

*Chris Lorenz*

## Fixing the Facts

### The Rise of New Public Management, the Metrification of “Quality” and the Fall of the Academic Professions

#### ABSTRACT

In this article I argue that neo-liberal reforms of universities since the 1980's have installed a new type of governance – usually known as New Public Management (NPM) – that is undermining the very idea of professionalism. NPM does so basically by replacing professional ideas and practices concerning the judgment of quality by the continuous “metrification of output” in both the domain of teaching and of research. As the idea of the university is based on the idea of professional specialisation, NPM is rendering the discussion about “the idea of the university” irrelevant. NPM does so especially by “impact factor measurement” and by university ranking, but in the Dutch case also by using “performance agreements” between the government and the universities that force faculties to produce fixed “outputs”. Simultaneously, in terms of labour relations, the faculty's autonomy is effectively undermined by replacing tenured faculty positions by casualised academic labour. Therefore NPM also requires the permanent “re-education” of the faculty – usually advertised in NPM-New Speak as the faculty's “professionalisation” – although in fact it boils down to the faculty's de-professionalisation. The article primarily uses the example of the Dutch universities in order to analyse “impact factor measurement” and “performance agreements” and their role in the general neoliberal economisation of academic teaching and research.

Keywords: *neoliberalism, New Public Management, quality assessment, metrification, impact factor, professionalism, de-professionalisation, casualisation, labour relations*

## Introduction

In this article I want to argue for one thesis.<sup>1</sup> This is the thesis that the continuing spread of neoliberalism and of New Public Management (NPM) since the 1980s is rendering increasingly obsolete the debate about “the idea of the university” – a debate that is taking place on a regular basis in many places around the world.<sup>2</sup> It does so by presenting the idea of professions and of professionalism as obsolete. After all, the university is an institution of professional specialists, as Max Weber already emphasised almost a century ago (in 1917).<sup>3</sup> Therefore the university cannot exist without specialised professions. Neoliberalism and NPM do away with professional self-regulation and replace it by an ever growing system of quantified controls.<sup>4</sup> Before I present my arguments, I will first introduce and contextualise my thesis with a scene from a television show, and with two quotes.

- 1 This article is based on a paper that I presented at the “Idea of University and the Future of Knowledge” Conference on September 19–20, 2013 in Utrecht, The Netherlands. I dedicate this article to my former colleague and friend Grahame Lock, who untimely died on 21 July 2014. I want to thank Rod Aya for his comments on an earlier version of this article, the Gerda Henkel Foundation for its financial support of my research and the Institute of Social Movements at the Ruhr-University Bochum for its hospitality.
- 2 For neoliberalism and its history see: David Harvey: *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford 2005; Matthieu Hilgers: *The Historicity of the Neoliberal State*, in: *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* 20:1 (2012), pp. 80–94. For academics as professionals see: Keith Roberts/Karen Donahue: *Professing Professionalism: Bureaucratization and Deprofessionalization in the Academy*, in: *Sociological Focus* 33:4 (2000), pp. 365–383, esp. pp. 366–368; Jim Barry: *The New Public Management and Higher Education: A Human Cost?*, in: Mike Dent/John Chandler/Jim Barry (eds.): *Questioning the New Public Management*, London 2004, pp. 164–65; Robert-Jan van Pelt: *Office or Chambers?: Notes Toward a Brief for the Professorial Chambers* (unpublished). For the discussion about the idea of the university see: Ulrich Sieg/Dietrich Korsch (eds.): *Die Idee der Universität heute*, Munich 2005; Christian Krijnen/Chris Lorenz/Joachim Umlauf (eds.): *Wahrheit oder Gewinn?: Über die Ökonomisierung von Universität und Wissenschaft*, Würzburg 2011; Stefan Collini: *What Are Universities For?*, London 2012; *The Bonfire of the Universities*, in: *Eurozine*, 7 January 2010, available online at: [www.eurozine.com/comp/focalpoints/bologna.html](http://www.eurozine.com/comp/focalpoints/bologna.html) (accessed 12 May 2014).
- 3 Max Weber: *Wissenschaft als Beruf*, in: Johannes Winckelmann (ed.): *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, 6th ed., Tübingen, 1985, pp. 582–613.
- 4 See: Richard Münch: *Globale Eliten, lokale Autoritäten: Bildung und Wissenschaft unter dem Regime von PISA*, Frankfurt 2009; Richard Münch: *Akademischer Kapitalismus: Über die politische Ökonomie der Hochschulreform*, Berlin 2011; Chris Lorenz (ed.): *If You’re so Smart, Why Aren’t You Rich?: Universiteit, Markt & Management*, Amsterdam 2008; Christian Krijnen/Chris Lorenz/Joachim Umlauf (eds.): *Wahrheit oder Gewinn?: Chris Lorenz: If You’re so Smart, Why Are You Under Surveillance? Universities, Neoliberalism and New Public Management*, in: *Critical Inquiry* 38:3 (2012), pp. 599–630.

## Professionalism and Quantified Control in *The Wire*

I wish to illustrate my thesis by a scene from the episode *Dead Soldiers* in *The Wire* (2004).<sup>5</sup> *The Wire* is an American television crime drama series set and produced in and around the Police Department of Baltimore, Maryland. The series is known for its realism and realistic use of language – characteristics that derive from fact that its texts were primarily written by the former reporter David Simon, who has had a long career reporting on crime and the police. He cooperated with producer Ed Burns, who is a former detective of the Narcotics and Homicide Division.

Baltimore is known for its extensive drug scene and related crime problems, including a high rate of homicide. Of course the university is not the same as a police department, but nevertheless there are extremely illuminating similarities of how quantified control – carried out by managers – is affecting the work floor and professionalism in both institutions.

In the clip I have in mind, the viewer witnesses a meeting between the police district commanders of Baltimore and two of their bosses, William Rawls and Ervin Burrell. It has been a long time since the two exchanged actual patrolling the streets of Baltimore for taking the best seats in the office and imposing the political wish list of the mayor concerning crime rates on the rest of the police department. In this meeting, the district commanders are held accountable by their bosses for the crime rates in their districts, and for the fact that these rates differ from the policy aims of Baltimore's mayor. In fact, the commanders whose districts show the wrong statistics are publicly humiliated by Rawls and Burrell and ultimately threatened to lose their rank.

The absurdity of this attitude is not lost on the district Majors. In the scene preceding the meeting, two black police district Majors, Howard “Bunny” Colvin and Marvin Taylor, appear in the men's room just before the meeting. The viewer hears Taylor (soon to be relieved of his command for producing “wrong” statistics despite conforming to policy guidelines) throwing up in a toilet. When he comes out he says: “I just can't take this shit, Bunny”. Colvin tries to calm his upset colleague down: “It'll pass. They're just riding you now. This week it's you, next week it will be somebody new. The worst they can do to you is to bust you back to lieutenant.” Taylor answers: “I don't even want to think what these motherfuckers can do. You don't either”.

5 See Wikipedia articles on David Simon and Ed Burns, at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Simon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Simon) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ed\\_Burns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ed_Burns) (accessed on 2 January 2014). Only recently I discovered that I was neither the first, nor the only one using *The Wire* as a source of inspiration for “disciplinary reflection”. See Matthew Wood: Lessons from *The Wire*: Epistemological Reflections on the Practice of Sociological Research, in: *The Sociological Review* 62:4 (2014).

