

**LOCALISM AND LOCAL ACADEMIC CONVENTIONS:
AN IMPACT ON FACULTY STRATEGIES AND VALUES¹**

Elizaveta Sivak²

Maria Yudkevich³

The paper presents a comparative analysis of opened and closed models of academic environment. Possible consequences of academic environment “lock-in” and formation of local academic conventions are discussed. The results to be described here are based on a 2007 survey of staff working in 28 St. Petersburg higher education institutions which train specialists in economics. On that data source estimations of some parameters of academic environment and examination of how “localism” affects individual careers and value orientations of faculty were made.

We demonstrate that academic environment of considered departments can be regarded as closed. The difference in strategies and value orientations between those who is working in the university she has graduated from and those who has graduated from another universities is demonstrated.

JEL Classification: J44, I23

Keywords: norms, academic environment, reference groups, cosmopolitans and locals

PRELIMINARY AND INCOMPLETE. COMMENTS ARE WELCOME

¹ Current study was carried out as a part of Laboratory for institutional analysis research project “Economics of university”. Intercourse with colleagues from other universities formed our concept of how local conventions are sustained and reproducing in particular universities and which consequences such a localism may have. We are grateful to our project counterparts Ann Panova and Yana Kozmina and for all participants of LIA research seminar for fruitful discussions. We thank Michael Sokolov for the comments on the earlier version of this paper. The research project was accomplished with financial support of Center for Fundamental Research, State University – Higher School of Economics.

² elizaveta.sivak@gmail.com, research assistant, Laboratory for institutional analysis, State University – Higher School of Economics, Moscow.

³ yudkevich@hse.ru, Ph.D, associate professor, head of Laboratory for institutional analysis, State University – Higher School of Economics, Moscow.

It is assumed that isolated educational institutions are detriment for successful education of youth; but a lot can be said also about disadvantages of detached and one-sided teaching. Clean outside airflows refresh atmosphere inside and provide it with hygienic qualities. Dreams of folk homegrown science and demand for planting and cultivating it are mere childishness and a caprice of jingoism. If science fall to pieces, borderlands and stripes then there is no science at all and there are only textbooks left.

Petr Vyazemskiy, 1880s

Academic activities of every lecturer and researcher are affected by university environment. Strength of academic staff, possibilities of interchange of expert judgments and ideas for research between colleagues, specificity of existing research standards, professional standing of research group and prestige of university in the whole – all these factors are relevant in studying what influences performance and results of individual researchers.

This can be summed up by the following presupposition: academic environment matters. Academic environment here refers to a set of norms and rules of professional activities which is specific to academic community under study and to a system of resource and expert networks and prestige networks transmitting those norms and rules.

Research productivity and parameters of academic environment which affect them have been dealt with in a number of papers. For instance, Ramsden (1994) studied an influence of various structural factors on research productivity and concluded that level of research activity of research unit is the strong predictor of individual research productivity. In another study (Wood 1990) academics consider it important to have colleagues who can provide stimulation and challenge but most acknowledge that the influence of collegueship is variable – it is positive only if it takes the form of cooperation not competition. Harris and Kaine (1994) consider perception of university environment as not constraining and favorable for research as a determinant of research productivity.

Researchers working on the same projects or involved in other forms of cooperation in research should follow the same rules and norms which regulate their academic activities. It means that faculty should be incorporated in integrated resource, informational and expert networks or establish closed isolated groups with local norms. In other words, academic environment can take an opened or a closed form.

The degree of openness or isolation of academic environment (it's orientation on common academic standards and norms or on local rules) is in our opinion one of the main parameters of academic environment. It determines stimulus, opportunities and career trajectories of individual researchers.

Our main concern here is how localism affects value orientations and strategies of individual faculty and politics of departments. We will begin by considering parameters of open and close models of academic environment and stimuli formed by each model. Then we will proceed by looking

at empirical data on 30 universities in St. Petersburg in order to estimate parameters of particular academic environment. The focus will be on employment politics, publication strategies and professional communication. In conclusion we will draw attention to possible consequences of localism.

