



**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES – CRITICAL FUTURES**

# Academic Freedom and societal values

April 8<sup>th</sup> 10:00am CET – Copenhagen (virtually...)

[Giulio Marini](#), PhD, Lecturer (Teaching)

Quantitative Social Science | Centre for Higher Education Studies

Social Research Institute ([SRI-UCL](#)), IoE

University College London






We don't want things to stay the same.

# Content of presentation

- Status of Special Issue at HEQ (led by Anatoly and me)
- What is Academic Freedom
- A (borrowed) definition
- Society driving Academia or vice versa?
- The interplay between society and universities (a typology)
  - Academic Freedom as contestable driver of social change
- Conclusion

# Special Issue in *Higher Education Quarterly* (2022)

## Higher Education Quarterly

ARTICLE |  Open Access |  

**‘The goal is not necessarily to sit at the table’—Resisting autocratic legalism in Hungarian academia**

Rafael Labanino , Michael Dobbins

First published: 04 December 2020 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12290>

## Higher Education Quarterly

ARTICLE

**A republic of scholars or scholars of the republic? Reflections on the predicaments of academic freedom and university autonomy in Turkey**

Burhan Findikli 

First published: 23 November 2020 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12287>

More articles currently under peer review concerning mostly Central/Eastern European countries, or conceptual papers

# What is Academic Freedom?

- *Freedom of Speech*
- *The tenure (and the fee for value)*
- *Autonomy*
- *(Contestable) Protection*

# Borrowing a definition

*Academic Freedom is the notion that it should serve to make society more virtuous and that it does so by ensuring that virtue is brought into society by dint of learning. [...] Academic Freedom, viewed within this perspective, is conditional upon academia's upholding both public virtue and public belief [...] [T]he private beliefs of academia are acceptable so long as they do not extend to public action.*

Guy Neave

Neave, G. (2002). Academic Freedom in an Age of Globalisation. *Higher education policy*, 15(4), 331-335.

## Society driving Academia or the vice versa?

- *A Marxist-like approach: the base (though including political powers) trumps the superstructure (the realm of academics)*
- *A Hegelian Master-Slave approach: The more the 'academic-superstructure' serves the politico-economic base, the more it might lose independence and/or capability to regenerate new configurations when a cycle comes to an end.*
- *The academic internal arena does all by itself.*
- *Academic Freedom as agency.*

# A typology of Academic Freedom as contestable driver of social change

A basic typology of social conditions given to universities and respective academic responses

Source: own elaboration

		Universities (system)	
		Advocating actively more protection and influence	Protecting and entrenching the current degree of freedom
Societal Values	Inclined to provide protection	<i>Activism</i>	<i>Golden Times</i>
	Reluctant to give / keep protection and privileges	<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Resilience via hibernation</i>

# Conclusion: Academic Freedom is contestable because it is a social driver

*In Europe policy makers and researchers in the field of higher education have tended in the last decades to describe how universities react to reforms and to other external pushes. The contribution universities are expected to give are mostly restricted to economic dimensions. To look at what universities can do to contribute to society at large is instead usually sketched, but not further analysed. There is a general paucity of sociological reflection about what universities can contribute for the societies they live in. We might be substantially aware that we have a problem loosely referred to Academic Freedom. Yet, to describe thoroughly what are we losing would constitute a useful step forward.*