After this short conversation they leave for the meeting where – as they expected – Taylor is humiliated before he is relieved from his command. Next, Colvin is summoned to explain why the crime rates in his district have gone up instead of down, as the mayor had promised his voters (and as the subdivision named “*Stat. Com*” has transformed into nicely projected graphs).<sup>6</sup> Colvin answers that he is very sorry that his statistics are true to the facts; he had checked and double-checked them. He has no explanation for the fact that the crime rate in his district has gone up two per cent instead of down, and therefore is not able to match the mayor’s policy plans. Lack of experience cannot be his problem because he is about to retire only a few months later. In defence of the unwelcome facts he can only state: “Sometimes the Gods are uncooperative”.

This answer, predictably, just solicits more vitriol from Rawls, who explicitly asks him to deliver the crime stats that he had promised the mayor, and from Burrell, who tells him: “I don’t care how many years you have on this job, if the felony rates don’t fall, you most certainly will. [...] If the Gods are fucking you, you just find a way to fuck them back. It’s Baltimore, gentlemen. The Gods will not save you”.

“Fixing” the stats, to make crime rates appear to drop, clearly is the only option available for those district commanders that do not want to risk their job.<sup>7</sup> Sometime later Colvin is also relieved from his command. He thus is degraded in rank with serious consequences for his pension claims. In later episodes he will therefore return as a private detective.<sup>8</sup> So much for *The Wire* with its intense confrontation between managers, who take their lead from politics and from projected statistics, and the district Majors, who can be seen as representing the professionals that are taking their lead from professional standards. So much for “disciplining” statistics used by management on professionals as a form of quantified control – with systematic, institutional dysfunction and a “blame and shame” culture as a result (“shit rolls down the hill”, as one police officer phrased it in a nutshell in *The Wire*).<sup>9</sup>

6 See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CompStat> (accessed on 3 January 2014).

7 For a factual example concerning the police of New York see <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2012/06/fbi-crime-stats-fudged-the-wire-nypd>.

8 See Wikipedia entry, Howard »Bunny« Colvin, at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard\\_%22Bunny%22\\_Colvin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_%22Bunny%22_Colvin) (accessed on 3 January 2014).

9 See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Wire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wire). Institutional\_dysfunction (accessed on 3 January 2014), pp. 16–17; Russell Craig/Joel Amernic/ Dennis Tourish: Perverse Audit Culture and Accountability of the Modern Public University, in: *Financial Accountability & Management* 30:1 (2014), pp. 1–24; Rosalind Gill: Academics, Cultural Workers and Critical Labour Studies, in: *Journal of Cultural Economy* 7:1 (2014), pp. 12–13. For the Dutch situation see Willem Halffman/Hans Radder: Het Academisch Manifest, in: *Krisis: Tijdschrift voor Actuele Filosofie* 3 (2013), pp. 2–18, available online at: <http://www.krisis.eu/content/2013-3/krisis-2013-3-01-halfman-radder.pdf>

As to its disciplinary tactics and repertoire there is a remarkable similarity between institutions that function under the rule of NPM and the institutions that functioned under former state-communism. In both cases in practice management has a totalitarian character: managers tend to regard dissenting opinions of employees - and especially criticism - as the “subversion” of order and as “poison”.<sup>10</sup>

Let’s move from the world of “faction” in *The Wire* to the factual world of higher education and research – which transpires to be a world with a strong fictional character, as we shall see.

## Quantified Control and Professionalism in Higher Education

My first introductory quote is from the last major policy paper by Dutch government concerning universities in the Netherlands, entitled *Quality in Plurality*. This policy paper has been adopted by the present Dutch government, which turned it into a

10 See for example Marla Gottschalk: Managers Beware: What Toxic “Jane” or “Joe” Can Do to Your Team, published online at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/article/20140426191009-128811924-managers-beware-what-toxic-jane-or-joe-can-do-to-your-team>; Hanny Lerner: How To Get Rid Of Toxic Employees – And Hire Right, published online at: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/hannylerner/2013/10/05/how-to-get-rid-of-toxic-employees-and-discover-the-toxic-ones>, (accessed on 23 May 2014); Simon Springer: The Violence of Neoliberalism, in: Simon Springer et al. (eds.): *The Routledge Handbook of Neoliberalism* (forthcoming): “Concealed beneath the allure of sirens, neoliberalism is actually a cacophony of violence and conflict, where there is profound dissonance between what it promises and what it ultimately delivers” (p. 11). I have elaborated on the similarities and affinities of neoliberal managerialism and state communist bureaucratism in *If You Are So Smart, Why Are You Under Surveillance?* (pp. 614–616) and argued that while state communism represents totalitarianism of the public sector, NPM represents totalitarianism of the private sector.

Basically NPM is characterised by the same hubris concerning the facts and the same refusal to acknowledge the difference between the “is” and the “ought” as former state communism. Alain Supiot in “Europe won over to the communist market economy” has elaborated the affinities of state communism and neoliberalism after 1990: “Arrived at with what capitalism and communism had in common (economism and abstract universalism), this hybrid system borrows from the market wholesale competition, free trade and individual utility maximisation, and from communism its “limited democracy”, the instrumentalisation of the law, an obsession with quantification and the complete disconnection between the rulers and the ruled.” (see: [http://www.globallabour.info/en/2008/07/europe\\_won\\_over\\_to\\_the\\_communi.html](http://www.globallabour.info/en/2008/07/europe_won_over_to_the_communi.html); accessed 12 May 2014). Also see Alain Supiot: Under Eastern Eyes, in: *New Left Review* 73 (2012), pp. 29–36, available online at: <http://newleftreview.org/II/73/alain-supiot-under-eastern-eyes> (accessed on 12 May 2014).

law in 2013 (*Wet Kwaliteit in Verscheidenheid Hoger Onderwijs*).<sup>11</sup> The core of this policy is refreshingly original: to concentrate public funding for scientific research on a limited number of nine top *economic* sectors: “No business as usual, the task [of the government] is to use science more effectively as fuel in the pipeline ‘knowledge-knowhow-cash register’”.<sup>12</sup> As a consequence of this economic policy, universities are now demanding the “valorisation” (*valorisering*) of research from the faculty, meaning that you can show how your research will fuel the pipeline “knowledge-knowhow-cash register”. Vice versa, many academics in the human sciences who apply for research grants now are trying to make plausible that their actual core interest and activity was and is “creative industry”, being the only designated economic “top sector” that looks slightly familiar to them.

The second quote is taken from the opening lines of the article *Living with the H-Index* published by the British sociologist Roger Burrows who explains the long term effects of the economisation of the university on the work floor:

Something has changed in the [British] academy. Many academics are exhausted, stressed, overloaded, suffering from insomnia, feeling anxious, hurt, guilt, and ‘out-of-placeness’. One can observe it all around: a deep, affective, somatic crisis threatens to overwhelm us [...]. We know this; yet somehow we feel unable to reassert ourselves [...]. In our brave new world, it seems that a single final criterion of value is recognised: a quantitative, economic criterion. All else is no more than a means. And there is a single method for ensuring that this criterion is satisfied: quantified control.<sup>13</sup>

11 See: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap: Kwaliteit in verscheidenheid: Strategische Agenda Hoger Onderwijs: Onderzoek en Wetenschap, Antwerp/The Hague 2011, available online at <https://www.eerstekamer.nl/9370000/1/j9vvhwtbnzpbzcc/vjbf-d5iyi1z2/f=y.pdf> (accessed on 2 January 2014).

