

Universities and democracies

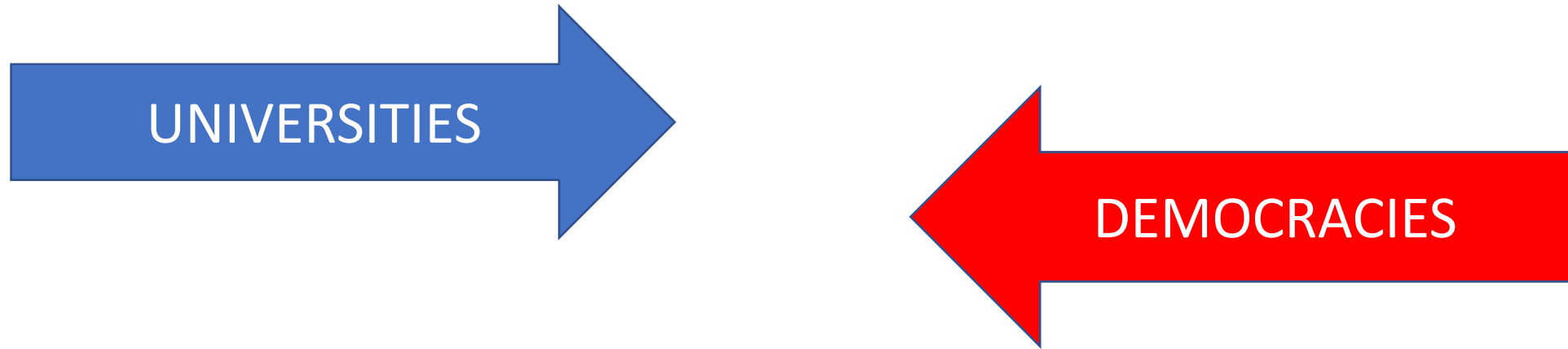


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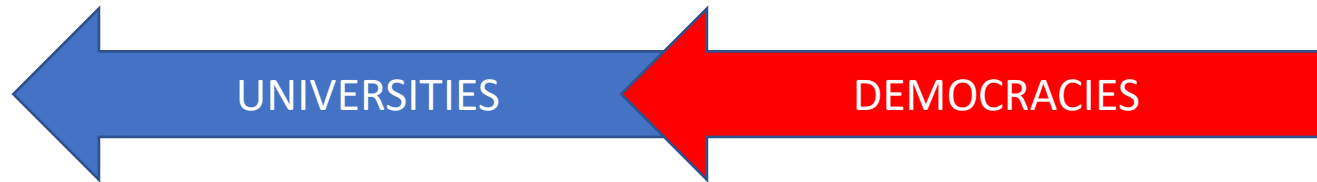
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Universities and democracy: strengthening the relationship
European University Association Webinar
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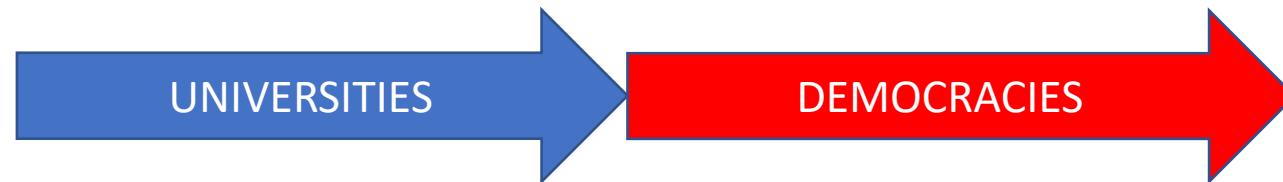
What is the relationship between universities and democracy?



(1) Do democracies make universities?



(2) Do universities make democracies?



(3) Are universities democracies?



(1) Do democracies make universities?

Al-Qarawiyyin (859, Fez, Morocco); Al-Azhar (950, Cairo, Egypt),
University of Bologna (1088, Italy) – caliphate, caliphate, papal bull

- Large territorial and political organizations (empires)

- Relative independence from political power



Image: seal of the University of Bologna

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Image: Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Wikipedia

(2) Do universities make democracies?

Expansion of higher learning post WWII – spread of liberal democracy

Large-scale participation in public life requires literacy, numeracy, and basic critical skills

“Learning citizenship”: consensus-building, learning to accommodate and negotiate disagreement

But: requires democratic supporting structures



Image: Higher School of Economics, Moscow



Image: Central European University logo, Wikipedia

(3) Are universities democracies?

Strong collegial/academic governance; strong student unions; staff representation on all levels; openness and methods for resolving conflicts

Only strong and healthy democracies can sustain strong and democratic universities

Problems of democracy (populism, intolerance) become problems of universities

E.g., disagreement over 'platforming' and free speech = disagreement over standards of public (and scientific) discourse

These disagreements cannot be ***legislated*** or '**wished**' away...

Democratic resolution requires equal participation and involvement of academics, students, and management

Can democratic universities exist in non-democratic societies?

For how long, and at what cost?

Should non-democratic universities exist in democratic societies?

Universities can only run like democracies.