2. Opened and closed models of academic environment: different institutions, different stimuli

At present there is a growing interest in such a phenomenon as localism of academic environment which can be defined as an absence of integrated academic community stratified in line with a general criterion. Under localism conditions science and educational systems exist as a number of separated horizontally ordered and self-referent segments each with its own academic standards, methodology, subject area, etc. (as specific “epistemic cultures” in Knorr-Cetina terms (Knorr-Cetina 1995)). D.Alexandrov holds that Russian academic community exists as a variety of local groups often confined to a single university. Such a local community has its own journals, local standards and norms. This raises a question about the very existence of science as institute in Russia (Alexandrov 1996). In Bourdieu terms, there is no single hierarchy of scientific authority, one of the most important hierarchies of a field of science: there are no citation rates, no common peer-reviewed journals amongst a number of local university journals whose functions deviate frequently from professional communication. Moreover, low financing forced faculty to switch to teaching entirely and as results of teaching are harder to evaluate then results of research activity such a hierarchy becomes virtually impossible.

Actually, it would be incorrect to describe localism of academic environment as a malfunctioning of a “right” mode. In our view this situation is a special model which is maintained and reproduced by a system of institutions, invested interests and specific parameters of educational system.

Speaking about various models of environment two opposite situations can be considered – an opened and a closed modes⁴. Let us describe these models in more details.

2.1. Open academic environment

High academic mobility of faculty and students following particular norms and rules is an indispensable condition of a formation of integrated academic environment. Therefore, in the first place opened environment can be characterized by high mobility of lecturers and researchers who change several universities during their career and high mobility of students who graduate from one university and then take master or Ph.D. degree at another university. These processes facilitate transmission of common research standards and norms, quality standards, rules of data analysis, etc.

⁴ See for instance Кузьминов, Юдкевич (2007), Фрумкина (2007).

Such academic mobility within open academic environment implies that universities usually hire faculty from external labor market, not their own graduates who have just finished their education. Faculty need to compete with each other on academic market and such hiring politics helps to sustain an external evaluation of faculty.

Research standards are maintained also by academic journals with peer-review. There is a commonly shared and articulated prestige hierarchy of journals. Quality of papers, abilities and potential of researchers who may work in different universities are assessed in compliance with a common criteria – a number of publications and quality of journals where these papers have been published. This assessment is recognizable not only in a single university but is transparent for a broad academic community.

2.2. Closed academic environment

Closed academic environment is characterized by local academic conventions and isolation of professional community and is reproduced if academic mobility is low. In absence of academic migration and horizontal academic mobility between universities and research units (see, e.g. Alexandrov 2008) local standards persist without any problems of discrepancy with external norms as interaction which could imply these problems is rare. Faculty and researchers hardly ever change the main place of work while universities often hire their own students who haven't entered an external market and haven't worked in another universities. Such succession of generations of faculty and researchers helps universities to reproduce their own standards and teaching culture⁵. These standards can differ from rules cultivated at another universities and research centers because of poor interchange of teaching and research practices and lack of professional ties.

Concerning student mobility it should be noted that it could also contribute to unification of rules but in the closed model it is low or absent as well. Moreover, a specific vertical integration of education process occurs: after graduation students enter master or Ph.D. programs at the same university. On the postgraduate stage students become actively involved in department teaching activities and after taking a degree they stay at the same department as faculty.

Low horizontal academic mobility is maintained also by opacity of achievements of research activity and by university specific character of faculty's teaching and research investments. It is caused mainly by absence of national reviewed journals. Publications in such journals serve for an outside observer as a signal of authors' research competences and abilities. Moreover, in closed academic environments local hierarchies are formed. A position in these hierarchies is indistinguishable from the outside (Pogorelov and Sokolov 2005) and going out of local environment means a considerable loss of status.