12 “Geen business as usual, de opdracht is de wetenschap nog beter in te zetten als brandstof in de pijplijn kennis-kunde-kassa” (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap: Kwaliteit in Verscheidenheid 2011, available online at: <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2011/07/01/kwaliteit-in-verscheidenheid.html> (accessed at 2 January 2014). All Dutch application forms now require the applicant to fill in how she plans to “valorise” the results of her research. For the Dutch topsectoren policy see: <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/ondernemersklimaat-en-innovatie/investeren-in-topsectoren> (accessed on 2 January 2014). The nine Dutch “top sectors” are; 1. Horticulture and Basic Materials; 2. Agri & Food; 3. Water; 4. Life Sciences & Health; 5. Chemical Industry; 6. High Tech; 7. Energy; 8. Logistics; 9. Creative Industry.

13 Roger Burrows: *Living with the H-Index?: Metric Assemblages in the Contemporary Academy*, in: *The Sociological Review* 60:2 (2012), pp. 355–356. Burrows is citing: Grahame Lock/Herminio Martins: *Quantified Control and the Mass Production of “Psychotic Citizens”*, available online at <http://espacestemp.net/document8555.html> (accessed on 28 March 2014). The various, visible and hidden forms of resistance against the new

The bulk of this article concerns the question how quantified control affects academic work.

I chose the fragments from *The Wire* because they nicely illustrate my thesis that New Public Management undermines professionalism as such – and I will give some arguments below.<sup>14</sup> My basic argument is that professions need autonomy in order to function properly and that quantified control makes this impossible. So NPM creates conditions in which professionals can't work to put my argument in a nutshell. This holds for both the policemen in *The Wire* as well as for the academic professionals

neoliberal working conditions and hegemonic neoliberal discourse by both faculty and by students are increasingly being researched and analysed, especially focusing on the UK, the Netherlands, the US, Australia and New Zealand. No overall comparative studies seem to exist as yet, nor any disciplinary location of this type of research. See: Martin Parker/David Jary: *The McUniversity: Organization, Management, and Academic Subjectivity*, in: *Organization* 2:2 (1995), pp. 319–338; Chris Lorenz: *Riddles of Neoliberal University-Reform: The Student Protests of 2009 as Bologna's "Stress Test"*, in: Christian Krijnen/Chris Lorenz/Joachim Umlauf (eds.): *Wahrheit oder Gewinn?*, pp. 37–57; Rosalind Gill: *Breaking the Silence: The Hidden Injuries of the Neoliberal University*, in: Ryan Flood/Rosalind Gill (eds.): *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections*, London 2010, pp. 228–244; Susan Ryan: *Academic Zombies: A Failure of Resistance or a Means of Survival?*, in: *Australian Universities Review* 54:2 (2012), pp. 1–11; Katherine Bode/Leigh Dale: *"Bullshit"?: An Australian Perspective: Or, What Can an Organisational Change Impact Statement Tell us About Higher Education in Australia?*, in: *Australian Humanities Review* 53 (2012), available online at: <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-November-2012/bode&dale.html> (accessed on 9 December 2013); Meta Gorup: *Beyond the Cookie Factory: Ways of Collectively Resisting New Public Management at VU University*, MA thesis (2013), available online at: [http://www.fsw.vu.nl/nl/Images/Thesis%20Meta%20Gorup%20COM\\_tcm30-365813.pdf](http://www.fsw.vu.nl/nl/Images/Thesis%20Meta%20Gorup%20COM_tcm30-365813.pdf); Andrew Nadolny/Suzanne Ryan: *McUniversities Revisited: a Comparison of University and McDonald's Casual Employee Experiences in Australia*, in: *Studies in Higher Education* (2013), pp. 1–16; Rosalind Gill: *Academics, Cultural Workers and Critical Labour Studies*, in: *Journal of Cultural Economy* 7:1 (2014), pp. 12–30; Nikki Sullivan/Jane Simon: *Academic Work Cultures: Somatic Crisis in the Enterprise University*, in: *Somatechnics* 4:2 (2014), pp. 205–218; Nan Seuffert: *Engagement, Resistance and Restructuring: A Legal Challenge*, in: *Somatechnics* 4:2 (2014), pp. 272–287; Kane Xavier Faucher: *Alienation and Precarious Contract. Academic Staff in the Age of Neoliberalism*, in: *Confero* 2:1 (2014), pp. 35–71; Ellen Ball, Erella Grassiani and Kate Kirk: *Neoliberal Individualism in Dutch Universities: Teaching and Learning Anthropology in an Insecure Environment*, in: *Learning and Teaching* 7:3 (2014), pp. 46–72.

14 I have elaborated the political context of NPM and its basic assumptions and implications more extensively in my *If You're So Smart, Why Are You Under Surveillance?* and in *If You're So Smart Why Aren't You Rich?*

staffing the university.<sup>15</sup> Hence I wish to elaborate on the sociological characteristics of professions and on the differences between professionals on the one side and workers as well as employees on the other.

The crucial sociological distinction is that professions determine their own *standards* – their own criteria of evaluation – to ensure the quality that their professions require. Therefore all professions determine their own professional hierarchies. This hierarchy is ultimately based upon the reputation of the individual professionals. His or her reputation is in turn based on the assessment by the professional community; in this case, the contribution of the individual scholar to the profession's body of knowledge. Moreover, professions determine their own procedures of inclusion and of exclusion. Because of this self-determination, professions are basically self-governing institutions when it comes to quality standards. In order for the professions to function, academics need this autonomy, and universities – if they take quality control seriously and work professionally – need representative shared-governance by all teaching and researching members of the faculty.<sup>16</sup>

In the Netherlands, however, the principle of shared-governance was replaced in 1997 by a strictly bureaucratic top/down model including a strict hierarchical ordering of all faculty positions and tasks, like in an ideal-typical Weberian bureaucracy. Typically, all faculty activities since the introduction of the *Universitaire Functie Ordening* (UFO) in 2003 have been subdivided in a limited number of “competences” – since 2011: 40! – which are strictly connected to “functional profiles” (*functieprofielen*) and to hierarchical positions. Therefore the traditional tripartite stratification of the faculty in assistant, associate and full professorships has been further differentiated into a genuinely bureaucratic labyrinth. Typically too, at all levels all important activities require authorisation and the signature by “the superior” (*de leidinggevende*).<sup>17</sup> This

15 I am not the first to compare the academic world to the world of crime neither. See for example: Alexandre Afonso: How Academia Resembles a Drug Gang, published online at: <http://alexandreafonso.wordpress.com/2013/11/21/how-academia-resembles-a-drug-gang/> (accessed on 12 May 2014). Characteristic for both the world of crime and the world of academia is that the personal risks that come with the job are high, that the average chances of a career in the long run are comparatively small and that only very few of the rank and file ever make it to the top.

