

# Higher Education Governance and Academics' Social Movements in European Countries: New Players on the Field?

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## New actors in higher education governance?

- Self-organized disciplinary communities and the role of academic elites in shaping research and higher education policies (Whitley et al., 2010)
- Collective resistance platforms spanning across disciplinary boundaries as **new players** on the field of higher education and research governance



## Research questions

- What new forms of collective responses do academics undertake in order to reclaim their positions as influential actors within the higher education and research governance systems?
  - To what extent does the collective response bear the characteristics of a social movement? (Definition, organization, action repertoires and strategies)
  - What has prompted the creation of the collective resistance? (Theories of social movements)

## Puzzles to be solved

- Why so late?
  - The policy change and the resulting structural changes in universities have started back in the 1990s, collective resistance platforms are a recent phenomenon
- Changing academic identities?
  - Strong disciplinary identity boundary maintenance among academics (Leisyte, 2014)
  - Collective resistance at national level is likely to go beyond disciplinary boundaries

## Definition of social movements

- “Collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities” (Tarrow, 1998: 4)
- “**Networks** of groups or organizations prepared to mobilize for **protest actions to promote (or resist) social change**” (Rucht, 1996: 186)
  - Conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents
  - Shared distinct collective identity
  - Framing as a mobilization strategy

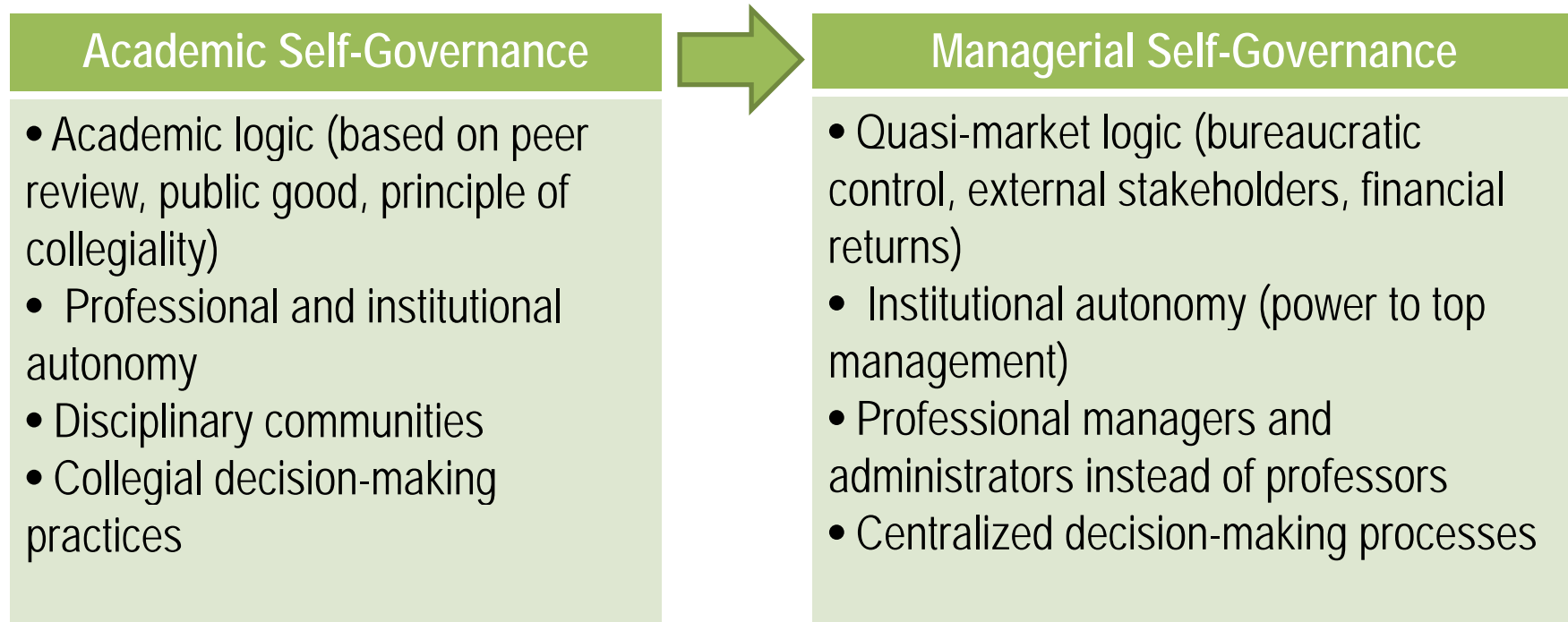
## Theories of social movements


- The theory of 'grievances' (Gurr, 1970; Müller, 1980; Klandermans, 1997)
  - Feeling of injustice and discontent which are initiated by social-structural changes in the society
  - Criticism: "Grievances are everywhere, movements are not"
- The concept of collective identity (Van Zomeren et al., 2008; Klandermans, 2014)
  - Shared grievances
  - Information
  - Social support

