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# Just How Managed is the McUniversity?<sup>1</sup>

## Craig Prichard, Hugh Willmott

### Abstract

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This paper seeks to illuminate ways in which the introduction and use of management knowledges and practices in U.K. universities overlaps, intersects and confronts established knowledge and practice in these sites. While broadly supportive of the general directionality of work in this field by other authors (Parker and Jary 1995; Winter 1995; Miller 1995) who argue that U.K. universities are becoming increasingly corporately managed around a 'Fordist' mass production arrangement, the paper offers an empirically based exploration of some of the contradictions and struggles that make this broad shift unstable, partial and by no means inevitable. In particular the paper critiques and extends points made by Parker and Jary's discussion (1995) of the changing character of U.K. universities. To do this, the paper begins by reviewing a range of conceptual resources that can be brought to bear on this issue. Following a brief discussion of Bourdieu and Giddens, we suggest that a framework outlined by Fiske (1993) offers a potentially illuminating resource for addressing the changing character of universities in the U.K. This conceptual resource is used to interpret empirical materials drawn from discussions with nearly 40 senior post-holders in two pre-1992 and two post-1992 universities. In the analysis of this material, we argue for the relevance and value of foregrounding the way that management knowledge is at work in processes of change that are underway. We conclude that management knowledge and practice, which provides resources through which the life of the university is thought and done in new ways, at best only partially reconstitutes and displaces existing knowledge and practice.

**Descriptors:** UK universities, academics, management, resistance

### Introduction

The 'McDonalds of Higher education' is how Open University Vice-Chancellor Daniel John has described his organization (*University Life* 1994a). Six weeks later, a group of senior academic post holders took issue with their V.C.'s comment (*University Life* 1994b). 'Perhaps the "Marks and Sparks" of HE (higher education) might have done more to suggest excellence to British ears. The Open University is hardly an example of American hegemony', they said. Their nationalistic sensibilities seem to have been offended, but remarkably perhaps not their support for the use of a retailing metaphor to describe their institution (Marks and Sparks not McDonalds).

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The exchange is an example of how some academics routinely (and un-self-consciously?) rely nowadays on commercial vocabularies to represent the organizations in which they work. The exchange seems to confirm both literally and metaphorically Parker and Jary's argument (1995) of the progressive McDonaldization of U.K. universities (*ibid.* 321).

'[W]e see a move from elite specialization with strong professional controls toward a "fordist" mass production arrangement. In conceptual terms we treat this as [a] Weberian form of rationalization or "McDonaldization" (Ritzer 1992) because it seems that comparability and standardization (of institutions, managers, academics and students) are central to NHE (new higher education) organization' (*ibid.* 321).

But just how pervasive is this? Has higher education simply imbibed the discourses and practices of the factory and the market? Are senior post holders now managers of processes that turn out goods or services, be they courses or qualified students (Conway et al. 1994)? Indeed, to what extent do such claims contribute to the creation of a climate that they detect yet seek to critique?<sup>2</sup> It seems to us that Parker and Jary too readily *read off* the effect of this shift from the discourse of enthusiasts such as those above. Their polemical piece, which constructs an ideal type new higher education institution based on their experiences as lecturer and dean respectively in a post-1992 university, is largely silent on resistance to, and questioning of, managerialism and the McUniversity. Their preference for a theoretical framework which lacks an extended theorization of opposition and resistance at once exemplifies and compounds this problem.

One does not have to dig deep to find equally high profile sceptics and questioners of management and the McUniversity. To return to the Open University, Stuart Hall, then Professor of Sociology (at the OU), observed how his colleagues, who were once 'good' social democrat education reformers bent on reversing the exclusiveness of UK higher education, have 'learned to speak a brand of metallic new entrepreneurialism, a new managerialism of a horrendously closed nature' (1993:15).

'They believe what they have always believed, but what they do, how they write their mission statements, how they do appraisal forms, how they talk about students, how they calculate the cost — that is what they are really interested in now.'

Our argument is that Parker and Jary's polemic underplays the extent to which critical comments such as these and the existing practices they support are resistant to being colonized by their ideal type (or should it be *hype*?): New Higher Education (NHE). Parker and Jary underplay the constant state of struggle between the colonizing practices and discourses and those of existing locales of academic life. In particular, their article, which repeatedly describes the McUniversity as imbued with 'greater managerial power', fails to explain how this is achieved.

It fails to explore just how the inherently problematic nature of managing itself is achievable across universities. So, while we support the general directionality of Parker and Jary's argument (see Willmott 1995), we suggest that each university is a mix of organizing practices which are historically located and variably resilient and resistant to being wholeheartedly overthrown by the 'new' managers.<sup>3</sup> In particular, we question Parker and Jary's assumption of a smooth and unequivocal transformation for the new 'manager' from old fogey academic to the 'dynamic leader' who identifies with 'corporate goals' (1995: 330). We highlight the problematic nature of this transformation and particularly how senior post holders are both supported by, and supportive of, colleagues who resist such moves.

To question and qualify some of Parker and Jary's assertions, and to elaborate points left out of their discussion, we draw upon empirical material collected from discussions with more than 35 senior post holders in four (two pre-1992 and two post-1992) universities,<sup>4</sup> the intention being to contribute to the development of a more empirically informed and theoretically sophisticated account of the changing character of UK Universities. The obvious limitation of our empirical material, which we readily acknowledge as a spur to further work, is the absence of data on the discursive positions taken up by rank and file academics (see Selway 1995; Trowler 1996). Nonetheless, we believe that our data does provide some badly needed, if partial, illumination of positions being developed by senior post-holding academics. Their observations offer numerous insights into the diverse and problematic character of being a manager in these settings and of managing academics. In our analysis, Universities A and B are 'new', post-1992 universities and Universities C and D are 'established', pre-1992 universities.

We begin the paper with a brief discussion of some of the problems with the framework taken up by Parker and Jary. We discuss alternatives, and then outline a set of conceptual resources which allow us to establish a tension between processes seeking to establish the McUniversity and those that are resistant to this (Fiske 1993).<sup>5</sup>

### Ideal Type or Ideal Hype?

Parker and Jary argue that their ideal type 1990s UK university exhibits among other things 'greater managerial power' (1995: 320). Management discourse has been imported, they argue, to enhance the 'importance of management as a process and to legitimate the activities of particular members — executives, directors and so on — as key decision makers' (*ibid.*: 324). They stress that the 'language of "line managers"', "customers" and "products" begins to displace the academic language of deans, students and courses' (*ibid.*: 324–325, emphasis added). Our basic objection to this claim is a simple one: because a language is to be found in a particular social terrain, this

does not necessarily mean that existing language and practices have been reconstructed to mirror the 'new' discourse. Parker and Jary, we would suggest, are attempting to read the effects directly off a discourse without addressing firstly the extent to which the 'new' managerial discourse leaves unchallenged those practices it attempts to narrate in new ways. Second it also ignores the ways in which passive or active resistance is directed at and rebuffs this 'greater managerial power' (see, e.g., Ezzamel 1994). Only in two brief sentences in the paper do Parker and Jary touch upon something of these resistant practices. They argue (against their own thesis perhaps) that:

'the professional academic does not necessarily want to please their management because they gain status from their relationships with their students and other academics inside and outside their organisation. It is a powerful argument, and as noted, it probably begins to explain why universities still function at all when their resource base has been cut so badly' (1995: 328).

If then, as they suggest, an academic identity is likely to be somewhat ambivalent in its relationship to the new discourse and practices of managerialism, surely there are also grounds to argue that 'greater managerial control' is likely to be a somewhat ambivalent endeavour. Yet nowhere in their paper do Parker and Jary give effective voice to this issue. Nowhere, paradoxically, do they place themselves as resistant voices in this context, despite the fact that their experience of working in their own institution, namely Staffordshire University, is an important motivation for the paper.

