

HIGHER EDUCATION AND PUBLIC GOOD: THE CASE OF THE UK

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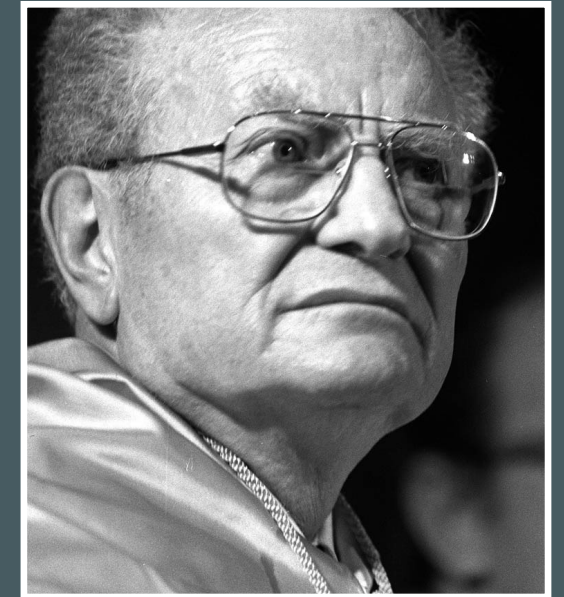
1. Anglophone political culture in relation to 'public'
2. The research – major policy reports and 24 semi-structured interviews
3. Conclusions



ECONOMIC POLICY SAYS THAT HIGHER EDUCATION IS *EITHER* PUBLIC OR PRIVATE: IT'S ZERO-SUM

- Public goods are non-rivalrous and/or non excludable
- Goods are *non-rivalrous* when consumed by any number of people without being depleted, for example knowledge of a mathematical theorem, which sustains its use value everywhere, indefinitely, on the basis of free access.
- Goods are *non-excludable* when benefits cannot be confined to individuals, e.g. clean air regulation, national defence, basic research
- Private goods are neither non-rivalrous nor non-excludable, and can be produced and sold in economic markets as individualised commodities. (Many economists see teaching/learning as a largely private good)

(Common-pool goods, are rivalrous but non-excludable, such as a fishing zone. Club goods are excludable but non-rivalrous until congestion occurs. Merit goods are rivalrous and excludable, but subsidised by government because otherwise the goods will under-consumed, e.g. because the private benefits are diffuse and long term)

