understanding the rise of Fascism in a context of an institutional liberal democracy.
its administration, bourgeoisie and working class, the new reunified Germany rapidly became a power in Europe. Nonetheless, the new nation-state lacked a political nation, that is, a state constituted by the people, according to which the people would represent the ultimate source of legitimation of a sovereign power.

Bismarck’s Germany was not constructed on a revolutionary beginning, such that citizens constituted a political nation. Instead it was predicated on the complex reunification of different principalities steered by Lutheran Prussia. Laying at the East of the German speaking world, Prussia steered unification by means of a solid and vertical bureaucracy and the Junker, an agrarian/military nobility. Prussia was a peculiar reunifying force, which geographically and socially laid far from the growing industrial principalities of the West as well as the Catholic South. Principalities that had distinct historical backgrounds outlined by political authorities emanating from different legitimacies and representing different confessions. Furthermore, these principalities had a political history in common under the form of “leagues” – a decentralised organisation that, since the late Middle-Ages, developed from the feudal governmental organisation with relative success.

Germany lacked a shared political legitimacy embodied in the people or a universal mission, in contradistinction to the French and the British. Being German was contradictory: it could not be just Lutheran, neither could it mean embracing Enlightenment values, since despite signalling modernisation, they came with the Grand Armée of Napoleon. Consequently, the spirit of resistance against French invasion became an integral part of German language and culture. Politically speaking, this developed an order of legitimacy predicated on notions that were far removed from the enlightenment horizon, which was now dismissed as a dishonest mask to hide French and English imperial thirst. Instead, legitimacy rested on notions of “pragmatism”, based on a combination of a re-discovered pre-modern essentialism and the respect for the factual, that is, the fait accompli of the present. This developed into an apolitical culture, which grew within the very structures of the state, conceived as an efficient machinery free of any naïve horizons. Following this depoliticising culture, the new German subject was asked to embrace a new beginning without politics, to be content with the fruits brought by the technological acceleration of industrialisation. The booming petit bourgeois, who prospered during this period, became the order’s most ardent supporters while the growing proletariat were marginalised. This culture allowed the formation and consolidation of a vertical order that enjoyed its finest hour during the
Wilhelmine Kaiser Reich, an openly autocratic state with an emperor (Kaiser) that made obedience to bureaucracy, hierarchy as well as to the myth of “German efficiency”, its central ideological elements.

Still, reunified Germany, and later the Kaiser Reich, lacked a transcendental justification beyond the vertical methodology and the ahistorical rationalisation of industrialisation. The need for a transcendental justification developed from out of a vague historicist German essentialism. German essentialism was itself a modern construction made up of different layers but generally underpinned by the reactionary spirit of European Restoration (1815–1848) that opposed the values of the enlightenment and the French Revolution and that called for a refounding of the essentials of communal from a distant past in order to re-constitute a “true” German nation. The void of a transcendental justification was filled by a form of ahistorical historicism. The ahistorical and thus essentialist nature of this construction was strengthened by the need to resist the inexorable advance of industrial capitalism, which was dissolving the ideals and old customs. The withering away of the old was said to signal the “decadence of mankind”, brought by mechanisation, the love for money and the subsequent constitution of classes and the masses. These were sincere worries expressed in the vibrant culture of the time.

This pessimistic view served as the background against which evolutionary narratives arose. These became increasingly popular both in society and in the universities and were applied in the study of history and politics. They conceived of the inexorable advance of industrialisation as the last chapter of a nation that needed to find itself again. Hence and paradoxically, theories originating in natural sciences, and so deriving from the much “malignned” enlightenment, suited perfectly this new appetite for secular historicist mysticism. The historian was not collecting and explaining the past but signalling the future as a continuation of an economic-biological destiny. Such selective interpretations, according to Plessner, excluded from history any dimensions of human existence that could influence different epochs, thus hollowing out the universal meaning of history, which is intimately connected to the emancipation of humanity. This did not mark a return to the pre-stages of modernity, what it called for was the creation of