Local communities can be confined to university or research unit boundaries or cross these boundaries and form on another basis (see Pogorelov and Sokolov 2005)). Anyway, an autonomy of

⁵ On internal academic labor markets see Куренной (2002).

segments is produced and reproduced, among other factors, by low horizontal academic mobility and particularly by a specific employment politics when universities prefer to hire their own students. For instance, Hoare (1994) uses such a narrow definition of localism as a phenomenon of academic mobility – as a strategy of employment politics just mentioned. Hoare consider localism as an ‘incorrect’ mode of mobility which affect negatively the whole university.

Results

Our analysis of localism is based on empirical results of a survey carried by Laboratory for institutional analysis of economic reforms on economic departments of St. Petersburg universities⁶.

We assume here that localism can be characterized by specific employment politics, publication strategies of faculty and professional communication. Thus in universities with local academic environment employment politics is directed primarily on this university graduates, faculty prefer to publish in local journals and most professional intercourse is carried out in local community limited by the university boundaries. Moreover, one of the main indicators of localism is a significant difference between two groups of faculty – this university graduates (*insiders*) and other universities graduates (*outsiders*)⁷.

Current study is concerned with the following issues: if localism seen this way is peculiar to universities under study or not; if academic environment is cross-university or exists as separated and closed systems with local professional ties, own academic standards and rules. To answer these questions we consider a proportion of own graduates among faculty and a difference between insiders’ and outsiders’ publication strategies, structure of professional communication and their opinion toward employment politics.

3.1. Employment politics

Concerning employment politics 45% of faculty assume that it should be directed toward own young graduates⁸. At the same time only 11% of respondents agreed with a statement that young graduates from other universities should be hired in the first place (table 1). Chairs, who can form an employment politics by themselves and play as gatekeepers, consider that university should hire their own graduates as well (table 2).

⁶ Empirical survey was carried out in St.Petersburg in September - October 2007. A two-stage sample design was used. Institutions which train specialists in economics sciences were the primary sampling units. There are 28 such universities in St.Petersburg with 150 departments whose academic curriculum have economic disciplines and we include them all in the sample. Academic administration and individual faculty members within the selected departments were the another sampling units. This survey included interviews with vice-chancellors and deans of economic departments (57 interview were taken) and formal interview of chairs (99) and faculty (740). Current paper presents results on last two groups, but we give some quotations from interviews with administration to illustrate certain aspects of employment policy.

⁷ Most of surveyed faculty work for several universities. We asked about a university where a person was questioned and almost a half (46%) said that they graduated from that university. So we will consider a difference between insiders and outsiders only in cases when a particular university was concerned (in subsequent discussion we will call it ‘this university’).

⁸ We analyzed only faculty worked on full time (81%; 79 % from initial sample) or half half time (19%; 19% from initial sample).

Table 1. Opinions about employment politics

University employment politics should be directed primarily on hiring...	Faculty	Chairs
Own graduates	45	62
Faculty with long teaching experience	34	48
Active researchers who are able to combine research with teaching	33	39
Practitioners ready to combine work with teaching	30	15
Graduates from other universities	11	11
All who are ready to high teaching load	6	3
Total	722	99

Question: On which groups, from your point of view, university employment politics should primarily be directed at?

To depict university employment strategies it will be instructive here to draw some extracts from interview with administration.

From interviews with university administration⁹

Is your university trying to attract own graduates to teaching in the university?

Surely. We seek to form a personnel reserve at departments. Of course we try, because... this is our next generation so we try to involve our graduates,... they already know specific features of our university. At first place we hope for our graduates that they stay and teach at the university.

- Very much so! One of our main activities is attracting our own department graduates.

- Oh, very much so! How faculty can renew in a different way? Naturally we are! Somewhere better, somewhere worse.

How do you recruit new faculty?

Well, basically – it's a usual scheme – there are our graduates. Our graduates who ... we depend on them, we involved them in teaching. Virtually we have no other ways.

