

‘Not for profit’ ?

**Reflections on
the Humanities' societal impact**

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Challenges in University Education in the Field of Humanities

Facts and Observations

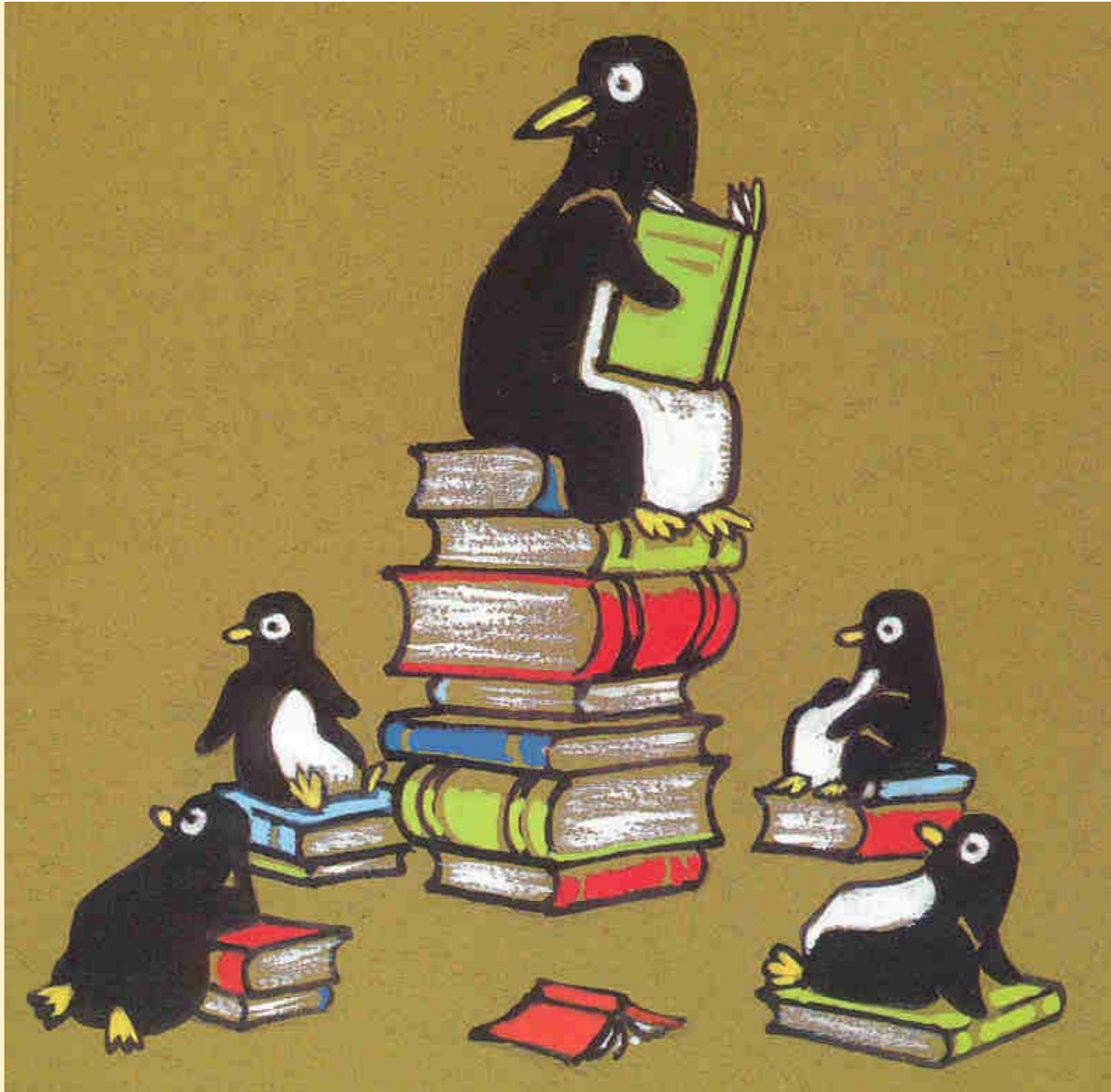
- Low profile in universities
 - Little esteem for book publications and public outreach
 - Inadequate instruments for research evaluation
- Small budgets, small units, weak international organization
- No thresholds for student admissions
 - Heavy teaching burden
 - Limited research facilities
 - Low motivation among students, high drop-out rate
 - Low status of alumni
- No overall strategy
- Weak position in multidisciplinary competition