These shortcomings with Parker and Jary's analysis are in part a result of selective application by the authors of ideas from Weber and Foucault, respectively. Much is made of Weber's iron cage of rationalization thesis: 'The institutions become an effective iron cage populated by Weber's cogs in the machine, specialists without vision and sensualists without heart' (1995: 329). Little is said about the residues of affective and value-rational action or about the paradox of consequences. Likewise, much is made of Foucault's notion of the construction of subjectivity via panoptical practices (*ibid.*: 329) ['greater managerial control and an increasingly restricted sphere of academic professional autonomy will result in new forms of subjectivity amongst academics' (*ibid.* 331)]. Virtually nothing is said about the central importance of transgression in Foucault's work (see Knights and Vurdubakis 1994).

Parker and Jary's argument tends to attribute agency to the imperializing formation — in this case the 'manager' — and passivity to that which has been, or is about to be, dominated — in this case the managed — staff and students. As a consequence, we submit that Parker and Jary overplay the extent to which the New Higher Education, or the McUniversity, has become embedded in the localized practices and discourse of universities generally, but particularly in the post-1992 institution (which is their most recent immediate experience). Parker

and Jary suggest that the 'language of "line managers", "customers" and "products" begins to displace the academic language of deans, students and courses'. Yet our empirical material tells us that this is not necessarily the case. The vice-chancellor of a post-1992 university of a similar size and with a similar history to that of Staffordshire University had this to say in relation to the plausibility of a discourse of the customer for this university.

'It (talk of customers) has been helpful to remind ourselves that just because we are appointed to a particular post, our views don't need to be challenged . . . now after saying that I don't think it is a question whether or not higher education should simply take the views of its customers and completely reform its activities to satisfy its customers. Education is a process which requires help and advice and synthesis and staff have got contributions in that debate.'

Of course, in common with our other empirical claims, it might be argued (e.g. by Parker and Jary) that senior postholders were dissembling about their 'real' position. In other words, it could be suggested that, in response to questions from external parties (e.g. researchers), they would wheel out the public relations (PR) 'rhetoric' of sustaining established academic values and priorities whilst, internally and privately, they would champion 'new' discourses and practices. We would not wish to deny or underestimate the capacity of (decentred) individuals to provide different accounts and rationales to different audiences and we accept that current developments and pressures in universities make this more likely. However, unless it is believed that PR-speak has (i) become deeply embedded among senior post-holders and (ii) is fed to all external parties in an indiscriminating way, we believe (and, no doubt, some would say naively) that enquiries from an academic researcher are likely to be dealt with in a *comparatively* open way. Their comments are likely to be inhibited and distorted more by self-deception (e.g. about the exercise of power by, or the powerlessness of, senior post-holders) than by the restrictions of PR-speak.

Parker and Jary position their paper as an attempt to apply some social theory to their experiences of organizational change (p. 319). We welcome their contribution, but feel that their use of Weber and Foucault was less than satisfactory (to use the current jargon of assessment). What is needed is social theory which can draw out some of the ambivalences, contradictions and struggles of managing in a university setting. Might Bourdieu's conceptual framework of habitus, field and capital offer a more penetrating framework for analysis (Bourdieu 1990; Calhoun et al. 1993)?

### Changing Fields; Challenging the *Habitus*?

One way to put Bourdieu's concepts to work would be to suggest that higher education in Britain is being re-positioned from a field of rela-

tively autonomous production where academics were able to some extent to define their own criteria of production, evaluation, organizational identity, purpose and focus, to a field of general production — a market. In this process, symbolic violence is done as the meanings associated with the market impose themselves on the identities and cultural capital of the previously restricted field (academic field). Bourdieu argues, however, that shifts such as these are always *locally interpreted and elaborated*. As a result, there is scope for some spontaneity and diversity of response. It is impossible therefore to guarantee the permanence and depth of such a shift (Oakes et al. 1995). Equally the notion of *habitus*, described as 'embodied history' (Krais 1993: 169) or as the 'ensemble of schemata of perception, thinking, feeling, evaluating, speaking and acting that [make-up] the verbal and practical manifestation of the person' (*ibid.*) allows for a more *reproductive rather than ruptured* understanding of changing social settings. Where Parker and Jary draw selectively on Weber and Foucault to suggest that academic subjectivity is being reconstructed, an analysis informed by the work of Bourdieu would be likely to point to *continuities* in the embedded dispositions of academic life. Bourdieu's approach also suggests that Parker and Jary's analysis tends toward agentless objectification. A Bourdieuan explanation would seek to focus on the performative, improvisational character of higher education 'made flesh' (1990: 57) by the academic, the academic manager, the administrator and support staff. While we agree that the recent changes have served to raise questions about the durability of the ensemble of schemata of perception, thinking etc., embedded in the academic *habitus*, the extent to which this has reconstructed the associated dispositions of the *habitus* is less clear.

Those ignorant of, or unimpressed by, Bourdieu's position might look elsewhere on the supermarket shelves of social theory (OK, we recognize that this metaphor is a hostage to fortune, but please allow us a little space for irony and self-deprecation). What about Giddens, a flavour that has been strongly promoted in recent years? Giddens' theory of structuration has much to recommend it for the study of managerial work (see Willmott 1981, 1987), but it also suffers from the paradoxical condition of paying much attention to human agency, and especially to practical consciousness, without providing much in the way of conceptual machinery (OK, we did it again) with which to address and analyze tensions and struggles within and between human subjects (for a broad critique of Giddens' theory of human agency, see Willmott 1986). As Pred (1990: 126) has observed of Giddens' theory of structuration, there is a need for the analysis of individuals and collectivities who:

'do not merely submit, but occasionally resist, . . . do not merely accept the strategies of employers and state authorities, . . . do not merely comply with established rules and symbolic repres(s)entations, but struggle over the use of time and space, struggle over localized resources and built landscape, struggle over meaning, struggle over visions of the world' (Pred 1990: 127–128).



With these issues in mind, for the purposes of this paper we draw upon an approach commended by Fiske (1993) which borrows selectively from Foucault, Gramsci, Bakhtin (see especially *ibid.*: 9), Bourdieu and Giddens (*ibid.*: 34). Fiske's approach is especially germane to the present study because it incorporates an understanding of agents in action and their immersion in practices/routines *and* an understanding that institutions of modern society are articulated via vertically opposing formations of social power. Conceptualized as the 'power-bloc' and 'the people', these formations are understood to compete for control over the form and content of everyday routines, including the production and dissemination of knowledge within universities. Fiske provides the primary theoretical framework for our analysis of changes in the UK universities. However, in the following account of Fiske's position we have taken the liberty of embroidering and revising his formulations without repeatedly acknowledging our deviations from his position.

### Knowledge, the 'Power Bloc' and 'the People'

Influenced by poststructuralism, Fiske's approach contends that power struggles in advanced capitalist societies cannot sensibly be equated with, or reduced to, struggles between classes. In practice, diverse struggles or contests occur between a plurality of groups comprising heterogeneous and shifting elements. The capital-labour relation may provide a persuasive basis for the analysis of some struggles, but other social divisions are important (e.g. gender, ethnicity).<sup>6</sup> Fiske follows Hall in arguing that:

'The people versus the power-bloc: this, rather than class-against-class, is the central line of contradiction around which the terrain of culture is polarized' (Hall 1981 cited in Fiske 1993: 9)

As Laclau (1990: 127) articulates a similar viewpoint, 'there are no *intrinsically* anti-capitalist struggles although a set of struggles, within certain contexts, could *become* anti-capitalist'. Tensions and struggles in universities associated with the introduction of performance measures for research and teaching, etc. can be linked to fiscal crises of capitalist states, and the U.K. state in particular. During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a sustained attack upon the most vulnerable areas of public spending as the weak performance and growth of private enterprise was attributed to the excessive and unproductive burden of public expenditure (Willmott 1995). However, whilst it is relevant to situate current changes in U.K. universities within this context, and to imagine how struggles in universities could be transformed into anti-capitalist struggles as academics become progressively 'proletarianized', it is difficult to make a *direct* link between the process of change in publicly funded universities and the organizational dynamics of capital-labour relations.



