

The background of the cover is an abstract, textured composition of thick paint strokes. The colors are primarily teal and orange, with some darker, more muted tones interspersed. The strokes are layered and overlapping, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is vibrant and dynamic.

Democracy and the Discourse on Relevance

**Within the Academic Profession
at Makerere University**

**Andrea Kronstad Felde, Tor Halvorsen,
Anja Myrtveit and Reidar Øygaard**

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Preface

This book is long overdue. Most books take time between data collected and results presented, but the Covid-19 pandemic, following on other unforeseen circumstances, means that years have passed since we held our first interviews at Makerere University.

Since we finished our research (in about 2018), we have become aware of a number of highly relevant new publications that overlap significantly with our topic. James Mittelman's 2018 book, *Implausible Dream: The World-Class University and Repurposing Higher Education* is just one example. We are sorry that we were unable to take this (and other) valuable contributions fully into consideration here, but what this raft of new publications confirms is that interest is growing in how the academic profession can counter neoliberal policies and their consequences for academia. We hope this book adds to this pool of literature in a constructive way and to future dialogues on neoliberalism, higher education, and the academic profession.

We thank the peer-reviewers whose comments we benefitted from greatly. Our thanks also to Professor John Higgins for his detailed comments on early versions of the manuscript, and for writing the Afterword.

We also thank the 93 academics at Makerere who agreed to be interviewed. We highly appreciate your willingness to help us. Despite your heavy workloads you took time to talk with us, some more than once, and some also participated in a feedback seminar that was held at an early stage in the project. The conversations we had were invaluable in helping us to write a book based on voices from below. We could not have completed our research without the help of the staff at the University of Bergen Office at Makerere. This proved yet again the

value of the more than thirty years of academic co-operation that has flowed between the two universities.

We also thank those at Norad's NORHED programme who agreed to fund the research and the publication costs. Last, but not least, we thank our editor, Mary Ralphs, and, as always, it has been a great pleasure to work with our publisher, African Minds, and its founder, François van Schalkwyk.

Frequently used acronyms and abbreviations

Building PhDs Project	Building and Reflecting on Interdisciplinary PhD Studies for Higher Education Transformation
CAES	College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
CEDAT	College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology
CHUSS	College of Humanities and Social Sciences
COVAB	College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Biosecurity
CUDOS principles	communalism, universalism, disinterestedness, originality, scepticism
ERB	Engineers Registration Board
EU	European Union
FoT	Faculty of Technology, Makerere University
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
HERANA	Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa
HURIPEC	Human Rights and Peace Centre
Makerere	Makerere University
MISR	Makerere Institute of Social Research
MUASA	Makerere University Academic Staff Association
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NORHED	Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development
NRM	National Resistance Movement (Uganda's ruling party)
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SoE	School of Engineering, Makerere University

SoL	School of Law, Makerere University
SIDA	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
STEM disciplines	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UiB	University of Bergen
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNCST	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology
US	United States of America
USAID	US Agency for International Development

PART I

ALL THE BACKGROUND

1

What inspired this book

This book is written in the context of the general spread of neoliberal ideas and reforms since the 1980s, accepting also that these ideas are rooted in a longer history.¹ Our focus is on how neoliberal ideas and reforms have worked to transform the university sector and the academic profession. In particular, we examine how understandings of, and control over, what constitutes relevant knowledge have changed.

Taken as a whole, these changes have sought to reorient universities and academics towards economic development in various ways. This includes the installation of new and competitive strategies for how institutions and professional academics achieve recognition and status within the academy, the consequent privatisation of educational services and the downgrading of the value of public higher education, as well as a steady shift away from the public funding of higher education. Research universities are increasingly adopting a user- and market-oriented model, with an emphasis on meeting corporate demands, the privileging of short-term research, and a strong tendency to view utility, and the potential to sell intellectual property for profit, as primary criteria for determining the relevance of academic knowledge.

The privatisation of education services (pushed by the World Trade Organization's General Agreement on Trade in Services, commonly known as GATS),² and the reorienting of universities towards the needs of the 'knowledge economy' (as advocated by, among others, the World Bank, the OECD and most neoliberal-leaning governments) has largely succeeded in transforming the discourse around the role of the academic profession in society. Neoliberal thinkers have even advocated for the removal of 'professors' who are reluctant to change, and their replacement with 'knowledge workers' who are 'sensitive' to the demands of the economy (Gibbons 1998).

Various neoliberal reform processes, as promoted by the World Bank in particular, have influenced developments in many African countries.³ In the higher-education sector, private providers have rapidly grown in number and existing public universities have been reformed, becoming actors in the newly formed academic marketplace. Student numbers have grown exponentially as institutions compete for fee-paying or subsidy-carrying applicants, yet the number of academics has remained relatively static. Many academics find themselves overwhelmed with teaching and administrative loads, and have almost no time for research. Meanwhile, university governance has moved away from the collegiate model, such that academic influence has become subject to managerial structures that are more concerned with reputation-building in the academic marketplace, and consequently less concerned with sharing knowledge, the relevance of research, research ethics or academic control over the production of knowledge. In essence, the academic profession is rapidly being downgraded, and academic control over the central question of what constitutes relevant knowledge is being dismantled.

The World Bank has often lauded Makerere University in Uganda as a prime example of what a university successfully reformed along neoliberal lines looks like (see Halvorsen 2016). However, our research into the working lives of academics at Makerere revealed a very different picture. Far from epitomising the allegedly positive outcomes of neoliberal reform, the stories of academics and postgraduate students we interviewed at Makerere provide worrying insights into the undermining, even destruction, of a vibrant and independent academic culture.

Our own normative framework stands in direct contradiction to that of the World Bank. We see academic independence as invaluable for the flourishing of societies – not only of so-called knowledge economies but rather of the whole public sphere, including how this is epistemologically and ethically justified. For us, the fostering of democratic values is central to academic independence and should be seen as a central criterion in determining the relevance of knowledge. In other words, we see a strong academic profession as a critical element of democratic practice, and as essential to the deepening of democracy.

We understand democracy to include meaningful popular participation in open public dialogue that aims to: reduce inequalities; expand local political control over the (global) economy; minimise corruption; achieve consensus about the value of the rule of law; and strengthen popular trust in effective legal institutions. By contrast, the neoliberal project's unidimensional orientation towards the knowledge economy seeks to reduce the power of the academic profession, leaving it to global elites who wield economic power to decide what knowledge is relevant.⁴

In this book, we expose the many problems that neoliberal reforms have created for academics at Makerere, leaving them feeling disempowered as educators, and reducing them to the status of consultants who are forced to chase contracts offered by private institutions to supplement their incomes. We also show how a range of local initiatives – particularly those taken by the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) to set up quiet protests, alliances with donors that are not exclusively market-oriented, and agreements with faculties that society needs a broad range of relevant knowledge – are steadily increasing resistance to the neoliberal model. We consider how, after many years of neoliberal domination, academics and others can further mobilise to regain control over what knowledge is considered relevant for Uganda and the East African region, and thereby deepen democracy. In so doing, we aim to highlight some responses and actions that have proven effective so far.

The NORHED project

In 2012, the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (Norad) launched the Norwegian Program for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development (NORHED), which encourages and supports research and institutional collaboration between academics and universities in the South and the North.⁵ Accordingly, in 2013, when the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR), led by Professor Mahmood Mamdani, contacted Norad, the University of Bergen (UiB) quickly responded to MISR's proposal to become the Norwegian partner in a joint project titled, 'Building and

Reflecting on Interdisciplinary PhD Studies for Higher Education Transformation’ (hereafter referred to as the ‘Building PhDs Project’), with a particular emphasis on doctoral training at Makerere.⁶ The MISR proposal created opportunities for UiB and MISR to pursue common research questions. Both organisations are interested in how neoliberalism has driven the strategies of international organisations (such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization), and in how this has influenced government policies in different African countries. As Wiegratz et al. (2018: 7) have explained, Uganda can be considered one of Africa’s most neoliberal countries. Thus, questions of how neoliberal reforms are changing universities and transforming the academic profession seemed relevant ones to ask.

We are specifically interested in why the World Bank has so much influence over the discourse around what knowledge is considered relevant. We also wanted to investigate the consequences of limiting universities to acting mainly in the interests of the economy while also becoming economic actors themselves. In this context, Mamdani’s ground-breaking book, *Scholars in the Marketplace: The Dilemma of Neo-Liberal Reform at Makerere University, 1989–2005*, remains highly relevant. In a study of how neoliberalism transformed Makerere, Mamdani pointed to the internal adjustments that took place in relation to this transformation and revealed the overall trends that indicated the gradual collapse of academic values. The book played a major role in both inspiring this study and helping to inform us about the university and its history. Judging from the interviews we had, many academics at Makerere, also refer to this text to help them make sense of their experience.

Arising out of MISR’s values and goals, the research project documented here, and the NORHED programme as a whole, are, on one level, a response to the hegemonic force of the wave of neoliberal reforms that has struck the higher-education sector, and that tends to be based much more on ideology than on actual knowledge about how universities work or the roles they play in the world. MISR’s Building PhDs Project is an important experiment in enhancing the quality of the doctoral programmes offered at Makerere and elsewhere

in the world. Its aim is to establish approaches that ensure research institutions are involved in ‘growing their own timber’ – tall enough to be seen and admired far and wide. Its findings will be of use to institutions, both rich and poor, that wish to learn from a model of cross-disciplinary and problem-oriented basic research that aims to empower PhD graduates to act as forces for the renewal of knowledge.

As described in Chapter 9, NORHED and MISR’s Building PhDs Project deliberately deviates from the tenets of neoliberal hegemony that focus on management, governance and organisational variables and that view universities as strategic actors via which academics can provide input into the workings of the global economy. The MISR project stands in stark contrast to the programmes offered by many of the private universities that are emerging worldwide. These seem to be in the business of producing ‘clones’, who can obtain degrees by simply absorbing standardised and pre-packaged knowledge products that the market for educational services deigns to export from the ‘advanced knowledge economies’. Ultimately, these packages help global actors who are intent on benefitting from ‘resource-rich’ Africa to do so more effectively.

Our general presuppositions about what a research university should be are perhaps best clarified in relation to the influential work of the Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa (HERANA). In their book, *Research Universities in Africa* (which summarises years of research), Cloete et al. (2018) present a number of indicators or performance targets that HERANA developed for measuring the degree to which institutions that want (or claim) to be research universities can really be classified as such. These indicators evolved out of a particular understanding of the relevance of research universities and the degree of societal embeddedness they require to secure this relevance. HERANA takes an ‘engine of development’ approach – borrowing this category from Manuel Castells.⁷ As Cloete et al. (2018: 13) explain, the aim of HERANA’s research has been to:

investigate the complex relationships between higher education and economic development through the lens of

the context in which universities were operating, the internal structure and dynamics of universities, and the interaction between the national and institutional context. It also aimed to identify factors and conditions that were facilitating or inhibiting universities' ability to make a sustainable contribution to development.

What neoliberalism considers development – the knowledge economy, particular kinds of economic activities, and knowledge-based industrialisation that presupposes 'knowledge workers' who are able to turn themselves into various forms of 'human capital' – all requires a *pact* between governments, universities and other stakeholders (including multinational corporations and donors) around a vision of universities as engines of development. This seems very similar to the OECD discourse that emerged in the early 1970s (see Halvorsen 2016). Based on the neoliberal/Schumpeterian growth paradigm, this discourse views universities as stakeholder organisations that should be harnessed into spurring particular forms of economic growth. Under the auspices of the OECD, several governments established ministries of higher education and research (where these were not already present).⁸ From around this time, research funding began to be increasingly channelled through research councils, which mediated between the users and creators of knowledge.

Since 1963, the OECD have published their *Frascati Manuals* (formally titled *The Proposed Standard Practice for Surveys of Research and Experimental Development*), listing indicators they see as adequately measuring scientific progress.⁹ In response, research universities began to evolve as a category, and obtaining a PhD became a precondition for gaining employment as an academic in a university. In other words, the OECD ushered in all the institutional changes and interactions that HERANA investigated in their studies of universities in different countries and in their cross-national comparisons of institutional strategies. Key to this development, as HERANA has argued, was the fact that universities were previously seen as *too distant* from the world they were expected to be relevant to. Soon knowledge workers began to

be seen as an alternative to professors. Consequently, universities had to justify their relevance in terms of the demand for their knowledge and many responded by beginning to tout the employability of their candidates in the knowledge economy.¹⁰ For a research university to be considered relevant within this paradigm, it has to produce good, useful and innovative knowledge (note our deliberate use of the word ‘produce’). In addition, academics who are willing to align themselves with these goals are needed.

The HERANA report provides a lot of data on the quality (or lack thereof) of academics at African universities, using publication records and the number of staff who hold doctorates as indicators. Much of the data is on university governance structures and their factory-like ‘knowledge production’ strategies. Academics in these institutions tend to have little if any agency and feature mainly as ‘knowledge workers’. In our view, HERANA’s research falls within the neoliberal mainstream, with its attention squarely on managerial variables, ideas about interests, and how innovation can invigorate and extend the global capitalist economy as a precondition for local development.

By contrast, our approach begins and ends with the voice and collective actions of those who create knowledge – *academics*. In publishing this book, we are not attempting to add to the existing literature on universities as organisations, nor do we comment on how their leadership and management structures are changing to bring them in line with neoliberal organisational models. We aim to reflect and think about *their views* on what knowledge is relevant and *their ideas* about the importance of academic independence for the growth of democracy. By focusing on actors and actions, voice and societal engagement, we aim to foreground academics as part of the society that shapes their collective identity within a political struggle. This approach is contrary to the structural modelling undertaken by HERANA. We are deliberately not concentrating only on the elitist pact between state, university leadership and other ‘stakeholders’ – a pact constituted by the orientation of these players to a particular kind of economy.¹¹

We stress the importance of understanding, yet we focus on the

actions of the academic profession, and particularly on if and how these actions shift attention away from the economy and towards democracy. Class struggles, growing inequality, exploitation of humans and nature, gender-based violence as condoned by patriarchy, and so on, also shape the lives of academics, challenging their professional ethics and influencing both their epistemology and for whom they consider their knowledge to be relevant. Our empirical focal point in the chapters that follow is therefore on the academics, their working conditions, and on how they experience their roles within a society that challenges their basic professional ethos, which is to foster understanding (truth telling) as a democratic necessity.

Arising from this, we define research universities as: *institutions that provide resources, opportunities, protections, as well as freedom of mediation and expression, and in which research and teaching are closely linked. Such institutions provide encouragement to scholars, academics, and professors to pursue their research interests both in relation to societal influence generally, or in interaction with any other actors in society for whom the academics find their knowledge to be relevant, whether or not they are asked to provide this knowledge. Research universities are governed by the academic community and contribute to the collective protection of academic freedoms, ensuring that individuals are free to argue about the relevance of the knowledge they create, curate and mediate.*

In other words, we aim to highlight the academic profession and the spaces that exist for individual academics, or the networks they choose to participate and work in, to teach and research. Ideally, universities should be organisations that support and promote areas of knowledge that academics want to explore within the framework of their professional values, ethics and ethos of collaboration.¹² Universities should also support the ways in which academics choose to communicate knowledge to their students, within collegial networks and to the public. Throughout the book, we explore what our definition of a research university means for the discourse around relevance, ideally as promoted and protected by academics themselves. We argue that academic influence on issues of relevance presupposes both democratic values and space for democratic expression. The right to collectively

organise to promote the academic freedom of individual professors is a basic democratic value. Ultimately, we argue that the agency accorded to and claimed by academics to determine what knowledge is relevant is directly related to the expansion of democracy in society.

When relating to the public as public intellectuals or as providers of expert opinion, the role of the academic profession is to illustrate and promote actions based on *understanding* as achieved through academic work rather than on political interests, chosen ideologies, moral teachings or any other motivations. That is, the abilities to *critically question and understand* will always be more valuable than utilitarian-inspired knowledge. For this reason, the final judgement regarding the relevance of research must remain in the hands of academics, rather than those who make their judgements based primarily on what the 'knowledge economy' sees as being of value or on any other narrow utilitarian interests.

Neoliberal capitalism and its challenge to the academic profession

The coming of neoliberalism has undermined the institutionalisation of the academic profession as an independent way of organising academic work that is protected and promoted by universities. Academics are now expected to become 'knowledge workers', employed by a university leadership that is primarily oriented towards users and funders. The neoliberal 'economy of knowledge' (that is, how the cost of creating new knowledge is valued) has to be disciplined to fall in line with the needs of the 'knowledge economy' that now characterises modernity.¹³ This is a cultural shift that is undermining the authority of the academic profession and the democracy on which academic freedom depends.¹⁴

Within neoliberal rhetoric on the knowledge economy is the notion that what is relevant is what works in practice (Gibbons 1998). As interactions between industry and universities have expanded (particularly since engineering became a university discipline), debates arose about who should decide what knowledge is relevant. In

the 1980s, however, when the market for educational services began to grow, the balance of power shifted, and a kind of merger took place between the production/industrial sectors and universities.¹⁵

What we describe in the chapters that follow is how Makerere is being influenced by this shift. Resistance to neoliberalism is clear as academics attempt to regain and retain control over what they see as relevant knowledge. As we see it, MISR represents the most vivid example of this resistance on the campus. As detailed in Chapter 9, MISR is attempting to reverse the growing emphasis on the knowledge economy and reorient the purpose of the university and the academic profession back towards the cultivation of a 'knowledge society', with reference to the democratic ideals and praxis that such a society presupposes. MISR graduates are taught that the academic profession must control what knowledge is seen as relevant, from its creation to its use.

In neoliberal terms, the value of knowledge is proven by its use. Some knowledge is thus seen as useful, and other kinds less so but the question of *who the users are* is seldom addressed. The disastrous battle for funding and institutional support that is taking place between the humanities and social sciences, on the one hand, and the so-called STEM disciplines – science, technology, engineering and mathematics – on the other, is just one example of this, and is highlighted in Part II.

A norm that we see as worth promoting is how academic work and the academic profession relate to democracy. Since Kant published his interpretation of enlightenment,¹⁶ the overlap in values between democracy and academic work has been the basis of ongoing discussion. In thinking about the normative structure of science, Robert K Merton (1973) proposed the CUDOS norms to summarise the institutional imperatives that should comprise the ethos of modern science.¹⁷ The norms rely on and promote democratic values. As democratisation should lead to the dispersion of power, ownership and influence across society, it can be expected to have the same effect on the spread of academic knowledge more and more widely over time. What democracy can do for the academic profession, on the other hand, is to promote and support a broad dialogue about what knowledge is relevant.

The book's structure and aims

Most of the ideas sketched above arose as we began discussing the Building PhDs Project, and our need to better understand MISR, Makerere and the relationship between the two. In the next two chapters, we set out some of the theoretical and historical issues we had to grapple with while working on the project. In essence, however, the study really got going when we conducted interviews with 12 senior academics who had served or were serving as deans of various faculties. As we reflected on those conversations, we decided to concentrate on academics' working conditions, their views on relevance, and on the PhD programmes being run in four colleges at the university so that we could compare these to similar aspects of MISR. As we approached our study of the habitus of members of the academic profession at Makerere, and of the changes that have influenced the discourse on relevance at the campus, we wanted to review some of what we had learned of the institutional history with academics who have worked there through this period. Thus, besides reading the existing literature, notably *Scholars in the Marketplace* (Mamdani 2007) and lots of institutional documentation, much of our understanding of this history came from the reflections of the people we interviewed. The results of these interactions are contained in the five chapters that make up Part II.

Our interviews with the 12 deans are described in Chapter 4.¹⁸ By drawing on their years of experience and relying on the fact that deans are both established academics and seen as 'first among equals', we hoped to obtain an impression of what they saw as the burning issues on campus. Our questions revolved around the deans' reactions and adjustments to the World Bank-led reforms. The responses we received revealed that this group of senior academics have seen major shifts in their work and their roles over time that provide an overview of the burning issues that recur across the book. Our sense was that the deans were extremely concerned at the impact of these changes, irrespective of discipline, organisational divisions into departments, schools and colleges, and the specific individuals involved.

Mamdani (2007) suggested that neoliberal reforms at Makerere were producing different outcomes for the humanities and the social sciences on the one hand and the natural sciences on the other. In Chapters 5, to 7, we describe the in-depth inquiries we conducted in four (out of the total of nine) colleges at Makerere, namely: the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES), the College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT), and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS), and the School of Law (SoL) (SoL is a school in name, but enjoys full formal status as a college). Two of the colleges are located in the so-called hard or STEM sciences (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and two are in the so-called NAIL (narrative, analytical interpretative, and literary) disciplines. Like Higgins (2014), we are interested in how these apparently separate streams relate to one another and how they rely on academic freedom. In selecting these colleges, our aim was to discern what they have in common and how they differ from one another.

Although certain trends are common across all four colleges, there are important differences between the colleges and between the individual departments. In Chapter 8, we highlight some of these and focus on the kinds of support that the colleges receive from the university in terms of research, teaching and the promotion of their ideas about what knowledge is important. This provides the background for understanding what led to the establishment of the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR), which we discuss in Part III.

In this final part of the book, Chapter 9 provides some background about MISR and outlines its efforts to counter the drive towards managerialism and competitiveness, while prioritising research and endogenous knowledge creation. We show how MISR's doctoral training programme not only opposes the neoliberal policy ideals that appear more entrenched in other parts of the university but is also structured very differently to those run by other colleges on the campus. A central theme of the chapter is the debate about relevance that emerges from these two different models and from how they are attempting to shape and reproduce the academic profession.

In Chapter 10, we draw together what we see as the most important issues to emerge from our study in relation to the vulnerability of academic autonomy in the neoliberal era. We set out to discover the degree to which the collapse of academic values described by Mamdani in *Scholars in the Marketplace* has continued, and what has emerged in their stead. We also try to critically assess whether MISR itself has really been able to sustain an alternative to the destructive impacts of neoliberalism and consider whether the example it sets has any chance of turning the tide. Within this, we aim to create a basis for reflection on the resilience of the academic profession, despite the ways in which it is being forced to adjust to the overwhelming dominance of neoliberalism, the market economy and instrumentalisation of knowledge.

An insightful afterword by Professor John Higgins from the University of Cape Town in South Africa, completes the work. With his incisive perspective on the historical roots of what he describes as a time ‘of lived contradiction for academics, academic administrators and higher-education policy-makers’, Higgins echoes our call for considered action in response to the many and varied ways in which narrow and economic definitions of relevance are undermining academic freedom and regard for the value of knowledge.

Of course, we hope that publishing this study will help to change the systems that value knowledge in ways that are driving research institutions towards competitive and market-like behaviour. We also aim to contribute to contemporary debates about what knowledge is relevant. We live in a divided world. Neoliberal hegemony, including its control over the discourse on relevance, and the academic profession as a whole, appears to be exacerbating these differences (Piketty 2020). For us, the central questions are how to create knowledge and knowledge networks that work against the growing inequality of wealth and knowledge, and what does this mean for turning the tide against neoliberalism? To arrive at answers to our questions, we first had to find out who has defining power over the relevance of knowledge, and how this is affecting an academic profession whose identity depends on its ability to make itself relevant. Thus, the focus of our study is the academic profession in general, and our central question is: who has

the power to define what knowledge is relevant in the academic field? We hope that highlighting MISR's work is a useful contribution to answering this question, and we hope that other faculties at Makerere and elsewhere might be inspired to consider adopting and upscaling MISR's doctoral training model.

Our theses are that neoliberalism undermines collective support for individual academics' ability to influence what is seen as relevant knowledge, and thus impinges on the most basic meaning of academic freedom. In other words, democracy and academic freedom rely on one another to thrive and, by undermining academic freedom, neoliberalism poses a direct threat to a democracy (Kuttner 2018). More broadly, therefore, we hope that, for the good of society, academics everywhere will resolve to regain control over defining what knowledge is relevant. Before offering some theoretical reflections on the academic profession and on how neoliberalism is undermining academic identities in the next chapter, we address some concerns readers might have about the study as a whole.

Some notes about process

Detailed information about our research design and process is contained in the Appendix. However, a few brief points need to be made at the outset. The first is that most of the informants we approached agreed to be interviewed and, once involved, seemed to show few, if any, concerns about giving their views on any of the topics raised in the conversations. At one level, this should mean we have good reason to believe that the interviews contain fairly solid material on the matters discussed. The second is that, as interviewers, we make no claim to having used anthropological or hermeneutical methods of participant observation, where the 'observer becomes part of his subject matter and experiences it from the inside as well as from the outside' (Diesing 1992: 144). The third is that what we are aiming for is understanding or *verstehen*, rather than explanations or predictions. However, as Diesing pointed out, a major risk in any interview process is that observers impose their assumptions on their

research processes and findings. This is a general critique of *verstehen* as a methodology. All we can say in response is that we attempted to remain highly aware of this risk at every stage of the research process. We hope that this awareness helped us question and distance ourselves from our assumptions and preconceptions, at least to some extent.

In addition, over the course of the study, we came to realise that the insider/outsider dynamic can be fuelled by both sides. For example, during the first round of interviews, an informant asked the interviewer if our research group could help to provide funding for the informant's own research project at Makerere. The question was asked because we explained that our project was funded by Norad, and the informant then seemed to see the interviewer as a potential donor or funding broker. In another instance, a potential informant declined to participate in the study because all the researchers were 'foreigners'. And one participant in a seminar held at MISR objected that we would be unable to construct an adequate analysis or interpretation of our subject because our author team is white. The suggestion was that, as white people and foreigners, we do not possess the capacity to understand Uganda or Makerere as insiders do and would easily be manipulated by informants. We could cite other examples, but our point is that binary categories – such as white/black, foreigner/native, donor/recipient, Westerner/African, male/female, and so on – were probably drawn on by all parties, thereby influencing the formulation of the question/answer sequences, the exchanges that occurred in the interviews, the information that was gained from these exchanges, and what is represented here.

We attempted to minimise the potential impacts of these binaries by first acknowledging that they exist, and, then, by trying to set up the interviews as interactions between academic researchers. In so doing we attempted to establish some sense of shared experience and of the equality of our contributions at this level. In addition, at the start of each interview, we established that the *informants were the experts* on Uganda and Makerere, and that we, as interviewers, had attempted to ensure that we were reasonably well-informed about the issues we were investigating. The most important aspect of our preparations was to

try to inform ourselves about the working conditions for academics at Makerere and in Uganda. We did this mainly through conversations, interviews and direct observation. Two members of our group studied at Makerere as exchange students not long before the interviews took place. The fact that we were not wholly unaware of conditions at the university, clearly affected our interactions during the interviews, and created some sense of common ground and shared insights. Many of the informants peppered their sentences with the phrase, 'as you know', implying that they saw us as being fairly familiar with the experiences they were describing.

Crucially, however, it was helpful for us to recognise that, like most universities worldwide, Makerere is part of multiple global networks. Many of our informants had completed at least some of their studies in the global North. It can be argued, then, that most of our informants had some insight into our experiences, as we did into theirs. That important areas of our experience overlap with those of our informants is a fact; we are not suggesting that this overlap eliminates the problem of access to the informants' actual universes but, in our experience, it has the *potential* to create the necessary bridge across which our different perspectives can begin to meet.

In our view, *meaningful* exchanges were possible and did occur in the interviews. For this reason, we argue that different cultural and life experiences should not be seen as impenetrable barriers that make mutual access, understanding and reciprocity impossible. In our experience, when such interactions aim for mutual understanding, more explanatory value can be accessed than is possible by preassigning people to mutually exclusive groups based on perceived differences. On this basis, and because we were invited by MISR to work with them on the Building PhDs project, we decided that an account of our study was worth publishing.

2

Theoretical reflections on the role of the academic profession and relevance

Central to our discussion is the academic profession's control over its own sphere of work – in our roles as researchers, teachers, public intellectuals and experts – including our control over the mental, material and social dimensions of knowledge creation that are inherent in all of these roles (Renn 2020).¹⁹ If the academic profession loses control over the definition of what constitutes relevant knowledge, then it also loses control over its work and its professional roles. The autonomy of the academic profession is its ability to control and thus influence understandings of what constitutes relevant knowledge as a democratic practice. How power relations within universities, and between universities and society, maintain or transform the academic profession's role in defining what knowledge is relevant, is part of what holds humanity's mental, material and social dimensions together. Control over the role of universities is thus critical to the autonomy of the academic profession.

The collective power of knowledge

Most professions are structured around some kind of unity, usually expressed through an organisation that either promotes the knowledge base of the profession, and/or determines working conditions and wage levels, etc. The knowledge base of a profession does not have to centre on one epistemic community but should involve epistemologies that have similar status, or are acknowledged by society, such that those who have this knowledge and education are seen as being able

to attain similar levels of status even if their class or social status may vary. For example, in what constitutes professorial identity, doctorates can be conferred on candidates only by those who have the requisite professorial authority to do so. In other words, the crux of professional power in the academic world (sometimes also endorsed by nation-states, and perhaps ranked globally) is its monopoly over the conferring of PhD degrees. To retain this monopoly, the academic profession is obliged to renew itself by continually raising academic standards. Those who educate members of all of the older professions (doctors, lawyers, religious ministers, etc.) and many new ones (from social workers to economists and engineers) do so in alliance with those professions. That is, certain academic identities and professional identities merge, although the boundaries between themselves and their clients and other users of their services remain intact. The independence of their knowledge base is symbolised by the disputation (or viva) as the ritual for entering the ‘profession of professions’. Thus, one of the keys to professionalisation is the establishment of a recognised entry point that creates the necessary boundaries between insiders and outsiders.²⁰

The collective of professors can be considered a profession because it has a mandate from society, and (usually) the state it serves, to handle certain fields of competence and certain types of societal interventions. The profession is also collectively responsible to society and the state for how it carries out this mandate. Ideally, the profession makes various ethical commitments in exchange for the trust placed in it. When ethical breaches occur, these are (primarily) dealt with, within the profession, as unfortunate deviations from the norms of societal responsibility (Kalleberg 2011). But the profession is also expected to take ethical responsibility for how knowledge is used, and not leave this entirely to the users of knowledge as if knowledge were neutral.

For the professorial/academic profession, these ethical commitments are rooted in the duty of truth telling. This comes with an expectation that academics behave as exemplary citizens and speak out against abuses of power in their role as public intellectuals and experts.

Far too many tragic examples bear witness to the fact that the academic profession has, in general, been relieved of and/or relinquished this responsibility, and the academic profession as a truth-telling project is being dismantled (Honneth 2014). By undermining ‘professional ethics’ and inscribing Western beliefs in the value of private property into national constitutions, global capitalism has destabilised the social foundations of democratic life that support, and are supported by, communities of scholars. This secures the dominance of global capital over knowledge, so that only information that is important for the ‘knowledge economy’ is considered relevant (see Gill and Cutler 2014; Piketty 2020).

Keith Macdonald’s book, *The Sociology of the Professions* (1995), is premised on methodological nationalism. He explains how the development of the professions has contributed to the normalisation of society, standardisation and the disciplining of citizens, leading to and legitimising the use of power against those seen as deviant (meaning people who are poor, and have been minoritised or made homeless or stateless).²¹ However, the professions have also developed knowledge and practices relevant for the weak and vulnerable, and in opposition to what political or economic actors might prefer. Some universities have a history of supporting and promoting independent academic work that reveals gaps in knowledge about oppression, and contributes to the creation of practical vocations (professions) to empower those previously ignored and left behind. In Uganda, this includes members of communities evicted by land grabbers as well as the precariat created by the so-called global knowledge economy.

The idea of multiple modernities highlights the reality that the academic profession varies from country to country and has, in fact, contributed to the historical specificity of nation-states. Even so, academics are also cosmopolitan, as is their knowledge base. As an education institution, based on the English model and using English as the language of instruction, Makerere has always been embedded in the imperium, and in how Uganda’s systems of public administration and high-school education feed into the country’s world of work (both agricultural and industrial).²² Consequently, while its academic and

management staff are intensely challenged by Uganda's (precarious) development trajectory, Makerere remains well connected internationally, and is deeply embedded in donor-driven agendas that are often backed up by academics' links with donor countries.

Makerere was initially established with 'help' from many foreign (mostly European and mainly British) academics, but the composition of its staff has gradually become more Ugandan.²³ However, Ugandan academics are more cosmopolitan than most, both in terms of the research networks that they belong to, and through how they tap into the broader academic community. They tend to participate in more conferences outside Uganda than inside the country's borders. The ability to consider the global and the local, to apply hegemonic theories and research to the local context, but also to contribute research data based on local observations, are seen as ways of strengthening the academic profession. By working at the coalface of international research, while still solidly focused on their own location in the world, Ugandan academics are trying to ensure that they remain relevant according to the global systems that evaluate both knowledge and development.

As Stephen Gill and Claire Cutler (2014) have pointed out, the transformation of laws and legal education in line with global business interests illustrates how universities are being redirected into 'serving' neoliberalism. While some academics, including the influential Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa (HERANA) seem to support this redirection (see Cloete et al. 2015), many of the academics we met at Makerere see the university as a potential source of knowledge for development for the whole of the Ugandan society in line with democratic values. How these global/local contradictions play out on this campus will be crucial for the extent to which neoliberal reforms are implemented or defied.

The knowledge profession and the state

The 'neo' in neoliberalism refers primarily to a shift in how liberal economists view the state. That is, neoliberals argue that states are necessary for regulating competition, managing security forces that

are capable of controlling the masses (who might otherwise threaten property rights), and for building and rebuilding social institutions that support the so-called global economy (which can never be challenged and must always be nurtured). Those who oppose the neoliberal view expect states to be guardians of public values instead. They point out that because universities depend on state funding (that is, public money) to develop knowledge and truth telling, it follows that all citizens 'own' and should have access to this knowledge. Ideally, they argue, private funding should also be channelled in ways that secure public knowledge. Sociologists talk of institutionally differentiated societies, in which three forms of power – *governmental* (state), *economic* (market) and *knowledge* (educational institutions and professional associations) – affect and respond to one another but *must* remain autonomous if societies are to flourish. For example, in the book, *Professionalism Reborn: Theory, Prophecy and Policy* (1994) Elliot Freidson pointed out that when neoliberal market forces ally themselves with state interests, the academic community has very little power with which to defend its autonomy. Towards the end of the book, Freidson reviews the ongoing debate about whether academia can be considered a profession or not. It may seem odd, he argues, that those who give us new knowledge, critique established knowledge, or act as public intellectuals should be called professionals. If we interpret Freidson correctly, he argued that the rigidity implied in the term is too narrow for academic thought and creativity. However, as he pointed out:

If you wish to take into account the institutions that make such activities as the 'disinterested' pursuit of knowledge for its own sake possible on a regular and predictable basis by a large number of people, then we must include scholars and scientists among professionals. They could not exist without such institutions. Neither could most intellectuals. (Freidson 1994: 177)

He then went on to explain how the academic profession resembles

other professions by, for example, controlling the recruitment, training and employment of their members. He also pointed out that:

Most cannot make a living by scholarship and research any more than most intellectuals can do so by their writing. The university teaching jobs that they control provide them with their living. Those jobs require daily concerns with the issues of scholarship and research and provide the free time in which to pursue rather than merely teach them. Following Parsons (1969) then, I would include scholars and scientists among those occupations today that resemble the ideal model of professionalism. (Freidson 1994: 173)

A basic principle that informs this ideal model is that the members of any specialised occupation control their own work. This control is a societal principle that also demands a social contract between the professions on the one hand, and economic and state power on the other. That is, to the degree that they control their own work, professionals provide a form of wider societal governance by both complementing and restraining these two other forms of power. No profession should be pressured to merge their power with either of the other two, as is the case in a 'knowledge economy'. Another basic principle is that professions are collectives; that is, their inner structure combines the crucial resource of knowledge with forms of solidarity and expressions of identity. All professional bodies that represent particular occupational fields must be recognisable and take responsibility for their occupation. That is, in any discourse on relevance, they must be able to prove the independence of their field from political and economic interests and influences.

Freidson's mission was to show that neoliberalism, with its alliance between those who hold state and economic power, threatens the power of professions as a source of societal governance. In the modern era, the power of the professions is the weakest of the three power structures. Thus, the capacity of this realm to influence the discourse around relevance is also comparatively weak. Plain truth telling is not

enough; to gain influence, professionals require the more powerful actors to believe in the value of knowledge and in the autonomy of those who produce it. By rejecting the idea that science can differ between truth and falsehood, the postmodernist ‘relativisation of knowledge’ has truly undermined the academic profession (Heywood 2015: 119). Bruno Latour, for example, has been referred to as a relativist for having undermined the power of knowledge by relativising the truth of truth. Latour himself argued, however, that his project was quite the opposite, and that his aim was to work for the institutional protection of facts and the role of the academic profession:

Although certain scientist friends believe that I have stopped being a ‘relativist’ and have started believing in the ‘facts’ about climate, it is on the contrary because I have never thought that ‘facts’ were objects of belief, and because, ever since *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (with Steve Woolgar 1979), I have described the institution that makes it possible to ensure their validity in place of the epistemology that claimed to defend them, that I feel better armed today to help researchers protect themselves from the attacks of negationists. It is not I who have changed but those who, finding themselves suddenly attacked, have understood to what an extent their epistemology was protecting them badly. (Latour 2017: 33, n.63)

The relevance of relevance becomes key to professional influence when society’s belief in knowledge and its value is in question. This doubt seems prevalent in Uganda as well as in the relationships between academics at Makerere and various outside actors. This is a theme we return to in most of the chapters that follow.

Under neoliberalism, market forces promote education as a service industry. Like the idea of knowledge for the economy, the education market has reduced the power of the academic profession – perhaps not yet, as Freidson predicted, reducing all academics to an industrial-type proletariat (or knowledge workers) – but certainly diminishing

our control over our work. The assumed social contract is that the responsibilities that have now been taken away from the academic profession are instead carried by the powers of the market and/or the state. Many of the informants that we cite in the coming chapters indicate that the control of knowledge professionals over their work is weakening. Consequently, trust in this way of organising societal interactions is vanishing – even, paradoxically, among academics and professionals – as the effects of the relentless deterioration of professionals’ working conditions become ever more apparent.

Diminishing levels of trust are relevant not only for the professions generally but also for the academic profession in particular. In the past, academics, and the lives they lived, were protected by the universities and related institutions, which created the conditions necessary for them to be able to do their work. Today, in addition to increasingly exerting direct control over academic work, institutional priorities are shifting to focus on the growth of the market economy. Through this process, universities are turning into bureaucratic institutions whose expansion depends on the income they can attract by outcompeting other academic institutions. These trends are mutually reinforcing; that is: the growth of universities as economic actors has promoted the growth of internal bureaucracies that, in turn, rely on income from business sponsorships and market-linked activities. These shifts have transformed the space in which the academic profession has to operate according to the ideal model of professionalism – that is, with autonomy, academic freedom and the freedom to impart the knowledge and skills that academics deem to be the most relevant and appropriate.

Citing examples from the US, Freidson (1994) showed how, by controlling the universities, economic and state interests swiftly dismantled the powers once held by the academic profession. And when the academic profession finds itself in conflict with these interests, universities, as institutions, have not always defended the profession’s autonomy (see Scott 2019). This situation is true for most the world, and was particularly so in Uganda at the time of writing. In essence, the political regime has little ‘belief in knowledge’ and,

according to our informants, the views of academics on political or any other issues are very unlikely to be seen as particularly important or useful.

While Freidson (1994) emphasised the necessity of defending professionalism, the growing dominance of state and economic powers means that the interests of the universities as institutions on the one hand, and the academic profession on the other, are increasingly out of sync. In East Africa, where Makerere is located, many ask whether the notion of the academic profession has any meaning given the sway that state and market interests hold over the region's universities (see, for example, Altbach 1996).

In most of postcolonial Africa, universities once established by colonial powers were given the role of building new nations. As such, they quickly became institutional protectors and facilitators of academic work that was conducted under state control. As has happened elsewhere, the universities and their academic staff then came to depend on the powers delegated to them by the state, and on the resources that the state could and would allocate to them. As noted in the introduction, the interventions of the World Bank (particularly from 1994 onwards) changed this. As Mamdani presciently pointed out:

The World Bank's notion of a flat world, *sans* history, can only entrench a global division of knowledge whereby research is concentrated in a few technologically advanced countries – the knowledge-driven economies – with its results disseminated to the majority of humanity living in market-driven economies and therefore fit to be no more than passive consumers of knowledge with no other future to look forward to than that of clones. (2007: xvi)

Furthermore, in many African states, donors have, more than elsewhere, replaced governments as resource providers, creating relations between the universities, academics and the state that deviate from those in countries where donors play smaller and different roles. Of course, some donors have attempted to moderate the World Bank's influence

by directly supporting academics who they see as the backbone of universities (see Halvorsen et al. 2019 on the NORHED programme, for example). This highlights how donor interventions can potentially supplement or undermine state power. In some countries, donors have come to represent an alternative power base within universities, with agencies such as Sida and Norad intentionally attempting to accentuate the value of the academic profession (Koch and Weingart 2018).

To sum up, business, state, and donor interests are key forces shaping the universities. For the most part, these actors have little concern for the impact they have on supporting or undermining the value and power of the academic profession. In this context, as our informants made clear, the dynamic created by the presence of these different forces has made it possible for certain academics to develop a research identity beyond what might otherwise have been possible, while others who are, or could be, conducting vital research languish in obscurity.

In 1987, Burton Clark was commissioned to write a special report for the Carnegie Foundation, which he titled *The Academic Life*. Arguing that, from a distance, the profession ‘fits the scholarly and commonplace’ definition, he noted that its huge complexity and variation made him wonder if something else was holding academics together. He asked whether the tangled web formed by the multiplicity of disciplines and their relationships to society gives rise to a multitude of ways of being and feeling relevant. As he put it, ‘Central to the shaping of the tangled web is the interaction between profession and organisation that steadily becomes more complicated’ (Clark 1987: xxiv). Clark highlighted the tensions between universities as social institutions and the academic profession that are created by the shifting balance of power in society. He noted that the concept of an academically governed university, headed by a professional collective that is held together by common values and norms of behaviour (and where collegial forms of governance prevail), seems to be a purely and increasingly romantic idea. This is all the more so, Clark argued, because epistemic communities relate differently to different actors in society, and thus adjust their ideas of relevance accordingly.

However, if universities, and the networks of institutions within

which universities are nodes, are primarily responsible for holding the academic profession together, then the question that arises is whether or not the profession will survive the transformation of universities wrought by states that are oriented mainly towards the neoliberal market economies. That is, how can a differentiated, even divided, academic profession retain or regain power over universities as institutions in ways that promote its professional role, which is to define what knowledge is relevant in educational curricula and research programmes? To answer these questions, we must also ask whether the changes that have affected academic institutions since the early 1980s have transformed the academic profession to the degree that we should consider it as having become something else? Michael Gibbons' (1998) proposal that academics be seen as 'knowledge workers' proved to be a powerful influence on global university politics and ushered in new ways of understanding relevance.²⁴ As Gibbons predicted, a new context for relevance has emerged. Knowledge workers are now held accountable to the field of practice and expected to solve 'real world' problems. What Gibbons and his colleagues consistently failed to understand or identify are the consequences of their recommendations for broader discipline-based and general tertiary education, as opposed to the limited skills-formation schemes that they advocate.

The vanishing network of global academic solidarity

In principle, academics have a monopoly on determining what knowledge is 'new'. However, this is only true if the academic community remains global and committed to the 'internationalisation of knowledge'. As mentioned, many academics at Makerere can be considered international in some ways but, in other ways, they cannot. Following the global shift towards neoliberal values, academic control over the relevance of curricula and research programmes is increasingly unequally distributed. In addition, the predominance of the English language in academic journals and prizes (such as the Nobel or Holberg), as well as in many ranking and rating systems, heavily skews the contexts from which supposedly 'international' knowledge

can emanate. To deconstruct this hegemony over research output, academics need time and resources to ‘translate’ those aspects that might be useful in other contexts and release their own theoretical reflections back into the common pool. This is why the nurturing and development of academics at Makerere, and similar institutions, is crucial for the profession as a whole. Unfortunately, the degree to which this will ever be possible – given the lack of resources available on the academic peripheries and the volume of hegemonic output from the centre (currently Western but soon to be Chinese) – remains to be seen.

Of course, all knowledge emerges from a context, and carries localised presuppositions and interpretations; truth is always relative to its presuppositions. For the academic profession, the clarifying of these presuppositions is one basis for *professorial* status. In modern society, it is usually seen as good for development when the division of labour is characterised by professionalisation driven by specialisation. However, under neoliberal polity and ideology, the professions are seen as monopolies that use their power to gain privileges in the labour market. Their ethical standards are questioned, and deeper accountability and clearer levels of control are necessary, even though some professions require up to ten years of (often public) investment in graduate education and training before they confer a qualification. Some professions even require additional state authorisation. In essence, society cannot work without knowledge but, in neoliberal theory, those who have knowledge must be contained and directed by contracts and other forms of managerial control. As Alain Supiot (2017: 5) explained:

From the perspective of the total market, which globalisation aspires to, society is simply a swarm of contracting particles whose relations to each other are based purely on calculated self-interests. Calculation – and hence the contract – thus comes to occupy the place previously assigned to the law of the normative reference.

Academic freedom is important for creativity and for ensuring critical distance from those who hold state and economic power. However, in the hands of professional associations, academic freedom is often quickly transformed into privileges for the few. According to neoliberal reasoning, contract-based individualisation counters this trend. If this were true, perhaps professionalisation would not be such a good thing, particularly when it comes to the ‘profession of professions’ – the professors. Perhaps the modern economy would benefit more if individual researchers could freely compete for projects or offer expert solutions to problems as defined by external actors? If this were the case, as neoliberals seem to think, its consequences for the formation of the academic professions, and the ties between teaching and research, or research-based teaching, must be reviewed. This would deal the final blow to Humboldt.

This growing elitism, evident not only in the US but also in the EU (Germany’s Universities of Excellence, for example), creates the organisational basis for cleavages within the academic profession as well as between the roles of teaching and research. The new elite is building on universities’ research identities, and working across departments and faculties as ‘cross-cutting centres’, but usually from outside or on the margins of the universities, while tapping into university resources. However, to retain control over the awarding of doctoral degrees, new categories, such as ‘corporate PhDs’ are funded by large companies are being created. Norway even has a ‘social innovation PhD’ for government employees that is funded via various university-based ‘centres of excellence’.

At the same time, the titles ‘doctor’ and ‘professor’ are being diluted by the expansion of public and mass universities. This is driving the elites to seek more exclusive identities in labels such as ‘excellence’, ‘cosmopolitan intellectuals’ and ‘international knowledge levels’ – with the latter having been standardised in the US without a trace of irony. Elitism and globalisation have become a single drive within academia, combining to justify cleavages within the profession in line with various externally determined reward systems. Thus, a journey up the academic ladder often entails a sojourn at a high-ranking US

university, which is likely to also involve a journey away from the solidarity of the profession.

So, what does a journey to Makerere entail? Here, the professors teach and select future PhD candidates from the cohort of master's students. However, as noted in Chapter 1, most of our informants earned their doctorates abroad. Those who qualified locally had mostly been left to themselves. Supervising a PhD candidate involves a commitment to the academic community that presupposes professionalism in the old sense of the word – that is, accepting the social responsibility of sharing knowledge in exchange for a certain amount of professional autonomy and recognition of your ability to determine what knowledge is relevant. Based on our study, this 'social contract' is under threat at Makerere partly because of how neo-liberalism tends to destabilise the authority of all institutions other than the so-called free market and partly as a result of internal divisions that this destabilisation has helped to create on campus.

The University of Berlin's Humboldtian model – revived in the US, thanks to (among other organisations) the American Association of University Professors – took as its credo that the profession of professors is constituted by teaching based on research.²⁵ From this perspective, new knowledge must be mediated to students if they are to become agents of societal governance, capable of guiding social change in an open and equitable basis.

Proponents of neoliberalism would prefer to see this ideal vanish. They expect universities worldwide to adjust to the commodification of knowledge and realise that they have become but one source of relevant knowledge about 'what works' (see Gibbons 1998, and the section on Mode 2 knowledge in Chapter 5). In countries with relatively young and untested academic traditions, the rapid growth of private providers of higher education, combined with weak quality-control mechanisms, means that academic freedom and the ethics of truth telling could soon be lost entirely. To counter this, strong moves are being made to differentiate between institutions, and ensure that at least some of them are able to uphold academic values despite market pressures. This is creating a new elite. As we show in later chapters, at

Makerere, the pressure of enormous teaching loads, and the lack of resources for research, has made this issue a crucial challenge.

The professional habitus

To explore this challenge, we attempted to explore features of the *habitus* (by which we mean systems of dispositions)²⁶ in which academics at Makerere live and work. This habitus interacts with a field of practice that has its own systems for valuing what is relevant; that is, the habitus of the professionals within this field reproduces the borders between what lies inside and outside of it. However, who and what constitutes the field is contested, and this means that questions about which actors are legitimate and what knowledge is relevant are constantly raised.

When relevance is not a given but constantly being recreated by a discourse (whose own boundaries and participants also shift frequently), how the academic profession defends its positions and its participation defines its strength as a collective force in society and thus also its status as a profession. In other words, as long as a field of science exists (within which actors identify, promote and select a particular habitus, thereby again establishing borders with other fields through their ability to influence definitions of what is relevant), we can talk of an academic profession being held together by this field and by what is at stake within it. The questions that then arise are: what kind of habitus characterises members of this profession and how does this habitus influence their positioning within the discourse on relevance? To sum up, the ideal, which builds on the notion that a profession controls who it recruits, is embedded in scientifically legitimised knowledge, and controls its own working processes by ensuring a high degree of autonomy in deciding job content, remains relevant. That is, as long as the academic profession controls the processes and assessments involved in obtaining a PhD, it can be said to have control over recruitment; and as long as the academic profession builds its teaching on ongoing research, the profession will remain strong and capable of self-governance.

The professionals (nurses, doctors, veterinarians, engineers, etc. that we generally refer to when using the term) who are educated in the universities have, as part of their collective identity, a contract with society (usually understood as the nation-state) to work in particular sectors and engage in certain types of activities. To uphold this contract, the knowledge they acquire and develop has to be both relevant and valid. In other words, what is relevant is what is valid. These professionals often have their qualifications certified by state institutions, educational institutions, a professional association, or various combinations of these. This certification confirms the reliability of the certified individual's ability to act in their professional capacity to provide information and act on the basis of research-based truth.

Modern society is driven by a division of labour that has led to institutional differentiation, with their own codes of conduct and specific knowledge. Professions are both a consequence and a cause of this differentiation. Institutions work on one another, but always within particular codes that they establish over time. In this process some knowledge remains relevant, and some knowledge can be superseded. As noted, the role of the university is to train competent professionals and to equip them with critical thinking skills so that they can think critically both within and beyond the institutionalised codes of knowledge related to their disciplines.

By contrast, academics work within a kind of 'mother profession' and have no contract with society to be relevant to any specific purpose or clientele. Instead, we have an employment contract with a university to promote and develop science-based knowledge. In his book, *Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft* [The Science of Society] (1990), Niklas Luhmann argues that within modernity, all functional systems are characterised by asymmetrical relations. He gives the examples of producers and consumers, governments and citizens, etc. Similarly, social roles and counter roles (*Rollen und Gegenrollen*) are also discernible in the professions – as in lawyer/client, doctor/patient, engineer/technology, priests/salvation and damnation. According to Luhmann, the one exception (in modern societies) is academic knowledge and the academic profession (*Wissenschaft*). In this realm,

the academic community determines what is true and relevant, and also how established truths are dissolved or discarded when they are disproven.²⁷

What this implies is that the academic profession is able to systematically review and evaluate itself and its own knowledge base in ways that do not destroy public trust in that knowledge. By proposing what is true, but also questioning and critiquing established truths, the academic profession should be able to maintain control over its own domain *and* sustain public trust. However, this social contract relies on continual renewal, and is based on trust in the validity of scholarly knowledge. How the academics secure sufficient resources for their own reproduction and growth within the organisations they work for has weak foundations in the political economy and strong foundations in the project of modernity. In other words, the profession is characterised by its own control over what is relevant as well as over how relevance is handled in the processes of research, teaching and the dissemination of knowledge in society. The relevance of the academic profession lies in the performance of these practices, which again only have meaning if old knowledge is constantly being challenged by new. Capitalism is characterised by creative destruction and science by 'destructive creation'. Surely, the latter is of more value to society?

Neoliberalism and public space

Who has defining power over relevance of academic knowledge, and how does this affect the academic profession whose very identity depends on its ability to make itself relevant? Our hypothesis is that, the shift of modern society towards the so-called knowledge economy, has undermined the ability of academics to define, pursue and shape what they see as relevant knowledge. At the same time, the role of democracy in creating space for deliberations about relevance has shrunk. In other words, neoliberalism has grown in influence to such a degree that it fundamentally threatens democracy (Streeck 2010). Searching for signs of resistance to neoliberalism (as we do

in Chapters 5 to 9), Axel Honneth (2014) suggested that academic knowledge and the academic profession can be made relevant again by building alliances with other social forces that promote the values that academic solidarity rests upon. He added a warning however:

The only way out of this crisis of the democratic constitutional state would be to bundle the public power of organisations, social movements and civil associations in order to put co-ordinated and massive pressure on the parliamentary legislature, forcing it to take measures to ensure the social re-embeddedness of the capitalist market. The more freedom that business has gained over the last quarter century to pursue its profit interests, the more the state has been put at the mercy of the former's increased capacity for obstruction. However, the development of a public, multi-voiced opposition is hindered by the fact that the necessary resources provided by a common background culture are gradually beginning to dry up. Political integration within the nation-state, which was once capable of providing moral motives for bundling various social forces, is now constrained by processes of globalisation and worldwide migration, without there being any sign of alternative sources of solidarity on the horizon. (Honneth 2014: 236)

Honneth is not alone in stating this hypothesis. UNESCO's report, *Rethinking Education: Towards a Global Common Good?* noted that, 'The status and working conditions of the academic profession worldwide are under strain due to both mass and budget constraints' (UNESCO 2015: 57). In addition, Guy Standing, in his book, *Work After Globalization: Building Occupational Citizenship*, described the 'commodifying of academics' and the consequences of this. As he put it, 'The work of intellectuals is becoming intellectual labour' and the academic profession has adjusted, rather than protested (Standing 2010: 134). Similarly, Wendy Brown (2015: 198) pointed out: 'It is remarkable how quickly all strata in public universities – staff, faculty,

administrators, students – have grown accustomed to the saturation of university life by neoliberal rationality, metrics, and principles of governance.’

Post-modern relativism and social constructivism have not supported or defended truth telling. Rather, they have undermined the academic profession from within, and made it receptive to external governance. As Standing (2010: 134) explained:

The commodification is epitomized by the way academics are being graded by number of publications and type of journal in which they have published. Certain journals are graded much higher than others, and in many subjects these are US-based. Mainstream journals are being converted into control mechanisms, for to publish in them the academic must use standard models, techniques, languages and, underneath, standard ideologies ... Globally, commercialization and liberalization of tertiary ‘education’ have increased the control exercised by outsiders over the scientific and cultural communities, reducing their autonomy and increasing the emphasis on market reward.

The spread of neoliberal political hegemony since the 1960s has gradually absorbed many of the world’s academic institutions. One result has been increasing pressure on academics to become economic actors, producing what neoliberals call ‘human capital’ (Becker 1964, 1976; see also Cloete et al. 2015, 2018; and Schmelzer 2016). Within this framework, only knowledge that is useful for so-called innovation is considered relevant. As state policies orient entire societies towards what neoliberals define as economic growth, democracy is also undermined. To secure control over its own work, the academic profession relies on democratic values, including free speech and institutional autonomy. Thus, the neoliberal threat to democracy also threatens the academic profession. As Wendy Brown (2015: 9) pointed out:

More than merely saturating the meaning or content of democracy with market values, neoliberalism assaults the principles, practices, cultures, subjects and institutions of democracy understood as rule by the people ... The claim that neoliberalism is profoundly destructive to the fibre and future of democracy in any form is premised on an understanding of neoliberalism as something other than a set of economic policies, an ideology, a resetting of the relation between state and economy. Rather as a normative order of reason developed over three decades into a widely and deeply disseminated governing rationality, neoliberalism transmogrifies every human domain and endeavour along with humans themselves according to a specific image of the economic.