Concerns about the Humanities

- 2004 British Academy:
‘That full complement of Riches. The contribution of the arts, humanities and social sciences to the nation’s wealth’
 - Conceptualisation
 - Communicative skills
 - Foster the public debate
 - Understanding identities and otherness
 - Knowledge about cultural production, consumption and heritage
- 2007 Netherlands: Report on *‘Valorisation of the Humanities and Social Sciences’* presented to Government and Parliament
 - Role of value-orientations, emotions
 - Comprehensive and dynamic vision on communities and societies

Character of Humanities Research

- Bound to particular society, culture, language
- ‘Universality’ of results not evident
- Specific, casuistic explanatory models
- Public recognition of relevance ?
 - Functional: commemorations
- Variety of addressees
 - Peers
 - Authorities
 - Professionals
 - General Public



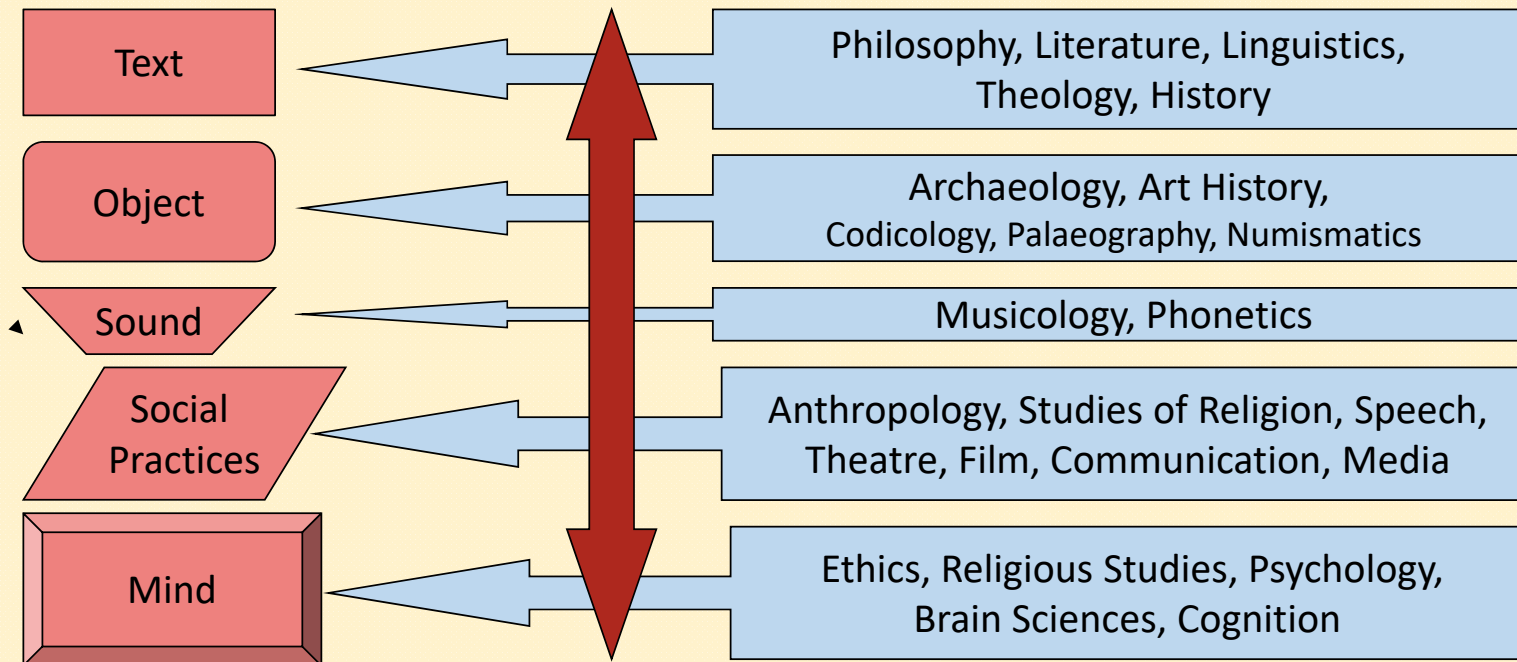
Students' choices

- Abandonment of traditional philologies, language and literature studies, art history
- Massive preference for
 - Communication and media studies
 - Regional and area studies
 - Psychology
- Aren't they influenced by societal demands and opportunities ?

Whither Humanities ?