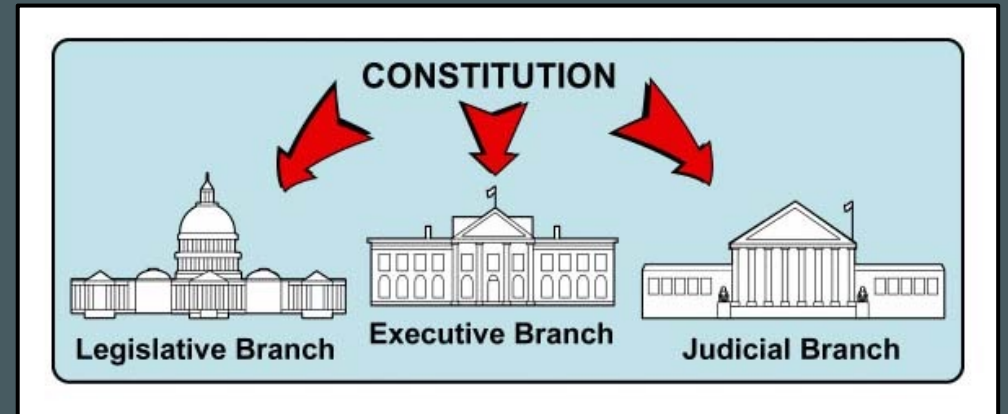
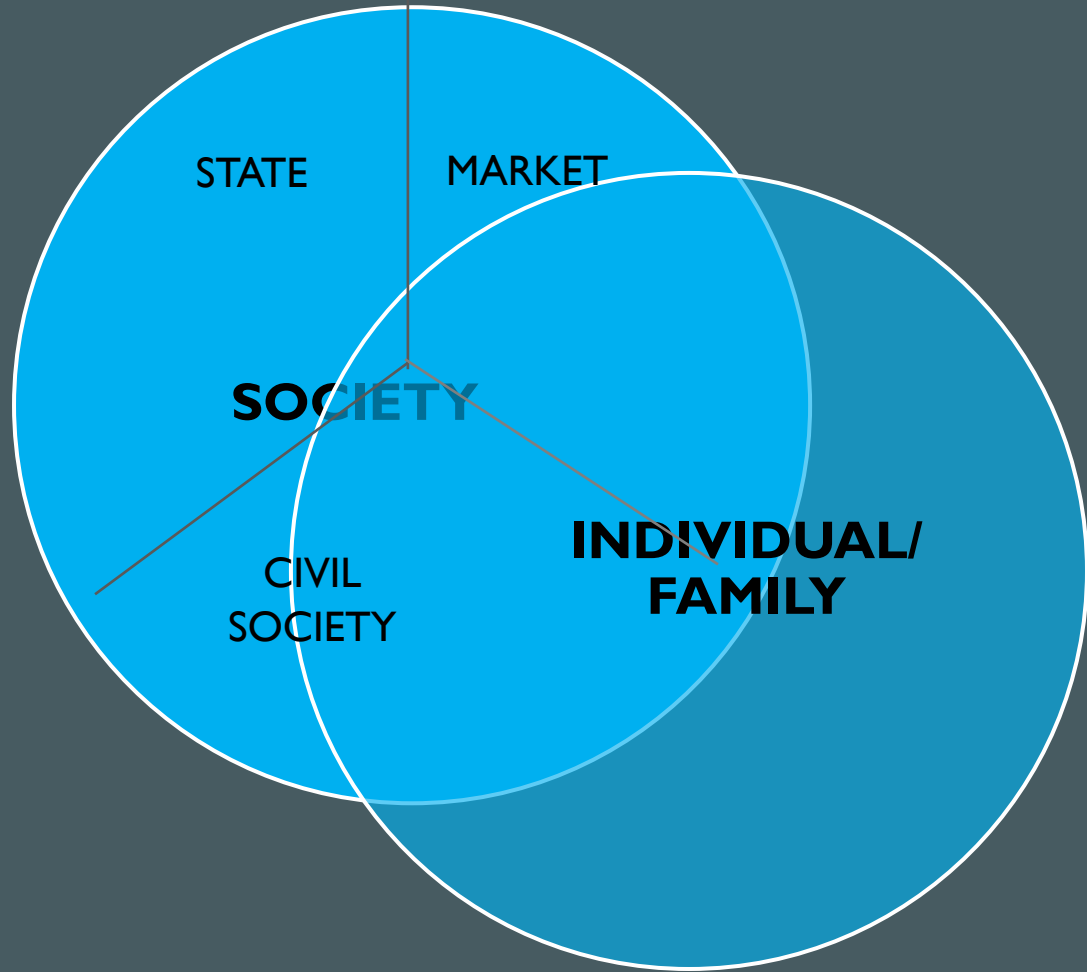


Samuelson, P. (1954.) The pure theory of public expenditure. *Review of Economics and Statistics* 36 (4), pp. 387–9

THE COLLECTIVE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS INCLUDE:

SECTOR	Higher education contributions include
KNOWLEDGE	Production, codification, dissemination and reproduction of knowledge in many fields
ECONOMY	Potentially employed skilled graduates, productivity of co-workers, reproduction of professions, knowledge-based industry innovation, dissemination of technologies, etc
REGIONS	Numerous contributions to building in cities and regions economic activity, social and civic life, and communications
SOCIETY	Certification, equitable allocation of social opportunities, normalisation of social literacy, tolerance, ethical conduct
CULTURE	Cultural activities by institutions, preparation of graduates in skills and sensibilities, libraries and other resources
GOVERNMENT	Advice on policy and regulation, preparation of reports, etc
DEMOCRACY	Formation of citizens competent in political and public life
GLOBAL	Normalisation of international experience, understanding