16 For the historical relationship between education and democracy as ideals in the US see: Wendy Brown: The End of Educated Democracy, in: *The Humanities and the Crisis of the Public University*, theme issue of *Representations* 116:1 (2011), pp. 19–41; Wendy Brown: Save the university, lecture held in Berkeley on September 26, 2009, available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aR4xYBGdQgw> (accessed on 12 May 2014)

17 See [http://www.vsnul.nl/functie\\_orderingsystem\\_ufo.html](http://www.vsnul.nl/functie_orderingsystem_ufo.html). Also Hans Radder summarised neoliberal policies concerning higher education and research in three trends: 1. Economisation; 2. Hierarchisation; 3. Bureaucratisation. See Hans Radder: Waartoe wetenschap? Over haar filosofische rechtvaardiging en maatschappelijke legitimering, available online

model received the Orwellian name “steering at a distance” (*sturen op afstand*) and was – also faithful to the inverted logic of Orwell’s *1984* – advertised as the solution to “the problem of bureaucracy”.<sup>18</sup> The then minister of education, Jo Ritzen, in order to “modernise” the organisational structure of the universities, put this in motion, a “modernisation” that was conceived of by his “academic” management advisers Roel in ‘t Veld and Walter Kickert.<sup>19</sup>

Since 1997 the academic-professional concept of quality has been replaced by the NPM notion of “efficiency in teaching” and “impact factor” in research.<sup>20</sup> And because “educational efficiency” and “impact factor” are fixed in quantitative terms by NPM management and are based on neoliberal political priorities – namely, budget cuts on public spending and the economisation of all sciences – the academics can no longer work according to their own professional standards<sup>21</sup> Both the self-governance of professionals concerning quality standards and the professional time regime (that is the time needed to meet the professional criteria) are replaced by an externally imposed regime of quantified control, like the projected crime statistics in *The Wire* and the educational statistics in the so-called “performance agreements” of the Dutch

at: [http://dare.uvu.vu.nl/bitstream/handle/1871/50855/Afscheidscollege\\_Radder.pdf](http://dare.uvu.vu.nl/bitstream/handle/1871/50855/Afscheidscollege_Radder.pdf) (accessed on 3 December 2014)

- 18 See Chris Lorenz, *If You’re So Smart, Why Are You Under Surveillance?*
- 19 See Roel in’t Veld: *Kennisdemocratie: Opkomend Stormtij*, The Hague 2010; Walter Kickert: *Steering at a Distance: A New Paradigm of Public Governance in Dutch Higher Education*, in: *Governance* 8:1 (1995), pp. 135–157. Typically Roel in ‘t Veld – who had been recruited as undersecretary (*staatssecretaris*) of Education and Sciences in the Dutch government by prime minister Wim Kok in 1993 and who had been advertised by Kok as a “kwaliteitsimpuls” – had to resign from his position after ten days because a journalist found out that he had failed to report on paid additional jobs and that he had registered commercial advices under the heading of “scientific output” during his time as part-time university professor. Without any doubt Roel in ‘t Veld’s major problem was – retrospectively – that he was “ahead of his time” with the “valorisation” of his “research” because his practice has in the meantime become official Dutch government policy. No wonder therefore that he has been collecting new professorships and advisory jobs like cherries after his retirement from public politics. See online at: [http://www.parlement.com/id/vg09llpm1esy/r\\_j\\_roel\\_in\\_t\\_veld](http://www.parlement.com/id/vg09llpm1esy/r_j_roel_in_t_veld) (accessed on 12 May 2014).
- 20 When all students get their (ECTS) credit points “on time” the “teaching efficiency” of the teacher is 100 per cent. When ten per cent of the students are “delayed” in obtaining their credit points the teachers “teaching efficiency” is 90 per cent etc. Therefore striving after maximum “teaching efficiency” always manifests itself in striving after a minimal “drop out” rate. Also “selection” of student performances by the teacher on qualitative grounds always appears as a “drop out” and as a “loss of production” within this scheme. See Chris Lorenz: *If You’re So Smart, Why Are You Under Surveillance?*, pp. 601–610; 621–625.
- 21 See Grahame Lock/Herminio Martins, *Quantified Control*; Grahame Lock/Chris Lorenz: *Revisiting the University Front*, in: *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 26:5 (2007), pp. 405–418; Chris Lorenz, *If You’re So Smart, Why Are You Under Surveillance?*

universities (*Prestatie-afspraken* is the NPM newspeak word in Dutch).<sup>22</sup> Over the last 30 years the so-called impact factor of publications has turned into the golden standard to measure the quality of individual and collective performance in research.

### Some Riddles of “Impact Factor” Measurement

The Austrian sociologist Christian Fleck has recently analysed the steep rise to the top of impact factor measurement. Both its short history and its utter lack of any disciplinary rationality are nothing less than bewildering.<sup>23</sup> This holds for the fields that are recognised as “academic disciplines”, the journals that are excluded and the ones that are included in the citation indexes, the time span in which citations are registered, the fact that only journal articles are registered and no books or bookchapters, and last but not least: the way in which the nationality of the authors of publications is established by the firms that produce the citation indexes. Establishing the nationality of authors has become increasingly important because national governments increasingly want to show off the ‘effectiveness’ of their policies concerning scientific research and higher education.

Fleck did a case-by-case check for sociology with remarkable results: in all cases the ostensible “country of publication” was the location of the publishing house and *not* of the author(s). For instance the *Journal of Sociology* is indicated as being located in England only because its publisher Sage is, whereas the editors are all located in Australia because the journal is the official journal of The Australian Sociological Association (TASA). Scrutinising journals’ websites revealed that it is impossible to assign a nation-state to each of them. Whenever the group of editors assembled scholars from more than one country Fleck categorized them as “international”. The “nationality” of many sociological journals consequently changed into “international” and in particular the United Kingdom and the Netherlands lost many presumed ‘British’ and ‘Dutch’ journals.<sup>24</sup>

Fleck’s finding that the nationality of academic journals is identified with the nationality of the publisher may help to explain what is known as “the Dutch paradox”. This paradox refers to the supposed fact that the productivity of Dutch researchers is significantly higher than of most researchers outside the Netherlands.<sup>25</sup> This “fact” is

22 For the effects of the neoliberal time management see: Paula Baron: Working the Clock: The Academic Body on Neoliberal Time, in: *Somatechnics* 4:2 (2014), pp. 253–271.

23 Christian Fleck: The Impact Factor Fetishism, in: *European Journal of Sociology* 54:2 (2013), pp. 327–356.

24 Christian Fleck, Impact Factor Fetishism, pp. 344–345.

25 Some OECD-reporters have even traced “good value for money” back to “ancient Dutch culture” and warn of “national complacency”: “Good value for money is one of the main

quite surprising because Dutch spending on universities and research is below the European average. Moreover, it is increasingly falling in relative terms due to the sustained Dutch saving policy on education and research.<sup>26</sup> Therefore successive Dutch governments have congratulated themselves on impact factor statistics that suggest the Dutch had found the formula of “sitting on the first row for a penny” (‘voor een dubbeltje op de eerste rang zitten’). What is regarded as common sense for most other professional activities, from playing football or tennis over performing music to collecting art: the insight that there is a strong and positive correlation between the size of an investment and its output, is explicitly denied for academic activities.<sup>27</sup> Therefore all Dutch governments, irrespective of their political colours, have stubbornly continued to save money on universities since the 1980s.

Fleck’s findings, however, suggests that the comparatively positive productivity of Dutch research may be attributed to other factors than the nation’s efficiency. The first factor is that the Netherlands – being a tax haven for multinationals – is the registered home base of some large publishing houses that produce above-average numbers of academic journals – such as Elsevier Reed and Wolters Kluwer. This fact helps to explain why “Dutch” journals are doing so well in international comparisons.

