Senior academics as key negotiators in the implementation of impact policies in the social sciences and humanities

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What does the literature tell us?

From an institutionalist perspective : the notion of isomorphism (1)

- Tendency of organizations emerging in the same field to become more similar, as rational actors try to change them (DiMaggio and Powell 1983)
  - Typology of organizational reactions to the change (Oliver 1991)

- Model of the World Class Research University
  - Internationalization
  - Quasi-marketization
  - Managerialization

From an institutionalist perspective : the notion of isomorphism (2)

- Article in English from International Top [high Impact Factor] Journals as « professional coin » (also in SSH) (Hammarfelt and de Rijcke 2015; Gläser and Laudel 2016; Kulczycki et al. 2018)

From an institutionalist perspective : the notion of isomorphism (3)

- Model of the Open University
  - « Mode 2 of knowledge production » (Gibbons et al. 1994)
  - Responsible research and innovation (Horizon 2020)
  - Science with and for Society (Horizon 2020)
  - « Societal challenges » (Horizon 2020), « missions » and « global challenges » (Horizon Europe)
  - Open Science (including citizen science), Open Innovation and co-creation (Horizon Europe)
  - Impact agenda (European Commission 2018)

From a comprehensive perspective (1)

- Individual scholars' power to « negotiate » the prescriptions (Linkova 2014)
  - Institutional autonomy of EU universities
  - Professional norms and values (Merton 1973)
    - Academic freedom
  - Scholars' definitions of quality (Hammarfelt and Haddock 2018; Hug, Ochsner and Daniel 2013) and impact (Derrick and Samuel 2017)

  - Administrators as detached academics

From a comprehensive perspective (2)

- **Reactions to internationalisation** (Medina 2013), **marketization** (Lam 2010), **managerialisation** (i.a. Barry et al. 2001, Deem 2003, Morris and Rip 2006, Kehm and Leiðytë 2010, Teelken 2011, Kaltenbrunner and de Rijcke 2016, Kalfa et al. 2018)
  - Acceptance, **symbolic compliance**, « tinkering » (Vanholsbeeck 2012), **manipulation**, **« micro-politics of resistance »** (Linková 2014) **or resistance to organisational changes** (Chandler et al. 2002; Kirkpatrick and Ackroyd 2003)
  - **« Double allegiance »** (Davies and Horst 2016)

From a comprehensive perspective (3)

- **Attitude towards Open Access and Open Research Data (**Ruiz-Pérez 2017**)**

- **Not many studies on the impact agenda (**Besley and Nisbet 2013, Dobbels et al. 2015, Besley et al. 2018**)**

Exploratory analysis of our results

Methodology

- 16 interviews conducted in 2018 with senior academic sociologists in Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Island, Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia

- Perceived roles in the implementation of research evaluation policies, including impact

- Impact as resulting from "productive interactions" (Spaapen and Van Drooge 2011)

Perception of prescriptions

- Impact not perceived as a (major) prescription
  - A few institutional initiatives (FRESH in BE, valorization of impact in IS)

- Prescribed form of research output = article in « International Top Journal » (with high bibliometrical value)
  - Indicators as a tool for more transparency (and less nepotism) but not an end in itself

Attitude towards impact (1)

- Impact deemed as important by most respondents
  - But risk of loosing substance in case of institutionalized impact

« I just have this feeling that people have adapted some standard phrases about impact. And, you know, about social impact, holding some conferences and connecting to some stakeholders, and things like that, involving someone from the labor market as consultant, background groups and bla bla bla. A few things are like this, yes. "

(IS, female senior sociologist)

Attitude towards impact (2)

- Possible to combine international publications with impact driven activities

- Impact not only « instrumental »: critical social engagement as a sociologist's duty, through a diversity of publications

Attitude towards impact (3)

- In regard to early stage researchers:

Quick penetration of the international research market (in English)
vs.
Societal engagement at the local level (in vernacular languages)

"So, if a university wants to be globalized (what we call internationalization) and compete with other universities in Europe, it has to be part of these university rankings. Therefore, in our university we encourage our staff to publish in English and even those who publish in Greek are encouraged to have an abstract in English so it can count in Scopus. Now, at a local level, it is of course important to publish in Greek (the local language) in order for the university to be part of society and social activities, but if we want to go beyond the small boundaries of Cyprus we have to publish in English."

(CY, male senior sociologist)

Other perceived obstacles to impact

- General lack of rewards and incentives: lack of (or lower) valorization of outreach (outputs)
- While outreach is time- and skill- intensive

- Open Access journals perceived as lower quality/reputation

- Lack of sound impact indicators (but are they needed?)
- Impact Factor not correlated to social impact

"[The Open Access institutional repository of my university] gives an extremely important visibility to works that are not necessarily recognized as such. I realize that one of my syllabus has been downloaded so many times. [...] It gives visibility to less recognized types of research outputs. Conversely, my latest publications [...] are clearly peer reviewed and had an impact factor, but finally they seem to me to have infinitely less social relevance than things that I would have a hard time putting in a scholarly journal, because they are not 'in the canons'."

(BE, male senior sociologist)

Policy implications

- Polymorphic universities
  - More diversified and open ecosystems of research production-dissemination-evaluation
  - More diversified career paths and profiles

- Impact and Open Science related skills (as part of the doctoral education)

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