\[3\] Despite, its differing intellectual origins, Plessner’s reflections on history becoming an evolutionary science, which ended up undermining any possibility of emancipation, resonate with Gramsci’s of “economicist tendencies” as well as the man detached from history, in his constructive dialogue with Croce (see page 130).
an irrational path to surpass the limits of humanism, of the Enlightenment, and even of modernity by the “purely empirical facts” (faktum) of industrialisation. The ideas born from a sincere fear of the dissolution of the human essence, had turned into a profoundly anti-humanist and reactionary model of progress ready to embrace any sort of authoritarianism. This trend was not exclusive of Germany, its main evolutionists were actually English, but it was in Imperial Germany where such ideas began to root deep with the “national culture”.

The collapse of the German Empire at the end of the Great War (1918) represented the abrupt end of the state and its narrative of evolutionary progress. It left in its wake an existential abyss. The Weimar Republic was, according to Plessner, the attempt to finally establish a political nation built by a people’s constitutive power, which would institute a liberal democratic civic culture based on the values of modernity. This possibility, however, did not crystallise in a society that had been for too long exposed to grand narratives that were antagonistic towards the very ideas that Weimar wanted to embody. Furthermore, the permanent political and economic turmoil of the 20s, resulting in the proletarianisation of parts of the middle classes, aggravated deeply felt problems. Citizens of Weimar Germany thus did not recognise themselves within this liberal democratic system, with which many looked suspiciously and sceptically at, in a context of growing resentment, cynicism and insecurity. There were three possible responses to this crisis: first, Revolutionary socialism, steered by the most organised and numerous working class in the world, who had been largely excluded from the “progress” of the Kaiser Reich, and who represented the only alternative that had been articulated politically during the failed German Revolution of 1918–20. Second, evangelical fundamentalism – a profoundly anti-liberal form of theology that pointed at the Revelation as an alternative. And third, Fascism, the most anti-humanist by-product of this historicist evolutionism, which situated the struggle for power and survival as the sole truth defining humankind, which would soon overcome the spheres of objectivity proper underpinning the liberal civic culture. The latter emerged as the winner and the Nazi party dissolved the republic despite never gaining a democratic majority, with only the grudging support or apathy of a considerable pat of the German population.4

4 Villacañas (2017), in his reading of Plessner agrees on the problem of the legitimation of the Weimar Republic but he is critical on Plessner’s acritical take on the incapacity of the middle classes to develop a liberal civic culture that could have stopped fascism or the socialist alternative.
This, then, would be a summary of Plessner’s argument on the problematic of the belated nation. Two final remarks to clarify some possible misunderstandings. From this summary, one might conclude that Germany is a victim of inevitable fatalism, due to its late constitution as a modern nation state. This teleological reading would presuppose the nation state as the final end of state rationality. Plessner’s argument runs counter to this, however. He argues that perhaps this teleological reading was actually the mistake; because of its historical characteristics; Germany could not constitute itself as a nation-state. The pre-national characteristics of German principalities and leagues should have been regarded as a strength, and not as a sign of backwardness, to constitute an enlightened post-national state adjusted to the particularities of the German situation.

Totalising movement Gramsci and the belated nation (I):
the absence of a historico- democratic constitutive moment in post-Fordism

Despite its differences, present-day capitalism shares some of the problematical characteristics depicted by Plessner, rooted today in the shift from a national to a global outlook, and the contradictions that this generates in the constitution of the politic-economic order.