Following Gramsci, Fiske conceptualizes the 'power-bloc' as a welding together of alliances. The idea of a power-bloc, it is worth stressing, is not a block but, rather, a more or less precarious set of implicit or acknowledged alliances that are vulnerable to implosion or fragmentation precisely because their components are frequently heterogeneous. The 'power bloc' and 'the people' are opposing sets of dispositions which encompass identities, relations, ways of being and doing. What distinguishes the 'power-bloc' from 'the people', in every case, is the *imperialist ambitions* of the former compared with the localized concerns of the latter. Those who comprise and support the power-bloc are preoccupied, more or less consciously, with *extending its reach* over how people behave and what they think and feel. To render its sense of social order more solid or 'real', the power-bloc harbours and mobilizes 'imperializing' knowledges, including management knowledges which claim to provide universally efficient or effective ways of improving organizations. In contrast, the power sought by 'the people' is that which secures control over their immediate social conditions of everyday life. In using this schema it is worth stressing that we are not seeking to establish these categories and processes as *essential* to all social settings or historical moments. The core features of this conceptualization needs to be stressed and potential misunderstandings allayed. First the two formations, 'power bloc' and 'people' are not in anyway the bourgeoisie and the working class, but may exist across multiple axes of difference. Second, they are not fixed features ascribed to particular individuals or groups but are an analytical or sensitizing device for addressing the sets of dispositions, identities and social relations which describe, prescribe and allow certain ways of being and doing. As such, these can potentially be taken up and put to work by us in differing settings and circumstances. Third, the 'power bloc' and 'the people' are conceptual devices that rely on the empirical material to make them meaningful. That is, they are dependent on spatial and historical evidence to demonstrate their usability.

To analyze the process of power-bloc formation and reproduction, Fiske introduces an analytical distinction between '*stations*' and '*locales*'. Locales are established and maintained at the 'grass roots' by those concerned about their immediate conditions of life. Stations, in contrast, are imposed from above in an effort to incorporate or colonize 'the people' into a system designed by the 'power bloc'. As Fiske puts it,

'Constructing a locale involves confronting, resisting or evading imperialization, for imperialising power wishes to control the members of its own society as strongly as it wishes to control the physical world' (*ibid.*: 12).

Those who seek to establish and maintain stations, Fiske continues,

'must control the places where its people live, the behaviours by which they live and the consciousness by which they make sense of their identities and experiences. It attempts to stop people producing their own locales by providing them with stations' (*ibid.*).

In opposition to the top-down power of 'power-blocs', the subordinated formations of 'the people' comprise and articulate localized knowledges and practices, as contrasted with imperializing ambitions. Take the example of Gay Liberation. Few Gay activists seek to convert heterosexuals to homosexual practices. Instead, they have struggled to dissolve the stigma attaching to homosexuality. Simultaneously, gay activists have struggled to establish conditions in which social, physical and temporal spaces develop that enable them to live with minimal restrictions and harassment. Instead of being identified by the power-bloc as deviants, Gays have struggled to establish their own sense of identity, and, in so doing, have gradually gained wider and deeper acceptance of their existence and legitimacy.

A station, Fiske elaborates, 'is both a physical place where the *social order is imposed upon the individual* and the social positioning of that individual in the system of social relations' (*ibid.*: 12, our emphasis). The position of *the manager*, for example, has been established through a succession of expert knowledges underpinned by a separation of ownership of property and control of resources. These knowledges position managers as experts at controlling organizations and, in particular, the profitable organization of human labour. In U.K. universities, the presence and legitimacy of managerial knowledges has been massively boosted by the introduction of a series of performance measures and practices (Townley 1993). These measures simultaneously evaluate the productive organization of academic labour within departments and across institutions. They thereby increase pressures upon senior academics to assess and improve performance according to the criteria established by these measures and their associated league tables of performance. In this way, institutions, departments and individuals are stationed as objects of power-bloc knowledges (e.g. measures of research output and assessment of teaching quality) that increasingly become a major focus of interaction and mutual surveillance within and between institutions (Thomas 1994; Willmott 1995).

From a Fiskean perspective, those who 'lubricate the mechanisms' of subordination — such as top-down performance measures — are understood to be participants in the reproduction of a 'power-bloc'. 'The people', in contrast, are distinguished by 'their comparative lack of privilege; their comparative deprivation of economic and political resources' (Fiske 1993: 11). That said, the disciplines and even the individuals that support a given 'power-bloc' change over time as the same values or measures are deployed either to advance or to resist the imperialist ambitions of the 'power-bloc'; and as the same individuals, on different occasions, act to support or challenge its legitimacy and extension. The multiple dimensions of polarization between 'the people' and 'the power-bloc' means that, for example,

'A blue-collar white man may form a social allegiance with Black men who share his skills and conditions of subordination at work, but may, in his leisure,

ally himself with other white men in relations of social dominance. The first allegiance would be with the social force of the people, the second with that of the power-bloc' (ibid.).

Thus, the recurrent struggles between 'power-blocs' and 'the people' occur within groups and even within individuals whose allegiances shift depending upon their positioning within diverse sets of social relations. From this we can suggest that we all move in and out of relations which maintain and extend the power bloc into and across our lives and the lives of others, and, of course, the appeal of Fiske's framework itself derives from *our* positioning which has prompted us to examine *this* issue in a *particular* way.

Given the existence of shifting allegiances, there is no guarantee that the imperializing knowledges and techniques will overturn existing localized practices and identities. In the case of performance measures within universities, there is no certainty that the *spirit* of procedures will be observed, although there may be a dramaturgical management of appearances to simulate conformity. For example, in one of the universities, discussed in a later section of this paper, the common 'story' about appraisal was that it became a chat between colleagues over a cup of coffee. The practices of the locale filled the space made available by the imposition of appraisal. In this, we can see the crucial difference between imperializing and localizing knowledges and practices. The *station* and the *locale* are different ways of representing and enacting the same physical and social space. Whereas the imperializing knowledges and practices of the power bloc are strategic in their colonizing intent, the concern of localizing power is not to expand its terrain but, rather, to strengthen its (tactical) control and defences over the immediate conditions of life. A further example based on anecdotal evidence suggests that elaborate ruses and devices for managing the appearance of 'excellent teaching' have been deployed to charm and impress the assessors of teaching quality, who, it may be added, despite their 'inside knowledge' of the assessment game, are obliged to award high points when appearances are effectively managed. The locale might appear in these descriptions as essentially defensive in orientation. Yet it seems likely that during particular periods and moments the practices and discourses of the locale could be taken up to serve the imperializing processes of an ascending power bloc. It may be then that the practices of a locale replace those of the stations of the older power bloc. As Fiske notes: 'Localising power is not fixed in its relations with imperializing, top-down power: indeed, it is impossible to specify in advance what forms these relations will take' (1993: 81).

### Changing Higher Education in the U.K.

Using Fiske's conceptual framework, which links broad socio-economic alliances with the micro-politics of locales, we now turn to an exploration of recent changes in U.K. universities.

### Setting the Scene

Prior to 1980, universities in the U.K. enjoyed a quasi-autonomous status in which the unit of resource for a student was basically fixed, though subject to some erosion, and research resources were spread fairly evenly across institutions. Following the election of the Thatcher administration,<sup>7</sup> the Department for Education pursued a strongly interventionist line (in which Vice-Chancellors have been, more or less enthusiastically, complicit). Initially, there were major, selective cuts in the funding of universities based largely upon the quality of their intake (i.e. the grades achieved by school leavers). Subsequently, student numbers have been continuously expanded without an equivalent increase in resources, and research resources have been progressively distributed according to 'objective' measures of performance (e.g. size of research grants, number of top journal publications, number of research students, etc.) rather than according to the numbers of academic staff employed (see Miller 1995). In 1992, competitive pressures were intensified by the wholesale conversion of polytechnics into universities, a move that made the ex-polys eligible to compete for research funding and provided an alternative model of administration and teaching provision to that traditionally pursued within the 'old' universities. Without going into the detail of these changes, some of which are elaborated in a later section of the paper (see also Willmott 1995), their effect has been *inter alia* to put mounting pressures upon senior academics and administrators — from Vice-Chancellors to Heads of Department — to demonstrate a capacity to organize and 'manage' their staff in ways that deliver the results that will ensure a flow of resources sufficient to sustain their existence and, ideally, to boost their prestige.

