

CLARK KERR AND THE CALIFORNIAN MODEL OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Fifty years on, Clark Kerr's multiversity and the Californian Master Plan for Higher Education stand as signal high points in the building of not just great public institutions but high participation modern human society. Key features of the Californian Model have become a universal template for research universities and system design. Seminal ideas and practices of higher education developed by Clark Kerr, Martin Trow, Burton Clark and others continue to colonize the thinking of policy makers, scientists, scholars, students and citizens, with profound effects not just in the United States but in every country. Yet the Californian Model of higher education - which long appeared everywhere else to be ahead of its time - was also specific to its own time and place. The conditions in which it was born, and which nurtured its flourishing, have changed. This is the first of three Clark Kerr Lectures on the Role of Higher Education in Society by Simon Marginson and organized and hosted by the Center for Studies in Higher Education with the generous support of the UC Office of the President and the Carnegie Corporation and delivered on September 30, 2014 at the David Brower Center, Berkeley. Previous Kerr Lecturers include Harold Shapiro, Charles Vest, Donald Kennedy, Hanna Holborn Gray, and Neil Smelser.

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This lecture series is a settling challenge to those invited to participate. It invites us to consider our words with more than the usual care, to summon whatever it is, if anything, that might be distinctive in what we say, and to synthesize and conclude our thought about higher education, a large enterprise populated by intelligent people of almost every description.

Yet I accepted without hesitation. I had always liked very much the *Uses of the University* and saw Clark Kerr as an admirable man. The modern system and institution builders, those who created higher education in the thirty years after World War 2, deserve all our respect. That generation includes my father, Raymond Marginson, the principal executive administrator at the University of Melbourne for more than two decades, still alive and active in university meetings at the age of almost 91. We work within the halls that were built by that generation, first in their minds and then in the world. Clark Kerr was the foremost of the builders. For better knowledge of Clark Kerr and his works, I thank the scholars I have read in recent months, especially John Douglass, Sheldon Rothblatt, and Kerr himself.

I begin by discussing the man in terms of the work. First the 1960 Master Plan, the embodiment of what might be called the Californian Model of Higher Education. Second, the 1963 Godkin lectures. Then I move to two other scholars from the University of California, who like Kerr brought Californian thinking to the whole higher education world: Martin Trow and Burton Clark, or Bob Clark as his colleagues call him. I did not meet Kerr but met Trow and knew Clark. Each produced one work that is constantly read and cited. Then I will open the apparent paradox that lurks at the back of all three lectures. The Californian Model, or different versions and aspects of it, has swept across America and the world, becoming installed—at least in the idea—as the modern higher education system norm, in which access and excellence are both secured through diverse provision. The 'excellence' component—Kerr's Multiversity, the large comprehensive science university—is closely imitated in many countries. Yet in California the Californian Model has faltered and the Multiversity is travelling less well. It now seems too difficult to provide access and excellence on a common public basis. The conditions and drivers that sustained the 1960s Model have changed. The Model has changed less. Perhaps that is part of the problem. I will close by pointing the way to Lecture 2.

Clark Kerr is fortunate in his friends and colleagues. They say fine things. Sheldon Rothblatt says that he saw life clearly and saw it whole, citing Matthew Arnold. He 'read widely, was learned and had a wonderful capacity' to ask good questions and find the answers. 'His observations were compelling, and he spoke with clarity and direction in sentences often pithy'. Christina Gonzalez says he was 'intensely interested in ideas'. Neil Smelser says that 'he had an ability always to grasp the big picture', and he was down-to-earth, his visions 'were embedded in the realities of social, political and economic life'. For Patricia Pelfrey 'he had a singular ability to look at mountains of information and discern patterns and trends where others saw only a jumble of unrelated facts and statistics'. This social science imagination, with its patterns and trends, invoked for Kerr the structure/agency dilemma: 'What remains of human freedom when the impersonal forces of history sweep all before them?' as Rothblatt puts it. Yet Kerr also had a gift for individual agency freedom. He respected talent and believed talented people should be given plenty of scope. His answer to the structure/agency dilemma was not either/or, but both and more. Clark Kerr framed things for himself in such a way so that he could see the world whole, *and* in its many parts, *and* would be effective in action as well.