The origins of the expansion of Fordist capitalism and its regulatory leg – namely, the Keynesian Welfare state in the West – can be situated in the antifascist alliance at the end of WWII. These antifascist alliances brought together many political traditions, having their fundamentals rooted in civil society and in popular democracy, as well as enjoying unquestionable legitimacy in the largely leftist led antifascist struggle in Axis occupied Europe, while the traditional conservative and liberal forces largely sided with the occupation authorities or did not openly opposed them. Even in the countries that were never occupied by the Axis Powers, for example, the US and the UK, the war was won thanks to those recruited from the popular classes and colonial territories, both of whom would, after the war, demand

_Villacañas argues that the idea that the German petit-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie were disabled as a political formation by two anti-liberal evils (fascism and communism) is a historic myth. Villacañas argues that they enjoyed political autonomy and resources, but their fanatic fear of Marxism actively made them embrace or at least tolerate fascism in an act of profound historical irresponsibility and cowardice._

343
better life standards and political self-determination. Therefore, the defeat of fascism resulted in the consensus that capitalism should develop by assisting in improving the standards of living for the working and middle classes, and cultivating popular democratic values. This consensus was shared both by the dominant social democracy and Christian democracy and, to a certain extent by the communist parties (Italy). All were strongly rooted in civil society (from trade unions to the Catholic Church) (Fontana 2011, 10–20).

Here a parallel can be drawn with Plessner: I see the post-War consensus, despite its differences and setbacks, as a constitutive moment from below that approximates a “political nation”. This would explain the popular support that the Keynesian welfare state and social democracy had in most of the West. The Cold War bipolar logic, and the fear of strong Communist Parties, helped to consolidate this model. But this was not to last for too long. Soon enough, long before the end of the cold war, a neoliberal attack on this consensus began in earnest. In Gramscian terms, the post-war consensus and Fordism would represent a historic bloc, a product of the heuristic relation between structure and superstructure: an order based on the hegemony of the Keynesian economic model, on the one hand, and on the symbolism of the defeat of fascism and on the other.

Neoliberalism succeeded in breaking the post-WWII consensus. But this was always an elitist alternative that, despite successfully extending its ideology, never had a “popular beginning steered from below”. The stability of the present political economic order is constructed on what is left from the Keynesian welfare state combined with the extension of an anti-collective and atomising culture of competitiveness. This culture of competitiveness suggests that social relations are built on networks in which individuals relate to each other only as a means for improving their own positions. This is the reincarnation of a new type of totalising evolutionism, this time not inspired by the competition of races and nations, but on a fierce competition between individuals and states in the big game of the global marketplace.

The problematic of Post-Fordism comes close to Plessner’s “belated nation”; it lacks a collective constitutive moment that frames a recognisable political community signalling a common existential horizon (Plessner 2011, 10–20).

5 The electoral defeat of Winston Churchill in 1945 a few months after the end WWII reflects this spirit. The British war leader represented the essence of the Empire but then suffered a bruising electoral defeat by Clement Atlee’s Labour Party, who promised to build a welfare state.
There is no political beginning driven by social emancipation but rather the deployment of a totalising logic of competition that erodes the notions of both the common and the political (Plessner 2017, 20). An instrumental method that, similar to the one adopted by Kaiser Reich, dissolves ideologies into a pragmatism that only values monetary success. What matters is the factual, while any alternative that lays beyond the material seizure of capital or the development of individual identities is labelled as either fanatical or naïve.

In contrast to Plessner’s account of the Kaiser Reich, post-Fordism lacks a societal backbone, represented by a growing petit bourgeoisie who happily hands over its political freedoms in exchange for material prosperity. Contrary, the social base of post-Fordism is composed of an increasingly atomised and immiserated middle and working classes who live in the midst of contingencies, having little room to lead a life beyond subsisting from day to day. A totalising context that, similar to the times during the German Empire, erodes ideas of citizen sovereignty, and thus democracy. This puts fundamental restrictions on the capacity to change and renew the present order of things (Plessner 2017, 80–81). The more years that pass, the more the inequalities increase and the more the distance between the material reality and the dominant narratives grow, attenuating the order’s legitimacy. This is essentially the widening decoupling between structure and superstructure that Gramsci discusses at length. The KBE would emerge as the most recent attempt to reverse this tendency and thus to secure for the order a revivified source of legitimacy.