Similarly, in *Freedom's Right*, Honneth reflected on 'the social foundations of democratic life' (the subtitle of his book), arguing that these are not only normative but also institutional. However, as he pointed out, democratic institutions no longer have any real influence over economic power:

Whereas eighty to a hundred years ago we could point to concrete events that demonstrated the class-specific selectivity of the state apparatus, today the bias of the state in favour of capitalist profit interests seems to be entirely hidden from the public view because the corresponding governmental measures are either not addressed in parliament at all or are justified with reference to objective constraints. (Honneth 2014: 326)

When neoliberalism emerged, academic identity had already been weakened by imperialism. As Olechnicka et al. (2019: 12) explained:

Scientific activity is spread unevenly across geographic space. This was true in previous centuries and continues to be the case in today's globalized world. Disparities in global scientific

production reflect the socio-economic diversification of regions, countries, and continents.

In essence, the old imperial powers drew their academic communities into global capitalism, ensuring the replication of economic and academic inequalities.

All that can be assigned a market value, along with more and more that cannot, is being expressed in terms of monetary exchange. In addition, time and space are being compressed into a new generalised universality, in which individuality is mediatised. In this way, communities (and individuals within them) are stripped of their history as well as their sense of spatial or social belonging and solidarity, retaining their value only as 'human resources'. '*Homo academicus*' and '*homo economicus*' are conflicting identities argued Brown (2015) and, in adjusting to this 'reality', universities are also becoming detached from their history and social purpose: 'the market value of knowledge – its income-enhancing prospects for individuals and industry alike – is now understood as its [the university's] driving purpose and leading line of defence' (Brown 2015: 187).

Although imperial, and particularly colonial, dominion appear to have diminished, Achille Mbembe (2017: 3) highlighted how neoliberalism's less formal domination is now conquering minds, including our universities, pointing out that by neoliberalism, he means 'a phase in the history of humanity dominated by the industries of Silicon Valley and digital technology'.

As pointed out in debates on epistemological decolonisation, informal suppression simply replaced formal oppression, and still dominates within neoliberalism's academic systems and knowledge structures. The new role allocated to these systems was to help build the necessary institutional framework for the global economy. For many universities, this quickly took precedence over their roles as cultural institutions for building nations and empowering their citizens. The HERANA project, for example, is concerned with how African universities can pool their resources so as to more effectively link their lagging national economies into the global knowledge

economy. In many ways, the knowledge economy is a form of imperial domination in a new, 'soft' or informal guise.

Thus, as universities are gradually transformed into economic actors, in line with the development model HERANA outlined (see Cloete et al. 2018), academics have to find ways to negotiate a path between identities, driven by the general trend towards neoliberal policies and the example of the so-called Asian-tiger economies. In our study, we therefore tried to find out how academics at Makerere negotiate the tensions between their scholarly role and the pressure to fulfil particular economic goals. We asked informants if they think they and their colleagues have lost the freedom to decide what knowledge is relevant, the authority to defend the independence of their research, and the courage to inspire their students to become independent thinkers in addition to preparing them for the world of work. We report on their responses in Parts II and III.

The relevance of relevance and the defence of democracy

According to the academic profession itself, academic knowledge is relevant when it is created and developed with the help of scientific means, and thus gains a character of truthfulness. Of course, objectivity is a contested concept, but it can be understood simply as an attempt to be independent of overt and explicit social interests. Academic knowledge is established as such when it is able to defend itself against counterarguments in open public debate. It is this debate (with the defence of a PhD thesis being one example) that makes us believe academic knowledge production is both possible and useful. Actors in society can access this knowledge if they wish to, and its development processes are transparent (unlike patents, intellectual property rights and contracts, which lock knowledge away and provide access only to the highest bidders).

As Merton (1973) emphasised, the truth-telling qualities of academic knowledge are independent of person, space and time, and are, in principle, changed only when 'objective' new knowledge is

developed. Academic knowledge also traverses language and culture. That is, academic truths should be universally true, universally applicable, and universally replicable. Contemporary debates about ‘decolonising knowledge’ *as identity politics* can thus be seen as somewhat contrary to the project of truth telling, albeit useful for developing new lenses through which we can examine and reflect on existing knowledge. Yet, what is ‘true’ is not given by ‘reality’. How we perceive and interpret reality is socially conditioned, but reality is not socially constructed (as in post-modernism) and facts do not have ‘alternatives’ (no matter how loudly Donald Trump and his followers disagree). Rather, theories, categories, and the ways in which academics gather empirical evidence are marked by the specifics of the academic process and its social character. This is why it is so important for academics to actively engage in democratic interactions via their role as public intellectuals, for example. The knowledge we consider true is so because we as academics agree that this must be the case. However, democracy is wiser and has a duty to challenge our ‘truth-telling’ and relevance arguments. All truth telling is a collective product (even Albert Einstein worked, and Mahmood Mamdani works, within a community of scholars), and the ideal for this ‘product’ is to be as objective as possible, *not despite* the influence of the social, but by making the social an explicit and an integral part of the premise. In other words, if all knowledge is socially constructed under the influence of the context within which it is created, intersubjective agreements among scholars about what is true, become impossible. The academic profession is thus also dissolved as a collective force defending common truths.

The social character of knowledge makes us choose to attend to certain facts and leave others aside. In principle, all human behaviour or natural phenomena are relevant for study and scientific exploration. Universities are, in principle, spaces free of moral and normative judgements. Political censorship or legal restraints on speech can thus undermine the academic profession’s ethics. However, what we study is guided by our socialisation and our social identification with or against power and forms of domination. What academics focus on,

and spend time, money and labour on, is thus dependent on social and political context and choices. Academics are part of a social world that influences topics chosen, interpretations made and networks joined (local and international).

While the academic community can claim to be objective, as well as the right to choose both what to focus on and how to present what is considered true, the rest of the world seems less and less concerned with this kind of truth telling. As argued, this is partly the fault of the relativism espoused by the academic profession via post-modernism, and social constructivism. Yet 'reality' is not constructed by social interactions among academics; little changes or disappears with or without science. What shifts is how we understand reality – theories and categories change understanding. When truth becomes relative only to the social context within which knowledge is constructed, then truth telling as the key value of the academic profession also tends to vanish.

Our concern, however, is less with the social relativity of knowledge (or its dissolution from within), and more about the external pressure on academics to use their time, work, and resources to be relevant for society as constructed in the image of the neoliberal economy. Our questions are: is this transforming the ability of the academic profession to tell the truth according to its own criteria and standards, and is the academic profession undermining its roles as truth teller by allying itself with neoliberalism and thus changing how it understands what knowledge is relevant to society?

The changing discourse on relevance

The debate about the relevance of knowledge has changed dramatically since the Enlightenment. This has also changed the academic profession. The influence of the academic profession over what knowledge is relevant has changed too. For example, in the US or Uganda, people still use academic knowledge to defend themselves against religious prejudice, popular superstition and authoritarian political control. This has achieved some success, even though a large proportion of US citizens believe in creationism and not in evolution. In Uganda, as

the intense praying that happens on the lawns at Makerere seems to indicate, belief in science seems to be, at best, one of many.

Wherever neoliberal ideologies are dominant, trust in codified or research-based knowledge is shaped by its link to the ‘users’ of knowledge. Science is generally seen as one type of knowledge among many and is expected to prove its value and relevance through its applicability. This approach to knowledge (also called Mode 2 knowledge by Gibbons et al. 1994) shifts the authority over the determination of relevance away from the academic profession and towards external actors. These actors are not ‘democracy at large’ (as should be the case for academic knowledge) but institutions that enable the growth and regulation of ‘the global economy’ (no longer plural).

In this book, we consider the relevance of knowledge in relation to the global neoliberal economisation of society, and how the governance of this economy is creating so-called competitive states.²⁸ This contrasts strongly with the traditional role of universities and the academic profession, which allowed for collaboration in the production and sharing of knowledge. In the contemporary era, neoliberal universities have focused instead on building the institutions of modernity, and shaping identities and skills that help graduates to function both within these institutions and within the framework of self-determining nation-states. In this context, belief in knowledge has become synonymous with belief in progress and normalisation – including the many negative consequences this has for the Othering and exploitation of everyone outside the Western world (Wagner 2016). Under neoliberalism, knowledge (as science) is no longer relevant in itself. It is relevant only as an objective force that can be transformed into a productive investment – that is, as part of the forces (not only the means) of production. Whether this knowledge is made available by creationists or any other antagonists to ‘enlightenment’ matters little. Knowledge can tell the truth about what pays, without having to reflect on its societal role or its ability to build or plan for ‘the good society’.

Therefore, not all knowledge is relevant for the economy, and some knowledge can be detrimental if it justifies securing national/nation-

state borders, or hinders capital mobility and investment rights, or questions whether human capability is more important than ‘human capital’ (Sen 2010). For FA Hayek, economist and founding member of the Mont Pelerin Society (the world’s first and still foremost neoliberal policy think-tank), the market as a communication system (of knowledge) carried higher value than any networks of universities and academic professionals, particularly since these might be rooted in cultures of collective identity which could distort both capital mobility and pricing mechanisms (Hayek 1944). Forcefully opposing the *Limits to Growth* report, which was commissioned by the Club of Rome, and in which Meadows et al. (1972) pointed out that energy and other basic resources are necessarily limited on our finite planet, Hayek insisted that the ‘limits to knowledge’ about what jobs can be found at the right price are all that really matters (quoted in Slobodian 2018: 225). In this context, a global market for knowledge workers is of great value, and the World Bank and the OECD dole out high praise for what they call ‘brain-circulation’ (OECD 2008).²⁹

This all stands in strong contrast to ‘knowledge for democracy’ – and no, neoliberals ‘do not see capitalism and democracy as synonymous’ as Quinn Slobodian observed (2018: 2). Within democratic discourse, truth telling is a resource for people often seen as vulnerable, and who depend on the voice of the academic community to help them to be more visible. Commenting on the rise of fascism in Germany, where alternative facts and their believers flourished, Hannah Arendt (1967) showed how keeping to the facts was ultimately what defended democracy against tyranny.³⁰ Limiting academic concerns to what is economically relevant lessens and minimises the influence of both the academic profession and democracy. This is particularly important since the spread of democracy and the growth of independent states has always represented a grave threat to globalisation.

Studying the influence of neoliberals in South Africa (who have also had some influence in Uganda), it is interesting to note that William H Hutt, was the first prominent academic in South Africa to join the Mont Pelerin Society. Active from the 1930s, and later serving as dean of the

commerce faculty at the University of Cape Town,³¹ Hutt reportedly opposed apartheid on the grounds that it placed limits on efforts to globalise the South African economy and on the mobility of ‘human capital’. However, inspired by Hayek, Hutt also wanted voting rights limited to the ‘capitalist enlightened’, thus effectively reproducing the ‘colour bar’ he was supposedly against. Supported by the University of Cape Town, Hutt developed its economics department into the breeding ground for neoliberals that it remains today, and spoke at many Mont Pelerin Society meetings about how the market economy would solve South Africa’s ‘race issue’.³² Nevertheless, in South Africa, as in so many countries, the ideology of white superiority that underpins the so-called race issue remains firmly in place. Perhaps it is fitting that the calls for decolonisation that propelled the Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall movements began at the University of Cape Town and have since echoed around the world (Habib 2019).

Building on the ongoing debate (at least in Europe) about the systemic contradictions between democracy and capitalism – among scholars such as Crouch (2000), Merkel (2014), Piketty (2020), Rueschemeyer et al. (1992) and Streeck (2020) – it is clear that the academic profession is facing a contradiction it cannot solve unless it allies itself with democratic forces (see Honneth 2014 and Chapter 10, this volume). As a voice in the public space, the academic profession has been, and is, dependent on universities that are supported by and promote democratic values. As universities change – for the sake of economic growth and in the interests of hegemonic neoliberalism – the criteria for their relevance and the relevance of the academic profession will change too. Using the legal profession as an example, Alain Supiot (2017: 9) has pointed out:

The state has become the instrument of the total market, in which all aspects of human life are measured in economic terms. In this context, laws themselves become the object of a calculation, treated as legislative products competing on a global market of norms ... People are no longer expected to

act freely within the limits laid down by the law, but to react in real time to the multiple signals they receive, in order to meet the targets they are assigned.

When the political economy determines relevance of knowledge entirely, academics have little room to explain how the effects of non-contractual preconditions on economic contracts – that is, how embedded the economy is in society, how the economy transforms politics and how capitalism unopposed quickly becomes inhumane. This, of course, also changes the status of the academic profession within the class structure. In Uganda and much of East Africa, for example, for academics to play the role of truth teller, based on their own ideas of what is relevant, tends to be more risky than rewarding. Even if academic status is protected, the rewards for truth telling seldom lead these scholars beyond the struggling middle class, if they even get that far. In other regions, the academic profession might have won a greater degree of autonomy from the state, and developed a reputation for being public truth tellers, thus justifying a claim to academic freedom within autonomous and publicly funded universities. This certainly confers and constitutes a certain social status. But if faith in the value of knowledge is small, and truth telling threatens the powerful, the status conferred is often without proper reward. Unfortunately, many representatives of the academic community have adjusted to power in ways that compromise truth telling in exchange for social elevation. The commodification of knowledge is only escalating such compromises further.

As the role of knowledge in society has grown, academic autonomy (and trust in the value of knowledge, as driven by curiosity and methodical investigation) is less and less conditioned by its public role. Rather, what is relevant in today's terms is 'innovation'. The notion of universities as institutions whose role is to question the aggregate consequences of human actions, is vanishing (Wagner 2016).

It seems the academic profession does not have the power to assert its autonomy in the face of neoliberalism's social forces that it has previously shown in response to the dictates of religious or political

control. Instead, relevance, as defined by academics, is being exchanged for patents, intellectual property rights and technology transfer. These mechanisms are now selecting what is relevant according to market demand, legal access, technological innovation, and their potential to increase productivity and reduce labour costs.

Relevance and governance

Universities have become strategic actors seeking support for themselves in ways that are only partly governed by the academic community. This is particularly so when, like Makerere, they are grossly underfunded. However, universities are also still meant to be guardians of knowledge – spaces that nobody owns or directs, and that honour the practices and rituals that constitute the academic profession. In reality, universities tend to develop goal-oriented behaviour that reduces both the autonomy and the independence of the academic profession. In such institutions, values such as academic freedom are easily compromised for the sake of organisational survival or growth, and other value sets are institutionalised instead. For example, the role of universities in containing and socialising young people, providing a place of employment or replenishing political governance can all take priority.

Historically, the academic profession and universities were co-created (like the medical profession and hospitals). Nevertheless, potential conflicts can arise between the two over the question of ownership. Thus, while e-mails do not constitute the internet and a gas flow is not a gas plant, for the academic community to be truth tellers, academics do have to constitute the universities.

Historically, the relevance of university-based knowledge was accepted by the societal leaders who established universities. Nowadays, academics have to prove their relevance, not only to societal actors but also *within* their universities. Mary Henkel (2000) described the way that university managers are structuring the work of academics, and building new systems of control, as a process of ‘morphogenesis’. Moreover, while co-opting actors integral to the internal organisation

of the university, this morphogenetic formation seems to be led by actors outside of the academic community. Neoliberal rationality guides the process as universities transform from being the sum of the activities of their academics, and focus instead on strategic *visibility* in an effort to gain resources and rewards according to criteria of relevance that are externally created and evaluated. The idea that we cannot always know *when* a good piece of research may be relevant, or *for whom*, is no longer considered valid. The demand is that every member of the academic profession must be able to show how and to whom their work is relevant while it is in progress and often before it can begin (Collini 2017).

Reward for academic work has shifted away from the production of content and discourse to (mostly quantitative) ranking according to the types of degrees awarded, number of publications cited, and numbers of students enrolled. To unite these contradictory reward systems, the price per student has to be as high as possible and the student numbers have to be kept as low as possible, while reputation-creating visibility has to elicit support from donors and other partners to make research possible. Overpublishing research output and recruiting students via alumni networks (with Ivy League universities recruiting upper-class or 'donor' children being the extreme case) have become standard strategies for strengthening institutional reputation and increasing revenue. Peer-reviewers and citation indices, along with journals and their editorial boards, are often co-opted into promoting this competition between universities. Together with demands for 'research impact', most of the power over what is relevant knowledge has been externalised, even when, like the peer-review mechanism, it was set up to protect and promote academic truth telling.

Our point is that those with the power to define what is relevant, also decide what knowledge will be created. When academics are sidelined in debates about relevance, their professional identities are questioned and what was once a generalised trust in the academic profession becomes conditioned by agencies external to the profession and by their demands around relevance. Even teaching is controlled to make sure it is relevant as quality-assurance agencies and standardised

curriculum descriptions become the norm. Fee-paying students think of getting ‘value for money’ and see university education as useful only in so far as it equips them for success in the job market – as if academics supply ‘human capital’ in bits and pieces.

In situations where relevance requires truth telling, relevance obviously cannot be defined a priori. However, under neoliberal hegemony, relevance has become a means of controlling academic work and thus eradicating the power of the truth tellers.

A small sample in a globalised sector

Our study is based on the normative idea that the independence of the academic profession is important. Our hypothesis is that how the academic profession seeks to influence this debate (as the occupation responsible for truth telling as the most relevant purpose of academic work) always determines its status and role in society – both as a force for democracy and for the dissemination of useful knowledge.

Our interest in truth telling relates to what is quite narrowly often called ‘science’ in English and *Wissenschaft* in German. What we mean is all the academic activities at a university that create valid knowledge (Parsons and Platt 1973). Over time, the scientific method has come to be a way of acquiring knowledge that is considered more relevant to most human lives than many other types of knowledge, including religious or spiritual, market-led, polemical, or intuitive. Human life is filled with knowledge and, in every action we take, we depend on knowledge learned from others in the communities within which we move. Some of this was developed by scientists and is believed to be ‘secure knowledge’ because it is empirical, replicable, etc. Consequently, the academic profession is linked to a combination of occupational practices that evolved out of its identification with science. Ironically, however, while science-based knowledge is more accessible than ever before, belief in the value of an independent academic profession appears to be dwindling (see Hessen 2018).

As Collini (2017) pointed out, relevance has become a key word, both for those who work in the academic world, and for those who seek

to govern universities and research institutions. It has also become a word of everyday use in higher-education policies. Being true is no longer enough to make academic knowledge relevant (Latour 2017).

However, it is also important to acknowledge that neoliberal hegemony is not monolithic; it does vary in different places and over time. Thus, while the World Bank pushes neoliberal policies, not all donors have fallen into this trap (see Halvorsen and Nossun 2016). It is vital that we remain alert to the multiplicity of ideas among political and economic elites, as well as to variability in university governance structures. Most importantly, pockets of the academic profession itself are resisting neoliberal attempts to use 'relevance' as a tool for governing and controlling academics and their work. Our question to informants was how deep this resistance goes at Makerere, what inspires it, and can the resistance evident at the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) offer an alternative to the widespread orientation of universities to the short-term interests of users and funders?

3

Some background on the development of the academic profession at Makerere University

To understand how academics interpret their own situation at Makerere presupposes some knowledge of the institution's recent history and the social forces shaping its policies. In this chapter, we attempt to provide some of this background, highlighting how neoliberalism has driven and shaped the campus since the mid-1990s. The chapter is divided into several parts. First, we present a brief background to the neoliberal reforms at Makerere and reflect on how the global (primarily represented by the World Bank) is present in the local. Second, we unpack some of the reasons why so few resources are allocated to doctoral training on the campus. Third, we reflect on our informants' experiences of their typical working weeks and highlight their experiences and attitudes towards key aspects of their work. In the last section, we trace the restructuring process that replaced faculties with colleges at Makerere and reflect on how this is affecting the academics we interviewed.

Neoliberal reforms from the mid-1980s

From 1993 onwards, having decided to formally adopt the World Bank's prescription for economic reform, Uganda's ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) began to push for full implementation of the World Bank's recommendations on universities. Ongoing protests from staff and students made little difference. According to Quintas Obong (2004: 110):

A World Bank sponsored Study Team that was commissioned to propose the modalities for revitalising the university sector reported the same year (1993), recommending:

- i) making better use of public university assets by developing night and evening courses, part-time-degree and non-degree programmes, contract-training and other income generating activities;
- ii) investigating possibilities for better use of university farms and other properties;
- iii) making more use of existing capacity in institutions and increasing the capacity of newly established private universities; and
- iv) raising the income of university staff members.

According to Ezra Suruma (2014), a Ugandan economist and academic who served as a senior adviser on finance and economic planning to Yoweri Museveni from early 2009 to early 2016, and was chancellor of Makerere since 2016, the government adopted the World Bank programme partly because the state was so weak. As the current regime tried to stabilise the country after the despotic rule of Idi Amin and Milton Obote, the state fell into the hands of the Bretton Woods institutions. As Suruma (2014: 29) pointed out:

While history is likely to judge the NRM leadership harshly for allowing these external actors to interfere with the country's sovereignty, it is important to note that after nearly ten years of brutal exploitation and rampant theft by Amin's regime, Uganda's national treasury was empty, virtually all economic infrastructure had been destroyed, and the people were facing extreme hardships. The NRM recognized the need for emergency funds to restore basic government services and get the economy moving. Unfortunately, the international donor and lending communities were not forthcoming unless Uganda agreed to abide by the conditionality imposed on it by the IMF and World Bank.

As noted, the demand that the universities be reformed was part and parcel of this new regimen. In many parts of the world, academic institutions have had their identities shaped by how they have been valued by national actors. In Uganda, however, the hidden and external powers of the Bretton Woods institutions – a type of post-national economic ‘governance’, involving the blurring of public and private authority – have had the final say in shaping its universities since the early 1990s. As the *Peril and Promise* report showed (World Bank 2000), several countries in the South experienced similar subjugation, but in Uganda the process seems to have been more extreme, with the country turned into an experimental test case for proponents of neoliberal reform.

Having observed this World Bank-led transformation at close range, Mahmood Mamdani (1995) noted how the marketisation of higher education displaced academics from their position of leadership in society, and forced them into enclaves from which they have to try to assert their right to academic freedom as a form of self-protection. Mamdani defined this displacement while describing the Symposium on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of Intellectuals held in Kampala, Uganda on 29 November 1990, which issued the Kampala Declaration on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility.³³

The first fact worth noting about the African symposium in Kampala was a rather startling shift in priorities: intellectuals, who in the past laid claim to a leadership role, were now coming together on a platform of rights. This was connected to another shift: that in the nature of the university as an institution, which since independence, has been shaped by a state-directed logic of development. It now found itself being defined by a market logic. (1995: 15)

For Mamdani, the declaration raised the question of whether the discovery of rights signified the rise of narrow professionalism, and how academic freedom relates to domination, asking, ‘Was it a way of privileging our narrow interests, even a crude and shameless elitism?’

(1995: 16). Given Mamdani's intellectual project to root 'African universities in African soil' (1995: 20), his answer is that the academic profession must seek legitimacy as a force for democracy, and not stand aloof from the rest of society, guarding its own special rights and privileges.³⁴ For Mamdani, the authority of universities to shape the content of the knowledge they develop also has to be part of a democratic mobilisation. He asserts that truth is multiple and 'academic freedom is a democratic right' (Mamdani 1995: 16). As holders of this democratic right, academics, and academic institutions, become actors in the struggle for democracy. In this context, knowledge derives its authority from the quality of its contributions to ongoing discourses on democratisation, and not from speaking for the powerful with their preconceptions of what is important.

In direct contradiction to this, the marketisation of higher education is linked to the power of donor organisations that operate *outside* of local and national mechanisms of democratic accountability. In this process, donors obtain the power to determine what knowledge is 'good' and how its relevance is valued. This radically undermines academics' democratic freedoms. It limits their autonomy to shape their own research questions, and it renders their participation in broad democratic engagements around research priorities and equity of representation meaningless.

In a detailed historical study of Makerere from 1922 to 2000, Carol Sicherman (2005) asked whether the institution can be considered an 'African university'? Her answer seems to be that the engine of neoliberalism overloaded the institution, slowing it down and threatening to derail it entirely. In essence, the pursuit of knowledge in terms of its relevance for the deepening of democracy – a strategy that included the professionalisation of intellectuals – came up against the World Bank's strategy for the transformation of the universities into viable business entities. Sicherman offered no clear answers as to how public universities facing this crisis should respond. Instead, she suggested only that all parties work together to produce consensus on further reforms aimed at securing a better balance between the provision of mass education and opportunities for the development of

quality scholarship, which she referred to as ‘elite training’ (Sicherman 2005: 319). Under neoliberalism, however, the concentration of power in the hands of university leadership and management gives them the means to block all attempts to redirect such institutions along the paths that Sicherman recommends.

In its *Peril and Promise* report, the World Bank (2000) offered a long-awaited self-critique of its earlier position on the relative importance of higher-education and research institutions, especially in Africa. In essence, World Bank policy-makers replaced their simple cost-benefit analysis of the value of education with the notion of ‘human capital development’ that they had promoted since the mid-1980s. That is, they masked their earlier errors using a new terminology that is better integrated with the neoliberal ideology that governs World Bank activities (see Cloete et al. 2018). The new approach, however, remained conditional; universities were now expected to join the education market and compete for students, academic staff, as well as for research autonomy and various kinds of international ratings.

Letting go of doctoral training puts academic autonomy at risk

In the push to implement neoliberal reforms in Uganda’s higher-education sector, focus was lost on the importance of doctoral training in the reproduction of an independent academic profession. PhD candidates at Makerere tend to be underfunded, isolated from the scholarly community, and, if unsupported by donors (and enticed into transferring to other universities in the North), they are mostly left to themselves to muddle through. On the way, many are forced into teaching because, while they might be employed by Makerere, few earn a living wage. Cloete et al. (2018) have argued that Makerere has too few PhD candidates to be considered a research university. Based on what our informants told us, the problem is that the campus is not embedded in a culture of academic research; there is little to sustain PhD candidates and help them evolve into independent and effective academics.

Estimates are that only about a thousand people living in Uganda have a PhD, and that Makerere employs 60 per cent of them (Uganda National Council for Science and Technology 2011, in Bisaso 2017: 430). Eren Zink (2016: 60, 61) also cites a survey by the Ugandan National Council for Science and Technology as stating that, in 2012, 53 per cent of Ugandan academics who have a PhD had graduated from Ugandan higher-education institutions, and primarily from Makerere. However, Zink went on to note that three other surveys, one of which he conducted himself, indicated that, in 2013, 70 to 80 per cent of doctoral graduates in Uganda's higher-education institutions were awarded their degrees either at a university in Europe or North America, or through 'sandwich programmes' with partner institutions in Europe.

To look into these and other issues affecting Makerere, Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni appointed a 'Visitation Committee' in 2016. Led by Dr Abel Rwendeire, deputy-chairperson of Uganda's National Planning Authority, the committee's task was to 'visit, study, make a situational analysis on the causes of endemic strikes, assess progress on the implementation of previous reports, conduct an appraisal of the integrity of finance management and establish the student and staff numbers' (Rwendeire 2017: ii). According to the committee's report, Makerere 'maintains the top share of academic staff with PhDs in the country and in Africa', and 'about 660 academic staff had PhDs by November 2016, representing 72 per cent of all academic staff (at the rank of lecturer and above)' (Rwendeire 2017: xvi, 10).³⁵

While it might be true that Makerere is better off than many African universities in terms of the number of staff who have a PhD, this is, as mentioned in Chapter 1, largely attributable to donor programmes. The university's academic and intellectual leaders have thus gained valuable international experience, but their epistemological moulding derives from very different contexts that are, at best, only indirectly involved in building strong academic networks capable of sustaining and expanding doctoral training in Uganda. In 2017, the university had 1 461 academic staff.³⁶ In 2016, the university had a total of 96 professors, representing 7 per cent of the university staff. Of these, only eight were female (Rwendeire 2017: 88, Table 4.4.1.2).

A typical working week for academics at Makerere

Where do doctoral studies fit into daily academic work? Are they just an add-on? In this section, we describe a typical working week at Makerere, as related to us by our informants, excluding those at MISR. We specifically highlight the ways in which doctoral work or support features in their understanding of their roles and their perceptions of their working conditions. In general, most of the academics we interviewed described their typical working weeks as harried, with a lot of work and meetings. Many framed their job descriptions within the categories of *teaching*, *research*, *(community) outreach*, and *administration*. Interestingly, these categories seem to reflect the wording of Makerere's mission and vision statements.³⁷ And, while no specific focus on doctoral training is evident in these categories, this work seems to be seen as integral to the research function. As we show in later chapters, neither is strong.

Teaching

Doctoral education did not feature as part of informants' teaching responsibilities. Rather, those who have a PhD are primarily seen (and see themselves) as teachers. One of the issues raised most often was the high number of students registered, and the number of hours that academics have to spend preparing and giving lectures, as well as on supervising, marking and grading coursework and exams. Many informants teach day and evening classes, as well as on Saturdays. Teaching multiple courses is the norm, and most informants say that they have too many students, especially at undergraduate level. This leaves them with little energy for master's students, even though these students are important for the selection and support of future PhD candidates. Many informants take on extra teaching loads, and some even join evening programmes to earn extra income.³⁸ A phrase we heard often was that salaries are 'not enough to put food on the table'. Our informants perceived their low salary levels as disrespectful of the value of their work as well as of their professional

skills and qualifications. Our findings are consistent with those of the high-level Visitation Committee in 2016 and 2017 (Rwendeire 2017). The Visitation Committee also noted that Makerere's administrators and academics share the same salary structure. This means that academic staff with high qualifications are on the same pay grade as non-teaching staff with lower qualifications. In addition, academics at Makerere reported that their salaries are lower than those paid by other universities in the region. Of Makerere's total academic staff complement, 81 per cent (1150 out of the total of 1417 academics) responded to the questionnaire issued by the Visitation Committee (Rwendeire 2017: 87).

Research

Heavy teaching loads overshadowed all other aspects of our informants' academic work, especially research. Although the university's policy on research and innovation stipulates that academics at Makerere should spend at least 20 per cent of their time at work on research and dissemination (Makerere University 2008: 8), most informants said their only option is to use their free time in the evenings and weekends or take leave to be able to further their research. Alternatively, they have to devote less time to their teaching duties. It was clear that if the academics had more choice, they would give more priority to their research in their daily workloads and the motivation to do research was evident across all the disciplines. As one informant put it:

Our work hinges on teaching and research, that is largely where the core is ... Over the years there has been too much teaching ... it really does not give people adequate time for research, but we still try to do quite a lot of research because the core is really research.

Some at CHUSS were aware of professors who informally outsource their teaching loads, paying someone to take their classes so that they can accept more lucrative or more rewarding contract work. Of those

who said they did have some time to conduct research, most did not feel they had enough time to do so effectively.

Makerere derives its funding from three major sources: the Ugandan government, internally generated income, and development partners. Although government and internally generated income are the dominant sources, government funding is specifically attached to government-sponsored students. In 2016, these comprised just 17 per cent of the student population (Rwendeire 2017: 29). In essence, *the government is not funding research* at Makerere, even though the university is supposedly a *public* research institution. With a single exception, no internal or external funding contributes to supporting research relevant to doctoral research and training. The exception is the Presidential Initiative on Science and Technology, which aims to 'enhance the development of science and research' in Uganda (Makerere University 2013: 2). This works through various bodies, including the Uganda Industrial Research Institute and the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology, and has, since 2010, funded certain research projects at CEDAT, CAES and the College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Bio-security (COVAB).

It is perhaps unsurprising then that reports on research projects vary widely from year to year. During our study, academics at CAES seemed to have access to more research funding than other colleges. Thus, according to the university's 2016 *Annual Report*, CAES had 48 research projects in 2016. CEDAT and CHUSS each had nine projects and SoL had three (Makerere University 2016: 64). All of the projects spanned several years. Note that these numbers referred specifically to college-based projects; they did not include grants or consultancies held by individual academics.

Most of the grants and consultancies we heard about were motivated by academics' need to publish so that they could make progress in their careers. However, while acquiring a PhD is recognised as a necessary part of the path to promotion, helping to foster the institution's research culture by supervising postgraduate students is not. The following comments from two informants are illuminating:

Our promotion criteria here emphasise publications and student supervision – that is, supervising students to completion of their degrees. Teaching is considered, but the number of years you have been teaching is what counts. They don't consider how well you teach ...[And] if you don't have publications and you don't supervise students, there is no way you can be promoted.

In most cases when people finish their PhDs, they will be very ambitious and would want to become a professor. But there are lots of challenges in the academic arena that might slow them down a little bit. [These are] largely financial.

Interestingly, the time taken to climb the hierarchy from teaching assistant to professor takes an average of about 30 years at Makerere (Rwendeire 2017: 91). On average, the process takes longer at CHUSS (35.4 years) than at any other college at Makerere. Among the colleges included in this study, the process at CAES was quickest (at 27.8 years).³⁹

Publish or perish but don't expect support

In the period 2010 to 2016, academics at Makerere published a total of 7 197 pieces of work (Rwendeire 2017: 28). The breakdown of publications by academics at the colleges included in our study in the same period was as follows: 1 547 at CAES (by 154 authors), 329 at CEDAT (by 137 authors), 78 at SoL (by 30 authors), and 700 at CHUSS (by 323 authors) (Rwendeire 2017: 172).⁴⁰ Based on these figures, CAES contributed 21 per cent of the research output of the university over this period. In general, the science-based colleges dominate research space and output at Makerere, with the fields of medicine, natural science and agriculture being the most productive. As measured by peer-reviewed publications, the social sciences and humanities appear to be the least productive (Bisaso 2017: 457; Rwendeire 2017: 34). In terms of citations, by 2017, the Scopus Citation Index indicated that research output from Makerere was being cited in about a thousand

publications per year (cited in Rwendeire 2017: 34). The majority (approximately 43 per cent) of citations were of publications by the College of Health Sciences.⁴¹

Most of our informants reported that they had published at least one book, article or report in the preceding few years. However, many also stated that much of their writing ends up in desk drawers, tentative and unfinished because of a lack of the kind of collegial support usually found in doctoral-writing support groups in many universities around the world. Several informants described the publishing process as challenging for a number of reasons: journal editors and publishing houses take a long time to respond to submissions; it can be expensive to publish in international journals; and local journals face such resource challenges that they often function poorly. But again, most informants listed teaching loads and the need to take on additional consultancy work as the primary obstacles to getting research papers into published form.

Most informants were keen to publish in African journals and publishing houses, indicating that they see it as more relevant to publish the work where the knowledge had evolved and was written for. As one respondent put it: ‘the knowledge will be consumed here’. However, several informants also expressed a desire to publish with international journals and publishers, acknowledging that international attention is necessary not only for advancing in their careers but also for purposes of networking and academic upliftment through the sharing of knowledge. One informant noted:

My bias is towards international publishing. Yes, I mean we have sources where we can publish in Uganda, but my bias is more to international ... International publishing is more visible. If you publish in a Ugandan journal...the access people have to those publications is limited. But if the publication is international then access is basically worldwide...I find my bias more towards international publishing rather than national publishers. So, it is really a matter of choice.

Even so, many of those who said they would prefer to publish in international journals ended up with African journals (notably the *Journal of Modern African Studies*, and the *African Journal of Public Administration and Management*) or publishing houses (Fountain Publishers and Africa World Press). Of the international publishers, Lambert Academic and Springer were mentioned. No informants said that publishing had been part of their doctoral training or a requirement on the path towards obtaining a PhD.

Community outreach and consultancy

As noted in previous chapters, a key to neoliberal ideas about knowledge is that its value is related primarily to its usefulness to the economy. Increasingly, this idea has been ‘transformed’ into the yet more functional notion that professors must demonstrate their usefulness, not only by creating critical understandings among their students of what constitutes a given practice, but also by participating in active practice outside of the university. Community outreach is now understood as one of the ‘missions’ or duties held by universities. Outreach is often linked to other work; at Makerere, for example, outreach has become an integral component of virtually all research projects.

Among our informants, including the deans, few believed that the university had a coherent understanding of community outreach, and many noted that no clear guidelines exist that define what it is and how it should be conducted. Some defined outreach as ‘community interaction’; others saw it as an attempt to change or influence public policy. In broad terms, outreach was understood as ‘working with (and for) communities’ or ‘giving back to society’. Despite the fuzziness of these formulations, academics at Makerere are expected to offer community services relevant to their areas of academic specialisation. One informant described outreach work thus:

The major part of our work as academics is not just to disseminate knowledge, generate knowledge, but we also interact with the community and get the relevance out there

– to cause change. We are really agents of change ... We get down to what we call community outreach. We go out to the communities; we teach the communities, and we help them to sometimes solve [problems using] new technologies ... It is a bottom-up approach. We get to know what the core issues are, return to the universities – and then we get back there [to the community] to create change.

For some, however, outreach has become synonymous with consultancy, and the lines between the two categories are blurred. The vast majority of the academics we spoke to mentioned that Makerere has a strong ‘consultancy culture’. Many consider consultancies a necessity for the extra income that they can generate. An informant at CAES reported that the income generated from consultancies could equal or surpass their (monthly) salary.⁴²

Several informants noted that being employed at Makerere had made them more visible and accessible to external clients and said that Makerere is seen as a pool for consultancy work. At CEDAT, this was especially clear. Some staff even showed us that their business cards include information about their academic and their business roles. Echoing Gibbons et al.’s ideas about Mode 2 knowledge (1994), these academics argued that their consultancy work enabled them to keep in touch with industry and said this was crucial for keeping them relevant as academics to knowledge users. As they saw it, consultancies enabled academics to benefit from Makerere’s reputation while simultaneously enhancing the university’s reputation for relevance. By contrast, academics at CHUSS and CAES acknowledged that consultancy work creates a dilemma for them: ‘either you choose to be a pure academic but lack the necessary income to put food on the table, or you do consultancy work to make more money but gain little recognition for your research’. They explained that consultancy work is seldom published, and the research involved seldom meets the standards required of academic research. In essence, consultancies are so prevalent at Makerere because academics see them as a necessary survival strategy and as part of meeting their obligations in relation to

community outreach. However, this situation is clearly also preventing the emergence of a solid research culture and sound doctoral training. As one informant explained:

So, basically you are limping on as an academic. You cannot survive on the salary, and you end up split between professional academic work and consultancy. So, consultancy means we sell knowledge, get the money and help the client see how they can apply knowledge to their situation. But the problem is that this takes away our time and energy from knowledge production. So, while it is, in a sense, community outreach, it is encroaching on the fundamental role, which is academic work.

One informant pointed out that all external consultancies have to be approved by the university authorities (the principal), and noted that Makerere receives 7 per cent of the resources allocated to the consultant. Thus, the consultancies appear to be helping to fund the university as reward for delivering what Gibbons et al. (1994) described as 'robust knowledge'. Indeed, in 1998, in line with recommendations made by its neoliberal advisors, the university established the Makerere University Consultancy Bureau. According to a World Bank policy brief, the aim was to divert some of the profits from consultancies into the institutions that housed the consultants, thus covering their overheads (World Bank 1999: 6). Makerere's Consultancy Bureau was established as a limited liability company, with individual staff members owning 51 per cent of the shares and the university as an entity owning 49 per cent. As the World Bank reported, the Bureau engaged in merchandising, provided consultancies in a great variety of fields, and set up a database to link consultant skills to task requirements.

It seems, however, that the transformation of Makerere into a consultancy bureau might not have been entirely successful. Very few of our informants confirmed that they had to have their consultancies approved or signed off by any university authority. It is possible,

therefore, that the university is not receiving 7 per cent of the revenue from each contract as envisaged. Our research group was unable to obtain clarity on this but if consultancies are a substantial source of income for the university, the institutional leadership might well be more interested in promoting than limiting them. If this is the case, both individual academics and the university as a whole are promoting and engaging in non-academic duties at the expense of their core roles of teaching, doing research, national and international networking and knowledge transfer, and sustaining the academy.

It was certainly difficult to see if any of the income earned via consultancies was helping reproduce the academic profession through supporting PhD programmes or funding of academic staff development in any way. Instead, donors promoted both the consultancy and took care of the PhD support.⁴³ According to Mamdani (2016a: 118), the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA) has been Makerere University's largest donor. At all the colleges in which we conducted interviews, SIDA was acknowledged as a substantial contributor to research projects and PhD scholarships. Other donors that have funded research at Makerere include Norad, the Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the European Union, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Rockefeller Foundation (Rwendeire 2017: 158).

Another concern is that research grants are more often given to *individual* academics than to academic units (Rwendeire 2017: 177). However, informants noted that donors have certain thematic priorities that seldom coincide with individual academics' own research interests. In this way, donors are seen as defining *what* research is conducted and many informants reported seeing the relevance of knowledge as defined and set by some 'external' entity.

Administrative duties

Our informants understood administration in different ways. Some saw it as: calling or attending meetings at department and school level;

operating as a department head or dean of a faculty; or co-ordinating courses and scheduling exams. However, some also seemed to see ordinary academic work as administrative. This could include: marking and grading assignments and exams, tutoring students, creating timetables and applying for funding. Most said that these tasks take up too much of their time, while a few reported that they did not do any administrative work.

Administrative tasks were seen as necessary for academia to function the way it was supposed to, but no-one saw the accomplishing of administrative duties as part of their career path. Rather, it was interpreted as a threat to the professors' academic future, since it took away time and energy from teaching, research and community outreach. No informants indicated a willingness to take on extra administrative work or responsibilities as a way of increasing their salaries, despite stating that they are not paid enough. Quite a few of the academics we interviewed had previously held positions as heads of departments but did not aspire to do so again because of the heavy administrative burden that comes with the role.

Our informants gave the impression of holding academic values high, and seeing administrative work as supportive of this, rather than as a major part of their work. By contrast, many other neoliberal universities tend to blur the boundaries between academic, administrative, management and leadership roles. This does not (yet) seem to have occurred at Makerere, indicating that, despite resource difficulties, its academic staff do share a common value system (linked to the CUDOS principles mentioned in Chapter 2), whereby the administrative systems and departments should be led by academics, not the other way around.

Restructuring and the formation of colleges from 2011

Mittelman (2018) found that a turning point at Makerere was the conversion to the college system in 2011. A committee, headed by Edward Kirumira (who was principal of CHUSS from 2013 to 2019)

and with the support of Norad, drafted a report that was approved by the University Council in 2005, which

called for a three-level structure; central administration, colleges and departments. It also contained provision for mergers, resource allocation, and implementation. In this system there would be no deans. But some units were ill-disposed to couple with others – to enter ‘forced marriages’ as one Makerere professor quipped. (Mittelman 2018: 187)

A second committee, chaired by Barnabas Nawangwe (Makerere’s vice-chancellor at the time of our study) and partly funded by SIDA, then planned for the full implementation,

with allowance for amendments of the proposed restructuring by 2013. The deanships would be retained for the purpose of co-ordinating and managing departments and operate in conjunction with department heads. Deans, though, should not handle finances which were to be vested in colleges and their principals. (Mittelman 2018: 187)

The restructuring process changed the institution from being faculty-based to college-based, with the stated aim of enhancing the university structurally, administratively and pedagogically, thus enabling the campus to fulfil its mission set out in the *Strategic Plan 2008/09–2018/19* (Makerere University 2008a; see also Rwenduire 2017). The restructuring involved all colleges, schools, institutes and departments. Ten colleges were established, all of which offer degrees, diplomas and certificates, and enjoy semi-autonomous academic, administrative and financial status.⁴⁴ The schools, mostly fall under the colleges, and engage in teaching, learning, as well as partnerships for research, knowledge and technology transfer. Institutes are generally units within the colleges that are exclusively research based, while departments are units within schools that deal with the core functions of teaching, learning and research in a particular discipline; they

should have at least one programme leading to the award of a degree. Finally, under some colleges, centres are units that largely undertake outreach and set up partnerships for knowledge transfer, (although the term is sometimes used to refer to units that are predominantly involved in research rather than outreach) (see Rwendeire 2017: 55).

Among the assumptions made was that the newly established colleges would have a greater degree of institutional autonomy, and that individuals within the colleges would have more influence in decision-making regarding administration, finance and programme development (Mittelman 2018). Decisions related to student admission, staff recruitment and financial management would still be made centrally. This swung the power base within the institution towards its bureaucratic systems. The restructuring also favoured notions that knowledge is relevant only when it can be put to use. According to the report of the Visitation Committee (Rwendeire 2017), the restructuring had several limitations and weaknesses. These included: creating additional layers of bureaucracy and attendant costs without providing added value to the decision making; failing to lighten the burden of the senate (which has to approve the results submitted by approximately a hundred academic departments every semester) or to reduce political peddling within the colleges when they elect department heads, deans and principals. As Mittelman (2018: 176) observed:

The market model heightened competition and sparked conflicts between Makerere's central administration and its academic units as well as among the units. The struggles were primarily over money, as in the clash between Makerere University and its Business School initially concerning who would control lucrative MBA programmes.

Although one would expect such a radical restructuring process to have affected academics and their working conditions, none of our informants referred to these structural changes in our interviews. When informants described their relationships with administrators

at Makerere, we detected a balance of power that tends to favour management and its administrative support structure. While most of the academics we interviewed agreed that a clear division of labour between the administration and academics is necessary, a lack of trust and suspicion appeared to haunt both sides. Few academics see the administration as valuing academic work highly enough. Instead, they argue that administration focuses too narrowly on the university budget, allocating these meagre resources in ways that tend to preclude academic influence. Some even argued that a hierarchy exists in which the academic staff are at the tail end and the administration are in charge.

Despite the fact that university leaders constantly express pride in the university's academic track record, they lean towards managerialism and a concentration of power in ways that keep them out of touch with academic staff. Several informants said they are treated as if they are 'the little ones', and are generally ignored or overlooked by the administration. Unless they hold an important position, such as head of department, ordinary lecturers are seldom noticed.

While informants hardly referenced the 2013 restructuring process, they did say that the divisions between academics and management deepened with the implementation of the neoliberal reforms. The prevailing view was that, in a context of resource failure and scarcity, the administration chose to take care of itself. And, instead of tackling corruption, the reforms reportedly escalated the problem. One informant explained:

I don't have a high opinion of the administration, because of the time it takes to get things done ... so salaries are always delayed. Also, you have the levels of corruption – when you know the right people and when you pay the right people, you get things done. The thing that is needed at Makerere is transparency and an efficient bureaucracy. And then it needs the right people, because with the wrong people, things remain the same.

Interestingly, perceptions of the administration were more positive at CAES than at the other colleges. Some CAES informants even suggested that the administration should increase its involvement by monitoring academics, and holding them accountable for research, teaching and outreach activities. This is interesting, because informants from all the other colleges reported that the administration interferes in academic matters. The following comment epitomises a view we heard quite often:

The administrative staff are necessary, we need them, they do things that we cannot do, but there has to be a balance. You cannot have very few academic staff, and then [a big] administrative staff. This is a big university, we need them [the administration], they are probably too many, and if they are way too many that means half of them is not doing what they are supposed to be doing. So, we need many people, we need efficient people.

In October 2016, a strike by members of the Makerere University Academic Staff Association was linked to dissatisfaction with salary levels and late payments of incentive bonuses as promised by government. These incentives were introduced in the 2013/2014 academic year, and were meant to consolidate the allowances that academics were earning from teaching evening programmes and to eradicate the indiscriminate distribution of these allowances among lecturers (Mamdani 2016b). At the time of the 2016 strike, incentive payments had been delayed for eight months. On 1 November, by which time students had also begun to strike, the president shut down the university.

To date, almost all strikes by the university's academic staff have been connected to demands for better remuneration (Rwendeire 2017: 6). Recurring at regular intervals over several years, the strikes can be seen as reactions to the neoliberal reform process, where the introduction of fees not only led to increases in student numbers, but also to the expansion of costs beyond what a research university can

manage if it wants to nurture and sustain its academic staff. According to the university's own leadership, the academic staff are expected to be pillars of quality in the provision of higher education (Rwendeire 2017: 73). However, to attract and retain exceptional academics, Makerere will have to provide salaries that are commensurate with their training, skills and workload (Altbach 2013b: 32).

Despite low salary levels, however, most of the academics we spoke to at each of the four colleges said they are motivated primarily by wages or status. While the neoliberal reforms relied on bringing academics in line with notions of how incentives and monitoring govern behaviour, Makerere's academics show strong signs of collegiality. They appeared to be committed to their profession and remained motivated despite their dissatisfaction with their wages. To some degree at least, this ethos overruled the incentives they are being offered to confine their views on relevance mainly to their consultancy work. As Mamdani (2016a: 130) emphasised:

Good teachers never work only for the money, but they must be paid enough to be willing to work with diligence. Teachers are not businesspeople ... The important thing is to reform the motivational structure at Makerere, so it attracts and rewards scholars, and discourages those who are there mainly for the money. For a start, this would mean paying meaningful salaries for teaching and research work.

PART II

TALKING WITH THE MAKEREREIANS

4

Meeting the deans, establishing a baseline for our study

Makerere is located in a country and on a continent that is in the midst of a rapid and uneven transition from agrarian to industrial modes of production. The university is linked to a regime that is more concerned about maintaining its own power and control than with helping the whole country to flourish. Accordingly, the state invests more in its soldiers than its professors, and generally prefers to consult foreign experts (usually recommended by donors or other foreign agencies) rather than find or support the development of local expertise. As noted in Part I, Uganda's regime has long been strongly moulded by the influence of the World Bank and the Washington Consensus (Wiegratz et al. 2018), which wield their powers more through the use of generalised myths (about what economic development is and how much they control it) than on the basis of any real knowledge of the complex world we share.⁴⁵ One such myth is that maintaining social order to ensure stability for financial investment justifies protecting regimes such as those led by Uganda's president Yoweri Museveni.

Some readers might expect academics in Uganda to occupy a place among the elite who control the state (and most of the country's wealth). This is not the case. Makerere's early history derives from the country's history as a British colony. Consequently, although those who were teaching on the campus in the 1960s might have been considered potential candidates for a reform-friendly elite, many were, in fact, critical of established knowledge. This critical dimension was of little use to the state, and as neoliberalism took hold in the early 1990s, academic scholarship was increasingly limited to the work of teaching. Today, even this minimised role is often criticised as lacking

in relevance for the world of work. As Mamdani (2007) pointed out, there is little room for scholarship in a marketplace.

Nonetheless, education remains a source of social mobility, and university-based knowledge enjoys a privileged position over other kinds of education. For university leaders at Makerere, the symbolic status of education seems to be their most important source of legitimacy and income. Thus, for many of the deans, the primary relevance of the university is its ability to produce graduates.

One dean from the older generation at first seemed to contest Mamdani's assessment of the detrimental impacts of the World Bank's policies. This individual pointed out that neoliberal reforms had created relationships between the academics and the university management not seen before 2000, and that the two groups had seemed to find a mutually rewarding solution to the financial constraints facing the university:

We entered academia at the time when professors had little status. Conditions were so bad, salaries so low – nothing was attractive. Eminent professors were leaving the universities. After 2000, things started to change mainly because fees [meant] more money and less reliance on government. Also, staff were allowed to make some small money on the side.

It is true that, after 2000, the introduction of student fees and rapid increases in student numbers meant that the university and its academic staff received a share of this new income stream. At the start of the 2002/2003 academic year, total student enrolment at Makerere was approximately 26 000. By the 2018/2019 academic year, the university had 34 566 registered students. (Of these, 28 366 were responsible for paying their own fees and 6 200 students had scholarships from the government.) Over the ten-year period, from 2009/2010 to 2018/2019, the total number of registered students grew by 4 per cent each year (Makerere University 2010: 11; 2019: 20–21).

The same dean argued that the reduction in dependence on the state has been beneficial for both the university and the academic

profession, noting that this allows greater space for ‘autonomy’ and ‘academic freedom’. Most important for this dean, however, was the fact that many academics had been able to upgrade their qualifications and skills. That is, the university had used the extra income to

come up with a scheme to sponsor staff to pursue further studies [including PhDs and to set up] ... staff development schemes ... Most of us that now are deans are the ones who benefitted. [This] created a new crop of leaders who are relatively young. This is what made me hopeful.

However, the dean then went on to point out that these improvements had been short lived. The reforms proved to be a Trojan horse: small increases in income meant that some funding was available for academic staff who wanted to study further, as the dean explained, ‘the frustrating bit is that the university has not been able to support research’. After some time, most of the academic staff found that their time was completely swamped by the work of teaching the ever-increasing student numbers. This soon undermined the ability of academics at Makerere to do their own research and to pursue their own master’s and doctoral studies, especially internally. As another dean noted:

In the end the research we do here is mainly through individuals who apply for very competitive research funding from outside organisations, like OSSREA [Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa] or CODESRIA [Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa]. Mainly this is where our staff have put in their applications. [This is a] tragedy because we have our own ideas which we promote, but nothing [is supported]. The explanation is that the funding that comes is based on external priorities. Only in former times did the government send free money. Now it is tailored to, for example, the ‘Presidential Initiative on Science and Technology’.⁴⁶ This is affecting areas where there is no government attention. [At]

the College of Humanities and Social Sciences [CHUSS], we are losing out the whole time.

Thus, additional income mobilised in the early 2000s was gradually channelled away from academic upliftment and into expanding and upgrading the university management and administration. It did not take long for the alliance between the academic profession and the university to fail, leaving ever-greater gaps and internal divisions between the two.

As Mamdani (2007) pointed out, the university's research activities were heavily compromised as the power moved from the academics to the management. Those academics who had managed to quickly upgrade their skills were left with little time and fewer avenues to put their newly acquired competencies to use. Several of the deans confirmed that the rapid growth in teaching load was decisive in the failure of the neoliberal reforms to deliver ongoing benefits. The allocation of more students per lecturer, for the sake of 'throughput' and income, led to the collapse of proper doctoral training. The reproduction of the academic profession through the ongoing recruitment of doctoral candidates stagnated, thus shattering one of the academic profession's defining roles: the raising of new generations of critical and independent thinkers. The deans named this as an 'insidious problem' that reduced the quality of teaching on the campus:

The new generation, despite its research orientation, found no room for anything but teaching. And [this] continues today.

This problem was not unique to Makerere. Similar issues have perhaps been reported most in the UK (see Collini 2017). What was specific to Makerere, however, was the way in which the availability of additional income initially convinced academics to believe that the reforms were improving their own life chances. As their expectations gradually faded, most academics acknowledged that the reforms were preventing them from even 'reproducing themselves' properly (by producing PhD graduates in sufficient quantities). As the only profession that fully

controls its own recruitment, the process of securing future scholars, from the day students register in first year to the day they graduate with a PhD, is crucial. At Makerere, several deans expressed concerns that many of the current academic staff would perhaps more accurately be described as educators than as academics. As one dean told us:

[We have] no time to mentor the new staff towards research.
 [They get] no time to learn what being an academic is all about ... [and we have] no time to be role models. So, it is right to call them teachers.

The deans who have been at Makerere since the early days of the reform process gave the impression of professionals in crisis. They seemed distressed at having been led into a deal with the university to share in a new income stream, and having helped to create PhD programmes to enhance staff opportunities, only to find themselves and their colleagues struggling with massive teaching loads. Based on long-term experience, they explained that universities that support their academic staff are characterised by their ability to continually transform the foundations of their knowledge on the basis of new knowledge that can be considered more truthful. The deans conceded that, at Makerere, the space for this ongoing transformation has largely vanished.

To address this situation, the deans offered various suggestions, none of which involve continuing with the reform process. They mentioned the usual list of requirements that universities in low-income countries often plead for: better-resourced laboratories and libraries, additional research funding, and wages for academics that indicate an appreciation of their skills and support a reasonable standard of living. Equally high on the list for the deans we interviewed were: addressing the tensions between academics and the university's managers and administrators; improving the wages and working conditions of administrators so that the three groupings can collaborate to prioritise the university's research role. Embedded in all of these suggestions was an urgent sense that support for quality doctoral education would be key to resurrecting respect for the

academic profession in Uganda.