Today I have no effective mechanisms to attract vigorous and initiative specialists. The main source of new staff is our graduates. Graduates are "count goods" and they can be involved through postgraduate courses.

The term "recruit" would be inaccurate here. We try to involve new faculty to supplement the existing faculty body when somebody is leaving. New vacancies appear and the department is expanding. There is no need to advertise for a new faculty member as we have good connections. With references, delicate affairs.

They are basically our own specialists who work here for many years, most work in business. And young faculty – we grown them up, they are taken under patronage not only of leading faculty, and these faculty share their experience, so here is the staff.

We don't recruit faculty, they become faculty as growing from postgraduates; postgraduates guide students degree theses and when an inclination to teaching appears in him a young Ph.D. becomes a faculty member.

Opinions toward employment politics differ significantly for own graduates and graduates from other universities (table 2). Insiders mention own graduates more often while outsiders frequently point out that graduates of other universities should be hired.

⁹ Deans and deputy rectors were intervened.

Table 2. Faculty opinions about employment politics

University employment politics should be directed primarily on hiring...	Graduation of this university	
	yes (per cent of own graduates)	no (per cent of other universities graduates)
Own graduates ¹⁰	53	39
Graduates from other universities	5	17
Faculty with long teaching experience	30	38
Active researchers who are able to combine research with teaching	33	33
Practitioners ready to combine work with teaching	35	26
All who are ready to work full time	6	6
Total	332	389

Question: On which groups, from your point of view, university employment politics should primarily be directed at?

We suppose that this difference (and those to which we will draw attention later) is due to inequalities in insiders' and outsiders' access to resources, informational networks, etc. and therefore academic environment is local. Familiarity with local rules and standards is of great importance. Faculty who are involved in local social networks since studying in this university seek to reproduce these isolated groups and not to admit people from the outside.

One point should be mentioned here. Our thesis that difference between insiders and outsiders indicates a localism of academic environment is based on a presupposition that this difference is due to the fact that the first group has graduated from this university while the last from another. However, insiders' and outsiders' strategies can differ due to other factors. For instance, there is significant difference in age: mean age of insiders is 44 and outsiders are 6 years older on average.

To control an impact of other factors we run a regression analysis, age and graduation from this university being independent factors. As a dependent variable we included the one that showed significantly different values (judging by chi-square criterion) for insiders and outsiders. Almost in all cases (including one mentioned above) the dependence remain significant. In the following discussion we will point out to situations when differences between insiders and outsiders must be due to other factors.

3.2. Publication strategies

Возможно, нам нужно сначала кратко описать существующую у нас классификацию журналов и упомянуть, что у нас нет реферируемых журналов.

Most common type of published work is a publication in journals published by this university (table 3).

¹⁰ We marked with gray filling those cases when differences between insiders and outsiders were significant (sig. 5%).

Table 3. Publications of different types

	Frequency	Valid percent
Publications in journals published by this university	366	51
Publications in Russian-wide academic journals	214	30
Textbooks	147	20
University working papers	146	20
Monographs and chapters in monographs	129	18
Publications in trade&industry journals	107	15
Working papers of other universities and organizations	99	14
Publications in Internet	52	7
Publications in mass media	41	6
Total	722	

Question: How many works in Russian have you published in two last years? (Answers were recoded: 0 – no publications of that type, 1 – one or more publications of that type).

Insiders publish in local journals more often than outsiders (table 4)¹¹.

Table 4. Quantity of publications

Type of publication	Quantity	Graduation of this university (percentage by column)	
		yes	no
Publications in Russian academic journals	0	76	66
	1	9	11
	2 or more	15	23
Publications in journals published by this university	0	45	53
	1	13	14
	2 or more	42	33

Most frequent methods of publication are the following: 1) faculty send manuscripts to editorial boards by themselves, 2) faculty publish their abstracts in a conference proceedings), 3) a work is published with assistance of the chair (table 5).

