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Learning the "New, New Thing" : on the role of path dependency in university structures

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Abstract

In current debates over the future of core institutions in a 'knowledge society', universities figure most prominently. It seems clear that they are crucial nodes in the overall knowledge producing system, which, however, need to be repositioned and reformed. Therefore, the learning capacities of universities are of central relevance. But how do universities adapt to new challenges? The central claim of the paper is that the rapid change of pace at the level of higher education discourse is hardly met at the level of universities. Here, one has to take the path-dependent character of their structures, practices and identity concepts into account. Therefore, learning the 'new, new thing' is a more cumbersome process than might be expected at first sight. Empirical evidence for this claim is drawn from the institutionalization of technology transfer offices at German universities. Based on these findings, further general policy and research perspectives on the role of path dependency in university structures are discussed at the end of this paper. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Krücken, Georg, E-Mail: georg.kruecken@uni-bielefeld.de