EURO-AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURES NORMALISE A LIMITED LIBERAL STATE AND DIVIDED POWERS



DESPITE THE FOUR
NATIONS UK (ESPECIALLY
IN ENGLAND) IS A
CENTRALISED, TOP-
DOWN, MONARCHICAL
POLITICAL SYSTEM



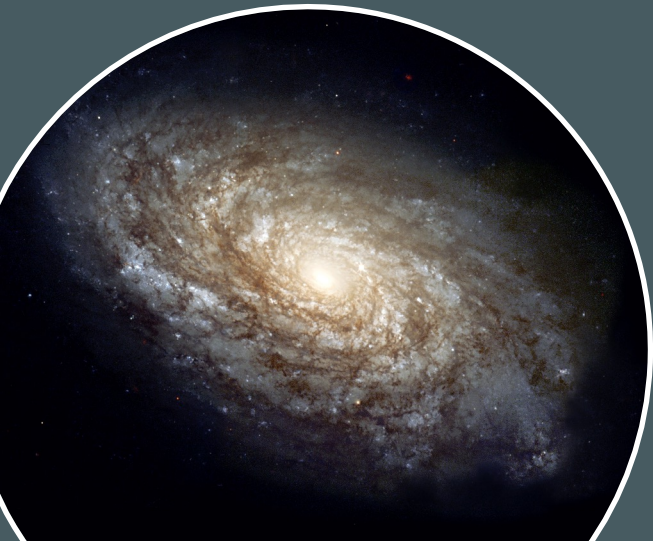


THE CONCEPTUAL TOOLBOX: ANGLOPHONE IDEAS OF 'PUBLIC' AND 'PRIVATE'

C. Analytic/economic:
public private dualism
(public and private exclude
each other)



**B. Communicative-
inclusive 'public':**
public includes and links
all private units



**A. Normative-universal
'public good':**
public contains private

PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE GOOD (ZERO-SUM RELATION)



Political dual:

Public = state/government

Private = spheres of home, family,
economic market, corporate sector

Economic dual:

Public goods = non-excludable or
non-rivalrous goods, can't be
produced profitably in market