As Sheldon Rothblatt describes it, Kerr's method was to pose contrasting poles of interpretation and then make synthetic judgments in the middle ground. Some would call it dialectical. Rothblatt makes the telling comment that Kerr saw the world in terms of 'in betweens' rather than absolutes. One example is his comment that the Multiversity was both public, and private, and something more. He was not an ideologue. He wanted to encompass the complexity of the world, not simplify it. For example, in the Multiversity concept, the notion of multiplicity enables a more inclusive vision of the university. His leadership style paralleled his intellectual method. As UC president and then head of the Carnegie Commission he led inclusively, by consensus. He believed mediation was the supreme function of leaders. The role of the mediator was not to find the mid point between the contending parties but to articulate a higher agreement, a synthesis that addressed everyone's ideas or concerns and turned them into a new solution that all could endorse. This is transformative mediation.

Kerr had the audacity to seek transformative consensus because he was an optimist. He was an active Quaker in his youth, who always saw good in every person, or believed he could find it. He saw industrial civilization as inevitable, and on the whole beneficial, but was sure the world could be made a fairer and kinder place. He opposed communism, and was a critic of capitalism, which he saw in terms of in-between, as an amalgam of pluses and minuses. He supported public planning, while conscious that states could be overbearing and legislatures were not always reliable.

He lost faith in pure markets during the depression. He was a liberal New Dealer in politics and a Keynesian in economics. Perhaps he would have been uneasy about today's neo-liberal ascendancy, and foreign policy. He opposed the American intervention in Vietnam, because, as he stated, 'it was a bad war for Americans to be in'. He was the national chair of the anti-war Committee for a Political Settlement in Vietnam. Yet at one stage Lyndon Johnson had Kerr under consideration for the post of American ambassador to South Vietnam, so compelling were his credentials.

JFK had offered Kerr the post of Secretary of Labor. Kerr turned him down because he was working on the Master Plan. The post that Johnson did offer him, in December 1964, was Secretary for Health, Education and Welfare. 'You'll have more money to work with than anyone else has had in American history', said the President. To Johnson's annoyance, Kerr asked for time to think about it. Berkeley was in the throes of the Free Speech Movement. It was not a good time to walk away. Meanwhile, reports Seth Rosenfeld in his 2012 book *Subversives*, the President asked J. Edgar Hoover to conduct the routine background check of Kerr's character, associates and loyalty. Hoover produced a misleading report, recycling allegations against Kerr that the FBI itself had already dismissed. Kerr decided to stay with UC. At the same time Johnson withdrew the offer. Kerr was too in-between for Hoover, and later for Ronald Reagan.

But one suspects that Kerr's 'in-betweenism', and its cousins, inclusion and multiplicity, were great strengths for him and for the Master Plan. The Plan was not so much a plan, as a bargain between contending parties—as an industrial relations mediator, Kerr liked bargains—but it was pitched for the long term. It was an inclusive Kerr style transformative bargain.

The Plan was a bargain between the University and the state colleges, later the Californian State University. The colleges gained coherence as a sector; the University protected its near monopoly of research. This ensured such a thick distribution of research funding across the whole of UC that fifty years later nine of the ten campuses are listed in the world top 50 research universities. It was also a bargain between higher education and legislature. Backed by Governor Pat Brown, the Plan meant 'the end of the open market approach of lawmakers and local communities towards creating new campuses', as Douglass puts it. Why did the State agree close off its fiscal and political options? The larger answer lies in the political culture.

The late 1950s and the 1960s were an extraordinary time. Perhaps the explosion of popular culture in the second half of the '60s has blocked from view the all-round creativity in many spheres, among them research, higher education policy, and government. It was the time of the Great Society, and the greater civil rights movement. Both government and its critics wanted to make a

better world. Rothblatt states: 'The period was one in which the very idea of planning in itself was held in high esteem'. The memory of the Second World War was still green, sustaining the potential for big collective solutions. American society lay between the improvised plans, resource and population management of the war years, and the new civil society and individuality that were emerging. The Soviet Sputnik in 1957 had pushed science and universities up the agenda. In this context, a well documented plan for higher education, one that promised shared opportunities for individual freedom, in the national interest, had broad appeal.