The key point, then, is that the funding of U.K. universities, including the salaries and working conditions of academic staff, is becoming progressively tied to measures of performance. Research funding, in particular, is increasingly linked to performance measures. At the same time, rapid increases in student numbers have not been matched by an equivalent level of resources, and salaries have been decoupled from rises in productivity. In this situation, the work of senior academics and administrators is being re-positioned. Stripped down to essentials, there has been a shift *from* a position in which teaching money allowed growth in students numbers, and research funding followed staff expansion, *to* a position in which both sources of income, but particularly research income, are increasingly conditional upon measured performance.

### Knowing Change

From being administrators of predictable income flows, senior post holders are now under pressure to take responsibility for the processes which are deemed to influence these flows. New knowledges and practices — notably, the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) which, since the mid-1980s, has ranked each department on a scale 1–5 every 3–4

years — renders senior academics and administrators more explicitly accountable as supervisors and organizers of academic labour, responsible for 'performance' which is measured in largely quantitative terms either as research excellence or research income. This responsibility incorporates a concern to know the 'how' of academic organization as a condition of acting effectively to strengthen or transform this 'how', so that performance is improved. In Fiske's terminology, the established *locales* of universities in which bargaining always existed over the immediate distribution of teaching and research income are being transformed as senior post holders come under increasing pressure to occupy *stations*, as managers, that are designed to serve the power-bloc.

The following are illustrative of organizational changes that have occurred. In some post-1992 universities, the faculty board meeting, which potentially involved the whole faculty, has been replaced by weekly management-team meetings. In some pre-1992 universities, academics are reported to be 'clocking-in and clocking out' of worksites. In others, student 'satisfaction' ratings of each course, and therefore of each academic's work, are displayed on public notice boards. More generally, courses are increasingly being known and designed as products; lecturers are being identified as producers of learning materials rather than as teachers or mentors; and students are being viewed as customers rather than as apprentices (Bocock and Watson 1994). Whilst much of this can be regarded as cosmetic, involving simply changes of name rather than any more substantive changes in practice, we would argue that such moves are not innocent and that they are symptomatic of a strategic intent to change the ethos of universities and, more specifically, to harness the activities of academics more directly and explicitly to market forces as a means of raising their contribution to national economic performance (Winter 1995; Halsey 1992: 135–137).

Yet, whilst a strategic intent may be discerned, when viewed from 'the top', initiatives designed to introduce change are fraught with difficulty. As the Vice-Chancellor of pre-1992 University 'C' observed, 'If I have discovered anything in the last three years it is that the implementation is a lot harder than strategy'. He then moved on to elaborate this discovery by discussing it in relation to the departments and the centre itself: 'I think the difficulty of implementation at a departmental level is how to get beyond the likes of me making speeches, to action [which] will actually allow targets to be achieved on things like student numbers'.

The diversity as well as the power of departmental 'cultures/locales' within any given university, and the capacity of departments to preserve or amplify these differences in response to pressures, is well articulated in the observations of a pro-vice-chancellor at University 'C'.

'Departments have amazingly different cultures and these seem to persist through thick and thin rather like family identities — you know, incredibly democratic or very hierarchic or rather anarchic, just competent ... or angry or very polite. They seem to have persisted because it is a departmental university and university departments have a lot of power'.

The Vice-Chancellor referred to above could be influential in setting targets with which he sought to station the activities of his staff, but their implementation depended upon mobilizing or transforming the locales. In terms of implementation in relation to the centre, the vice chancellor noted: 'We have talked about implementation as though it is all neat. The other side of the coin is things going wrong all the time, *people won't take responsibility for it so it reaches up until it gets to me*'. (emphasis added)

Out amongst the departments, there was some evidence of support for what was widely regarded as the Vice-Chancellor's strategy, but there was also evidence, as the above comment shows, of staff searching about for local tactics with which to resist the centre. A head of department said:

'One of the present complaints is that heads of department are suffering from initiative fatigue. The vice chancellor is issuing all these signals about yet another new thing and people are saying what the hell do we do to channel this, to limit it, to choose. Are we allowed to choose, *or are we going to be downgraded in the perception of performance if we don't jump through every hoop that we are directed to?*' (emphasis added)

As a result of this, the same Head opined that the Vice Chancellor's 'reforming' efforts had 'run into the sand, because it is too big an institution, there are too many entrenched positions for him to sort it'.

The above comment ('what the hell do *we* do to channel this', emphasis added) also suggests that relations between heads of department have been strengthened as the corporate centre has become more active. In this and one of the other universities included in the study, 'heads groups' had formed and met regularly (see Prichard, 1996b). Interestingly the vice-chancellors saw these formations as forums for 'management development' (as stations), while many heads themselves understood these groups in more subversive terms — as gatherings through which resistant practices could be co-ordinated (as locales). Yet in these universities, this desire for resistance was often splintered by the competitive relations between department heads (e.g. competition between heads for extra centrally distributed research funds or extra student numbers. Also a tendency for heads to keep to themselves valuable information which might benefit 'their' department.), and the individuating practices of the university itself (the key example of this from the post-1992 universities was the removal of heads from national bargaining and their 'placement' on individual, often very open-ended and locally negotiated contracts).

Nevertheless, in University 'C', and elsewhere, it seemed that 'messages' from the centre are handled tactically and as a result muffled as they 'cascade'. A head of department in post-1992 University 'B' made a similar point: 'Deans spend a lot of time with the Vice Chancellor's group where they are definitely inferior. I think there is less mediation of instructions the further up you go. The deans get told in a fairly bloody minded way to do this by Tuesday, they mellow a bit as they tell us, ask us and so on down'.



However, the increased size of institutions and often the spatial distance between the centre and departments also means that strong managerial relations are problematic, particularly as information about departmental activities is often tactically handled. The head of department continued: 'He (the vice chancellor) might be quite surprised to find out how we fund things like study leave ha ha . . . I'm quite happy for [the vice chancellor] to be very distant from it as long as he understands that he is distant from it which by and large he does, [but he] does say silly things occasionally'.

This illustrates how the dynamics of change are complex and contradictory and are mediated by emergent knowledges about 'how' to change. For example, it is possible to interpret 'clocking in' as a potentially attractive (albeit desperate) means of resisting any further intensification of academic labour.

Partly as a tactical move to avoid such a 'work-to-rule' mentality, some senior academics identify their task as buffering and protecting their colleagues from the demands of managerialism. However, whether this neo-paternalism is intended to preserve and/or boost a research-centred culture, or whether it is regarded simply as a condition of improving levels of measured performance, is a matter of judgement. Whatever the intent, it would seem that a major consequence, or truth-effect, of knowledge of these measures has been to (further) distance or 'protect' staff from processes of decision-making that sooner or later will affect their conditions of work as teachers and researchers.

