This House Believes the Traditional UK University Has No Future

“How much to universities need to change before they become ‘not traditional’? Not that much”

**Proposition 1: Nick Hillman**

Hillman argues that Cambridge is not in fact traditional. Cambridge of 1935 resembled the Cambridge of the Middle Ages more than the Cambridge of today. Women did not get full degrees until 1948. The past has been rejected. The great technological initiatives which exist are testament to the way in which Cambridge is not traditional. Northampton University is the third oldest university. It wants to build a new campus with only one new lecture hall. Traditional universities will be “squeezed” by universities doing new things. For these reasons, he proposes the motion.

**Opposition 1: Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz**

Sir Borysiewicz begins his speech by arguing that the a definition of a University includes the people that make up the university, the university is not just defined as ‘as a place’ – scholars working alongside academics and students in order to pursue knowledge. Traditional universities face great changes but, still, the “the principles and traditions... serves well today”. He continues to say that the university is there “to serve society through teaching, learning and research at the highest international standards of excellence because those standards serve the students, scholars and staff”. Indeed, the tradition matters only in as much that it can deliver an outcome today as it was first enunciated “in this place and in other places”

**Proposition 2: Kate Brooks**

Brooks argued that universities are under pressure to become corporations - “this fundamentally challenges all of the assumptions about universities”. The move online is fundamentally challenging idea of personal interaction as the essence of a traditional university education. The traditional university reflects the inequalities inherent within the education system.

**Opposition 2: Doug Cochran**

A traditional institution has the capacity to change. The ‘modern university’ lacks certain qualities – they don’t gather together a ‘community of scholars’. That makes a difference to the environment in which education happens. The function of a traditional university does, admittedly, need to be democratised. “Modern universities have a place, traditional universities have a place, and the death of the traditional university has been greatly exaggerated”

**Proposition 3: Fletch Williams**

“How much to universities need to change before they become ‘not traditional’? Not that much”. Traditional modes of education like lecturers are not worthwhile and it is a bad way for people to teach to those with issues like dyslexia. It does not help to ‘foster student learning’. Many traditional universities prioritise research over teaching. Perhaps a non-traditional university, Williams suggests, is one where teaching and research is equal.
Opposition 3: Srishti Krishnamoorthy

The ‘draw’ of a traditional institution is its greater possibility for democratisation. Further, traditional universities can exclusively provide intensive learning. In response to Williams, Krishnamoorthy points out that lectures are not the only type of teaching at a traditional university. There are of course problems of access and elitism in traditional universities but traditional universities do have the ability to widen access.

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For footage of the event go to https://www.youtube.com/user/cambridgeunionsoc