The second factor is that publications are registered as Dutch when at least one of its authors is based at a Dutch university (and not necessarily being a Dutch citizen). This factor accounts for some 50 per cent of the “Dutch” publications, because half of them have at least one author who is based at a non-Dutch university.<sup>28</sup>

characteristics of the entire system” (p. 93). Good value for money is a commendable quality, and it has deep roots in the Dutch culture. However, good value for money can be had at any level of performance, and it is a criterion that carries with it the risk of inducing national complacency.” See Simon Marginson et al. (eds.): *OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education, Netherlands 2008*, p. 16.

26 See Chris Lorenz: *It’s Getting Better All the Time!: Universiteit en New Public Management*, in: Fenna Vergeer (ed.): *De Onderwijsbubbel: Over kennisverarming en zelfverrijking*, Antwerpen 2011, pp. 86–111.

27 The VU University Amsterdam, for example, has increasingly used the mindboggling slogan “Less is more”. See Verontruste VU’ers zoeken nog naar oplossing, in: *Ad Valvas*, 26 April 2013, available online at: <http://www.advalvas.vu.nl/nieuws/verontruste-vu%E2%80%99ers-zoeken-nog-naar-oplossing> (accessed on 3 December 2014); *Het nieuwe toverwoord bij de VU is impactscore*, in: *De Volkskrant* 12 July 2012, available online at: <http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2844/Archief/archief/article/detail/3285272/2012/07/12/Het-nieuwe-toverwoord-bij-de-VU-is-impactscore.dhtml> (accessed on 12 May 2014); Cf. Gail Kinman: *Doing More with Less?: Work and Wellbeing in Academics*, in: *Somatechnics* 4:2 (2014), pp. 219–235, for the psychosomatic effects of the “less is more” policy on the faculty.

28 *Nederlands Observatorium van Wetenschap en Technologie (NOWT), Wetenschaps- en Technologie Indicatoren Rapport*, March 2010, p. 89, note 41. Moreover, a publication is

The third factor is also due to the method of measurement: the relative high “productivity” can partially be explained by the relative low number of Dutch researchers, as the authors of the NOWT-report mention in a footnote.<sup>29</sup>

The fourth factor is again related to the method of measurement: the authors of the NOWT-report state that the (high) level of aggregation of their data may have a “significant influence” on the collection of publications and thus on the citation- and impact scores.<sup>30</sup>

The fifth factor, explaining “Dutch productivity”, is also mentioned in the footnotes of the very same report that registers the Dutch success. Possible “biases” are the due to methods of measurement, such as the fact that the Web of Science predominantly registers publications in the English language and the fact that the set of registered journals changes continuously by the inclusion of new journals and the dropping of old ones. This constant change in the data set limits the validity of the measurements considerably, and makes comparisons over time adventurous to say the least.

The sixth factor concerns the assumption that the introduction of the measurement indicators of Web of Science is not causing disturbing “external” effects itself – and if they do, that they do this everywhere in the same manner.<sup>31</sup> The retroactivity of rankings is thus carefully ignored, including the established fact that the retroactivity varies with the “local” effects of rankings.<sup>32</sup>

attributed to all institutions where the co-authors are based in an equal measure. Therefore ‘success’ in bibliometry may have many fathers (p. 88, note 37).

- 29 Wetenschaps- en Technologie Indicatoren Rapport 2010, p. 91, note 44: “De hoge productiviteit is ook een gevolg van het relatief geringe aantal Nederlandse onderzoekers. De Nederlandse cijfers zullen worden herzien door CBS en OESO; na deze correctie zal het aantal publicaties per Nederlandse onderzoeker lager zijn, maar waarschijnlijk nog steeds een toppositie tot gevolg hebben”.
- 30 Wetenschaps- en Technologie Indicatoren Rapport 2010, p. 88–89, note 38: “Dit verschil in benadering kan leiden tot significante verschillen in onderliggende verzamelingen onderzoekspublicaties, en dus ook tot verschillende uitkomsten wat betreft publicatie-output en citatie-impact”.
- 31 Wetenschaps- en Technologie Indicatoren Rapport 2010, p. 89, note 40: “Verondersteld wordt dat deze onderzoeksoutput een redelijk goede afspiegeling vormt van de omvang van de onderzoeksactiviteit in de diverse landen. Echter, de resultaten van dergelijke bibliometrische indicatoren kunnen worden beïnvloed door meeteffecten, database-effecten en gedragseffecten van onderzoekers. Bijvoorbeeld, een uitbreiding van het Web of Science bestand met tijdschriften waarin bepaalde landen relatief veel publiceren, maar ook de positieve effecten van prestatiebevorderende evaluatiesystemen waarin bibliometrische indicatoren een prominente rol spelen. Er wordt gemakshalve aangenomen dat deze ‘externe’ effecten een marginale invloed hebben op deze uitkomsten en gelijkelijk van toepassing zijn op alle referentielanden en onderzoeks-instellingen binnen die landen”.
- 32 See Wendy Espeland/Michael Sauder: Rankings and Reactivity: How Public Measures Re-create Social Worlds, in: *American Journal of Sociology* 113:1 (2007), pp. 1–40. They point out that rankings especially generate strategic retroactive action in the “border zones”

So, all in all, on closer analysis one wonders on what grounds *other than political*, anybody would take the (national) measurement of productivity based on impact factors seriously.<sup>33</sup> Fleck's conclusion seems inescapable:

The quite recently established regime of IFs [impact factors] is driven by the business concerns of two international corporations, Thomson Reuters and Elsevier, and accepted as the gold standard in today's academic market by the newly emerging elite of university administrators and policy-makers, using it whenever it fits their impression management strategies.<sup>34</sup>

A recent case study on impact factor measurement by the Dutch philosopher of science Hans Radder corroborates Fleck's findings. Radder analysed four issues of well-known journals in philosophy and the social sciences and investigated how the factual citations compared to the presuppositions of impact factor measurement.<sup>35</sup> First he came to the conclusion that there are no factual grounds to prefer journal articles to book chapters because more than half of the factual citations in his sample refer to book chapters. His second conclusion is that the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) is based on a far shorter time frame – that is two years – than the actual citations suggest and therefore is practically meaningless. Moreover, approximately 25 per cent of the citations of journal articles refer to journals that are not included in Web of Science, so their “impact” is missing in the JIF. Given this huge gap between the actual practices of citation in the human and the social sciences, as researched by Fleck and Radder, and the presuppositions of Impact Factor measurement, the installing of the new regime of “impact factors” can be seen as the “Great Leap Forward” in the de-professionalisation of the faculty

of rankings because management tends to find it important that their institutions obtain or keep e.g. a position in the national or global top ten, top 20, top 50, top 100 etc.

33 All their provisos in the footnotes notwithstanding, the authors of the report have no doubt how to interpret the data of their research in the end: output-financing more or less explains higher productivity. See *Wetenschaps- en Technologie Indicatoren Rapport 2010*, p. 92. “De mate waarin wetenschappelijke publicatie-output als prestatie-indicator of als grondslag wordt toegepast voor financiering van onderzoek is een belangrijke verklarende factor; het is geen toeval dat de twee landen die ver zijn gevorderd in publicatie-output gestuurde financiering (Verenigd Koninkrijk en Australië) ook tot de meest productieve landen behoren. Met uitzondering van China laten de overige referentielanden een lichte daling zien in productiviteit”.

