

WP 2:
'Methodologies: Combining Ethnography and Political Economy'
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University Reform, Globalisation and Europeanisation

WP2: Aims and challenges

AIMS are to:

1. Share expertise of AU and UoA ethnographic studies of universities and UoB's expertise on critical discourse analysis and extended case method
2. Explore ways to combine strengths of macro-level political economy perspectives with micro-level ethnography
3. Translate the conceptual and theoretical framework outlined in WP1 into a methodology and research strategy.
4. Lay a foundation for subsequent joint research initiatives
 - How do these processes translate into practice? How are they impacting upon the lives of those who work or study in universities?
 - How can we provide an evidence-base of what is happening to universities as they try to adapt to the challenges of the global knowledge economy?
 - **The Holy Grail: a methodology that combines scales (joining up the global-local disconnect)**

The Challenge - Responses

1. Mapping the Key Actors involved
 2. Tracking Key Metaphors (e.g. of Modern and Post-Modern Universities)
 - Helix
 - Hubs
 - Hotspots
 - Networks
 - Clusters
 - Internationally competitive / world class
 3. Deconstructing the 'Isms'
 - ('A whole set of key concepts for the understanding of society derive their power from appearing to be just what they always were, and derive their instrumentality from taking on quite different forms (Smith 2006:628)
1. Scoping the political field (Bourdieu?): identifying relations/hidden histories (Nader 1983); tracking connections/ multi-sited ethnography anthropology of policy
 2. Discourse analysis and metaphor analysis
 - Follow that metaphor' (Marcus 1995); Lakoff and Johnson *Metaphors we Live By*; Root metaphors and master symbols; E. Martin:
 - NB. Symbolic analysis; the power of ritual (Turner/ Kertzer)
 3. 'Problematizing language categories; de-naturalising discourses; strategies for challenging received wisdom

Examples of Emerging and/or Increasing Powerful Actors

PRIMARY SCALE OF OPERATION	ACTORS	GOAL/LOGICS	TEMPORAL HORIZON	KEY UNIVERSITY ENTRÉE POINTS
Global	Private firms (e.g., Thomson Reuters, The Economist Intelligence Unit)	Research services & insights, (e.g., citation indices) for profit; forecasting, benchmarking	Quarterly/yearly with strategic plan	Library systems, funding councils
	Private firms (e.g., Google, Cisco)	Enhancing access to information for profit	Quarterly/yearly with strategic plan	Consortia; Library systems; Personal computer web browsers
	Private firms (e.g., media)	Ranking to enhance profit	Once per year	All levels
	Private foundations (e.g., Gates Foundation; Soros)	Development	Short; longer term (e.g. Central Eastern University)	Faculty and administrators
	Private firms (e.g., Standard and Poors)	Risk analysis for profit; emerging markets	Client-driven	Senior administrators
	Private firms (e.g. Apollo Global; i-graduate)	Return from investment portfolio	Shareholder driven	All levels

Key Actors
in the new
globalised
HE
environment

	Multilateral agencies (e.g., IFC, OECD, UNESCO, WTO; IAU)	Development and system change	1-5-10 years	Ministries and senior administrators (universities and associations)
	Sovereign wealth funds (e.g., the King Abdullah University of Science & Technology)	Development and branding	5 years	Researchers and key STEM departments departments/un
Regional and Interregional	Regional organizations (e.g., EU, ASEAN, APEC, ASEM, OECD, IFC)	Regional integration and development	1-5-10 years	Ministries, senior administrators (universities and associations), funding councils
	Regional higher education areas (e.g., the EHEA; UNILA)	Regional development and reform	1-5 years	Ministries, universities
	Regional funding councils (e.g. European Research Council)	Facilitating research	1-5 years	University research units and researchers
	Regional champions (e.g. Bologna Promoters; West Midlands in Europe)	Regional development and reform	1-5-10 years	Regional development agencies; university academics
National	Ministries of Trade	Enhancing trade	Singular (signing) and then term of free trade agreement	N/A
	Ministries and monarchies (e.g., Qatar)	Capacity building and branding	Post-economic crisis or during economic boom	Senior administrators
	Funding councils	Global research infrastructure	Irregular	Faculty and senior administrators
	Funding councils	Joint calls for proposals	Irregular or annual	Faculty and senior administrators
	Think tanks (e.g., Lumina)	Insights for development	Issue-specific cycle	Senior administrators
	Student mobility brokers (e.g. Gap year)	Creating safe travel products	Economic cycles	Families; university careers advisors

Questions to address



- How do we connect macro-level political economy perspectives on the processes of globalisation, regionalisation and Europeanisation with micro-level aspects of everyday life?
- Beyond providing texture and local colour, how can empirical, evidence-based analysis of what is happening within universities inform theory?
- What impacts are shifts in the political economy of higher education having upon the day-to-day practices of university subjects and actors? And
- How do those actors perceive and engage with those (often quite contradictory) processes?

