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The Nomos of the University : Introducing the Professor's Privilege in 1940s Sweden / Ingemar Pettersson

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Abstract

The paper examines the introduction of the so-called professor's privilege in Sweden in the 1940s and shows how this legal principle for university patents emerged out of reforms of techno-science and the patent law around World War II. These political processes prompted questions concerning the nature and functions of university research: How is academic science different than other forms of knowledge production? What are the contributions of universities for economy and welfare? Who is the rightful owner of scientific findings? Is academic science "work"? By following the introduction of the professor's privilege, the paper shows how spokespersons for the academic profession addressed such questions and contributed to a new definition of university science through boundary-setting, normative descriptions, and by producing symbolic relationships between science and the economy. The totality of those positions is here referred to as a "nomos" – that is: a generic and durable set of seemingly axiomatic claims about universities. This Swedish nomos, as it took shape in the 1940s, amalgamated classical notions of academic science as exceptional and

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autonomous with emerging ideas of inventiveness and close connections between academics and business. Crucially, though, the academic-industrial relations embedded in this nomos were private and individual, thus in sharp conflict with the ideas of entrepreneurial universities evolving globally by the end of the 20th century. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)