Private goods = everything else

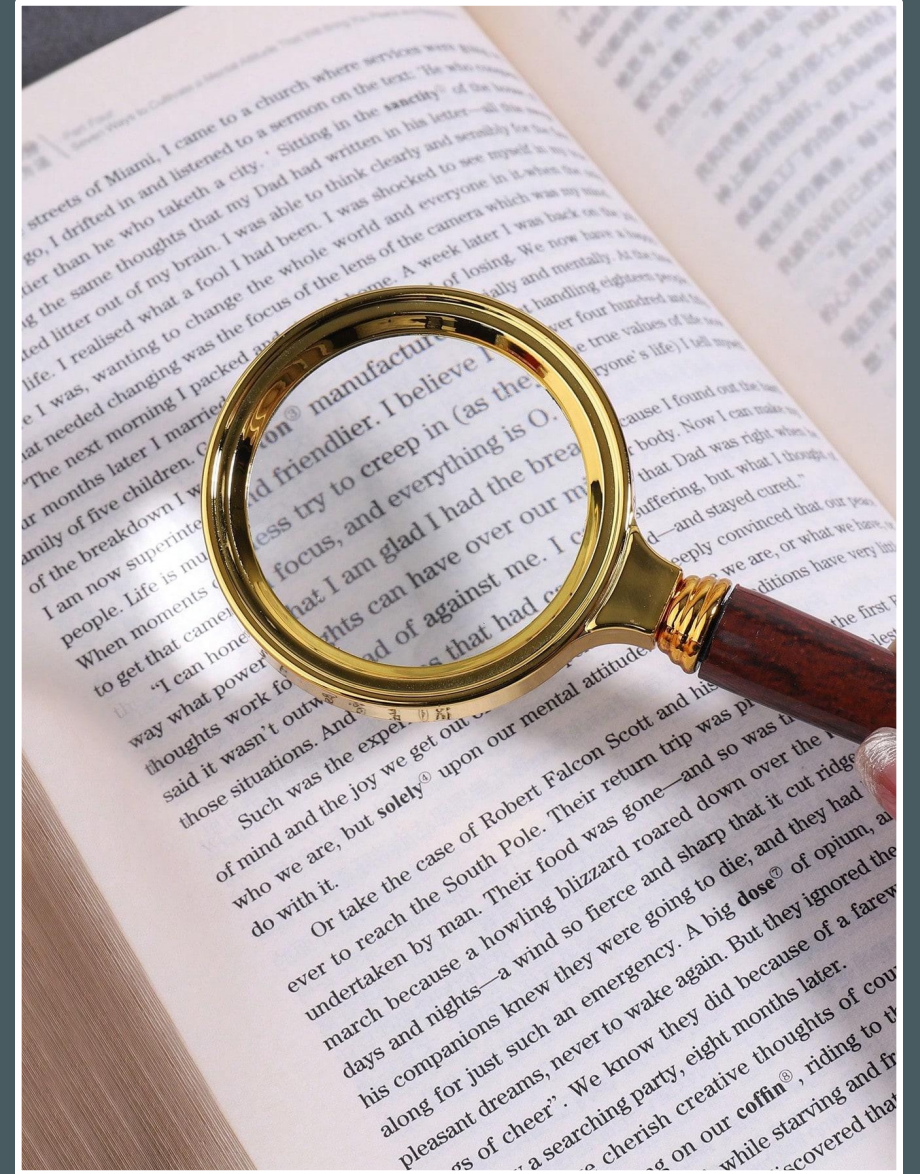
THE UK CASE STUDY

- Critical review and comparison of significant policy reports
- 24 semi-structured interviews::
 - 13 in two contrasting research universities
 - 4 current or former policy makers
 - 3 leaders of national higher education organisations
 - 1 leading journalist
 - 4 academic experts on the topic



SIGNIFICANT POLICY REPORTS

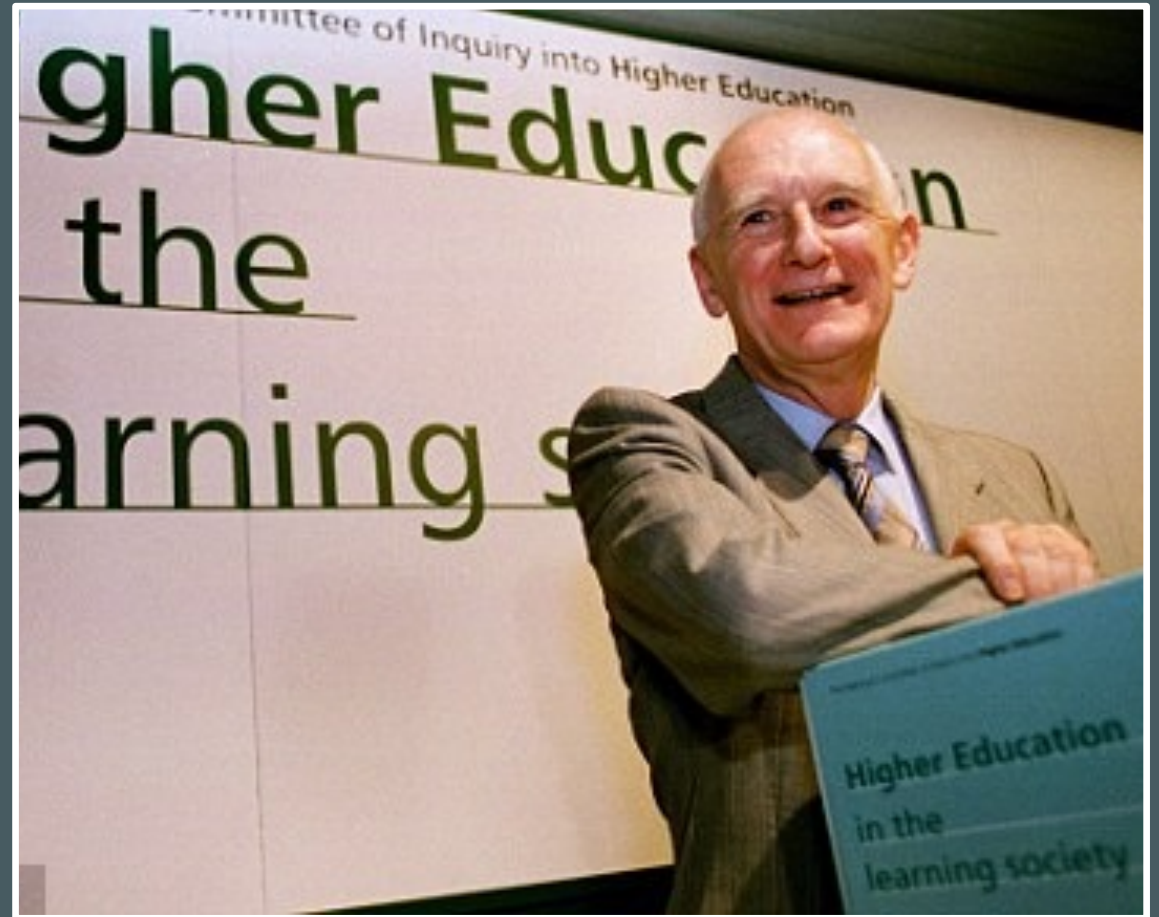
- Robbins 1963
- Dearing 1997
- Browne 2010
- Augar 2019