However, the deans we spoke to also noted that, behind the scenes, a professional solidarity had gradually emerged to divide various disciplines. Following international trends, they indicated that the propensity of donors and others to favour the fields of science and engineering means that these now tend to represent a counterforce to the humanities and the social sciences (see also Mamdani 2007). Perhaps predictably, the views of these two blocs on the strategy of 'funding by numbers', and the question of whether external donors, local actors, or individual academics should set research agendas, have evolved very differently. One dean described how this had impacted on the financial system:

Originally, each unit shared student fees with the central administration. Now all money goes to the centre, and [it then] distributes [this] according to the staff complement. Originally, the humanities got a lot (five times more than they get now) but, after the rearrangement, income was distributed to all the staff of the university. [This was] agreed upon after a strike about pay; it was part of the settlement with management.

Accordingly, the deans' desire for unity across the academic profession as a whole, and in alliance with the university management, encountered difficulties when it came to implementation. Furthermore, in terms of on-campus work, say the deans, all that is left is the right and duty to assign, correct and grade assignments and exams. Given the university leadership's failure to create working conditions at Makerere that are worthy of the skills inherent in the academic profession, many of its academics have been reduced to playing the role of 'knowledge workers' (Gibbons 1998). Ultimately, it seems that researchers – to be, or feel, relevant – have taken their skills off campus, into the business or NGO worlds, and to a lesser extent into government and multilateral agencies.

The consequences for how PhD candidates are recruited, and how these candidates then select research topics is seldom debated or reflected on. Instead, the idea that ‘a good project for a client could also become a PhD’ seems to have taken root. While the recycling of reports into PhDs might produce some quality research, this seems unlikely if the professors have no time to help shape project conceptualisation or the interpretation of data.

As the deans noted, knowledge has always been a product of communal work – humans rely on one another to sustain the constant exchange of ideas and findings. Knowledge should not be owned and turned into property that is either sold or kept hidden behind legal barriers. Instead, knowledge should be used to expand and enhance public space. This communal space must also be the basis for the role of the academics as experts. One dean, who described life on campus as ‘running from one small NGO project to the next without ever being linked to one in particular’, told us that:

As individuals our research identity is growing, but everyone is individually oriented. Everybody is working for themselves, on their secret laptops. High levels of secrecy, more secrecy than collaboration [prevails ... The] most important change in promoting academic identity, [would be to] change the way research grants are awarded, [and] also make them more equally shared. [We must] get away from how the donors cling to one person – [their] ‘donor darlings’ – again and again. They are part of the system but keep working secretly. That is killing research ... I would also change the isolation of academic life to create more public [intellectuals]. Professors should give public talks, and develop a new spirit in academic debates. Because of this secrecy people do not want to present [their work], even seminars are dying now...[A new spirit would] encourage flows of ideas across both students and academics, and [allow] ideas to flow more freely. [But we have] no forums for academic discussion.

What this seems to imply is that academic leadership at Makerere is collapsing, and that the autonomy achieved when the institution first decreased its reliance on state funding has spawned a new form of power that is based on alliances between the state and the university leadership around the availability of funds. A lack of space for academic discourse – ‘even the seminars are dying’ – is reinforced by the ways in which academic freedom is limited (internally and through consultancies) to exploring only topics that are considered relevant for economic growth. As one dean put it:

[There is] no institutional autonomy. The government has a lot of indirect influence. They use the wage bill to arm-twist academics [into a] beggar–master relationship [that is] over-regulated by finances.

As we explore in later chapters, the deans also pointed out that the knowledge that academics at Makerere try to develop seems to matter little to those in government or to the country’s political leaders. A dean of one of the science faculties argued that politicians and policy-makers have too little contact with academics at Makerere. Academics at CHUSS emphasised this too, with one observing that the idea that academics provide ‘evidence-based advice [is] not true [in Uganda because the policy-makers] do not involve the professors’.

Makerere’s academics have not yet lost all of their power, however. The most crucial tool of professional autonomy – control over who is recruited into their ranks – remains in their hands. As one academic affirmed, ‘appointments are ok, still transparent and controlled by academics’. How this power might erode given that the quality of the doctoral training available on campus is poor, and could thus repel the better candidates, was a concern for all the deans. A comment made repeatedly was that the doctoral candidates recruited are seldom the best but often the most affluent. In the words of one of the deans: ‘People can pay their way into a PhD programme, and it is difficult to show professional resistance to this recruitment.’

Our overall impression from interviewing the 12 deans was that,

as an institution, Makerere is still in transition from a public-funding to a mixed-funding model and is still influenced by the neoliberal reforms that propelled it into this change. The insights provided by the deans indicated that the reforms are directly linked to a decline in the quality, authority and autonomy of the university's academic staff. Moreover, this decline is specifically related to the university's failure to facilitate an enabling and generative environment for doctoral education and training.

As Mamdani (2007) showed, when public universities, such as Makerere, were made into private providers of educational services – and were rendered subject to a new matrix of (public and private) contractual arrangements – an increase in the delivery of quality education that the World Bank promised, proved elusive (Halvorsen 2016). In fact, educational quality declined. The massive increase in student numbers saw overworked lecturers delivering inferior and undemanding course material for the sake of student throughput. In an analysis of 'Academic dilemmas under neoliberal education reforms' at Makerere, Quintas Oula Obong's (2004: 118) asked:

In light of the fact that the reforms have yielded spectacular increases in the university's revenue, why have they not translated into a generally improved quality of teaching, learning, and scholarship? What explains the paradoxical situation in which there is a growth of institutional revenue on the one hand, and deterioration in academic standards and scholarship on the other? More specifically, why have the faculty not influenced the reforms towards the improvement of academic standards and quality of scholarship, but instead responded in ways not too different from university administrators and politicians? ... These reforms have profound implications for the purpose and function of the university as well as the configuration of power between the faculty and academic managers, which in turn impacts directly on the quality of teaching, research and scholarship.

At Makerere, resistance to the reforms seems to have been weak, or rather to have weakened as the year 2000 approached, when the World Bank bragged about Makerere being a model African university in its report, *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*.⁴⁷ In 1987, after a ‘donor conference’ was held to agree on a framework for bringing Makerere under the control of World Bank representatives, Carol Sicherman (2005) and Frederick Byaruhanga (2012) recorded another wave of protests by both staff and students. One of these protests ended tragically when ‘police killed two students on campus’ (Sicherman 2005: 262). Since then, strikes over insufficient wages as well as freezes in salary levels and allowances have occurred on almost annual basis; the main demands have been for increases in salaries and bonuses. Nevertheless, at the time of writing, academic salaries still failed to meet staff demands for a living wage. In 2019 and 2021, Uganda’s nine public universities held national strikes, demanding that government deliver on a promise it had made in 2015 to increase staff salaries at all public universities (Kamunyu 2021; Mukhaye 2019; Mukhaye and Atukunda 2018; Mukhaye and Kasozi 2019; Musinguzi 2016b; Tusiime 2016; URN 2017).

Other strikes have highlighted academics’ concerns about the reform process. In March 2014, for example, academic staff at CHUSS downed tools to protest against the college system (Talemwa and Kamugisha 2014), and in May 2017, the Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA) protested against the selection of principals and deputy principals, noting that the process disenfranchised their members, denying them the right to vote for their leaders. They demanded the introduction of a transparent process instead (Okoth 2017). Similarly, in December 2018, MUASA demanded that three government representatives on the university council should be replaced as the incumbents had held their positions for over eight years (Aine 2018). In 2019, MUASA also challenged the appointment of two members of the university council, which, the association said, flouted the university’s own rules. The national strike of 2019 followed the irregular dismissal of Dr Deus Kamunyu Muhwezi, the chairperson of MUASA from both the union and his position on the

staff of the university. He was suspended by the management for 'continuing to engage in acts that amount to misconduct ... incitement with the intent to cause disobedience and/or strike to undermine the university administration' (Ampurire 2019b). Muhwezi was also accused of 'engaging in acts that bring the university and the university officials into disrepute' (Ampurire 2019a), while Bennet Magara and Kalema Joseph, the chairperson and general secretary respectively of the Makerere Administrative Staff Association (MASE), were also suspended (Ampurire 2019b).

On the whole, the strikes and protests seem to have done little to restore academics' authority within the institution. Arguably, they may even have contributed to what one journalist described as a 'culture of chaos' (Nassaka 2016). For ABK Kasozi (2016b), the strikes are just the tip of an iceberg, and indicative of much larger problems with the governance model that enables the state to exert ultimate control over Uganda's higher-education sector. We touch on this topic again in Part III.

5

Engineering knowledge and innovation for development

While the overarching question of this book is to explore *who has defining powers over the relevance of academic knowledge, and how this power affects the academic profession*, this chapter explores the case of academics at Makerere's College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT). Our particular focus is on the School of Engineering (SoE). In this chapter, we discuss how the neoliberal reform process has unfolded here, and how its academics understand their role in defining the relevance of their role and their knowledge, in relation to both the engineering profession and the wider society.

In *Scholars in the Marketplace*, Mamdani (2007) suggested that the then Faculty of Technology (FoT) (now the SoE) had resisted the reform process. We suggest, instead, that the reforms simply took a different form, and that the question of how relevance is defined is therefore as topical here as it is for the other colleges. Over the years, the engineering and science disciplines have moved closer to one another. This is particularly so since engineering became a university discipline and many technical colleges have been upgraded into universities. Consequently, when it comes to knowledge policy, science and technology are increasingly referred to as if they form a single body of knowledge. Nevertheless, science and engineering remain distinct and different, with engineering degrees, for example, oriented towards a specific profession, and the focus of engineering curricula is to highlight the role and relevance of engineers within the broader arena of science and technology. Accordingly, the questions we put to informants at Makerere centred on how they see their academic training of engineers as relevant to the future of their students,

particularly those they see as potential PhD candidates but also more generally. We wanted to find out if (and how) they experience any conflict between their role as university-trained experts – who expect, and are expected, to use knowledge independently – and the demands of their professional working lives in practice?

We begin by providing a brief history of current trends in engineering education in Uganda. We then outline the influence of Gibbons' concept of Mode 2 knowledge in displacing the relevance of academic knowledge and the role of academics in defining what knowledge is relevant. The discussion that follows centres on the tendencies, challenges and (internal) disputes evident in the SoE, and how these relate to the world outside of campus. The fundamental questions of our study as applied to this context are: how the university's neoliberal orientation has shifted academic control over disciplinary discourse in this particular school; and how this might be changing the ways in which engineers are being educated, the research that is being conducted, and the ethics that researchers hold dear. We then reflect on the consequences of these changes for broader academic autonomy and relevance to society.

Engineering education

The engineering profession, like other professions, is based on specialised education and training that enables those who qualify to provide professional advice and services. Engineering academics conduct research and develop new knowledge within the discipline in addition to educating the next generation of engineers. The title 'engineer' is not protected, meaning there is not a one-to-one relation between the title and a specific qualification. Completing a course at a technical college can confer the title of engineer; and in some cases, the title also can be acquired through practice. In most countries, universities add to the title of engineer to indicate that a field of specialisation had been studied. This is so, for example, at the SoE, where students must choose to enrol for one of three engineering degrees: civil and environmental, electrical and computer, or mechanical.

At the time of writing, the universities of Mbarara, Kyambogo and Busitema as well as Makerere, constituted the core of the teaching, learning and research in engineering in Uganda (Lugujjo 2010). Makerere was originally established as a technical school in 1922, and courses in engineering were offered from the very beginning (Sicherman 2005). However, in 1969, the education and training of graduate engineers was formalised in Uganda with the opening of the FoT and the establishment of the Engineers Registration Board (ERB) as the statutory authority under the Engineers Registration Act of 1969.

Constructing a discipline-based engineering degree

The FoT's very first intake in 1970 consisted of 26 students in the three areas of civil, electrical, and mechanical engineering. Other faculties later established graduate level engineering programmes as well.⁴⁸ Back in the late 1960s, however, the establishment of the FoT was driven by demand from industries in the region for a more skilled workforce. At the time, most engineers were graduates of the University of Nairobi in Kenya, and the Ugandan government wanted to establish a local training programme for engineers. For its first 16 years, the FoT was supported by the UNDP and UNESCO, which provided expatriate staff, student scholarships, laboratory equipment and textbooks.⁴⁹ The basic degree programmes remained unchanged until 1995, when it was resolved that three separate departments would be set up (civil, electrical and mechanical), and students had to apply to be admitted directly into one of the three. As noted, these same three departments still exist in the SoE.

At the time of writing, the *civil* engineering programme included courses in transportation infrastructure construction and management, water-infrastructure management, building management, public health infrastructure, environmental and geotechnical engineering, as well as surveying. The *electrical* engineering programme covers the study and application of electricity, electronics and electromagnetism, computer engineering, and telecommunications engineering. The *mechanical* engineering programme focuses on the design, construction

and industrial application of mechanics in the production of tools and machinery.

As the description of these three sub-divisions makes clear, the engineering profession has myriad links with the world of work. Its role in public sector infrastructure is crucial, both for the safe and systematic development of large grid systems for water and electricity, roads, and telecommunication, as well as for a number of smaller public services, such as monitoring quality and safety when new homes or shops are built. The profession also has a particular role in relation to production, and expectations are that it will continually help to refine and improve industrial development over the longer term. Engineers often find themselves torn between the need to profit in the short term and the long-term transformation of the technical basis of the economy, and between small incremental refinements versus the needs for the transformation of largescale systems that demand a long view of time and require forward planning.

In line with the global neoliberal drive to privatise and marketise higher education, the number of tertiary institutions in Uganda has increased rapidly since the early 1990s. In 1969, Makerere was Uganda's only university; by 2020 the country had over 200 tertiary institutions, many of which are private. Until the early 1990s, the government subsidised most students in higher-education institutions, but this has since changed greatly. Nowadays, Uganda has more private universities and fee-paying university students than ever before (Matovu 2018).

The growth in private providers has impacted on Makerere as a 'competitive force', pushing its science-based education curricula towards an increasingly market-defined relevance. At the same time, the absence of quality control mechanisms and academic oversight is increasing levels of risk in various contexts. While the National Council for Higher Education is responsible for licensing private universities and sets academic and management standards for all universities in Uganda, the ERB regulates and controls the country's engineers and their activities, while also advising the government on the engineering sector. With the increasing demand for higher education,

some institutions are offering courses that have not been accredited by the ERB, leaving students with useless qualifications and massive debts (*Daily Monitor* 2019). Students who obtain engineering degrees from unaccredited institutions are not able to register to practice in Uganda. Even so, the number of fraudsters working in the profession is steadily increasing, as are incidents in which buildings and other structures collapse (*Daily Monitor* 2018).

In the 1996/1997 academic year, Makerere registered its first fee-paying students in undergraduate engineering programmes. This led to the student intake doubling over the next few years. For Mamdani (2007), the intake of student fees heralded the very first of the neoliberal, market-based reforms that overtook the institution in the 1990s. As noted earlier, this intake occurred after public funding for higher education declined sharply.

Neoliberal reforms and the Faculty of Technology

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Wendy Brown (2015) has argued that neoliberalism is best understood, not simply as an economic policy but as a governing rationality that disseminates market values and metrics to every sphere of life and construes humans exclusively as ‘homo oeconomicus’. In line with the notion that all aspects of society can and should be organised along market principles, neoliberal governments often reduce public spending, deregulate cross-border trading and privatise public domains such as higher education. Accordingly, the reforms at Makerere were part of a broader liberalisation and reorientation of the Ugandan economy towards global markets. Although initially not interested in embracing these policies, the Ugandan government ultimately accepted loans from the IMF and the World Bank, as well as the structural adjustment programmes they imposed. As Mittelman (2018) put it, from 1987, these Washington-based institutions registered as ‘true north’ on Uganda’s higher-education policy compass.

One of the conditions imposed was that the government should reduce funding for higher education and shift state funds from higher to

primary education, because providing universal primary education was understood as the key strategy for poverty reduction. Consequently, during the 1990s, the university suffered from a drastic reduction in state funding that translated into a financial crisis at Makerere (Mamdani 2007). Before the university reforms, Makerere was purely publicly funded. By 1999, however, over 80 per cent of the students were fee paying, and this income accounted for more than half of the university's total revenue (Musisi and Muwanga 2003). The mass entry of fee-paying students took its toll, not only on the infrastructure of the university, but also on the research activities of academic staff. With the increase in the teaching load, research became an impossible endeavour for many of Makerere's academics (Musiige and Maassen 2015).

As Mamdani (2007) pointed out, the neoliberal reforms at Makerere had two drivers: privatisation and commercialisation. It can be argued that, by opening up to fee-paying students, privatisation can still be compatible with a public university as long as priorities are publicly set. However, commercialisation inevitably leads to the priorities being determined by the market. Makerere was no exception; commercialisation shifted the content of the courses offered so as to attract higher numbers of students, which in turn meant more income from fees. Moreover, Mamdani argued that the reforms and their consequences unfolded differently in different faculties. For example, he argued that the arts faculty was able, in many cases, to simply take any arts subject, link this to a skill that was in demand and teach the combination as a single course. Courses such as Religious Studies and Conflict Resolution, Geography and Tourism, Linguistics and Secretarial Studies, History and Development, Philosophy and Public Management emerged. Although revealing a market-orientation, these new combinations were argued to be both more relevant and interdisciplinary. At the FoT however, Mamdani showed that academics were more reluctant to adapt to the reforms and refused to take this route. They also refused to subordinate their research to the increased teaching load. Many FoT academics argued that adopting a market orientation was a source of new problems, rather

than an answer to the funding crisis. When they were then accused of prioritising donor-funded research projects, faculty members firmly stated that ‘the mission of the faculty was to teach and carry out research, and everything else was secondary’ (Mamdani 2007: 101). However, as discussed later in this chapter, we argue that reform did take hold at the SoE, but that it manifested in different forms when compared to the other colleges.

Knowledge production and the role of academics

Before returning to our study of the SoE, we introduce two concepts that guide our understanding of the role of its academic staff. Both concepts seek to describe a change in the role of universities and academics, but they also illustrate a shift in perceptions of the role of the academic profession and its role in defining the relevance of academic knowledge. In line with the neoliberal ideologies that underpinned the reforms at Makerere, both concepts are characterised by an instrumental and linear understanding of knowledge and knowledge development that is strongly influenced by a neoliberal perception of the role of the academic profession.

In the book, *The New Production of Knowledge* (Gibbons et al. 1994), and its sequel, *Rethinking Science: Knowledge and the Public in an Age of Uncertainty* (Nowotny et al. 2001), Gibbons and his colleagues describe a shift in how knowledge is produced in contemporary societies and argue that this new way of producing knowledge is moving the responsibility for determining the relevance of academic knowledge beyond the academic community. They argue that this new form of knowledge production, which they call ‘Mode 2 knowledge’, is emerging alongside traditional, disciplinary ‘Mode 1 knowledge’.⁵⁰ They then suggest that the production of knowledge is in transition, and that that the ways in which scientific knowledge, technical practices, industries, education and society at large are now organised and function, contrasts sharply with how these were arranged in the past (Gibbons et al. 1994). They note that this shift affects not only *what* knowledge is produced but also *how* knowledge is produced,

organised and rewarded, *who* is involved in its production, and *where* it is pursued. The main change for universities, they suggest, is that knowledge production and dissemination are no longer primarily carried out within the relative isolation of research institutions, but that these activities now necessarily involve and require interaction with a variety of other kinds of knowledge producers.

For Gibbons et al. this shift affects all the academic disciplines. They suggest that Mode 2 knowledge emerges from a range of concerns that are broader than those usually considered within a purely academic approach. The primary aim of Mode 2 knowledge production is to be useful and profitable to industry, government or society, and organised around a particular application. In theory, this means that the knowledge develops within a framework of ongoing negotiation, and will not be produced unless, and until, the interests of the various actors are included. Gibbons et al. (1994) assert that growing awareness about the variety of ways in which advances in science and technology can affect the public has increased the number of groups trying to influence the outcome of research processes, and that this makes Mode 2 science more *socially accountable*. They argue that this is reflected not only in the interpretation and diffusion of research findings, but also in the definition of research problems and the setting of both research and policy agendas.

As the nature of the two modes of knowledge production are different, criteria for assessing the quality of the knowledge that is produced also differ. In Mode 1 research, peer-reviews are an essential aspect of quality control. The selection of those considered to be competent to act as peer-reviewers is, in part, determined by the contributions they have already made to the development of the discipline (Gibbons et al. 1994). In Mode 2 research, a range of intellectual inputs are solicited, along with inputs from groups that might have social, economic or political interests in the results. Questions as to whether any proposed solution will be competitive in the market, as well as socially (and politically) acceptable become central to processes of quality control and evaluation.

Universities worldwide, argued Gibbons et al. (1994), are based

on Mode 1 knowledge production, and their disciplinary structure has translated into a specific organisational form, with segmented departments defining administrative units for academic work and minimal co-operation between them or with other institutions and knowledge producers (see also Gibbons 1998). However, it can be argued that the concept of Mode 2 knowledge was introduced in an attempt to describe the already contracting role of universities, and to illustrate the shifting perceptions of the academic profession and its authority to define the relative value of different kinds of knowledge. As Olssen and Peters (2005) observed, the ascendancy of neoliberalism produced a fundamental shift in the ways in which universities define and justify their institutional existence, and this lent legitimacy to the concepts of Mode 1 and 2 knowledge production within universities themselves.

Olssen and Peters (2005) also pointed out that the traditional academic culture of open intellectual enquiry and debate within and between academics across institutions has been replaced by an emphasis on individual and institutional performativity. This is evident in the importance placed on output and citation measures, strategic planning, performance indicators and academic audits. Universities have become increasingly concerned with their reputations and intolerant of criticism from their staff. In essence, universities have been made accountable in new ways; academics have to demonstrate their usefulness to their institutions – partly by competing effectively in the open market, and thus attracting large numbers of students to their course offerings, and partly by achieving high citation indexes. Student fees now provide the bulk of institutions' core funding, while publication bonuses help supplement salary levels, and external sources of income have to be enticed into funding research.

The recognition of the economic importance of higher education, and the necessity for universities to be economically viable as business entities themselves, has seen initiatives that promote entrepreneurial skills among academics and students, as well as the development of new systems to establish and measure targets. As key drivers of the knowledge economy, universities are strongly encouraged to develop

links with industry and business in joint-venture partnerships. At the same time, increasing recognition of the value of practitioner research and work-based learning is legitimising new forms of knowledge and innovation within universities themselves.

Innovation and the capitalist model of economic growth

The economist Joseph Schumpeter emphasised the role of innovation as the key driver of economic development. He saw innovation as central to the expansion of capitalism, arguing that the introduction of new products, new methods of production, new sources of supply, new markets and new ways to organise business all stimulate consumer demand and lead to economic growth (Fagerberg 2006). In line with Schumpeter, Beckert (2016) argued that innovation has an immense impact on the economic performance of firms, regions and countries by satisfying previously unmet needs and creating new ones.

Schumpeter defined innovation as new combinations of existing resources by entrepreneurs (Fagerberg 2006). These new combinations depend on knowledge production. It is useful to note that approaches and attitudes to innovation differ depending on which of the two modes of knowledge production is pursued. That is, for those in favour of the Mode 1 approach, new knowledge can but might not lead to innovation; for those who prefer the Mode 2 approach, innovation is the central purpose of knowledge production, and the emphasis is on its immediate application. Gibbons et al. (1994) described the process of knowledge production and innovation as linear, suggesting that knowledge producers start by identifying a problem or a need and then systematically seek solutions. Beckert (2016) on the other hand, emphasised the nonlinear and unpredictable nature of innovation, highlighting the underlying uncertainties and noting that no one knows what the precise outcomes will be when research begins. Beckert points out that knowledge developers do not separate means and ends but define these interactively as they frame a problem. What is initially planned as an innovation, might lead to completely different discoveries. Beckert further argued that creativity and imagination

are seldom emphasised in the literature on innovation, and this holds true for Mode 2 knowledge production as well.

As Halvorsen and Vale (2012) have explained, the view that innovation should result in 'products', and that the knowledge arising from product-oriented research is of most value to society, is highly detrimental to research institutions. Universities that adopt this view quickly tend to differentiate between faculties, deploying competitive criteria to determine which ones receive more funding and other resources. This differentiation then disrupts relations between faculties, preventing the advance of collegiality, trust and co-operation, which greatly undermines the creativity of the scholarly project and leads to a general loss of knowledge. Paradoxically, what was meant to foster innovation can produce the opposite result, reducing creativity, blocking pathways to new thinking and ultimately hindering innovation.

The idea that industrial development comes about through access to ever-more sophisticated levels of technology has, together with conceptions of economic growth, underpinned ideas of development for over a century (Trace 2016). The instrumental belief that innovation will lead to economic growth underpins this idea. Reality, as Trace points out, is rather messier. Technology is a product of human interactions, and the use and innovation of technology inevitably reflects the political, social and cultural nature of the societies from which it emerges. Moreover, human beings shape, and are in turn shaped by, technology. The 'messiness' of human interaction and evolution means that technological progress is not as linear as we might like to believe, nor is the social impact of any innovation easy to predict (Trace 2016). Innovation is unpredictable and non-linear and can lead to unforeseen outcomes. Before a new product is successfully introduced to the market, it is impossible to know whether it will be profitable to invest resources in researching it (Beckert 2016). Innovation therefore represents a financial risk that businesses are often reluctant to take. In high-income countries, government funding is considered more 'reliable' and as having the capacity to support research projects even when their outcomes are uncertain (Mazzucato 2015).

National development and industrialisation

According to Stehr (1994), contemporary societies can be referred to as knowledge societies because their constitutive mechanism, or identity, is increasingly knowledge driven. This has been a gradual process through which the defining characteristics of many societies changed from being agrarian to industrial, transforming themselves both culturally and economically in the process. Higher-education institutions and advanced research are considered cornerstones of knowledge societies and knowledge-based economies (Kearney 2009). Following this development, there is a growing consensus among national policy-makers that universities are drivers of economic growth and increasingly universities are expected to play a central role in this development. As the backbone of society's primary knowledge institutions, it is assumed that academics can simply link research and education to innovation (Cloete et al. 2015).

Various studies have pointed to the changing roles played by academics in the increasing orientation of science systems towards strategic goals such as national development plans, and the strong emphasis on relevance of the knowledge produced (see Hessels and Van Lente 2008). However, in most African countries, linking innovation to national development capacity is a relatively recent addition to the discourse on national development (Yakubu 2017). Even so, the idea of linking universities to national development is not new to the continent. The postcolonial ideal for many African universities was to be a 'developmental university', where the institutional mission reflected the broader state goals. What rather seems to be new at this time is the linking of innovation and development, and the strategic role that universities can play in this with regard to the disciplines of science and technology.

The Ugandan government seems to see industrialisation as the engine of the country's development. In the long-term development plan, set out in *Uganda Vision 2040* (NPA 2010), President Yoweri Museveni and his cabinet set targets which show that they expect Uganda to achieve middle-income status by 2040. The official national

vision statement is: ‘A transformed Ugandan society – from a peasant to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years’. The same development plan set the target of increasing the total labour force within the industrial sector and more than halving the percentage of citizens working in agriculture (NPA 2010). Museveni has also clearly stated his strong support for science and technology, urging the youth to pursue higher-education studies within these fields, suggesting that this will eventually enable them to solve the country’s challenges (*Daily Monitor* 2014; Tumushabe 2013). In fact, this vision stands in stark contrast to reality. With an annual per capita GDP of US\$604, Uganda is among the world’s least developed countries according to the OECD (2020). Uganda’s economy depends largely on services, industry and agriculture, with the majority of its workforce employed in the agricultural and service sectors. The industrial sector is dominated by small firms that process agricultural products, although mining and construction companies are perhaps more important. All industrial enterprises depend heavily on imports for basic machinery, spare parts and raw materials, and the larger industries are predominantly foreign owned (Shinyekwa et al. 2016).

Presidential initiatives

The government adopted the country’s first national science, technology and innovation policy in 2009, followed by an implementation plan in 2012. The universities were identified in the plan as key institutions to achieve the overall goal of the policy, which is to: ‘strengthen national capacity to generate, transfer and apply scientific knowledge, skills and technologies that ensure sustainable utilisation of natural resources for the realisation of Uganda’s development objectives’ (MoFPED 2009). In 2016, the government established the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation to ‘provide leadership, an enabling environment and resources for scientific research and knowledge-based development for industrialisation, competitiveness, and employment creation leading to a sustainable economy’ (MoSTI 2017).

Within the higher-education sector, Uganda’s government puts

special emphasis on the potential of the hard sciences (engineers especially) to contribute to industrialisation. The targets set in *Uganda Vision 2040* are closely linked to advances in science and technology. Accordingly, the government has funded research projects at Makerere through its Presidential Initiative on Science and Technology, which ‘supports the university’s main priorities in the area of research and innovation as defined in light of the scientific challenges and identifying role of universities as change agents in the economic development of the country’ (Makerere University 2013: 2).

CEDAT has received funding from the Presidential Initiative for ten research projects, which are referred on the CEDAT website to as: ‘the ten key advanced projects highlight the potential of triggering an innovation process to propel Uganda into a real knowledge economy and the industrial world’. Clearly the college has great expectations of the potential of these projects. One of the projects has developed a prototype for an electric vehicle, the Kiira EV. Besides appearing on the covers of college and university annual reports, the car has received media attention from the *Wall Street Journal*, CNN and *The Guardian* (Bariyo 2015; Kavuma 2011; Said 2015). It has thus become a symbol of modernity as ‘the new face of Africa’s transport’, highlighting national technological advances and the innovative capacity of the university.⁵¹

Research funding and donor domination

The Presidential Initiative, and the regime’s optimism about the potential impact of the initiative on economic growth and industrialisation is an example of the instrumentalist belief that innovations will translate into economic growth. Instead of broadly financing research at Makerere, the Presidential Initiative strategically funds projects aimed at the manufacturing and sale of products that are developed by research institutes outside of college structures. In this way, the political regime is using its own interests and priorities to define what academic knowledge is relevant and worthy of support. Unsurprisingly, several academics interviewed at the SoE said that they would rather see the government funding more research at the

university that is not limited to short-term funding for specific projects only but is also directed towards longer-term research programmes. The views of this informant were echoed by many:

Normally when you are dealing with a [research] project, it takes something like maybe two, three or four years. If, in these years, the finances lapse, then you don't have any more financing to even go and monitor these activities. So, the lack of continuity of projects can be a problem. Well, I could say that is funding, because normally you write a project and, it has a certain limited duration. Maybe, by the time it ends, you haven't got another one. Or you have got another one, but it is in a different field. So, it becomes difficult to continue along the same lines.

Makerere has three main sources of research funding: internally generated funds, government initiatives, and donor funding. Less than 1 per cent of internally generated income is spent on research and innovation (Rwendeire 2017). Government funding is also strictly limited, yet CEDAT is one of three colleges that received funding for research through the Presidential Initiative discussed above. Despite this, most of our informants called on the government to fund more research at the university:

This is a government university; the government is expected to fund special research, to provide resources, but that doesn't seem to be the priority of the government ... The government should take more interest and fund our research. The government does not provide enough money. No, there are donors and the private sector. A lot of research has been supported by the Swedish and the Norwegians, and that has been a big driver on research projects over the years.

As the informants pointed out, foreign donors are the main sources of funding for research at Makerere, with donors funding 80 per cent

of the research at the university. Private donors include, most notably the Carnegie Corporation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Mastercard Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; among the public, bilateral donors are SIDA, Norad, USAID and the EU (Musiige and Maassen 2015). Donor funding is characterised by relatively short-term contracts (usually three to five years), and donors generally fund projects on the basis of their own programmes, interests and ideologies (Musiige and Maassen 2015). Public donors such as SIDA, Norad and USAID support the university significantly via loans for infrastructure development and grants for educational programmes, student scholarships and research projects. For countries such as Sweden, Norway and the US, providing loans and grants to low- and medium-income countries through aid programmes is a foreign-policy issue. Accepting loans and grants requires that Makerere runs financial and other mechanisms to monitor and report on spending and share research evidence and findings from the academics.

Despite all the expressed commitments to the ideals of equal participation and partnership in donor programmes, the structural elements integral to the donor–recipient relationship prevents symmetrical participation by all actors in decision-making processes. For example, CEDAT’s strategic plan for 2011–2018 emphasised that academics affiliated to the college must maintain and sustain ‘donor goodwill, to work hard to satisfy the donors and the stakeholders’ requirements’ (CEDAT 2011a). As pointed out by Göran Hydén (2016), asymmetrical donor partnerships have produced results at the cost of national development for countries in the global South. Many of the academics at the SoE expressed concerns about this situation, noting that most of the available funding for research is linked to conditions that compromise their ability to set their own priorities and to formulate their own research questions. As one informant observed:

In our situation where our research is not defined by ourselves – in other words we don’t have university funding that is available – and they say: ‘ok we want researchers to solve this problem’. We are somehow tied because we do not

have funds so that we decide what we should do. Somehow this is influenced by the people who fund us. If you write a proposal and it is not fitting within a certain core, it is not going to be funded.

Another informant was particularly concerned about the lack of public funding and the consequent absence of a national research agenda with clear priorities. This individual argued that donors not only dominate but set research agendas, and that they therefore put what they see as global priorities over national interests:

Personally, I think there are global interests in certain areas. If I could think right now, I would say renewable energy, in the area of water and environment, in the area of health and safety, in the area of biomedical engineering, in the area of food security. That is what seems to be driving most of the research funding that is coming to us. Now, the area of manufacturing I think is a local interest, for us to improve our GDP. For us to basically develop as a nation we need manufacturing. But I think most of the funding, maybe 70 per cent, does not come from Uganda. So, this is our interest, but I think the government should fund the areas where its interests are, such as manufacturing ... But most of our funding, even for our research, our PhD research, has not come from government. So, they have limited control over which direction it takes.

Academics thus have little choice but to apply for whatever funding is available and are left with little control over defining the relevance of their knowledge. Another of our informants at the SoE called for more public funding for research to help foster innovation:

When it comes to innovation, when it comes to finding solutions for the problems that communities have, it's an iterative process, which basically means a lot of money is

going to go outside, to waste, as much as you'd want to reduce that. But if you have a directive that says, 'this funding is specifically for this, and at the end of the day you are going to have an output.' In a business sense, that is ok. But in an education scenario, people wouldn't even want to start if, at the end of the day, you're going to tell them they are supposed to produce this [holding up a mobile phone]. And yet, they have to find out the ways of producing this, which requires, and where evidently there will be, mistakes. So, at the end, they shall produce a product that is worth, say, a hundred dollars if they have spent four hundred dollars. But now they can only account, so to speak, for the hundred dollars that is physically embedded in the product that they are producing. No one wants to do that.

As the informant points out, financing research and innovation goes beyond financing a particular end product. For academics to be able to seek and develop new knowledge, and thus innovate, they must also be given opportunities to try and to fail, and to learn from their failures. As in Mode 2 logic, knowledge is assumed to be produced in an applied context, where researchers instrumentally seek solutions to a defined problem. This allows little room for the messy, unpredictable processes that might lead to new understandings and new discoveries. As Mariana Mazzucato (2015) put it, if governments actually want to fund innovation at universities, then governments must prioritise long-term research, allowing academics the space necessary for developing new knowledge.

Financial and political support for higher education and research are widely considered crucial to any country's development, and this support has become even more critical in recent decades, with the growing emphasis on creating knowledge societies (Hydén 2016). What the World Bank (1999) promised would free universities in the South from their dependence on state funding, has led Makerere into a situation in which it is dependent on donor funding to be able to conduct any research at all. According to informants at CEDAT, donor

agencies tend to act more as stakeholders in knowledge production than purely as funding facilitators. In other words, donors play a significant role in setting the terms on which research agendas are agreed and consequently in deciding what issues will be researched and what knowledge will be produced.

While World Bank advisors insisted that less reliance on public funding would free universities from depending on national governments' annual budget allocations and spread an 'entrepreneurial ethos within and beyond university precincts (World Bank 1999: 8), they did not seem to take the need for long-term funding into consideration. Taking the Apple products, such as the iPhone and iPad as examples, Mazzucato (2015) shows that the importance of long-term state funding for innovation is widely underestimated and unacknowledged. She explains that a whole range of general-purpose technologies, which themselves formed platforms for further innovation by Apple, came into existence primarily through state-funded and state-led research and development. Mazzucato goes on to show that Apple was, in fact, more innovative *commercially* than technically, and that its products were based on inventive combinations of already available and largely publicly funded technologies. That is, the products were not the inventions of any single company but were developed because Apple had access to technologies that were developed within major state-funded research programmes.

It seems trite to say that being able to build on existing knowledge is of paramount importance in every successful story of development. However, questions of development cannot be solved solely by importing knowledge. For knowledge to be developed locally, in the context in which it will be applied, the various actors need time and space for the mutual exchange of knowledge (Arocena and Sutz 2010). As Kasozi (2016a: 88) showed, the lack of 'homegrown' African scholars has led donors and others to assume that they can import knowledge and technologies from abroad, with no real consideration for how well this might or might not 'translate' in national or local contexts.

The development of the Kiira electric vehicle is illustrative of innovations that highlight the discrepancies between the kinds of

knowledge produced at university institutes and the needs on the ground in Uganda. Stories depicting the Kiira as ‘the new face of Africa’s transport’ made sensational headlines nationally and internationally. But in a country where 89 per cent of the population *has no access to electricity*, and only 4 per cent of the road network is tarred, this achievement has more symbolic than real value for most Ugandans and seems to be driven by an image of development that is very remote from Uganda as it is now. As Kasozi (2016a) pointed out, scholars who have knowledge and experience of African conditions must be free to produce ‘African-centred’ knowledge, instead of importing so-called universal concepts and models, with consequences that are too often dangerous, laughable or simply irrelevant.

The issue of relevance

In the 1990s reforms at Makerere unfolded under the banners of interdisciplinarity and relevance (Mamdani 2007). Traditionally, the relevance of engineering programmes has been judged according to the appropriateness of the training to meet the needs of the government and wider public service, but the restructuring and privatisation of Uganda’s economy has changed this. Engineering programmes in Uganda are now expected to respond positively and quickly to the demands of industry and the marketplace while simultaneously attracting many students and producing graduates with sufficient flexibility and entrepreneurial skills to create jobs (Lugujjo 2010).

Debates about the modes of knowledge production are closely related to the issue of relevance. A common critique of Mode 1 knowledge production is that universities are ‘ivory towers’, with limited relevance to anyone outside the academic community. Those who favour Mode 2 knowledge production claim that it is more socially accountable and relevant because it is developed in the contexts in which it will be applied. Academics have critiqued this for limiting creativity to the demands of businesses and industry and placing the power to define what constitutes academic knowledge in the hands of those whose interests lie outside of the academy. However, when discussing the issue

of relevance, the modes of knowledge production simply fall short. As an applied science, engineering is and has to a large degree always been dependent on maintaining close relationships and feedback loops with societal actors, especially the relevant industrial sectors. Nevertheless, the power to define what knowledge is relevant in the discipline, and thus set its research agendas, remains at the core of academic work. As pointed out by Halvorsen (2010a), academic autonomy ensures that a variety of knowledges can develop, not through disciplinary isolation (as the Mode 1 model implies) but through a multitude of contacts with society and societal actors. In this way, Halvorsen says, knowledge can develop according to a discipline's internal criteria and remain open to external scrutiny and debate, but also be protected from the external pressures that corporate and political interest groups often try to exert. Halvorsen is not advocating the adoption of Mode 2 approaches; he is rather asserting that alternatives can be found to the problem of academic isolation identified in the Mode 1 approach, without compromising academic authority over setting research agendas and curriculum development.

For universities and academics to have an impact outside of campuses, meeting points must be established where academics can engage with policy-makers and representatives from communities and civil society organisations to discuss challenges and areas of common interest for development. From the interviews we conducted at the SoE, Makerere does not seem to have established such meeting points.

Links with industry

Uganda's most important industrial sectors are agro-processing, mining and construction. Although Makerere has an established technology-transfer office, a challenge for the SoE is that Uganda's industrial sector is so dominated by small firms that have limited manufacturing or beneficiation capacities and depend heavily on imported machinery, spare parts and even raw materials. Most of the larger industries are still foreign owned (Shinyekwa et al. 2016). Small- and medium-sized enterprises account for over 90 per cent of

businesses in Uganda, with 58 per cent of registered firms employing 5 to 10 people, and just 9 per cent employing between 21 and 50 people (Shinyekwa et al. 2016). Growth in the sector is low as smaller firms generally have less access to bank finance as they are less able to cope with interest rate hikes (World Bank 2017b).

As an applied science, engineering aims to link the sciences with societal needs, and therefore relies on open dialogue with societal actors and the relevant industrial sectors. Even though engineering education in Uganda was founded on a recognition of the need for engineering knowledge and a skilled workforce, engineers at the university still find it challenging to sustain relations with industry (Lugujjo 2010). One increasingly tenuous link is through practical training that students are required to complete at the end of their second and third years of study. It has become difficult to find appropriate placements for students as many private companies have come to regard making any contribution to the training of university students as outside of their mandate (Lugujjo 2010). An informant from Makerere's Department of Civil Engineering explained:

Our construction industry still has a lot of challenges because it is still dominated by foreigners. Just like government is not supporting research institutions, even industry isn't offering much support in building local capacity. That's why you find that most of the big projects are being run by foreigners.

Road construction is another sector that is dominated by foreign (and particularly Chinese) workers and contractors (Namubiru 2018). One of the largest road construction projects in Uganda underway at the time of our study was the Kampala–Entebbe Expressway. This is an important project for the government as it will reduce the time needed to drive between Kampala and the international airport at Entebbe from over two hours to about 30 minutes (Biryabarema 2018). Construction of the expressway has been outsourced to the China Communications Construction Company. The project is being funded by the Ugandan government but partly through loans from

China Exim Bank (Egessa 2016). At the SoE, one of the academics interviewed explained how the process was preventing Ugandan engineers from participating in the project:

Once the economy is small, once you are depending on borrowing loan money that comes with conditions about who the contractor is going to be. Then the contractor brings their senior engineers, even their junior engineers. Therefore the [local] engineers who are lucky to be employed by the government institutions that are co-ordinating these projects make no technical decisions. They are just there as messengers – handling meetings, archiving files here and there, and looking at designs they cannot own. For example, the Kampala–Entebbe express highway is designed and constructed by Chinese engineers. The design was developed in Chinese and we could not read the plans. There were complaints that the design should be translated into English, and a few things were translated but, by that time, construction was taking place and somebody had approved the plans to proceed and go on. We can't read designs which are in Chinese. I mean, even if somebody translates them into English, it's useless: the decisions have already been taken and construction is ongoing.

Foreign contractors who bring their own employees and materials, are only part of the challenge for Ugandan engineers. Another challenge for engineers at Makerere seems to be a lack of demand for their knowledge. At the SoE's Department of Mechanical Engineering, informants indicated that there is very little demand for engineers or for research from businesses in Uganda. To quote just two of them:

Our industry here doesn't value research. They focus on their profit. When you tell them about research, it is on you to fund the research; you will not get money from them. And industry does not ask for our knowledge.

Many of the stakeholders are not interested in academia, they are more interested in the practical aspects ... But there is no way we can do without the fundamentals.

Despite being widely acknowledged as among the most crucial professions for Uganda's development, through the industrialisation of the economy as set out in the *Uganda Vision 2040*, the failure to appreciate the value of academic knowledge is undermining respect for the engineering profession as a whole. A critical feedback loop between the field of practice and the field of knowledge seems to be missing. Similarly, recognition of how research-based knowledge helps move the applied sciences forward, also seems to be absent. This challenge was also described by one informant, who argued that research tends to both 'start and end' on campus, and thus does not benefit or help anyone beyond its boundaries. One informant explained the situation as follows:

Another problem we have at the university [is that] we create our own problems and solve them. So, we should try to solve problems that are relevant to society. In that way, they own it. If we don't solve [problems] with them or what is theirs, then it becomes our problem, and they are not interested.

As this informant highlighted, dialogue and feedback loop with actors outside of campus is important; and within this dialogue, academics should use their knowledge to identify specific challenges that can serve as starting points for setting research agendas and formulating research questions. One informant suggested that the lack of demand stemmed from the fact that the government, like the private sector, exclusively values quick results and short-term applications, whereas research is often aimed at the longer-term transformation of the technical basis of the economy. This conflict illustrates the distinction between Mode 1 and 2 knowledge production, and the neoliberal idea that the governments should only support research if it is translated to innovations that contribute to economic growth. Research and knowledge are then considered equal to any other commercial product

and thus appreciated only in relation to their potential market value and not as a broader a common good.

The approach from the third world is that people should have a product which is sellable, and then they can make money and create jobs. That's the thinking. That's why they are talking of basic research – you don't want things to be [left] in the library ... So you kind of do both: in the process of doing academic research, your outputs should be spinoffs. Then you say, 'Ok now I have a patent; now I have an innovation which can go out to industry', but from the African viewpoint people are like, 'Why should you be doing research for this, when actually we want things that can put food on the table?' So, they'd rather have products – things that really work and give quick results – than something that might never materialise into anything.

As discussed, there is a growing consensus that universities help drive economic growth and development, both through educating a skilled and competent labour force, and through developing new knowledge through research (Cloete et al. 2015). However, for academics to have an impact off campus, universities have to establish meeting points and feedback loops between the field of practice and fields of knowledge. Here, academics can interact and engage with policy-makers, the business community, civic organisations and others to discuss challenges and areas of common interest, and still be able to define and set research agendas based on academic knowledge and technical insights in ways that do not compromise academic autonomy.

Academic autonomy and relevance

The debates about academic freedom, university autonomy and the wider relevance of the academy are not new. In the Humboldtian tradition, academic freedom is defined mainly as the freedom to teach and research – that is, the autonomy academics enjoy when it comes to

choosing their topics, concepts, methods and sources, and their right to contribute to their academic communities according to the standards and rules of their discipline (Enders 2007). This understanding largely corresponds with the Mode 1 model, in that knowledge is seen as being produced and controlled within the academic community through its own internal peer-review mechanisms. According to Mamdani (2018), two camps dominate current debates: one side mobilises in defence of academic freedom and the other calls for more engagement with, and production of, knowledge that is relevant to the social and political issues of the day. Cloete et al. (2015) draw a similar distinction, arguing that the debate regarding universities' role in society rests on two somewhat contradictory perspectives: an instrumentalist role that sees the academy as being of direct service to society, and a role that sees universities as 'engines of development' that strengthen knowledge and explore innovation. Each perspective sees the role of academics differently. Seeing academics as 'engines' of knowledge production reflects an appreciation of scientific knowledge, and an awareness of the importance of academic autonomy when it comes to setting research agendas. This, too, is in line with the Mode 1 model. Seeing academics as in the direct service of society implies that academics should respond mainly to direct requests and commissions from actors or clients external to the university. This reflects a utilitarian appreciation of knowledge, measured in 'output' or innovations, in line with the Mode 2 approach.

However, when research is initiated only to serve goals set out in national or industrial development plans, and when these plans are created outside of the universities and not in consultation with the academic profession, then research agendas are being defined by political priorities and not by academic criteria. Collini (2012) has argued that a central role of universities is not only to pursue practical goals, such as the educating of civil servants, but also to offer a form of resistance to the dominant practices and values in society. In Uganda, the government's exclusive funding of strategic projects through the Presidential Initiative can be seen as an illustration of how a research agenda can be politicised, and how universities can be reduced to

serving pathways to economic growth and development that are limited to political party programmes and specific ideological viewpoints. With almost all of the government's funding directed towards a few specific projects, academics have no room to use their knowledge to challenge the policy agenda or pursue 'curiosity-driven research', the many benefits of which are outlined by John Higgins (2016). At the time of our study, the Ugandan government did not seem interested in scientific knowledge per se, but rather seemed to see knowledge and innovation merely as instruments for economic growth.

While Gibbons et al. (1994) argued that the involvement of stakeholders beyond the universities makes knowledge production more socially accountable, it also challenges the autonomy of academics to define their research agendas and develop course curricula. The context of application ensures that knowledge is produced under conditions of continuous negotiation and will not be produced unless and until the interests of all the various actors are included in the process. Academic curiosity therefore no longer justifies knowledge production; instead, a bargaining process among stakeholders determines the basis for the research agenda and defines what is relevant to and useful for societal actors. When academics lose control over the definition of what knowledge is relevant, they also lose autonomy over what research they do, how it is prioritised and how it will be conducted. In this way, a negotiated research agenda challenges the basis of science, which at its best, has always striven to produce true knowledge that serves humanity in general, not merely those with vested and narrow economic or political interests.

In arguing that knowledge is relevant only when it is socially accountable, one assumes that the relevance of scientific knowledge to society can be objectively determined. This view fails to consider the likelihood of conflicting interests and unequal power relations in society. What interest groups in industry, business, government, civil society or international organisations see as relevant knowledge, is not necessarily congruent with what academics see as relevant to their discipline. In addition, the notion that innovation is an apolitical and purely technical solution to the problems of development disregards

normativity. In other words, knowledge is never developed in a social, political or economic vacuum, and innovations are always aimed at those with the access and resources to formulate their needs and be taken seriously. The simple need for technological advancement does not necessarily lead to this need being prioritised. Applied knowledge has to have a target market, and to be profitable, the target group must have the resources to pay for new products or services. People living in extreme poverty seldom constitute a profitable market, and until they participate in setting research agendas, they have little reason to expect they will be beneficiaries of new technological advancements. The process of socially accountable knowledge production, as Gibbons et al. (1994) envisaged it, reflects only the interests of those who are already at the table where decisions are being made. The increasing commodification of knowledge into commercial products that can be bought and sold, as facilitated and enforced by intellectual property rights and patenting, contradicts the idea of knowledge as a common good. When applied knowledge is developed for particular end-users, the knowledge is no longer accessible and open to the public but privatised and commodified in ways that oppose and contradict the norms and traditions of public university education.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, we have explored the history of the SoE at Makerere and the perceptions of its current academics about their working conditions, the challenges they face and their autonomy to define the relevance of their knowledge and their research agendas. Overall, our informants among the engineers at CEDAT perceived their knowledge to be relevant for development and industrialisation. However, informants highlighted several challenges that make it difficult for them to define the relevance of their knowledge to society. In a broad sense, political and economic conditions in Uganda do not facilitate or appreciate scientific knowledge unless it is the outcome of a direct, strategic initiative from the country's president. While the academic profession can generally be said to control the acquisition and application of knowledge within

their field, this does not seem to be the case for academics at the SoE. As is evident from the comments made by informers, the acquisition and application of knowledge, via research and its usage, is limited and restricted by factors that are often beyond the control of academics. In fact, these academics do not even control the recruitment of PhD candidates, as they are entirely dependent on external donors and their pre-set priorities. What they do control is how established knowledge is communicated, through lectures, student training and consultancy work. However, this limits their ability to make their knowledge relevant beyond the university campus. This lack of control over what is a central aspect of the profession's working conditions is at odds with much of the literature on the profession, challenging the core definition of the profession itself.

The absence of funding is another factor that makes research an unattainable activity for many academics interviewed. Although many of our informants were critical of donor funding and its conditions, foreign donors remain the largest source of research income for the university. Donor priorities tend to change relatively often, which can make their funding programmes both unpredictable and relatively short term. The variety of donors involved also tends to create fragmented research projects with no clear agenda that is unambiguously centred on local development. Obviously, this has direct consequences for the knowledge being produced at the university in terms of priority areas and favoured disciplines, as well as specific topics and research questions.

Academics are widely seen as key actors in national, and global development. In Uganda, there is a particular emphasis on the potential of the hard sciences to solve national challenges. However, there seem to be discrepancies between the needs on the ground and the state's visions of development. In our view, this indicates that the university has not sufficiently facilitated interactions between academics and societal actors outside of campus.

The focus on innovations as the primary outcome of higher-education institutions reflects an instrumental understanding of knowledge production. This reduces the broader mandate of higher-education and research institutions to being merely instruments for economic growth.

This linear understanding of innovation, as reflected in the Mode 2 model, does not take the ‘messiness’ and uncertainties of innovation processes into consideration.

While Mamdani (2007) argued that the academics at SoE resisted the neoliberal reforms, this chapter argues that the reform simply took a different form. The neoliberal agenda manifested at CEDAT through the instrumental idea that academic knowledge must result in profitable innovations that translate directly into economic growth and development. Academics are required to also apply an entrepreneurial mindset, which conflicts the academic profession in that one is forced to meet the short-term needs rather than seeking knowledge as a common good that serves humanity in general and not particular economic or political interests.

These findings lead into discussions about Makerere being a so-called market-led rather than a developmental university. As argued by Mamdani (2007), reforms undertaken at Makerere under the guidance of the World Bank shifted the aims and functions of the institution from developmental to market-oriented. University reforms went hand in glove with reforms in the national economy. The broader implications for the university seem to be that all parts of the university – from student enrolment to scientific research and curriculum development – are now steered by a market-related logic that prioritises short-term, economic growth. The university has itself become part of the economy, and governed by the logic of the market, rather than by any central, national strategy for development. In addition, the absence of a co-ordinated opposition working to counteract this shift has negatively impacted on academics’ ability to both define and demonstrate the relevance of their knowledge to society.

6

Relevance cultivating science? Agricultural education and research at Makerere University

Agriculture was first offered as a subject at Makerere in 1925, that is, three years after the university was established (Macpherson 1964). In 1952, the Faculty of Agriculture was formed. Six years later, the School of Agriculture was established within the faculty, and began offering a bachelor's degree in agricultural sciences. In the 1960s, postgraduate programmes were added, and research became an integral part of the faculty. Other than during the chaos of the Amin period (1971–1979) and the subsequent civil war, the faculty continued to grow, and some changes were made to departments and programmes from the mid-1980s. In 2010, institutional reforms at Makerere saw the merging of the Faculty of Agriculture and the Faculty of Forestry with certain environmental sciences departments. The structure was named the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES). The college has three schools plus a number of centres and institutes. At the time of our study, CAES was one of Makerere's largest colleges, not only in terms of staff and student numbers but also with regard to access to research funding.

In this chapter, we first present an account of how the academics we interviewed at CAES perceive their general working conditions. While our findings tend to confirm those of previous studies of the university, they informed our discussions about the issue of relevance, which we cover in the second part of the chapter. Here we consider how academics who are educating professionals for careers in the agricultural sector see their knowledge reaching farmers and filtering into the development of the sector generally. We also explore how

neoliberal policy-making in Uganda is shaping the agricultural sector in ways that not only influence debates around relevance at CAES but are also undermining academic praxis and adding to the marginalisation of subsistence farmers.

Perceptions of the academic role and the profession's control over its working conditions

We start with a reminder of our basic idea (as set out in Chapter 1) that we see the academic profession as:

embedded in scientifically legitimised knowledge, and in control of its own working processes due to having a high degree of autonomy in deciding job content. As long as the academic profession controls the awarding of PhD degrees, it has control over who enters the profession, and as long as the profession bases its teaching on ongoing research, it will remain capable of self-governance.

Our first step in exploring our informants' perceptions of the level of control they have over their work processes and content, was to try to get a sense of their everyday experience of their work and working conditions. To try to see into this and understand what these academics actually do, we simply asked: 'What would a typical week look like for you in terms of work?' We added no further queries and gave no prompts.

Interestingly, our informants used the same set of categories to describe their academic activities at Makerere, namely: teaching, research, outreach, and, for most but not all, consultancy. Moreover, the academics interviewed saw themselves as occupying the roles of lecturers, researchers, and consultants, although outreach and consultancy seemed to be slightly blurred in role terms. However, they consistently described their overall role as academic professionals as containing these sub-roles.