- Re-orientation of disciplines
 - Philologies split into linguistics and literary studies
 - Art history evolves into Arts sciences
 - Philosophy into Ethics, Cognitive sciences, Methodology
- New foci
 - Interpreting
 - Communication
 - Area studies
 - Cultural studies
- History & Archaeology stand strong, open to other disciplines

Disciplines and their Object



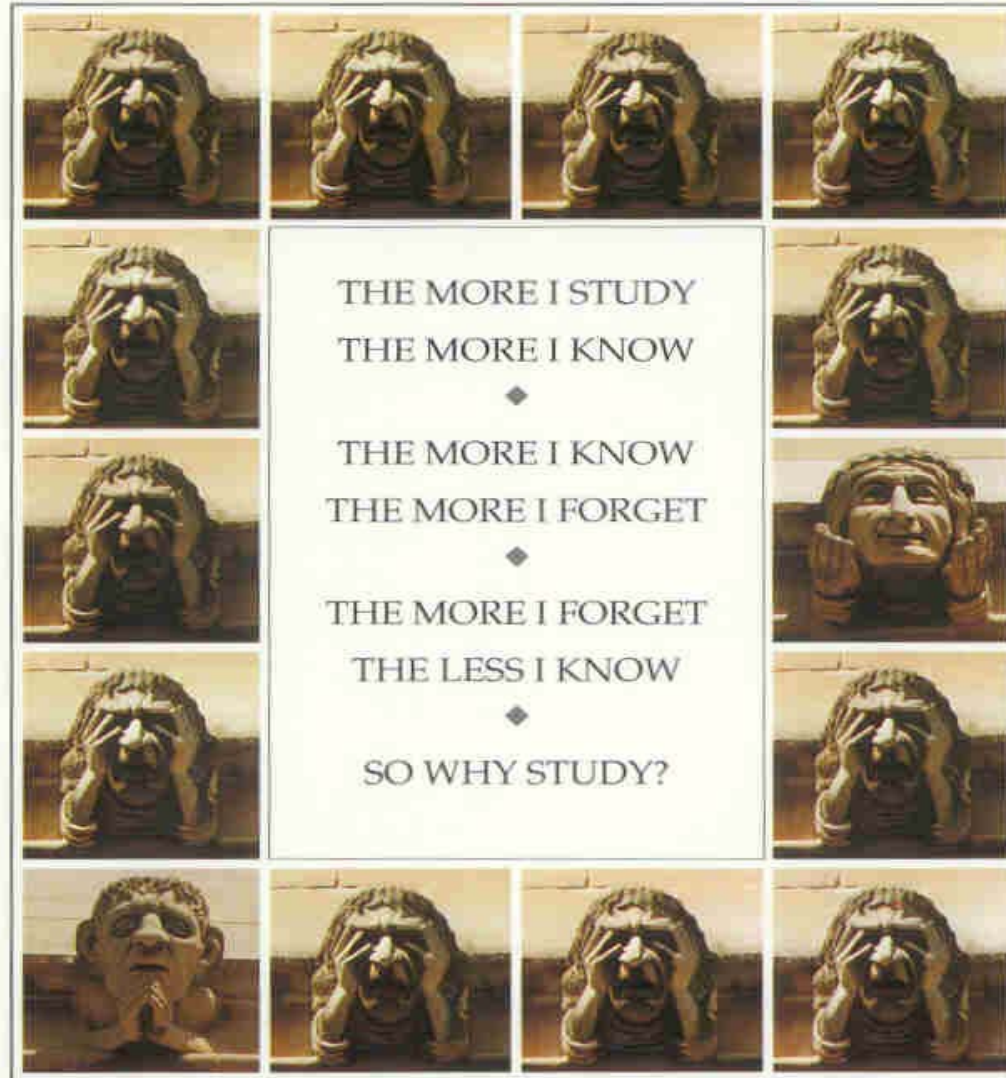
- **Disciplines have traditionally been defined by object = medium, and method**
 - **Multi-media studies are required to respond to societal demands**

New Demands and Needs

- Media-specific disciplines → multi-media
 - History of painting → visual arts
 - Theatre and film studies combine text, performing, sound, scenery, techniques
 - Electronic devices combine what traditionally was studied in isolation
 - Electronic data-collection and analysis offers formidable opportunities, applicable to numerous practical uses
- Attention to societal impact of cultural productions became evident
- Media need polyvalent talents with high communicative skills

Two Humanities' Cultures?

- Formal linguistics, archaeology, economic history adopted science procedures
 - Universal
 - Formalistic
- Cleavage between Anglophone and Romance worlds
- Are the scholars losing contact with their cultural basis ?
- Junior researchers migrate to best opportunities
 - Brain drain
 - Conformism



WHY STUDY?