Table 5. Methods of publication

	Frequency	Valid percent
I sent manuscripts to editorial boards by myself	330	46
In conference proceedings	328	45
With chair assistance	179	25
On invitation from editorial board	132	18
With scientific advisor's assistance	119	16
With assistance of other colleagues powerful in academic community	95	13
I didn't publish papers in last two years	86	12
By participating in a research papers competition	44	6
Do not know	47	7

¹¹ However, regression analysis shows that neither graduation from this university nor age affects a quantity of publication in university journals, so the difference is caused by some other factors.

Other	4	1
Total	722	

Question: How did you publish your papers in last two years?

Concerning types of future publication, faculty most often point out that they plan to publish papers in this university journals and Russian trade&industry journals (table 6). Insiders less frequently than outsiders intend to publish in working paper series of other universities and organizations – 11% of this university graduates over against 25% of other universities graduates have such publication plans.

Table 6. Plans for future publications

	Frequency	Valid percent
In journals published by this university	340	47
In Russian academic journals	241	33
In Russian trade&industry journals	204	28
University working papers	185	26
Working papers of other universities and organizations	98	14
On the Internet	69	10
In international journals	43	6
In newspapers and other mass media	33	5
Other	13	2
Do not know	151	21
Total	722	

3.3. Professional communication: orientation on ‘inner circle’

The majority of faculty (86%) state that teaching (classes and preparing for them) takes most of their time (table 7).

Table 7. Frequency of different activities

	Frequency	Valid percent
Teaching at this university (classes and preparing for them)	672	86
Teaching at other universities	109	14
Research	209	27
Administration duties at this university	141	18
Teaching at other educational institutions (except universities)	32	4
Teaching at preliminary courses	21	3
Tutoring	18	2
Studying (professional development courses, postgraduate programs, etc.)	70	9
Working at state institutions not connected with science	11	1
Working at profit organizations	92	12
Do not know	14	2
Total	785	100

Question: Which activities takes most of your time?

Taking this into consideration it is not surprising that students and department colleagues become the most important groups with which faculty communicate most often and which are significant in teaching – 87% and 88% of faculty say that students and department colleagues correspondingly affect they teaching. Less often respondents mention such groups as university colleagues with similar specialization and colleagues from other universities (table 8).

Table 8. Groups which affect teaching (in per cent)

	Strong influence	Weak influence	No influence	Do not know
Students	57	30	6	7
Administration	29	32	17	20
Department colleagues	62	25	5	7
University colleagues with similar specialization	29	36	16	17,5
University colleagues	12	33	32	23
Colleagues with similar specialization from other universities	18	33	25	24

Question: Which influence on your teaching exert these groups?

Localism of professional communication express itself also in faculty' strategies of making a course program. Insiders point out more often that they use programs of similar courses in this university as orientations while working out their own programs (31% of insiders and 24% of outsiders mention this orientation)¹².

We also examine a structure of professional communication – with people from which groups faculty used to discuss different issues. The results of this examination indicate localism of professional communication as well. We consider such issues as matters of teaching, teaching methods, matters of research, organization and conducting of research, new publications and their authors, students and their works. In all cases faculty select most often groups which are closest to them – department colleagues, chair of department, research mentor (table 9).

Table 9. Discussions on various issues

	issues of teaching	teaching methods	research issues	organization and conducting of research	new publications and their authors	students and their works
With colleagues from foreign universities	4	4	4	3	4	2
With colleagues from other Russian universities	18	19	13	8	17	9
With department colleagues	73	71	35	28	57	63
With other university colleagues	19	28	6	10	27	17
With relatives	10	7	14	4	7	7
With scientific advisor	17	14	37	34	23	6
With students	14	11	3	3	15	37
With the chair of your department	55	47	42	34	36	36
I don't discuss it with anybody	8	10	18	26	14	14
Total	722	722	722	722	722	722

¹² Regression analysis reveals that this difference between insiders and outsiders are due to other factors then age or graduation from this university.