Informants described their typical working weeks in quite mundane and concrete terms, and sometimes also in percentages of

time spent. Teaching, for example, was simply named as such with no added qualitative considerations. However, descriptions were often normatively framed, in terms of what should be – implying that informants' experiences do not really live up to what they think of as an appropriately constructed academic role. Their descriptive categorisations of work-related activities carried implicit judgements about, and comparisons with, their projected or idealised view of the role that academics should play, and their reported, actual situation deviated considerably from what they said they would prefer, and/or had expected, their work to involve. With little variation, most academics we spoke to at CAES reported that:

- *Teaching* and related activities made up the overwhelming majority of their working weeks. No one reported spending less than 60 per cent of (paid) time on teaching and related work, and most reported spending more than 60 per cent. No one said they would like to take on more teaching.
- *Research-related activities* were reported by all except one informant. Research was, however, reportedly conducted on an irregular basis, and only in the time that is left over after all teaching-related duties had been fulfilled. Many said they favour research work and noted that they would prioritise research far more if they had the scope to choose.
- *Outreach* was reported by most informants as occurring on an irregular basis because it is linked to project funding. This was the least defined category and seemed to be widely understood as 'working with (and for) communities'. For some, outreach was synonymous with consultancy work, and for these informants, the distinctions between the public and private spheres seemed to be blurred.
- *Consultancy* work was also mentioned by most informants. Although not always stated explicitly, it seemed to go without saying that informants were taking on this extra work out of necessity. The salaries from Makerere were described as being far too low to survive on, much less achieve the standard of

living that informants consider decent and that they expected or aspired to achieve as professional academics. Clients in these consultancy relationships were reported to be NGOs, donor foundations, and international organisations such as the World Bank and UN agencies. One informant reported having been engaged as a consultant by a private company.

When asked what activities they would prefer to do more or less of, everyone responded with 'less teaching' (including related duties, such as marking assignments and exams), 'less administration' and 'more research'. It was in this discussion that it became evident that what informants considered an appropriate academic role deviated from how they perceived their actual work, and that to be able to bridge this gap, they would like to do more research and less teaching and administrative work.

Furthermore, the informants' line of reasoning about the discrepancies between their actual and expected roles was strikingly similar. In essence, they stated that the university has had to find ways to fund its activities because the government has largely stopped funding higher-education institutions. A massive increase in the intake of fee-paying students had occurred in an effort to make up for the gap in funding. Consequently, the work involved in teaching large numbers of students has had to take precedence over all other academic activities, to the point that what informants perceived as a 'proper academic role' has been replaced with (or reduced to) that of teacher or lecturer. A complementary factor that they emphasised is that research funding, and how the funding system works, is inadequate. In essence, informants argued that these two factors reinforce each other to overamplify their role as educators and minimise their research work.

In comparative terms, however, significant variations are evident between the colleges at the university. Compared to the College of Design, Art and Engineering (CEDAT) and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS), CAES appears to have been better able to maintain an identity grounded in research. All except one of the academics interviewed at CAES were engaged in some research.

This was far from true at CHUSS and CEDAT. The availability of (external) funding for agricultural research clearly favours CAES, and the comparatively modest student–staff ratios at CAES and CEDAT is another factor that prevents staff from developing a ‘purely’ lecturer-based identity. Nevertheless, the role of academics at CAES, as constructed in terms of actual work, was consistently reported as deviating substantially from what they considered appropriate.

The main questions we sought to answer were the degree to which the academic collective at CAES have control over their working conditions and over the foci of their teaching and research. We return to these questions later, but some clues are evident in the observations already described. First, these academics viewed their roles as having been misconstrued or skewed towards lecturing as opposed to consisting of an apt and interactive blend of research and teaching. In identifying the factors that perpetuate this skewed role, informants consistently pointed to forces they saw as operating beyond the control of their profession and the university. The government’s continual renunciation of responsibility for funding and resourcing higher education and science in Uganda was viewed as the prime mover behind many unwanted developments in the evolution of academic roles at CAES and at Makerere in general. And when it came to politics, few of the academics we interviewed were optimistic about having any impact.

Recruitment and succession planning

We have stressed that a defining feature of a solid academic community is its autonomy, including its ability to control its future trajectory by determining the criteria by which PhD candidates are selected and graduate. To be specific, this is about controlling the content of PhD degrees, the setting of quality standards, and making certain that candidate recruitment and selection processes ensure good succession planning. Empirical data on how these processes play out at CAES is limited, but sufficient for us to make some informed assertions about how its current and future academic staff are being nurtured and trained (see Chapter 10).

The first point to note is that all the academics we interviewed at CAES had a PhD or were in the process of acquiring one. This is not to say that our sample was biased – a high proportion of CAES staff have a PhD degree, most of which were conferred outside of Uganda. As one department head told us:

So, we are proud now ... we have 17 members of academic staff here, and 15 of us have PhDs. Two [will follow]. So, all of us will be PhD holders very soon, and we can also supervise PhD students here.

Indeed, all the senior staff members we interviewed at CAES were supervising one or more PhD students. This implies that the college has many doctoral candidates but information about the exact number of PhD candidates enrolled at CAES during our study was not made available and is not stated in any of the official documents from the college. It seems possible that no one in the college is keeping track of this data. Even without numbers though, the situation at CAES contrasts starkly with that at CHUSS and CEDAT, where the number of staff members who have doctoral degrees is significantly lower. One challenge facing CAES is how to put themselves in a position to offer their many PhD candidates a position at the college in the fairly near future.

The second important point is the quality of the current PhD cohort as assessed by the senior staff at CAES. Again, our informants consistently claimed that the quality of candidates was ‘good’ or even ‘very good’. These judgements, however, were later qualified. A narrative about the current cohort of PhD candidates that was shared by many of the senior staff described them as: ‘good’ but not as ‘independent’ as candidates have been in the past. The suggestion is that the ‘reading culture’ that these senior staff members were themselves trained and socialised into is not evident in the current generation of candidates. These two characteristics are obviously linked. As one informant put it:

The current [master’s and PhD] students, they want you to

deliver everything to them, they want to read your notes, and that's all ... But, for us, we grew up in the reading era.

Another informant stressed the consequences of this change as follows:

Yes, [they are] not kind of independently doing their thing as innovative thinkers and bringing [work] to you as supervisor [that] you can read and say, 'Yes, this student is doing something'.

Most informants expressed the concern that this shift towards less (scholarly) independence among postgraduates could ultimately lead to less critically minded scholars. Reflecting on the reasons for this, informants all asserted (in one way or another) that socialisation related to learning is problematic in Uganda. As one individual put it, the problem is 'society, and it goes all the way back to primary school'. The emphasis on examinations in primary and secondary education was often cited as a major obstacle:

In the past we used to have few primary and secondary schools, and they were public, not private ... A reading culture started from there. But I think it was in the late 1990s, when private schools started emerging. Now, the private [primary] schools, they are interested, yes, to educate, but also in making a profit. So, over time, schools that seemed to have a lot of students passing very well were perceived to be very good schools; and everybody wanted to take their children there. But that has had some negative impacts because students are now trained just to pass. That culture is not good, it does not create critical thinkers, or innovative thinkers; they are just after being given something. And that is, I think, what we are suffering from, right from undergraduate to the master's and PhD levels. To me, that is a fundamental problem.

Given these views, a sound selection and promotion process for candidates aspiring to join the academic profession would seem to be of critical importance. We therefore asked informants for their perceptions about how PhD candidates are recruited into CAES. The responses we received indicated that, while informants were critical of the college on a range of issues, they had no qualms about the criteria and procedures for selecting PhD candidates. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, they confirmed that these criteria and procedures are consistently and transparently applied. As one informant explained:

We have quality assurance at Makerere. So, for the students, our criteria, rules and regulations are in place. And, actually, these are stringent, and they work. Some students are rejected ... But the criteria for selection are okay, the guidelines are there, and all the requirements. If you don't meet them, you will not be admitted.

Informants emphasised that entrance requirements are exclusively meritocratic, and that academic achievements constitute the basis for entry into the profession.⁵² Once recruited however, problems still surface for some candidates. As several informants explained, some candidates are 'in for a delay'. One reason given for this relates to the students' lack of independence already mentioned, with the result that, as one supervisor put it 'you kind of limp along with the person, and make sure that they pass and go through the system.' The same academic expressed another commonly held concern as follows: 'I also see a situation where the way you operate as the supervisor is still lower than it should be.' This kind of self-criticism was quite common at CAES, but it was also somehow softened and explained away as a by-product of how the university is organised and funded.

In this regard, the university's lack of funding creates a range of difficulties. One result is that the time supervisors can spend with their PhD candidates has become a casualty of the system. That is, as

academics try to supplement their salaries with income from other sources, they find themselves having to divert their time and attention to work outside of the college. As one informant observed:

The problem comes with supervision and with the supervisors because they get no funding. They are getting peanuts in terms of their salary. The staff are paid very little.

A similar problem affects many PhD students too as the informant pointed out:

So, you find that PhD students are always in the field, doing other things, consultancies, so that they can make a living. But people are dedicated.

The lack of funding was also mentioned as a factor that hinders the progress of some PhD candidates but delays did not seem to be a problem affecting the PhD cohort as a whole. And in terms of numbers, the PhD candidates at CAES clearly constituted a pool that has the potential of securing the continuity of the academic profession in the field of agricultural science.

CAES as a research-based college

Of significance, when discussing the role of the academic profession, is, of course, the shape and functioning of the university itself. Although the academics themselves defined their roles as those of teachers, researchers and consultants, it makes sense (in terms of role theory) to see these as functions or tasks attached to a single role that is shaped (among other factors) by the organisation in which it operates.

It is commonly assumed that universities epitomise organisations in which science and research reign. However, if an institution is not conducting science-based research, it cannot be considered a 'real' university regardless of whether the word university is part of its name. And for a given piece of knowledge to be considered scientific,

certain requirements must apply to how that knowledge is produced. Moreover, resources of various sorts have to be mobilised to ensure the continual production of knowledge. Establishing a university is not just about securing the dissemination of existing knowledge, but of constantly challenging what is already known so as to produce *new* knowledge. This is why the core act of the academic profession can be called creative destruction.

Emphases on scientific knowledge and research are central ingredients in the vision and mission statements that run through the strategy plans and annual reports of both Makerere as a whole and CAES in particular (see CAES 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017; Makerere University 2010b). Deeds and words can differ however, and because such documents might refer to an ideal rather than an actual state, we asked our informants for their views on the meaning and significance of research in relation to their roles as academic professionals. From their responses, research funding seems to be a major concern, not just because of its scarcity, but also because of how it is currently accessed, and because of the impact this process was having on their research efforts.

The meaning and significance of research

As noted earlier in this chapter, every one of our informants said that they wished they had more time and resources to devote to research. This is far from unique to academics at Makerere and is very likely common to academics everywhere. What does seem to be peculiar to Makerere, however, is how the balance is struck, and how resources are allocated to different activities. The time and energy required for teaching large classes, and the high number of courses on offer, explains why academics at Makerere jokingly renamed Mamdani's 2007 book 'Lecturers in the marketplace'.⁵³ Informants noted that the heavy burden of teaching, combined with extremely limited resources for research, was narrowing their experience of their own identities to that of teachers.

Nevertheless, from our interviews, we learned that all but one of our informants at CAES were engaged in research, and many were

involved in several research projects. In addition, the more senior staff members reported that they were also supervising research projects run by their PhD students. For us, one could not be on the CAES premises without developing an awareness of being immersed in a genuine research community. As impressionistic as this is, a research orientation and identity *was* present in the people we met, at the very least in the sense of an ‘imagined identity’. For sure, they expressed frustration about the limits of the research being done, but this made it even more clear that they assess their actual situation against what they feel themselves to be: that is, academics who are also researchers.

But what does it mean to be a scientist or researcher in this particular context? In response to this question, one of our informants was very clear:

Oh, research is very, very important because it allows me to think ‘outside the box’ as they say. You know, interacting with the people doing research gives you a wider perspective, wider thinking, and it gives you better experience. And sometimes, what we see when doing research, and incorporating this in the training and teaching of our students, [is that] it is not only benefitting the end-user, but even our students here ... [Our] teaching material is based on practical experience that you only get when doing research, because research is generating information, which we use when we are training our students.

Thus, according to this academic, research benefits everyone – from the end-users, to current and future student cohorts, as well as the researchers’ own intellectual development. The statement also hints at ‘relevance’ and ‘truth telling’. In other words, conducting research is not simply a role or activity that academics have to perform, it is an integral and defining characteristic of the profession. In addition, research is also strongly linked to another, more (external) and career-driven impulse. Informants made a range of statements affirming that advancing within the academy requires that scholars publish,

and conducting research is a necessary precondition to publishing. Academics are thus 'incentivised' to do research. But incentives tend to be effective only in so far as the values they seek to promote are internalised within the group they are aimed at. In other words, it was clear from our observations that, while academics at CAES saw research as intimately linked to their own potential for advancing within the academic community, they were also strongly committed to research for the sake of advancing the academic community and its values.

Without having established these conceptions, it would have been difficult for us to understand the levels of frustration that were expressed, particularly on the issue of research. Arguably, such frustrations are products of the felt discrepancy between informants' internalised visions of their role and the brutal realities of how research is actually funded and organised. One informant explained that the issue of research funding at Makerere, as compared to what these informants expect from a properly functioning university, represents one of the 'biggest thorns in the flesh of the scientists ... [We] run projects rather than programmes'.

Commenting on the notion of 'research-led universities', another academic at CAES who has an extensive track record in research observed that this is 'another widow that has opened ... And we don't seem to take it seriously', adding that by 'we' he meant Uganda, not the university or the academics. This informant was of the opinion that the shaping of a proper research-based academic role was conditional on the creation of a proper environment (the university), and that this is necessarily a state responsibility. He added that drastic reforms are needed:

Government needs to come in strongly and support this concept, to allow Makerere to be a research-led university. You can't be a research-led university with a lack of funding. So the government needs to come in and support this initiative. We can't continue to have 'basket universities', all in one basket, that are there to give theory to students and graduates. We need to have a difference in universities ...

And that will not happen because of policy statements; it will only happen if you have the necessary funding. For, I don't know, the last ten years, Makerere has said it is becoming a research-led university, but there isn't adequate funding to support that.

If a research-led university was created, he went on, it would not be in the narrow interests of Makerere and the academics working here but would primarily 'serve the greater good of our country'. This widely shared vision, combined with perceptions of the crumbling state of the systems that should be supporting research and education in Uganda, feeds into a sense of collective frustration, particularly over the issue of research funding. Thus, while our evidence indicates that considerable research is ongoing at CAES, and that this helps to sustain academics' sense that they are participating in a research environment, this does not translate into perceptions of Makerere or CAES as research-led. We return to this issue later, so it suffices to add just one more comment here: the *intimate* links between teaching and research that conceptions of research-led universities generally take for granted are quickly rendered meaningless when research agendas are largely determined outside of the control or influence of the academics and the leadership of education institutions. This was at the crux of the frustrations we saw at CAES and Makerere, and as long as this situation remains, this intimacy will remain elusive, and coherence will be impossible to achieve.

The relevance of agricultural science and education

The main title of this chapter was partly inspired by a book about the history of agricultural science in the Netherlands and its colonies. The book is called *Science Cultivating Practice* (Maat 2001). The notion that science shapes practice was not a Dutch invention, but it was widespread among agricultural reformists in northwestern Europe where the industrial and agricultural revolutions emerged together in the late sixteenth century. The phrase is also typical of slogans coined

in the spirit of the Enlightenment, which asserted that science should inform and direct agricultural activities, and that the mobilisation of this knowledge would liberate agriculture from the constraints of nature and from the confines of human tradition and superstition. By rewriting the slogan as ‘Relevance cultivating science’, we are advocating for the formation of a new relationship between science and society. This arose as we obtained responses from informants to our overall research question, namely: what does ‘relevance’ mean in this field, and which actors have the power to define what constitutes relevance? We approached these issues by first asking academics at CAES how they view relevance in terms of the educational content they provide and the knowledge they generate at the college. They started by revisiting some of the history, much of which we found echoed in the literature on the history of Makerere, particularly Carol Sicherman’s 2005 book, *Becoming an African University: Makerere 1922–2000*.

Orientations in the agricultural academy

When agricultural science and education took shape during the first half of the nineteenth century in western Europe, one issue was of major concern: finding ways to integrate and balance theory and practice. Teaching the theory or ‘science’ involved constructing a solid and well-grounded educational process, while proponents of the ‘practical’ aspects had vocational education in mind. Depending on how this combination was approached in various emerging nation-states, issues such as admission criteria and staff requirements had formative effects on curriculum development. As Carol Sicherman (2005: 13) pointed out, the same tension between ‘vocational’ and ‘learned education’ runs through the history of Makerere’s engagement with agriculture, with the university’s British derivation adding a distinct preference for the belief that there is a ‘fundamental antithesis between liberal (or ‘literary’) and vocational education’.⁵⁴ The opposition between practical and theoretical education at Makerere was reinforced by the fact that agriculture is associated with manual and menial labour. In

Sicherman's view, 'In Uganda, resistance to agricultural education withstood such an argument, for Africans found it inconceivable that anyone who had escaped a peasant's hard life would willingly revert to any element of it' (2005: 13). Consequently, Sicherman argued, the evolution of agricultural studies at Makerere had a strongly theoretical or scientific orientation with less emphasis on practice. As she indicated, however, this changed somewhat from the 1980s. At that time, CAES developed stronger links with rural communities in an effort to enhance the university's impact and to avoid being criticised for teaching from inside an 'ivory tower'. Numerous CAES documents cited earlier affirm this shift. Similarly, programme reviews and other documents are all filled with words about the college's strong emphasis on users' needs and, in particular, the college's impact on society. How, or indeed *if*, this rhetoric translates into action is another question.

Relevance and curriculum formation

Discussing more recent trends at Makerere, Mamdani (2007) highlighted what he called 'vocationalisation' – a tendency to replace programmes and courses that were grounded in science and research with vocational training.⁵⁵ Vocationalisation can be seen as the opposite of what, in the sociology of the professions, is called 'academic drift' – meaning a tendency to overemphasise the sciences or scientific basis of vocational education and occupations. The question we asked academics at CAES was how they perceive the directions curriculum development has taken and how this is linked to the issue of relevance. From our interviews, it was clear that Mamdani's *Scholars in the Marketplace* is well known to academics at CAES. His assessments of developments at the university and his suggestions for its future were shared by almost everyone we interviewed. In his book, Mamdani did not say very much about the (then) Faculty of Agricultural Sciences but focused more on the social sciences and the humanities on the one hand, and on the natural sciences on the other. As a so-called 'dry' faculty, he argued that the natural sciences had been relatively unaffected by vocationalisation. Similarly, academics at CAES located

their college within the natural sciences and consistently expressed the view that:

This college did not follow that train that happened in the 1990s ... You can't teach science en masse so there was no way you could bring in many students and teach them ... If you haven't qualified [obtained the entry requirements] for science, you haven't qualified; if you are not a scientist, you are not a scientist. It is not like anyone can just say 'let's bring in more numbers'. The students are not there, they have not met the entry requirements. That means full stop ... So they [the natural science departments] were trying to copy from the others but they couldn't do it because science is science; you cannot expand it into any other form.

However, another informant added that:

The reason that this course [moved] more towards that [vocational direction] was really in response to stakeholders' demands. There have been criticisms that the university is producing people that that employers don't really need, that employers need people who can actually get the job done and things like that.

This observation highlights the significance of 'stakeholder demands'. Criticism that the university was producing useless graduates was, by no means, targeted only at the humanities and the social sciences. Makerere's agricultural training programmes and graduates have been accused of being 'irrelevant', and of having little 'impact' on society. This is evident from the general discourse on the role of academics and scientific knowledge in Uganda as well as from documents about the programmes offered at CAES. In the interviews, it was very clear that academics were aware of this criticism. Quite a few also mentioned that NGOs employ many CAES graduates and are among the groups that are most likely to be critical of the college. As one informant noted:

The general perception among NGOs in Uganda is that ... Makerere is just too academic. [They think] we don't know how things work, we are not relevant, we need to come to terms with issues in the field. They dismiss us, saying we don't want to work, and that we are interested only in abstract things that are not relevant to practice.

Other informants alluded to this issue when discussing the development of new CAES programmes. Several mentioned that the 'Agriculture and Rural Innovation' programme was designed to respond to such criticisms. In fact, according to the academic just quoted, this programme is one of the biggest at CAES in terms of student enrolment, and was

developed in a very consultative way. We engaged the private sector; we had several studies to understand what they would want. The initial ideas for the programme were subjected to ... analyses by different actors within the agricultural sector. So eventually ... it really addressed a lot of the issues that NGOs, for-profit businesses and others really needed to see in Ugandan agriculture ... It is a programme that really tries to address stakeholders' concerns. It also gets criticised here for being lacking in science, but even if academics [are critical], people perceive the programme to be really good. It seems to be one that really attracts so many people [students] ... And a lot of people who have done the programme actually liked it. So, there is that disconnect between how much science should be in course content [and how much the content should accommodate stakeholder concerns].

Like many other informants, this academic emphasised that CAES has done much to adjust to demands that the college make its courses more 'relevant'. However, several informants expressed some ambivalence about what gets lost when the scientific content of programmes is downplayed. Interestingly, with regard to the Agriculture and Rural

Innovation programme, although the course was developed for people who want to work, and have been working, with grassroots organisations, it seems to be awakening an interest in further study among those who complete it:

What we are experiencing is that those [former students] are coming back for master's degrees. And yet, the course was designed for people who would be really hands-on! ... But we see that, when they enrol for higher degrees, they really struggle. Because of the lack of science [in the basic degree], they really struggle with research ... But these guys are not going to stop coming for graduate courses. So how much more science-based [must we get]? They [the sciences] have very little to do with how to manage community affairs. Even now we have discussions about whether to introduce more regular research elements into this programme, given the increasing numbers that are coming for higher degrees. When they struggle a lot in terms of conceptualising research ... it creates a lot of tensions. So how do we handle that? We have tried to come up with different programmes, but some [still struggle. To emphasise 'hands-on' knowledge too much] would be catastrophic for science. And yet, if we are too much here [science-based], we are told we are in the 'ivory tower', we become irrelevant, and it becomes difficult to justify our presence. So, we need to be relevant to the country and also to science. There is a real tension here.

The example is striking because what started out as an effort to accommodate demand-side expectations by giving birth to a 'hands-on' programme exposed CAES to the pressure of academic drift. The pressure to increase the science content came from returning students, whereas the push to create the programme had come from a different set of stakeholders on the demand side. In other words, different stakeholders can have different and even contradictory preferences with regard to the shaping of academic programmes.

These kinds of tensions are evident in most agricultural education institutions, and quite probably in all educational programmes that combine the theoretical and the applied sciences. Science is now widely expected to be mobilised so as to have an impact on social practices. Thus, an understanding of how agricultural education at Makerere is being shaped might benefit from seeing it in the wider context within which vocationalisation is driving education in one direction and those who are concerned about ‘academic drift’ are pushing from another. In this context, it is vital to understand that the processes that shape educational programmes are affected by social forces that have the potential to push education in different directions. Undoubtedly, CAES is under strong pressure to prove that its graduates are qualified to make an ‘impact’ in their chosen profession. Definitions of what impact actually means tend to overlap with a particular concept of relevance, which can be equated with ‘what works’ or ‘what is demanded by and rewarded in the labour market’. This trend started some time ago, as Mamdani (2007) revealed, and it was clearly visible when Makerere was reorganised into its constituent colleges around 2010. As part of that process, CAES conducted a comprehensive review of its programme offerings. New evaluative criteria were then established to prioritise the demand-side, and stakeholder participation was firmly secured in regulating both the review of existing courses and processes for initiating new programmes. An emphasis on ‘science’ and ‘research’ remained strong in the rhetoric, but from the perspective that both were relevant only in so far as they served demand-side interests.

Relevance and the shaping of graduates

It seemed to us that staff members at CAES are resisting the pressure to produce ‘hands-on’ graduates only, and to anchor the relevance of graduates’ skills purely in a ‘what works’ sphere of practice. They are well aware of criticisms that too many graduates lack practical skills or are not ‘relevant’ enough, and so on. Their response was that in some instances the critique is sound and fair but, in the main, it is based on a misconception about what a university is or should be. Informants

argued that the relevance of CAES's curricula and graduates' skills should be judged primarily according to this criterion. They insisted that their views of what a university is, or should be, have informed their decisions regarding what degree programmes include. Articulation of the usual critiques consistently met with responses such as:

The university should not go into vocational training. It should concentrate on ... areas of research and do research. Vocational training per se is trying to produce what I call 'workers' ... I don't see that as the role of the university ... Just because someone tells you, 'I want a university graduate who knows how to drive a tractor', does that become the role of the university? No!

A university should be producing 'thinkers' and we must not mix these up with 'doers' ... The university is an intensive knowledge-generation place ... And therefore it is very, very important for us – much as the community want us to be practical – not to forget that we are 'thinkers' and we are supposed to think for this country. We have another band of 'doers' who are able to translate the knowledge into practice.

In essence, the view of our informants was that vocational and university education are qualitatively different, and that this distinction is intimately linked to the preferred structure and divisions of labour in the agricultural labour market. They did not discourage vocational training per se but argued that this should be provided at vocational schools outside the university. They see vocational training as important for the agricultural sector, and acknowledged that its graduates are skilled at 'translating knowledge into practice.' Thus, CAES academics visualise Ugandan agriculture as having an occupational structure filled with various categories of skilled 'doers' who are capable of translating different levels of abstract theory into useful and applicable skills. They maintain, however that the important task of educating *all* of the different layers of semi-professional 'doers'

is not the responsibility of any university. The trouble, our informants agreed, was a growing tendency to disrupt the division of labour between universities and technical schools. The following comments sum up an often-stated opinion:

It is a mistake what we have done in East Africa – killing what used to be called vocational schools. Institutions have been killed and changed into universities. In Uganda, we used to have ... [naming several schools], those were vocational schools. And I don't think that should be the role of the university.

We have killed institutions ... what was a strong technical institute, we have turned it into a university. We have killed those which used to be strong agricultural institutions; we have turned them into a university ... That is defeating the role of both 'thinkers' and 'doers'.

The 'killing' of vocational education refers to contemporary educational policy in Uganda. Various tertiary institutions are under pressure to become universities, and the government is encouraging this. Given the current significance of 'demand' as a driving force in shaping the whole structure of higher-education institutions, the preferences of (potential) job applicants and (potential) employers are also playing a role in determining the types of education that are offered. Informants often alluded to a general perception that the (flawed) design of Uganda's current education system has conflated vocational and science-based education. This threatens to do away with what are widely seen as healthy distinctions between 'doers' and 'thinkers' or, in CAES's case, farmers, labourers and scientists. This blending will, as one informant bluntly argued, eventually 'defeat *both* thinkers and doers'. The shaping of CAES graduates is thus viewed in the context of the entire educational system. In other words, the quest for relevance, and the pressure CAES is under to reorient their curricula, are seen as by-products of a flawed system.

Before we turn to the issue of how relevance relates to the generation of knowledge through research, we can sum up the situation with regard to education at CAES as follows. First, curriculum design has seen a marked shift, such that the issue of relevance is seen as increasingly embedded in user demands. Second, few academics at CAES welcome this shift; they see it as undermining what was a healthy division of labour between different kinds of tertiary institutions which is being undermined as university courses become more ‘practical’ and technical school curricula become more ‘theoretical’.

Relevance and research

As noted, the ‘relevance’ of education at CAES seems to increasingly need to be legitimised with reference to impact ‘on the ground’ and meeting the demands of external stakeholders. Informants from CAES seemed to see external stakeholders’ demands in relation to shaping programme content as something they have to comply with. When it comes to the research conducted at CAES, however, the picture is different. As explained, even though CAES is comparatively better-off than other colleges at Makerere, access to research funding severely restricts academics’ ability to engage in research. In dealing with questions about relevance and research at CAES, we proceed in three steps. First, we address the spilt between so-called basic and applied research. Then we consider the related question of the aim of research. Finally, we turn to funding arrangements and their consequences.

Basic and applied research

From how informants at CAES described their research, it is perhaps unnecessary to state that none of them said they were involved in basic research; all of it was applied. Nevertheless, the distinction between basic and applied research seemed highly relevant to them, and the way in which they understood the distinction was essentially functional: basic research is seen as ‘serving’ the applied sciences, and the applied

sciences, such as agricultural science, are seen as ‘serving’ society. As one informant explained:

Before you can actually solve big problems, you need the small pieces; somebody needs to have done the small things [the basic research], for you to come up with the solution. So, I think it is important to strike a balance based on the needs you have.

However, the funding regime in place at the time of our study effectively made the search for a ‘balance’ between basic and applied research redundant. The existing system does not allow for basic research in Uganda. Two informants commented on this as follows:

Nobody will just give you money to study an insect purely to get knowledge about its biology or the internal structure of the species.

Trying to get funding for [basic] research here would be a long shot. Everybody looks at applied research, and the research questions are usually based on [societal] needs. So, you do not decide ‘This is what I am going to work on’. It is, ‘What are the problems out there, and how can I help?’ Because if it is not relevant, nobody is giving you money anyway. Even the funding agencies determine what you work on.

The absence of funding for basic research is probably felt even more intensely in departments that focus on the natural sciences than it is at CAES, which is able to access some funding for applied research. That our informants at CAES exhibited a certain distaste for what they described as ‘useless’ knowledge, and strongly favour an ethos that involves serving societal needs, seems to help them fit neatly within institutional funding priorities.

Research orientation

Along with this orientation toward applied research comes the view that research should address issues beyond the academic world. This view is strongly and widely held by academics at CAES. The college is not a place where the idea of ‘knowledge for its own sake’ receives much support; even basic research is justified in ultimately instrumental ways. Take, for example, the following statement:

My obligation is to think, come up with a solution, take that to society or the community, and to change that community ... If I find that cattle feeds, or the sample I have collected, is infected by aflatoxins, then, in my assessments, I will find out what the causes could be, what went wrong. Then I have to go and change the community [practices].

Similar statements were made in many of our interviews, regardless of the informants’ specific fields of expertise (ranging from plant or animal breeding, soil, post-harvest losses, pests and pollinators, and so on). Proper research is understood as consisting of identifying common problems, making them researchable, investigating them, and finding solutions. The first and the last elements are, of course, what make the research applied, while the middle two define the process as research.

The informants’ strong identification with the role of ‘problem-solver’ was testimony to the emphasis they placed on the applied components in defining the relevance of their research. Thus, the applicability of knowledge was the defining criterion for what constitutes the relevance of knowledge production. Furthermore, many argued that such production should be steered towards any natural or social conditions that hamper ‘development’, with the latter concept defined by actors outside of the university. According to informants, these two criteria determine what knowledge can be considered relevant in the agricultural sector and both are equally necessary. That

is, research that is not directed at helping resolve predefined, societal problems, and that does not result in applicable solutions, is seen as irrelevant. Science and research are thus not seen as relevant in and of themselves; they are solely a means of resolving problems as defined by societal actors outside of the academic community.

It is beyond the reach of this chapter to assess whether this orientation is something new for CAES or the continuation of a long-held position. However, in multiple interviews, we were offered a narrative that supports Sicherman's (2005) claim that, in the 1980s, Makerere's agricultural engagements became more outwardly oriented. The story goes that Makerere, once an elite institution accessible only to a select few, was transformed from the 1990s into an institution for the many. At that point, the university also became receptive to demands made by outside stakeholders in relation to curriculum formation and knowledge generation. We touch on this again later in the chapter.

Funding arrangements and their consequences

As stated, CAES is relatively well-off with regard to research funding, and academics at CAES experience themselves as having roles that are at least partially research-based. However, we must quickly add that few academics at CAES would easily concur with this view of their relative affluence. The Ugandan government reportedly allocates no funding to research at CAES, except for an 'incubation centre' that is funded via the Presidential Initiative on Science and Technology (also discussed in Chapter 5). Similarly, the university's own budget makes little or no provision for research and leaves the task of supporting research to donors instead. All of our informants at CAES saw their research work as entirely donor-driven. By this they mean that research is disorganised, fragmented, and poorly oriented towards local (national) needs. Views on this issue were so strongly held and widely shared that it suffices to quote just one informant:

So we ... respond to research projects that have been internationally [called for]. And we don't have the real planning internally where we say, 'we have dedicated funds to work on ... [this particular] national issue for 10 or 20 years'. Instead, we do piecemeal [research] in terms of attacking some ['global'] challenges.

What this means for Uganda and its development is one problem; how this situation affects academics' perceptions of their roles as they struggle to deal with the fallout is another equally serious crisis. It is telling that everyone we interviewed said that if they could choose more freely, they would undertake research in significantly different areas. One informant put a figure on this, noting, 'I would say 20 per cent of my research is what I want to do', before ruefully adding that the 'donor or person who brings in the money' decides what research gets done. This individual also emphasised that, most of the time, researchers move around on the 'surface' of their research field, in what he described as a 'ping-pong-like arrangement', and are never able to conduct in-depth or longitudinal studies. Another informant noted that the funding situation encourages opportunism in grant applicants: 'You find yourself compelled to tilt your research questions towards what the call needs so that you can win the grant'.

A range of other anomalies that trail in the wake of this 'funding system' came to light. These include the uncomfortable facts that: competitive grants give rise to internal competition rather than collaboration between academics; funding is mostly project- rather than programme-based, which makes most of it short-term, unpredictable and unco-ordinated; the 'global' nature of most funding calls promotes opportunism and does not foster real commitment to science or to solving national, societal problems. At best, the system keeps academics afloat until the next call. These anomalies all relate to another widely reported view that has to do with the core values of academic freedom and autonomy:

Of course, as university we have our autonomy ... The university decides which research to do, we can decide which research we do ... But, at the same time, it is dictated by who is funding us. Because the university does not have its own money ... The budget we have from the government is spent on the teaching. So, that's why we lose autonomy when it comes to research. Yes, I can say 'I want to do this research'. But if the donors are interested in different things ... you will find yourself doing that [donor-defined] research ... We try to choose donors which fit in with our university mandate ... So, I have that autonomy: I am not dictated who to take.

In principle, the university has the autonomy to decide what to research, and how. But because there is no budget for research, academics have little choice but to orient themselves to external sources. These sources decide what research topics they are willing to fund. The academics' autonomy thus consists of 'choosing' between donors, or deciding which calls to respond to. They do not have the freedom to define their own research agendas or even to frame their own research questions. Many informants at CAES told us that they often disagree with donor agendas, noting that calls for research proposals are seldom geared to what academics in Uganda perceive or prioritise as actual national or regional developmental needs. In these circumstances, the autonomy of the academic profession is under severe pressure.

To sum up, several points need to be emphasised. First, academics have to adjust their research interests and skills to the funding opportunities that come their way. That is, the ability to define what research is relevant lies beyond the control of the academics, and rests entirely with donors. Second, academics don't see the research agendas driven by donors as particularly relevant and noted that these agendas deviate considerably from the topics that academics would pursue if they had more control. Third, the aggregated output of this fragmented research agenda is not commensurate with the depth or scope of research that is needed to address agricultural development

in Uganda. Finally, because being relevant as an academic at CAES requires staff members to be responsive to donor interests, Makerere's dependency on donor funding is undermining a core value of the academic profession.

The third mandate: outreach

So far, we have touched on two aspects of CAES's mission – teaching and research. The third part of their mandate as outlined in their *Strategy Plan, 2011–2016* is 'outreach' (Makerere University 2010b). According to the plan, outreach was added to the mission statement of what was then the Faculty of Agriculture in the latter half of the 1980s. From around 2000, the meaning of outreach was modified somewhat, signalling a shift away from knowledge transfer and towards the formation of *partnerships* with a range of actors 'engaged in the broad agricultural and environmental sub-sectors', including:

farming communities for research and innovation, government and other public-policy and R&D bodies, students, private-sector business and industrialists, civil society, regional and global knowledge centres and development partners. CAES meets the needs of this clientele by building their capacity for mission fulfilment and engaging with them in innovation and development actions. (Makerere University 2010b: 19)

Although the shift from 'knowledge transfer' to 'partnerships' mirrors a global trend in agricultural research and development, certain peculiarities are specific to Makerere. First, the introduction of outreach in the 1980s was partly an effort to counteract the forced isolation that Makerere experienced during the Amin regime, and to restore links with local communities that existed prior to the Amin era (see Sicherman 2005). Second, 'reversing the old pattern that privileged "the international interests of scientists" over "those of local agriculture"' was seen as a top priority for the faculty (Opio-Odongo quoted in Sicherman 2005: 206). In essence, outreach was introduced

at Makerere when it was felt that academics, curriculum development and so on, were neglecting the needs of the local agricultural sector.

As with teaching and research, when discussing outreach, we again encounter the two different constituencies that are so central to higher education and research – namely, ‘local’ (or ‘national’) agriculture and science. The perception was (and still is) that tensions exist between the two constituencies, and that they need to be balanced in some way. Achieving balance is difficult because what constitutes relevance for local agriculture on the one hand, and for science and scientists on the other, can differ quite substantially. Since outreach was introduced at the college some thirty years ago, it is interesting to consider how this plays out in the present. In doing so, we share some of our informants’ perceptions of CAES’s outreach mandate, and of how outreach relates to the question of CAES’s relevance.

As noted, when asked to describe their typical work week, teaching and related activities were overwhelmingly reported as the most time-consuming. Research was also mentioned. Only then was outreach mentioned by most, but not all, informants as something they engage in. Far less detail was provided about what outreach entails. Those who did not mention outreach at first, did so when explicitly asked. Overall, outreach was an activity on which informants spent the least time and resources, and on an irregular basis. In addition, outreach activities were consistently included in teaching or more often research work. That is, every outreach initiative was based on, or part of, a course or research project at the college. Since most outreach engagements were linked to research, the issues of donor dependency discussed in relation to research apply to outreach activities as well. In fact, many research grants require an outreach component to be included in projects. Thus, even though outreach is an official part of CAES’s mandate from the university, donors appear to both facilitate and sanction such initiatives while the university reportedly never earmarks or allocates resources for this. Taken together, these factors contribute to the contingent nature of outreach activities at CAES, and arguably account for its sporadic and ad-hoc character.

Two main constituencies were reported as being reached out to: the first and main one was ‘communities’, meaning ‘rural communities’; the second was ‘policy’ circles. A common view is that outreach is synonymous with ‘working with rural communities’. As one informant put it:

We are promoting some technologies with sweet potato, and I am in charge of the gender and nutrition component. So, we are conducting training with community people as well ... That is outreach.

Our interview transcripts are filled with similar statements about outreach activities. The general *modus operandi* seems to be to engage (primarily) rural communities within a given area of expertise and intervene in local practices with the aim of improving lives and livelihoods. However, while many of the statements we recorded feature the standard technology-transfer paradigm that reflects a one-way flow of information from expert to lay person, our informants often stressed the reciprocal nature of interactions between themselves and community members. This issue deserves further attention. The old image of academics who occasionally and briefly leave campus to visit a local community to tell them what to do and what not to do, but otherwise work in splendid isolation, was frequently mentioned as being part of Makerere’s past, when the university was seen as epitomising the ‘ivory tower’ stereotype. Whether or not this was true is beside the point. What matters now is that most informants described their current practices as being very different to those of the past. Although outreach activities at CAES are contingent on donor funding, and remain ‘weak’ and not ‘very aggressively’ pursued (as two informants described them), academics at CAES expressed a strong moral commitment to the newer version of outreach. In this version, outreach has the potential to prove that academics are relevant to society. As one informant said:

So basically here, I teach. Through the mandate, I'm teaching, undertaking some research, and then I do outreach. That means community service. We offer services, to attend to society's problems, probably through consultancy work. Maybe even ... if a community feels there are some problems and they need our services, they can approach us here. And, in that case, I am able to come in with a perspective that is about taking the university to the people, to the community.

In contrast to much of the teaching and research done at CAES, outreach activities offer opportunities for academics to interact directly with groups outside of campus that are meant to benefit from academic work. When informants talked about outreach, their strong orientation toward the agricultural sector and actors involved in the sector was clear. All informants exhibited a strong commitment to promoting the development of Uganda's agricultural sector. The ways in which they justified staying in their current positions were all related to contributions that they believe they can, and do, make to rural development. Most seemed to regard scientific work as important to their own career advancement and for solving societal problems, but no one ascribed any independent value to science. Scientific achievements seemed to have instrumental value only in so far as they contribute to the greater good of society. Outreach was portrayed as the main way to ensure this.

From this perspective, outreach activities 'take the university to society'. At one level, this does involve problem-solving as per the old technology-transfer model. However, the new version of outreach also involves communities in the process of defining and prioritising their problems. In the old paradigm, it was assumed that the experts (academics) would define the problems and create solutions. In the revised version, clients have to be included in the process and their specific needs and aspirations have to be considered. For example, it is now finally seen as futile to promote a certain breed of livestock, a farming method, or use of a technology if this is rejected by the farmers for being at odds with their beliefs, traditions or available

financial resources, etc. Multiple informants mentioned having seen instances of ‘failed uptake’ by farmers. As one of them explained:

Outreach invites us to know the problems better; to define problems better. I think that if we were to really describe university outreach, I think that what we are really doing ... actually takes the university to the community ... You can have meetings when members of society come in and tell us what they need. Hopefully, when they tell us, we don’t stay put. I mean, I don’t invite people and collect all these views and then just keep them somewhere ... No, I bring in the people and I do the research that carries forward and expresses their needs. You know, that kind of thing.

Informants agreed that scenarios in which scientists develop innovations in isolation from the social environment in which they work, and without taking the views of potential beneficiaries into account, were doomed to fail. They pointed out that any agricultural academic following this strategy risks the worst of fates: irrelevance. In this narrative, impact was the defining feature of relevance, and impact was widely understood as uptake of academically produced knowledge and technology among end-users. To accomplish this, clients have to actively participate in all stages of a project, and their views have to be taken into consideration, all the way from the initial definition of a problem to the implementation of solutions. Put differently, this participatory cycle is what brings ‘society into the university’.

The dissemination of knowledge: a broken system

A final issue to be considered here is the division of labour between the government and CAES in providing technical advice and support to actors in the agricultural sector. Although these academics hold direct interactions with rural communities in high regard for enabling them to prove their relevance to society, none of our informants agreed that these interactions should be their core function as professional

academics based at a university. An obvious reason for this is that, in the agriculture sector, the dissemination of (scientific) knowledge and innovations has been the sole purpose of the public extension service. In Uganda, as elsewhere, the traditional education-research-extension model has meant that the role of the university was to supply research stations and extension services with appropriately skilled officers, and thus provide end-users with knowledge and technical advice. The trouble, as academics at CAES perceive it, is that the extension service has broken down for political reasons. This creates a serious problem, not only for the extension services but also for CAES as the breakdown has severely weakened the college's links with society.

Not surprisingly, the disarray in Uganda's extension services is a source of frustration for academics at CAES. Many noted that their outreach activities are under pressure to somehow fill the gaps left by the failing service. As multiple informants emphasised, extension services were designed to cover every district in the country whereas outreach at CAES reaches relatively few communities, and has a far more limited and localised impact. As a mandated service, outreach was meant to *supplement* the extension service, not to replace it.

Assessing the scope and significance of CAES's outreach programme is difficult for several reasons. The first is its contingent, ad-hoc and residual nature, which tends to minimise the importance of outreach in academics' perceptions. At the same time, outreach has strongly normative connotations at CAES. This means that whether or not they are involved in these activities, all informants agreed that outreach should be a central concern for every agricultural academic. Having said that, they also acknowledged that outreach is (at best) a modest support to the work of the extension services.

Whether or not outreach has developed into an activity capable of counteracting academics' inclination to favour the 'international interests of science' at the expense of local agricultural development, is impossible to assess. What can be said is that, when it comes to problem definition and problem-solving, the academics we interviewed at CAES prefer to embed their academic efforts in local agriculture.

CAES, neoliberalism and the meaning of relevance

We have not yet explicitly addressed the issue of neoliberalism mentioned in the introduction. In the rest of this chapter, we revisit this topic, drawing on the history of CAES to identify key characteristics of its development from the late 1960s until the present. Our point of departure is from a lecture by John L Nickel. Nickel came to Uganda from the University of California at Berkley in 1966 and was appointed as the first full-time dean of Makerere's Faculty of Agriculture. In his inaugural lecture, he said:

Statements about isolation from society and seeking truth and knowledge for their own sake can generally be traced to early European and British universities, built around the professions of law and medicine and the studies of theology and philosophy, designed to educate an elite. I do not believe such statements are generally felt to apply towards the modern Faculty of Agriculture, whether it exists in a British, American or African university. (Nickel 1970)

Nickel held his position until 1971. He thus led the faculty from Makerere's so-called glory days of the late 1960s, and into Idi Amin's reign of terror. Under his leadership, the faculty made some important advancements in terms of research-capacity building, the development of postgraduate programmes and the Africanisation of staff. Commenting on these advancements, Sichertman (2005: 202) observed that 'Had not Amin intervened ... the links among research, teaching and national development would presumably have evolved coherently'. We found no empirical evidence to back up this claim, but none to reject it either. Based on Nickel's speech, his commitment to the idea of the 'developmental university' was clear. As he saw it, 'It is the responsibility of the Faculty of Agriculture to teach, train and inspire professional agriculturalists to be front-line officers in agricultural revolution' (Nickel 1970: 16).

However, Amin *did* intervene, and in the wake of the destruction inflicted on the faculty by Amin's regime, and by the subsequent civil war, the faculty's 'moves toward restoration' in the latter half of the 1980s and its 'revival in the 1990s' are highlighted by Sicherman (2005: 205, 207). It is as if the faculty was saved from the brink in the 1990s and was able to resume its journey along a somewhat similar path, re-establishing the relationships between its research, teaching and national development. What is missing from Sicherman's account, however, is the catastrophic interventions of the Bretton Woods institutions in Ugandan politics and policy-making from around 1990. The promotion of neoliberal policies affected not just Ugandan higher education but also the agricultural sector, thus profoundly shaping the conditions in which academics at CAES now work. For the remainder of this chapter, we focus on the nexus between relevance, neoliberalism and democracy.

Research, teaching and national development

Based on the data we collected, we cannot confirm Sicherman's assertions about the coherence of research, teaching and national development in Ugandan agriculture. In theory, the Ugandan government has a research agenda related to agricultural development. In reality, however, the absence of funding prevents this agenda from being implemented. Instead, as shown, agricultural research is overwhelmingly donor-driven and -funded. The (foreign) donors have their own research agendas, and these have no clear links or means of co-ordination with one another or with national strategies for knowledge generation that aims to serve the agricultural sector. As noted, academics at CAES see the resulting fragmentation and lack of funding as not only hampering knowledge production relevant for agricultural development but also harming the academic profession by delinking the relationship between teaching and research. Based on our data, academics at CAES perceive this relationship as having developed incoherently and become stagnant.

Furthermore, the deregulation of tertiary education in Uganda

has created a race among the former technical schools to become universities. As a result, many of the practical certificate- and diploma-level courses in agriculture have vanished. This drift towards university education has also generated a vacuum in the occupational structures in agriculture. That is, there is no longer any adequate education that fills the gap between academics on the one hand, and the farmers and other users of knowledge on the other. This has left the scientifically oriented CAES in limbo – the division of labour between the tertiary institutions with regard to agriculture is blurred, with no clear boundaries between theory and practice. In terms of curricula development, CAES is being pushed in both directions.

In addition, Makerere, which was, until recently, the only university offering a degree in agriculture, is now competing for fee-paying students in the increasingly privatised education market. In this market, demand-driven curriculum development foregrounds the preferences of NGOs (as employers of agriculture graduates) and students above solid educational criteria. Accordingly, Makerere has been transformed from a ‘developmental’ into a ‘market-led’ campus (Mamdani 2007). Rather than playing an external and supportive role in a transforming economy, the university has become part of the economy, governed by the logic of supply and demand in the marketplace for higher education. At CAES, curricula are no longer designed primarily with a view to meeting the needs of Ugandan agriculture, but also in relation to what increases student numbers and income generation for the university. Under such circumstances, for academics at CAES to be relevant means simultaneously satisfying different sets of criteria for relevance. These criteria include: producing skilled, ‘hands-on’ graduates for NGOs and agri-businesses; recruiting scientifically trained staff who are capable of ensuring the future development of the academic profession, and yielding graduates who are capable of contributing to national agricultural development in Uganda. Our data suggests that these three aspects of what constitutes relevance do not merge into a coherent whole. Instead, as they diverge, external, off-campus stakeholders are increasingly securing a stronghold over how relevance is defined.

In line with the neoliberal project, the state's agricultural extension service has been partially privatised (that is, sub-contacted to private companies), and critical responsibilities have been transferred from the central authorities to district-level structures. As a result, NGOs have become dominant actors in providing extension services to Ugandan farmers, and in employing agricultural professionals. However, this privatisation and decentralisation process has severely weakened the extension services' relations with both the academic community (which previously provided a knowledge base for extension officers), and the central state, which is supposed to guide and plan for national agricultural development and food security. Thus, neoliberal reforms have severely weakened a major channel via which the university and society have long been linked in the agriculture sector. Having established that this situation frustrates academics at CAES enormously, we asked informants what this means for how they see the relevance of their own work in relation to the needs of their supposed beneficiaries. We reflect on and discuss their responses below.

'There is no demand': knowledge and neoliberal 'development'

We have briefly outlined how the neoliberal reforms have affected CAES. However, Museveni's regime ranks among those that have adopted neoliberal conceptions of development in their 'purest' form and taken these to their extreme in practice. Consequently, like Makerere, the entire agricultural sector has been subjected to the 'advice' of the Bretton Woods institutions. Consequently, measures related to 'liberalisation' were implemented to 'incentivise' (meaning pressure) farmers to move away from subsistence and into commercial agriculture. Academics at CAES told us that the relevance of the knowledge they possess, and the roles they can play in agricultural development, depends heavily on the policy context within which the end-users of this knowledge (that is, graduates and ultimately farmers) work. Simply put, certain policy directions mobilise end-users to engage in trade and agro-industry, others do not. In this context, if CAES decides to share any knowledge that does not directly

mobilise and enable end-users to enter the market, the college is seen as failing to maximise the uptake of academic knowledge. Reduced uptake renders academics' wider knowledge base irrelevant and the academic profession becomes 'a ruler-in-waiting', as one frustrated informant described it.

Among interviewees at CAES, the consensus was that current agricultural policy in Uganda does not spur agricultural development, in the sense of promoting market exchange between farmers and other actors in the sector. Rather, in their collective narrative, the neoliberal policy regime (a phrase used explicitly by quite a few and implied by the rest) has had the effect of not 'incentivising' farmers to shift their subsistence practices towards more market-oriented ones. In effect (subsistence) farmers are being 'left behind' in the sense that the Ugandan state has withdrawn its previous engagement with, and support for, agricultural development in these communities.

The story goes that, as long as farmers are not 'incentivised', they have no (rational) reason to attempt to sell their goods, and the only actor that academics believe has the resources to create the conditions that would support such trade – the state – has chosen not to do so. According to this narrative, Ugandan farmers are unable to make the shift from subsistence to market-based agriculture and find themselves in a 'transition trap'. It goes without saying that academics at CAES support neither this policy regime nor the ideology on which it is based. For them, neoliberal agricultural policy is, at best, a recipe for the agricultural stagnation that they see in Uganda today.

The stagnation of the sector also presents a significant risk to the college. The statement "There is no demand!" was uttered explicitly in one interview and implied by many others. The view expressed was that the demand for knowledge from academics is non-existent because the majority of small farm owners are disconnected from the market economy. Again, the link between the farmers' market orientations (or lack thereof) and academic knowledge is assumed. Centre stage in understanding this disconnectedness was the demolition of the farmers' co-operatives. These co-operatives are viewed at CAES as a prerequisite for mobilising market exchange between broad layers of

the peasantry, but the current policy regime's hostility to co-operatives means that this mobilisation cannot occur. Co-operatives are understood here not as ideological organisations but as part of an indigenous and practical economic system that is necessarily a factor in Ugandan development. As long as the government impedes this method of organising local communities, co-operatives will remain unable to motivate small-scale and subsistence farmers to participate in market exchange.

On the relationship between relevance, knowledge and development, our most important conclusion is that academics at CAES generally hold the view that Uganda's agricultural policy is preventing uptake of their knowledge by potential users. According to most of our informants, the neoliberal policy regime is based on assumptions that are untrue in the Ugandan context, and it is therefore unable to transform the sector in line with its own presuppositions. This, in turn, means that universities receive little or no demand for their services from their supposed beneficiaries. What this situation makes abundantly clear is that any discussion about the relevance of the profession and its knowledge base has to be lifted out of the internal academic sphere. For example, recurring debates about 'balancing' theoretical and practical knowledge are perhaps not very important when considered from a perspective that takes account of societal needs and conditions for making knowledge accessible. That is, whatever balance academics might strike, uptake of their knowledge can still be prohibited by conditions such as the current neoliberal policy regime, which are, for now anyway, beyond the control of academics at CAES.

Summing up

The findings we remain most certain of concern the working conditions and role perceptions of academics at CAES. Although working conditions seem to be better at CAES than in other colleges at the university, informants consistently reported that their teaching loads leave little room for other critical aspects of their role. With access to some research funding, the academics are able to maintain their

identity as researchers to some extent. However, this does not mean that CAES can be seen as research-led, since research and education at the college do not appear to be linked in any systematic way. In terms of professional autonomy, the conditions that determine this are beyond the control of the college, the university and the tertiary sector as a whole. This leaves academics in Uganda in a situation of professional dependency.

This claim is strengthened by our findings on the question of relevance in relation to research, curriculum development and outreach. With regard to research, academics are largely at the mercy of donors when it comes to deciding what to research. At CAES, a clear discrepancy exists between the research agendas of the college's many donors and what the academics themselves would focus on if they had more freedom to choose. In terms of curriculum planning, actors outside of the college increasingly influence the shape and content of courses. At CAES, the idea that course offerings must be 'relevant to society' has a strong foothold, yet what the academics themselves define as relevant is increasingly equated with 'irrelevance'. The final mission, outreach, is still regarded by academics at CAES as crucial for maintaining some (albeit weak) links to their preferred constituency, the farming community. However, outreach activities were consistently described as ad-hoc and highly related to research funding; here again, CAES is dependent on external donors.

As outlined by academics at CAES, neoliberal restructuring has impacted on the university and the wider agricultural sector, with the 'demand-side' gaining the upper hand in shaping curricula and research. This means that 'hands-on' knowledge, (which can supposedly be applied by graduates as soon as they reach the job market) is prioritised. Many courses and course materials are directed at end-users who have supposedly made the transition to the market economy, but this means that almost no support is available for subsistence farmers.

The significance of Uganda's agricultural policy in shaping academic work at CAES cannot be underestimated. Informants consistently reported seeing this as at least as important as policy on higher education and research. In essence, the perception is that the failure of

neoliberal policy to promote agricultural development is also inhibiting farmers' demand for academic agricultural knowledge. This demand deficit is understood as gradually reducing the role of academics, rendering their knowledge unwanted and their efforts irrelevant.

These observations and conclusions lead us to the final point we wish to make in this chapter, which is about the nature of the relationship between capitalist development and democracy. Like Makerere's first dean of agriculture, John Nickel, who was appointed decades ago, academics we talked to at CAES strongly reject the idea that academic knowledge should be produced in 'isolation from society' or that they should spend time 'seeking truth and knowledge for its own sake'. Instead, they asserted that knowledge should be produced for external social and economic purposes – in their case, to advance the social and economic conditions for rural communities in Uganda. However, they don't understand the mobilisation of knowledge as the only prerequisite for (capitalist) agricultural development. Rather, they see the uptake and use of knowledge as conditioned by the policy regime that governs the sector.

In other words, Uganda's current agricultural policy has had the dual effect of 'leaving subsistence farmers behind' and reducing the uptake of agricultural knowledge produced in the universities. No agricultural development (or 'agricultural revolution' to use Nickel's phrase) is taking place, *and* no academic knowledge is being drawn upon. This, of course, exposes the flimsiness of the link between development and democracy that neoliberals so often assert and espouse when arguing that democratisation is intimately (even causally) linked to capitalist development and vice versa. Indeed, since academic knowledge is not actually being drawn upon to stimulate capitalist development in Uganda, it is difficult to argue that this knowledge base is being used to promote and expand democracy in any way. The irony is that although this link is precisely what neoliberal ideology professes to support, in practice, as shown, it inhibits both.