### Managing to Change?

In this section, we explore how knowledge of the new performance measures and associated disciplines is at work in making sense of the organization of academic activity. Many of our respondents' comments can be read as a confirmation that universities are being reconstituted as knowledge factories organized by managers, whose aim is to intensify and commodify the production and distribution of knowledge and skills to whomsoever has the wherewithal to purchase them. Certainly, imperialistic management discourses can provide materials through which the life of the university is thought and done in new ways, but, equally, our interview data suggests that this reconstitution is partial and is likely to remain so. This is because the stationing of senior post holders as managers is itself subject, in many cases, to a personal and professional struggle between existing localized practices and knowledges and those of the new imperializing discourse. We suggest that a recurrent managerial problem and challenge for these post holders, which is unlikely to go away, is to develop a sufficiently integrated 'performance'. The challenge for these (at times reluctant) 'managers' is to enrol the support of 'the managed' by contriving to reconcile embedded, largely localized and tacit discourses with



the imperializing discourses associated with the new performance measures.

#### **A Challenge to Tradition**

In the following extract, a Registrar from pre-1992 University 'D' represents the imperializing discourse of management as directive and authoritarian and sets this against what is seen as the natural collegiality of the university:

'The culture is not one which welcomes the concept of direction. The whole culture of the academic community and I, I support all of this, is focused on the individual excellence or team excellence (and) the right of the individual to pursue what they feel they want to pursue. That is why anything which smacks of management starts to eke into, either emotionally or in reality into that very important freedom of the enquiring opportunity so that even if the management were to be of what one might call, non-academic areas, it would still be seen as a beginning of a move to a different type of arrangement.'

According to this Registrar, moves that are corrosive of the local autonomy of universities pose a threat to an established culture in which, it is argued, excellence depends upon preserving 'the right of the individual to pursue what they feel they want to pursue'. The new measures, imposed from above, are understood to exert pressure upon academics to do what will be good for the ratings (e.g. engage in 'quick and dirty' types of research that has predictable but unexciting outcomes that will be readily published and/or attract further research funding) but, paradoxically, simultaneously operate to constrain and subvert a culture of excellence. This Registrar continued:

'I don't want our senior academics, and or any of our academics, to feel that they are working in an institution which is starting to relegate them to "the workers". Do you know what I mean? Er because, in the folklore, the opposite to management is "the workers" and I have been in academic institutions where bluntly I have heard senior management staff talk about "the workers" and I find that intolerable. In a university, particularly like this one, the academic staff are not just employees, they are statutory members of a Chartered corporation. And it's different. They are different — they have a status in the institute which needs respecting. And I'm very sensitive to anything which overtly and unnecessarily disturbs what I think is the important theory amongst the staff that they still work in an institution which puts their activity first, not the management first, not, not the "corporate" as necessarily first.'

The concern expressed is that the new performance measures will radically change the ethos of universities so that their members relate less to each other 'horizontally', as colleagues within a Chartered corporation, and more as 'managers' and 'managed'. As the new measures are applied, the worry is that corporate interests will come to take precedence in ways that subvert the activity of academics who, it is believed, must be free to pursue their agendas without interference. However, to make this point, the Registrar is obliged to undertake a considerable

amount of discursive work just to re-establish something that only a few years earlier would have been largely taken for granted. The volume of the background 'hum' of management discourse has become so loud that the speaker is forced to deal directly with it. This requires an appeal to freedom, to good taste and finally to an argument about the legal status of academic employees in a pre-1992 university.

### **Business as Usual?**

Many senior post holders emphasized the continuity of 'old' with 'new' practices, arguing that the new disciplines could be used to support and facilitate established practices. The presence of the new managerialism is acknowledged but is seen as something of a puzzle precisely because it is deemed to be broadly congruent with an established ethos. For example, a Pro-Vice Chancellor in University 'C' commented that:

'I'm told by [the vice chancellor] that I'm the very model of a modern manager. I find that puzzling because I don't think of myself as a manager. I haven't read most of the books. I have very little direct authority with respect to most of the people who would nominally work for me, except I am prepared to take responsibility and prepared to cover for them and certainly not to blame them publicly, which is an elementary thing. As far as I can see, if you want to be a major research university you have got to have something like the traditional untidy structure of deans, councils and senates with a fair amount of departmental autonomy . . . if you want to be a major research university you have to tolerate a certain amount of chaos and anarchy, you have to trust people.'

Here, the view is expressed that 'a certain amount of chaos and anarchy' is a necessary condition of successful academic research activity. Since the RAEs do not prescribe how performance is to be achieved, there is no direct pressure to change 'the traditional untidy structure' and, thus, this pro-vice-chancellor defines his role as facilitating established practices rather than disrupting them. Later he referred to himself as 'One who tries to construct lots of internal and external networks and keeps trying to put them together'. However, his allusion to 'people who nominally *work for me*' (our emphasis) and 'not blaming them publicly' suggests that, despite an avowed lack of formal authority, he is willing to intervene 'privately' in ways that are tolerant of 'chaos' *as long as* they deliver the goods for the corporation.

At University 'D', one head of department (HOD), now a Dean, went so far as to suggest that 'managing' amounted to protecting colleagues and their existing professional practices. An unintended consequence of demonstrated success in this role was, for him, promotion and increased external recognition (chair of professional associations and research council). Making no bones about what he viewed as the coercive imposition of disciplines by the funding council, he observed that:

'You have got to protect the institution . . . the HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) is a bully, the research councils are bullies, they know they have the whip hand and they bully you. You have got to jump partly because your institution's jumping so if your institution's jumping then it is passed down the line. What I have tried to do since I wasn't going to be able to do much research anyway, was to actually act as a sort of barrier and of course the better I was at that, the better known I became in the (academic) community and the university community, the more effective you can be as that barrier.'

Rather than viewing himself as a proselytizing manager, this HOD preferred to represent his actions as protecting, or ameliorating the distress of, his colleagues. Instead of seeing himself as administering the blow of the 'bullying' HEFCE, he portrayed his role as softening its impact by ensuring that his staff were well equipped 'to jump'. By portraying the HEFCE as a 'bully', he was able to suggest sympathy for rank-and-file academic staff and thereby secure a degree of support for measures that enabled the institution to be responsive to the demands of the 'power-bloc'.

A condition of playing this role effectively, according to this interviewee, is not so much the insidious weakening of the established (professional) values, as their active support. During his interview, this HOD gave numerous examples of the strengths of his professional locale. As a consequence of his protective actions, it was suggested, his department had adapted to the many changes demanded of it — which included semesterization and modularization in addition to the performance measures for research and teaching — without sacrificing the established culture of the department, which relied on field trips and close contact with students.<sup>8</sup>

However, this rosy picture of an HOD adapting successfully to new pressures without any significant erosion of traditional values and practices needs to be complemented by a recognition of how the department's student numbers had been increased and how pressures on department members to maintain research ratings were intense. As the Head observed:

'The department has been subjected to ever increasing pressure as a level 5 department to keep at level 5. The result is that I find that some of my staff are stressed far more than I was at their stage, especially the young people. They respond in different ways. Some of them become frenetic and overactive which is sometimes detrimental to their families, sometimes detrimental to their teaching, certainly detrimental to the minimum administration that I expect them to carry out. Others become rather sullen and take refuge in teaching or in other displacement activities like being on committees or computing which is the biggest displacement activity I know. It is much easier because computing suggests that they are actually doing something, which they could do with a pen far more efficiently, very often.'

Here the degree of internalization of imperializing pressures by many members of staff is recognized. The HOD says that the self-discipline

of these staff made it unnecessary for him to intervene to ensure that levels of research productivity, as measured by the RAE, are sustained. This observation suggests the extent to which academics have 'bought into' the disciplines of the power-bloc, assessing their 'excellence' in terms of the rating that they achieve rather than the value which they place upon their activity, but, of course, there is more to it than this. The rating received by the department influences the capacity of staff to attract research grants, their career prospects and the regard in which they are held by colleagues/competitors in their discipline. All these factors are relevant for explaining why academic staff are receptive and responsive to the imperializing discipline of the performance measures which, as the HOD indicates, displaces their effort from other activities, such as teaching and administration. As this HOD also observes, another important and overlooked effect of the pressures of the imperializing discipline is their divisive and potentially demoralizing influence upon a minority of staff (in highly rated departments) whose status and career prospects are weakened by such pressures and who, unlike the HOD, have no opportunity to move from research into administration-cum-management. Finally, this example again illustrates how imperializing management discourse is mediated by the distinctive locales and, more specifically, how senior post holders are 'made' (or destroyed) by these disciplines and how they represent their effects within and without the immediate locale.