ROBBINS 1963



DEARING 1997



DEARING COMBINED A BROAD PUBLIC PERSPECTIVE WITH NEO-LIBERAL FINANCING

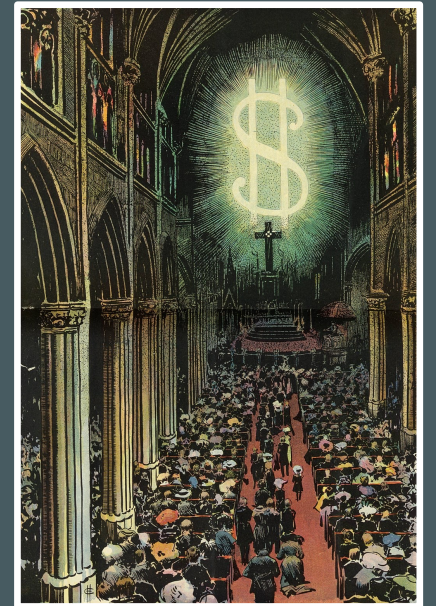
‘There is overwhelming evidence that those with higher education qualifications are the main beneficiaries from higher education in the form of improved employment prospects and pay... graduates in employment should make a greater contribution to the costs of higher education in the future. While we believe the economy as a whole, and those who employ graduates, are also substantial beneficiaries, even though these benefits have proved elusive to quantify, the greatest benefit accrues to graduates themselves’ (Dearing 1997, pp. 288-289).

BROWNE 2010



THE ECONOMIC PUBLIC/PRIVATE DUALISM IS ALSO A FUNDING FORMULA IN A MARKETISED SYSTEM

- The public/private dualism maximises the scope for capitalist economy while sustaining a limited liberal state with residual functions. In this ideal world, markets produce everything except those outcomes they cannot produce
- It is also a way a to limit public spending. In education and health **government chooses** whether to provide the service as a universally accessible public good (e.g. NHS, UK primary schooling) or as a private good (e.g. higher education in England)
- When higher education is defined as a private good the student/graduate is ultimately responsible for paying. The state sees itself as the guarantor of the private benefits of human capital investment, it focuses on 'value for money'



AUGAR 2019



**‘ASSESSING
THIS
WIDER
VALUE IS
VERY
DIFFICULT’**

‘We have used the available data to consider the economic value for students and the economy of different higher educational routes, for different people. However, we are clear that successful outcomes for both students and society are about more than pay. Higher levels of education are associated with wider participation in politics and civic affairs, and better physical and mental health. We also understand the social value of some lower-earning professions such as nursing and social care, and the cultural value of studying the Arts and Humanities. The earnings data enable us to make economically defined value calculations, not value judgements. Assessing this wider value is very difficult but government should continue to work to ensure that wider considerations are taken into account in its policy and funding decisions’ (Augar report 2019, p. 87).