7

Teaching social studies and law in a neoliberal authoritarian regime

Uganda has struggled to build a democratic society, leaving Ugandans in general, and Makerere University in particular, caught between policies and processes that encourage democracy to flourish and others that entrench dictatorship (Halvorsen 2010c; Mbazira 2016). Sabiti Makara's description of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM), led by President Yoweri Museveni, as a 'soft authoritarian regime' rings true (2010: 79). Throughout Uganda's post-independence history, relations between the government and the university have been ambivalent. The government tends to see the university as a hotbed of domestic opposition, and academics who have taken up the struggle for democracy have suffered hardship and deprivation (see Musisi and Muwanga 2003; Sicherman 2005). Indications are that the knowledge-politics nexus in Uganda is ambivalent in the sense that scientific knowledge is generally not perceived to be a solid basis for political decision-making. In particular, relations between the state and academics in the humanities and the social sciences have often been problematic. Accordingly, when making political decisions and policies, state officials and organisations rarely draw on academic knowledge or data, and the president has repeatedly criticised the social sciences and humanities in Uganda for the irrelevance and 'uselessness' of their courses (*Daily Monitor* 2014, 2016). At the same time, our impression is that those neoliberal forces that do influence the priorities and policies of the political regime often question the relevance of these disciplines for Uganda.

In its *Strategic Plan for 2006–2016*, Makerere’s School of Law (SoL) acknowledges that neoliberal economic thinking is likely to have far-reaching consequences for the campus, although it does not address or discuss these (SoL 2006). What is crucial for universities, is that this economic paradigm changes what constitutes relevance and how relevance is understood. Neoliberalism favours a more pragmatic but much narrower notion of relevance, judging it primarily according to educational outcomes, and how these contribute to economic development. Based on this notion, Gibbons (1998) suggested that higher-education institutions no longer need to fulfil some of the critical functions that they have played in Western society since the early 1900s. One of these critical functions is ‘truth telling’ or constructive criticism. Increasingly, this role, which we see *as essential in any academic* institution, is seen as ‘intellectually and socially dangerous’ at Makerere (Sicherman 2005: 244).

The dual focus of this chapter is the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS) and the School of Law (SoL). The purpose of the chapter is threefold. First, we aim to understand the relationship between the academic profession (including the realm of scientific knowledge) and politics in Uganda in the context of neoliberal reform. Second, we explore and discuss what relevance means to academics at CHUSS and SoL.⁵⁶ Third, we consider what neoliberalism means for the role of academics in fostering democracy in Uganda. We start by presenting how academics understand relevance; we then reflect on the relationship between knowledge and politics. We also present the academics’ understandings of academic freedom and how they perceive its status at Makerere, before discussing how these academics see themselves as contributing to democracy and the challenges they face in this regard.

The shifting relationship between Makerere and Uganda’s governments, 1966–2020

From the late 1960s until the early 1990s, Makerere was – like most other institutions and sectors in Uganda – badly affected by political,

social and economic upheaval. During Milton Obote's first term as president (1966–1971), the running of Makerere was placed clearly under state rule and the government exerted strict control over the university. The head of state was made the university's chancellor, and while the education minister had the authority to direct the affairs of the university in the 'national interest', Obote had full responsibility for appointing all senior administrators (Mamdani 2009: 10).

When Idi Amin was in power (from 1971 to 1979), the arbitrary firing of academic staff was common, some students and academic staff were even killed, and many academics fled the country. Unsurprisingly, relations between the government and formal bodies representing staff interests at Makerere were hostile. In 1975, the Makerere University Academic Staff Association was banned, and government spies were deployed to the campus to try to silence protests and discussion among academics (Musisi and Muwanga 2003). By 1977, more Ugandan academics were living outside of Uganda than inside the country (Kyemba 1997: 98). Those who remained, struggled to maintain academic standards while working for little to no pay in an atmosphere of political menace (Sicherman 2005; Whyte and Whyte 2016). As Sicherman (2005: 256) observed, the 'growing illiberalism' of those times particularly affected political scientists, whose 'research into issues of domestic political significance became not only potentially subversive but downright dangerous'.

During Obote's second term in office (1981–1985), the killing of academics continued while others were co-opted into accepting positions in government. Thus, from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s, fear and staff shortages were endemic. The Department of Political Science was particularly vulnerable because its teaching staff were seen as people who 'understood too much and might stick their necks out' (Sicherman 2005: 113). While a less obviously life-threatening political climate has prevailed since the NRM's rise to power in 1986, academics have continued to report feeling that their rights are limited (see Mittelman 2018; Musisi and Muwanga 2003).

In the 1990s, Makerere felt the hand of government less directly, but was far from immune to its influence (Sicherman 2005). As noted

in previous chapters, from the early 1990s, market-oriented reforms unfolded at Makerere, guided by the conviction then held by the World Bank that higher education was more of a private than a public good. Museveni and his government embraced the World Bank's views with uncritical enthusiasm, holding fast to this dogma long after the World Bank itself started to rethink its position. Mahmood Mamdani (2009: xiii) summed up the situation as follows:

At Makerere, I lived through a period where successive governments systematically devalued higher education, either because they saw it as a dangerous centre of independent and critical thought (the Obote II period) or because they embraced the World Bank lie of the 1980s that higher education was not productive (the Museveni period).

In adopting its market-friendly perspective, the Museveni government has decided that the social sciences are only marginally relevant for development and national needs. According to Mamdani (2009: xi), the reforms, driven by the World Bank, political leaders in government and the top management at Makerere, have commercialised the university to such an extent that the private sector not only drives this public university but has also expanded the state's role in, and control over, the institution (see also Kasozi 2016b).

Relevance

As argued in Chapter 3, the academic profession has no social contract stipulating that it must be relevant for any particular purpose or client. For academics to be free to define the relevance of their own work is important not only for their professional responsibilities inside the universities but also for their various engagements with society. Most of the academics we interviewed at CHUSS and SoL saw their relevance as closely connected to truth telling and problem-solving, and stated that they aimed to make their work relevant to their students as well as to local communities and the political system in various ways. This

notion of relevance was closely linked to academics' perceptions of their roles as teachers and knowledge disseminators. In this context, many understood relevance as requiring that they teach their students to think independently and critically, thereby equipping graduates with skills such as problem-solving and self-reflection.

Relevant vision and strategic plans?

Academics we interviewed at CHUSS all said that they identify with the mission of the college (as stated on its website), which is: 'to create and transmit ideas, knowledge, virtues and values to students with a view to preparing them to be leaders and workers for their country'. However, they did not agree with the goal set out in the college's strategic plan for 2011–2018, which proposes that the college will 'transform students into effective and innovative human resources' (CHUSS 2011: 8).

At SoL, informants emphasised the importance of teaching the meaning of constitutionalism without limiting this to what is contained in Uganda's constitution. To teach law not only as it is, but also how it should be, was seen as highly relevant and important. This view, however, was reported as reflecting a relatively recent trend at SoL. Apparently, in the past, the role of lecturer was simply to lecture on the constitution and other legislation without reflecting on, or discussing, broader issues of justice in society. Although some staff reportedly still work according to this limited focus, this is apparently less prevalent than before. Dani Nabudere (2001) traced this change back to the 1980s and attributed it largely to three new graduates who joined what was then the Department of Commercial Law. Sicherman (2005) agreed that this department laid the foundations for changes in the law faculty in the mid-1990s, when it reoriented its curriculum and prepared new courses befitting the expanded definition of human rights contained in Uganda's current Constitution, which was adopted in 1995.

The relevance embedded in the types of knowledge that academics pass on to their students is closely related to curriculum content. Mamdani (2009) described how the arts faculty (now part of CHUSS)

was at the epicentre of the neoliberal reform crisis at Makerere in the early 1990s, and that the arts departments transformed their curricula more than any others. For him, these curriculum reforms were driven by a quest for relevance, but the reformers' notions of relevance were wholly market-oriented. Only those skills for which there was an explicit demand in the job/economic market were considered relevant, and new curricula were geared towards imparting skills that would help graduates get jobs. At the time, the university management called the process of curriculum change 'professionalisation' but Mamdani perhaps more accurately described it as vocationalisation (2009). This process was further reinforced by two trends in Uganda's higher-education sector. The first was that new private higher-education institutions were rapidly opening up, and the second was that courses that attracted larger numbers of students were allocated more resources, while courses with lower student numbers received less.

When we conducted our study in 2019 and 2020, CHUSS's strategic plan for 2011–2018 (CHUSS 2011) was still the college's guiding document. The plan emphasises that the college should include stakeholders in curriculum development and carry out market surveys to ensure that it remains relevant to the demands of the job market. This, and other formal statements issued by the college, reveal their clear focus on making the social sciences attractive and on equipping students with skills that are seen as relevant to the world of work. For example, a statement on the history of CHUSS reads: 'Aware of the global challenges, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences designed new strategies to provide its students with more favourable and marketable programmes and courses'.⁵⁷ Also clear from this statement is that CHUSS sees the offering of market-oriented programmes as one of its strengths. In its mission statement, set out in the strategic plan, the college's stated aim is to produce the 'most competitive and relevant graduates for regional and global markets' (CHUSS 2011: 4). 'Customer responsiveness' is listed as one of the college's core values, and the strategic plan asserts that the college strives to 'make its *products* more relevant to the needs of society' (CHUSS, 2011: 4, 12, emphasis added). Clearly, the college is not necessarily attempting to educate graduates

according to internally developed notions of relevance that are rooted in academic values or the disciplines of humanities and social sciences.

In stark contrast to these official statements, none of the academics we interviewed at CHUSS or SoL agreed that the primary mandate of the college or the school is, or should be, limited to training for the job market. As one informant put it:

You don't go to study to get jobs ... [or to get] vocational training. Here, you study to acquire knowledge, critical thinking. That is the aim of the liberal arts at the university. And after that you can think about other things. There is a difference between a terminal degree and an academic degree. Universities are not supposed to train for job markets directly. You train, broaden your mind, and then you can do other things. It [a first degree] is not supposed to be terminal.

Relevant curricula?

Most of our informants agreed that students should be educated in ways that enable them to understand public concerns and problems, and to participate thoughtfully in addressing these. Everyone we interviewed recognised the value of a citizenry educated for democracy and advocated for this. They emphasised that academics should manage curriculum development and that this process should be guided by academic values.

At SoL, one informant stated that academics had been given the scope to influence course development according to their understanding of relevance, rather than market demand alone. In essence, this meant that they had been able to ensure that gender and human-rights perspectives were adequately integrated into the curriculum. The academics we interviewed at CHUSS understood the steady vocationalisation of Makerere's academic programmes as eroding the quality of the qualifications conferred. They noted that such courses are often poorly designed, attract less competent students

and lecturers, and tend to be placed in the wrong colleges and faculties. In line with Mamdani's views, one academic pointed out that the aim of these courses

was to attract money, so those programmes ended up being weak. The university has been vocationalised. So, this is a problem, the emphasis became making money ... That is where Makerere lost it – over money.

Another expressed a contrasting view, noting that the supposedly 'clear-cut line between vocationalisation and academic disciplines is not so clear' and suggesting that critics of vocationalisation are confusing this with the scope it creates for interdisciplinarity:

You can say tourism is vocational, but when you look at it from a big-picture perspective, it ceases to be vocational because tourism can translate and feed into environmental science. How? [Well,] you might not focus on tourism as a business but as a service for sustainable conservation. And the same is so for many other subjects.

Relevant outreach and research?

Most of our informants understood relevance primarily in terms of community outreach. Central to this were projects that aim to educate the public, carry out advocacy work on issues of politics and governance, influence and inform policy, and interact with communities. They pointed out that these projects can take the form of capacity building within government – guiding government officials and policy-makers in their work, engaging with and providing input for policy and legislative processes, and training of governmental officials. This is in line with CHUSS's overall mandate, which (besides teaching, conducting research and disseminating knowledge in the humanities and social sciences) is to

inform policy, programmes and decision-makers through translation of research to policy, public engagement and monitoring social development ... [and] generally speaking, to look critically and advise on issues of governance, respect of human rights and ethical matters in society. (CHUSS 2011: v, 3–4)

This community focus was also very evident among academics and leaders at SoL, whose strategic plan emphasises that, given the dwindling public finances available to Makerere:

There is a need to move away from an ‘ivory tower’ mentality, where research is done for research’s sake, towards a situation where legal research and the teaching of law deal with day-to-day problems facing local communities, vulnerable groups, the country, the region and the international community as a whole. (SoL 2006: 1)

Expanding on this, some of the *leaders* at SoL told us that the ‘ivory tower’ mindset remains problematic among some staff. They emphasised that the school has accepted the ‘need to behave like a business’ (which is also mentioned in the strategic plan) (SoL 2006: 6). By contrast, *academics* at SoL argued that basic research (‘research for its own sake’) complements the work of community outreach and emphasised that they see both as equally important. Community outreach at SoL is closely associated with capacity building in the governance system. Thus, decision-makers and politicians are regarded as central actors and potential users of the knowledge produced and disseminated by the school. Relevance was understood as present when outreach happens successfully. Many informants at SoL said that academics should engage with society outside of their classrooms. Accordingly, they often emphasised the links between their academic work and society, with most stating that they hoped to influence actors in society through their research and outreach.

While none of the academics we met argued that Uganda is being

governed according to democratic values and principles, they all saw the academic profession as having a role to play in contributing to the growth of democracy. Generally, they saw their academic work as important and relevant to this, arguing that academics should help to provide society with a knowledge base on which to base their political choices, and from which to develop their political skills and capacities. Some argued that universities are relevant to the extent they are able to educate, inform and enable a democratic citizenry. However, they went on to say that, for academic work to be relevant to the development of democracy in this way, universities had to be respected as crucial social institutions, and as driving forces in society.

We encountered two conceptions of the role of the academy in CHUSS and SoL (as engaging in the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and in response to the needs of society), and their academics saw both as relevant. As one informant explained:

There is a traditional role which would be to guide students, to teach, guide and do research. But also, the other role is to do with the fact that you engage with the public ... So, the outreach work which you find me doing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example ... that is part of my mission as a professor. So, there are two lines: here at the university and also outside of the university.

Mamdani (2009) argued that the World Bank-led reforms at Makerere in the late 1990s led to the university changing its mission from being development-oriented (where the point was to produce skills adequate to correcting the distortions of the colonial economy) to being market-focused. However, the academics we interviewed at CHUSS and SoL seem to be adopting a (new) developmentally oriented approach. They argued strongly that the graduates they educate, the knowledge they disseminate, and their research output is relevant for development, both in broad terms and for national needs. And whereas the market-oriented phase at Makerere prioritised the natural and other sciences, the current staff cohort acknowledge that the social sciences and

humanities are of paramount importance in their own right. In addition, they see the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake as relevant, and they see their colleges as serving society through the production and sharing of relevant knowledge. This service was *not* purely, or even primarily, conceptualised as supporting economic development. All of our informants disagreed with the neoliberal notions that course content should focus exclusively on job-related skills and that research topics should be driven by student or market demand. Nevertheless, to survive on the low salaries they receive, many informants told us that they have no choice but to offer their expertise in the marketplace as consultants and respond to donor interests when applying for research grants. Thus, it can be argued that they are, in fact, answerable to the demands of the market in various ways.

The science–politics nexus

When asked about relevance, informants said they see this as closely linked to the political system, and stated that, besides their students, they perceive the government as the main potential user of the knowledge they create and disseminate. Academics at CHUSS pointed out that the college has a mandate to ‘inform policy and decision-makers, and advise on issues of governance, respect of human rights and ethical matters in society’ (CHUSS 2011: v). Similarly, SoL’s main tasks are to ‘develop and enhance the legal knowledge necessary for practical application in national development, democratic governance and integrity in public institutions’ (SoL 2006: 7; see also Makerere University 2007: 282). Despite these clear directives, very few informants said they are able to influence governance as much as they would like. Most reported that it is difficult to communicate their research output to potential users in government and noted that they seldom receive requests for data or expert opinions. Since academics at CHUSS and SoL see the relevance of their work as closely linked to the extent of their influence on political processes, we now try to describe and reflect on the strained relationship between politics and knowledge in Uganda.

The influence of academics

Ideally, informants agreed, their work should be relevant *and* enjoy influence indicating that the actual situation is far from ideal. A central issue is the difficulty of establishing causal links between research and its political impact. As one informant said:

I think for [our] work to be accepted as relevant, and then be acknowledged as relevant, it has to find its way into the public domain, into public policy and be acknowledged as such, you know.

The academics clearly see relevance and influence as related, but they seem to understand *influence* as having consequences outside the university, while *relevance* is understood as having an impact both internally and externally. In other words, academic work can be *relevant* to societal actors, whether or not those actors are able to acknowledge, understand or value the contribution. By contrast, *influence* is dependent on those who access knowledge acting in ways that can be expected to lead to some sort of social change. Given this distinction between relevance and influence, it is possible for academic work to be relevant *and* influential. However, it is equally possible for work to be relevant and have no influence.

Generally speaking, academics can obviously influence politics and governance in various ways. In democratic societies, academics regularly participate in advisory processes with different branches of government, with the expectation that the data and expertise they share will inform political decision-making (Maasen and Weingart 2005: 9). In Uganda, academics at CHUSS and SoL told us that politicians neither read nor pay attention to the research they produce. Although each of the arms of government *could* benefit from the knowledge produced through consultations and consultancy services, this was not happening. To quote a few informants:

I wish it [the government] was [paying attention], but I can't say that it largely is, because the decisions that are taken, sometimes they are really not based on research.

We should be able to feed into [policy formulation] but we are challenged. First, because we have to teach and do research, so there may not be enough time to engage in policy-making. Second, the attitudes of the policy-makers towards academics, where it is thought that we are more about theory than practice. But at the end of the day, it is the theory that informs practice really. That should be the idea.

The politicians don't consult. Contrary to what they say, they don't. They just sit with a few people, think about something and then develop an idea. And that is what they present. The parliament, they don't consult. Because, if they were consulting, the best people to use would be us. You come to us, we consult the people, and then you get the real views of the people, they don't do that.

The most difficult people to influence in this country are the policy-makers. We have tried many times, but with very little success ... For my project, I went and met with the undersecretary, and booked an appointment to go and speak to the people who draft these policies ... After maybe ten minutes they were dozing. They were not attentive at all. And here was me thinking, 'My God, this country needs help'.

Thus, while the academics did not *expect* research-based knowledge to have any direct effect on policy-makers, they strongly believe that research and consultancies should inform policy and political decision-making. Ugandan citizens seem to share this view. A project run by SoL's Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIPEC) before the 2016

presidential and parliamentary elections set out to map the political influence of various societal stakeholders, including the universities (HURIPEC 2016). The findings revealed widespread public perception that academics have few interests and little influence. One informant summed this up as follows:

Respect is not transformed into influence; the work we do is good, but the influential power is little. We are yet to get there.

The HURIPEC study suggested that one reason for this is that

The vibrant debates ignited by academia have long been lost. Active politics in Uganda is no longer a realm for decent people as it is characterised by high levels of hooliganism and money games. This has kept out many worthy persons, including academics. (2016: 44)

Nevertheless, the study found that most citizens wanted the academic profession to play a more active role in relation to national politics. The report also acknowledged that the commercialisation of the universities means that most Ugandan academics are too busy trying to survive economically to have the time or opportunities to influence policy. However, some members of the public did mention Makerere as the academic home of the few scholars in Uganda who are believed to have some influence over policy, and who are offering leadership by presenting papers at political workshops (HURIPEC 2016). On this, a few academics in our study gave examples of how they had been able to contribute to policy development. One informant said that colleagues at SoL had participated in many areas, including issues related to environmental law. Another had commented on guidelines for how the judiciary should handle court cases and helped educate MPs about international human rights and constitutionalism in Uganda. Other matters on which informants reported having been able to contribute were: local government and decentralisation, governance

and accountability, political party structures, youth employment, improving electoral processes, and unconstitutional legislation that was violating human rights.

Others acknowledged that the government had funded certain research and consultancy projects but had subsequently ignored the findings and policy recommendations. One informant gave the following example:

Even when I just came here in 2002, I did research for the minister of agriculture ... They said, 'you are the best placed to advise on this' ... They gave me money, and I went to two districts [to assess a project the ministry was involved in]. I told them, 'This thing is not working at all, stop it'. Then they said, 'Do you want us to lose our jobs?' ... Of course, they got my work and put it on a shelf. They did not work on it.

This academic argued that, rather than seeking suggestions for improving established practices, the ministry was simply interested in confirming that existing practices were working. Consulting academics thus seemed to be mostly about legitimising their approach. Many informants believed that policy decisions are mostly based on policy-makers' own private interests or ideas. In their view, policy-makers tend to rely on the politicians for direction, rather than on the work of academics or other professionals. In essence, informants suggested that informal discussions and interests – 'somebody's gut feeling or simply hearsay' – guide political decision-making far more than evidence-based knowledge. Many of these informal prompts are perceived to be connected to the wishes of the president.

Some informants reported that when government departments do commission research, the commissions are sometimes duplicated and reports seldom seem to be read or followed up on. In general, government officials are regarded as reading very little research at all. As two informants observed:

We do our best to disseminate it. I mean, even if it is not being read, at least the documentation is there. We can refer to it, and we need to be able to capture things as they are happening.

Our politicians don't read. We know this because the book [*Scholars in the Marketplace*] really spells out the problem of the university in Uganda. If the president, the parliament, read that book, they would reform our education system. But they don't read. Even when you call them and say 'I want to give you a paper', they will listen for the first five minutes, and then they are waiting for when it is tea time, and then they go away.

Despite these experiences, most informants still insisted that their research has value, and some suggested that the absence of effective communication channels between academics and the government can make it difficult for politicians to access the research that is available. Others noted that relevant research does not 'get out there' and often gets filed away in university libraries. Perhaps the problem is double-sided: academics are unable to make their data and recommendations available in easily accessible form, and policy-makers have little interest in academic research or data. Either way, academic knowledge is not reaching government officials effectively. Another view expressed by several informants is reflected in the following comment:

The problem is not even with the university. The university is actually producing knowledge that is relevant out there. But if you have a government that has a negative view of the university, that's where the problem is. Here the state doesn't deal with academics.

In reviewing these comments, we made an analytical distinction between how academics perceive the *conditions for influencing policy-*

making, and how they perceive the *influence they actually have*. This distinction divided informants into two categories: those that perceived the conditions for influencing to be *bad*, and their actual influence to be *non-existent*; and those that perceived the conditions for influencing to be *bad*, and their actual influence to be *small*. No one suggested that the conditions for influencing are good or adequate. Many of the academics at CHUSS fit in the first category. Some at CHUSS and most of those at SoL said that they had influenced the government on some issues. Academics at SoL generally perceive their potential for influence to be greater than that of other colleges and schools at Makerere, and indicated that their research is not only met with more interest but is more often requested and used.

Nevertheless, given the generally weak channels of communication and lack of interest from the government, it seems reasonable to state that most of the knowledge emerging from CHUSS and SoL was unlikely to influence political processes or lead to effective policies per se. The strained relationship between the political regime and certain academics seems to be making it less and less likely that state officials will seek professional advice from academics. Arguably, knowledge is not a 'currency of choice in legitimizing state power' in Uganda, even though Weiler (2006: 71) claimed that this is the case in democratic societies.

Trust in academics

Many of the academics we spoke with in Uganda told us that decision-makers and politicians tend to view academics and their research with disinterest and scepticism. Academics are neither trusted nor particularly valued by the regime. Trust in science-based knowledge is a precondition for the existence of a research university, and knowledge creation relies on the trust of knowledge users in society, including parliament and the civil service. For universities to have an impact, their graduates and research, as well as the books, articles and reports that flow from these, have to be trusted (Halvorsen 2010a). When this

trust is absent, as is the case in Uganda, academics find their expertise is neither sought nor listened to. According to one informant, this problematic relationship is quite common in the region:

There are few governments that trust universities in Africa. There are few universities where government and universities are working hand in hand, you know, like happy friends, because, traditionally, universities have always been centres of opposition. Not necessarily supporting opposition parties, but centres of resistance, centres of questioning, centres of demanding more in terms of rights. I don't think the relationship between our university and the government is any different from any other university in the establishment.

The term 'establishment' is used here to refer to the political regimes in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa; that is, authoritarian regimes with one centre of power, and where the power is concentrated in the hands of the ruling elite (Makara 2010). Authoritarian states seldom tolerate dissenting or critical voices, nor do they willingly share power with other social actors, groups or institutions. Such regimes stand in stark contrast to those in societies where trust in the academic profession has long since been established.

Sicherman (2005) noted that, in Obote's first term as president, Makerere was seen as one of three centres of power in society, together with government and commerce. To counter this, Obote increased state control over the university by, among other measures, enacting the University Act of 1970, which placed the university firmly under state control. Nevertheless, academics and their research continued to be viewed as potential sources of dissent and opposition. It can be argued that the political regime still sees Makerere as a rival, albeit less powerful, centre of power in Uganda. This applies especially to CHUSS and SoL, which, given the nature of their disciplines, are oriented towards 'a critical and practical study and understanding of human thought and behavior' (CHUSS 2011: v). As two of our informants explained:

In political science, since we are dealing with power and power relations. Government is sometimes a bit hostile, sometimes quite hostile, to our ideas.

The government maybe feels that academics are overstepping their mark. Our work should be to teach, that's the way they interpret it. So, any critique, any feedback that comes from academia, may be regarded negatively. Yeah, so that is a major problem.

In Uganda, a bottleneck is perceived to exist between the realms of politics, policy-making and research, such that the scientific knowledge and insights that academics are capable of providing represents a mountain of inconvenient truths to the regime. As a result, knowledge produced by CHUSS and SoL that questions the regime's political priorities is simply set aside. However, research findings that support government policies and actions are reportedly praised by state officials. To simply keep quiet about the outcome of (commissioned) research is, as Meuleman and Tromp (2010) pointed out, an effective if not very spectacular way to neutralise unwelcome information.

In addition, however, the disciplines practiced at CHUSS and SoL are not only seen as a potential threat to the regime but also as completely irrelevant to the government's conception of development. Since the NRM came to power in 1986, its neoliberal developmentalist ethos has been strong (Mamdani 2009). Accordingly, the party considers the humanities as an only marginally significant and inexcusable luxury. As the president told a journalist:

You ask these arts students what they can solve and they tell you, 'for us we only think.' Think about what? You find that many of these people putting on big academic gowns have no solutions to many of the country's challenges. These people have nothing to help us because they offered useless courses. (quoted in *Daily Monitor* 2014)

Museveni's stated belief is that the so-called STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) are more relevant to the economy and broader development (*Daily Monitor* 2014, 2016). This is in line with World Bank policy, which gives much credit to the sciences (Higgins 2016). Similarly, ABK Kasozi (2016b) has argued that, apart from the science-based faculties at Makerere (and at Mbarara University of Science and Technology), Ugandan universities have contributed very little new knowledge to resolving national social problems or to driving the larger global economy. The academics we interviewed at CHUSS and SoL acknowledged that the government is more comfortable supporting and using research output from the STEM disciplines:

I think ... the political establishment is comfortable with people who have done physical sciences, and work in a lab. For what they do, of course, can be physically seen, you understand? And they rarely go into the arena of political or social analysis ... We have more people going into the areas of law, humanities, social science. Now those ones, by the very nature of their disciplines, make a critique of society. And when things are not going well ... these people who are studying social sciences are the ones revealing those weaknesses in the system. So, they [the politicians] would prefer that we [academics] were not here or [that] we were few.

According to Halvorsen (2010a), political regimes only trust knowledge if they themselves are essentially legitimate and rational, while Nico Stehr (2003) has argued that the academic profession would vanish entirely if members of society had no trust in it. This suggests that the issue of trust in knowledge is related to the degree to which academic work is considered relevant to society.

The utility of knowledge is one criterion for relevance and, as his statements to the media make clear, Uganda's president, does not see social science that questions or criticises the actions and policies of his regime as useful in any way. The president's criticisms can be read as

an acknowledgement of the potential power of academics at Makerere, and his statements to the media can be seen as attempts to undermine CHUSS and the disciplines it represents. While Makerere's academics have little power in the usual sense of the word – they attract and accrue few resources and they do not dominate any sector of society – the power of knowledge lies in the influence it has in society. As Stehr (2009) suggested, power is related to the capacity to make a difference. In our view, academic teaching and research do represent a threat to the way the regime is running the state, because certain research projects target government practices, including corruption, vote buying, police brutality, human-rights abuses, and the fact that Museveni has been in power since 1986. In the long run, however, the government's efforts to undermine the academic profession also have the potential to erode trust in scientific knowledge across all sectors of society (Weiler 2004). The president seems to advocate a hierarchy of disciplines that promotes the 'hard' sciences above the 'soft' fields (social sciences and humanities). As John Brennan (2007) pointed out, this affirms the idea that the 'needs' of the economy and industry, as mediated by the government and the World Bank, have become central to assessing the relevance of academic disciplines. From this perspective, the role and relevance of higher education is to teach job-related skills and support innovation that produces new technologies.

Our informants questioned whether, in addition to this economic function, the president recognises the social functions of research universities. A largely vocational and instrumental view of the roles and functions of Makerere fails to acknowledge that the humanities and social sciences are essential to society's well-being, functionality and understanding of itself (Collini 2010; Higgins 2014). By judging the relevance of academics and the university in purely economic terms, the state fails to see the social benefits inherent in how ideas broaden our horizons and enable us to challenge established views. Mamdani (2016b) argued that the biggest returns from any university are in the realm of ideas, and that no university can be reduced to an economic unit. Higgins' (2014) suggestion that relations between the economy and society are best understood in terms of mutual

interaction, and that governments should not focus too narrowly on the STEM disciplines is also pertinent here. As one informant declared:

Social science does not stand in isolation and neither do the pure sciences stand in isolation. If there is a science problem, it has to be explained by a social scientist, and that inevitably means that we are relevant.

The need for legitimation

Academics at CHUSS and SoL told us that, in their work, they aim to speak truth to power and to provide useful knowledge that politicians can use when making decisions. As noted, some have been employed as consultants by government (even if their findings are not used). Others have held seminars for MPs and sat on committees, providing the parliament and civil servants with expert advice. The fact that academics are invited or allowed to give their views in these ways should not be taken as an indication that all state officials or MPs have a genuine interest in their views. As one informant explained:

Government perceives us as the enemy ... The politicians, the bureaucracy, some of them, yes, they will call us, consult us ... [But] even in those ministries, staff do not have a living wage, so when there is a project, they prefer to do it themselves. But sometimes a donor will force them to collaborate with the university, which they do not like, but they have to, due to quality. I have been requested to give my opinion on sexual identity, etc. not because the Ministry of Health wanted it, but because UNAID insisted ... So, there is politics.

In general, according to informants, government employees in Uganda prefer to justify their decisions, where necessary, with reference to international organisations rather than local academic opinion. Of course, referencing international organisations is not always problematic, but when international reports and data are seen

as preferable to, and more relevant than, knowledge produced within the national university, this marginalises and weakens Ugandan academics. A related problem pointed to by one of our informants is that academics in Uganda tend to be marginalised both nationally and internationally:

International actors and international scholars get more attention when they write about political issues in Uganda than any Ugandan scholar would get. This means there will be more international attention when international actors put emphasis on such issues. It is the privilege of the West.

Academic freedom and state control

What seems to make the juxtaposition of dictatorship and university interesting is academic freedom: dictatorships destroy it, universities need it. (Connelly 2005: 2)

In our view, academic freedom is a necessary precondition for the free pursuit of knowledge, and it requires that academics are not subjected to undue political interference in their work.

Informal control

While climate change might soon alter this, Altbach and De Wit (2018) point out that violations of academic freedom are more common in the social sciences and humanities than in the natural and life sciences. According to one informant, Makerere, and academic space in Uganda in general, is protected from the government, the army and the police to some extent. Others asserted that Makerere is freer than other institutions and groups in Uganda, including civil society organisations:

But you can see, now there is narrowing space for civil society to operate. The state wants to know everything

that is happening. That is where academia comes in with a comparative advantage. Because of our space we have more academic freedom ... We can have seminars here within the university under the cover of academic freedom and the enlightenment of minds generally.

None of our informants at SoL or CHUSS suggested that the government *formally* restricts or decides what they should research through imposing laws or any other direct sanctions. However, those who commented on this issue all agreed that the reason for this is simply that the government does not fund the university. Thus, while acknowledging that the state does not interfere with research efforts at Makerere, many academics see the lack of public funding as a deliberate attempt by the state to limit the research that can be undertaken. As James Mittelman (2018) pointed out, structural conditions fetter academic freedom in subtle ways and the economic marginalisation of universities hinders open inquiry. Two informants described how this works:

I think the biggest way of stifling academic criticism has been not to fund the university, to make it really hard to earn a living and just be so preoccupied with earning money ... I don't think Museveni is stupid and, you know, he is the government ... He knows that academia is potentially his biggest threat. But, of course, he won't say that. He will say that there is no money in the budget.

Just this month, government salaries for September were paid on 1 October, and we have not been paid what we call the incentive payment, I think, since March 2016. So that is a way in which the government is trying to sort of say, 'You guys are the ones who talk, so we have to find a way to narrow your space'.

While formal control of research activities is not routine, the closure of the university in late 2016 following student and staff strikes (staff were protesting the stalled incentive payments) was seen by many as an attempt to limit intellectual freedom (Musinguzi 2016a). In addition, some respondents said they see the government's curtailing of critical academic voices as equivalent to 'colonial rule'. The case of Dr Stella Nyanzi is a prominent example: Nyanzi was detained and charged with cyberharassment and offensive communication after posting comments on Facebook that were critical of the president and his wife. Nyanzi was later denied permission to leave the country for an academic conference (Amnesty International 2020; Freedom House 2018) and was subsequently imprisoned for 18 months. Released on 18 February 2020, Nyanzi fled to Kenya in February 2021, fearing abduction (McCool 2021; Okiror 2021).

Intimidation

While acknowledging that academic freedom is sometimes restricted, few informants were willing to discuss the government's abuse of power with us. Those who did touch on the topic were often brief and vague, describing an intimidating landscape. Some mentioned that, when lecturing, they cannot know if spies are present. One noted that 'everybody is working within some kind of control'. It was clear that criticising the government, in class or through their research output, could be dangerous. Some informants mentioned that several academics in SoL had received threatening text messages or phone calls, and quite a few made statements such as: 'Any movement too far and somebody might pull the leash' and 'You can criticise freely, but I tell you there are consequences for criticising. The state has a lot of influence.' One academic reflected on this as follows:

I told you, I am really weak on the activism because I am a coward, I don't want to cross the government, and I don't want to be known by them. I prefer to keep a low profile,

and because I don't think the risk is worth it. If something happens to me, it is my kids that will miss me. And who will care for them, you know? ... [That] is probably a fallacy because Uganda is for all of us, and if we don't solve [the problems] now, we won't leave a better country for our children. So, I know my thinking is wrong, and I know I should do more. And I keep telling myself that I will do more, but I always get too busy with life.

A few informants at CHUSS mentioned that some of their colleagues have informal patron–client relationships or ‘networks of affection’ with state officials. These academics reportedly refrain from conducting research that might reflect badly on their political patrons. In return, they are appointed as consultants or included in government committees and receive funding or other kinds of support. Similarly, HURIPEC (2016) found that, rather than critique the state, some academics choose to partner with it so that they can benefit from its resources. It was difficult for us to establish which academics were part of these networks, but as one informant explained:

There are those we call ‘official academics’. They get consultancies and funding from the state. Those who are critical will not get it. So certain things are not done on merit.

Another noted that this trend had increased over the years:

I came back to find all these ... government departments now would not give you work unless you agree to give them a kickback. And it had become so normal. To me it was such a shock that someone could give me work – you know, seemingly based on merit and my experience and my skills – and then say, ‘but you have to give us a kickback’. And you know, it was like everyone was doing it, and all the consultants seemed to have accepted this as the new normal.

Patron–client relations seemed to be a reality for some at CHUSS, albeit not explicitly discussed. At SoL, it was believed that the regime had given some staff ministerial posts or judicial positions as a way of silencing criticism. In this way, some critical voices had been co-opted, while others are vilified and shunned.

Self-censorship

In his book, *Implausible Dream: The World-Class University and Repurposing Higher Education*, Mittelman (2018) argued that it is hard to tell how many academics at Makerere keep their heads down and muffle their voices because of their poor working conditions and the institution's relations with the Museveni regime. He observed that academic freedom is fragile, and that intellectual autonomy is constrained by the political structures. Similarly, we found that academics tend to limit their own freedom of speech for fear of threats and informal control. Both the academic staff and the academic leadership reported exercising self-censorship in different ways in their research, in public debates and in class:

Of course, you think of the consequences for yourself. I think, honestly, most people engage in some level of self-censorship. If you try to do certain kinds of research, it can become a bit more dangerous, more tricky for you.

Although the academics we interviewed said they are strongly committed to academic integrity and values, they acknowledged that, for practical reasons, many succumb to self-censorship. Generally, however, few informants described their own personal experiences with self-censorship, but many referred to this as a general phenomenon and talked of colleagues who had suffered the consequences of being reprimanded or denounced by state officials.

Academic freedom is both a positive social force and an essential component of a democratic society (Higgins 2014). At the centre of academic freedom is the commitment to defend critical thinking.

According to our informants, the government is doing very little to protect this or any form of academic freedom in Uganda. At CHUSS and SoL, attacks on academic freedom vary from direct threats and subtle intimidation to reprisals and imprisonment as well as a general state of uncertainty and insecurity. Less difficult to pinpoint, but no less important is the fact that academics' freedom to pursue research and contribute to the ongoing optimisation of governance and legislative structures is extremely limited.

The academic profession and democracy

Political leadership is among the most decisive factors affecting the expansion of democracy in any society (Huntington 1991) As Sall (1996) points out, it is precisely because academics play an active role in democratisation that they are harassed. When academic freedom is fragile and undermined by state agencies in various ways so that self-censorship occurs, the contributions that the academic profession can make to the flourishing of democracy are necessarily obstructed and inhibited. Formally, the political regime in Uganda acknowledges the importance of democracy for political stability and social progress. Uganda's *Vision 2040* recognises that poor governance and corruption have created a bottleneck that has constrained Uganda's socio-economic development since the country achieved independence (NPA 2010), and states:

This Vision aims at consolidating the tenets of good governance which include: constitutional democracy; protection of human rights; the rule of law; free and fair political and electoral processes; transparency and accountability; government effectiveness and regulatory quality; effective citizens' participation in development processes; and peace, defence and security of the citizens and the country. (NPA 2010: 104)

The document acknowledges the role of government, private sector, civil society and the media in supporting and participating in the socio-

economic development of Uganda, as well as their role in monitoring and reporting on progress made towards realising the Vision's aims. In this regard, academic institutions are highlighted as vital for economic development, but this is limited to the role they play in promoting science, technology, engineering, and innovation. The importance of the humanities, social sciences or the law are not referenced, and the Vision does not acknowledge any role for academics or scientific knowledge in democratisation.

Nevertheless, Makerere and the academic profession have a social obligation to undertake knowledge generation and ensure knowledge transfer (Makerere University 2017). Articles 20, 22 and 24 of the 1990 Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility, state that academics have a responsibility to 'promote the spirit of tolerance towards different views and positions and enhance democratic debates and discussion' and 'struggle for, and participate in the struggle of the popular forces for their rights and emancipation' as well as an obligation to 'show solidarity and give sanctuary to any member who is persecuted for his or her intellectual activity'.⁵⁸ In Uganda, academics not only have a professional responsibility to contribute to democracy, they also have a personal one: according to Uganda's Constitution, all citizens are duty-bound to promote democracy and the rule of law.

However, given that the political regime is more interested in entrenching its own political power and profiting from industrialisation than it is in fostering democracy, it is questionable whether the social sciences in general, and the academic profession at Makerere in particular, are actually able to contribute to democracy. Despite the many constraining factors, our informants argued that they do contribute to democracy through their teaching, research and community outreach. Our own sense is that, while individual academics are committed to the search for truth, the academic community on campus has reflected little on its role in nurturing democracy in Uganda. Commitment to democracy seems to be seen as a personal, rather than a collective or professional duty, and academics' contributions appear to be less about bringing about direct change and more about contributing to a long-term process. Those who said they have made a personal commitment

to democracy, mostly do so by offering in their roles as experts and teachers and through public engagements and social activism. However, as one informant pointed out:

It is very important for us to appreciate that the professors in this department don't think the same. We don't argue the same. We don't have the same political ideology. Some of the professors in this department are strong allies of the ruling party; some are critical of the ruling party. There are those in this department who actually sit on certain committees of government, and they serve as advisers to government units. So, they tend to carry the view that government is doing the right thing. They appear to lend academic weight even to the mistakes and the misinformation that seem to prevail in government ... So, in short, our view of and our relationship with government depends on where we stand.

All except one of the informants clearly expressed support for democracy and said that they see democratic rule as the only legitimate form of government for Uganda. However, they expressed concerns about how limited democracy is in Uganda and argued that democracy has not yet been consolidated in the country:

Everyone is talking about democracy in the sense it is practiced in the West. In terms of freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, freedom to publish, democracy ... does not exist here. As far as I am concerned, what we have here is authoritarianism.

When it comes to thinking about the deeper meaning of democracy – deeper or consolidated democracy – it is absent in this country because you have a group of people who control power ... They control all the political processes, they control the juridical processes, even the parliamentary processes and elections.

One of the problems is that we have a head of state who is so preoccupied with being in power ... He's been in power for so many years ... He does nothing, and he does it very openly. If you are his supporter, you can do anything, and you can get away with anything. If you are not his supporter, they will look for any chance to throw you out.

The role of experts and research

Reasoned democratic deliberation relies on information and insight. In general, academics are ideally placed to provide both, since they possess specialised knowledge about the 'state of the world' that can enhance political decision-making (Tellmann 2016). In the West, and much of the rest of the world, science is the ultimate reference when reliable knowledge is required, and as institutions, the universities in which scientific knowledge is produced, are oriented towards the common good, and have long attempted to teach and conduct research in ways that transcend narrow political ideologies and economic interests (Weingart 2018).

As Stehr (1994) pointed out, despite continual knowledge generation and transfer, no linear relationships can be traced between increases in knowledge and human abilities to plan, control or predict or indeed in a decline in 'irrationality' when it comes to politics. Further, Stehr argues, the scientification of societies does not mean that all social actors have adopted scientific thinking and reasoning in all aspects of their lives. Consequently, attempts by academics to contribute to democratisation by offering their advice on politics generally go nowhere. Similarly, academic research is seldom used as a baseline for policy development. For Mamdani (2009), the relevance of universities is that they are locations for research and reflection through which societies come to understand their potentials and their weaknesses.

Of course, where knowledge contradicts government policies, it can undermine authority and the legitimacy of a state (Lentsch and Weingart 2011). In some ways, SoL can be seen as a countervailing

force to the political regime. Much of its research is more radical than the work produced at CHUSS because academics at SoL have a long tradition of building social activism into their research projects and have developed areas of work according to their own ideas about what is relevant.⁵⁹ Research conducted by HURIPEC is a case in point. According to its website, the centre is a semi-autonomous department within SoL that was established to foster teaching, research and activism on human rights and peace. It is geared towards promoting understanding and respect for human rights and democratic governance in the East-African region.⁶⁰ The research emerging from it intends to set the tone for politics in the long run and has highlighted legal rights related to sexual identities and family constellations. As Sicherman (2005) put it, through HURIPEC, SoL promotes social justice in ways that have revolutionary implications for academic culture at Makerere and for Ugandan society as a whole. She recommended that other universities should try to follow its example.

As at the other colleges at Makerere, a major factor limiting academics is that they are seldom able to design and conduct research programmes as they think best. This is especially so at CHUSS, which has very little access to research funding. Informants noted that the donors that fund research projects at Makerere are not always aware enough of local needs to ask the most relevant research questions. One informant explained that even if donors are willing to fund research on democracy in Uganda,

the disappointment is that the research funders are looking for particular aspects of democratic practice. They want to create a certain picture, so it is their research agenda. People who fund have an objective, so it is not like [we have] free, internally generated research in Uganda. It is usually sponsored by donors ... Even when the research is published, the people that read it are not ordinary citizens here in this republic, not even the leaders and members of parliament. So, I don't even know the effects of research. It is just to feed their [donors'] agenda, and it is lying there in the books.

Others argued that the research is also used by civil-society organisations in Uganda and some informants indicated that the Ugandan media can be very effective in communicating research findings to the public. They maintained that SoL and CHUSS are thus contributing to democracy by informing the public and by clarifying the implications of complex political issues. This is in line with Stehr and Mast's (2010) understanding of the power of knowledge; they argue that science is an effective social force that can both engage and be derived from civil society.

Truth telling and public engagement

One of the services that academics can offer is to directly critique the society they are part of (Huntington 1991; Karran 2009; Martinelli 2010). Informants at SoL and CHUSS stated that they do this by making knowledge-based judgements and by participating in public debates, including via the media. As one informant explained:

Many of our colleagues have engaged in public debates and discussions on different issues. I remember myself, after the first presidential debate before the elections in February 2016, I was one of the legal analysts of the debate. You see what were the issues [corruption, bribery, vote buying, violence etc.], so we take up a public role, really, to discuss how is the government of this country, and where could it be better.

Another noted that

There are those that are still teaching and, yes, they are well known for their writing and their critique of what is going on in Uganda – of politics, of human rights, you know, of everything really. So, I think professors that have been there [at SoL] have played quite a significant role in critiquing unconstitutional laws, laws that violate human rights, laws

that are not fair, the way elections are conducted, and all these things. They have definitely played a role, and they continue to play a role through talking, writing, research, writing opinion pieces in the newspapers.

Academic freedom is essential for this kind of critique (Karran 2009). Although academic freedom is constrained, the academics we spoke to argued that they are still able to comment on government practices, and that not all critical public engagement is met with political condemnation or informal repression. Interestingly to us, it seemed that the few academics who regularly engage in political debates via the media or write articles in newspapers had all done so for a long time. They are well known, within and outside the university, for being outspoken.

For example, in 2016, nine of Makerere's law professors joined various civil society organisations in filing an *amicus curiae* (friends of the court) motion to promote the transparency of Supreme Court proceedings (Oloka-Onyango 2020). The proceedings related to a petition put forward by Amama Mbabazi, challenging the validity of Museveni's 2016 election victory, and raising the question of whether the general elections were free and fair (MinBane 2016). Mbabazi had also stood for election as president and finished third. The *amicus curiae* motion was granted and, for the first time ever in Uganda, CSOs were allowed to give input on a case they were not directly party to. According to a press statement issued by the academics who took part in the action, their participation helped serve the interests of justice and enhance access to the courts by the people of Uganda who would otherwise not be represented (MinBane 2016).

As far as we could tell, however, most of the academics we interviewed remained neutral or opted to be passive, and many appeared to have no real interest in public political debates taking place at Makerere or in the media. Although academics in Uganda have both a professional and a personal responsibility to promote democracy, human rights and constitutionalism, a common perception is that it is acceptable for them to stay out of public debates. In the lecture rooms, these

academics also showed a strong preference for neutrality, and while they were willing to cover the historical and theoretical arguments for democracy, they were far less keen to discuss or interpret democratic practice in Uganda.

Martinelli (2010), along with Asher and Guilhot (2010), recommended that academics maintain a critical distance from the social issues they study, and should separate their academic work from social activism. In their view, this shields academics from the conflicts that might arise from balancing their integrity as researchers with the responsibilities of active participation in politics. However, from our interviews, it was very clear that none of the academics at CHUSS or SoL were engaged in *partisan* political activities – that is, they were not active members of any political party. Those who did engage in public debates stated that they keep away from party affiliations, and that their academic work is what informs their views. They clearly saw their roles as distinct from those of politicians and other political actors, and stressed that their participation in public debates should not be seen as indicating their support for any party. In our view, when democratic values are at stake, academics should use their skills to critically assess the political establishment and use their authority to communicate their views publicly according to their core values.

A training in democratic praxis

Mamdani argued that universities help cultivate future leaders by giving students opportunities to consider a range of choices that make democracy meaningful in different spheres of life (2009). A lasting engagement by academics at SoL has been to help train MPs and civil servants through the courses on democratic leadership, human rights and constitutionalism. Mamdani also argued that the relevance of the liberal arts and the social sciences is that they have the potential to produce leaders with a shared understanding and a shared vision. This, he noted, requires determined and concerted action from the academic profession. At SoL, every informant stated that they see the promotion of democratic values as a vital part of their role

as teachers, and as important to their work generally. In particular, the Public Interest Law Clinic was established to promote a culture of social justice by developing a consciousness among law students of the important public role that lawyers play in protecting the rights of Ugandan citizens. According to their website,

The clinic seeks to promote a culture of social justice lawyering in Uganda by developing a consciousness amongst law students of the important role public interest lawyering plays in protecting the rights of ordinary Ugandans.⁶¹

Several academics at SoL said that they see the clinic as contributing to democracy by making students aware of their social mission. The same goals were expressed by academics at CHUSS (although perhaps to a lesser extent) and are reportedly communicated to students through specific courses. As one academic explained:

We have courses in ethics and public administration, and ethics and international relations. So those courses will explain to people certain things. But also, when we are teaching other general things, we try to make it relevant, to try to influence people's thinking about the way things must be done. I think some will get it and others may not.

Contributing to democracy through teaching is arguably one of the most effective means open to academics at Makerere since this is how they spend most of their time. As one informant pointed out, this is also one way that academics can make use of their 'comparative advantage' in being at Makerere, which is still seen as a relatively protected space:

Because of the strict political situation in Uganda it helps to work within a university setting. It helps to have that protection.

An exciting example of this was the Uongozi Summer School, held in 2014 with the aim of addressing one of the most formidable challenges facing the world – the leadership deficit. Over fifty students from the Universities of Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Burundi and the National University of Rwanda joined students at Makerere to listen to academics and politicians from across the region. The Department of Political Science and Public Administration at CHUSS hosted a session, and Uganda’s former prime minister Apolo Nsibambi shared his personal reflections on leadership (Makerere University 2014: 35).

Neoliberalism and democracy

One crucial effect of neoliberal rationality is to reduce the desire for democracy, along with its discursive intelligibility when it does appear. Hence, another variation on Rousseau’s paradox: to preserve the kind of education that nourishes democratic culture and enables democratic rule, we require the knowledge that only a liberal arts education can provide. Thus, democracy hollowed out by neoliberal rationality cannot be counted on to renew liberal arts education for a democratic citizenry (Brown 2015: 200).

Neoliberalism can be understood as a governing rationality that allocates market values to every sphere of life. Consequently, the existence of the humanities and social sciences is under attack globally and Makerere is no exception. As noted, neoliberal values permeate the Ugandan government. This has created severe limitations for how, and to what extent, academics are able to educate students about their responsibilities and rights as citizens. It is difficult to attach a market value to such education or justify it as a work-related skill. The resulting changes to the mission of the university and its colleges, combined with associated curriculum change, has led to students being schooled less in democratic discourse (related to the challenges of public life and how they can contribute to the public good) and more in how they can maximise their own market value as ‘human capital’. Similarly, neoliberal policy perspectives do not view truth telling or a better understanding of society as relevant to economic growth, and

so less and less research funding is available for academics who are best equipped to deepen our knowledge and awareness of these questions. Most of the academics we met at CHUSS and SoL expressed strong opposition to these realities but said that their heavy workloads and lack of research funding leave them with few opportunities to act. For these reasons, neoliberal rationality has made inroads at both colleges, although academics at SoL seem to have been able to retain more influence over curriculum development, and have ensured that their own criteria for what is relevant remain embedded in most of what they teach.

Concluding remarks

For academics at CHUSS and SoL, being able to define the relevance of their work according to their own academic criteria was pivotal. They understood relevance in various ways but, generally, this included elements of teaching, research and outreach. While acknowledging that the academic programmes offered at the two colleges have been marketised, they argued that they still share relevant knowledge with their students. Despite feeling some pressure from the university administration to tailor their programmes to the demands of the market, they stated that they retain the power to define their own roles as teachers. This stood in stark contrast to how they see their role as researchers. Here, they argued, donors use conditionalities and thematic priorities in ways that influence research agendas far too much.

The academics' primary idea about relevance was that, to be relevant, their work should contribute to development of some sort, most often via the topics they research and communities they engage. All argued that their work is relevant in that they generate new knowledge on issues relevant to national, regional and local development, and they disseminate their research findings on these issues. Few, however, thought that societal actors share their view of the importance of this work. Quite often, they acknowledged that the regime, including the public sector, sees neither the need for, nor the relevance of, social science. They mentioned that they are often bypassed in favour of

international organisations and experts if and when the regime seeks to legitimise its policies through research and noted that local academic knowledge is rarely drawn upon (and even less often commissioned) as a basis for policy-making, the setting of political priorities or the drafting of national development plans. Consequently, while insisting that their work is of relevance, these academics rarely enjoy influence. Exceptions do occur, but more often than not, their contributions are overlooked or ignored.

Academics in CHUSS and SoL are strongly committed to truth telling and see it as their duty to communicate this publicly. Although the regime claims that these disciplines are of only marginal importance and are irrelevant to the needs of the country, it views the academics at CHUSS and SoL as enough of a threat to have made intimidation part of everyday life on campus. Academics are in a precarious situation; academic freedom is fragile and self-censorship is common. This, in our view, reflects the power of truth telling and the critical knowledge that the humanities, the social sciences and law can provide; but the role and function of the humanities and social sciences at Makerere and in Ugandan society is being devalued by the political regime. We agree with Brown (2015) that the survival of a liberal arts education depends on widespread public recognition of its value for democracy; and democracy depends upon a people being educated to practise it. Unlike the regime and the top managers at Makerere, our informants at CHUSS and SoL strongly oppose the idea that Makerere should be run as an enterprise, or that academic relevance should be defined by the needs of the market. However, most academics have found themselves unable to effectively oppose the marketisation of their roles and feel helpless as they see critical aspects of their work – truth telling and constructive criticism – undermined and ignored. In this context, the academic profession is only occasionally able to contribute to the flourishing of democracy.

8

Reflections on Part II: Academic professionals or knowledge workers?

In preparing to interview our informants at Makerere University, we developed an interview guide in which we described the academic profession as follows:

Professors relate to knowledge of disciplines (under faculties); that is, they have identification with a particular type of 'epistemology' (or a particular type of knowledge that gives meaning to research and teaching). Linked to the work role are also expectations about relevance and the ability to make knowledge relevant. It is relevance in teaching, in research and in mediation to the general public. Professional academics have to take part in the running of the organisation they work within, both by doing some administrative work in support of their academic work, and by working with university management. They have a responsibility for academic leadership in relation to organisational management. A university is managed by a hierarchy of offices. Thus, the university has – but is not as such – a bureaucracy. The role of professional academics is therefore also to balance administrative behaviour with the academic, and make the academic leadership guide the administration to secure its autonomy.

Thus, we have this description: A professional academic is trying to legitimise her/his autonomy through a particular kind of epistemology, to *influence what is defined as relevant* by securing an academic leadership of the university that

supports this influence. Academics must ensure academic management of the reproduction of the academic profession through critical research, doctoral education and academic freedom.

Our hypothesis is that a strong academic profession will resist neoliberal policies. Having said this, we ask: how strong is the academic profession at Makerere and what identity do its academics share?

Although some informants agreed with our description, few seemed to have reflected on their role as members of the academic profession, and there was little direct response to the question of what they identify with in our description of an ideal research university. Most informants seemed to see themselves primarily as academics employed by a university rather than as members of the *academic profession*. Some did not even agree that being an academic is a profession. As one informant put it:

Well, I understand you but professions are associated with other things ... [A profession] is, of course, organised around knowledge and theory, that's correct. But it is also based on exclusivity, so that traditional professions provide services to the public. And normally the area of knowledge is made exclusive, first, I think, by a long period of study, and second, by its encoding in a body of knowledge. If you take law as a profession. it encodes the law in legalese. Medicine does the same, so that it is not accessible ... And then, of course, licensing states what a profession is for. And traditionally, professors are not professional teachers definitely, and they are not licensed in the sense that traditional [professions are]...Because, actually, professions in the [common sense of the] word imply a degree of set control ... I understand the aspects [you raised] yes, but that I would not want to describe academia as a profession in that sense. We are academics, that's all.