Question: With whom do you discuss the following issues?

Insiders less frequently than outsiders point out that they discuss different issues with colleagues from other universities (table 10).

Table 10. Professional communication with colleagues from other Russian universities

	Graduation of this university	
	yes	no
Matters of teaching	14	22
Teaching methods	15	22
Matters of research	10	16
Organization and conducting of research	7	10
New publications and their authors	12	21
Students and their works	8	9

Question: With which groups from the list do you discuss ...?

Conclusions

High per cent of graduates who stay at their universities after graduation as faculty and researchers and significant differences in individual strategies and value orientations between insiders and outsiders can be considered as indicators of localism.

Results discussed above allow us to assume that for surveyed universities localism can be a correct model to describe academic environment. In whole faculty and chairs of departments suppose that employment politics should be directed at graduates of this university; faculty publish mostly in this university journals, with assistance of the chair or scientific advisor. There are also significant differences between insiders and outsiders. These differences show that actual boundaries of academic environment are to be drawn not only, for instance, as disciplinary confines but as university boundaries within which specific standards are produced and reproduced.

References

1. Александров Д. (2006). Места знания: институциональные перемены в российском производстве гуманитарных наук // Новое Литературное Обозрение, № 77, 2006. С. 273-284.
2. Alexandrov D.A. (1996). Почему советские ученые перестали печататься за рубежом: становление самодостаточности и изолированности отечественной науки // Вопросы истории естествознания и техники, № 3, 1996. С. 3—24. (online): <<http://www.russcience.euro.ru/papers/alex93v.htm>>.
3. Александров Д.А. (2008). Ученые без науки. Институциональный анализ сферы // Публичная лекция «Полит.ру». 10 февраля 2008 (online): <<http://www.polit.ru/science/2006/03/06/aleksandrov.html>>.
4. Кузьминов Я.И., Юдкевич М.М. (2007) Университеты в России и в Америке: Различия академических конвенций // Вопросы образования. №4.
5. Куренной В. (2002). Государство, капитал и мировое научное сообщество // Отечественные записки, №7, 2002. (online): <<http://strana-oz.ru/?numid=8&article=75>>.

6. *Погорелов Ф., Соколов М.* (2005). Академические рынки, сегменты профессии и интеллектуальные поколения: фрагментация петербургской социологии // *Журнал социологии и социальной антропологии*, Т.8, № 2 (31), 2005. С. 76-92.
7. *Салтыков Б.* (2002). Реформирование российской науки: анализ и перспективы // *Отечественные записки*, №7, 2002. (online): <<http://strana-oz.ru/?numid=8&article=79>>.
8. *Соколов М.* (2007). Российская социология после 1991г.: интеллектуальная и институциональная динамика «бедной науки». (Рукопись предоставлена автором), 2007.
9. *Фрумкина, Р.М.* (2007) Бросая в воду камешки... Полит-ру, 23 августа 2007 г.
10. *Bourdieu, P.* (1990) 'The intellectual field: a world apart', pp.140-150 in Pierre Bourdieu *In other words: Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
11. *Bourdieu, P.* (1988) *Homo Academicus*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
12. *Hoare, A.* (1994) 'Transferred Skills and University Excellence?: An Exploratory Analysis of the Geography of Mobility of UK Academic Staff' *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 76: 143-160.
13. *Knorr-Cetina, K.* (1995) *Epistemic cultures: how science makes sense*, manuscript.
14. *Wood, F.* (1990) 'Factors Influencing Research Performance of University Academic Staff', *Higher Education* 19: 81-100.
15. *Ramsden, P.* (1994) 'Describing and Explaining Research Productivity', *Higher Education* 28: 207-226.
16. *Harris, G., Kaine, G.* (1994) 'The Determinants of Research Performance: A Study of Australian University Economists', *Higher Education* 27: 191-201.