QUESTIONS IN INTERVIEWS

1. What do you understand by the term 'public good'? In your opinion, what kind of benefits and activities fall under this heading, in general, in all areas of policy?
2. What do higher education and research contribute to the public good, or public goods?
3. What are the main roles of government in higher education? What should government do? Are there limits—what should government not do? In what areas should universities make their own decisions?

'TRANSCENDS INDIVIDUAL UTILITY'

'The public good is something that ... transcends individual utility, individual perspective, and provides some benefit for society as a whole. ... that means all of us, independently of whether we individually get benefit'.

- middle manager university I, computing

REGULATION SHAPES A NARROW UNDERSTANDING

‘There are certain key performance indicators that we’ve got so trained into talking about. [These indicators] ... probably struggle to capture some of the softer aspects. [For example] the teaching excellence framework only encourages us to think more about graduate destinations.’

- middle manager university I, literature

NO SINGLE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING PUBLIC GOOD(S)

‘Unfortunately there isn’t a simple metric or even set of metrics. We did some work about a year ago where we created a value framework, which deliberately looked at where we could put metrics against non-economic factors. You can track things like the health of an individual or a cohort, you can track demographic participation, you can track how many are going into professions seen as vital to the public good. Some of those are measurable through metrics. An awful lot of them aren’t’.

- senior leader, national organisation

INDIVIDUALS GAIN MORE THAN PECUNIARY BENEFITS

‘You can turn someone from someone who feels like they have no agency in their life, or they have very few choices, into someone with lots of agency and lots of choices. I think that is very powerful.

- senior journalist

‘ It is good for us as a community to have people who ask questions, who understand responsibility, who understand complexity and ambiguity ... it’s good to have a civil society in which people understand their own biases and can reach out and be empathetic to others.

- senior leader, university |, arts

‘WE NEED TO THINK OF EDUCATION AS EDUCATION’

‘We have moved too far in the direction of thinking about the economic benefit for the individual. We need to think of education as being education, not training for a job’.

- middle-level leader, university |, computer science

BUT 'IT IS CREATING SOCIAL DIVISION'

'We can celebrate positive social mobility impacts of higher education on an individual level, while also acknowledging that on a collective level it is creating social division in a way that is quite problematic.'

- senior journalist

'PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BENEFITS ARE NOT NECESSARILY ANTAGONISTIC'

'Public and private benefit are not necessarily antagonistic, or choices, they can both be advanced. ... in some cases the overlap is very clear.

- middle level leader, university I, literature

'There's no doubt that on average that university education provides a significant private return to students, but it's hugely heterogeneous. ... higher education provides private returns but also provides huge social returns. I don't think it's a zero-sum game'.

- expert, economics and education

ONE INTERVIEWEE AGREED WITH TREASURY

‘The time that one spends on research is more obviously generating a public good than the time that one spends on teaching. Teaching is more obviously a private good, in the sense that the direct benefits of teaching are enjoyed by the individuals who are there getting the degrees...’