Based on how they spend their working days, it seemed most academics we interviewed felt that they had been downgraded to ‘teachers’, at the expense of their role as researchers, although teaching and research are meant to be mutually reinforcing at Makerere (see Makerere University 2008b: 9, 2016: 14). As one informant explained:

I don’t think there is a good balance between the teaching, research and the other tasks of a professor. Probably I should require more time to research, but they give us very little time on research ... This has a bit of relation to the administration at Makerere. Makerere is set up such that we are looked at more as teachers than as professors. There is a policy ... that every individual needs 10 hours [of research time] at least, and for me this is nonsensical to say the least. As if my job here is only to teach. Actually, I do much more supervision than teaching, and the 10 hours of supervision is not counted ... I think this is where we go wrong.

Few informants explicitly stated that they see themselves as *experts* in their disciplines/fields of science, or as *public intellectuals* participating in general public debate. However, a small group, most of whom were employed at SoL, confirmed that they have made the latter task a priority for themselves. They engage quite frequently with the public because they feel personally committed to this.

Almost all informants saw their teaching, research and administration as work done on campus, and said that community outreach happens outside of the physical confines of the university.⁶² Consultancy work (although not considered a traditional academic role) was also understood as an activity mostly conducted off campus. However, since academics invoke Makerere’s reputation and standing when they introduce themselves to potential clients, and sometimes use university facilities to conduct consultancy-related activities, this activity sometimes blurs the line between on- and off-campus work.

Collegial spirit

One of our assumptions was that a strong collegial spirit is a precondition for the academic profession to have a say in what constitutes relevance. If collegial spirit is weak or absent, this will affect the way the profession is able to define relevance, and for whom their work should be relevant. A strong collegial spirit, on the other hand, can enable academics to collectively define not only what is relevant for the sake of knowledge production, but also who this knowledge is relevant for.

Informants gave varying answers when questioned about collegiality. Although not addressed by everyone, it was often implicit in how they answered related questions. Two contrasting experiences emerged: some highlighted a culture of *suspicion* and *competition* among their colleagues, others spoke of a culture of *co-operation*. When talking about the former, most referred to feeling the need to continually compete for research grants and funding. Some even mentioned that some of their colleagues steal others' texts and academic work. Few perceived the colleges as co-operative spaces, but rather as internally competitive.

As individuals our research identity is growing, but everyone is individually oriented, everybody is working for themselves, on their secret laptops. High-level secrecy, more secrecy than collaborations. These [competitive] projects have killed all collegiality.

This was especially a concern at CHUSS, and less so at CAES, where academics reported that there are many grants they can apply for within the college. Even so, many expressed a desire for more collaboration between departments and across disciplines. At CHUSS, CEDAT and CAES, few collaborations were reported, while informants at SoL reported that collaborations across disciplines and colleges do occur. In general, informants called for the reorganising of academic programmes so that the university could be open to more inter- and

multidisciplinary collaborations. They also called for more seminars where they could present their work and discuss their research with colleagues. They said they miss having a professional platform for discussion and often feel isolated. Without such a forum, some argued, it is difficult to promote the academic profession and its values. One informant suggested that such seminars could help to reverse the trend of competition and individualisation:

We could open up to each other, it would be good for our department. But we tend to be closed to each other, even within the university itself. Someone who is in food science up there [pointing towards CAES] could have a water project. [But] they wouldn't call ... a water expert [and ask] 'Can you help me?' They would kind of hide everything. Because they want to keep everything to themselves. And then you find yourself that you are going out there, interviewing again ... and you are like, 'You should have told me you are doing this, we could have done more'. So, the co-operation between the colleges is limited.

The one area in which co-operation was reported to work well was the peer-review process:

This is a collegial thing which, really, all academics do. I enjoy doing the reading of other peoples' articles and writing comments because that is really part of research – you learn from them at the same time as you critique. So, there is a peer-review process, you review peoples' work and they also review yours. It is really part of the debate, because it means that you are part of the network that is knowledgeable on a particular topic, and the fact that you are being consulted is an act of recognition. It is a way of making your work relevant for others, but also a way of having an input to the work of others.

International academic networks

Since most of the academics we interviewed had obtained their PhDs abroad, they were well connected internationally. Time spent in other countries was highly valued for a range of reasons, including giving them a network for future research collaborations as well as opportunities to attend further seminars, workshops and conferences abroad, apply for research grants and publish in international journals. Mostly, informants' international contacts were with individual academics at the universities where they had studied but several had also joined international or regional associations, committees, think-tanks and NGOs while studying abroad. The majority of informants elaborated on the importance of these contacts and networks as helping them to improve research and teaching 'on the ground', and serving as platforms for advancing their careers. As one academic explained:

As a university in a third-world country, sometimes there are limitations to accessing information but through my contacts, it would be easy for me to get access to those resources. So, in a way, yes it does improve on the kind of access you have in terms of academic resources.

According to some informants, however, international networks also have consequences for how academics interact with their colleagues at Makerere:

We locally [at Makerere] do not want to share, do not want to complement each other. We find that it is easier with others out there ... We are not colleagues in the real meaning of the word ... The old do not pass on knowledge to the younger ones. If an old (professor) retires, all knowledge is lost. They do not think of continuity, only of their own career. To collaborate with outsiders does not threaten my position here at Makerere. Rather it gives me exposure and often multidisciplinary knowledge. So, [it] secures my position locally.

According to informants this view is often reflected in internal debates on Makerere's intranet platform, where staff discuss not only academic competencies and qualifications but also notions of academic 'worth'.

Status but no relevance

Makerere is a highly respected institution, and is often referred to as Uganda's 'most prestigious university' (see, for example, Bisaso 2017: 433; Zink 2016: 69). In 2018, the Times Higher Education World University Rankings ranked it fifth in Africa, and top in Africa outside of South Africa.⁶³ Makerere has a great number of applicants, and a degree certificate from the university is widely seen as a status symbol. In addition, 70 per cent of graduates report being fully employed (Ssembatya and Ngobi 2015: 6, 17).⁶⁴ Our informants painted a very different picture, indicating that confidence in the knowledge generated at Makerere is generally low. As noted in previous chapters, academics at all the colleges agreed that the government shows little interest in the knowledge produced at Makerere, and that scientific knowledge seldom informs or influences government policies. In addition, informants argued that many Ugandans see university education as overly theoretical, and at times too distant and isolated from society. Taken together, these perceptions made many informants feel undervalued. The following two comments reflect widely held views:

I mean no one wants to be unappreciated, and academics are no different than anybody else. But also, it lends a certain level of frustration that you are not understood – what you do is not understood, and the link between what you do and the broader society is clearly not well developed.

Unless you do something ground-breaking, an academic works and dies doing very good work but is never recognised.

A primary teacher is more recognised than you who teach at the university. Primary school teachers can be seen easily, but a university professor can't be seen because, at the end of the day, the students graduate ... It's not that you have constructed a building somewhere and you can show people, 'You see, that was done by me!' There isn't much to show from what you have done. Other than in your own academic circles, that is where you can be seen and recognised. But outside, no, you are not seen.

Many of the academics were unhappy about the poor status accorded to scientific knowledge in Uganda, and their perceptions of how they are valued seem to differ greatly from their expectations of how they should be valued. Their expectations can perhaps be traced back to the 'glory days' of the 1950s and 1960s, when university staff and students were seen as part of the country's elite (Sicherman 2005: 39).

Most informants suggested that stronger channels of communication should be established between the university and the wider society so that research output and scientific knowledge could be more easily communicated and made accessible to all citizens. However, we saw no evidence of discussion among academics on how they could collectively contribute to improving their status or expanding recognition of the importance of scientific knowledge in society. Instead, what we observed was academics from Makerere establishing academic communities *outside* of the university in an attempt to enhance the status and autonomy of their own disciplines rather than of the university as a whole. In fact, many academics seemed to feel a need to distance themselves from Makerere. The establishment of the Centre for Basic Research in Kampala is one example of this kind of distancing.⁶⁵ It was inspired by the concerns of academics from Makerere and other institutions about the fact that more and more researchers are pressured into taking on short-term consultancies to meet their immediate financial needs.

Makerere: a research university supporting its academic profession?

In Makerere's 2016 annual report, the point is made that the university 'is defined by the continued quest to become a research-led institution bringing together the best minds to conduct cutting-edge research' (Makerere University 2016: 15). Its authors argue that evidence of this can be found in the high volume of research output from Makerere that is listed in international research databases. Unfortunately, while the number of scientific publications emanating from a university is important, this is not sufficient to confer the title of 'research university' on any institution, and other factors are at least as important (Cloete et al. 2018). To give just one example, teaching and research have to be integrated in ways that clearly and organically link into doctoral education (Halvorsen 2011; Mamdani 2016a). In other words, to generate the kinds of learning environments that inspire continued research and create independent students who later become skilled researchers, doctoral training has to be embedded in active research. From this perspective, universities have a dual role as places of research and as spaces that produce researchers who are capable of becoming excellent academics (Mamdani 2016a). Mamdani argues that every research university must 'grow its own timber', and the key to growing researchers is solid doctoral training.

Although one of Makerere's stated principles is that teaching and research are mutually reinforcing (Makerere University 2008: 5), Mamdani (2016a) has argued that Makerere has never been a research institution. Similarly, ABK Kasozi (2016a: 85) observed that:

Although Makerere University has achieved some impressive results in research, the lack of local funding, an unfriendly legal framework, inadequate research-management systems, and an overemphasis on teaching at the expense of research, are undermining its struggling research capacity.

From our vantage point, academics at Makerere do not seem to see research as being as crucial for updating and informing teaching as we think it is. For this reason, we argue that Makerere can be considered more of a *teaching* university, rather than an institution in which teaching and research mutually inform and reinforce one another. As noted, most of the academics we met were ‘re-imported’ back into Uganda after having earned their doctorates in other countries.

In a report to the Visitation Committee on its research portfolios, Makerere’s leadership described the dissemination of research as a core aspect of the university’s research productivity, and indicated that this was achieved through conferences, lecture and seminar series, workshops, dialogues and exhibitions (cited in Rwendire 2017: 172). However, both the Visitation Committee and our informants reported that academics have little time to engage or participate in such ‘extra’ activities as they are too busy fulfilling their teaching commitments. Some of the more senior academics recalled years past when they had found it easier to engage in such activities. Mittelman (2018) also mentioned Makerere’s glory days – before the World Bank-led reforms in the early 1990s – when the university was more preoccupied with fostering academic values than with efficiency and competition. Recalling his experiences at Makerere as a research associate at the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) in the late 1960s, Mittelman (2018: 168) wrote;

I truly enjoyed Makerere’s glory years and have not yet recovered from my good fortune. We engaged in stimulating debates about colonialism’s lasting imprint, the state’s agenda, and how to decolonise knowledge. On a grander scale, these exchanges were about what drives history and how to attain the good life. On these matters of moral reasoning, we vied with other scholars and government officials over vital political issues. Our classes included tutorials: instruction for individuals or small groups of students called upon to parse reading and regularly submit essays. We often gathered in the

largest auditorium, in Main Hall, for clashes among giants in the academic and policy communities. There was no dearth of public intellectuals – among others, Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, Guyanese historian Walter Rodney, and head of Makerere’s political science department, a Kenyan, Ali Mazrui – all of whom could rouse an audience and inspire young generations of academics and activists.

If the purpose of research universities is to consistently produce scholars of high quality, then doctoral training has to be among their core functions. In the 2016/17 academic year, Makerere had 587 registered PhD students; CAES had 155, CEDAT had 22 and CHUSS had 95 (Makerere’s Directorate of Research and Graduate Training 2016, in *Rwendeire 2017*: 156).⁶⁶ We were unable to ascertain how many of these were involved in so-called sandwich programmes with other universities. For Makerere to produce skilled researchers, the supervision of PhD candidates is decisive. About a quarter of the academics who participated in our study reported that they supervise PhD students. However, many said that supervision processes are weak and that few resources are available to improve them. For this reason, informants argued that it is virtually impossible for senior academics at Makerere to be good role models for PhD candidates and for their junior colleagues.

Although most of those involved in PhD supervision considered the quality of their candidates to be ‘fair’ or ‘quite good’, several argued that inadequate supervision negatively affects candidates. Many informants said that (like the current cohorts of undergraduates and other students) PhD candidates tend to be less self-driven and more dependent on their supervisors than they would like. They read less than they should. Some informants said they consider Makerere’s doctoral training programmes to be overly dependent on donor funding (one example mentioned was a programme on water resilience offered at CHUSS). These academics said they would like to see more of their own research interests integrated into doctoral training and argued that this would significantly strengthen the local academic community.

Regaining control over relevance?

Relevance is a difficult concept to define because it is relational and depends on context (Church and Katigbak 1988). Most academics have ideas about relevance, but the relevance of the debate about relevance proves itself when academic interests and values are threatened – as they are when neoliberal reforms enable external interests to define what knowledge is needed and when. In this context, not standing up to defend your understanding of the relevance of academic knowledge seems to us to signal weakness in the academic community. Our sense is that academics at Makerere have not engaged in the ideological and theoretical discourse on this issue. For most informants, the concepts of ‘relevance’ and ‘being relevant’ were blurred. When pushed, respondents generally argued that it was essential for the profession to be in a position to define the relevance of their own work but they also acknowledged that their control over this domain is weak. Many said they feel the university is constantly being pushed to marketise and make itself relevant to ‘the economy’.

Nevertheless, academics did report having control over their teaching and over curriculum design. Many felt that, by being able to develop course curricula and organise their teaching, they were helping to educate the kinds of graduates that Uganda needs. On this basis, most respondents argued that their internal relevance at the university is secured through the fact that their students are qualifying. However, even in relation to teaching, we were told that representatives of the ‘market model’ are gaining influence. Some informants reported being under pressure to develop curricula according to the demand for courses, to create ‘relevant learning outcomes’ and produce employable ‘human capital’.

Overall, no systematic discourse occurs through which the ideas raised in our interviews can be aired. Rather, a vague ‘developmental ideology’ seems to unite academics in a desire to do something that is relevant for society off campus and mostly within Uganda. When asked how they communicate or express their relevance in society, many academics responded that they find this difficult to do. Although they

said that they produce knowledge and disseminate research output that is relevant to the needs of Ugandan society, they admitted that many potential users show little interest in this output. Few, if any, academics said that they, or their departments, receive demands from societal actors off campus. Rather, they hinted that each academic or 'expert' seeks to build a client base, and donors repeatedly choose to work with academics they already know. One informant described the situation as follows:

Of course, I mean, in political economics we say there is no such a thing as a free lunch. So, if you receive funding from a foreign source, unfortunately the chances are that you may not have the space to choose the theme, you might choose a topic within a broad theme that is set by donors. Unfortunately, the spaces are usually eroded when you receive funding from overseas. My point is that foreign aid is political; it is usually used to advance the interests of the aid giver.

Thus, the academics we met recognised that research projects run at Makerere do not always target the most important societal issues, nor do they integrate research and teaching in productive ways. Even when research projects do address relevant issues, they were often said to be doing so 'in the wrong way' and thus were still not producing the knowledge and skills that Uganda needs. Many informants said that, if they could decide for themselves, they would conduct research on different topics or different aspects of topics than those chosen by donors. They agreed fully with Mamdani's statement that

A decent research agenda can only be formulated on the basis of an understanding of one's own reality. There is no recipe that can be shared. It has to be homegrown. The first step towards intellectual independence for a research community is for it to develop its own research questions. (2016a: 119)

Many academics indicated that they generally don't have opportunities to negotiate with donors about tailoring research topics and questions to make these more relevant to local needs. Makerere has a Directorate of Research and Graduate Training, which co-ordinates and administers all research, and negotiates with donor agencies.⁶⁷ According to Musiige and Maasen (2015), the directorate does not delegate its mandate to the academic departments, which means that heads of departments have little authority when it comes to deciding what research will be conducted in their units. Our informants confirmed that no arenas exist in which they can negotiate this. They also noted that the differences between academics and international donors in terms of power and resources have huge consequences for academic autonomy and academic freedom. Rather than being able to focus their research on topics they see as important, they have to write research proposals that fit donor priorities. One academic described this experience as follows:

Sometimes you are in a situation where you have to decide whether you are advancing your own research that you have been working on, or you are interested in working on, or you are actually just chasing the money, and you have to think of crafting something that fits within that, what they [the donors] want.

The situation seemed to be a bit different at CAES. Here, informants said that, although donors have their own understandings of societal needs and their thematic priorities and conditionalities, academics have the autonomy to choose to apply for grants that best fit the college's research priorities and are free to decide on this. As we discuss in Chapter 9, this is also the case at MISR. According to one informant there:

MISR actually turned down some funding from the Ford Foundation and others because the funders wanted to determine how the research was being done and, at MISR,

people did not want that. Also, what is important for Mamdani is that Uganda – and researchers at MISR – develop our own questions and our own research. And then, when the questions are asked in the right way, in our way, we can involve international and external donors to ask for funding on projects that are being defined here ... There are similar problems in the rest of the university – that the research topics are already set for them by external actors. But still, professors and groups of professors take what kind of funding they get. Why not, you know the university needs the money.

Scholars in the Marketplace 15 years later

In *Scholars in the Marketplace*, Mamdani (2007) addressed the issues raised by the market-based reforms introduced at Makerere via the World Bank in 1993. Arguing that Makerere was becoming like a vocational college, he warned that neoliberalism's market orientation was redefining the priorities and curricula of public universities in ways that radically undermine the quality of teaching and destroy research capacity.

The 'reformed' Makerere is an informal university where questions of quality have been thrown by the wayside and where fee-paying students receive a low-level vocational education in an expensive campus setting. (Mamdani 2008: 9)

Based on this analysis, Mamdani proposed several changes to help the university recover. These included: the removal of vocational programmes from campus; putting a stop to commercialisation; making research integral to higher education; funding students on the basis that higher education is a public good; and, helping state officials and society to reach consensus on the importance of funding research. He repeatedly stated that doctoral training is a key activity.

Although not everyone we interviewed had read Mamdani's book,

they all had opinions about his suggestions, as the reforms have affected everyone. They agreed that research should be an integral component of Makerere, and many confirmed this is not currently the case for all the reasons discussed. Underfunding was the obstacle most frequently mentioned and finding a solution to this was seen as essential. No one seemed optimistic that a solution would be found anytime soon. Although not explicitly stated by everyone, informants seemed to agree that higher education is a public good, and that student funding should be premised on this understanding. Questions about vocationalisation and commercialisation elicited a range of opinions. Importantly, not everyone had a clear understanding of what vocational programmes are, or how they differ from profession-based, theoretical/academic programmes. For this group, Mamdani's suggestion was unclear and confusing. Some academics said they do not think it is possible to clearly separate 'the academic from the vocational', and several informants at CEDAT did not see vocationalisation as a problem at all. One academic explained:

Well, it comes back to what I said, what is the purpose of today's academics and today's academic knowledge, and [what] would be the ideal? If the purpose is to solve problems, you can't solve problems without participating in some kind of vocational activity.

Others strongly opposed vocationalisation. Expressing a strong desire to restore Makerere to a research-based institution, they argued that vocational programmes should be taught in dedicated vocational schools. As one informant stated:

I entirely agree with Mamdani because here in Uganda we are faced with a very challenging situation, and this is actually led by the president himself. The [idea that the] university is a vocational university, and that the university should produce jobs: that is something I really don't understand. A university is a place that trains thinkers. It is nothing like jobs

or whatever, we try to make you think better ... I agree that vocational institutes, vocational colleges should be revived. We had them in the past, but the government somehow neglected them. We still have some, but they are very, very small. They should all be revived. Not all students at Makerere should be here. That is the biggest challenge.

Informants at CAES and CEDAT indicated that academic programmes are designed and adjusted according to stakeholder preferences and criticised some of the programmes for having sacrificed science in this process. The government-initiated Visitation Committee (Rwendeire 2017) confirmed that most of the master's programmes at Makerere are applied in orientation, and that the development of students' research capacity is therefore limited. This is a strong indicator of how deeply commercialisation has affected Makerere. Informants from SoL all strongly disagreed that curricula should respond more strongly to stakeholders and insisted that academics must take the lead in defining and designing curricula.

When asked what they thought should change at the university, a common suggestion was that the number of undergraduate students should be reduced so that the university can focus more on postgraduate training and research. This echoes the views expressed by Mamdani who, about ten years after the publication of *Scholars in the Marketplace*, offered two further practical suggestions for Makerere. The first was that the university substantially reduce undergraduate admissions. The second was that postgraduate education must be made integral to the university's core role, and not remain dependent on external funding (2016a: 129–130). The Visitation Committee made very similar recommendations (see Rwendeire 2017).

Doctoral training: the reproduction of the academic profession

Securing a PhD degree is seen as crucial for anyone who is serious about an academic career. A large majority of PhD candidates are

awarded stipends to write their PhDs from a position within the ranks of academic staff. The basic model is that candidates are employed by a university department for which they earn a small stipend, and they then seek funding to cover fees and other expenses related to their PhD. For most candidates, these expenses tend to be covered by donors or sponsors. The consequence of this model for Makerere is that the majority of its PhD candidates leave Uganda to complete their studies (see Chapter 2). Most doctoral programmes give their candidates a professional academic identity. That is, candidates learn to value research-based education, they experience what it means to have independence when choosing a research topic, they gain an understanding of academic freedom, and develop a desire to constantly renew their own knowledge base and that of their fields of specialisation. They also see their doctoral studies as part of a broader research project, to which they contribute, or at least aim to contribute as they conduct their research.

It is noteworthy, however, that most of our informants (and we talked only to academics who had completed their PhDs) were recruited into our study as individuals from the disciplines within which they had gained employment. Very few indicated that their PhD proposals had evolved out of their involvement in a community of research-based academics who shared a particular topic or focus area. Our sense is that most doctoral candidates are socialised into the academic community in the country in which they earn their PhDs and that doctoral studies can shape students' academic identities relatively independently of their places of origin. After graduating, they tend to 'represent' the universities they went to, not the one they came from.

Most returning graduates express great pride at being promoted into the '*homo academicus*' collective and the profession of truth tellers, and they bring with them a strong belief in the value of science and research. When asked why they returned to Makerere, the answer they give is usually 'to help develop Uganda'. Rarely does anyone say they are 'seeking scientific perfection'. Thus, it seems fair to say that they assess their own relevance in relation to their contribution (or their potential to contribute) to the development of their country.

On returning to campus, most are ‘promoted’ but essentially return to the jobs they had before they left. At this point, the reality confronting ‘*homo academicus*’ seems to be how to avoid being reduced to ‘*homo oeconomicus*’. Returnees have to try to find their place in a hybrid organisation that professes academic values in public but pursues market opportunities in practice. As discussed, academics’ working lives are shaped by massive teaching loads, low salaries, and the lure of supplementary employment in the growing private education market. Uganda reportedly has more than fifty private tertiary institutions, the majority of which defy international law and call themselves universities (Kasozi 2016a). Academics who take on consultancy work to survive might find some work related to their field, but they are unlikely to be able to deepen their skills in systematic or cumulative ways. And even if they apply for and successfully obtain a research grant, they are aware that much donor-supported research is on topics defined by other scholars who need ‘a local partner’.

All too often then, newly qualified PhD graduates have few opportunities to translate what they have learned abroad into their work at Makerere. The use of their newly acquired skills is limited to teaching or being underutilised by donors and others. Neither the university as a whole, nor the colleges in particular, seem to have the resources to promote or participate in regional or international research collaborations. The only option open to many is to engage in the kind of strategic branding required of lone entrepreneurs in the market for educational resources.

Having received funding to help them earn their PhDs from renowned institutions, and having returned to Uganda after spending years abroad, a number of informants said that being unable to secure better employment than assistant to ‘donor experts’, for example, had damaged their professional identities and dented their self-confidence. As Koch and Weingart (2016) show, this situation also reduces society’s respect for the academic profession and prevents academic work, knowledge and expertise from being properly valued. Similarly, the legitimacy and authority of academic knowledge is necessarily reduced when a state refuses, or is unable, to base its policy decisions

on accurate local research and home-grown knowledge (Zink 2016).

Despite being reduced to the status of ‘teaching facilitators’ (an often-used self-descriptor), academics at Makerere showed a remarkable resilience to the economisation of their work. Their belief in the value of their knowledge and the need for their research, encourages most to try to publish wherever possible. While related to their socialisation into academic career-building, they describe these efforts as personally satisfying and as responsive to their felt need to offer creative solutions to Uganda’s social and political challenges. Consequently, the desire to increase the time they have for research was expressed constantly.

In line with this, almost all the professors we interviewed agreed with the proposals put forward by Mamdani (2007) about how to develop Makerere (back) into a public research-based university, and most of the PhD candidates we spoke to indicated that an alternative to the existing doctoral training in Uganda is needed. In Chapter 9, we examine the pros and cons of the alternative model that MISR has implemented.

PART III

**THE CHALLENGE OF STRENGTHENING
THE ACADEMIC PROFESSION**

The Makerere Institute of Social Research: a future-focused doctoral programme?

From 2010 to 2012, the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) was formally integrated into the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS) at Makerere.⁶⁸ Prior to this, the institute was a centre for commissioned research, that was basically detached from the university. MISR's formal incorporation into CHUSS introduced new ideas and practices that have challenged the established order on campus. Of particular interest in this chapter is the US-inspired and interdisciplinary model of advanced learning and research that MISR chose to use when designing their doctoral programme.

Makerere was, and still is, largely shaped by the British academic tradition (with its engineering faculty being one possible exception; see Chapter 5). Doctoral studies are generally seen as a kind of academic upgrade for individuals who access whatever funding they can, and then register for their doctorate within their college or faculty, regardless of where the funding comes from or the conditions it might bring with it. In contrast, MISR selects doctoral candidates from a range of disciplines, gathers them together and secures funding for them to conduct academic research on a full-time basis, ensuring that they have minimal teaching or other responsibilities while completing their PhDs. MISR also supports students by ensuring that they have access to cross-disciplinary courses and gives them the freedom to propose their own dissertation topics. Postgraduate study at MISR is seen as a collective effort aimed at ensuring individual learning at as high a level as students can manage within a given timeframe. Research topics are determined by societal phenomena that students see as relevant and theoretically challenging.⁶⁹

In this chapter, we discuss MISR's doctoral training programme in light of how it contributes to recreating and uplifting the academic profession, and thus to the reappropriation of its power to define what knowledge is relevant. Within these developments, we locate MISR as part of a countermovement to hegemonic neoliberalism. We describe how doctoral studies conducted at MISR contrast with those offered by the broader university. We consider issues related to coursework and multidisciplinary, and explain why students are encouraged to develop as experts *and* as public intellectuals in their chosen fields. We reflect on the achievements of the programme in relation to MISR's overall goals, which one informant summed up as: 'to decolonise the knowledge basis of PhD candidates' education and research orientations'.

A central goal of MISR's doctoral programme is to train candidates to see the global in the local and vice versa, and to develop ways of responding effectively to what they see (MISR 2015). This includes understanding how global interests and values (of norm-setting UN agencies and multinational companies to the World Trade Organization, etc.) shape local realities. It also includes exploring how a deeply grounded knowledge of local areas or regions (such as East Africa) can help create voices to be reckoned with in global contexts. Our questions to informants focused on how PhD candidates at MISR develop their knowledge of this global/local/global dialectic, and how this knowledge is then shared and amplified within the global academic community.

Many of the responses we heard fell within well-established debates about modernity. By this we do not mean a post-modernist or anthropological denial of the value of this category, nor, for that matter, Latour's (or any other version of the) argument that we have never been modern. The focus of our discussions was on the nexus between knowledge and politics, and how this varies in different 'social formations'. Accordingly, one of our aims in this chapter is to outline the knowledge-politics nexus that MISR is attempting to both promote and confront in its efforts to offer an alternative model of doctoral training. How the MISR model differs from the general trend of knowledge politics and doctoral education is discussed, not

only in relation to the rest of Makerere but also in relation to the development of the academic profession more broadly. In line with previous chapters, we also consider how academics in Uganda have lost influence over determining what is of relevance within the public sphere and try to discern the degree to which MISR is succeeding in its efforts to reverse this trend.

We take as our basic premise that MISR's leaders see university-based knowledge as valuable to society. Indeed, it was clear from all our interviews that MISR links its reason for existing to its belief that university-based knowledge is relevant for progress – arguing, like Wagner (2012), that without universities, development and modernity would be weakened. Therefore, our question is: must the basis for the modernisation of Europe (good and bad) also be so for East Africa and beyond? Having addressed this, we consider whether the MISR model can be scaled up to explore some of the resistance that the doctoral programme has encountered.

Before and after 2010

In 1948, the East African Institute of Social Research (EAISR, later renamed MISR) was one of three institutes set up after the Second World War to conduct social science research in the British colonial territories. At that time, it was led by anthropologists who saw themselves as giving voice to 'native people' in an otherwise hostile colonial establishment.⁷⁰ After Uganda achieved independence in 1962, leadership of the institute was taken over by young nationalist scholars who saw themselves as pioneers of an emancipatory nationalist scholarship, and also as critics of nationalism's anti-liberal tendencies – particularly when these undermined the autonomy of scholarship.

When Makerere became a national university in 1970, MISR became part of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. At this point, the institute did not combine research with graduate training. Its funding mandate was driven by an assumption that researchers would be trained outside of Uganda. A consequence of this was that research and teaching were seen as two disconnected activities (Mamdani 2017).

By the early 1990s, when both MISR and Makerere were under severe pressure from ‘market forces’ as discussed in Chapter 2 and elsewhere, a pervasive consultancy culture emerged. In 1994, MISR became an autonomous institute, charged with the role of strengthening social sciences research at Makerere, although, by then, it was already more of a consultancy unit than a research institute (Mamdani 2017). Throughout this period, ‘the secret of its [MISR’s] proud existence has been its ability to change with the times, at times to gather the courage to defy scholarly convention, often to be at the cutting edge of change at Makerere’ (MISR 2014: 7).

The story of MISR since 2010 cannot be separated from that of its director and academic leader, Mahmood Mamdani who was appointed in May of that year. In his account of the history of MISR, he emphasises how his book, *Scholars in the Marketplace*, created a platform for him and some of his colleagues to reconstruct MISR as an academic institution that saw itself as looking beyond the immediate challenges of the day:

As executive director of Makerere Institute of Social Research from May 2010, I witnessed first-hand the damage suffered by the country’s premier research institute. Sobered by this realisation, a small group of us – a number of colleagues in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences – spent the better part of a year brainstorming how to turn MISR around from a consultancy unit to a research institute. We agreed that nothing less than the development of a process of endogenous knowledge creation, including a full-time, coursework-based, interdisciplinary PhD programme would do. (2017: 7)

In the introduction to the 2013 edited volume, *Getting the Question Right: Interdisciplinary Exploration at Makerere University*, Mamdani explained why knowing how to ask the right questions is crucial to developing relevant and convincing knowledge. The book is a collection of papers by a number of prominent scholars who contributed to

shifting MISR's focus away from consultancy work and towards making research its core activity, thus preparing the ground for its interdisciplinary PhD programme. The programme seeks to produce researchers who are capable of conducting research on specialised issues, and teaching on a broad range of subjects at all levels and contributing to public discourse.

As noted in Chapter 2, in the years before Mamdani was appointed to MISR, discontentment with the neoliberal order and how it was affecting the academic world was growing globally. Enlightened by *Scholars in the Marketplace*, the privatisation of higher education in Africa became a major concern for many. The MISR alternative – a *theory-driven* independent source of epistemological work, freely combining disciplines in line with theoretical demands – may have had little support at a global level in the heyday of Mode 2 knowledge production (see Chapter 5). However, since its reorientation, MISR has become increasingly important as an example of how the (re) colonisation of the academic world can be countered, and as a model for resisting globalisation's domination of contemporary epistemological-economic constellations. It was also hoped that the integration of MISR into CHUSS would bring benefits to both units. For example, it was envisaged that MISR would help upgrade the college's research capacity and that MISR's students would help teach tutorials in the college from their third year onwards. Similarly, MISR was expected to benefit from being able to draw on academics in the college to teach selected courses in the doctoral programme (MISR 2015).

The basis of the doctoral programme

The key phrase that Mamdani and his colleagues are now using to guide MISR is: 'endogenous knowledge creation, including a full-time, coursework-based, interdisciplinary PhD programme'. The contrast with Mode 2 thinking (which was still prevalent in 2010 albeit facing growing criticism) is captured in the word 'endogenous'. Gibbons (1998: 1) has constantly insisted that inward-looking universities will not survive, arguing that 'the critical function of universities has been

displaced in favour of a more pragmatic role in terms of provision of qualified manpower and the production of knowledge'. UNESCO, along with many universities, accepted Gibbons' assertion that 'the new economically-oriented paradigm is not going to be replaced and that the trend towards increasing accountability is going to become more and more firmly established' (1998: 1). In direct opposition to this, the purpose of supporting endogeneity is to secure an independent and self-driven academic community that is capable of legitimating its knowledge using academic criteria to determine what knowledge is relevant.

The 'old' (pre-2010) MISR was sustained by commissions and by meeting various 'demands' for knowledge from 'the market' (public or private). For the 'new' MISR, the idea is that, to be of value as a basis for doctoral training or PhD-level research, knowledge has to develop at some distance from the pull of society so that long-term thinking and reflecting on established theories are facilitated.⁷¹ When much of the rest of the world was (and still is) praising the idea that knowledge should always be produced with a view to its application, MISR attempted to reconstitute itself on the basis that if knowledge is to contribute to creating a strong and independent academic profession, it must be detached from its applied 'context' precisely because the role of academics is to be critical, and because their legitimacy lies in their independence.

The notion of endogenous knowledge has been a focus within the African academic community for decades. In their book, *Paulin Hountondji: African Philosophy as Critical Universalism*, Franziska Dübgen and Stefan Skupien (2019) show how central endogeneity has been to debates about academic development in colonial and postcolonial Africa. In the last decades of the twentieth century, Hountondji systematised this in the growing discourse about how to decolonise our world, including our universities (Mbembe 2019).⁷² The promotion of endogenous knowledge serves many purposes. It seeks to replace the shallow dichotomies and asymmetries between Western science and knowledge that originated in the rest of the world (including Africa). Endogenous knowledge also offers an

alternative to so-called ‘indigenous knowledge’ (also often used in this context). Endogenous knowledge includes both self-reflection and the appropriation and (re)-integration of local knowledge (of all sorts) into the world of science as generalised knowledge that carries the same weight as any other universally valid scientific knowledge. The aim is to achieve *autonomous* science, based on what has been systematically undervalued, excluded, or thwarted. As Dübgen and Skupien (2019: 70) explained:

The practice of scientific research in the colonies has been limited to gathering data and facts, and to reproducing established procedures. Hountondji strongly criticised this division of labour that kept African scientists away from participating in the evaluation of this data, and from the core of intellectual activities, the building and testing of theories.

During the 1970s and 1980s, ideas about how to reintegrate local knowledge by detecting and explaining its rationales, re-evaluating and reappropriating its truths, were central to decolonising strategies within universities. This should have led to the demarginalisation of local (or what was locked in as ‘indigenous’ or ‘traditional’) knowledge through its integration with general academic knowledge. According to Dübgen and Skupien, more than simply opposing ‘modern’ or ‘Western’ science, Hontoundjii aimed to harmonise and overcome the compartmentalisation of thought. Endogenous knowledge is not limited by place or space, nor is it internal only to specific communities of culture and language. In addition, endogeneity also overcomes the dichotomy between ‘local’ and so-called Western knowledge.

Unfortunately, the basic challenge of inequity in the modes of production of science is a problem that is not even close to being overcome, but the prioritisation of endogenous knowledge at least seems to offer a starting point. Proof of the MISR model’s success would therefore be the degree to which endogenous academic work/process manages to develop new theoretical reflections on ‘reality’ and its challenges. To find some answers to this question, we reviewed

books, doctoral dissertations and course material produced by scholars at MISR, and we discuss these later in the chapter.⁷³ Other answers may lie in how course curricula are presented and the reasoning of those who have invested time and thought in creating these. The composition of the staff and how they teach are also crucial, as is the creation and use of a library that makes academic independence possible. The main issue, however, is whether and how MISR is building a basis for *theoretical reflection*, which as Mamdani has often emphasised is the key to endogenous knowledge development (see, for example, Mamdani 2019). Like Hountondji, Mamdani worries about the tendency among tertiary students, and even some academics, to adopt Western theory unreflexively:

Colonialism brought not only theory from Western academy, but also the assumption that theory is produced in the West, and the aim of the academy outside the West is limited to applying that theory. (Mamdani 2019: 64)

In an extract that sums up the MISR programme and offers a strategy for tackling the concerns articulated by Hountondji and his pioneering generation of African academics, Mamdani wrote:

The process of knowledge production is based on two distinct but related conversations, local and global. The scholar needs to balance two relationships in the process of knowledge production: one with the society at large, and the other with the scholarly community globally. The local conversation is with different social forces, their needs, their demands, their capacities and their visions. The global conversation is the product of an ongoing global debate within and between disciplines, a debate where geopolitics is of little obvious relevance. The local conversation makes for a public intellectual who is very mindful of political boundaries; the global conversation calls for a scholar who transgresses boundaries. Our challenge is to acknowledge that the public

intellectual and the scholar are not two different personas but two sides of a single quest for knowledge. To pursue this quest is to bridge and close the gap between the public intellectual and the scholar. (2019: 64–65)

The test for MISR is if its academics can find constructive ways of being part of the local intellectual and academic community while also achieving equal standing among members of the global academy, beyond and across all kinds of borders (see Ossome 2019).

A cross-disciplinary curriculum

This led us to the question of how MISR is using established theories to build a base of solid academics. The chosen tool seems to be the development of a cross-disciplinary curriculum, oriented towards different sectors of society and societal relationships; that is, a broad historical, cultural and social theory about societal order and social change.⁷⁴ In essence, the curriculum is an invitation into a discussion about what progress is, for whom and in what context. This broad approach enables students not only to ‘translate’ established theories to their own contexts, but also to understand how context both shapes and limits the development of theory.

Hontoundji developed a useful list of 13 indicators to highlight how the legacy of colonialism excludes African universities from independent scientific theory-making, arguing that platforms for independent theory development are won as the forces of exclusion are replaced by *global scientific inclusion*. The indicators, slightly adapted from the list cited in Dübgen and Skupien (2019: 70–72), are as follows:

1. All technical equipment comes from the global North.
2. Libraries are underfunded and publishing houses are scarce.
3. Academic tourism to the global North flourishes in compensation.
4. Academic tourism leads to brain drain.

5. External assistance (from donors and other sources) means that financial support for academic research comes from sources that perceive the context and the host institution or university as foreign.
6. Applied rather than basic research is emphasised.
7. African authors too often address themselves to what they assume will interest Western readers.
8. Research design 'remains bound to the local context instead of participating in universal debates'.
9. Scientific research serves the further economic exploitation of African resources.
10. The focus on ethnoscience or 'indigenous knowledge' is negative for social and economic development, because this knowledge is merely objectified and left behind as 'disconnected and static bodies within scientific approaches'.
11. Authors are compelled to acquire fluency in colonial languages if they hope to have global reach.
12. Communication between scholars in the global South is paltry.
13. Universities are marked by mediocrity; academics are perceived to be accepting of 'lower standards' and of not pushing hard enough to achieve high quality.

MISR's response has been to create a stable space at Makerere for students from the East African region, build a solid academic reputation, to equip its library well and to ensure that it has reliable access to global online resources. Students receive a living allowance so that they can focus fully on the work they need to do to deliver a high-quality research-based PhD thesis. By providing a well-resourced space, that allows students to experience and build continuity, collegiality and mutual support, students are less tempted to accept donor funding for research they don't consider relevant or to become an 'academic tourist'. Studying at MISR has also helped to strengthen communication between the scholars within the region and foster the continual and mutual sharing of knowledge between alumni as a collective. This is quite different to what individual PhD candidates tend to experience in

other faculties at Makerere or internationally.

Given that the conditions for independent theoretically embedded research have been created at MISR, the question we then asked is why cross-disciplinary basic theory is taught alongside a problem-oriented approach. We wanted to find out what kind of disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking justifies this choice. As noted when we discussed Gibbons and his colleagues (in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5), their view was that the future for universities no longer lies in sustaining academic disciplines, but rather in the delivery of problem-solving multidisciplinary research (with the combination often decided before the fact by the likely user/donor/beneficiary. According to Gibbons et al., the income that universities have historically earned from teaching should gradually be replaced by income from commissioned research.

MISR's approach is very different. Here interdisciplinarity is a theoretically informed and guided meeting between disciplines as internally required within a research process. It is not, as in the Mode 2 approach, a mixing of disciplines in an applied context determined by whoever plans to use or buy the research output. Disciplines are still considered important because they form the nexus between teaching and research. It is perhaps useful here to revisit the general notion of disciplines being the 'cement of universities'; the power of disciplines, and the orthodoxies they build on, are difficult to challenge. As Stephen Turner (2017: 13) explained:

Disciplines prize their legitimacy and autonomy, and protect both in various ways: by standards, certification, practices, licensing, and through the control of accepted means of communication. Typically disciplines have a professional association, a set of journals, meetings, and other structures.

MISR challenges disciplinary structures by highlighting *their social formation* and constitution as historical/sociological constructions. PhD candidates are encouraged to ask what created the social formation to which they are addressing their research, and from which their research questions may evolve into meaningful academic truth

telling? According to MISR's 2013 *Annual Report*, the institute seeks to understand *alternative* aesthetic, intellectual, ethical and political traditions, both contemporary and historical; '*the object is not only to learn about these forms, but also to learn from them*' (2013: 3, emphasis added). We can only understand these alternative forms of knowledge academically if we also understand the social formation within which PhD students at MISR find themselves.

While disciplines as we know them today are mainly created by processes of institutionalisation – with internal divisions of labour and codes of relevance relative to Northern societies and universities – the focus on *social formation* ensures that students take a step back and ask, what holds different social groups together and what creates differentiation? Institutionalisation and divisions of labour are viewed in historical/sociological context, and their societal effects are revealed. This ensures that MISR students cannot build on established (Western) disciplines only. Instead, PhD candidates begin by orienting themselves as researchers, and develop an understanding of how and why they are situated where they are. This process of discovery is not left to chance. Rather, their 'route' is established by training students in what constitutes research. This training starts at the master's level and deepens throughout the PhD. In the process, students develop 'a contextual and historical understanding of research problems' using an interdisciplinary research process to find theories that are relevant to this broad reading of context and connections. In this process, students develop a deep appreciation of why and how the key to research lies in the formulation of the problem. To quote MISR's 2013 *Annual Report*:

The curriculum of the MISR MPhil/PhD, therefore, seeks to ensure that each student's course of study is driven forward by academic debates and not by orthodoxy or re-learning default assumptions. To accomplish this, the curriculum has a distinct feature: it combines an interdisciplinary focus with distinct disciplinary training in four different clusters: a) political studies, b) political economy, c) historical studies, and

d) cultural studies. Interdisciplinarity has several dimensions. First, an interdisciplinary focus is cultivated through a set of core courses on social and political theory and historiography. Second, students are required to identify a primary cluster of their major field, and a secondary cluster as their minor field, thereby assuring they take courses from more than one disciplinary cluster. Third, each study will include a study of themes, such as gender, ethnicity, or the environment, that call for a cross-disciplinary focus. (MISR 2013: 3)

The overall purpose is to enable PhD students to train themselves to see their own work and social position within this broad context, and thus be able to rethink, both in institutional and intellectual terms, the role of the university itself and the role of academics in society. Clearly, this is a challenging PhD programme. It is justified by the need to develop quality research and relevant knowledge about and for East Africa, without falling into the trap of producing ‘indigenous knowledge’ as something that can be kept apart from global discourse. The empirical question it raises, and to which we return later, is: to what degree has this ideal been implemented and with what results for candidates’ formation?

When public intellectuals are essential

From its inception, MISR’s stated goal was to train future researchers and future leaders in higher education. Central questions that have been raised are how MISR can most effectively contribute to the betterment of the academic profession and the university. One response has been that strengthening the universities’ influence on society begins with improving the quality of PhD programmes, thus enhancing the calibre of candidates who are awarded PhD degrees. By contrast, the dominant contemporary trend seems to prefer to develop doctoral candidates’ managerial skills, as if universities are ‘factory-like production units’ as US economist Thorstein Veblen proposed in 1916 (cited in Donoghue 2008: 10). This thinking also

has some influence at Makerere, and its adherents have attempted to undermine MISR's PhD programme and to prevent it from being adopted or emulated by other departments.

Part of the reason for this is the notion that local/endogenous knowledge is not important. As illustrated in Part II, belief in the value of local knowledge is weak among Ugandan academics, and probably even weaker among business leaders and professionals. Trapped in neoliberal aspirations/illusions, neither the civil service nor the private sector see the need for universities to equip graduates with an appreciation for local knowledge. Admittedly, the knowledge that universities developed (before privatisation) as so-called 'flagship universities for national development' contributed to the rise of national elites, thus engendering little respect for the academic profession. As a result, while few Ugandans see meaningful relationships between education and work, even fewer see the relevance of research-based knowledge to society and the economy.

Historically in Europe, social institutions related to the church and the state grew with, and in relation to, the universities. This created a level of trust in the education that universities provided and the people they educated. Education became both a tool of state administration and a way of entering it at different levels. To an extent, education merged with authority but, in the process, new social hierarchies were created that were at least partly justified by meritocracy. Universities had to respond to this by providing knowledge about a variety of administrative and economic fields. To cut a long story short, bureaucracies and universities co-evolved in ways that made academic knowledge valuable and trusted, while turning bureaucracies into relatively stable and dependable forms of authority. This was never the case in Africa. Here, the bureaucracies that were imported and imposed by colonisers were neither valued nor trustworthy; those with no administrative skills and lots of 'social capital' have long been able to countermand civil servants.

Today in Uganda, for example, orders can emanate from anywhere, decisions made in parliament are rarely implemented, and the separation between the public and private domains is blurred. More

importantly, orders can be issued without reference to knowledge or due process, so that state and institutional resources are directed into the hands of a small elite. Consequently, the link between knowledge and authority that might accord some respect and latitude to a university graduate, or adequately reward academics for their skills and contributions, is absent. The so-called flagship universities that were expected to nurture public intellectuals and leaders after African countries achieved liberation, had not managed to reshape the knowledge base of these societies before being wrecked by World Bank policies, marketisation and internal conflict over power and resources. As one of our informants neatly summed this up, this means that degree certificates are now worth little more than a 'button on a suit'.

Years of domination by external capital in the guise of privatisation coupled with increasing public debt, has created an intense mistrust of the state and its officials. Taxation is seen as achieving little more than filling the pockets of corrupt officials, and in many countries, the economy is comprised of parallel systems of formal and informal transactions in which the line between legal and illegal is blurred at best. The formal economy is dominated by external expertise in which the locally educated play a junior role, and the informal sectors see little need for university graduates or their skills. As Mamdani (2007) pointed out, economic regimes of this nature tend to subjugate universities rather than be transformed by them.

In response to the problems of rent-seeking and corruption, the World Bank (1997) propagated the idea of the 'agile state', and began turning the tertiary sector into a market for educational services. What the World Bank failed to understand is that, while governments can turn various sectors into arenas for competition, they cannot do much more. In reality, all marketisation achieved was to promote global hegemony and further impoverish national public universities, leaving them more deeply embedded in cultures of corruption. When it came to devaluing efficient public services and democratic participation in public space, the interests of the World Bank dovetailed neatly with those of non-*rechtsstaat*-oriented local regimes. The fact that effective bureaucratic and democratic systems are necessary to the evolution of

stable nation-states, and that these are fostered by higher-education institutions, was perhaps less important than the fact that both have the potential to exert some measure of control over the market economy in ways that might prove inconvenient to the World Bank and its allies.

Of course, the knowledge that particular academics find relevant, given their role as ‘truth tellers’, is part of wider social struggles, and this is relevant to the growth of democracy too. Focusing on academics’ role as experts (in promoting economic growth, for example) can create a contradiction between the power of knowledge (or the domination of expertise) and democracy. This is particularly true when neoliberalism prevents knowledge from being productive and action-oriented in specific arenas. We therefore take the role of expert to be only a part of a much broader identity. As Kalleberg (2011: 111) put it:

Academics can contribute to democracy by communicating research-based knowledge and insight so that it becomes integrated in general democratic discourse and by educating students also as citizens, with adequate attitudes and knowledge. Professors have a role both as public intellectuals and as educators of students to become future citizens.

MISR’s prioritisation of the development of public intellectuals evolved from the need to show the public the value of critical knowledge – as opposed to merely ‘useful knowledge’ (à la Gibbons et al.) – and how this can improve the ways in which social relations are negotiated. With leaders of this kind, and by creating trust and a shared belief in the value of knowledge, universities might be able to resume a relationship with the world of work that is based on respect for academic authority and tertiary education. MISR has set itself a formidable task that is achievable only if its values permeate through the education system. For this to happen, ‘scaling up’ is essential. The idea that MISR can increase respect for academic knowledge by leading by example needs support. The cultivation and encouragement of public intellectuals is one way they have chosen of attempting to garner more support.

Modernity and the universities: MISR's influence

As scholars from all over the world have argued, the values of the Enlightenment are not deducible from Western culture nor are they a purely 'Western invention' (see Wagner 2001, 2010, 2012). The different varieties of modernity indicate that universities cannot drive modernity in a single specific direction, but rather contribute to a variety of modernities, where knowledge can derive from many sources, depending on societal actors' beliefs in knowledge and the context in which it is developed. In the end, however, the strength of the academic profession depends on the degree to which societies value the knowledge developed in those societies (see Chapter 7). As Bourdieu (1976) pointed out, social formations need to be both *analysed* and *recognised* if they are to have a basis for social influence. Recognition is what forms the basis for trusting academia but does not come about by itself. For this reason, how MISR relates the *quality* of its work to the *relevance* of its work is key to the influence it has and will have on campus and beyond.

The academic profession relies on society trusting strangers for reasons that are different from those that apply in the context of religious faith, family loyalty and military obedience. In essence, academic knowledge can only be understood (and gain traction) if modernity has room to expand. In other words, it is only when the better arguments can be freely advocated that they can gain influence in the public realm. In societies where trust in the better argument has no space to exist and grow, the academic profession tends to vanish fast – as in Pol Pot's Cambodia, Amin's Uganda, China's 'cultural revolution', and ZANU-PF'S Zimbabwe, for example. For the academic profession to thrive, a belief in the value of knowledge is a primary requirement and must be accompanied by trust in the academic profession's capacity to contribute to societal development. This is particularly important in contexts where hegemonic regimes are being challenged.

Older theories of modernity consider development in terms of a *linear progression*, related to rationality, formality, efficiency (as

epitomised by the OECD's model of economic growth). Where this linear and utilitarian perspective of development still holds sway, the role of academics is often reduced to providing 'objective' neutral advice and tools for the achievement of pre-set goals. Means and ends are assumed to be uncomplicated, and the setting of goals often determines the means that are chosen to achieve them. For those who hold this worldview, public intellectuals are unnecessary (Hans 1994). More credible theories involve no such presuppositions. Instead, references to rationality are considered symptomatic of the power of specific actors to further their own hegemonic and economic interests (with the World Bank being a prime example) (Wagner 2016). Of course, there are many roads to modernity. Generally, the goals are unclear, and both the means and the ends have to be open to debate. In the world of scholars (as opposed to experts), academic creativity is characterised by unclear relations between means and ends. The discovery of new means (sometimes the unintended consequences of research projects) has to be able to change the ends (which might also have to remain unclear or abstract).

Allowing for this kind of open-endedness requires a critical approach to established knowledge and a certain distance from society's utilitarian interests. This is the paradox embedded in theories of knowledge about modernity: while the academic profession is seen as modernity's foremost sign and symbol, the profession cannot be subsumed under the ideas of instrumental rationality that are often considered to generate enlightened modernity. That is, a certain degree of institutional differentiation is necessary to ensure the autonomy of the academic community in exchange for ethical behaviour and social responsibility. These ethical issues are all the more challenging when academic ingenuity is needed to help society express its more humane values (see Mann 2005; Ossome 2019).

How academics in Uganda deal with these questions of modernity and rationality is indicative of how they occupy their role in the universities as educators of other professions, and in society more generally. By being attentive to how different fields of knowledge work on one another within a social formation, MISR aims to show that

developing an appreciation for endogenous knowledge is a key value that should underpin modernisation in the region. By choosing to take an independent road towards modernity MISR is asking Ugandans: in which direction do we want to go to make progress? Just asking this question poses a fundamental challenge to many at Makerere, where the instrumental copying of disciplines relies on a means/ends rationale and conception of modernity that is simply not applicable or, at the very least, not developed from within. As Wagner (2016: 13–14) said:

All societies have to provide answers to some core concerns when living together. Most centrally, they have to answer the questions: how are the material needs of the members of society satisfied, what are the rules of living together and how are they determined; what are the knowledge resources that our life in common can rely on. These questions refer to what can be called the basic problematic of human social life – the economic, the political and the epistemic problématique. Different societies have answered – and still answer – these questions in different ways.⁷⁵

Participation in global debates

Shifts in theories of modernity are reflected in the move away from methodological nationalism (in which the USA is seen as the epitome of modernity) and towards globalisation. This move has also changed understandings of the role of academics as mediators of knowledge. Whereas nation-states previously conferred authority and stimulated demand for knowledge, their role in this is no longer clear cut. Academic authority can now emanate from global organisations, private universities, think-tanks and consultancy firms. In Uganda, the authority of the multilateral organisations has long outcompeted that of the state. In the face of these developments, academics have found refuge and resilience in collegiality (Hall and Lamont 2013). We therefore attempted to explore the spaces of collegiality that MISR

aligns with, and to consider the extent to which MISR is constituted within the framework of the 'liberation movements' or if other social realities, such as resistance to the globalisation of capitalism and neoliberalism, opposition to the agendas of the bipolar Chinese and US empires, and responses to global environmental challenges, also play a role in guiding the knowledge production. To try to answer this question, we briefly reviewed various publications that emanate from MISR, asking ourselves to what extent its staff and students are fired by the realisation that

Africa is a planetary laboratory at a time when history itself is being recast as an integrated history of the Earth system, technical system and the human world. Here, a technological revolution is taking shape at a time when the continent is increasingly perceived as the last frontier of capitalism. (Mbembe 2019: 252)

MISR has published a series of working papers since 2011⁷⁶ and a series of policy briefs since 2015.⁷⁷ In 2016, the institute's flagship journal, the *MISR Review*, was launched.⁷⁸ Some might question the wisdom of allocating so much of its scarce resources to publishing. However, one of MISR's basic aims is to contribute not only to knowledge and possible solutions regarding the challenges facing academics in Africa, but also to add to the pool of global academic knowledge by helping to build theoretical categories and generalisations based on systematised empirical practices. The general project of seeing the global through the lens of the local, and the local from the perspective of the global, presupposes the ability to present research through publishing channels that value independent reflections on academic practice. However, as Mamdani and his co-editors explained in the first issue of the *MISR Review*, the requirements of Northern journal editors, combined with and the pressure to earn 'publishing points', is transforming not only the content but also the authority of knowledge emerging from institutes like MISR. In response, they explained that

The journal signals a long-awaited step in the development of the programme at MISR. It combines a commitment to local and indeed regional knowledge production, rooted in relevant linguistic and disciplinary training, with a critical and disciplined reflection on the globalisation of modern forms of knowledge and modern forms of power.

As mentioned, MISR's postgraduate training resembles the American model, but it also has some traits characteristic of Ugandan culture; that is: the structure of the programme does not determine its content. PhD students from sub-Saharan Africa are expected to publish in the journal (and they have), and to demonstrate the value of developing their own theoretical categories and constructs about their realities. As lists of references show, however, none of the students are blocking out knowledge from elsewhere. It is accepted that we can all search for what we call true knowledge, and what is found will always reflect the context in which it was sought and formulated. Generalisations are always up for discussion, but to contribute to this discussion, localised theoretical reflection is necessary in the form of translations or new concepts.