## Managerialist reforms in HE institutions

- New Public Management (NPM) reforms in the public sector (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; Sultana, 2012)
- Managerialism in European HE institutions: More 'complete and 'corporate organizations' (Krücken and Meier, 2006)
- Characteristics of managerialism:
  - Accountability based on performance & target setting
  - Funding based on results
  - Marketization & commercialization of higher education and research
  - Bureaucratization & centralized HE governance

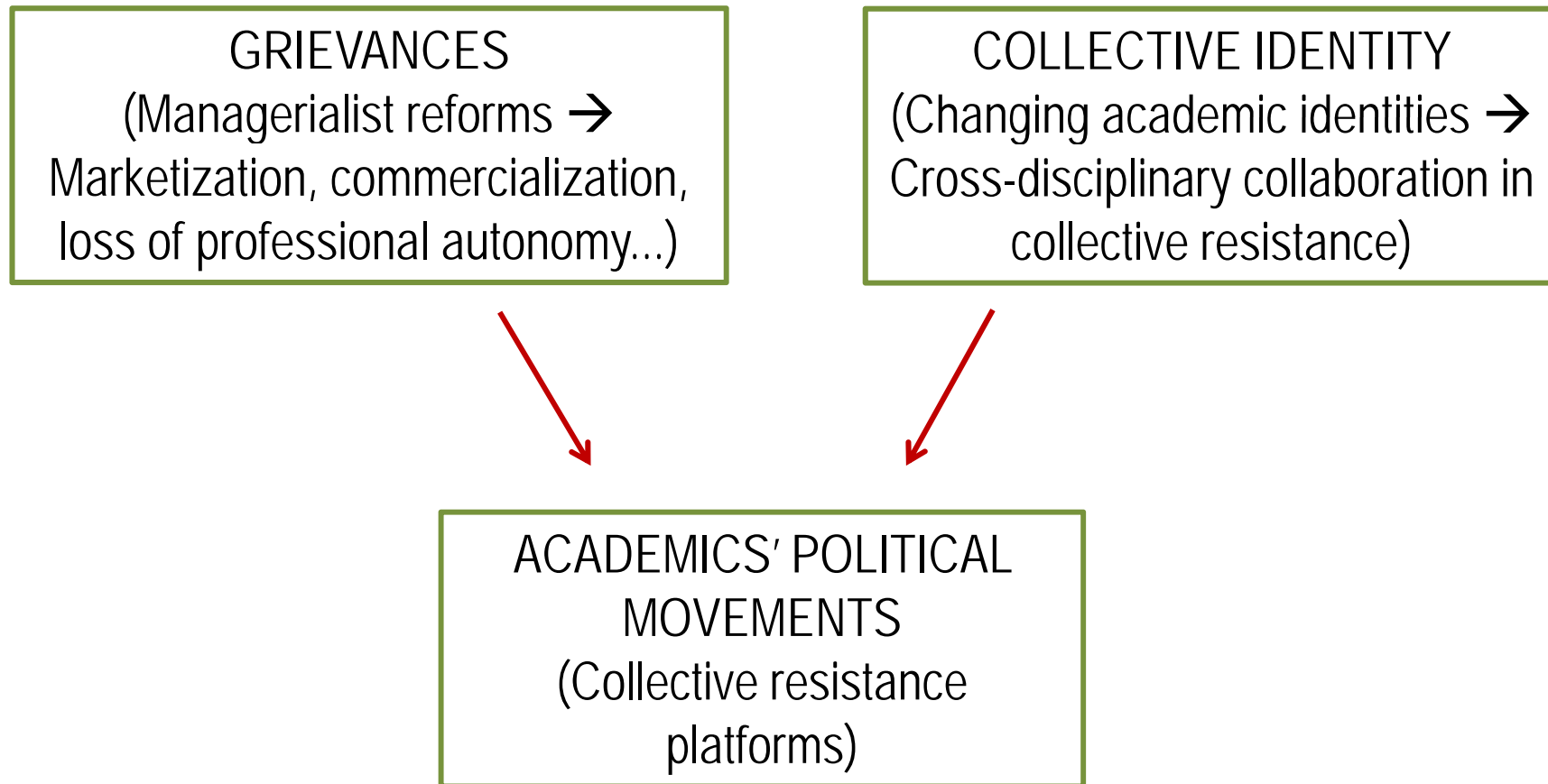
## Shifts in HE governance



 Consequences: Weakening role of academics in shaping university decision-making, changing academic work, performance pressure, decreasing academic freedom...