34 Christian Fleck, *Impact Factor Fetishism*, p. 355.

35 Hans Radder, *Waartoe wetenschap?*, pp. 8–9. The researched journals are *Journal for General Philosophy of Science*/*Zeitschrift für allgemeine Wissenschaftstheorie*, *Philosophy of Science*, *Minerva*, and *Science, Technology, and Human Values*.

in those disciplines. Small wonder that these disciplines are facing extremely stormy weather in recent times in the form of permanent budgetcuts, reorganisations and the destruction of specialisations.

## The De-Professionalisation of the Faculty

Paradoxically, simultaneous with their factual de-professionalisation, academic professionals have been systematically represented in NPM discourse as entrepreneurial subjects responsible for their own business, that is, for the (financial) output they produce for their university through cost “efficient” teaching and “excellent” research. Due to the continuing casualisation and taylorising of academic work (that results in the de-skilling of the faculty) research in the meantime is being transformed into a privilege of the happy few who are successful in obtaining research grants.<sup>36</sup> To describe the taylorisation of academic work in terms of the McDonaldisation of the McUniversities, as it has been usual since George Ritzer’s *The McDonaldisation of Society* (1993), however, is to miss the fact that the casualised workforce of McDonalds has far better working- and career conditions than casualised academics.<sup>37</sup> As Rosalind Gill has analysed, the precarious working conditions of the casualised academics – and most of the newcomers in NPM universities are casualised – are increasingly similar to the casualised labour force in the cultural sector.<sup>38</sup>

36 However, see Hilde de Weerd: Taken for Granted, in: *Times Higher Education*, 16 August 2012, available online at: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/taken-for-granted/420848.article> (accessed on 3 December 2014). As Willem Halffman and Hans Radder point out in *Het Academisch Manifest* the claims to “academic excellence” of the presumed “prestigious” university colleges in the Netherlands – like the Amsterdam University College – obscure the fundamental fact that these colleges only pay their faculty to teach and not to do research. These colleges therefore parasitise on the universities that still fund research for their faculty. It should not come as a surprise that an increasing number of Dutch universities have recently started to “free” their faculty of its remaining financed research tasks too (the so-called “*eerste geldstroom*”), thereby silently abolishing the “unity of teaching and research” and thus the very difference between academic and non-academic learning. Not accidentally in the NPM world, management is also claiming the right to determine what is prestigious for the faculty.

37 Andrew Nadolny/Suzanne Ryan, *McUniversities Revisited*. Also see: Tanner Mirrlees/Shahid Alvi: Taylorizing Academia: Deskillling Professors and Automating Higher Education, in: *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* 12:2 (2014), pp. 45–73.

38 Rosalind Gill: *Academics, Cultural Workers and Critical Labour Studies*. Of course this observation does not ignore that the – fast shrinking – tenured part of the faculty, especially the full professors, are working under different and far better conditions than their casualised colleagues. The point is that casualisation has become the rule while tenure has become the exception for newcomers in the university system.

The crucial fact here is that the control systems, increasingly advertised as “audits”, are not set and run by professionals themselves but by politicians and managers according to their political agenda.<sup>39</sup> The reality that many managers and politicians are *former* professionals is not relevant. What is relevant is that they no longer behave like professionals because they do not stick to the quality standards of their profession. Professionals know and acknowledge that “the Gods may be uncooperative”, as Major Colvin of Western Baltimore formulated it. To the contrary, managers and politicians presuppose that the Gods can be forced to cooperate and to obey their policy plans and statistics. If the facts contradict the statistics, it is so much the worse for the facts. That was the basic message broadcasted by Walsh and Burrell in *The Wire* to the professionals who had not understood this message.

As soon as the academic professionals are transformed into producers” of fixed outputs, and students into their consumers, the perversion of professionalism is guaranteed because professional standards of quality go down the drain. “Perverse stimuli” in order to meet policy goals by adapting the “output” to policy statistics irrespective of the professional quality standards then move to the centre of the university system. Institutional dysfunction and cynicism on the work-floor are the predictable results, just like in *The Wire*.<sup>40</sup> Campbell’s Law in social psychology – and Campbell used crime statistics as one example of his “law” in 1976 – would predict that much: “The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision making, the more subject it will be subject to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social process it was intended to monitor”.<sup>41</sup>

39 Cris Shore: *Audit Culture and Illiberal Governance: Universities and the Culture of Accountability*, in: *Anthropological Theory* 8:3 (2008), pp. 278–299; Mary Strathern (ed.): *Audit Cultures: Anthropological Studies in Accountability, Ethics and the Academy*, London 2000, also has clarified the completely self-referential nature of audits: the audit measures become targets and produce the effects they are supposed to measure, just like the crime statistics in *The Wire*. This fact is basically an instantiation of Campbell’s law. Wendy Espeland and Michael Sauder with *Rankings and Reactivity* make the same arguments for the effect of rankings and so does James C. Scott: *Two Cheers for Anarchism: Six Easy Pieces on Autonomy, Dignity, and Meaningful Work and Play*, Princeton 2012, pp. 101–129 for citation indexes.

40 Therefore enthusiasm concerning the functioning of the own institution has also turned into a requisite for working at the NPM university. The continuous proofs of dysfunctioning, as exemplified in diploma inflation, diploma frauds and other kinds of fraud (like plagiarism) in the Netherlands, nevertheless are always represented in NPM discourse as incidents. These incidents may be investigated by special commissions that individualise their case(s) in their reports and consistently advise improvements – without ever touching on the structural causes of institutional dysfunction.

41 Cited in Richard Münch/Len Ole Schäfer: *Rankings, Diversity and the Power of Renewal in Science: A Comparison between Germany, the UK and the US*, in: *European Journal of Education: Research, Development and Policy* 49:1 (2014), p. 60.

## Fixing the Output of the Faculty by Performance Agreements

Let me illustrate my last statement about fixed output and forcing the Gods to cooperate with policy plans and statistics with the example of the University of Utrecht – that is the Dutch university that usually comes out on top in the world rankings.<sup>42</sup> Just like all the other Dutch universities the University of Utrecht in 2012 has signed performance agreements with the Dutch government concerning the improvement of quality of education and research. These agreements are a result of the policy paper *Quality in Plurality*.<sup>43</sup> For simplicity's sake I will restrict myself to education here.

In order to increase the NPM quality of education, the management of University Utrecht has promised to reduce the drop-out rate of students systematically. Utrecht promised the government to reduce the drop-out rate after the first year from 20 per cent in 2006 and 18 per cent in 2010 to 15 per cent in 2016. The dropping out of students at universities thus can be meaningfully compared to the dropping of dead bodies in the police districts of Baltimore. In both cases politicians and managers regard the reduction of this rate as a crucial indicator of the improvement of “quality” that is identical to the “success” of their own policies. In both cases the professionals that do not produce the right “improvements” – at least in their statistics – are facing serious problems.<sup>44</sup> In this context the fact that the neoliberal universities are

42 Strategisch Plan Universiteit Utrecht 2012–2016, inclusief prestatieafspraken in het kader van het hoofdlijnenakkoord, available online at: [http://www.uu.nl/university/utrecht/NL/profiel/Profielenmissie/Documents/Strategisch\\_Plan\\_2012–2016.pdf](http://www.uu.nl/university/utrecht/NL/profiel/Profielenmissie/Documents/Strategisch_Plan_2012–2016.pdf) (accessed on 12 May 2014). The fact that two physicists who worked at Utrecht University – Gerard 't Hooft and Martin Veltman – were awarded with a Nobel Prize in 1999 – for fundamental research that they mainly conducted in the 1960's – has helped this university's ranking substantially. So ironically Utrecht University's major success took place a long time before university rankings were invented. The fact that Veltman had already left the University of Utrecht in 1981 for the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor (where he stayed until his retirement in 1996) did not make a difference either when it came to attributing the Nobel Prize to the University of Utrecht and thus to Utrechts present day ranking.