Bringing WP1 and WP2 into alignment

- some ‘analytical assemblages’ (?)
- 5 possible areas/themes we might focus on

The overarching question that animates the URGE project is ‘how are universities engaging with the challenges of the global knowledge economy?’ 5 methodological aspects of this are;

1. **Track the networks [“follow that policy”]**: Globalisation, regionalisation & the problems of scale: what exactly is ‘policy transfer’ in the context of university reform? Who is transferring what to whom, how, and with what effects?
2. **Analysing the university as a site of contestation [“Follow that dispute”]**? What are the key areas of ‘friction’? *Disputes* as a methodological vantage point for analysing changing policy frames and social relations.
3. **Problematising language & unpacking the “isms” [“Follow those metaphors /discourses”]** E.g. ‘hubs’, ‘hotspots’, ‘triple helix’ ‘Internationalisation’, ‘innovation’, ‘entrepreneurship’ ‘knowledge transfer’. What new kinds of actors, structures, processes and subjects are these creating?
4. **New management, new governance, new power relations: ownership and appropriation: who owns the university and its knowledge? [“Follow those meanings: legal, symbolic & economic understanding of the university & its mission”]**
5. **Observing/theorising the changing conditions of academic existence: how did are these impacting on research, academic practice and everyday university life? How is university work being redefined? How did we get *here*? [genealogical approach; histories of the present]**

The problem of 'comparison'

- Comparison requires a shared theoretical agenda & conceptual language
- 3 parallel developments in the political economy of higher education:
 - growing emphasis on the idea of the 'global knowledge economy' as the driving force of modernity and as the system within which all countries must now compete (knowledge as 'raw material' that can be claimed through legal devices, owned, and marketed as a product or service' (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004: 17)
 - Shift in conception of university education; from 'public good' to private investment for skills and employability
 - spread of New Public Management principles and practices and a new common sense based around human capital theory.

Are these developments evidence of a 'globally structured agenda of university reform?' (Dale 2000),

University Reform and Globalization: Seven Global Trends

1. Retreat of the state support for universities (i.e. public disinvestment of higher education) and increasing government unwillingness to pay for costs of university education
2. Rising fees and levels of student debt (as unis try to make up for lost income),
3. Increasing emphasis on commercial activities that generate new income streams – most visibly see in the rise of ‘third stream’ activities [spin-out companies, patenting and licensing, business incubators etc], aimed at commercialise research and forging stronger ties between universities and industry
4. The expansion of management and administrative systems for measuring efficiency or ‘excellence’ of services.

Macro-level trends in the political economy of HE (cont.)

5. Rise of 'export education' market as HE institutions embark on the search for new fee-paying consumers online or overseas
6. Changes in university staffing profiles and employment practices. Rise of new categories of employee ('HR consultants' to 'Professional Teaching Fellows' etc.). And the increasing casualization of academic labour.
7. Increasing *differentiation* (and hierarchy) within HE as well as between universities (i.e. through various forms of benchmarking and auditing such as research assessment exercises). 'Star player syndrome' and increasing branding and self-promotion: the rise of universities as global brands (e.g. Harvard, MIT, LSE – but also Bristol, Aarhus and Auckland).

Locating/theorising these developments in a wider context: “Embedded Neoliberalism”

- “neo-liberalism has become the dominant ideology in contemporary society and one consequence of this is that it is very difficult to think outside of its black box. *It is very difficult to think of policies that are either being discussed or developed that are not neo-liberal.* There is no language outside of this that enables us to communicate outside of that world-view ... when our gaze becomes centred on one sector or institutional setting it can obscure neo-liberalism’s pervasiveness. ... neo-liberal thinking manifests itself in different sectors of society and across institutional settings. *It takes different forms but is part of the same phenomenon*” (Harris 2007:4, emphasis added).
- “the central feature of the neoliberal state is that all social relations, not just economics, are seen as relations of exchange” (Harris 2007:19) Quoting Polanyi she adds,, “instead of the economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system” (Polanyi 1944:57).

Methods, Perspectives and Approaches

1. **Ethnography (anthropological; institutional and autoethnography)**
2. **Anthropology of policy approach**
3. **Language: Discourse analysis, Metaphor analysis, sociolinguistics**
4. **Genealogical approaches**
5. **Extended case-study method (Burowoy – but also Gluckman/Manchester School)**
6. **Discourse Analysis [Critical /Ethnographic; Narrative analysis; metaphor/rhetoric]**
7. **Interpretive and symbolic approaches**
8. **Life history techniques**

