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# "Academic labour markets in Europe: an analytical framework to understand their transformation"

Christine Musselin

# Introduction

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# Introduction

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- Rather well known facts and trends
  - The academic profession is increasingly “professionalised”
    - Thus access is more and more formalized...
    - ...but also more and more unpredictable
  - Casual positions are more and more frequent



# Introduction

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- Academic activities are more and more :
  - Organized around projects assembling various categories of actors achieving different tasks
  - Assessed according to diverse criteria allowing to link scientific reward to financial retribution
  - Expected to be also relevant
- Careers (or trajectories) are affected
  - Less linear
  - Less organizational



# Introduction

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- No doubt that the academic profession is changing but how to analyse this?
- My point here will be:
  - To simultaneously look at academic labour markets,, the content of academic work and the transformation of academic organizations and at their interplay
  - Each time trying to rely on a specific analytical framework



# Content

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1. Transformations of academic work
2. Transformations of academic labour markets
3. Transformations of academic organizations



# 1. Transformations of academic work

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# 1. Transformations of academic work (1)

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- Looking at academic work with the tools of the sociology of work
- Building on M. Lallement (2007), 4 main dimensions have to be distinguished
  - Division of work
  - Individuation
  - Integration
  - Regulation





# 1. Transformations of academic work (2)

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## ■ Division of work

- “The way segmentations with cognitive virtue are built, last and are destroyed” : a traditional issue
- “The principles which structures the division of work”
  - Statutes
  - Contractual arrangements
  - Performance
- “The criteria determining hierarchies”
  - Managerial skills // scientific competencies
  - leaders // primus inter pares



# 1. Transformations of academic work (3)

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- Individuation as processes “producing a diffraction of the social”
  - Instruments allowing forms of individuation: citation-index, web of science, H-index, rankings
  - Transparency about the performance of colleagues
  - A common group of equals sharing the same norms // differentiated salaries and work conditions



# 1. Transformations of academic work (4)

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## ■ Integration

- Organisations “whose integrative function is recognized today”
  - More interdependence because of more division of work
  - Increase in collective devices and practices at the infra-organisational level.

*The British case and the RAE:*

- more collective practices (seminars, mentoring, etc.) at the department level.
  - individual success depends on increased collective collaboration and exchanges at the departmental level.
- “The adoption of shared ideals and common representations”: the resilience of the academic identities



# 1. Transformations of academic work (5)

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- Regulation as the “continuous movement of creation, recomposition and destruction of rules”
  - Academic review and scientific criteria are playing an increasing role...
  - ... but non-academic rules, norms and standards are developing in parallel



## 2. Transformations of academic labour markets

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## 2. Transformations of academic labour markets <sup>(1)</sup>

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- Market segmentation as an analytical framework (Doeringer and Piore 1971)
- Primary *versus* secondary labour markets
  - The increase in secondary labour markets...
  - But also less pathways from secondary to primary labour markets



## 2. Transformations of academic labour markets (2)

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### ■ Two phenomenon

#### ➤ External labour markets

- Become highly valorised (being local or "native" is wrong)
- The more prestigious way to make a career

#### ➤ More equipped internal labour markets

- Universities as internal labour markets
- Increasing equipment of the internal labour market
  - introduction of merit-salaries,
  - contracts by objectives,
  - advancement rules etc.



## 2. Transformations of academic labour markets (3)

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- New contractual arrangements between universities and academics
  - From universities as hosting places...
  - ... to universities as employers
  - A paradoxical trend : more institutional commitment *versus* more flexibility





# 3. Transformations of academic organizations

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## 3. Transformations of academic organizations (1)

- Reforms affecting the governance of universities
  - Delegation of tasks previously in the hand of the public authorities
  - Strengthened executive leaders / weakened deliberative bodies
  - Collegial governance is challenged by university boards



## 3. Transformations of academic organizations (2)

- Universities as organizations (Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersonn 2000)
  - Drawing boundaries and constructing institutional identities
    - “Being special”, i.e. emphasizing singularities and “distinctiveness” => building specific assets
    - Increased tension between being committed to a discipline than and to a university: towards “local cosmopolites”?



# 3. Transformations of academic organizations (3)

## ➤ Reinforcing the hierarchy

- More coordination as well as more control on individual behaviours *vis-à-vis* the overall institutional project
- Multiple evaluation

## ➤ Looking for rationality

- Rationalising the production process within universities
- Promoting responsibility, relevance, accountability



# Conclusion

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# Conclusion

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- The three dimensions (work, labour markets and organization) play one with another: some examples
- Two main consequences (and issues to study):
  - A move of academic work towards other forms of work?
  - The academic profession, more and more differentiated



Thank you very much !



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