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**Abstract**

Using the lenses and theoretical frameworks provided by social science, this article highlights some of the central debates concerning higher education governance, within a perspective that privileges the relation between the state and the citizen as mediated by the institution of the university. The article begins by interrogating the meaning of governance, focusing on demographic, ideological, economic and cultural factors that have an impact not only on the pervasiveness of governance as a focus for research and debate, but also on the way it is defined. Key trends in ? and emerging models as well as instruments of ? higher education governance are identified, laying bare some of the local, regional and global forces that are shaping higher education practices. Opting for ?critical? over ?liberal? models of the university, the article argues for forms of governance that nurture public intellectuals who challenge and disrupt the reproduction of power. Universities can thus both serve and scrutinize the society they form part of and that supports them, becoming laboratories for democracy that model, in miniature, the kinds of social relations that ought to prevail beyond the confines of the campus.

(HRK / Abstract übernommen)