Totalising movement, Gramsci and the belated nation (II):
a re-foundation of capitalism without the democratic means to enforce a political nation

The KBE emerges as a recognisable political project in the second half of the 1990s. This is perhaps neoliberalism’s finest hour, enjoying a hegemonic momentum with the swift expansion of the market economy in the post-communist space and the assumption of part of its ethos by prominent social democratic parties. The implementation of KBE policies during the
2000s and 2010s runs in parallel with a growing scepticism, a certain existential void, surrounding the political and economic order. This becomes especially evident immediately in the aftermath of the 2008 Economic Crisis.

The loss of economic sovereignty means moving an important part of politico-economic order away from any direct democratic control. This had obvious negative consequences for social welfare provisions. Labour has become de-territorialised, workers undertake work remotely, having no ties with their immediate social environment, or simply they are forced to sell their labour power cheap, on short term contracts, and increasing the flow of migrant workers who have little time nor perspective for settling. The tension between global economic integration, and the subsequent loss of sovereignty that results in precarity, defines identities at all levels (national, class, work, cultural etc.). Nonetheless, the nation state remains a significant referent in the eyes of the majority, not only for reasons of identity and belonging, but because it remains the only recognisable form of socio-political organisation that still transfers welfare.

The KBE attempts to fill this historical and existential void, by re-organising the social order, so that it can continue the neoliberal expansion, riding on the back of global economic integration. As we have seen in this book, in its superstructural dimension, the KBE offers the frames for a new constitutive moment turning post-materialist identities, contingency, precarious labour into individual assets (e.g. creativity, flexibility, permanent learning) for a better future. The canonical KBE individual is an emancipated being ready to find her existential realisation on the back of creative work and skills that historically surpass the competitively ruthless neoliberal subject. The brains of these creative entrepreneurial subjects, working in alliance with both public and private institutions and adeptly harnessing new technologies, will seize a prosperous future for everybody. This order is one that recalls liberal enlightenment values in its respect for knowledge and individual autonomy as a means for the progress of mankind.

The KBE subject emerges as a “popular fundamental”, dressed in the regalia of a political constitutive force; a post-national societal subject turned into a political nation that will put an end to this dysfunctional and declining nation-state, in order to re-construct the legitimacy of the capitalist order for decades to come. Despite all these elements, which indicate
the attempt to form a hegemonic bloc from below by empowering the individual, the KBE lacks a basic element to constitute political nation, namely a democratic beginning.

This would be a historical democratic movement of political empowerment that reverses the increasingly oligarchic form of present capitalism. Instead, the KBE is an elitist project cooked up by experts and politicians, and thus is far from any democratic control and popular participation. Moreover, the targeted “political nation” does not receive any factual political instruments to become a constitutive force. More importantly, due to its relatively small impact in the labour market and in the economy as a whole, the targeted group represents a social minority. The autonomous individual expert is a sympathetic figure but by no means does it represent an exemplar for the majority of waged workers.

The KBE narratives also relate the rise of the KBE subject to a form of more decentralised post-national order, with the global city, and not the nation state, as the framework for a more flexible and adaptable political action. Nonetheless and in contrast to Plessner’s desire for a decentralised Germany based on the long tradition of small polities and autonomous principalities closer to people or even based on a post-national European form of democratic government (Plessner 2017, 66), the totalising move of the KBE only decentralises production and ultimately steers the concentration of capital power. The nascent political nation has no actual tools to lead a democratic decentralisation; while it has the city as a polity for social and political organisation, it only makes passing and inconsistent references to a supposed new becoming of societal empowerment. In Gramscian terms, this KBE nation would be made of “hollow men”, who while wearing the attires of the citizen ultimately are dispossessed of the very instruments that make it possible for a citizen to participate in the country’s development. A “man detached from history” but dressed in the attires of history: this is how a subject becomes integrated within a given order. Furthermore, this horizon has little democratic substance, despite its references to individual autonomy and social prosperity. Progress is not the product of a historical compromise steered from below but of technology; progress is a technical achievement disconnected from political struggle and, as was the case in Imperial Germany, it functions as a tabula rasa: a beginning without politics (Plessner 2017. 57. 104) that legitimises the concentration of power.
Totalising movement, Gramsci and the belated nation (III):
Historical impasse and the rise of the extreme right