The content of the Plan tapped into an older tradition Douglass calls 'The California Idea'. This derived from the California Progressives, a middle-class political reform movement that set out to reshape Californian society at the end of the nineteenth century. The Progressives believed education would usher in 'a modern and scientifically advanced society'. All high school graduates should have the opportunity for postsecondary training. The state should progressively expand the number of public higher education institutions, especially in emerging population centres. By 1920 there was the University of California on two campuses and two research stations, a large system of public junior colleges, and the teachers' colleges. Berkeley President Benjamin Wheeler positioned the University 'as a great engine of equality and prosperity for the state', as Douglass states.

The 1960 Plan 'guaranteed that there would be a place in college for every high school graduate or person otherwise qualified who chose to attend,' as Kerr put it. In 1960, 45 per cent of California's college-age population matriculated to a higher education institution. The national average was about 25 per cent. The Plan endorsed continued growth of participation, in response to economic need and popular demand (which were conflated), and the equalization of opportunity and removal of access barriers.

As well as being normatively compelling The Master Plan was economically cheap for the first 15 years because it shifted part of future growth from four-year to two-year institutions. Structurally it firmly separated the elite research-intensive University from the volume-building community colleges, buffered by a middle sector located on the mass side of the divide, because its potential in research and doctoral training was constrained.

The Plan was public in its commitment to universal access, and in its systemic character, in the positioning of the sectors as inter-dependent. It replaced unbridled competition with cooperation between and within sectors; a major departure from the idea of university as stand-alone firm that was influential then (especially in the private sector) and dominates us today. The Plan also sustained the long-term autonomy of higher education in a highly politicized state. Provided all sectors kept to the rules, higher education could more or less regulate itself, with the universities protected by their sector offices from the interference that plagued institutions in other states. This autonomy did not necessarily contradict the public character of the Master Plan. Higher education was positioned as a kind of civil society, separate from government while universal and public: an alternate form of 'public', democratic in purpose and access, but closed to electoral contest or political capture. This freed the Multiversity to both do public good and be itself, while holding it at the pinnacle of the system.

Three years later Clark Kerr put the seal on his understanding of the Multiversity, in the Godkin Lectures. The first three lectures are still the most insightful book on modern higher education; especially the large research university, which has become (not least because of this book) the ideal and hegemonic form of higher education institution across the world.

Kerr's prose is not as beautiful as that of J.H. Newman in *The Idea of a University*. Newman's extraordinary writing still compels us to a normative argument that is archaic and unrealistic; for example the refusals of research in universities, and practical knowledge, and learning for vocation. Kerr compels us in a different way. He uses spare and simple prose and joins this to a pellucid clarity in analysis. He is not a humanist like Newman, he is a humanistic social scientist: at home with numbers but not ruled by them, lifting us with language while staying anchored in the material world. The observations are immediate, plausible and witty. They make our own experience more clear to ourselves. Clark Kerr's grasp of what Smelser calls 'the realities of social, political and economic life' was such that *The Uses of the University* still stands as a valid description of the research university. In part this is because developments in California in 1960, such as large universities, professional administration, and the government structuring of research via funding, anticipated developments in the rest of the world. In part it is because Kerr saw where things were going. In part it is because he was strong at the level of generic concepts and synthesis. And in part it was because he separated fact and value, in the style of Weber.

As he stated in the 1963 preface Kerr saw it as his task to explain the Multiversity, how it worked and the environment in which it sat, not to preach one or another normative position on what it should be. Explanation had an honoured place. The separation between fact and values is never absolute. Explanation can be used to inform a range of normative projects. And Kerr's observations were shaped by his values. Yet those values were also a partly open system. He knew there was always more to

learn. New facts and explanations were possible. Different people had good ideas, and even values were open to tests of evidence and could evolve over time.