43 OCW en Universiteit Utrecht Tekenen Prestatieafspraken, available online at: <http://pers.uu.nl/ocw-universiteit-utrecht-tekenen-prestatieafspraken> (accessed on 28 March 2014). One can easily understand the general gist of the Dutch performance agreements when one looks at the police. Here the government agreed with police management that the police would produce a fixed number of tickets as their performance. Next the financial value of the tickets was booked as part of the budget of the police.

44 See <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2012/06/fbi-crime-stats-fudged-the-wire-nypd> (accessed on 28 March 2014), for the example of the New York police.

silently abolishing tenure and tenure track jobs, leaving most casualised newcomers completely dependent on HRM evaluations for new, temporary, contracts, is all the more significant.<sup>45</sup>

Utrecht has also promised the Dutch government to deliver more “excellent” students. Utrecht will raise the percentage of excellent students participating in honours courses from five per cent in 2006 and nine per cent in 2010 to 12 per cent in 2016. Again we see the promise of guaranteed “progress” by simply speeding up the diploma mill; it is “excellence on delivery”. And again those professionals that will not deliver “progress” will be facing similar problems as major Taylor and Colvin were facing in *The Wire*.<sup>46</sup>

Utrecht University is by no means the only institution promising the Dutch government exactly what it asks for, that is more “quality” in education and research for less money. All universities and other “schools” do.<sup>47</sup> For instance, the Fontys Hogescholen, a conglomerate of professional schools, have promised to deliver 95 per cent of its students with a degree within five years! In comparison to Fontys the promise of Utrecht University even appears fairly modest: it will only raise its present percentage of 74 per cent successful students within four years to 77 per cent in 2016 – in 2006 the percentage was 69 per cent – so there is still plenty of room for further “improvement” in the future.

So much for my educational examples of quantified systems of control for this moment, systems of which the performance agreements – that are increasingly being connected to the permanent procedures of “accreditation” of teaching programmes – only represent a top level, together with university rankings.<sup>48</sup> Below this top level there is a whole network of other quantified control systems, working from the level of the individual faculty member over the institutional and national levels to the

45 See Richard Moser: Overuse and Abuse of Adjunct Faculty Members Threaten Core Academic Values, in: *The Chronicle Of Higher Education*, 13 January 2014. This is also the real basis for the generational resentment that NPM discourse is mobilising against the older, tenured faculty members, who are often collectively disqualified as academically unfit baby boomers. See Chris Lorenz: Anything Goes: Debatteren over de universiteit in Nederland, in: *Beleid & Maatschappij* 37:2 (2010), pp. 154–160.

46 For telling Dutch examples see Vergeer (ed.): *De Onderwijsbubbel: Over kennisverarming en zelfverrijking*.

47 This practice is aptly parodied in: <http://www.speld.nl/2014/12/12/lageropgeleiden-voortaan-ook-hogeropgeleid/> (accessed on 28 March 2014).

48 Therefore the history of accreditation is also part of the history of NPM and of the Bologna Process, that uses the rhetoric of the free market but in practice in the last instance is relying on mechanisms of centralised control. For the Dutch case see: [http://www.nvaonet/bestaande\\_opleiding\\_nl](http://www.nvaonet/bestaande_opleiding_nl), and Chris Lorenz: Will the Universities Survive the European Integration?: Higher Education Policies in the EU and in the Netherlands Before and After the Bologna Declaration, in: *Sociologia Internationalis* 44:1 (2006), pp. 123–153.

international level. I am referring to the citation index, workload models, transparent costing data, research assessments, and teaching quality assessments. Ideally, all these systems are somehow coordinated by so-called Human Resource Management which is an integral part of New Public Management.<sup>49</sup> In fact, they all put increasing pressure on faculty members, especially on the fast growing casualized majority without tenure (-track), while stimulating a bewildering variety of perverse and counterproductive effects, ranging from strategic citing over (self-)plagiarism to outright fraud.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion: the Metrification of Quality and the “Re-Education” of the Faculty

Characteristic of the above mentioned external systems of control is that they basically replace the idea of professional quality by measurable quantity. They exchange professionalism for metrification. This metrification is predominantly based on so-called output indicators: output of research, output of teaching etc. New Public Management claims that metrification confers “transparency” and “objectivity” to “quality control” in closed and self-serving professions. Therefore (supposedly democratic) transparency, (supposedly democratic) accountability, and efficiency are the buzzwords in NPM discourse.<sup>51</sup> All the free market rhetoric notwithstanding, Richard Münch and Len Ole Schäfer have argued that “output-financing” of the universities simultaneously generates oligopoly-formation and what I propose to call “academic cannibalism”. By this I mean the creation of institutional stimuli that make the financially successful professionals drive the financially less successful ones out of competition for good. This policy comes with an immense “human cost” and is undermining the diversity and capacity for innovation of the university system *as such*.<sup>52</sup>

49 See Matthew Waring: All in This Together? HRM and the Individualisation of the Academic Worker, in: Higher Education Policy 26:3 (September 2013), pp. 397–419; Roger Burrows: Living with the H-Index?

50 Willem Halffman/Hans Radder, *Het Academisch Manifest*; Ruud Abma: *De Publicatiefabriek: Over de betekenis van de Affaire Stapel*, Nijmegen 2013; Russell Craig/Joel Amernic/Dennis Tourish: Perverse Audit Culture and Accountability of the Modern Public University, in: *Financial Accountability & Management* Vol. 30:1 (2014), pp. 1–24.

51 In *If You're So Smart, Why Are You Under Surveillance?* I have analysed NPM discourse on education as a “bullshit-discourse” in the sense that Harry Frankfurt gave the term in his *On Bullshit*, Princeton 2005. Also see: Jill Koyama/Brian Kania: When Transparency Obscures: The Political Spectacle of Accountability, in: *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* 12:1 (2014), pp. 143–169.

52 Richard Münch/Len Ole Schäfer: Rankings, Diversity and the Power of Renewal in Science: A Comparison Between Germany, the UK and the US, in: *European Journal of*

In the last instance NPM has moved the power of the professions to determine their own criteria of evaluation to a very small number of mainly US- and UK-based corporations that produce the data for university rankings.<sup>53</sup> For the humanities this is very bad news because the humanities hardly matter for these corporations. The typical “output” of the humanities – the monograph, especially – does not show up in their “output indicators”. I am now referring to corporations such as Thompson/Reuters (producing the Web of Knowledge), Elsevier Reed (producing Scopus) and the Times Higher Education Supplement (producing the THES ranking). This also holds for the Dutch NOWT-report, which is based on the data of Web of Science. In the report’s overview of impact factors the humanities are all of a sudden excluded *in toto* on basis of the surprising argument that citation scores in this domain are poor indicators of quality.<sup>54</sup>

Because all university rankings are based on a mix of output indicators, the rankings produce widely diverging results for most universities. Small wonder therefore that research on ranking has become a growth industry.<sup>55</sup> For example, in the 2012 global rankings, the Dutch university of Utrecht varied somewhere between nr. 50 and nr.100. Nevertheless, climbing in these rankings has become the primary policy goal of university management because climbing in ranking is perceived as the only proof of the success of management policies and of thus of the improvement of the university’s NPM quality. The fundamental fact that universities almost invariably occupy quite different positions in different rankings – with the remarkable consequence that the climbing and falling of a university may occur *simultaneously* – is simply ignored. This

Education 49:1 (2014), pp. 60–76.