MISR's publishing programme can be considered a form of defence in an epistemological war in which enormous resource advantages give Western universities the power to dominate. As Hountondji explained, claims to universality cannot be universally accepted when mediated by an authoritative epistemology that disguises the social formation that shaped their formation (Dübgen and Skupien 2019).

MISR therefore seeks to build on African understandings of the cosmos, as different from the Greco-Roman, but with the modern idea of knowledge *as organised by universities*. In line with some of the ideals of the Humboldtian tradition, MISR aims to use the need for evidence-based and contextualised knowledge to help universities in the global South to reconceptualise their work. The aim is to foster independent research (and teaching) based on academics' abilities to discern what knowledge is relevant ('getting the question right') and to hold the

academic community accountable for the choices that are made. A journal edited and published by MISR allows for wider profiling of such knowledge and proves the value of organising knowledge production in this way. The hope is that additional organisational and institutional backing will follow.

Of course, the core 'products' of MISR's educational programme are its students' PhD dissertations. As Buzeki (2016) observed, the PhD programme is 'the engine of research at MISR'. MISR's PhD students are encouraged to explore new terms and analytical categories that explain their realities better than the existing disciplines and orthodoxies. A search for new understandings, theories and categories drives their research, as opposed to fixed categories or preconstructed variables that have become detached from the object of study. The programme seems to be designed to develop students' ability to name the 'burning issues' in their own lifeworlds. This ability to understand a lifeworld within which language and culture have meaning, while reflecting on it as if from outside, is what MISR hopes will help graduates increase societal self-reflexivity – a capacity that seems critical to how humanity will deal with crucial choices about the future.

A glance at the titles of PhD dissertations submitted between 2012 and 2019, gives an indication of how students are applying a broadly historical socio-analytical approach:⁷⁹

- *Islam in the State: A Genealogy of the Muslim Minority Question in Uganda* (by Joseph Kasule, 2012)
- *Reading Monuments: The Politics and Poetics of Memory in Post-War Northern Uganda* (by Laury Ocen, 2016)
- *Prophets and Subjects of Development: Slavery, Civilisation and State Formation in Ethiopia* (by Yonas Ashine Demisse, 2017)
- *The State and the Puzzle of Tribe: Rethinking Mass Violence in Uganda's Rwenzori Area* (by Yahaya Sseremba, 2018)
- *The Transformation of Karamoja: The Sedentarisation of Pastoralists* (by Emmanuel Frank Muhereza, 2018)
- *Militias, Warriors, and Workers: Capturing Peasants and the Making of a Strong State and a Weak Society in Eritrea* (by

Temesgen Tesfamariam Beyan, 2018)

- *Topographies of Reminiscences: Asmara as Historical Representations and Deliberations* (by Netsanet Gebremichael Weldesenbet, 2019)

Our brief reviews of these dissertations revealed that the MISR programme has a particular focus on history, both as a way of approaching a field of study and as a means of conducting in-depth study of a chosen topic. In our view, the MISR approach seems to make possible a kind of knowledge that is not widely available. For example, issues of state–society relations are examined to enable greater understanding of how order is established, at whose cost and to whose benefit, as well as how this might change or be changed. Similarly, explorations of violence, relationships between types of regimes and types of political economies, the issue of women and modernity, and why variations of modernity emerge, seem to be quite uniquely documented. Unlike knowledge from the North, delivered via a donor’s silver platter, these studies are creative and independent. They not only help us better understand the regions studied, but also refute the supposedly ‘universal validity’ of models and categories developed by Western ‘political scientists’.

What became clear from this review, and from our interviews with informants at MISR, is that the aim of the institute’s programme is twofold. First, MISR aims to provide a model for the restoration of real scholarship at Makerere, where academics develop their own epistemological identity. Second, the doctoral programme is an attempt to demonstrate the level of institutional resources and academic commitment that the cultivation of this kind of scholarship requires. However, our sense is that the links between the global and local academic worlds appear to be framed within a ‘liberation movement’ logic. Interest in Africa’s history, postcolonial trajectories, and why so many of its governments have turned into elitist projects that spawn corruption and ethnic conflict is clearly strong. However, globalisation and the neoliberal domination responsible for the decimation of universities in East Africa, often in alliance with former

liberation-movement leaders turned elitist, is less often discussed. Discourse related to the local consequences of global class conflict, and how those who hold economic power are pivotal in determining what knowledge is valued, seems surprisingly small, and critiques of the role of techno-capitalism in ecological catastrophes, climate chaos, and the acidification of the oceans are also not very visible in work emanating from MISR. As of 2017, three core research areas had been identified: beyond criminal justice; land and agrarian questions; and higher education (MISR 2017: 6). All three have the potential for great relevance or not. While MISR has established the kind of broad academic training that encourages scholars to reflect on and develop new models of development, we wonder if it is really developing the capacities of its students to move beyond its 'liberation movement roots' to address the challenges of the Anthropocene/Capitalocene and stimulate new relationships between the global and the local.

It is noteworthy here that MISR's Global Scholars Programme ensures that some courses are taught by eminent scholars from other parts of the world. Two of these, Lyn Osome and Samson Bezabeh, published books with MISR while running their courses and were, of course, able to deepen and enrich their research and thinking through their experience in Uganda. Interestingly, their books build on these two scholars' own PhD research, providing examples that MISR graduates can follow (see Bezabeh 2015 and Osome 2019).

The pros and cons of scaling up

In terms of scaling up the MISR model, two scenarios emerged from our discussions. In the first, if Makerere were to decide to follow the MISR model, the university as a whole would have to fundamentally transform. The number of students would have to be reduced or the number of staff would have to be dramatically increased. Either way, more resources would have to be found and these would have to be allocated according to different priorities; staff would have to have the time and funding to conduct research. In the second option, Makerere could become a node in an African network for the development of a

new academic 'prototype'. As a centre for advanced doctoral training, MISR's long-term survival and the 'scaling up' of its model seems more feasible. In relation to the first option, some students, academics and university management have shown signs of opposition. They argue that the model is too elitist, the students too privileged and their resourcing too costly, and that its wider adoption would reduce and undermine the resources and opportunities available to a very limited number of candidates. Before discussing this in more detail, we reflect a little more on the powerful interconnections between knowledge and politics.

MISR is attempting to equip its PhD graduates with the skills they need to share their knowledge with society in ways that will (in time) be well received. The aim is to educate candidates who are equally well respected in the public sphere and academic community. To achieve this, MISR had to organise itself differently from the rest of Makerere where most academics undertake their doctorates while continuing with their general academic duties. They have little space for full-time concentrated study or research unless they opt for a sandwich degree and take time out to do some of their research or writing at a university abroad. With its very different set of resource demands, the MISR model challenges the *politics of knowledge* at Makerere. Through their practice and accomplishments, MISR graduates implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) critique the ways in which most postgraduate programmes are organised at the university. The systems adopted at MISR can thus be understood as an attempt to influence relations between knowledge and politics in a number of ways. The institute is providing an organisational model for doctoral education oriented towards the bold ideal in which the academic community resumes control over what makes knowledge relevant and of outstanding quality. Discerning what knowledge is relevant is a basic step towards quality, but for relevance to convince that ways in which the research is conducted and findings are presented also count. In this regard, MISR has chosen to measure the success of its knowledge policy and doctoral training by how much and how well its graduates interact with society. On the one hand, MISR graduates are expected to

engage in public discourse on the basis that it is not enough simply to understand the relationship between politics and knowledge; this understanding must be made publicly accessible. MISR assesses the strength of its doctoral training in terms of how effectively it gives graduates the authority to intervene in public debates on behalf of the better arguments, even if such interventions are politically risky or likely to elicit pushback from the establishment. On the other hand, it is also hoped that MISR graduates will ultimately become leaders of universities or other influential higher-education and research institutions, thus inculcating the kind of academic leadership that they have experienced into the wider education system. Given the extent to which (World Bank-inspired) managerialism has gained a foothold in the running of universities globally, this is a formidable expectation. It is, nonetheless, crucial to decolonisation and epistemic autonomy.

In a volume edited by Jonathan Jansen (2019), he pointed out that decolonisation is a notoriously unclear term and, as a contributor to the same volume, Achille Mbembe (2019: 240) noted:

We still do not have a precise idea of what a ‘truly decolonised knowledge’ might look like. Nor do we have a theory of knowledge as such that might completely underpin the African injunction to decolonise. Because of the absence of both a theory of knowledge and a theory of institutions, the injunction to decolonise may be, at least for the time being, better understood as a compensatory act to whose function is to heal what amounts to racial shame.

A fuller discussion of this is beyond the scope of this study but, in general, we affirm that knowledge interests everywhere must try to shape politics so that the *local* academic community has the space, resources, and freedom to decide on what knowledge is relevant, and how to present it to the public. In this regard, whatever future role MISR graduates play in public or as leaders, they know that they have the skills and experience to develop knowledge that they see as relevant to decolonisation and other aspects of their realities. Crucially, they have

also experienced what it means to be comparatively free of *imported* disciplinary structures, curriculum, research and policy priorities.

In our view, achieving this kind of strength in the knowledge–policy nexus is a necessary precondition for any institution that considers scaling up the MISR model. Whether this occurs in other faculties at Makerere, at other campuses in East Africa and beyond, or both, success will depend on the capacities of MISR graduates to prove themselves as academically independent academics, as well as on the impact of their research. The model will also have to be decoupled from MISR’s charismatic leaders and be integrated into university structures that support this method of strengthening the academic profession.

If we consider MISR’s relationship with Makerere more broadly, several of our interviews with faculty members and leaders indicated that the model is contested, even resisted. Of course, many informants doubt that the model can work financially. They suggested that MISR has survived so far because of its distinguished leadership and five-year funding allocation. This funding structure is the only one of its kind on the campus and could thus have ‘a problem with sustainability’. Naturally, these concerns about the costs assume that the political regime will continue to show very little interest in funding higher education. In this context, informants said that creating a demand for such concentrated funding seemed to them to be unrealistic and unfair.

Informants also perceived the high costs involved in the MISR programme as contributing to an elitist attitude among MISR students. One individual described this as follows:

The students see themselves as the best, above the rest ... The programme was made so exotic and so out of the mainstream that the students felt very superior. They were given the impression that this PhD was the only programme of quality at the university. This set them on a collision course with everybody ... And they are privileged; they don’t have to find money for anything – even breakfast etc. They get all the money and housing they need to manage.

The funding question aside, several informants also expressed educational reservations about the programme. A (former) dean from CHUSS rejected the MISR model as unlikely to ‘help the university directly’, arguing that its demands for high-quality staff and candidates runs counter to the university’s general aversion to external recruitment, and fosters an attitude that MISR is ‘too good for the rest of us’.

These responses reflected a reaction to the idea that a dedicated institute for doctoral training is educationally more sound. The suggestion is that PhD candidates should instead continue to muddle through as individuals within their disciplines, as is currently the case for many. Concerns about the ‘elitist attitudes’ of MISR students seemed to include some criticism of the fact that the initiative did not grow out of the disciplines, and far from being controlled by disciplinary tribes and territories, it has instead challenged them and their knowledge base. The presence of independent academics with strong voices defining what knowledge is relevant seemed to inspire some antipathy. While the pervasiveness of systems of ranking and rating, and all kinds of quantitative competitive measures of difference appear to be accepted as given and non-negotiable, differences related to ‘academic competition’ (that is, whose knowledge counts the most) are apparently seen as threatening by some.

Their lack of socialisation through the disciplines also seemed to work against the MISR students. Those we interviewed emphasised that they often felt that MISR was detached from Makerere. An informant from CHUSS confirmed this and described an experience of attempting to arrange meetings with individual MISR students:

But these people [MISR PhD students] are not members of staff, and the system will not take them [employ them]. They do not have contracts with the Makerere institution. And we have had bad experiences. They have been called ... [but] do not want to come ... They dictated a meeting date to me. And I had to force them to meet one by one to discuss their situation. I insisted. They said ‘we must appear as a group’ ...

they made a lot of demands. It is this privileged programme of Mamdani that made them into what they are. No one will employ them ...

[The MISR programme is a] good programme with high quality, but it is foreign to our academic culture. These MISR people do not have commitment, they cannot be members of staff. [MISR] has not worked on integrating them into our university system. And then Mamdani argues that they are forced to work by teaching in the third semester. But they have no contract or any institutional commitment. And now he insists that his centre is under CHUSS. They [MISR students] will come and teach as training but nothing else, [and we] only see them after three years. But the kind of students Mamdani has developed, [we] will not give them a job. They are too cocky.

By educating students who have no loyalty to Makerere, and who are not properly integrated, despite having to teach courses at the university, MISR seems to have become a threat, rather than a resource to CHUSS. In addition, the informant argued that:

MISR has not succeeded in creating this as a model for PhD. [It is] too expensive, and unaware of the real environment within which academics work here at Makerere and in Uganda ... The PhD programme is only part of MISR but is MISR a research environment? Not really, perhaps a bit. But it is also divorced from the rest of the university ... Also, those that join MISR out of research interests feel they are foreigners.

Like others we spoke to, this informant saw no room for scaling up the US-inspired doctoral model and rejected the ways in which the model challenges disciplines, funding, academic control and the tight internal recruitment of PhD candidates through tight departmental and disciplinary disciplining.

MISR students also commented on their experiences of being de-linked from the university as a whole and were also sceptical about the chances of Makerere scaling up the model. They reported that it is difficult to get PhD students from other colleges and faculties at Makerere to attend MISR seminars (no matter how interesting the topics or how distinguished the presenters might be). Some PhD students at MISR even said they ended up seeing themselves as ‘guests’ (at Makerere), and indicated that they just want to get their PhD and go home.

But all of this does not limit the fact that we benefit academically, perhaps that is why Mamdani finds it easy to do this ... For me, it has been beneficial.

The feeling of being disliked due to ‘elite status and privileges’ seemed pervasive and problematic for most. The sense of disconnectedness was also exacerbated by insecurity about MISR’s future given the absence of public funding and the institute’s almost total dependence on donor support. Not quite understanding why the university is so against MISR, they wondered if other academics at Makerere really feel threatened or if other reasons exist.

This year [2019] was not a good year, due to the fact that we did not know if Mamdani would stay, and the general Makerere context. If he is not here it will not continue, he is the only one who can stand against the corruption ... Why is Makerere so against this programme? Because there are many dead departments. This [MISR] is so different. The students are powerful. Those who come to our seminars, they see we are good. Mamdani summonses [them] from the rest of the university, and for him it is important to link with Makerere. But most important is the question of corruption, the accountants, etc. they are after MISR’s finances.

Our impression was that those who were the most hostile were often those who, as described in Part II, really struggle the most to have their research and expertise acknowledged as relevant to Uganda's development. For example, one academic at CAES rejected MISR's PhD programme as too different from their model of doctoral education 'by research'. Other informants, given the strain on the social sciences, seemed more open to the MISR model and acknowledged the value of linking research-based PhD programme to interdisciplinary thinking and coursework.

Most of the PhD programmes [at Makerere], except the one at MISR and ours, I think all the other programmes are by research ... So, to compare programmes that are by research with programmes that are by coursework and dissertation is a bit of a problem. But I see people who have done some kind of coursework, [and] I think they are better off in the sense that they have explored some theoretical issues and things like that. They are more likely to understand the sector much better than somebody who just does research and things like that. That's why, even in the programmes that are mainly research-based, there are still some courses that the graduate school recommends [that students should attend] – whether it is research methodology and other kinds of courses that ... are supposed to ... improve their [work]. I think ... a taught programme has an edge over programmes that are purely by research.

Similarly, some MISR students told us that accessing academic careers within the university, and at other universities in Uganda that expect recruits to be immersed in disciplinary interests and identities was proving difficult.

Taken together, informants' comments highlight both the strengths of the MISR model and the cleavages it has created on campus related to various disciplinary and funding issues. If Makerere's academic

community were able to reach broad consensus that adopting the MISR model would enhance the quality of the university and the lives of its academic staff, solutions to the funding question would have to be found. For example, various national stakeholders could be asked to commit to providing long-term support that inspires but does not depend purely on donor funding. In addition, the value of ongoing and deeper cross-disciplinary interaction must be affirmed and given institutional encouragement.

While academics often debate Makerere's doctoral programmes and see the absence of research as a major challenge, the possible adoption and benefits of the MISR model does not seem to have received thorough consideration. One informant who spent a year as a research fellow at MISR described the differences between the PhD programmes at MISR and those in other departments at Makerere as follows:

There are various kinds of differences [between the PhD programmes at MISR and Makerere], and I think one of the obvious differences is that the programme at MISR sort of gives people the theoretical grounding, in terms of introducing them to the debates in the particular fields and, of course, intense reading. You cannot compare that in any way to people who come here to do research, sometimes without even understanding what it is that they should be doing. Sometimes you have people that don't really [grasp the essentials], I mean they are doing research and all that, but when you listen to their public defence, you feel they cannot even answer very basic questions. So there are huge differences in terms of grounding ...

That may just be me, because I did my PhD in the US and we had to do coursework for two years so it [MISR] is kind of like the US model, but I feel there are huge differences. The PhD at MISR is interdisciplinary whereas I think the departments [at Makerere] are still very compartmentalised. They have not moved very much out of those kinds of boxes...

That can be a bit problematic. I think the interdisciplinarity of the MISR programme encourages people to read across the disciplines, and [helps students] to be able to see how the different disciplines complement each other.⁸⁰

This sums up the structural barriers to the scaling up of the MISR model. However, it also explains why adopting the MISR model could help institutions counter the neoliberal idea that a good PhD is a project that specific actors in the business or public sectors see as useful and are therefore willing to fund. On the research component of MISR, one candidate observed that

The benefit of MISR is that a lot of academics from outside, both from Europe and America come. We get to meet them; they give a talk, and we exchange ideas. This is increasing the quality of my research because chatting about work helps you to think more globally outside the Ugandan context and this is something important.

On students' motivation, this informant added:

I think students at MISR already come in politicised; they are already motivated by the political situations in their countries, and they want to do something about it. They are from countries where politics is in the forefront – this holds true also [for students] from Uganda. And coming to MISR gives them space to think critically on these issues.

Building an environment that is supportive of MISR students while they are on campus, as well as a strong network of successful alumni, will be invaluable. Recruiting dedicated staff who are committed to sustaining the quality of the programme is equally crucial. Complaints that MISR's 'external recruitment' is excessive must be balanced with the demand for quality and cross-disciplinary qualifications. And of course, there must be support for the general idea.

Conclusion

MISR's attempt at creating a high-quality PhD degree, based on a broad academic training and allowing independent choice of dissertation topic, has undoubtedly proven a timely and crucial strategy for shifting attention away from all the ongoing crises of university leadership versus management, student throughput and the overburdened academic community, to highlight instead the central yet often neglected issue of knowledge. MISR's major priority is knowledge, and what is needed to secure academic control over its relevance, its quality and its dissemination. If scaled up, this attempt to turn the tide could be a crucial step in restoring the authority of the academic profession in Uganda and beyond. In essence, MISR's work aims to 'decolonise' universities and free scholars from the marketisation and managerial control of higher education that determines so much of what is taught and researched. The work is therefore equally relevant to well-resourced countries where academic freedom is also circumscribed and subject to neoliberal hegemony. As UNESCO's World Higher Education Conference in October 2020 made clear, global inequity remains stark in terms of opportunities to access and create knowledge. In this context, MISR stands out as an important example of academics reclaiming the independence of their profession.

10

The academic profession and its influence on the relevance of knowledge

In this final chapter we first sum up some of our main findings about resistance to the influence of neoliberalism at Makerere as reflected in much of MISR's work and its postgraduate training model, as well as in the views expressed by many of the academics we interviewed across four colleges at the university. We then discuss the potential for wider societal support for this resistance, and highlight the importance of strengthening the autonomy of the academic profession in relation to deciding what knowledge is relevant. Using our definition of a research university, we suggest ways in which Makerere could support the creation and dissemination of endogenous academic knowledge.

Summing up the MISR–Makerere relationship

Our overall impressions from our study of MISR, and our interviews with professors and 'professors in the making' about their habitus and what has shaped their professional identities at Makerere, are that negotiations between '*homo academicus*' and '*homo oeconomicus*' are intense and ongoing at this institution. MISR is a focal point for resistance, but it is certainly not alone. Many informants outside of the management structures argued that for Makerere to reverse the negative impacts of neoliberalism, the university will have to enrol fewer students, pay better wages, secure more time for research, pool available research funds (and ensure that academics control the disbursements), extend internal democratic practices, ensure that international networks and collaborative research projects are generative for endogenous research,

encourage academic debate, and develop academic programmes in line with Uganda's own needs and priorities.

All of these opinions are consistent with MISR's. However, as long as the government shows no long-term commitment to higher education, and allocates no significant funding to the sector, none of the university's leaders believe that they have any option but to follow the neoliberal path to marketisation that the university is on. This includes transforming the university into an organisation that is managerially and strategically (rather than academically) governed, with the central aim of converting students into 'fee-paying customers' who purchase knowledge products and direct their research efforts towards user demands and donor calls rather than graduates who are well equipped to think deeply, research skilfully and respond creatively within the professions they enter.

According to the deans, the university has been through a process of centralisation. This has meant that, while the academic community's formal powers seem to still be in place, power is shared with a central leadership structure whose primary aim is national and global prominence in a competitive sector. On the ground, this has led to frustration with the growing number of academic vacancies, and suspicion that funds that should be spent on the academic profession are being allocated to administration. The strengthening of the administration is believed to be driving the university away from its focus on academic work and its relevance for truth telling. While the university leaders clearly endorse the institutional ratings systems and cherish the high standing that Makerere has achieved among African tertiary institutions, none of this was mentioned by the deans. Their concerns (like those of their colleagues at MISR) centred on how to develop and fund theoretically grounded and academically relevant knowledge. Their constant question was how to find the time and money to renew the core of their knowledge base and enhance that of their students.

In essence, the neoliberal push to turn Makerere into a 'strategic actor' has not, as far as we could tell, permeated through to the academics or the deans. Instead, these academics showed remarkable resilience in their desire to transform Makerere into a research-based and research-

driven university. While the management seemed to accept that adjusting to external systems of 'measurement' is necessary, the deans were more concerned about returning to collegial co-operation and reinstating the university as a public space for sharing knowledge. The deans did not see organisational or individual competition as a form of progress along this path but rather as a regrettable adjustment to management's need to make the campus visible in the public domain.

Makerere has long been a 'donor darling', and continues to receive a significant amount of funding for infrastructure and laboratory equipment, course development, student and staff exchanges, and doctoral training. The university has already developed a 'client-oriented' approach to research. Most of the research is thus in step with the idea that knowledge can be sold like any other product. In most cases, this takes the form of expertise provided by professors or other academics. Neoliberals might see this as a valuable prelude to an even more market-driven exchange of knowledge services, whereby Makerere would compete with other universities to deliver educational services in Uganda and potentially anywhere in the world. However, echoing the widespread objections by African universities to the World Trade Organization's attempts to make its general agreements on trade in services apply to universities, most if not all of the deans we spoke to were deeply concerned about how to secure long-term public support that would make the university less dependent on donor funding. Securing public support presupposes regime change, both at the university and in structures that govern the higher-education sector.

Even though a number of deans working in the sciences (but excluding those at CAES and CEDAT) insisted that they decide what to research even when donors fund their research projects, they all said they would prefer to see a wider adoption of the MISR practice – whereby donors fund research on topics that academics prioritise according to what they see as relevant for Uganda. They agreed that this would allow for more research to be done on issues related to Uganda's national development plans, noting that these are often neglected when donors fund external actors to supply data and analysis.

This seems to be an area where academics have not yet succeeded in gaining influence. Having little choice but to play the game while having no say in the rules, many academics are subcontracted into the role of data collector or co-opted into playing expert knowledge vendor. Makerere's journey to becoming a fully market-driven university is likely to be short and swift unless (at least some) donors recognise the danger in this, and chose to help build a different road that is more in line with the deans' and the academics' recommendations. The NORHED programme is one example of a donor organisation attempting to avoid the well-trodden paths that are littered with failed development schemes designed and imposed from the North and trying to find better ways of strengthening the academic profession (see Halvorsen et al. 2019).

The steady growth in student numbers clearly haunts the campus however. The deans all complained about this but remain powerless to change it. The enrolment of high numbers of students is undermining academic work at all levels, including the ability of academic staff to create critical and thoughtful graduates who have internalised a sense of the value of knowledge and of the unique contribution they can make to extending and sharing this. Enrolling high numbers of students seems to be the leadership's key means of generating revenue and meeting the demands of the educational market. While different disciplines are differently impacted by this, student-staff ratios have generally reached a level where it is difficult to see Makerere as a university that is driven by and supportive of academics. We detected no counter strategies among the academics we met, but rather a hesitant acceptance that once the gates were opened to the fee-paying masses, universities just need more staff and resources to survive. To us it seemed that the university had not yet fully grasped the characteristics of the education market and was failing to differentiate its offers accordingly. Changing this is imperative if the current staff and those recruited in future are going to survive as independent academics.

Most of the deans saw the sourcing of additional research funding as a likely saviour, a way of turning the tide. However, while the government (or rather, the president's office) contributes a little in the

way of funding, very few other actors in Uganda seem to see the need for academic research, and even fewer are concerned about the quality of the research that is being done. Consequently, the ‘users’ of knowledge in Uganda have shown little support for MISR or its doctoral training. The fact that these users express no need for new and high-quality research, and show little to no interest in the views of academics who speak out as public intellectuals, presents a dilemma for the neoliberal argument that universities should adjust their criteria for relevance in relation to the needs of knowledge users. How should universities react when local users formulate no demands for new knowledge and provide no indications about what knowledge they see as relevant?

Makerere seems to have reached a stalemate: increasing student numbers undermine the ability of the university to generate research with the resources available to it. This in turn prevents academics from developing relationships with potential clients, other than donors who might support research. The avenue of selling research seems to have closed. On the other hand, the state neither values nor trusts academic knowledge. When arguing for public money, academics receive no support from the state; again, only donors appear to take any notice. Given these realities, we have to echo Collini (2017) who asked: what are universities in Uganda for? The answer provided by the deans and many of the professors we interviewed was that universities are for strengthening the academic profession. However, this perspective enjoys little practical support from Uganda’s political or institutional leaders. In essence, this leaves the university playing the role of a social institution that does little more than provide a contained space for the socialisation of young people whose parents have money and illusions about the value of Uganda’s tertiary education system.

During the time we spent at Makerere, the university seemed set on continuing its journey to marketisation. The institutional management had prioritised the securing of ‘visibility’ via global academic ratings and ranking systems, etc. (Cloete et al. 2018), despite the fact that their efforts seemed to enjoy little support from academic staff. In addition, ratings and rankings achieved in relation to numbers of publications, student throughput statistics, or PhDs awarded, offered us little

insight into debates about what knowledge is relevant, or whether the academic profession is producing any knowledge relevant for Uganda. On this issue, most of the academics we interviewed expressed the wish for more time to write and publish, not only for the sake of their own development, or to help them qualify for promotion, but also to enable them to strengthen their voices in debates about the relevance of academic knowledge. The so-called international journals, so important to ratings and rankings systems, are directly related to the functioning of global knowledge hegemony of the North. Consequently, journal editors seldom rate the relevance of the research conducted by academics at Makerere particularly highly. Most informants pointed out that adjusting to the requirements of this publishing sphere is a way of ensuring that their work becomes irrelevant to their own context, their own problems, and the development of their own theoretical ideas. Nevertheless, academics we met frequently referred to their commitment to society, and specifically to Uganda and East Africa. We took this as indicating their longing for locally embedded research and doctoral training programmes based on local epistemologies, as an alternative to doctoral training abroad.

The relevance of the academic profession: suggestions for shifting towards democratic values

In inviting readers to consider and actively seek alternatives to neoliberal hegemony, we have two recommendations to make in this section. The first is that the academic profession should strive to make explicit its own understandings of how it sees knowledge as contributing to development. The second is that relationships and dialogue between faculties and disciplines must be promoted. We reflect on each of these points in a little more detail below.

Being explicit about how knowledge contributes to development

In unpacking this first recommendation, it is important to reiterate that in the global 'knowledge economy', knowledge is conflated with

economic value. However, if democracy is what we value and prefer knowledge to nurture, then academics must make their assumptions about how democracy develops as explicit as possible. This includes helping to build a self-reflexive and democratic culture.

Many informants wanted their work to be seen as relevant for development and expressed disappointment about not being seen as useful to society. However, they acknowledged that they had too little time, resources or training to be able to show why and how they should and could be useful in this way. This issue was particularly pressing for those involved in educating for specific professions (CAES, SoL etc.). Representatives of the social sciences and humanities expressed frustration at being unable to develop their own language or vision of their relevance and at having to deal with the social and political implications of making themselves relevant in the knowledge market.

Following Anthony Giddens' (1979) introduction of the debate about 'double hermeneutics', academics are not only socially and politically influenced when they choose what to research, how to teach, and what curriculum to use, they also influence the world through their knowledge. How we are influenced in our choice of knowledge development, and how we see knowledge influencing society (the double hermeneutic) should be an ongoing aspect of collective reflection in any academic department or institute. No discipline can avoid playing a normative role. Part of how academics justify truth telling is to clarify, as far as possible, all the general presuppositions that guide the academic process *and* examine its impact on social relations. Most informants expressed a normative commitment to democracy (in one form or another). However, most were also highly concerned about remaining politically neutral. That is, they seemed to be comfortable with mediating 'the facts' but took little responsibility for the influence that these 'facts' might have, as if all facts are simply given. As discussed in Chapter 9, truth telling is a crucial value both within the academy and in a democracy – it is where academic freedom and freedom of speech meet.

Academic authority should be unquestionable when it comes to facts. Facts are not something anyone should be asked to vote for or

against (liberal democracy has its limits). Nor are facts alterable by state authorities or economic interest groups, however much they might claim otherwise. However, as many of those we interviewed affirmed, academics cannot escape the normative influence of these groups because facts remain relative to presuppositions and choices about theories as well as to expectations of impact and outcomes. In other words, for facts to have influence, academics have to clarify the relationship between the social conditions and the fact-finding processes. For example, if the normative commitment (of most social scientists) is to democracy, then, in addition to securing academic freedom, democratising academic practices should infuse how research topics are chosen, how curricula are designed and taught, and how interactions with knowledge users occur. This includes how knowledge is accessed, the languages used, as well as how, and for whom, academics act as experts. These practices will determine the character of a 'knowledge society' and whether or not it helps to cultivate democratic values in its members. This means entering into open debates in which *all* objections to any 'facts' that come with certain pre-science conditions that contribute to or prevent change *can be freely aired. To be objective means to be able to absorb and deal with all objections through open academic discourse.* And to facilitate the process of creating objective knowledge, the double hermeneutical circle has to be made explicit in all research and teaching.

In general, this is how the social sciences and the humanities secure their professional standing as part of the overall academic collective (Weingart 2015). Our impression from Makerere is that the idea of 'neutrality', which often comes up, undermines this reflexive process. The result is that others (including donors and ratings agencies) are given too much power to decide on the possible or likely relevance of locally generated knowledge (Collini 2017). Certain sectors of the academic profession thus seem to advocate the idea that their role is to develop a reservoir of knowledge from which society can draw. Their idea of being of relevance is maintained by keeping their distance from knowledge users, as providers of objective science that 'users' can deploy for good or bad, as they see fit. That is, they maintain

that because their input into the reservoir is not directly connected to how the knowledge is used, they carry no ethical responsibility for its 'misuse'. This notion underpins the impossible position that the humanities and the social sciences find themselves in – of being simultaneously relevant and apolitical/asocial (Frodeman 2015). If relations between the factual and the social are not reflected on by the profession itself, the influence of the profession diminishes. Creating space for such reflection is, in our view, the most important task of academic leadership, but neoliberal positivism is preventing this task from even being performed, let alone prioritised.

For some academics at Makerere, perhaps because of how power is exercised in Uganda as a whole, the inability to define what knowledge is relevant seems to represent a huge and unsolvable dilemma. However, those in professional fields, such as engineering or agriculture, have found ways to work around the issue by making reference to 'operational demands'. In the law faculty, for example, where the 'code of the discipline' is not science or truth telling but justice, it is taken for granted that academics have to participate in normative discourse, and take responsibility for setting norms based on general values that evolve from their work in arenas such as human rights law and culpability. In fact, academics who are active in general discourse about the role of the law, see the law as political almost to the point of replacing or at least merging with politics. Accordingly, they are involved in facilitating public discourse on political issues, issuing publications on political debates, fact-finding with the aim of placing topics on the political agenda. For these reasons, educators in the law faculty at Makerere seemed to have been the least affected by neoliberalism, and the faculty still relates to both the state and the public as sources of public norms. Interestingly, this also often involves 'shopping' for norms from within the global reservoir and then translating these to ensure that they are relevant and useful to the local context (Felde and Halvorsen 2019).

The key issue in our discussion of whether Makerere has a strong and autonomous academic community that controls its working conditions is how the discursive power to define relevance and enforce

its definition is determined. As noted, this power relies on trust – that is, how societal support is (or is not) secured and how academic work is valued by different actors in society. Under neoliberalism, knowledge institutions are conflated with economic tools. This undermines not only the universities but also the modernisation of all societal institutions. As capitalism generates its own destruction due to lack of counterforces and critique (Kocka 2016), modernity is also being transformed. Or, as Supiot wrote:

Today, the pressure of globalisation on all cultures has triggered a powerful backlash of religious, ethnic, regionalist and nationalist identifications. Their common hallmark is to look for new solidarities grounded neither in tradition nor in the state, but rather in solidarities of combat, based on the binary opposition ... of friend and enemy, which try to find justification in fundamentalist or dogmatic corpuses. (2017: 5)

This ‘binary opposition’ is a direct consequence of neoliberalism as belief in knowledge and acceptance of the validity of facts are banished, and no longer serve as a middle ground for debate. Like Donald Trump and his followers, more and more people believe it is acceptable for them to develop ‘their own facts’. From this perspective, what might seem like a hopeless situation at Makerere in terms of defending academic knowledge might not be so bad after all. Here, despite a severe lack of resources, belief in knowledge and the value of academia remains comparatively robust. Despite being under the constant pressures we have outlined, academics at the university remain true to the values that are relevant to their autonomy. Makerere might, after all, be a space from which the wider academic community can draw inspiration for a cross-national countermovement. While neoliberalism lays waste to education institutions in the North, academics in the South might yet inspire a revival of scholarship.

Following Niklas Luhmann (see Chapter 2, this volume), we argue that the academic profession is the only profession that is a

'client to itself'. This means that the profession is able to be relevant to everyone and no one in particular. Unlike the members of many other professions that are educated at universities (such as doctors, engineers or agronomists) academics don't have to constantly keep in mind the clients to whom their knowledge is of functional value. Instead, to be part of the academic profession, individuals have to take a reflexive approach to the functional dimension of the knowledge that is mediated and developed through research. This involves developing their abilities to reflect on the knowledge needed by potential users of knowledge but, more importantly, it involves reflecting on the role of this knowledge for the general division of labour in society. This includes the role and potential of knowledge in bringing about individual emancipation, class formations, power and domination, as well as the use and misuse of nature (including humans). This meta-reflection is what generates the ability of the academic profession to tell society what knowledge is relevant for whom and why, and to help decide (within the frame of academic values and commitments) what knowledge to prioritise in teaching and research.

Promoting dialogue and relationships between disciplines

Coming to our second recommendation for how universities such as Makerere could be reformed to help counter neoliberal hegemony, we suggest that relationships between faculties need to be encouraged and dialogue between disciplines needs to be promoted. In our thinking, there is no such thing as a whole that is bigger than its parts. Rather, universities make interactions between a variety of types of knowledge possible, so that they mutually challenge one another, thus forcing disciplines and faculties to be explicit about their assumptions, particularly those related to relevance. To prevent the instrumentalisation of knowledge (whereby knowledge is valued for its epistemological and economic uses, as in the debate about prioritising the STEM disciplines over the humanities) we argue that faculties and disciplines must engage in constant dialogue, especially on the issue of relevance. It is in these interactions where some common

understandings of the ongoing value of universities might evolve. To help refute the notion of the whole being more than the sum of its parts, we offer the biology-inspired idea of systems (or institutions) and environments that are in constant interaction and mutual adjustment. Undoubtedly, universities are institutions that aim to interact with the environment in the broadest ways possible. Ideally, they should interact with all of society. In reality (and particularly under neoliberal regimes), they are configured and subordinated by the state–economy interface, unless social mobilisation like that first seen in France in 1968 occurs.

Thus, our most general presupposition – that the role of the academic profession is to develop critical knowledge – includes all academic disciplines. No discipline is a given; all are, in one way or another, social constructs (Barnes 1985; Bloor 1981). Similarly, research and teaching, and how they combine, involve social choices that, if the profession is to deserve its name, must be made through critical evaluations of established knowledge and how it works on and in society. Knowledge and politics are intertwined, and the role of critique is to make these intricate interrelationships explicit. This means that knowledge is only neutral to the degree it manages to make its value base accessible and widely understood. The value of the academic profession, and its justification for deserving academic freedom (work autonomy), is its ability to discern and develop what is good for society. In other words, as citizens, we generally support the production of academic knowledge because we believe it is good for society. What is good for society is, in turn, part of ongoing political discourse where the basic premise about how citizens discern good from bad is that the discourse is as broad and open as possible.

Some agreement seems to exist that academic knowledge promotes *progress* in terms of personal freedoms (not to be confused with the neoliberal notion of personal autonomy) and the strengthening of social institutions that help to defend this freedom. Ideally, economic development, societal integration (solidarity), justice and equality, and rule-oriented government (to mention just a few aspects of human society) should be assessed in terms of how well they contribute to

building the social institutions that help to secure personal freedom – which is of course, also a contested category (Honneth 2014; Wright 2019).

The key value of the academic profession: academic freedom and the relevance of relevance

The academic profession has to continually show how its knowledge is relevant for *progress*, and for how it interprets progress in line with its values. The values that justify academic freedom are often summed up in the terms ‘truth telling’ and ‘objectivity’ – with the latter meaning to withstand all objections, not ‘universal truth’. For us and others, these values give rise to a continual deepening of democracy, which we understand to include: first, the securing of social institutions that promote the individual freedoms necessary for academic work and vice versa (that is, spaces in which individual freedom helps democracy to grow); and second, the ongoing diffusion of knowledge and understanding through society. Thus, in approaching this study, we attempted to assess how neoliberalism’s focus on the role of knowledge for the economy has impacted on academics’ independence. In other words, we tried to see if and how the promotion of ‘*homo oeconomicus*’ has undermined the *critical* role played by different fields of knowledge, thus preventing the university as an institution from playing a role in educating ‘*homo politicus*’ and promoting progress as the basis for democratic growth.

As we have seen, the standard argument from the World Bank and other institutions that see the functionality of knowledge for the economy as its general purpose *and* its criterion for relevance, is that economic growth will lead to a more diversified society (and a middle class that can afford education) that will gradually develop democracy as a consequence of its own self-interest. What is missing from this argument is any understanding of the effects of neoliberalism on the values, norms and political orientation of its adherents. As noted in Chapter 2, Wendy Brown and others have pointed out that neoliberals see democracy as a threat to the ‘laws of the free market’

and as challenging their need for competition to penetrate all societal institutions. To succeed, therefore, neoliberalism had to create a different learning environment – one in which democracy struggles to grow. As FA Hayek (1936) insisted, information about the rewards of the marketplace carries more value, and cannot be replaced by planning, no matter how well these plans are embedded in academic knowledge. In other words, neoliberals see knowledge as relevant to the degree that it responds to a price mechanism and/or external incentives related to short-term competition). To make universities relevant, neoliberals had to make them responsive to users by encouraging the adoption of the so-called Mode 2 approach. And users in this context are mostly defined as economic actors and institutions that uphold society's 'economic contract'.

In universities that are oriented toward democratic values, and which see progress as the deepening of democracy rather than the expansion of the 'knowledge economy', control over relevance is seen as a crucial part of critical reflection. The paradox that neoliberals cannot properly relate to is that universities that try to be relevant for democracy, and which define for themselves what is of long-term relevance for progress towards democracy, also create a basis for economic development that is more stable, fair, redistributive and capable of supporting the public sector through a tax system that is widely complied with and that can provide basic support for public universities.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the World Bank and UNESCO's 2000 report, *Peril and Promise*, hailed Makerere as epitomising the benefits that flow from implementing World Bank policies (Halvorsen 2016). Makerere is portrayed as a university that was in a crisis and is transforming itself through public-private initiatives, night schools, and increasing student numbers which allows them to pay academics' higher salaries and generally benefit from the market for educational services. The gradual reduction of traditional privileges (such as subsidies for fees, accommodation and food) transformed students into customers, leaving Makerere, according to World Bank rhetoric, on its way to renewed glory (Halvorsen 2016). As our study has shown, the academics have had few opportunities to bask in glory.

Fifteen years after the publication of *Scholars in the Marketplace*, and twenty years after the *Peril and Promise* report was first made public, the academic profession in Uganda has lost most of its independence, and the consequences of this for progress and democracy are not encouraging.

When arguing that universities should explore the relationship between reflexivity and democratic values, we should perhaps clarify that we are not saying that university-based knowledge is not and should never be relevant to economic activities. However, the linking of knowledge to the capitalist market economy under neoliberalism undermines public space generally and academic independence in particular. We are critical of the economisation of universities, their emphasis on the development of ‘human capital’, and their disregard for citizen education, especially within fields of knowledge that are oriented towards the economy, whether it be trade or production.

The scarcity of sound critical reflection is our concern. At Makerere and beyond, the links between politics, economy and knowledge have been dismantled or rather conflated into ‘the economy’. The commons as a public space for reflection on what constitutes progress is vanishing. The ways in which the economy undermines democratic ‘sovereignty’ (Gill and Cutler 2014) also undermines the role of knowledge in critical reflection about what is relevant for society as a space of shared belonging. The rule ‘of the people by the people’ evolved in the North via a long process of development. It cannot simply be implemented via donor-supported electoral processes, nor can it survive without a degree of societal and state support. State sovereignty has been ‘dethroned’ by global capital and is now simply used by global capital to promote and secure the free movement of capital investments. The essential meaning of democracy, and the value of critical thinking, is being lost. Freedom is being reduced to market choices, while ‘human capital’ development and individualisation are deepening inequalities (Brown 2015). For universities to help to counter neoliberal hegemony and its fallout, a focus on decolonisation as conceptualised by Mamdani (see 2019) is one key to unearthing new understandings of the relevance of the academic profession.

Can we expect societal support for the transformation of Makerere?

In their book, *Uganda: The Dynamics of Neoliberal Transformation*, Jörg Wiegratz, Giuliano Martinello and Elisa Greco (2018) describe the transformation of Uganda over a fairly short time, from its espousing of a left-leaning political orientation (rhetorically at least) to evolving into a neoliberal regime and a ‘donor darling’ under President Yoweri Museveni. Quick adoption of the recommendations of the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organization, and a shaping of the internal elite in line with the interests of these donors (with some exceptions), made Uganda a showcase of neoliberal authoritarian reform:

Through neoliberal politics, discourses and practices, contemporary capitalism has restructured Uganda by extending the realm of commodification, commercialization, and marketisation deeper into Ugandan society. This restructuring has consolidated a capitalist social order and social domination. In this sense, neoliberalism is about a renewed dominance of capital over other classes, and the expectation and demand of capital to rule society as a whole. (Wiegratz et al. 2018: 9)

The neoliberal transformation of Makerere, with all its destructive consequences, was thus part of an overall societal transformation that only universities with an exceptionally resilient and independent academic profession could have resisted. In different chapters, Wiegratz et al. show how the shift to neoliberal governance (which involves not governing but just administrating or orchestrating actors in society) blurred relations between economic and political institutions in Uganda, and made the public sector a space for private capital expansion. So-called public–private partnerships further undermined democratic accountability. Local democracy was replaced by World Bank strategies to decentre the state. Democracy (such as it was) was replaced with service administrators who (again) imposed

market-like limits on access to basic services such as healthcare, education, water and sanitation. State capacity was fragmented as new types of relations were established between local service providers and the donors that fund their services (often the World Bank). Citizens were left out of the loop entirely.

In the agricultural sector, the dispossession of land is just one indicator of deep shifts. Local knowledge and local economic networks between landowners, farmers, peasants, wood-lot owners are undermined and undervalued. Instead, large (mostly international) industrial agricultural companies are prioritised for the sake of linking into so-called 'global' economy and trade. The result is growing poverty, deepening divides between rural and urban, and the rapid growth of urban slums. In addition, as entrepreneurs moved from the informal into the formal economy, the manufacturing industry lost its internal and local base, along with the growth potential it once had. As Asiimwe explained: 'Although liberalization increased the volume of goods, it opened the domestic market to giant multinational companies whose products outcompeted local products, thus leading to de-industrialization (2018: 151).

The health and the education sectors have both been partially privatised. This has undermined the public sector, making it more difficult for the state to justify taxing citizens for shared services, including for building spaces of public engagement and capable government. Contributing little to public health services, private health-care providers thrive, and the market for health services is growing but mostly serves those who can afford it. Private schooling is also expanding (with public support), albeit with no demonstrable improvement in children's abilities to read and write, and only half of enrolled students formally completing secondary school. As Lutz and Klingholz (2017: 125) observed: 'the education gap of more than a century explains why Africa is nowadays the least developed continent and lags behind with regards to virtually all social and economic indicators.'

Uganda's neoliberal trajectory has not helped. The privatisation of health and education as 'services' has promoted a human-capital-

type strategy among health personnel, teachers and the users of such services based on the logic of value for money. This means that the poor either get no service or symbolic support only (such as primary education) (Wiegratz et al. 2018). The point is that Makerere, itself transformed by neoliberal strategies, is expected to support the neoliberal transformation of the whole society. This means:

- Teaching students to be ‘human capital’ strategists although Wiegratz et al. (2018) show that the promotion of ‘entrepreneurship’ and individualism among youth leads to social hopelessness rather than to opportunity.
- Being responsive to governance and the market (as opposed to the government and the public).
- Adjusting to the economic actors that take priority; namely: international capital that replaced internal relationships between the knowledge providers, local manufacturers and the domestic market (see Wiegratz et al. 2018 on the oil industry, for example).

Interestingly, Wiegratz, et al. were strongly affiliated with MISR while writing their book. The lacuna that MISR represents within this neoliberal campus created the space for the important work of problematising the context within which universities work, and showing the value of critical reflection, alternative knowledge and independent, cross-disciplinary academic work. Unfortunately, MISR remains a small counterinitiative that relies heavily on societal support in Uganda and on international support academically. Its future presupposes not only that the opponents of neoliberalism prevail but also that the ongoing production of knowledge based on alternative ideas of progress reveals different development models and invites broader academic engagement. Above all, this requires the building of social institutions, including at all universities, that promote more authentic forms of individual freedom than neoliberalism can offer.

Erik Olin Wright (2019) proposed two sets of values to counter the economisation of everything: equality/fairness and democracy/

freedom. As alluded to above, these values have the potential to shape: 'a just society' in which 'all persons would have broadly equal access to the material and social means necessary to live a flourishing life' (2019: 12); and 'a fully democratic society' which requires that people have 'equal access to the necessary means to participate meaningfully in decisions about things that affect their lives' (2019: 15). These values are basic to the academic profession and to the role of universities as a public resource. If we see progress along these lines, uncontrolled market-oriented governance and competitive individualism could be exchanged for types of collective solidarity that promote progress for all.

So what knowledge do we see as relevant for progress along these lines? In practice, it requires producing and sharing knowledge that is relevant for understanding and changing historically accumulated and currently perpetuated injustices (Piketty 2020). It means asking what new injustices are being generated in the name of progress, and what alternative ideas of progress we can agree on. It means transforming the epistemic-economic social relations and our use of the earth in ways that entrench respect for humanity and our planet. As Wagner pointed out:

Against this background, the direction of political progress is rather clear. The building of democratic agency would reconnect the idea of progress to a notion of collective autonomy that answers the question of how autonomous human beings can act together to find the adequate solutions for their living together. Such democratic agency would be based on intense participation in the identification of key problems and the ways to resolve them, rather than the numerical summing up of numerous individual decisions in elections and opinion polls. It would emphasise the legitimacy of collective choices developed through such participation, not against personal freedom, but against the idea of the primacy of individual autonomy. And it would develop co-operative ways of dealing with interdependence between societies and politics, in particular with regards to global concerns, such as

climate change and the regulation of financial flows. (2016: 142–143)

Based on these final reflections, and the many interviews we conducted, we wonder what kind of Makerere its leaders and academics expect to see rising from the ashes of neoliberalism. Will they return control of the discourse around relevance back into academic minds, hands and hearts? Will they agree that nourishing democratisation as it evolves from within is the best path to choose going forward?

Getting academic freedom into focus

An Afterword by John Higgins

Today, if we were to present an updated volume of Gustave Flaubert's great project for a *Dictionary of Received Ideas*, an entry for academic freedom might well read: 'Academic freedom: Always say, "It must be defended to the death!" Always say, "An idea that has outlived its relevance"'.⁸¹

All too often, we think of this kind of contradiction as paper-thin. A logical contradiction is an easy matter to resolve, since a correction is made almost automatically once the error in reasoning is pointed out and attention is drawn to it.⁸² Against this, Flaubert's general point in compiling the *Dictionary* was that we often live quite comfortably in, and with, contradictions simply by ignoring them. Flaubert generally abhorred this practice, associating it with the mentality of the despised bourgeoisie and their *bêtise*.⁸³ People generally give the response that they feel will fit in best with the particular group they are talking to at that moment – hence the widespread failure to think things through and our continuing capacity to live unclear lives, mired in contradiction. This was, Flaubert insisted, neither the way to experience reality nor the proper basis for portraying it as an artist. The *Dictionary* can thus be taken as a warning that contradiction is more complex than we like to imagine because it cuts much deeper than we think.

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Indeed, as French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu observed (in an essay in which he sought to present an alternative to, and critique of, Jean-Paul Sartre's reading of Flaubert's *L'Idiot de la Famille* (Sartre 1971–1972), Flaubert's extreme sensitivity to *idées reçues* is at once a matter of personal temperament and a question of social determination, something profoundly social and ideological in nature. According to Bourdieu, Flaubert's concern with received ideas surfaces the most complex questions of what 'adhesion to the group' means for the practice and performance of an idea of identity in which social determinations and personal choices are inextricably intertwined (Bourdieu 1993: 168).

In this perspective, far from being any simple error or mistake, received ideas have important social and ideological work to do. They can work to blind us to contradiction and, consequently, inhibit the actions necessary to resolve, or even address, the contradiction in question. My argument is that the two received ideas of academic freedom work to blind us to, or at least blur the possibility of seeing, the dynamic yet often unremarked conflict between these two opposing ideas about the aims and purposes of higher education.

The arguments and analyses that make up this volume mark a concerted attempt to grapple with, rather than avoid, the fundamental contradiction in higher-education policy. For this attempt alone, and not to speak of its many other virtues, it should be welcomed. The contributors think through what the key idea of relevance in global policy has come to mean in practice in the specific context of Makerere University.⁸⁴ In and through the different chapters of the book and the interviews sampled in it, a guiding thread is woven by repeated references and appeals to academic freedom as a necessary part of any serious consideration of relevance. In this principled insistence, the volume as a whole can be read as a powerful call for the active and engaged recognition of academic freedom as both a constitutive value for academic life and scholarly research, and a key practice for any active democracy. This activation of the idea of academic freedom is particularly timely, as it comes at a moment when varied struggles around the many different dimensions of academic freedom are taking

place in Africa and across the world.⁸⁵

Such an activation is a less easy task than it might at first appear, given the lived complexity of contradiction indicated above. For academic freedom often seems a somewhat hazy idea.⁸⁶ While sharp enough from the perspective of one eye, it is blurred to the point of disappearance in another, and consequently requires a conscious effort to bring it into considered focus. This difficulty is evident from the ways in which most policy-makers and many academics seem willing either to pay mere lip service to academic freedom or to pass over it in complete silence, and this despite the vigilant efforts of activist or scholarly groupings such as Scholars at Risk and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) who seek to keep the matter firmly in the public eye.⁸⁷

My brief argument here is that both the lip service paid to and the silence around academic freedom as a received idea are symptoms of a significant moment of lived contradiction for academics, academic administrators and higher-education policy-makers. The aim of this afterword is to try to get hold of this contradiction by framing it historically, all the better to act on it in the present. To act, we must bring academic freedom more clearly into focus.

Academics, administrators and policy-makers live in and think through the contradictory space produced by two competing and opposed definitions of the aims and goals of higher education active globally since the end of the Second World War. The first is the understanding of higher education as a human right, and one dedicated to the public good through the enhancement of the lives of citizens. The second construes higher education as an essentially private benefit, whose central purpose is to service the economy through the provision of appropriately skilled person-power. Academic freedom is the sore point at which the lack of fit between these two contradictory concepts of higher education should grate and become painfully clear. Instead, all too often, the contradiction is either taken for granted or shrugged off and passed over in silence. This evasive mode of thinking demonstrates the workings of what I have elsewhere called an exclusionary consensus.⁸⁸ Here, the important UNESCO conference on

‘Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy’, held in Romania in 1992, serves as an example of the same kind exclusionary consensus.

Higher education as a human right: dignity and democratisation

Let us begin by looking briefly at an exemplary instance of the post-war thinking about education and democracy, taken from the experience of Great Britain. Here (as elsewhere), the necessarily collective solidarity of the war effort had promoted a new structure of feeling in which the static inequalities of the past could be identified and challenged.⁸⁹ So, for example, even as unlikely a proponent of left-wing politics as the liberal man of letters Cyril Connolly insisted (in the first editorial he wrote celebrating the end of the war): ‘there must be a levelling up which socialism alone will provide; we cannot continue to maintain two utterly different standards of living’ (Connolly 1945: 367).⁹⁰ In the aftermath of the war, such ‘levelling up’ meant (among other things) that new attention was paid to the role of education systems in creating more just, democratic and equitable societies.

In Britain, this new structure of feeling was evident in what became widely known as the Beveridge Report (after its author, Lord Beveridge) of 1942. This was that rare thing for government reports, an instant bestseller for a public looking forward to a better post-war society. In addition, its arguments and recommendations were read with interest by governments across the world (Judt 2005; Whiteside 2014). ‘A revolutionary moment in the world’s history is a time for revolutions, not for patching’, declared Beveridge in the report’s opening pages (Beveridge 1942: 6).

More formally known as the *Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services*, the report called for social protection for all ‘from the cradle to the grave’ and identified ‘want’ along with ‘disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness’ as the ‘five giants’ to overcome on the ‘road to reconstruction’ (Beveridge 1942: 6). With the victory of the Labour Party in 1945 – a victory won, in part, due to its promise to fulfil the recommendations of the report – various pieces of legislation were

passed which put in place the constituent elements of the new 'welfare state'.⁹¹

Alongside and in addition to the core of social-security measures, emphasis was placed on the giant adversary 'ignorance'. The 1944 Education Act extended secondary education to cover all children up to the age of 15 and, through the mechanism of the '11+' examination, gave all children the possibility of attending a grammar school and, consequently, access to higher education. At the same time, higher education was itself beginning to transform from the pre-war 'elite' system, to which entry had effectively been limited to the male members of the ruling class. Wider access opened this up to women, as well as to the middle classes and working classes. Confronting 'ignorance' thus implied broadening access to all levels of education, and giving people opportunities for forms of reflexive understanding associated with the practice of academic freedom since (at the very least) Kant's discussion of enlightenment as the 'emergence from ... self-incurred immaturity' (Kant 1991: 54).⁹²

At the core of all of these proposals was the intention to restore dignity to the working class, removing the social stigma of 'means-tested' benefits for those in need that went all the way back to the vicious laws of the early nineteenth century. Dignity – in essence, the right of a person to be recognised and treated as of equal standing to others – was the keynote. The very need to emphasise dignity exposed the prior social state and structure of feeling in which it was seen as natural for some to withhold equality of recognition from others.⁹³

In Britain, the question of dignity was read especially through the lens of social class. However, much broader concerns were in play in the thinking of the UN – those of refugees, the stateless and all who had suffered under Nazi Germany's genocidal politics.⁹⁴ Dignity and the idea of the democratising force of education runs through the founding documents of the UN and UNESCO, which was specifically tasked with realising the UN's goals for education as well as scientific and cultural communication.