Explaining the Multiversity in realistic fashion opened it to broader public scrutiny, and created a more sophisticated reflexivity about institutional form. This has no doubt fed the evolution of all research universities. Kerr later said that with hindsight he would have been less frank, less the social scientist, more guarded in the Godkin Lectures. 'I paid a heavy price for being an honest and realistic commentator'. We are fortunate that he did not have that hindsight, though we can sympathize with his predicament.

The first Godkin Lecture provides a history of ideas of the university; reflects on the evolution of the American institution, and its key moments, the land grant movement and the research and graduate university that began at Hopkins; explains the Multiversity as a plurality of communities, interests, agendas and beliefs; and reflects on governance and the different styles of presidential leadership, culminating in the president as mediator.

Lecture 2 situates the Multiversity in its federal policy setting. Research funding had created the 'federal grant university', though this was more concentrated than the land grant role had been. Direct relations between granting agencies and disciplines skewed the balance between fields, and disembedded faculty stars and research centres from the Multiversity. Research income compromised undergraduate teaching. Familiar issues.

Lecture 3 expanded on both sets of themes. The two big shifts in higher education had been the adoption of the principles of universal access, and progress through science. The Multiversity was seen as driver of economic growth, and all-round solver of problems. It now included all students, regardless of social and economic background. The faculty were conservative, but external factors for change were irresistible: growth, the spread of professional credentialing, university involvement in society. 'The knowledge industry' had become central to business and government. Universities were becoming more like industry themselves. Resources were becoming concentrated in units that produced useful knowledge, stratifying the sector. 'Inter-university rivalry' was intense. Kerr did not call it 'academic capitalism' but described some of the signs. There were three challenges ahead: to improve undergraduate instruction; to create a more unified intellectual world, with stronger humanities and social sciences; and to 'relate the administration more directly to faculty and students in the massive institution'. No doubt those challenges are still ahead.

The Godkin Lectures are a good summary. They failed to predict Silicon Valley, the Internet, the wholesale off-shoring of production, and neo-liberal policy, but no one else predicted them either. My only reservation is about Kerr's account of the coherence of the Multiversity.

In the first Godkin lecture Kerr remarked that 'universities have a unique capacity for riding off in all direction and still staying in the same place'. Later, in the 2001 edition of *The Uses of the University*, he commented that the integration of the Multiversity into the outside world triggered its disintegration within. Both statements pose the question 'What holds the Multiversity together?' given its many norms, missions, interests, pressures and inconsistencies. Kerr had various answers to this, implicit and explicit. One answer was 'nothing'. Nothing holds it together. Another answer was 'the university president'. A third answer was the 'name' of the multiversity. This is nearer the mark. In my judgment, what holds the Multiversity together is something Kerr rarely talked about, social status. In a modern age, it is hard to talk directly about status. It has an aristocratic air.

Research universities are a status economy. Their institutional status is reproduced by selective entry and research performance. Those two drivers of status (selective teaching and research) feed into each other. In elite universities, high quality students bring status to the institution, they reproduce its selectivity, and in return receive institutional brand status as graduates, though this brand value varies by field of study. In turn, the educational mission drives the accumulation of revenues needed to sustain research performance in a competitive market; and superior research lifts institutional status with its power to attract top students. This is the real teaching/research nexus, articulated via status competition. It is also the framework for resource dependency logic in the Multiversity.

Status is scarce. In the upper reaches of the sector it is almost zero-sum, there is only so much high prestige to go around, which helps to explain the growing intensity of competition that Kerr noted. There is no status at the lower levels. Its binding effects are available only to the elite. It is less clear what holds non-research institutions together, except that for-profits are held together by money. This is one reason for the fragmentation of mass higher education, which I will discuss in the second and third lectures.

I will turn now to Martin Trow, who talked directly about elite and mass higher education. Martin Trow was a sociologist who directed the Berkeley Center for the Study of Higher Education from 1976 to 1988. In 1974 he prepared a paper for OECD on

'Problems in the transition from elite to mass higher education'. The argument was prophetic and has influenced policy thinking in many countries. It is scarcely possible to overstate its impact.

Trow isolated three phases in the evolution of higher education: elite higher education; mass higher education, where participation reached 15 per cent or so of the age group; and universal systems where participation exceeded 50 per cent. Access shifted from privilege (elite phase), to right (mass phase), to 'obligation' (universal phase) for middle class families. The purpose of higher education shifted from 'shaping the mind and character of the ruling class' (elite), to preparing a larger group in professional and technical skills (mass), to preparing the whole population in 'adaptability' to social and technological change (universal). The three phases were Weberian ideal types. Trow variously imagined them as historical stages, and as differing sets of practices. The latter allowed him to explain how elite institutions could flourish alongside mass and universal higher education. The three phases allowed Trow to develop narratives about change in areas such as teaching, student life, and the organization of higher education; for example from Oxbridge tutorials in the elite phase, to low intensity teaching and technological delivery in the universal phase.

Trow's other achievement was that, better than other social scientists, he understood the drivers of the growth of participation in higher education. The dominant mythology, shaped by human capital theory, was this. Economic growth and modernization drives the need for more graduates. Individuals invest time and money in higher education in response to opportunity for future earnings. Governments respond to both sets of signals—labour market demand, and student demand for places—by expanding the supply of higher education. At times expansion overshoots and generates an oversupply of graduates. At times there is a lag in meeting labour market needs. Shortages result. But sooner or later policy and/or market forces restore the equilibrium between education and economy.

Most families see higher education first and foremost in terms of job and career. As Clark Kerr put in 2001: 'In the United States higher education has always occupationally oriented.' Hence the great growth since the mid 1970s in fields like business studies, technologies and engineering, and the partial eclipse of liberal studies. But do these expectations follow a human capital logic? Does the causality flow from economic demand for labour, to investment in education, to specific labour market outcomes? Do people calculate participation in terms of net rates of return over a lifetime? Trow did not share the dominant mythology. In *Problems* he did not critique the human capital argument directly, but he used a different framing.

While he noted that both the economy and graduate jobs were expanding, this was incidental to growth in demand for places in higher education. The main driver was aspirations for social position. People invested time and money in higher education in order to augment their position, as human capital theory suggested, but most of them did so without knowledge of the specific outcomes of that investment. They knew only that whatever the state of the labour markets, it was better to be a graduate than a non-graduate. Thus popular demand for higher education was not shaped by the logic of economic scarcity. 'It seems to me very unlikely', stated Trow, 'that any advanced industrial society can or will be able to stabilize the numbers'.

Despite 'loose talk about graduate unemployment or of an oversupply', stated Martin Trow, 'it is still clear that people who have gone on to higher education thereby increase their chances for having more secure, more interesting, and better paid work throughout their lives.' As more people went to higher education, it became normalized, 'a symbol of rising social status' (p. 41). It developed into a universal aspiration. It became quasi-compulsory. Non-participants faced a diminished life. Graduate unemployment was not a problem, because of the 'educational inflation of occupations'. Graduate jobs were not fixed in nature but moved down the occupational scale when graduate numbers increase. Graduates displaced those without college, sometimes using their educated capabilities to enrich those jobs. 'What mass higher education does is to break the old rigid connection between education and the occupational structure', he said.

Trow crucial insight was that once mass higher education was established, social demand would expand until it approached universality, unless there were strong barriers, such as cost or low retention at school. Government would have to respond to social demand for places. That political logic was clear in a wealthy active democracy like California, but it later became apparent

Martin Trow



that social demand had the same limitless quality in democracies, one-party states and dynastic regimes everywhere. In the second Clark Kerr Lecture I will discuss what might be called the generic 'Martin Trow tendency', the universal tendency towards universal higher education.

There are many signs Trow's reading of the employment/education relationship was right. There is a chronic lack of fit between higher education and the labour markets. While in elite professional fields there is a clear match between training and employment, and while labour markets do 'pull' additional educational supply in particular areas at particular times (for example when there is a shortage of accountants, or engineers), labour markets and education markets are on 'separate tracks', as Roger Geiger puts it. Employees are selected on the basis of many factors. Specific qualifications are only one. Institution attended can be equally important. Specialist graduates often go where the best opportunities lie, the best pay and career prospects, rather than to the occupations for which they were trained. In some countries, at least half the graduates from law and/or engineering work outside those specific fields. More remarkably, many specialist positions are filled by persons trained in the *wrong* field. In any case the majority of graduates are not specialists. They carry generic qualifications in business, humanities, social science or natural science. This maximizes their range of opportunities, and is consistent with the fact that most jobs in management and government are also generic in character. It is foolish to berate educational institutions for not achieving a close fit between training and work. Graduate labour markets do not work like that.

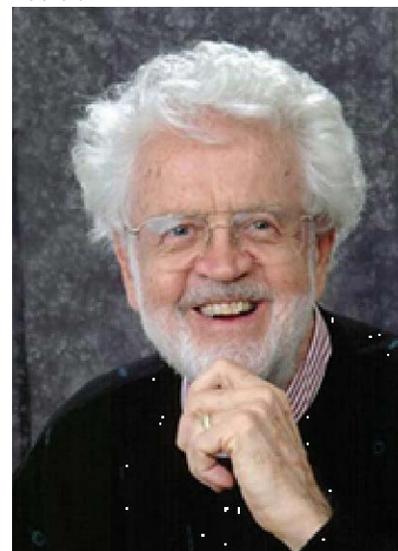
Trow's perspective is not shared by many policy economists and editorial writers, but has some support from other scholars. In *Higher Education and the World of Work* (2009), Ulrich Teichler finds that 'a match between the number of graduates and the corresponding positions, or between the competences acquired during study and job requirements, cannot be expected'. Clark Kerr noted in 1967 that 'there is ... no precise way to relate rising job content to higher educational requirements'. Kerr saw the degree in generic terms. While its contribution to productivity was substantial, productivity was difficult to measure exhaustively. This suggests the value of higher education is not captured by average private rates of return.

Let us turn to the third Californian scholar, Bob Clark. Bob graduated from UCLA and worked at Stanford, Harvard, Berkeley and Yale, where he served as Chair of Sociology. He returned to UCLA as Allan M. Carter Professor of Higher Education in 1980 and published his seminal *The Higher Education System* in 1983. There he developed a cultural understanding of the sector. The book set out to explain 'how higher education is organized and governed'. It considered work, beliefs, authority, system integration and the handling of change, within systems and institutions. He explains the role of symbolic factors in higher education, the integrating role of shared beliefs, the different permutations of system structure. The book was grounded in a succession of empirical studies, not only here but also in the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Japan and the Soviet bloc. Clark did not impose norms based on a solely American experience. The nuanced insights in *The Higher Education System* have broad worldwide purchase. They retain their relevance three decades later, though if the work was prepared today it would probably say more about competition, university rankings, university brands as symbolic and integrating factors, and management and managed faculty behaviours.

Interestingly Clark Kerr, writing twenty years before, anticipated the entrepreneurial university more than did *The Higher Education System*; while Bob Clark went further than Kerr and Trow in isolating what was distinctive about the higher education sector. Clark has a more bottom up view. 'It does not make much sense', he said, 'to evaluate business firms according to how much they act like universities, nor economic systems according to their resemblances to higher education systems. Nor does it make any sense to do the reverse; yet it is built into current commonsense and management theory that we do so.' The key to understanding higher education was the 'knowledge-centred nature of its tasks', which fostered in diversity of outlook, the autonomy of persons and groups, and endemic uncertainty and ambiguity. The centrality of knowledge was 'the root cause of the many odd ways of the higher education system', he said. Kerr agreed the knowledge was central to explaining higher education. On this point, though not many others, Kerr and Clark both agreed with JH Newman.