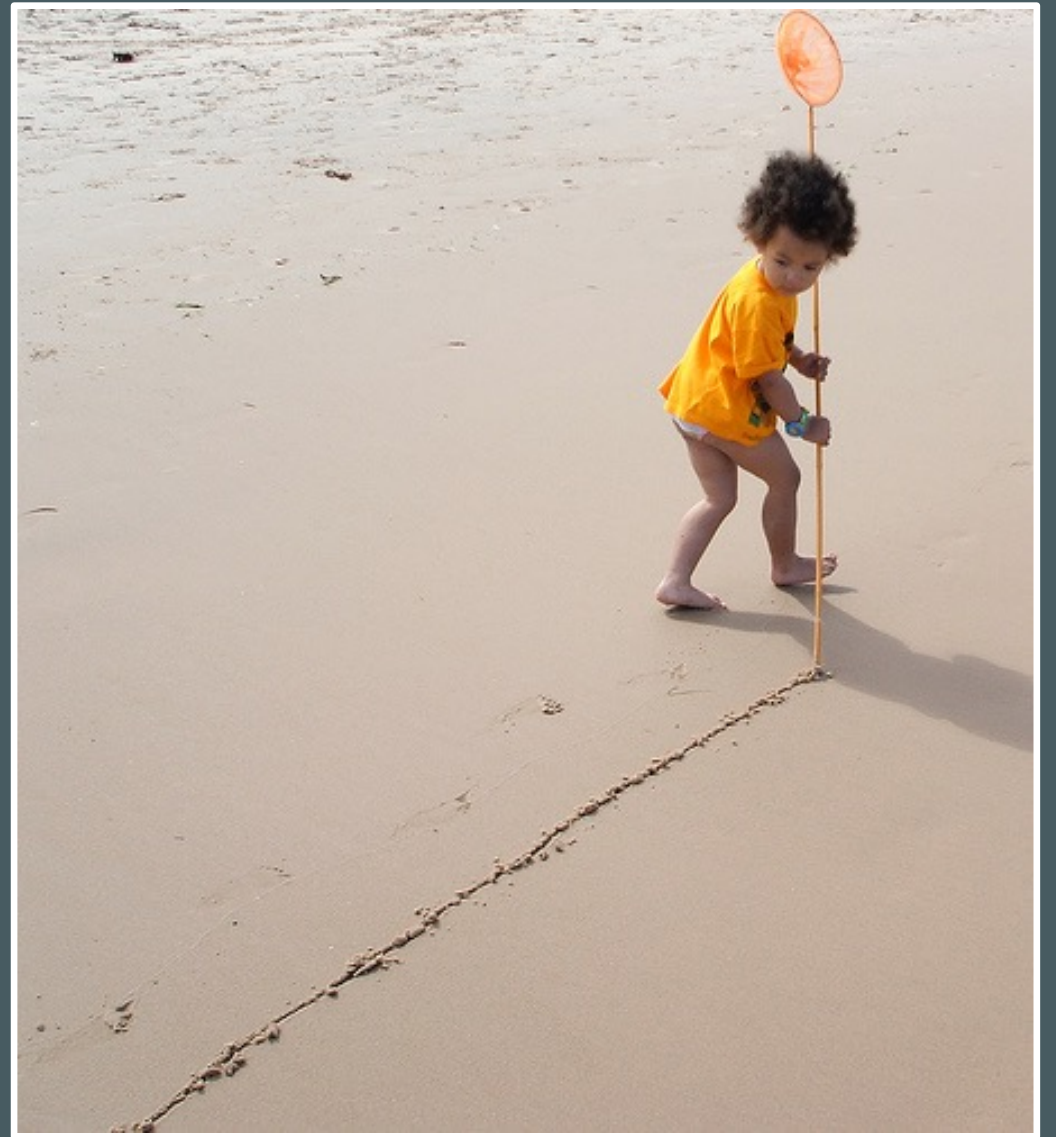
- professor, university I, political economy

NEO-LIBERAL AUTONOMY HAS ATTRACTIVE FOR UNIVERSITIES

‘A university’s contribution that was only public good would be in danger of being suffocated by the state’

- expert, higher education

**BUT WHERE TO
DRAW THE LINE
BETWEEN PUBLIC
AND PRIVATE COST?**



**‘IT’S ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR
UNIVERSITIES TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO
THE PUBLIC GOOD’ – POLICY MAKER**

‘It’s absolutely necessary for universities to pay more attention to the public good, just as a defence against the probably unjustified accusations that there’s too much private interest in what universities do. It’s also a natural bulwark against governments of whatever kind. Much more positive attention to it, rather than doing it when pressured, is the thing ’.

- policy maker

IN CONCLUSION

Single Word Synonyms for **In Conclusion**



Briefly

Summarizing

Obviously

Altogether

Considering

Overall

Therefore

Ultimately

Thus

Finally

Essentially

Lastly

Indeed

Principally

STUCK
IN THE
MUD



NO STABLE BASIS FOR FINANCING



THE WAY OUT

By breaking the nexus between funding policy and judgments about provision and activity, UK government and institutions could focus openly on the potentials of individual non-pecuniary outcomes and the many and diverse possibilities for collective goods





Dicksonia Antarctica, Otways, Victoria. Australia 2009

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING