Part 1
Ancient problems and modern dilemmas

This part contains a succinct analysis of how and why the university came to be what it is today. Which problems were inherited from the past and have to be solved for the future? Is the basic idea of the university still tenable? Whilst the university has been successful for almost eight hundred years, the number of pressure points – which are often rooted in the past – is increasing. Today, the question is whether the government is still willing or able to fund university education: private education is on the rise around the world, often paired with increasingly stringent selection. What is more, the universities can hardly keep pace with the growth in student numbers, also in view of falling state contributions. This growth is rooted in the sharp rise in participation in higher education that began in the mid-twentieth century, when, under conditions of growing prosperity, access to university was democratized to a profound degree. Ironically enough, despite the rise in student numbers, universities are increasingly being assessed on the basis of their research, which is receiving more and more funding from third parties. This is bringing the core values that were inherited from the Enlightenment, in the form of freedom of research and the independence of the university, into question. Under pressure, the university is looking for new solutions.