### Embracing the New Measures

Whilst some senior academic post-holders sought to work the new practices and disciplines into a continuity with existing locales, others interviewed are more readily identified as people who have been positioned and 'empowered' by these imperializing measures. The following quote is drawn from a Head of School in pre-1992 University 'C', but it is perhaps more typical of some 'new' managers in post-1992 universities (see Prichard 1996b) where there have been restructurings to boost research activity as well as to devise courses that are intended to access previously untapped pools of students.

'I had long felt for years before taking on this role that things were too loose, that things were under-managed, and things were not properly evaluated. X said he was doing his research even if the annual list of publications didn't seem to show any output. So what I was doing was picking up a School where its old residual staff were under-performing in terms of research, with a lot of new people being brought in.'

In this case, then, the HEFCE performance measures are enthusiastically embraced as a way of justifying the introduction of disciplines that, in the assessment of this Head of School, were long overdue. He went on to outline the steps that had been taken to raise the department's RAE rating:

'So in order to take us up in terms of research I had to set the kind of level that would be reasonable. One of the approaches was to set clear targets for performance. We set a very modest one. The normal expectation was that each member of staff should produce at least one article in a refereed journal each year, and people who were not producing that were seen to be under-performing and were diagnosed for positive help. That has actually helped. The measure is crude but when I took over the school, average per capita publication was about .4 or .6 of a unit per year which is treating each publication as the same, books, articles and anything else. In 1993 it was 3.8.'

Whilst acknowledging that average per capita publications presents a 'crude measure' of performance, this Head of School argued that 'it is actually an enormous cultural change' accomplished 'by making it clear that research really did mean producing stuff'. To achieve this improvement in performance, the Head had introduced a system in which 'people through the divisions and through the professorate were going to set up little networks which would drive research forward'. This move was described as involving 'good man management, good person management'. By this was meant the requirement of senior members of the School to take 'a direct and close interest in the performance of their colleagues and help them to improve it, which had not (previously) happened'.

'I started this when I first became head of school . . . during that year I arranged for myself with the relevant professor of the division to meet every single member of the non-professorial staff in the school to discuss teaching, research, life, work, everything. And actually several people in the long-standing staff said: "I've been here 20 years and no one has ever talked to me about this before". So, in a sense, that's management which had not been there. It was a very positive outcome.'

In the absence of a well-established research culture, this Head of School exerted pressure downwards upon professors and staff to raise research activity, as measured by the number of publications per staff, and to 'diagnose for positive help' those who were deemed to be under-performing. His account of this transformation suggests that 'good person management', which could also be expressed as 'increasing the degree of surveillance and visibility of academic output' had brought about a cultural change. However, another and arguably more compelling explanation of the massive increase in publications, and one to which the speaker briefly alludes, was a massive change in the School's personnel. Between 60–70 per cent of the academic staff had been appointed during this period, and the professorate had changed completely in that time. Whilst it might appear that management in general, and the Head of School in particular, had successfully mediated the imperializing discipline of the power-bloc to raise the productivity of previously unproductive academic labour (e.g. through heightened surveillance and annual appraisal), the institution had recruited a large number of young, research-active academics. This is not to minimize

the disciplining effects taking place, which of course included the strategic replacement of staff, but simply to note how claims about the effectiveness of local measures (e.g. close monitoring of individual research productivity) that directly parallel the imperializing disciplines need to be placed in a wider context. In this case, rapid expansion of student numbers and innovations in teaching programmes had presented major opportunities to recruit research-active staff.

### Between 'Power-bloc' and 'People'

One of the most pervasive issues facing senior post holders across the four universities was whether or not they saw themselves as managers, and more particularly how this self-understanding should be articulated and enacted. In other words, to what extent had they come to know themselves through an imperializing discourse of management; and, relatedly, to what extent had the demands and stationing of the 'power-bloc' been uncritically embraced?

A head of a science department in University 'D' definitely saw himself as a manager and, at the same time, reported difficulties in responding positively to the pressures upon him. The responsibilities attached to his role, he observed, were not matched by authority: 'I don't have the ability to move as fast as the manager of a small business but *that is what I am*' (emphasis added). Others seemed to agree that they were effectively managers but stressed the importance of *not* calling themselves, or presenting themselves, as such. For example, a Pro-Vice Chancellor in University 'C' volunteered that: 'It matters very much that you have got, we don't call ourselves this, "managers", that you have a senior team that is in touch with what is going on and can give some suggestions as to developments'. For him, the acceptable face of management within the context of universities was that of an advisor who is well informed about local operations and therefore cannot readily be 'fobbed off' by departmental heads. The favoured representation of such practice is being 'in touch' and offering advice rather than imposing requirements or controlling activity in an overt or explicitly managerial way.

### Selling the 'Power Bloc'

In the interviews with the senior post-holders the *language* of management was widely, but not universally, viewed with suspicion because it was perceived to pose an obvious threat to an ethos and self-identity of professionalism. However, the *practices* of management may nonetheless have a seductive appeal insofar as they offer a way of addressing the intense pressures and stress being experienced by academics as a consequence of deteriorating staff-student ratios and the external monitoring of teaching and research activity. As a Dean in University 'A' observed, it is possible to gain support for changes, if these are perceived to reduce the pressures upon academic staff.

'What you are about is creating structures which will make people's lives easier to bear. Everybody in higher education is increasingly stressed, is doing one and half or two jobs and what they want predominantly is *no longer just to be dismissive about management* but if you have credibility as an academic and researcher and also you are fair, open, reasonable and friendly in your approach to staff, *then they see that as being efficient*' (emphasis added).

In practice, forms of management may be welcomed, this Dean suggests, when they are shown to deal with issues that are of immediate, local concern. In his assessment, this move depends upon preserving and mobilizing a culture of collegiality in which 'you are fair, open, reasonable and friendly in your approach to staff'. What is counter-productive, he submits, is more explicit manifestations of management in which changes are imposed rather than negotiated. What staff 'don't buy', he observed, is 'hard management, hierarchical management, which is this, "I am a hard manager this is the most efficient way", kind of myth' — an approach which he judged to be 'incompetent' within the particular circumstances of his locale. 'This industrial model' is said to 'carry no force': 'Basically what staff are most critical of is the kind of management rhetoric — business goals and so on — which is seen to be hierarchical and simultaneously no more competent — in fact, incompetent and inefficient in very real terms and they will just not buy it'.

Here there is an awareness of the tensions between an established culture of academia that relies heavily upon cooperation and consent lubricated by the various 'sticks' and 'carrots', referred to below, as contrasted with command and control founded ultimately upon the capacity to hire and fire. Instead of monopolizing and concealing information and imposing objectives, which is associated with 'the industrial model', the Dean commends the sharing of information and the selection of objectives for which there is widespread support: 'if you create a situation where you set certain kinds of objectives that they respect and endorse, like enabling individuals to do research, giving them access to budget figures, giv[ing] them access to staff funds, making clear in equal proportion (this is not necessarily in order of priority) that one of the things is to give the students the best deal we can in the circumstances'.

Yet, whilst 'the industrial model' is criticized, it is more relevant to note how the more collegial approach to change is legitimized in terms of a productivist ethic; and it is defended not because it is ethically more defensible but because it is more likely to fulfil the demands of the imperializing disciplines: 'It seems to me to be a much more productive ethos to create [than one] which means that the next day they are not going to find themselves at the top of a list of people who are non-people'.

In these quotations, this Dean offers a spirited justification for the *metem (manager/managed) split* in terms of identity and relations *alongside* a neo-paternalist discourse which glosses management with notions



of support, fairness and the collegial spirit of critique. A 'nod' towards shared academic identity is made. Yet, however it is dressed up, the relation of manager to managed is dominant. This relation is constructed through a discourse of empowerment, skills and growth identified by many recent management writers. Watson (1994) refers to this as the 'roses' culture in which people are empowered to proactively apply their skills and competences in the organization's strategic direction. The manager's job in this discourse is to create the environment in which people 'want to move in a constructive direction', as one of the interviewees put it.

In adopting this approach, it is less a matter of dissolving established traditions than recasting and reinforcing them in ways that can be shown to be 'good for the department and/or the university' rather than, or in addition to, being 'good for the discipline'. Where such traditions are established and respected, moves to introduce 'hard management' are likely to prove counter-productive. However, it is precisely the knowledge or threat of such a 'hard' possibility that makes 'softer' forms of managerialism more acceptable and even benign insofar as they can actually deliver on the promise to create 'structures that make people's lives easier to bear'.

### Becoming the 'Power-Bloc'

One of the Deans at University 'A' was keenly aware of being caught in the middle between the pressures upon him to be more of a manager, responsive to 'the executive', and a colleague responsive to the concerns of academic staff:

'There is a constant pressure, I think from the executive, to try and draw deans more into them. And that, I think, would automatically put a line between me and my colleagues, which I don't want there.'

He continued:

'I think that the executive would like to see deans as both academic and resource managers. To be fair, our executive ... have moved a considerable amount of resource authority to me. I mean I have a one line budget really and there are certain things I can't do, but *there are a lot of things I can do that in the old days I couldn't do*. I think that they (the executive) are trying to shift the sort of academic (*sic*) and the resource decisions closer to the shop floor if you like, closer to the academic staff as can be done.' (emphasis added)

This Dean comments upon the devolution of some resources from the executive to the Deans that gives him a degree of power to fulfil his responsibilities. However, in doing so, he is being constituted more directly as an arm of the executive with potentially negative consequences for his capacity to elicit support and co-operation from 'the

managed'. The conflict between these aspects becomes apparent when asked to identify the issues that he was currently dealing with:

'The biggest problem really is maintaining an attachment to what we were sure about in the past; that what we were doing was of general national value and we had a sort of shared view about the worth of our work and colleagues. *Even though they really felt they were underpaid, they didn't blame the university for it.* Its a morale kind of thing really. I'm trying to succour a view amongst colleagues that we are professionals with skills. My own belief is that the government doesn't believe we are professionals with skills and it is consciously undermining us and trying to turn us into skilled shop floor workers who can be bought and sold at will.' (emphasis added)

Once more, this interviewee highlights the importance of traditional academic values in which there was a taken-for-granted sense of 'the worth of our work' and the status of academics as professionals. The Dean identifies erosion of these values as 'the biggest problem' — not just because it is demoralizing for staff but, arguably, because, in the absence of such values, there is a resort to managerial forms of control that further corrode traditional academic values. His claim is to be 'succour(ing) a view *amongst colleagues*' (emphasis added) who are all 'professionals with skills'. At the same time, though, he believes that what we have termed the imperializing discourses are consciously motivated by a concern to supplant professional values with a market ethos in which academics are turned 'into skilled shop floor workers who can be bought and sold at will'. Whilst apparently critical of this development, and presenting himself as a defender of 'what we were sure about in the past', this Dean positions himself as a resource manager who, effectively, does the bidding of the 'power-bloc'. Institutional post holders, such as this Dean, are striving to accommodate the demands of the 'power bloc'. Efforts to achieve an accommodation with these demands become (even more) problematical when long-established and often intimate relations with small well-integrated departments are at stake. For instance the Dean said:

'It's more difficult to play the sort of jackboot Fuhrer if you've known people for 20 years. I mean some of my staff I've known 27 years er, and in the old days we would go off camping together and you know. With quite a few of the staff, I remember I was having my little babies and they were having their little babies and the wives know each other quite well. So there is a sort of network of human relationships that is very hard to pinpoint ...'

As we have repeatedly suggested, extending the disciplines of the 'power-bloc' in the local settings of academic work is fraught with difficulty. The HOD, who compared himself with the manager of a small business (see above), identified his problem as follows:

'I have no sacking power. It is a constant bleat of heads of departments. I have actually no sanction over my staff. If they care to raise two fingers to me and go and do something else there is literally nothing (pause) I can do

something about it. I can starve them of resources to some extent, not very helpful because they could also work to rule, give lousy lectures and do their administrative job badly . . . now, I recognise, that if I could sack people, there would be a downside to it. I'm not saying (that) that is the panacea, just one of the tools which would enable me to be *taken more seriously as a manager who could influence things.*' (emphasis added)

Here we glimpse the credibility problem that senior post holders have when, or if, they take up a position within managerial discourse, especially when they are unable or unwilling to dovetail or mediate this with local practices. Yet, even for those who seek to work within the local practices, the degree of scope available to them to 'do the bidding of the power bloc', apart from those times when new staff are appointed, can seem limited, particularly given the capacity of staff to subvert managerial programmes. A dean in University 'D' for example identified the use of 'carrots' to induce improved performance from staff:

'As with all these things, it's a mixture of carrot and stick. Um, there are a few carrots that we still have available um that one can give. Some of this is space, taking space away from people and giving it to others who will be more likely to (pause). There are still some funds available . . . we tend to keep a reserve back so we've got the odd few thousand we can give to people who are being pro-active and moving in the direction we want, as a carrot.'

Thus, the top-slicing of funds that can be awarded to those who are deemed to be 'moving in the direction we want', and which can be withheld from those who are not, is identified as a major means of control (and one which is likely to attract support for the local bargaining of salaries from senior post holders, who would otherwise be averse to it). However, whilst the carrot is preferred as means of control, other more coercive options are available, as this dean observed:

'There are ways of making life slightly more difficult in terms of the occasional public comment or message to heads of department, and so on. If they put in for particular things and (we) say well that is rather a low priority um. (However) I'm not the sort of individual who will sort of stand up and say this department by and large achieves nothing. This just creates enemies. I find it better by and large to try and encourage people to work with members of teams. Those people who are being difficult, you sit down (with them) and if they are not prepared to work in that team, then perhaps there is another team they are prepared to work in, and I would say that, by and large, that has worked.'

Whilst this senior post holder acknowledged that 'the size of stick is probably fairly limited', and excludes the threat of sacking, for example, there are a number of more subtle sticks that he claimed to have deployed to good effect. In the main, these rely upon peer pressure — for example, by making the occasional public comment that is sufficiently understated to make its point without causing offence or alienating HODs. Equally, encouraging recalcitrant staff to work with colleagues

in teams relies upon peer pressure rather than direct supervision to discipline those who are ineligible for, or indifferent towards, 'carrots'. While 'management' has, to some extent, succeeded in selectively supporting and disciplining 'the managed', this has been accomplished by selectively mobilizing the identities, histories and practices of the locale.

### Summary and Conclusion

In this paper we have used a conceptual framework commended by Hall (1981) and developed by Fiske (1993) to analyze accounts of change presented by senior post-holders in four U.K. universities. Their accounts have been interpreted in terms of a continuing struggle between the 'power bloc', in the form of imperializing knowledges intended to measure, reward and increase the productivity of academics, and 'the people', comprising identities and relations located within academic locales which are the objects of these knowledges.

The body of the paper explored how imperialistic knowledges have challenged the adequacy and legitimacy of localizing knowledges and practices. Much of the empirical data is readily interpreted as lending support to the view that these knowledges have changed how academics think and act in relation to their work. Senior post-holders talked of the implementation of strategic initiatives, of managing staff, of taking responsibility and even of being a small-businessman. However, our analysis led us to enter a note of caution in respect of claims that a transition is occurring from 'collegialism' to 'managerialism' (Jary and Parker 1995; Scott and Watson 1994). Management discourse — with its demands for managerial relations and manager/managed identities and increased control over activities — is certainly available to senior post-holders and has been enthusiastically embraced by some of their number. However, many of them are themselves subject to existing discursive regimes and localized practices which have a strong mediating effect on the reception and articulation of 'management' disciplines. Thus, whatever 'transition' may be occurring, it is likely to be patchy, extended, and incomplete.

Each university is a mix of organizing practices which are historically located and variably resilient and resistant to being wholeheartedly overthrown by the 'new' managers. Parker and Jary (1995) play down the way in which those in senior posts are supported by, and supportive of, resisting locales. The transmission of their university-wide or external positionings as managers (the 'bullying' and 'jumping' to which a Dean made reference) into the actual operational practices and knowledges of university departments is therefore partial and uneven.

That said, as existing structures — for teaching and research as well as administration — creak and fail under the weight of additional loads,

two parallel developments seem likely to gather pace. First, there is the prospect of more support for, or at least little resistance to modularization, formation of research centres, de-democratization of committees, etc. Given the pressure to meet performance targets in the areas of teaching and research, the time available for participating actively in departmental and faculty decision-making is being eroded. As one HOD put it, in response to mounting pressures, staff 'become frenetic and overactive . . . sometimes with detriment to their teaching, certainly with detriment to the minimum administration' that they are formally required to undertake or 'become sullen and take refuge in teaching or in other displacement activities'. Second, there is the prospect of a continuing expansion in the number and influence of 'professional' committee sitters and managers.

Paradoxically, it is the presence and power of established academic, research-driven values which currently drives or tempts many academics to withdraw from the very activities (e.g. committee work and other 'Good Citizen' activity) that sustain and renew an ethos that extends beyond an individualized commitment to the production and dissemination of knowledge. Without the active fostering and renewal of this ethos, 'soft' managerialism will increasingly strike a responsive chord; or, rather, it will elicit a supportive response when it is calculated by individual academics to make their lives 'easier' or 'better'. The very idea of 'creating structures that make people's lives easier', as one of the interviewees put it, may be superficially appealing to hard pressed rank-and-file staff, especially when they are eager for recognition and promotion. It is certainly seductive when contrasted with 'hard management'. However, at root, neo-paternalist moves in this direction are disabling insofar as they further remove 'the people' from decisions that affect the conditions of their work and are supportive of collaborative research effort.

Our analysis has not discredited the view that imperializing disciplines, exemplified in the context of higher education by the Research Assessment and the Teaching Quality exercises, have been corrosive and disruptive of local practices. Where there is an established, ingrained research or teaching culture, the dominant effect of these technologies has been to encourage (even) greater 'self-discipline' amongst academics by encouraging them to 'better understand' the likely effects of their actions, and to adjust (or redouble) their efforts in ways that are consistent with 'the managerial interest'. The commitment of academics to research and teaching, or at least the difficulty or undesirability of finding employment outside universities, renders them vulnerable to the appeal of knowledges that favour passive acquiescence rather than organized resistance. Despite the comparative security of their employment, their espousal of critical thinking and experience of public debating, (full-time) academics are poorly prepared (Willmott 1995), and lack public sympathy, to argue against the widely held perception that they are comparatively unproductive, adequately remunerated and take

long vacations. When outright resistance to the imperializing disciplines is effectively ruled out, the tendency is to resort to a variety of local tactics to evade and subvert as well as to accommodate and appease these demands.

As the interview material presented in this paper indicates, the capacity of imperializing discourses and practices to discipline academics falls short of their aspirations, for they confront locales in which there is often little enthusiasm for changing established traditions, values and procedures, unless change is perceived to strengthen or sustain local practices. The implementation of imperializing disciplines is thus precisely conditional upon an appreciation of the productive contribution of certain local practices and the preparedness of senior post-holders to defend these, while at the same time 'giving some suggestions as to developments', as the Pro-Vice Chancellor at University 'C' put it.

## Notes

1. The term 'McUniversity' is a reference to 'The McUniversity: Organisation, Management and Academic Subjectivity' by Martin Parker and David Jary (1995). The term 'McUniversity' is derived from Ritzer's discussion of 'McDonaldisation' (1993), a process where fordist standardization and rationalization of production methods replace craft skills.

2. It is a charge to which one of the authors of this paper (HW) pleads guilty (see Willmott 1995) but which he seeks to redress here.

3. Similar assessments have recently been made of the impact of management on other public-sector organizations. Clarke (1995) for instance, in his assessment of the interaction of management and social services, suggests that while many professionals have been subjected to managerialism, they have not necessarily become its subjects: '[O]lder discourses and the subject positions and identities associated with them have not gone away — they linger on not just out of nostalgia, but because the specific practice of welfare provision continue to require particular combinations of skills, competencies and orientations which outrun the discourse of business, management and enterprise. What has been constructed is a field of tensions within which people manoeuvre — calculatingly, passionately, politically.' (p. 9).

While Clarke notes the incorporating power of managerialism — for instance its discursive tactics (e.g. reconstructing the citizen or student as customer, the subordination of professional judgement to budgetary management, and the colonization of professional judgement with auditing processes), and its 'success' in accomplishing which he calls the 'TINA effect (there is no alternative) (p. 11)' — he also notes how 'local managements contain the permanent possibility of new alliances or of managements being themselves co-opted to local values, objectives and missions' (*ibid.*).

4. Interviews were conducted by CP during 1994 with senior post holders in two post-1992 universities (former Polytechnics which became self-managing institutions in 1989, and gained the title of university in 1992 in response to changing Government legislation on tertiary education) and two 'Civic' universities that were well established by 1992. The two pre-1992 universities have annual turnovers in excess of £100m, have more than 10,000 students and consider themselves to be research-led. The two post-1992 universities are predominantly teaching-based institutions, about half the size of the two pre-1992 universities in terms of cash turnover. In each of the four institutions, about nine senior post-holders were interviewed: three very senior staff (typically, vice-chancellor, pro-vice chancellor and registrar or equivalent), three high-grade administrative staff (e.g. head of accommodation, personnel, planning, etc.) and three senior academic post holders (e.g. dean, head of school, head of department). Where appropriate, the title of the interviewee is given, and their subject area is identified. The interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes and covered the following issues: the interviewees' current experience of work, past experience of work; changes in their experience of work; the consequences of these changes and anticipated future

changes to their experience of work. The transcripts were then analyzed for the key dilemmas each interviewee expressed. These were then marshalled into themes for the paper. The empirical material is part of that gathered by CP for a PhD. Researchers who might wish to draw on the transcripts can write to Professor Graham Kelly, Department of Management Development, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, PR1 2HE. These transcripts, available in the department, have been filtered to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees and their institutions.

5. We would like to thank participants at the 'Change in Knowledge-based Organisations Conference', University of Alberta, Canada, May 1995, and the ESRC Professions in Late Modernity Seminar No. 5, Imperial College, June, 1995, (particularly John Clarke), for their comments and suggestions.

6. While we recognize that gendered practices are strongly implicated in higher education management, the discussion in this paper does not deal specifically with this. See Prichard (1996a) for a discussion of this, which draws material from the study upon which this paper is based.

7. The Thatcherite power-bloc, for instance, has comprised a distinctive set of alliances between private capital, a radical Conservatism propagated by Keith Joseph and heterogeneous sections of the electorate. This power-bloc encompassed diverse shades of political opinion — notably in relation to the meaning of Nationalism and the European question. As moves towards European Federalism have been made or projected, the Thatcherite power-bloc has become progressively split and disorganized as a populist ideology as well as a political force.

8. On the other hand, this department had been a major beneficiary of the North Sea oil boom. In addition to providing equipment, oil companies had supported large numbers of doctoral and post doctoral students whose presence and capacity to publish are critical for a 5 rating on the RAE. A virtuous circle had developed in which staff had been successful in obtaining research council grants and the head of department had become closely involved with major funding bodies through the presidency of his professional society.

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