Recommendation : Practice-oriented MA-Profiles

- 3-years' BA programmes allow for practically profiled MA's with the specific components from other disciplines
- Strength of an university-MA should combine **content and professional skills**
 - **Education**
 - **Communication & media**
 - **Arts sciences**, combining various media
 - **International relations** – with political sciences, international law, cultural studies
 - **Cultural management** – needs acquaintance with content, organisational, managerial and multilingual communicative skills
 - **Research**

Crossing borders

- Humanities & Social Sciences

- History is theoretically a social science
 - methodology should be the same
 - older sources require specialised decoding techniques
 - statistical data and interviewing offer limitations for historical work
- Ethnology, anthropology belong to both
- Communication & media studies belong to both, need each other
 - form, content *more* Hum
 - organisation, reception *more* Soc Sc

- New interdisciplinary fields

- **Cognition, brain sciences:** linguistics, developmental psychology
- **Environmental studies:** history of geography, geology, biology, climate, sociology
- **Archaeology** and many special fields apply advanced scientific techniques

ERC Advanced Grant 2018:
Margarita Díaz-Andreu, Univ Barcelona

The sound of special places: exploring rock art soundscapes and the sacred

<http://www.archaeoacoustics.ub.edu/>

“Human experiences associated with altered or mystical states invoked by the identified special *sonic characteristics of these landscapes* will be further tested by exploring the *psychoacoustic effects these soundscapes* have on people and their *neural correlate to brain activity*. The project will also thoroughly survey *ethnographic attitudes to sacred soundscapes* based on both current premodern societies and ethnohistorical sources.”