However, Bob Clark's work is best known for the 'triangle' of coordination. Clark established three Weberian ideal types: systems driven by states, systems driven by market forces, and those driven by academic oligarchies. He positioned all nations in the triangle. This construction is still widely used, though it has proven vulnerable to history. Clark wrote his book before the full

Bob Clark



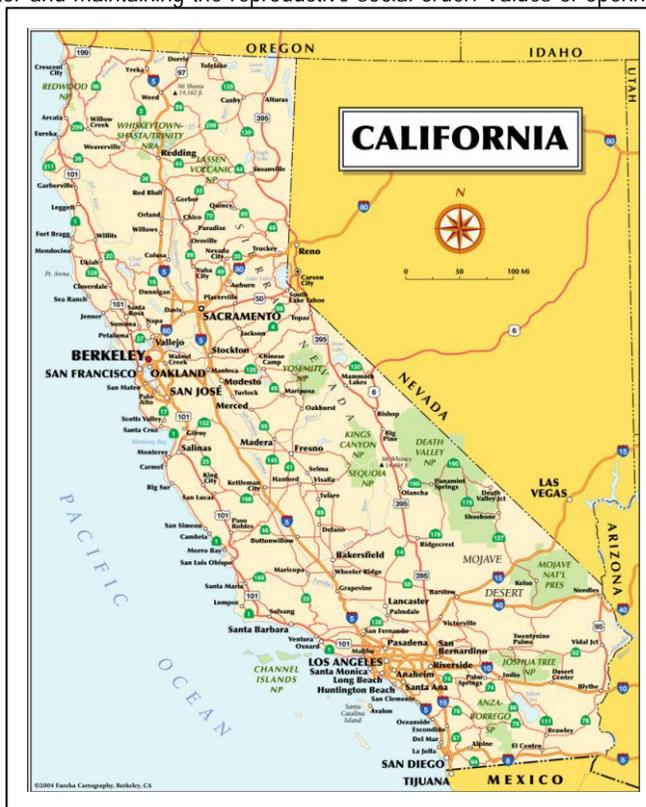
development of neo-liberal systems of government in which states deploy quasi-markets as means of allocation, control, legitimation and performance management. In today's systems of coordination, two parts of his triangle, state and market, overlap. Another problem is that in most countries, the authority of the university executive has partly replaced that of professors and faculty; and in some countries, but not others, that executive authority is tied to the state. All that happens inside one point of Clark's triangle, the academic oligarchy. The triangle breaks down, but it is a brilliant simplification and nothing has yet replaced it.

So: Clark Kerr, Martin Trow and Bob Clark. These three Californians are the three most influential thinkers in the academic field of higher education studies. Only Ulrich Teichler from Germany is close. My doctoral students continue to seek out Kerr, Trow and Clark without prompting. Their worldwide influence in thought parallels the influence of the Californian Model and the Multiversity in system and institutional design.

Let us return now to the Californian Model. A self-regulating system that continually expands to meet social demand, while providing for economic need. A system approach, with an ordered and hierarchical division of labour, based on defined missions, sustaining access while protecting the elite research sector and maintaining the reproductive social order. Values of openness, optimism, public spiritedness and common enterprise. All Californians free to pursue their goals and dreams, their careers and earnings and riches, by using public higher education. An attractive vision.

But now everything has changed. The Californian Model has run into sand. For an outsider, it is a little astonishing. How did it happen?

It is often argued that the decline of the Californian Model began with the Free Speech Movement in 1964, a year after *The Uses of the University*. In 1960 Clark Kerr had predicted a 'new bohemianism', composed of a greater degree of personal liberty and individualism. He was right, but I don't think he understood the student revolt. Though some activists were reading Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*, the demonstrations were not primarily about alienation, as Kerr thought. Rather, the students' confrontations with authority expressed their collective desire for a new and alternate society. This desire drove the rise of the counter culture, three years after the Free Speech Movement began. The Multiversity was both the incubation chamber for this sustained creative experiment, and its collateral damage. The student revolt did not disrupt the Californian Model, but it weakened the position of the Multiversity in mainstream Californian political culture.