The totalising movement of the KBE is a failed attempt at squaring the circle, namely the merger of neoliberal oligarchic disorder with a supposedly enlightened and progressive form of capitalism underpinned by liberal democratic values and autonomous individuals committed to technological progress. As we have seen in this book, as an instrument to extend market logics, the results have been relatively successful. Yet, the KBE does not resolve the historic lack of a constitutive power, that is, a political nation. On the contrary, the effort to de-politicise defuses the possibility of an alternative constituted from below. Moreover, it further widens the gap that results from the decoupling of structure and superstructure. We can say that today we live in a historical impasse that, like in Plessner’s Germany, cultivates scepticism, cynicism and the slackening of universal progressive values (Plessner 2017, 132).

Plessner (2017, 161–170) argues that technocentrism decisively contributes to the erosion of universal values: specialisation sits in a moral oblivion and embraces a mathematical philosophy that lacks any spirituality or political vision beyond strictly factual material accomplishments. Plessner’s reflection also applies to the pace of industrialisation and scientific rationalisation from the early Fordist experiences in Finland as well. Technocentrism in the KBE narratives feeds the same problem aggravated by the increase of inequality and the deterioration of life standards. Scepticism and cynicism mutate into fear and rage, fed by competitive morals, a culture of immediateness in a disorganised civil society leaving little room for a progressive alternative. This is the perfect historical context for the rise of fascist irrationalism, and indeed recent developments indicate that the extreme right is gaining momentum by turning crude rage and fear into a strategy to gain power. The rise of the extreme right today bears a disturbing resemblance with Plessner’s account of how fascism exploited anti-humanist sentiments and social deterioration that reigned during the Interwar Period.

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7 Finland had a similar problem roughly during the same period when the scientific rationalisation of the governmental apparatus to provide welfare concealed the very political anchorage of redistribution. Later, this de-politicisation of social policy facilitated the progressive dismantling of the welfare state when welfare was no longer recognised as a political achievement, a product of a compromise that came after a political struggle, but simply a part of the state machinery (Ketunen 2010, 232).
It recalls as well Antonio Gramsci’s reflections on Fascism in Italy, which he understood as the means of re-stabilising capitalism in the form of a historic bloc (the fascist state) at the expense of a parliamentary democratic system (See discussion section 6.3.1). In a more grounded analysis of fascism, as early as 1921, Gramsci underlined that Fascism embodies the historic perversion and systematic dissolution of any notion of civic values:

> It has by now become evident that fascism can only partly be assumed to be a class phenomenon, a movement of political forces conscious of a real goal; it has overflowed, it has broken loose from every organizational framework, it is superior to the will and intention of every regional or central committee, it has become an unleashing of elemental forces within the bourgeois system of economic and political governance which cannot be stopped: fascism is the name for the profound decomposition of Italian society which could not but accompany the profound decomposition of the state and which can today be explained only with reference to the low level of civility (culture) which the Italian nation has reached in sixty years of unitary administration. (Davidson 1977, 150. Cited from Adamson 1980, 618)

This passage, written more than a year before Mussolini’s March on Rome, while witnessing the growing presence of the *fasci di combattimento* on the streets, approximates Plessner’s analysis in the *Belated Nation*. A communist revolutionary intellectual, on the one hand, and a German liberal thinker, on the other, on common ground. When liberal democracies, incapable of offering responses to the problems generated by capitalist oligarchy, choose to de-naturalise civic values, emptying them of political meaning to protect capital accumulation, then resentment, the prologue of fascism, is likely to follow. This is what essentially occurred in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis when the progressive politicisation of a sizable part of society in the West called for an end to the drift into oligarchy, but was met with the tin ear of the political and economic establishment, who did everything in their powers to stop any progressive renewal in a context of severe social deterioration. The KBE has been essential at the superstructural level to depoliticise, and thus to reinforce the status quo.