Article 26 of the UN's 1948 Declaration of Human Rights states that 'Everyone has the right to education' and that such education

should be compulsory, and free of charge 'at least in the elementary and fundamental stages' while higher education 'shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit'. This followed from the centrality of education to the democratising project undertaken by the UN as it set itself against the 'disregard and contempt for human rights' evident in the 'barbarous acts' of the Second World War, and aimed to promote 'the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want'.

Thinking on education in UNESCO was driven by its roots in the UN's promotion of human rights and its democratising tendencies, which focus above all on the importance of dignity. Education was then understood as having a strong emphasis on the dimension identified in German as *Bildung* – that is, on its formative and socialising aspects.⁹⁵ This was an affirmation of education as a means of developing dignity and self-esteem in individuals, and of encouraging the active, critical and creative aspects of human understanding with the sense that these all contribute to the strength and maintenance of democracy and support the public good. This affirmation was also caught and articulated with particular force in the Carnegie study, *Investment in Learning: The Individual and Social Value of American Higher Education*, with its crucial insistence that

The chief products of higher education, learning in all its manifestations, consists primarily in changes in people – changes in their knowledge, their characteristics and their behaviour ... learning may set in motion a dynamic process leading to further changes in people and also to broad social changes ... Higher education is part of a dynamic process that may extend far into the future, bringing about changes no one can predict. (Bowen 1977: 16)

In practical terms, this meant that by 1973, general commitment to such democratising measures had resulted in enough progress in terms of access to higher education for sociologist Martin Trow to observe that the transition from the pre-war 'elite' system of higher education to a new

system of ‘mass’ education was well on its way. The old elite system had catered to around 10 per cent of the post-secondary school cohort, and largely served the reproduction, across generations, of a social, political and economic elite – a ruling class. The emerging system of mass access had already doubled that access rate, and promised to move towards a 30 per cent participation rate or what Trow referred to as ‘universal’ access (Trow 1973).⁹⁶ This system, while serving to democratise access, also served the newly perceived needs of a changing economy – one more broadly based in expanding and emerging professional knowledges, with a consequent extension and complication of the simpler structures of pre-war class identities, and vivid new senses of the possibility of social mobility through education (Castells 2017).

It is important to note that the human-rights-based and democratising vision of the UN Declaration makes no mention of academic freedom as such. Far from suggesting that the idea of academic freedom was of no interest to this project, I would argue that the absence of specific discussion rather indicates something about what it means for an idea like academic freedom to be, or become, a received idea. It means being so obvious that it is taken for granted and does not need to be spelled out. For UNESCO, academic freedom (literally) *goes without saying*. It is simply understood as part and parcel of the support that Article 19 of the UN Declaration gives to the freedoms of opinion and expression: ‘Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.’

This complacency that academic freedom is implied in, or covered by, support for the freedoms of speech, opinion and publication was always unlikely to stand the test of practice. Received ideas such as academic freedom come into focus and consideration only when they come under pressure; it is the pressure of the particular historical moment that provides the need to articulate in some detail what is otherwise an ‘empty’ (of definition) or purely pious received idea.⁹⁷ Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere – see Higgins (2019b), one of the constitutive paradoxes of academic freedom is that it is rarely if ever

simply *nominative* (that is, referring to or describing an existing state of things). It is rather a *normative ideal*, called up precisely at those moments when ‘it’ is lacking or visibly under threat (as is persistently argued and evidenced in many of this book’s chapters).

What were the pressures that gradually worked to bring academic freedom into focus in global higher-education policy? What was the main source of the threat to academic freedom within this policy? Paradoxically, the main source of pressure and threat was located in the provisions and discourse set out in the work of an organisation that was set up by the UN in the post-war period: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, or the World Bank as it is now known. The policy discourse of the World Bank represents an economistic and instrumental view of the substance and aims of higher education that contradicts UNESCO’s founding emphasis on dignity and the democratising force of education. The World Bank has asserted its perspective with considerable force in its policy advice, statements and loan conditions, with important, though usually unacknowledged, implications for academic freedom.

Higher education as a private benefit: banking on ‘human capital’

As Heyneman (2003) has shown, it was almost by accident that education and higher education became a topic of such interest to the World Bank. Founded in 1944 alongside UNESCO, the Bank was one of the new global agencies tasked with supporting post-war social and economic reconstruction. While its initial mandate was to provide funding for reconstruction in war-devastated European countries, its focus gradually widened following the wave of decolonisation from the late 1950s. For World Bank leaders, the need was less to repair than to construct the basics of modern functioning economies in former colonies across Africa, Latin America and Asia. The consequent focus on education was limited and instrumental, as if the discipline of engineering was somehow to be taken as the model for all academic subjects and disciplines.⁹⁸

By 1996, then-president of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, summed up what had become absolutely clear in the decades of the institutions' lending programmes: the centrality of education. 'We have been in the business of researching and disseminating the lessons of development for a long time', he noted. Now, he argued,

we need to invest in the necessary systems, in Washington and worldwide, that will enhance our ability to gather development information and experience, and share it with our clients. We need to become, in effect, the Knowledge Bank. (cited in Zapp 2017: 4)

At the centre of the World Bank's thinking on education is a highly specific and contentious understanding of the aims and substance of education, grounded in what became known as human-capital theory. Key to this new 'common sense' stands as an organising principle a particular and selective interpretation of higher education as 'human capital'. First introduced in an influential speech by US economist Frank Knight in 1941, and later developed by thinkers such as Chicago economist Theodor Schultz, this idea achieved its most influential expression in a book by one of Schultz's protégés, Gary Becker. *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education* was published in 1964, and fast became the standard reference point for World Bank policy templates and recommendations.⁹⁹ According to Schultz,

'Human' capital refers to the forms of knowledge and skills acquired by people through their education and training, the knowledge and skills which contribute to and enhance their productive capacity in the economy. And just as productivity can be improved through investment in physical capital resources, investments in human capital through education can also yield productivity gains. (Schultz 1961: 3)

Human-capital theory spurred the post-war expansion of higher education through directly linking higher education to economic progress and technological superiority in the context of the Cold War (Teixeira 2014). Higher education was understood and represented as an investment with a calculable ‘rate of return’, and thus reframed an essentially private benefit to investors or users.

From a human-capital perspective, students become ‘entrepreneurs of the self’,¹⁰⁰ who make decisions about higher education, based primarily on their calculation of the balance between the costs of self-investment and the future financial benefits that are likely to accrue to them. At the same time (and as the research in this book demonstrates), the human-capital perspective also works to produce – for practising academics – a damaging and distorted view of relevance that threatens to undermine or even displace the critical, democratising and public-good functions of university-based research, training and professional formation.

Over time, it gradually became clear that the World Bank’s highly influential body of research and inquiry on education and higher education had all the symptoms of an exclusionary consensus: a closed circle of reference, the dismissal of alternative views, and the cherry-picking of evidence. The deployment of human-capital theory meant a narrowing down of the idea of secondary and tertiary education in ways that favoured to its instrumental and vocational aspects, as opposed to the reflexive and critical dimensions proper to higher education. Indeed, as Heyneman pointed out, in practice, this emphasis on the vocational and instrumental meant a

prohibition against assisting other parts of the education sector. These other parts were treated as consumption goods, and not as proper investment. The lending program prohibited any assistance to art, science and faculties of humanities, even libraries, all primary and academic (as opposed to diversified) secondary education, and postgraduate education, none of which could be included in project appraisal reports. (Heyneman 2003: 317)

Similarly, a wide range of critics have challenged the effects on universities of the exclusionary consensus generated by World Bank research and policy. From Africa, Nico Cloete and Peter Maassen (2017) reported on a meeting between the World Bank and African vice-chancellors in 1986, at which the bank's representatives went so far as to suggest that higher education in Africa was a luxury, and that most African countries would be better off closing their universities and sending students to study abroad instead (Cloete and Maassen 2017). Joe Oloka-Onyango observed how the World Bank's policies

focus on higher education as a 'luxury', and emphasize the strengthening of vocational training and the 'relevant' as opposed to the 'esoteric', as well as various mechanisms to 'share costs' ... [In this way] academic freedom has been transformed into a 'commodity' that has also been deemed of marginal value. (Oloka-Onyango 1994: 330)

From Germany, Ulrich Teichler noted 'increased uneasiness within higher education about undue instrumentalist pressures' (2009: 67), and from Scandinavia, Peter Maassen and Johan Olsen reported a lack of interest in 'the possible role of universities in developing democratic citizens, a humanistic culture, social cohesion and solidarity, and a vivid public sphere' as well as the reduction of higher education to an instrument 'for economic performance and growth' (2007: 9, 7). Meanwhile, in the US, Patricia Gumpert emphasised the shift from the 'dominant legitimating idea of public higher education ... as a social institution ... toward the idea of higher education as an industry' (2000: 70). In 2015, US scholar Wendy Brown underlined how the deployment of human-capital theory in higher education is

distinctly not concerned with acquiring the knowledge and experience needed for intelligent democratic citizenship ... As it dispenses with the very idea of the public, neoliberal rationality recognizes and interpellates the subject only as

human capital, making incoherent the idea of an engaged and educated citizen. (Brown 2015: 177, 183)

The Sinaia Conference: twisting contradiction into compromise

In 1992, UNESCO took note of rising concerns about the influence of the human-capital approach and the related imposition of new public management structures on higher education. As mentioned, it organised a special conference on 'Academic Freedom and University Autonomy', which was held in Sinaia, Romania, to address them. One of the new democracies to emerge after the demise of the Soviet Union, Romania was particularly sensitive to questions of academic freedom and its relationship (or not) with broader democratic freedoms. However, the conference as a whole is notable for the ways in which the contradiction between the democratising and the human-capital versions of higher education was twisted into compromise. That is, a formulation of academic freedom was found that seems to satisfy (or rather gives the illusion of satisfying) the place it occupies in the two opposing definitions of the aims of higher education. Rather than bringing the issue more clearly into focus, this formulation resulted in a blurred and partial vision of academic freedom; the discursive trick was to 'background' the democratising force of higher education while foregrounding and privileging the emphases on human capital development.

On the one hand, of course academic freedom had to be defended. It was a key value for any idea of education and higher education, particularly because of the democratising force it embodies and enables. As one contributor reportedly put it, 'Academic freedoms should be regarded not only as an effect of democracy but particularly as forerunners of freedom in society' (UNESCO 1992: 37).¹⁰¹ With this democratising view goes an understanding of the university as the unique setting for *Bildung*. The university was to be regarded as

the repository of truth, be it historical, cultural, or scientific
... [It is the place] where minds, embarking on the quest

for truth, meet and clash in pursuit of this ideal. Minds so fashioned are the individual carriers and transmitters of past and future thought, of tradition, and of innovation ... It is the place where the scholarly elite, the critical intellectual mind of society, takes shape, discards obsolete findings, and affirms and reassesses other interpretations of truth. (UNESCO 1992: 6)

In the concept of *Bildung*, higher education is understood as *the* institution in society which forms critical thinking in such a way as to address blind-spots both in disciplinary thinking, and, more generally still, in ways of thinking of, and being in, the social order. Jacques Derrida caught this sense particularly well in a lecture at Cornell University where he noted that universities give societies opportunities and institutional occasion for 'reflection' in two senses: reflecting or representing the society itself through the corporate body of its members, but also through a 'dissociation' from that stable reflection – reflection as the act of critical thinking which is heterogenous with what it reflects (Derrida 1983: 19).

From this perspective, as argued at the UNESCO conference (1992: 5), 'governments and the public must respect the rights of universities to serve as centres of completely free inquiry and social criticism'. This is a vision of academic freedom grounded in the understanding of higher education as a democratising force and as a public good. However, the argument then moves quickly on to state that 'fundamental questions of responsibility' must be faced, and that these are, above all, questions of responsibility to the market, with the insistence that 'there is no doubt that a market economy increases [the] flexibility [of the university system]' and so 'may have a positive effect in the performance of universities by encouraging productive competition among institutions' (1992: 25).

Thus, it is at precisely the point of articulation in favour of academic freedom and university autonomy that the pressure of the human-capital paradigm is felt, and the direction of the discussion changes to highlight the question of responsiveness to market pressures. While

broadly acknowledging (though only for a moment, before dismissing such concerns) the ‘*potential* drawbacks of the effects of the market economy on the university system’ (1992: 25, emphasis added), the reality of the already visible and deleterious effects of the new public management policies is (to use a Freudian term) disavowed or denied. Much work is done here by the adjective ‘potential’ in suggesting that drawbacks are only a possibility, not a fact.

All in all, conference delegates expressed support for what was called a ‘revitalised understanding with society’, in which ‘universities recognize their obligation to demonstrate to decision-makers and to the public at large the value of their enterprise’ (1992: 5). ‘Enterprise’ is the key term here, aiding the transition from a sense of active agency to one of commercial operation: ‘Specifically, universities must develop convincing mechanisms of evaluation which demonstrate their quality and effectiveness’ (1992: 5).

With this apparently bland statement, the entire structure of the arguments in favour of understanding higher education as a democratising force and a powerful contributor to the public good is displaced and relegated to the background of the discussion. In this approved version of good governance, it is clear that the word ‘society’ is really to be read and understood as ‘the economy’ while the ‘public at large’ are imagined less as citizens than as consumers and ‘human capital’.

I refer to the Sinaia conference proceedings here as exemplary of the twists and turns in thinking that are necessary when people prefer to avoid recognising – and facing – a contradiction in thinking.¹⁰² As mentioned, the discursive strategy is a certain placing of ideas alongside each other that stand in contradiction, but doing so in such a way that the friction of conflict is avoided and the contradiction is safely maintained. At Sinaia, it is as if commitments are made to the democratising force of higher education (and to the key roles in this of academic freedom and university autonomy), but these elements are then kept firmly in the *background* of the argument as a whole. The *foreground* – which is made up of actual policy formulation and calls for action – is fully occupied by the human-capital perspective and its concerns.

What is the end result of this process of somehow twisting contradiction into an apparent compromise? In this case, it was that the conference ended up recommending that UNESCO give the ‘matter of academic freedom and university autonomy its utmost attention’ and ‘prepare an international instrument for the protection and promotion of these values’, but much of the substance of academic freedom was already lost in the conference’s active and restrictive formulation of the concept. The key formulation reads as follows: ‘in order to function as a hotbed of knowledge’, a university ‘must benefit from and respect a number of basic norms of conduct’ (1992: 1):

Although not a fundamental human right, academic freedom is a basic university right. Academics must be free to choose what they will put forward in their teaching, research, or publications. Academic freedom is the freedom of *individual* academics to follow a particular path of intellectual conception and activity within particular higher education institutions. (UNESCO 1992: 1, emphasis added)

This is academic freedom understood as the right of an individual, and narrowly confined to the workplace provided by institutions. It leaves aside many of the difficult questions of academic freedom as a material practice. These include general considerations such as: the relations between universities and the state, and the conflicts arising from the priorities given to certain subjects and disciplines over others in terms of research and teaching policies; the conflict between vocational and critical or reflexive education; the complexities of intra- and extra-mural speech; and the complex questions of *Lernfreiheit* or the academic freedom of students.

In particular, it leaves aside the key question raised in this book of the restructuring of the academic habitus around human-capital incentives in ways that threaten (or is it promise?) to undermine or eliminate the critical and democratising aspects of higher education once championed by UNESCO. It is silent on whether academic freedom should serve the interests of self-realisation or self-reification

– to borrow an old but useful term from the critical vocabulary of Georg Lukàcs.¹⁰³

Conclusion

The current volume adds to the now necessary pressure for considered action in response to the varied ways in which academic freedom is under threat from unduly narrow and economistic definitions of ‘relevance’. It does this by highlighting, in and through the fine detail of its varied interviews and analyses, the often ignored ‘inside’ or systemic threats to academic freedom that are posed by the ‘epistemic authority’ of World Bank policy.¹⁰⁴ It makes clear that these need to be considered alongside the often more obvious ‘external’ assaults on it daily recorded in the world’s press.¹⁰⁵ Now is a moment when it is important to try and get the idea of academic freedom firmly into focus, not as a received idea, but rather as the complex material practice that it is.¹⁰⁶

Appendix

Some notes about methods and process

To better comprehend this habitus, and the features of the field with which it interacts, we decided to seek out individual academics and interview them. In contrast to other studies of Makerere, most of which are based on documents emanating from, or about, the institution, we attempted to obtain the views of the academics themselves, in ways that would enable them to reveal their genuine views and perspectives. We conducted interviews with 93 individuals over a period of about two years. We also conducted several follow-up interviews with some of the same informants during the period. We are therefore offering a ‘snapshot’ of academics’ views in 2016 and 2017.

Meeting our informants

Having chosen interviews as the most appropriate method of obtaining relevant data, we had to make decisions about their shape and content. We decided to create written guidelines for our interactions with informants. This helped us cover the themes relevant to our research questions and include the various question/answer sequences necessary to secure comparability across interviews, and by extension, across departments, schools, and colleges at Makerere as well as between Makerere and other universities. At the same time, the guidelines helped us to avoid over-standardising the sequencing, and thus allowed for genuine responses that were formulated in informants’ own words and were descriptive of their own perceptions of relationships (albeit prompted by our categories).

Clearing the ground for such interviews requires a balancing of structure and openness. Here we entertained the debate between ‘structured’ and ‘unstructured’ approaches as well as the associated arguments about ‘standardisation versus sensitivity, enumeration versus emancipation, anonymity versus ardour, and so forth’ (Pawson 1996: 295). In addition, we had to accept that informants could not be expected to set aside very much time for an interview. After weighing the pros and cons, we opted for a semi-structured interview format, which is generally acknowledged as ‘probing in-depth the experience of the respondents and generally stressing context over generalisability, induction over deduction, and complexity over parsimony’ (Rathbun 2008: 2).¹⁰⁷

In terms of content, the interview guide was closely linked to the issues raised in the previous chapter. To grasp the informants’ experiences and perspectives, indicators were created as questions and propositions with a view to prompting responses that represent informants’ genuine take on the issues, while being framed in ways that made comparisons possible. Furthermore, the guide was split into three main parts. The first sought to detail the informants’ backgrounds and career paths. It also contained a sequence whereby they were asked to detail a ‘typical work week’, which functioned as an introduction to issues raised in the subsequent sections. The second part included questions intended to reveal different dimensions of their experiences and perceptions of being an academic at Makerere, irrespective of their disciplinary affiliations. The third part reversed the second by probing their ‘field of knowledge’ and how they saw this playing out in the context of Makerere and Uganda. The issue of relevance was woven into questions contained in parts one and two.

Once we had formulated the research questions and established the principles upon which our empirical study would rest, we began recruiting informants and gathering data.

First, some words about timing. Our research group (consisting of the authors of this volume) assembled in the first half of 2016. As outlined in the introductory chapter, we began thinking about the Building PhDs Project when Mahmood Mamdani approached

NORHED. Initial discussions led us to focus on academics and the academic profession. Later that year, we elaborated on our research questions and agreed on a division of labour within the group. From August to early October of the same year, we worked on the interview guide and prepared for our fieldtrips to Makerere, which all took place between October 2016 and October 2017. Since then, we have analysed the data we collected and worked on drafting this book.

We never attempted to create a ‘representative’ sample of informants. At Makerere, ‘representivity’ in the statistical sense is neither particularly meaningful, nor would it be a viable strategy. There are no proper ‘variables’ to select for that would make the sample representative. The recruitment of informants therefore took another route.

As we had decided to focus on Makerere University’s three colleges and their academic leaders, our pool of possible informants was already limited to the academic staff members in these units. The initial step in recruiting informants from this sub-group was to obtain the names of staff members from these units. This list was set up by our contact person in the Bergen Office at Makerere. The same person then contacted the individuals on the list, sending them a letter containing some information about our project and inviting them to participate in the research as informants.

As it turned out, a rather small number of these individuals were able or willing to participate in the project, and many did not respond to the request. From that point on, ‘snowballing’ best describes our recruitment process. Individuals who were interviewed suggested other individuals who they believed would be willing to participate. The method was very effective, and the majority of our informants were recruited in this way. After we had gained insight into the different colleges, we also approached potential informants by knocking on office doors and introducing ourselves and the project. See Table 1 for more detail on the sample of informants.

Of the 93 academics interviewed, 87 had a PhD, three were enrolled for a PhD, and the remaining three were not in a PhD programme. Most informants had acquired at least one of their degrees abroad – in the UK, South Africa, the US or Sweden. Similarly, the majority

Table 1: Informants by college affiliation

College	Number of informants	Number of full-time academic staff
College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT)	30	132
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES)	31	150
College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS)	19	274
School of Law (SoL)	5	38
Deans of other colleges ^b	8	not shown
Total	93	594

Notes:

a. This includes deans of the four colleges named in the table and excludes teaching assistants and part-time employees.

b. These included the College of Health Sciences (CHS), the College of Natural Sciences (CoNAS), and the College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resource and Bio-Security (CoVAB).

Source of figures in column 3: Makerere University (2017: 29–31)

of informants who had PhDs had earned these at a university in the North, while some had done so at institutions in sub-Saharan Africa, notably South Africa, Uganda and Tanzania. Interestingly, most informants at CAES completed their doctoral degrees, partly or fully, via a so-called sandwich programme (see Zink 2016).¹⁰⁸ However, none of the informants at CHUSS or SoL reported that they had earned their PhDs in this way.

As noted, each informant received a letter that included details about the research project, explained how the collected data would be handled and stored to ensure confidentiality, how we planned to make the findings public, and their right to withdraw from the process (and have all records of their participation deleted). We also requested their permission to record the interviews, to which nearly everyone agreed. All interviews have been transcribed and codified according to identified themes.

In recruiting and interviewing informants, a noticeable difference emerged between informants at CHUSS on the one hand, and all the other groups. At CHUSS, several potential informants declined to take part in the project. One staff member at the school decided to end the interview after initially agreeing to participate. Further, the interviewer sensed that CHUSS staff who were interviewed, somehow

took the conversation in a slightly different direction to the one they were explicitly requested to take. It seemed to us that certain issues were deemed too difficult or too sensitive to discuss with a stranger and on record. The issues avoided in this way could be considered 'political' in nature, and informants seemed to feel that stating their views would be too risky, even though they had been assured that their anonymity was guaranteed.

In fact, several CHUSS staff declined to take part in the research even before they knew what we wanted to discuss. Generally, the reasons given for their refusal centred on interview fatigue. Several individuals stated that they had been interviewed many times for other projects and were no longer willing to prioritise such time-consuming involvements. Interestingly, several of these academics also indicated that they had received little, if any, feedback regarding projects they had participated in, and indicated that investing time in such projects therefore had little or no value for them. This highlights the reality that Makerere is not just a 'donor darling' but also a 'research study darling'. The institution has been massively scrutinised by researchers from abroad. It is understandable that the lack of feedback and dialogue has translated into a deep hesitation among staff to act as informants.

Among staff members at CEDAT, CAES, and among the deans, our experience was quite different. Although we were unable to base the study exclusively on the initial list of potential participants, we found that it was easy to recruit other informants, and once recruited they did not seem hesitant to talk about the issues we raised. In addition, once we had been introduced, no one declined to participate or withdrew during or after their interviews.

In 2015, interviews were conducted with several deans. Then, in October 2016, the research group went to Makerere together for about three weeks. Most of the interviews were done during this trip.¹⁰⁹ Another round of interviews took place in April/March 2017, at CAES, CEDAT, CHUSS and SoL and we also held a feedback seminar for informants who had participated in the first round. A final set of interviews was conducted in October 2017. Every fieldtrip was also

utilised to collect other types of research material, such as reports from the colleges and documents from Makerere's archive.

Feedback seminars

An integral part of the research process was a feedback seminar held on 4 April 2017. At the end of each interview, every informant was told that such a seminar would take place. Once we had set a date, we sent an invitation via email to all informants. Shortly after this, we sent a reminder to all informants along with draft papers from each member of the research group. To help make attendance easier, the seminar was held on campus at midday and lunch was served.

Our intention with the seminar was twofold. First, as we presented our preliminary findings and interpretations, we saw the seminar as a way to offer some feedback to our informants and to honour their contributions to the project. Second, we hoped that the informants would respond to what we presented in ways that would feed back into the research and provide additional data, insights, and corrections – a kind of hermeneutic circle. In terms of these aims, the seminar outcomes were mixed. Although 21 informants registered for the seminar (out of about 50 who had participated by that time), just eight turned up. Three other academics at Makerere who were involved in the project but not as informants also attended. Thus, including us three researchers, 14 people were present. In the discussion that followed, it became clear that few of the attendees had read the drafts presentations that had been emailed to them. Nonetheless, some discussion took place from which we obtained some new and valuable insights.

Regarding our first intention of giving feedback, we at least succeeded in providing an opportunity and a space in which an exchange could take place. We therefore hope we did not add to the 'interview fatigue' evident among Makerere's academics. Even if only a few of our informants attended the seminar, they were all made aware that we wanted their feedback, and they all received the draft papers. We also know that some of those who did not attend were *unable* to for reasons that are made abundantly clear in Chapter 4.

On 15 June 2017, we presented our preliminary findings at MISR's annual doctoral seminar. While this seminar was quite different from the previous one, in that it was not aimed mainly at our informants, our presentations nevertheless provoked some critical comments that forced us to reflect deeply on a fundamental methodological issue: the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. We then had to re-examine how preconceptions on both sides and impact on this interaction, ultimately influencing the data that flows from the interview (see the introductory chapter for more on this).

As noted, we conducted in-depth interviews with academics at four colleges, including a fifth group, made up of the deans across all the colleges at the university. Focus areas were assigned within the research group as follows: Andrea Kronstad Felde – CHUSS and SoL; Anja Myrtveit – CEDAT; Reidar Øygard – CAES; and Tor Halvorsen – the deans. These focus areas were allocated according to our own research interests and with a view to our being able to compare and integrate our findings.

In some ways, the selection of these focus areas posed certain challenges. For example, of the four colleges selected, two (CEDAT and CAES) are biased towards the applied sciences, CHUSS is more difficult to classify, and SoL has its own dynamics. However, while we recognise that these issues might have skewed our data somewhat, we did not attempt to address them when planning the research process but made time to reflect on them as we went along.

Notes

- 1 We do not attempt to explain or trace the general rise of neoliberal ideologies and policies, but for our understandings of its impacts on higher education, we owe a great deal to the work of Dieter Plehwe and his many collaborators across the world who are developing a detailed picture of neoliberalism and its underlying ideologies (see Plehwe et al. 2020).
- 2 For more on the role of the World Trade Organization in realigning the education sector, see Mathisen (2008).
- 3 However, as James Mittelman (2018: 175) noted, 'In these interactions, the World Bank's thrust was hardly singular. Let me cite one among the other progenitors of education reforms in Uganda. Like the Bank, the WTO embraced the position that education as a public good is an antiquated notion that must be put to rest if it fails to deliver cost-effective and competitive returns.'
- 4 On the fundamental incompatibility of democracy and capitalism (and the potential for political change to address this), see Habermas (2015: 80–102).
- 5 At the time of publication, in 2021, NORHED was funding 50 projects globally, 13 of which are based at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda (hereafter referred to as Makerere). NORHED generally focuses on how best to support students who aspire to be academics, as well as junior academic staff who are working towards securing or upgrading their PhD. Several North–South research programmes funded by NORHED aim to support the growth of scholarship and enhance its quality (see Halvorsen et al. 2019).
- 6 In the early 2000s, UiB had already established a research project on the globalisation of higher education called 'Knowledge Shopping or Identity Formation?'. The project's main aim was to compare higher-education institutions in Africa and Europe, and investigate how the growing market for educational services was changing the higher education landscape in these regions (see Halvorsen and Michelsen 2002; Halvorsen et al. 2005). The project was also supported by the Norwegian Research Council and focused strongly on research institutions located in the Nile Basin, including Uganda (see Alemu et al. 2010).
- 7 The role of universities in economic development (via their role in reshaping cities) features increasingly in Castells' writing – corresponding with perhaps fewer references to the themes of popular resistance and class alliances as engines of change that were prominent in his earlier writing. For example, in 'The Wild City' (1976: 25), Castells wrote 'The exploitative and increasingly contradictory model of urban–suburban expansion that dominates metropolitan America in the last thirty years will be transformed only if the people's forces win decisive gains in upcoming battles'. Today, such battles are escalating worldwide, not only in the US.
- 8 Reflecting on the consequences of the spread of the OECD model, Drori et al. (2002: 7) argue that 'science is similarly institutionalised on a world level and similarly presumed to confer instrumental value'.
- 9 For more on this, see Spiegel-Roesing and De Solla Price (1977).
- 10 On the continuity between OECD and HERANA, the OECD's 1981 report, *The Future of University Research*, states categorically that modernity and economic growth depends on science and

science-based education. Compiled by neoliberal stalwarts Stuart Blume, Michael Gibbons, Sheila Kelly and Wouter van Rossum under the direction of Georges Ferné, the report was discussed at a meeting of senior government officials from OECD member states held in May 1980. Here it was 'emphasised that university research, through its multiple functions, is an indispensable asset for all member countries, particularly as the source of knowledge upon which future innovations will be based' (OECD 1981: 7).

- 11 The word economy is deliberately used in its singular form here as we are specifically referring to an economy that is not inclusive of a variety of actors with contradictory interests or ways of developing a society.
- 12 As Ragnvald Kalleberg (2011: 102) put it, 'The ethos of science is a form of communicative ethics, consisting of requirements to individuals and research communities. Members of the discipline have to present arguments in public, defend arguments, be open to criticism and open to the possibility of being wrong.'
- 13 On our understanding of modernity, see Peter Wagner (2012).
- 14 While Drori et al. affirmed that science and science-based education is first of all a cultural product (now globally prevalent) that promotes both democracy and economic utility, they tended to understate the extent to which neoliberalism is deepening the growing contradictions between democracy and capitalism. In their view, their studies show that 'science also encourages the incorporation of democratic practices, greater attention to environmental concerns, and expanded steps toward standardisation of management and organisations. Science is a quite general rationalising force in the modern system' (2002: 2). Science however, does not act. The academic profession does. Academics must begin to systematically confront questions related to the consequences of knowledge use, how to think this through, and how to educate for democracy. That is, we have to take responsibility for working out how to make knowledge relevant within generally accepted cultural values.
- 15 Peter Weingart described these transitions well, while also highlighting neoliberalism's relevance paradox: 'Eine Paradoxie dieser Kopplungen wird jedoch schon jetzt darin erkennbar, dass gerade diese begrenzten institutionellen Veränderungen mit Pioniercharakter die Sensibilität der scientific community im Hinblick auf den zentralen Wert der freien Kommunikation geschärft und offengelegt haben' (2005: 1, 230).
- 16 As Kalleberg (2011: 106) noted: 'According to Kant, the long-range task of citizens in modernising societies was to increase freedom, equality and rationality.' The role of universities can therefore be understood as helping to 'build' democratic identities (citizens). However, Kalleberg also pointed out that 'students cannot internalise the ethos and epistemology of science in the role of external customer or client, nor as a kind of employee, receiving instructions from teachers above them and reporting upwards again in exams.'
- 17 CUDOS is an acronym for: communalism (no private ownership of knowledge as the patent system and intellectual property rights promote); universalism (as truth seeking but being aware of socio-cultural limitations to generalisations, thus more inviting 'universalism' than insisting on or achieving it; see below on the decolonisation of knowledge); disinterestedness (that is, no contractual relationships between stakeholders); originality (building on orthodox/established knowledge and transforming / changing / criticising from within the epistemic community); and scepticism (validity, reliability and peer-review processes) (Merton 1973).
- 18 While interviewing academics in the four colleges (as described in Chapters 5 to 8), we interviewed another ten senior academics who were or had been deans, heads of departments or principals of colleges. In these interviews, our focus was mainly on the informants' roles as academics. Our plans to follow up on all of the interviews with further face-to-face conversations were blocked by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 19 As Renn (2020: 10) noted, ‘a broader concept of knowledge than that which is usually employed in academic discourse ... would ... constitute a radical answer to the radical neoliberal ideology claiming that when problems cannot be resolved with the help of market forces, the answer is not to limit them but to demand even fewer market constraints. In contrast, I argue here that we should embrace the possibility of rethinking all of our challenges as challenges of knowledge, and that when our knowledge does not suffice, we require more and perhaps different knowledge (e.g., about the functioning of markets).’
- 20 On this topic, Steven Connor’s (2019: 187–199) vivid descriptions of the history and theatrical aspects of Western academic traditions are challenging, as are his questions about their purposes in today’s world of more systematic and empirical knowledge ‘production’.
- 21 Macdonald (1995) outlines the traditional model of how the professional project ‘is pursued’ in both the social and the economic order, highlighting how it seeks to achieve status and respectability by establishing a legal monopoly over knowledge-based services that are justified by higher-education institutions, usually within a discipline. All this presupposes and creates trust between professionals and their clients, whereby clients trust a person for reasons that are independent of their person and personality and dependent on their qualifications instead. Trust between strangers is thus not blind trust, but created by a public culture that ascribes responsibility for certain services to profession. This closes professions off from lay people and others, but such closure usually also presupposes a public responsibility and the professionals’ ability to earn public trust.
- 22 Makerere was first established in 1922 as a government technical school. In 1949, it affiliated to the University of London. In 1963, Makerere College became the University College for East Africa (with Makerere, the University of Nairobi and the University of Dar es Salaam as constituent colleges), and in 1970, Makerere became an independent national university offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses (see the university’s website: <https://www.mak.ac.ug/about-makerere/historical-background>; see also Bwesigye 2016; Mills 2006; Sicherman 2007).
- 23 It is perhaps important to note here that we interviewed only Ugandans in our study.
- 24 Supported by the World Bank, and presenting his paper at the 1998 UNESCO World Higher education conference, Gibbons was then the secretary-general of the Association of Commonwealth Universities. He made a name for himself by elaborating the concept of Mode 2 knowledge (knowledge produced in the context of application) in contrast to Mode 1 knowledge (that builds on the Humboldtian tradition). His 1998 paper was an attempt to show why Mode 2 knowledge institutions would evolve and transform notions of what relevance is. He predicted that, in this process, those to whom ‘knowledge workers’ are accountable would also change, and that knowledge would be increasingly valued through the (education-market-based) competition that he believed would drive academic excellence. HERANA’s ideas on how tertiary education should create ‘self-programming’ candidates seem to neatly echo Gibbons’ proposals (see Cloete et al. 2015).
- 25 See Levine (2016: 784): ‘Not only did the institutional innovations of the research university flow from Germany to the United States, as the classic story of the American university emphasises, but by 1905 they had begun to move in the reverse direction.’
- 26 Donald Broady defined Bourdieu’s concept of habitus as ‘systems of dispositions that allow humans to act, think, and orient themselves in the social world. These systems of dispositions are the result of social experiences, collective memories, ways of moving about and thinking that are shaken into humans’ bodies and minds’ (Broady 1991: 225, our translation; see also Bourdieu 1977: 72ff.).
- 27 As Luhmann (1990: 347) put it: ‘Im Falle der Wissenschaft geht es primär um Ordnung des Erlebtes, nicht des Handelens. Daher können Rollenasymmetrien nur schwach ausgebildet

werden und stehen unter dem Vorbehalt jederzeitigen Umkehrbarkeit.'

- 28 For HERANA's definition of the pact that constitutes a competitive state, see Cloete et al. (2018).
- 29 In its 2008 publication *The Global Competition for Talent*, the OECD argued that the market knows where knowledge is needed and that knowledge workers fill in where they are relevant. The OECD fails to point out that no one claims to understand or know how to manage exactly how this faceless yet all-powerful market, which the OECD perceives as 'the most knowledgeable' and 'the most efficient' ensures that 'better international flows of knowledge lead to more efficient knowledge production everywhere and thus to better solutions to problems and less duplication of R&D' (OECD 2008: 60).
- 30 For more on this, see Åsa Wickforss (2017).
- 31 Hutt was also a guest lecturer and was appointed honorary professor at the neoliberal Universidad Francisco Marroquín (probably first of its kind), which a handful of business executives established in Guatemala in 1970. Here, works by Hayek, Von Mises, and other neoliberal economists were obligatory reading for first-year students (Plehwe 2007).
- 32 We are grateful to then-registrar at the University of Cape Town, Hugh Amore, for providing documentation on the university's support for Hutt's work with the Mont Pelerin Society and other neoliberal think-tanks in the UK, the US and elsewhere.
- 33 The Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility (1990) is available online.
- 34 Clearly, Mamdani does not envisage academia as the *Bildungsbürgertum*, that Wilhelm von Humboldt emerged from and espoused in Europe in the early 1800s.
- 35 On page xvi of this report, the number of staff who held a PhD in 2016 is stated as 790.
- 36 Makerere makes full-time academic positions available to staff from the level of assistant lecturer to professor; teaching assistants are seen as being 'in training' and are not counted as full-time employees (Makerere University 2017: 29).
- 37 To cite the university's 2015 Annual Report, Makerere's vision is 'To be the leading institution for academic excellence and innovations in Africa' and its mission is 'To provide innovative teaching, learning, research and services responsive to national and global needs' (Makerere University 2015: vi).
- 38 Although not addressed directly in numbers, most of the academics said that the salaries they earned were insufficient. Similarly, Erin Zink (2016: 68) found that Ugandan academics spend a considerable amount of time on activities that generate additional income so that they can afford basic necessities. Some informants mentioned that they found it quite difficult to afford school fees for their children. In addition, many are expected to provide, not only for their own children, but for their extended families as well.
- 39 Data was not available for CEDAT but the average time from teaching assistant to associate professor took 28.1 years (Rwendeire 2017: 91).
- 40 An overview of employees in 2016 indicated that CAES had 209 academic staff; CEDAT had 157, CHUSS had 287, and SoL had 47. Included in these numbers are professors, associate professors, senior lecturers, lecturers, assistant lecturers, teaching assistants and part-time staff (Makerere University 2017: 51).
- 41 The College of Health Sciences is also the college that received most of the documented research funding at Makerere, followed by the College of Natural Sciences (Makerere University 2017: 40).
- 42 Consultancies are generally undertaken with government, national and international NGOs, private foundations, industry and international organisations, such as the World Bank. Some informants noted that quite a lot of 'moonlighting' happens – whereby staff undertake

consultancies and accept teaching posts at private universities. We did not collect data on which of these sources provide the most income, and it was clear that the amount of consultancy jobs that individual academics take on varies considerably. One informant at CHUSS said they had undertaken over 150 consultancies over their career. Others said they did not seek out regular consultancy work, but only took it on if opportunities came along.

- 43 In the 2015/16 financial year, the number of active grants held by the colleges in our study varied as follows: CAES – 48, CEDAT – 7, SoL – 5 and CHUSS – 6 (excluding the 3 grants active at MISR) (Rwendeire 2017: 230).
- 44 The ten colleges are: the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, the College of Business and Management Sciences, the College of Computing and Information Sciences, the College of Education and External Studies, the College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology, the College of Health Sciences, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the College of Natural Sciences, the College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Bio-Security, and the School of Law.
- 45 Historian, Francesco Boldizzoni (2013: 9) has made it his calling to quash such myths. He points out that ‘Whereas history is complex, pseudo histories typically make strong claims and propose one-size-fits-all interpretive keys. They bear such pompous titles as *Why Nations Fail: The Origin of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012). This is a work attempting to demonstrate that something is wrong with the cultural system underlying the Third World economies, as they failed to develop “inclusive” institutions protecting individual property rights and fostering entrepreneurship’. Boldizzoni points to another influential myth-spreader – a book by Douglass North, John Wallis and Barry Weingast called *Violence and Social Orders* (2009). As Boldizzoni explains: ‘Douglass North and his co-authors have been advising the World Bank for some years on the issue of institutional barriers to development ... In their view, most approaches to development have been unsuccessful because they did not address the problem of violence first. How can international organizations help solve this problem? Well, they should put the money in the hands of dictators. Once violence is under control, underdeveloped countries will know how to get rid of them and will eventually evolve into Western-style democracies and market economies. As you see, Hobbes strikes back. But he does so with World Bank money.’ The underlying idea is that economic growth (with dictatorships securing investments) leads to the growth of an educated middle class that will, in future become a democratising force. As Rueschemeyer et al. (1993) show, this too is a myth absent of historical truth, but it does fit World Bank ideology which holds that certain economies will develop democracy as a side-effect. The Chicago Boys’ contribution to the death of Salvador Allende in Chile is just one example of the tragic outcomes of neoliberal myth making.
- 46 See Chapter 5 for more information about this initiative.
- 47 For students, the imposition of fees triggered most of the protests. However, in 2000, when Makerere’s leaders announced that the central objective of its new five-year plan was to increase student numbers by 10 per cent per year, from 22 000 to 35 000, few academics objected. However, other types of scholarly resistance soon followed though, mostly linked to the ways in which the academic profession was being devalued. Mamdani (2007) has described and analysed the protests in more detail.
- 48 In 1990, for example, the Faculty of Agriculture established a graduate programme in agricultural engineering in its Department of Agricultural and Bio-Engineering within the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, and in 2012, the Department of Geology and Petroleum Studies and Industrial Chemistry in the College of Natural Sciences established a graduate programme in petroleum geosciences.
- 49 This information is from CEDAT’s website at: <https://cedat.mak.ac.ug/about-us/historical-background>.

- 50 Gibbons et al. (1994) stated that their aim in naming these ideal types was essentially heuristic, that is, to help them to clarify the similarities and differences between each type and to assist them in understanding and explaining related trends and tendencies.
- 51 More information is available at <http://kiiramotors.com/about-us/>.
- 52 One exception to this was mentioned by a single informant who said that when students from abroad (including from within the region) are accepted into postgraduate programmes at CAES, they sometimes struggle to cope. This individual noted that, 'by the time they come here, they were already selected. And when they come, they start to have problems.' While this created all sorts of problems for the college, in the view of this informant, the host department was not to blame as the grading and selection of the students is conducted elsewhere.
- 53 This is a play on the actual title, *Scholars in the Marketplace*.
- 54 This statement was made by former British prime minister, HH Asquith in 1945 (quoted in Sicherman 2005: 13).
- 55 As discussed in Part I, Mamdani (2007) explained this (and other) developments as resulting from the combined effects of the government's withdrawal from funding the university and pressure exerted by the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank, IMF, etc.). To survive, the university then had to generate income from other sources. One source of income was student fees. Thus, to attract high numbers of students, many departments sought to establish programmes that were both popular with students and could be delivered to large numbers.
- 56 CHUSS has five schools; informants who agreed to be interviewed were from the School of Liberal and Performing Arts, the School of Women and Gender Studies, and the School of Humanities and Social Science. SoL runs several law clinics; one of our informants works at the Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIPEC).
- 57 Available at: <https://ugfacts.net/background-makerere-university-college-humanities-social-sciences-chuss/> (accessed March 2020).
- 58 The declaration is available at <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/africa/KAMDOK.htm>
- 59 This view was not only expressed by informants at SoL, it was echoed by many at CHUSS and other colleges, as well as some journalists and a human-rights lawyer that we spoke to.
- 60 See <https://huripac.mak.ac.ug/about-us-2/>.
- 61 See <https://pilac.mak.ac.ug/about-us>.
- 62 In 2008, the university affirmed its commitment to what it described as its three strategic pillars: (i) being learner-centred, (ii) being research-driven; and (iii) engaging in knowledge transfer, partnership and networking (Makerere University 2008b: 9). In saying this, the university formally shifted away from its former community-outreach paradigm to engaging in knowledge transfer via partnerships and networking. While this move increased the institution's focus on relationships with the private sector (Bisaso 2017), most of the academics we interviewed still said they view community outreach as the third strategic pillar of their own work.
- 63 See <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/>. The same ranking organisation rated Makerere fourth in Africa in 2016/2017.
- 64 The category 'fully employed' means graduates who spent at least 40 hours a week at the same job. This included young graduates who had never been employed before graduating and mature students who had been employed before registering for their degrees, but this employment status varied fairly widely across disciplines (Ssematya and Ngobi 2015: 6, 17).
- 65 See <https://cbr.ug/about-us/>.
- 66 No figure was provided for SoL.
- 67 See their website at <https://rgt.mak.ac.ug/directorate-research-and-graduate-training>

- 68 MISR's PhD in Social Studies was approved by the university's senate and council in 2011, and by Uganda's National Council for Higher Education in 2012; their approval was institutionalised on 12 July 2012 (Buzeki 2016a).
- 69 Following the model often used in the US, the MISR programme integrates the master's and doctoral degrees into a five-year programme. A call for applications (published in *New Vision*, 13 May 2019) reads as follows: 'The five-year programme entails two years of coursework and three years of dissertation research and writing'. In this time, students are expected to write two bibliographical essays (one thematic and one place-specific), teach two tutorials for undergraduate courses at CHUSS, and present their work at a research colloquium. In the first semester of their third year, students present drafts of their thematic and place-specific bibliographical essays to a research colloquium at which MISR's academic staff act as discussants. On successful completion of Year 3, students are awarded an MPhil degree (MISR 2017).
- 70 The information in this paragraph is from the About MISR page at <https://misr.mak.ac.ug>.
- 71 The so-called 'Stella Nyanzi case' has its roots in the transition from the old MISR that was a centre for commissioned research. Nyanzi's research and advocacy in support of vulnerable groups in Uganda was supported by a number of donors. The new MISR tried to discourage such direct links between donors and individual academics, the Nyanzi case suggests that such relationships are not necessarily always problematic. Attempting to intervene in her research work was widely perceived as a step backwards for MISR and Makerere, in terms of securing funding and developing relevant knowledge. Unsurprisingly, Nyanzi resisted the challenge to her work and conflict escalated when she refused to teach in the PhD programme. This evolved into a public argument about the value of MISR's doctoral programme and how it is managed. For most universities, this kind of conflict would be detrimental to attempts to scale up, but in this case (assuming it has not put donors off or undermined internal support for MISR completely) a willingness to engage both sides of the argument might be a learning opportunity for both MISR and Makerere.
- 72 As Mbembe observed, calls to 'decolonise are not new. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s they were issued under different names, the most recognisable of which were "Africanisation", "indigenisation", "endogenisation" and so on' (2019: 239).
- 73 See for example, Ossome (2019) and Bezabeh (2015).
- 74 Four broad thematic clusters define the programme's intellectual focus: political studies, political economy, historical studies, and literacy and cultural studies. Students take classes across all four clusters and specialise in one. Each cluster includes additional themes, such as gender, the environment and ethnicity (MISR 2017: 8). The aim is to give students an opportunity to ground themselves theoretically, while acquiring a broad foundation in historical debates affecting the humanities and the social sciences.
- 75 For some alternative gazes on the broad issues of modernity in the context of global/local linkages, see Idemudia and Amaeshi (2019) and Mavhunga (2017).
- 76 A total of 31 published working papers in this series between 2011 and 2017, the first written by Mamdani; *The South Sudan Referendum* (2011).
- 77 The first, *Beyond Nuremberg: Learning from the Post-Apartheid Transition in South Africa*, was written by Mamdani.
- 78 By October 2020, four issues had been published and made available online. See <https://misr.mak.ac.ug/publication/the-misr-review-no4>
- 79 After the restructuring of MISR in 2011 and before December 2019 when we completed this part of our study, seven PhD students at MISR had submitted their dissertations; another two were expected to submit in 2020.

- 80 This informant's comments are also based on having spent some time studying in the US, where students often enrol for an MPhil that flows into a PhD.
- 81 This would maintain the tactic of comparable entries in the Dictionary such as that for the entry on 'Printing': 'Marvellous invention. Has done more harm than good' (Flaubert 1954: 69). As Barzun emphasised, 'Flaubert has an infallible ear for the contradiction that everybody absent-mindedly repeats' (Barzun 1954: 9).
- 82 For an intimation of the philosophical complexities involved in this question, see, notably, one of Wittgenstein's final notebooks, published as *On Certainty* (Wittgenstein 1974).
- 83 For a useful discussion, see Prendergast (1988: 180–211).
- 84 In so doing, they consciously follow on from Mahmood Mamdani's 2007 book, *Scholars in the Marketplace*.
- 85 For some useful surveys of the global systemic challenges already visible, see, for instance, responses to UNESCO's 1997 Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (of which more below) by Appiagyei-Atua et al. (2016) and Karran (2009b); see also Altbach (2001); Bilgrami and Cole (2015); Tierney and Lanford (2014); and Varnham and Jackson (2015).
- 86 Moodie, for instance, described it as 'a woolly blanket term' (1998: 10). Similarly, a substantial survey by South Africa's Council on Higher Education suggested that 'no one party can know how, or should have the sole power, to draw a fixed boundary between higher education and society, or between academic freedom, institutional autonomy and accountability' (CHE 2008: 26), while US scholar Robert Post observed that 'the doctrine of academic freedom stands in a state of shocking disarray and incoherence' (Post 2015: 123).
- 87 Scholars at Risk was founded in 1999 and launched its Academic Freedom Monitoring Project in 2012. Since 2015, it has published an annual report, *Freedom to Think*, charting assaults on academic freedom around the world. *University World News*, an online news outlet, also provides occasional though consistent coverage of issues related to academic freedom. Similarly, the AAUP has shown a long-standing interest in, and support for academic freedom, and has published the *Journal of Academic Freedom* since 2010.
- 88 I describe other aspects of exclusionary consensus in Higgins (2014b: 155–157, 2019a).
- 89 For an interesting account of this, see the discussion of the wartime experience of the socialist critic Raymond Williams in Inglis (1995: 86–106).
- 90 Note that by 'standards of living', Connolly was playing on the established economic sense of the phrase and turning it towards an understanding of cultural and educational inequalities. For a useful placing of 'Mandarin Connolly', as he was sometimes known, in the literary politics of the post-war period, see Hewison (1981).
- 91 With regard to 'want', new legislation included the Family Allowances Act, the Pensions Act and National Insurances Acts. 'Disease' was to be addressed via the National Health Service Act; 'squalor' by the Landlord and Tenant Act; and a commitment to seeking full employment through broadly Keynesian measures. Through these and related measures, benefits were made available for retired, disabled and unemployed people, alongside a universal allowance for children and the establishment of a nationwide health service.
- 92 In Kant, too, something like the struggle against received ideas is central; see, for example, his statement that 'Dogmas and formulas, those mechanical instruments for rational use (or rather misuse) of ... natural endowments, are the ball and chain of ... permanent immaturity' (Kant 1991: 54–55).
- 93 For a rich and suggestive example of the reality of the difficulties around equal recognition, see the writings of George Orwell, notably *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *The Road to Wigan Pier*.

- These exemplify the vivid contrasts between Orwell's objective political sympathies for the British working-classes and his subjective and visceral disdain for them. I leave aside here the increasingly rich literature on the importance of recognition in political understanding, simply noting Axel Honneth's important insight that the 'experience of being socially denigrated or humiliated endangers the identity of human beings, just as infection with a disease endangers their physical life...the experience of disrespect [can] become a source of motivation for political resistance' (Honneth 1995: 135, 139).
- 94 For a powerful account of the centrality of these experiences, and Hannah Arendt's complex thinking on dignity, see Macready (2018).
- 95 For a contemporary defence along similar lines, see Nussbaum (2011).
- 96 Trow's observations were largely based on US and British data. It is worth noting that – despite the efforts of the World Bank and the OECD – this process of massification has deepened and continued across the world. Recent estimates place the total number of students in higher education at around 200 million worldwide and growing (Atherton et al. 2016). While the rate of increase has slowed to around 2 per cent per year in high-income countries, it continues to strengthen in medium-income countries at a rate of 7 per cent per annum, while the rate of increase in low-income countries is around 5 per cent (Salmi 2017: 2). All in all, global participation in higher education is calculated to have reached 38 per cent, while in upper middle-income countries it stands at more than 50 per cent (UNESCO 2019: 145). In these circumstances, the importance of getting academic freedom right is ever more pressing.
- 97 An exemplary instance here is the AAUP's definition of academic freedom, which was generated in the wake of pressure. For a brief history and thoughtful analysis of this and other academic freedom struggles in the US, see Scott (2019). In all of these cases, pressures on the practice of academic freedom resulted in varied precise and particular formulations.
- 98 For a robust critique of the World Bank and its policies as 'the major player in global educational policy', standing 'at the forefront of the shift to neoliberal thinking', see Klees (2008) and Klees et al. (2012). For a useful overview of criticisms, see brettonwoods.project.org (n.d.).
- 99 I leave aside here any consideration of the related work and arguments of the OECD, save to say that it was an active partner in furthering the exclusionary consensus around human-capital theory.
- 100 The phrase is from Foucault's important discussion of human-capital theory in *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008). For an engaged and engaging analysis of Foucault's arguments, and their particular extension to questions of higher education, see especially Brown (2015).
- 101 The document as a whole is presented as a report on the papers given at the conference, with no specific utterance attributed to any particular person. This itself contributes to a 'smoothing out' of potential differences.
- 102 See Higgins (2014b) for a range of other examples.
- 103 See Lukács' vital account in *History and Class Consciousness* (1971).
- 104 I borrow Mike Zapp's useful phrase here (Zapp 2017).
- 105 See Hughes (2021). In addition, Bilgrami and Cole present a comprehensive view of the 'different groups and tendencies ... that fear academic freedom and attempt to thwart it', locating these in 'sources as diverse in range and generality as intellectual orthodoxy, the interests of donors, institutional board licensing, Israeli and other pressure groups, US legislation and government policy, and actions taken within universities such as speech codes and restrictions on research' (2015: ix).
- 106 For an account of academic freedom as a material practice in the South African context, see Higgins (2019b).

107 We use the term 'informant' rather than 'respondent' because, in our view, the former implies a more active informed participation while the latter implies a passive response to a set of pre-established understandings indicative of a stimulus-response model, which was not what we wanted.

108 As Zink (2016) explains, a sandwich programme is characterised by co-supervision by faculty members at Makerere and a foreign university, with the PhD candidate regularly travelling between the two institutions. The degrees can be awarded by Makerere, the foreign institution, or jointly by both institutions.

109 A strike by academic staff towards the end of our stay led to the closure of the university, and some interviews had to be cancelled.

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Democracy and the Discourse on Relevance Within the Academic Profession at Makerere University is set against the backdrop of the spread of neoliberal ideas and reforms since the 1980s. While accepting that these ideas are rooted in a longer history, the authors reveal how neoliberalism has transformed the university sector and the academic profession. In particular, they focus on how understandings of what knowledge is relevant, and how this is decided, have changed.

Taken as a whole, reforms have sought to reorient universities and academics towards economic development in various ways. Shifts in how institutions and academics achieve recognition and status, combined with the flow of public funds away from the universities and the increasing privatisation of educational services, are steadily downgrading the value of public higher education. As research universities adopt user- and market-oriented operating models, and prioritise the demands of the corporate sector in their research agendas, the sale of intellectual property is increasingly becoming a primary criterion for determining the relevance of academic knowledge. All these changes have largely succeeded in transforming the discourse around the role of the academic profession in society.

In this context, Makerere University in Uganda has been lauded as having successfully achieved transformation. However, far from highlighting the allegedly positive outcomes of this reform, this book provides worrying insights into the dissolution of Uganda's academic culture.

Drawing on interviews with over ninety academics at Makerere University, from deans to doctoral students, the authors provide first-hand accounts of the pressures and problems the reforms have created. Disempowered, overworked and under-resourced, many academics are forced to take on consultancy work to make ends meet. The evidence presented here stands in stark contrast to the successes claimed by the university. However, as the authors also show, local resistance to the neoliberal model is rising, as academics begin to collaborate to regain control over what knowledge is considered relevant, and wrestle with deepening democracy.

The authors' careful exposé of how neoliberalism devalues academic knowledge, and the urgency of countering this trend, makes *Democracy and the Discourse on Relevance Within the Academic Profession at Makerere University* highly relevant for anyone working in higher education or involved in shaping policy for this sector.

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