53 See Rachele L. Brooks: Measuring University Quality, in: Review of Higher Education 29:1 (2005), pp. 1–21.

54 Wetenschaps- en Technologie Indicatoren Rapport 2010, p. 97, note 47, Tabel 5.3 Citatie-impact naar wetenschappelijke hoofdgebieden, geordend naar overall citatie-impact (2005–2008): “De scores van de alfawetenschappen (de hoofdgebieden Taal & Cultuur, en Recht) zijn niet opgenomen in deze tabel vanwege de gebrekkige waarde van citatiescores als prestatie-indicatoren in deze Nederlandse vakgebieden waarin wetenschappelijk communicatie nog steeds voor een belangrijk deel plaatsvindt via Nederlandstalige publicaties en boeken (in plaats van Engelstalige tijdschriften)”.

55 See for example: David D. Dill/Maarja Soo: Academic Quality, League Tables, and Public Policy: A Cross-National Analysis of University Ranking Systems, in: Higher Education 49:4 (2005), pp. 495–533; Marguerite Clarke: Special Issue: Higher Education Ranking and its Ascending Impact on Higher Education, in: Higher Education in Europe 32:1 (2007), pp. 59–70; David Pontille/Didier Torny: The Controversial Policies of Journal Ratings: Evaluating Social Sciences and Humanities, in: Research Evaluation 19:5 (2010), pp. 347–360; Christophe Charle: L’Évaluation des Enseignants-Chercheurs: Critiques et Propositions, in: Vingtième Siècle: Revue d’Histoire 102:2 (2009), pp. 159–170; Hildegard Matthies/Dagmar Simon (eds.): Wissenschaft unter Beobachtung: Effekte und Defekte von Evaluationen, Heidelberg 2008; Christian Fleck, Impact Factor Fetishism.

variety in ranking results may even be seen as a managerial advantage because it always allows management to pick its favourite ranking for its public relations, as Fleck also observes.

Therefore, the best thing university management can do is to establish its *own* ranking, like Leiden University has understood some years ago. In that case you can fix your own mix of output indicators and you can basically fix your own ranking. We could call this “rank fixing”, a term inspired by the recent discovery of “match fixing” in sports (in order to serve the needs of those who organise criminal gambling based on the fixed outcome of football matches). This retroactive – or: reflexive – behavioural pattern, is an instance of what “Campbell’s Law” states in social psychology.<sup>56</sup>

Given its increasing policy relevance ranking is far from an innocent practice. Increasingly neoliberal politicians and university management are channelling research funding exclusively into those branches of “their firm” that make “top” contributions to the university’s position in the rankings and are withholding funding from those branches that do not. This practice has already led to the shutting down of quite a few departments in the humanities and social sciences over the last 20 years – and most certainly there is more “concentration” to come because the neoliberal governments are simultaneously deciding which branches of the university are important for “the economy” and therefore are worthy of public funding in the future. In the United Kingdom and the United States the so-called STEM sciences have been labelled as such (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). In the Dutch case the representatives of nine economic “top sectors” have been installed by the government to determine which researchers shall live or die in the future. Recently new plans have been announced to centralise researchfunding and to use it directly as fuel in the pipeline “knowledge-knowhow-cash register”.<sup>57</sup> So quite a few academics are actually losing their jobs as a direct consequence of the policy and practice of valorisation and of ranking. Moreover, would-be future academics in an increasing number of “uneconomic” branches are confronted with blocked or non-existing career paths as a consequence of top sector and ranking policies. Small wonder therefore that not all faculty members are very enthusiastic about ranking and assessments.

56 See Wendy Espeland/Michael Sauder, *Rankings and Reactivity*.

57 See note 10 and Frank Donoghue: *The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities*, Fordham 2008. For the recent plans of Dutch government to centralize public researchfunding see: *Wetenschapvisie 2025: keuzes voor de toekomst*, at: <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2014/11/25/wetenschapvisie-2025-keuzes-voor-de-toekomst.html> (accessed 08–12–2014).

This lack of enthusiasm among the faculty is not unknown to university management given the fact that quite a few authors have published advices how to deal with this “toxic” problem – next to just getting rid of the “toxic” employees.<sup>58</sup> Tara Newman for instance advises university managers to actively recruit “missionaries” and “cheerleaders” among the faculty who can help management to solve the problem that “overwhelmingly, administrators are being faced with faculty resistance to assessment efforts”. [...] “The overwhelming viewpoint of faculty is that accreditation – and therefore assessment – is other-imposed and not meaningful to their work as instructors”.<sup>59</sup> Luckily Newman explains to management that this lack of enthusiasm of the faculty is based on their lack of understanding:

When there is a lack of understanding of assessment, faculty members tend to feel imposed upon. Questions of academic freedom arise. When the understanding is clear, however, an intrinsic motivation begins to develop and higher levels of importance are placed upon the efforts.<sup>60</sup>

Now the trick is to convince the faculty that continuous assessment is just part of *their* profession and to develop “a culture of evidence within an institution [...]”. If administrators want faculty buy in, they have to invite faculty to be engaged in the process – not merely go through the motions to satisfy external requirement” – especially because in an “overall low-trust environment” (! - CL) faculty will just be “playing the game”.<sup>61</sup> In the end everything depends on making the faculty understand that assessment is part of teaching and management can do this by “promoting professional development” and create Faculty Learning Communities (FLC).<sup>62</sup>

Next to the creation of Faculty Learning Communities in order to “re-educate” the faculty, the only problem university management has left is to get their own ranking system – if they develop one – accepted by other universities that have gone down the same road.<sup>63</sup> For good New Public managers that is no problem because they simply presuppose that if the Gods are not cooperative, you just can make them cooperate. In

58 See Marla Gottschalk: Managers Beware; Hanny Lerner: How To Get Rid Of Toxic Employees.

59 Tara Newman: Engaging Faculty in the Assesment Process: Recruiting Missionaries and Cheerleaders, *The Journal of Academic Administration in Higher Education* vol. 6:2 (2010), pp. 9–14.

60 Tara Newman, *Engaging Faculty*, p. 10.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 10; Cf. Vincent Icke: He no Playa da Game, in: Chris Lorenz (ed.): *If You're So Smart Why Aren't You Rich?*, pp. 269–281.

62 Tara Newman, *Engaging Faculty*, p. 11.

63 The Leiden ranking ranked Leiden University 58th in 2013 and Utrecht University 64th in the world. See online at: <http://www.leidenranking.com/ranking> (accessed on 3 January 2014). The THES-ranking ranked them 67th and 74th respectively, while the Shanghai

this respect NPM managers are very much like the police managers in *The Wire*: they all share a principled preference for the world as it is described in their policy statistics. If you do not like or distrust the facts as a manager, you better fix them beforehand.

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ranking reversed their hierarchy and put Leiden on 73 and Utrecht on 53 in 2013. For many universities the range of variation among the rankings is even more impressive.