Plessner’s “belated nation” with respect to our own Gramscian theoretical framework tells us that the apparent robustness of the totalising movement without a well-entrenched hegemonic consensus comes at the expense of civic values. There are no magic solutions. Democratic consent for the re-foundation of capitalism cannot be fabricated with promises of a prosperous and secure future alongside talk about the rise of a post-national
knowledge-empowered political nation. The distance between the generalised deterioration of material conditions and the field of discourse legitimating the order is simply too big and continues to widen while the order unfolds. This distance is defined through a decline in the notion of the common, due to the expansion of the cultures of competitiveness and verticality.

Therefore, and returning to the paradox opening this section: the fact that the order continues to expand despite the absence of any consistent legitimacy does not imply that it no longer needs consistent consent. Neither does it imply that the superstructure is a subsidiary of the structure. It rather means that the hegemonic operations that helped to construct a certain consensus is no longer based on the civic values that the KBE claims to embody (even if their meanings are hollowed out) but on something else. We are at a historic impasse, a moment of redefining the legitimating grounds of capitalism. As the Indian economist Chandrasekhar (2018, cited from Fontana 2019, 157) stated, one decade after the 2008 crisis: the legitimacy of globalist neoliberalism has been called into question and the horizon of the enlightened post-national constitutive nation, bringing with it boundless prosperity, as promised by the KBE, is already fading away. The extreme right breeds in a context filled with unmet expectations and resentment while calling for the defence of supposed “moral essences” lost in a sea of liquid identities (e.g. “politically correctness and do-goodism”, “multiculturalism, feminism etc.”) Here we are referring to narratives made of different reactionary traditions: irredentism, racism, antifeminism, religious fundamentalism and anti-Marxism, all of which offer insurmountable facts and consent based on the glorification of power, enmity and vertical rule.

The advance of the extreme-right today reminds us that the heuristic relation between, on the one hand, the narratives in the superstructure and, on the other, the material advance of the structure, can result in antagonistic state models, thereby underlining the uneven and malleable nature of capitalism. What is clear is that democracy can only coexist with capitalism once the oligarchic strive for capital is tamed by prioritising a civic commonality. Otherwise, the spectres of essentialism will eventually step into the breach of irrationalism; and as we are more than aware, at stake today is the struggle against these authoritarian forces for the soul of democracy.


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Since the second half of the 1990s, Higher Education Institutions have globally experienced a series of far reaching reforms. The purpose of these reforms has been to further integrate Higher Education Institutions into the production of high-added value knowledge to secure a prosperous future within the Knowledge-based economy characteristic of post-Fordism. These developments have occurred in Finnish and Estonian universities, which are conceived as spaces in which knowledge, technology and entrepreneurship are creatively combined in order to contribute to the realisation of sustained economic growth. This has resulted in an order defined by market expansion constituted through the contradictory relation between optimistic narratives, on the one hand, and the vertical implementation of policies, on the other. Despite this contradictory relation, a consent based on a vague horizon of hope and freedom has been consolidated. In this book, the resultant order is analysed in light of two university departments in Helsinki and Tallinn and recontextualised within the wider global politico-economic system. This is achieved by employing a Gramscian framework. The analysis offered in the study brings to light how larger market forces are conveyed within the university, firstly through the circulation of an optimistic narrative that de-antagonises the issue of market expansion and secondly by an academic meritocracy that by eroding its own principles integrates the market logic in the daily governing of academic work.

Adrià Alcoverro is a political scientist. This study is his dissertation, completed at the Department of Political Science, and in connection with the Baltic and East European Graduate School (BEEGS), at Södertörn University, Sweden.