Art as State Symbolism

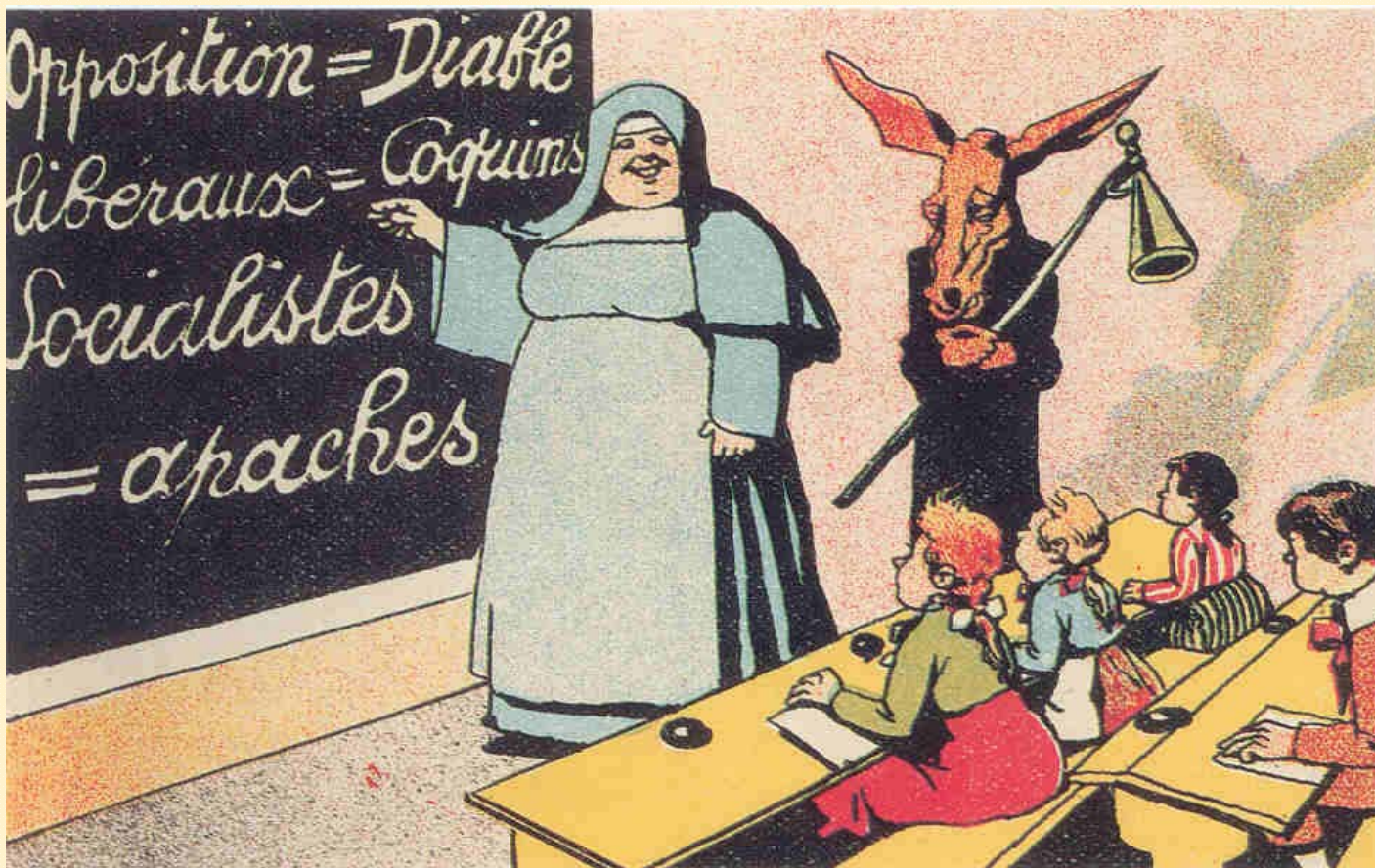


- Sketch of Palace of the Sovjets, Moscow
- Paris, Arc de la Défense
- Mural of Franco as Santiago

Professional activity of Alumni in History at Ghent University, 1891-2015 - 3782 persons

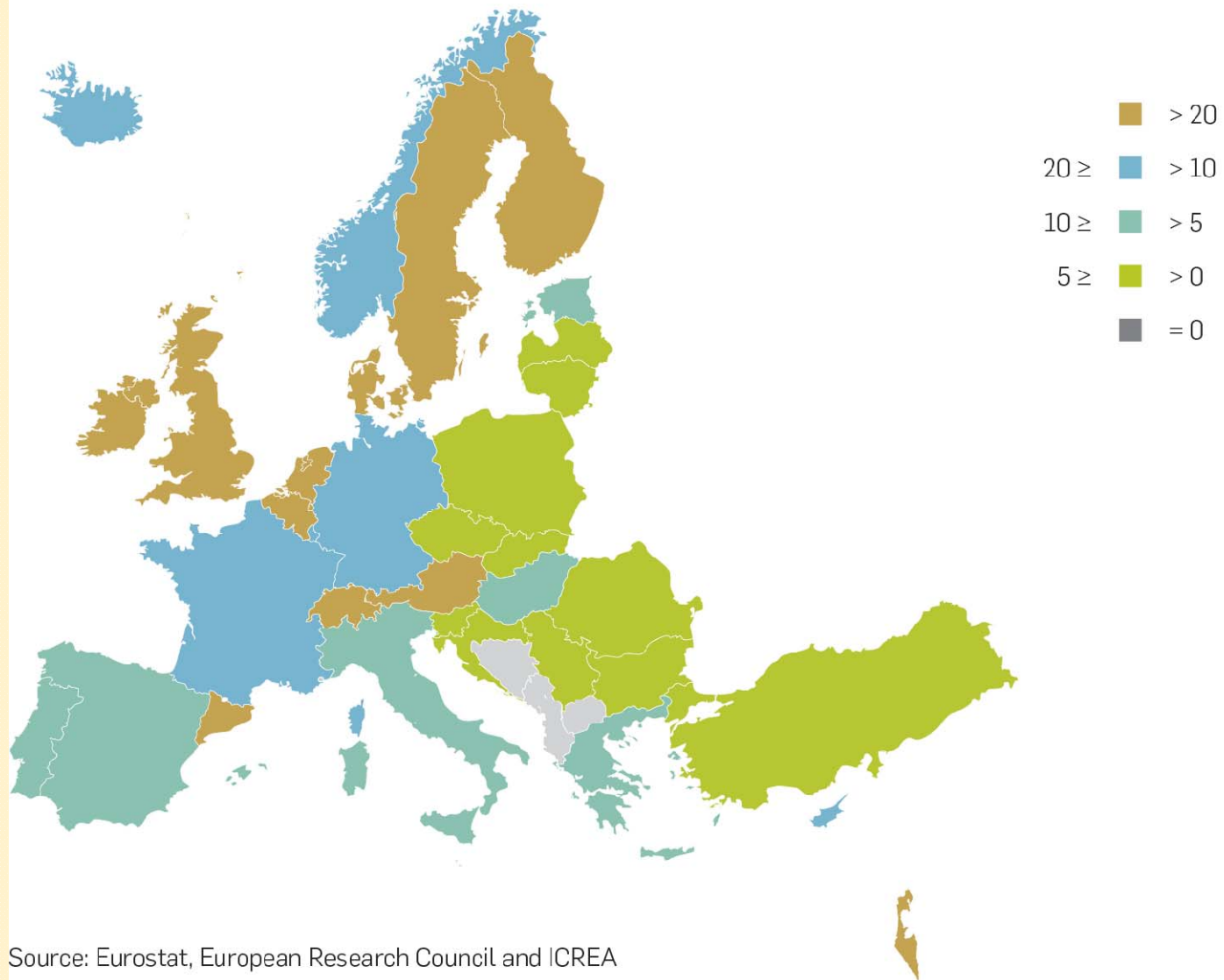
Sector	Professional activities N = 4502	%
Political institutions	110	2,44
Public Administration, incl. scientific institutions	1082	24,03
Education, incl. universities	1640	36,43
Non-profit organisations	417	9,26
Private organisations	1253	27,83

