

which can prominently contribute to achieving social, cultural, or economic solutions. In our digitized and globalized world, with its multiple opportunities for networking and interacting with one another, it is indispensable that the humanities bring to the fore how much it helps us to grow our personalities and cultivate our virtues through these encounters. Ultimately, it is the other who helps me understand myself and my environment better than before. Such a contextualization of humanistic studies not only links the present to the past, but it also puts great hopes on the future.

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## 5 Reconfiguring institutions – Towards a culture of creativity

Human behaviour and values (including central values like freedom, dignity, and wellbeing) are fundamentally tied to the structure of our social institutions. This is because human action and self-knowledge are necessarily shaped by social interactions that are patterned through institutions. As Hegel argued, individualist approaches or solutions to social problems are insufficient, because the rational freedom and wellbeing of individual lives are essentially bound up with the structure of our institutions. Humanistic inquiry must involve the critical study of the values held, both tacitly and explicitly, in our social institutions, examining their rational potential and deficits, and creating new institutions in line with our latest rational self-portraits.

An adequate institutional framework must be put in place for the humanities and social sciences to realize their full potential. Their potential is undermined not only when financial and material conditions are precarious, but also when they are squeezed into an instrumental logic and tied to technocratic descriptions of what problems are to be solved. We identify *four demands* for the institutional framework that enables a culture of creativity in the humanities and social sciences.<sup>61</sup>

1. Sufficient funding for research and education is a minimal condition. The demands of the humanities are far removed from those of the natural sciences, which require expensive technical and laboratory equipment. A wide funding gap between the humanities and experimental sciences – on average – is understandable. Patterns of defunding the humanities and further shifting resources to the natural and engineering sciences, however, shake the minimal conditions for the humanities to perform their crucial roles in society. Research must not be a weekend activity and the same number of teachers must not be left to cope with greater student numbers and bigger classes. Under these circumstances, research, education, and learning are bound to suffer.
2. The institutional framework must ensure a reliable, high-trust mode of core funding for teaching and research. That means placing more emphasis on the careful *ex ante assessment* and selection of both researchers and their projects, and less on ever tighter *ex post control* and reporting. For researchers and their projects, there is a fine line between risk-taking and measurable output. It is in the nature of creative research to ask questions whose answers are uncertain. It might lead to better understandings of the problem, rather than operational solutions.
3. This leads us to our third condition for an adequate institutional framework: What research should it reward? What counts as valuable? We have seen a tendency to submit the humanities and social sciences to problem descriptions as they arise from policy processes and managerial understandings of society. Their role is then reduced to the adjacent production of legitimacy. At its worst, and not unheard of, the humanities would be tied to promises of contributing to a country's gross domestic product (GDP).

Such an instrumentalization of the humanities would undercut their potential from the outset. For one thing, shifting understandings of what the problem is may be one of the humanities' main contribu-

tions and one of the most important drivers of societal change urgently needed in an ethics of transformation. It is necessary to crack dominant frames that confine problem descriptions and the scope of possible answers.<sup>62</sup> Humanities' role in this regard is even more necessary in view of current overlapping crises. It is necessary to conceptually slow down because the times are urgent, lest society remains stuck in the scheme that has been fuelling the crises. We see the role of the humanities in the practice of interpretation and understanding, and also in thought-provoking novel ways of understanding ourselves as part of society and nature. As for the vocation of research generally, the role cannot, at least not only, be to offer solutions and tell people what to do, but to provide 'inconvenient facts' that don't fit and challenge dominant frames of thinking.

4. To tap into their full potential, humanities' institutional framework must facilitate multidisciplinary and integrative work within and beyond their disciplinary boundaries. Critique remains powerless if it is not heard, and necessary provocations fail to appear across fragmented disciplines and related social spheres. The humanities need to open up towards the desires and anxieties of non-academic stakeholders while not subjecting their work to their demands. Stakeholders and their involvement must not be mistaken as a euphemism or fig leaf for the role and influence of private power. But isolating the humanities in view of that risk would be a wrong reaction, even part of the problem that we sketched at the outset. The institutional framework should enable multidisciplinary combinations while cherishing the proprium of each discipline and its distinct contributions.

Creating these new kinds of institutional ecosystems is in no way trivial. Nevertheless, there are some features which are more likely to foster creativity.<sup>63</sup> Most fundamentally, diversity, which must not be confused with mere heterogeneity. Building upon diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, etc. as a crucial precondition, diversity aims for an aggregation of different disciplines and sectors of society. To move from heterogeneity to di-

versity, active institutional curation is required. Curation includes the creation of ample opportunities for intense communication and interaction. If the institution is too small, the stimulus for extra-disciplinary orientation will be missing. If the facility is too large and heterogeneous, there will hardly be sufficient room for intense personal contacts and fertile exchanges.

With the need for thorough (self-)reflection in mind, establishing an atmosphere of sensitivity and mutual trust is vital. It has been shown to play an important role in increasing levels of empowerment, engagement, collaboration, and innovation. Enhancing an institutional governance that builds on and consistently demonstrates trusting and trust-enhancing behaviours is usually referred to as a high-trust culture. A high-trust culture ensures interactions on mutual respect, where promises and commitments are understood and fulfilled, as well as the forming of meaningful and supportive relationships.

Each discipline has its own traditions, theories, methods, and focuses, which may eventually cause obstacles to discussions even within a single discipline. The same is true for different sectors. As a result, joint interdisciplinary and intersectoral work may occasionally resemble speaking different professional languages. In order to cooperatively move towards new pathways for the future, interdisciplinary discussions require sustainable modes of translation. For at least a decade, there has been a growing number of programmes (not only in the humanities and social sciences), which aim to educate scholars who are familiar with more than one discipline and to foster interdisciplinarity within one person. This kind of translation may be seen as facilitating the connectivity of disciplines to one another.

By putting these features at the heart of building or reshaping institutions of the humanities and social sciences, there is a chance not only to discover any new pathways but to discover those that reach society by creating a sense of ownership among and between all parties involved.