## Expectations

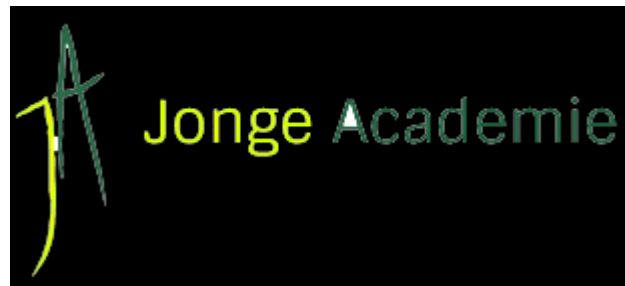


## Case Studies



**HNU** Platform Hervorming  
Nederlandse Universiteiten

**Actiegroep Hoger Onderwijs**



## Policy context

UK	BE-Flanders	Netherlands
„Hard NPM country“	„Soft NPM country“	„Soft NPM country“
Managerialism since early 1980s – Thatcher reforms – strengthening managerial self-governance within universities	Managerialist reforms in 1990s (Decrees of 1991 and 1994) – In 2008 the Decree on the financing of HE	Managerialism introduced mid-1980s (increased self-regulation), since late 1990s and early 2000s also increased accountability & strengthened market orientation
Strong top-down policy process: Government → Funding Councils → University	State steering with laws and decrees / Intermediary institutions provide some buffer	State steering with laws and decrees / Intermediary institutions provide some buffer
Centralized research quality assessment for the allocation of public funds (Performance-based funding)	Financing of HEI according to research output and number of student credits	Performance-based government funding based on student numbers

## Structure of academics' resistance platforms

	CDBU (UK)	AHO (BE-Flanders)	H.NU (Netherlands)
<b>Launch</b>	November 2012	Summer 2013	November 2013
<b>Structure</b>	Membership-based organization	Loosely structured, supporter-based	Loosely structured, supporter-based
<b>Funding</b>	Membership fees & donations	--	--
<b>Membership</b>	67 founding members 7 steering group members 6 trustees, >600 members	>150 founders	25 founders
<b>Links</b>	Linked to other movements & campaigns in the UK	Linked to similar national and international academics' platforms	Linked to similar national and international academics' platforms; soon to other movements

## Action repertoires

	CDBU (UK)	AHO (BE-Flanders)	H.NU (Netherlands)
Mobilization	Becoming a member, donations, sharing own stories, joining or starting up local groups, promoting the council, volunteering	Online petition action „Open Letter“	Online signature action for supporting the manifesto of H.NU „Towards a Different University“
	Social Media presence (Twitter, Facebook, Blog)	Social Media presence (Twitter)	Social Media presence (Twitter, Blog)
Communication	Newsletter, journal articles and newspaper columns, policy documents on website	Journal articles and newspaper columns, policy documents on website Interactive website	Newsletter, journal articles and newspaper columns Interactive website
Communication	Organization of events such as lectures, conferences	Organization of discussion rounds	
Political Action	Contacting politicians (Public hearing at House of Lords)	Contacting politicians (Public hearing at Flemish parliament)	Flyer action at the event „Gala of Science“