States, Churches and Education : the *Kulturkampf*



Satire on Catholic Schools, Belgium, 1880s

ERC grants per million inhabitants



Source: Eurostat, European Research Council and ICREA

ICREAs by area of research 2018

- SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES 11%
- HUMANITIES 15%
- EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCES AND MATHEMATICS 27%
- ENGINEERING SCIENCES 17%
- LIFE AND MEDICAL SCIENCES 30%

What to do ?

- Formulate broad BA programmes and focused MA-profiles
 - Organize internships to familiarize students with professional contexts
- Emphasis on multiple functions of Humanities research
- Open eye for societal 'relevance' and 'impact' of Humanities research
 - Language acquisition for migrants
- Capitalize public interest
- Universities should reward achievements with a societal impact
- Encourage scholarly communication to the general audience
 - Role models : ex. Robbert Dijkgraaf, Director IAS Princeton

The Humanities' Riches

Humanities have a more variegated impact than other disciplines

- Understandable discourse – avoidance of jargon
- Training in decoding *meaning* in messages, texts, sounds, images, gestures, and target groups in cultural sector
- General public : readership, documentaries, exhibitions, historical fiction, analysis of speech acts
- Specialized education, journalism, opinion leaders
- Creative industries
- Tourism, heritage, entertainment, 'high' and 'popular' culture

The Humanities' Mission

- Embedding in culture and society
- Understanding the 'self' and the 'others'
- Production and discussion of *Meaning*
- Understanding otherness and cultural dynamics
 - Cultures as the result of contacts and exchanges
 - Evolution through time
 - Construction of cultural trends by discourse

Challenge : responsiveness to societal demand

- Dealing with a problematic past is a major political concern in many European countries
- Demand for regional cultural information
- Multiple identities are a burning political issue
- Religion and nationalism are back
- Migration and integration studies urgently needed: inter-cultural dynamics
- Interpreters and language technology necessary in a multilingual Europe
- Brain and cognition sciences break new ground: cognition and emotion
- Global environmental history adds insights to the debate on climatic change
- Define the social conditions for sustainable economic innovation
- Dare to identify the long-term effects of imperialistic behaviour

Historical awareness



Active cultural heritage



The construction of the Citadel had a profound impact on the Quarter de Mar district. The demolition of over a thousand houses meant the loss of 17% of the total of the city's built-up area and the destruction of its most powerful commercial and industrial zone.

Two sectors were particularly affected. The first, situated to the east and north of the Rec Comtal (the city's main water channel), was eminently industrial. Some of its installations were located in La Fusina, a space of large market gardens adjoining the city wall between the Portal Nou and Sant Daniel gates. Beside the Santa Clara convent there predominated butchers' shops because of the proximity of the abattoir, located below the Pla d'en Llull. This was a very busy place, with the presence of a large number of hauliers.

La Ribera district was the other major area that was flattened. Lying between Carrer Bonaire and the waterfront, it was home to a great many of the families who made their living from trades related to the sea. Facing La Ribera waterfront stood the porticoed building of the fish market, devoted to fresh fish, while salt fish was sold at small stalls placed in front of the houses, in accordance with strict regulations on the occupation of the public thoroughfare.



Plànol de la Barcelona de 1700 i detall del sector enderrocat per a la construcció de la Ciutadella
Plano de la Barcelona de 1700 y detalle del sector derruido para la construcción de la Ciudadela
Plan of the Barcelona of 1700 and detail of the area that was demolished for the construction of the Citadel