The real disaster for the Californian Model was the tax revolt, which began with Proposition 13 in 1978. Ironically, the communal individualism of the New Left paved the way for the high capitalist individualism of the New Right. The anti-statism of the movement against the war and the draft morphed into the anti-statism of the tax revolt. The Californian Model was a public policy that created long-term social conditions for individual freedom. In lifting the rights of each person, it lifted the condition of all. But the mad belief embodied in Proposition 13, that government tax/spend is in itself a reduction of individual liberty, is incompatible with public provision. It is still surprising, for this outsider, that the same mad belief remains a potent factor in US politics and is rarely challenged in a fundamental way.

You know the story from there. Proposition 13 reduced county revenues by 40 per cent and undermined K-12 and community colleges. In 1988 Proposition 98 tied 40 per cent of the state budget to K-12 schools and CCC. UC and CSU were locked into the small part of the budget where the State still had discretion. Clark Kerr noted in 1994 that Californian higher education experienced much the largest cuts of any state. He quotes a state budget official. 'It was a war of knives. And higher education had no knife'. But the early 1990s have been dwarfed by the effects of the Recession since 2008. A catastrophic drop in revenues meets an unsustainable fiscal system. In the last decade state funding to UC has been cut by a third.

So the Model cannot be funded under its old terms at a universal level. At the same time, and against the trend-line in most of the rest of the world, democratic participation in schooling and higher education has faltered amid major social inequalities, again undermining the public character of the Model. In California, only two thirds of public school students graduate. There are very high graduation rates in wealthy neighborhoods, dismal rates in low-income communities. In 2007 Los Angeles United school district had a completion rate of 40.7 per cent. Transfer rates from CCC to four-year institutions also vary dramatically by region. You know the ethnic composition of low participation and low transfer populations. A declining financial capacity in higher education meets staggering school retention, ordered in an ethnic hierarchy. The outcome is inevitable, and it is terrible.

Despite the poor throughput from school level, cash-starved higher education can no longer cope with the flow it gets. Eligible students are being turned away from the UC system and State Universities. The Community Colleges cannot no longer expand to accept all demand. Though the system relationships are maintained, and the President's office still buffers the UC campuses from direct legislative interference, participation has lost its universal character, and California has lost national leadership.

Whereas in 1960 state participation was double the national average, fifty years later in 2010 California was the 43rd state in the proportion of 18-24 years olds with Baccalaureate status. In the US as a whole, the proportion of the population graduating with a degree has fallen in relative terms to be only slightly above the OECD average. The nation still follows California.

There will be a dramatic surge in population in the next generation. The State will have 50 million people in 2050, compared to 38 million in 2013. What will happen then? Can California respond to the challenge, with a new Master Plan crafted for different times?

If so it will be necessary to go back to first principles. We cannot divorce the question of the university from the question of society, any more than did Kerr and Trow. The root problems are in the social and political culture. The public/ private balance has shifted; a more self-centred individualism is dominant; and in higher education an instrumental economic focus has so strengthened the emphasis on private individual rewards as to exclude the common good. The system is nominally public, but does not serve everyone. In a more competitive setting equality of opportunity is thwarted, though I think the abstract 1960s expectations about equality were too optimistic.

In lecture 3 I will return to these themes. I suggest two moves that might be made, to create a new public mission for the Multiversity and the Californian Model, and offer you gratuitous outsider advice on what a new Californian Model might contain. Let me just say this now. The Californian Model always was historically specific. It needed to evolve more than it did: to enlarge itself to encompass growth and respond to changing publics, and to repair the internal deficiencies that arise in any policy model. There is no return to 1960, or 1963, any more than there is a way back for JFK from Dallas. As Clark Kerr put it in the 1963 Preface to the Godkin Lectures: 'Instead of platitudes and nostalgic glances backward to what it once was, the university needs to take a rigorous look at the reality of the world it occupies today'. As for the Multiversity, so for the Californian Model.

But there is more to Californian higher education than the travails of state policy. For the forms and ideals of the Californian Model and Multiversity, has spread across the whole world, in a globalized setting. The second lecture will discuss the global higher education space, which is evolving quickly, and the articulation of the Model through diverse political cultures. In that global space there are strategic opportunities, new kinds of 'private' and 'public', new potentials for reciprocity, foreign policy challenges, and some of the seeds for the next Californian renaissance in higher education.