## Social media presence: Twitter

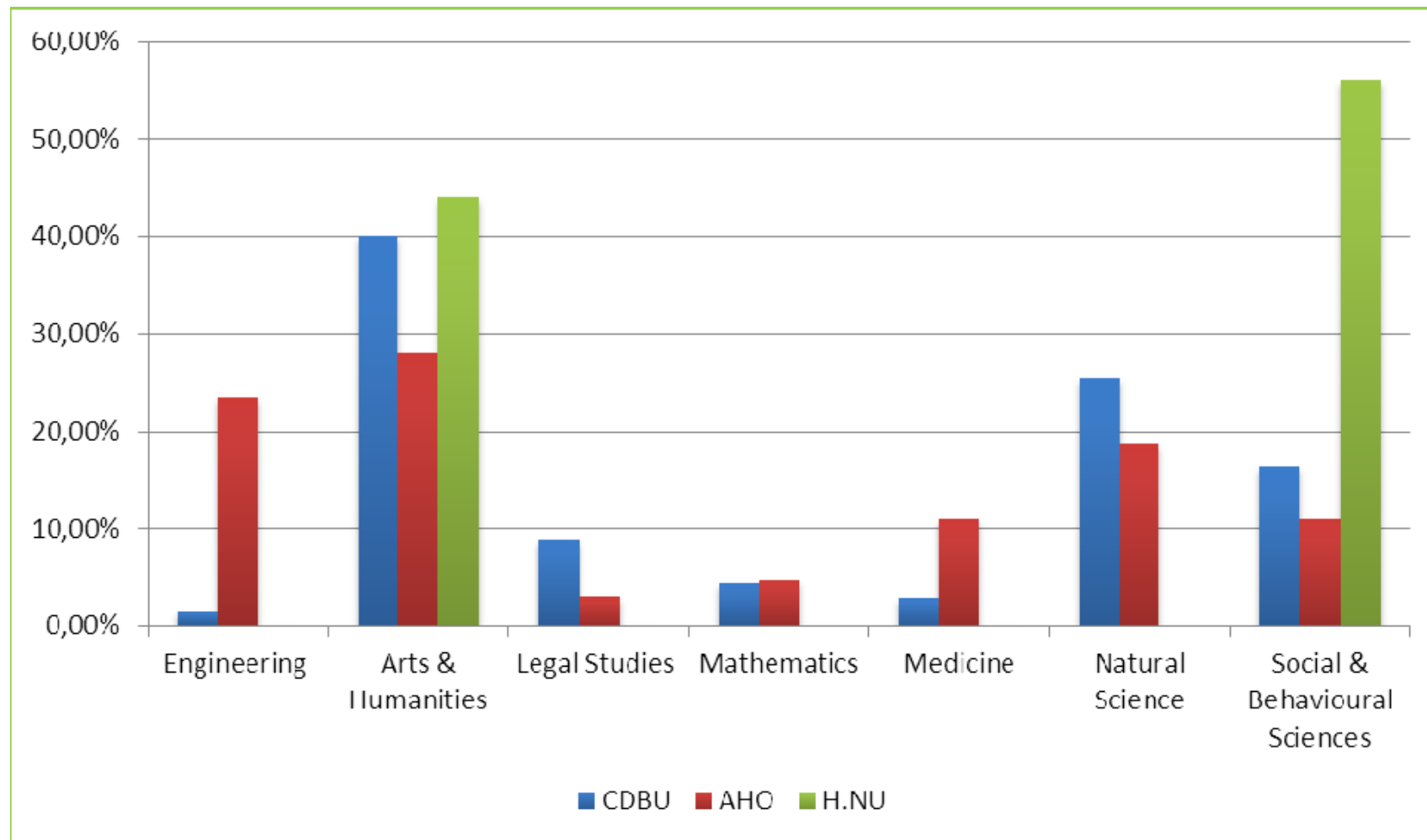
The image shows a collage of three Twitter profiles. The top profile is CDBU (@cdbuni), featuring a yellow shield logo and a banner image of a gate. It has 2,349 tweets, 641 following, 1,083 followers, 217 favorites, and 2 lists. The middle profile is Actiegroep Hoger Ond (@ActiegroepHO), with a bookshelf banner and 473 tweets, 204 following, and 149 followers. The bottom profile is PLATFORM HNU (@PLATFORMHNU), with an HNU logo banner and 25 tweets, 27 following, and 59 followers. A tweet from PLATFORM HNU is visible, mentioning Andre T Linnenbank and a science competition.

Profile Name	Tweets	Following	Followers	Favorites	Lists
CDBU (@cdbuni)	2,349	641	1,083	217	2
Actiegroep Hoger Ond (@ActiegroepHO)	473	204	149	-	-
PLATFORM HNU (@PLATFORMHNU)	25	27	59	-	-

## Topic framing

CDBU (UK)	AHO (BE-Flanders)	H.NU (Netherlands)
Academic Freedom	Performance pressure and research quality	Commodification of research and the emphasis on financial criteria
Commodification of research and the emphasis on financial criteria	Precarious work conditions esp. for young academics	Academic freedom
Performance pressure and research quality		Inclusive academic self-governance
Inclusive academic self-governance		Performance pressure and research quality
Equal opportunities, student fees, early career researchers		Precarious work conditions esp. for young academics

## Founding members per discipline





## Summary and conclusions

- All three platforms resemble social movement organizations in many aspects (structure, topic framing strategies, activities), but differ in terms of organizational structure, activities, as well as the effects of grievances and multidisciplinary collective identities
- Grievances (the NPM-based higher education reforms and the fundamental changes in university organization and academic work) seem to be the main drive of academics' collective resistance platforms
- A politicized collective identity might have been fuelled by the grievances, but no clear evidence on the extent to which collective identity has played a role on the emergence of academics' political movements

## Where do we go from here...

- What are the predispositions that lead academics towards forming the action platforms? → Social movement theories → Interviews with founding members
- What other theories apply to the emergence of academics' movements? → Relationships of founders with other actors of governance (Unions, professional organizations, lobbyists...)
- What are the motivations of academics who support the protest platforms? Do they differ on the basis of social characteristics (gender, age), academic level, or academic disciplines? → Theories of protest participation → Interviews with participants

Thank you for your attention