University Reform, Globalisation and Europeanisation (URGE)

Work Package 4

‘Universities as knowledge organisations’

Workshop Programme

To be held at
DPU, Copenhagen
8-10 August 2012

EU FP7 (PEOPLE) MARIE CURIE IRSES
Universities as knowledge organisations

Rationale
Reforms in many countries are designed to reposition universities within an envisaged global knowledge-based economy. The aim is to translate knowledge efficiently into innovation and production through regional and global networks of flexible knowledge organisations, with new styles of leadership and proactive, self-managing workers.

Similar packages of reforms have been applied to universities with very different constitutions, relations to the state, and forms of internal decision making. Moreover, within particular contexts, the meanings of key terms - autonomy, state steering, strategic leadership, entrepreneurialism - are often contested. For example, the Lisbon process called for the establishment of a more ‘autonomous’ form of university governance and more ‘strategic’ leadership. Yet European rectors complained that such moves were accompanied by circumscribing existing university ‘autonomy’ and their own room for manoeuvre through greater state direction in the form of funding mechanisms, governance reform, or legislative change.

Research questions
The workshop will address the following clusters of questions:

1. How are universities being reconceptualised and repositioned as ‘knowledge organisations’ in a ‘knowledge economy’ in Denmark, New Zealand and UK?
   - What do the terms ‘knowledge organisations’ and ‘knowledge economy’ mean?
   - Who is doing this repositioning?
   - How are universities being networked into the new ‘ecology’ of industry, finance capital, government and knowledge producers, on a global scale?
   - How are universities envisaged as having new roles in their region?
   - What changes to the university are being introduced in the name of equipping universities to fulfil these roles?
   - How is this reflected in changes to and contests over ‘autonomy’, governance, strategic leadership, state steering, financing, decision making, and disciplinary groupings and organisation?

2. How do such reforms envisage workers in knowledge organisations? How are they expected to perform? How do they actually perform and what new academic subjects are being created?
   - How do these ideas about knowledge workers apply in universities? If academics are, variously, conceived of as in need of strategic leadership, required to produce predetermined (ac)countable outputs, and expected to be self-managing, as well as self-motivated, pro-active and entrepreneurial, what do all these terms mean in policy imaginaries, and how does this change the environment for, and expectations of, academics?
How do academics, like other ‘knowledge workers’, make sense of this complex of ideas and expectations? What new opportunities, advantages and self understandings, as well as tensions, alienation or stress are they finding and experiencing?

Are there emerging new forms of ‘entrepreneurial academics’?

3. How do universities enact their multiple roles: to transfer knowledge to industry, increase their ‘interaction’ with ‘surrounding society’, be ‘entrepreneurial’, develop civil society and democracy, and be the ‘critic and conscience’ of society?

How can universities speak to a global higher education community and market – and overcome a methodological nationalist view?

How are the tensions that arise negotiated? With what outcomes?

Approach

This workshop is the culmination of work package 4 in the URGE programme. The aims are to:

1. Bring together the research of partners in Denmark, New Zealand and UK so as to share existing knowledge and develop new collaborative projects
2. Generate detailed ethnographic comparisons, which get beneath similarities in the policy language, to explore how universities are conceptualised as knowledge organisations.
3. Connect analysis of large scale changes to policy and political economy with changes to academic practice. Whereas research often focuses on one or two of the above three clusters of questions, the approach in this workshop is to explore connections across all three, in keeping with URGE’s overall objective to connect large-scale changes to ‘political economy’ with detailed and ethnographic changes ‘on the ground’.

Partners’ projects contributing to this workshop

The projects and research that are brought together in this workshop include:

- ‘Stress, new management and intervention – borderless work in public organisations’, which explored how four kinds of public sector ‘knowledge organisations’ (including universities), their managers and workers were conceptualised and enacted. (Kirsten Marie Bovbjerg, Jakob Krause-Jensen and Sue Wright, DPU/Aarhus University).
- Strategies to reposition universities in New Zealand and its regions. (Chris Tremewan, Auckland University).
- Partners’ knowledge of the reform of universities as knowledge organisations elsewhere, notably in Europe and in Australia and the Asia-Pacific Rim. (Chris Tremewan, Cris Shore, Auckland University; Susan Robertson, Roger Dale, Bristol University; Sue Wright, DPU/Aarhus University, and others).
- ‘An Ethnography of Auckland University’, including new roles in the surrounding society, and contested new forms of governance and management. (Cris Shore, Auckland University).
- Changed role of universities in the Bristol city/region, focusing on concepts of innovation and entrepreneurialism (Susan Robertson, University of Bristol).
- ‘The third mission of the university’, a proposed project focusing especially on the organisation of third stream activities in 7 countries, the tensions third stream activities
generate for the social sciences, and concepts of academic entrepreneurship (Nick Lewis and Cris Shore, Auckland University).

- Universities’ interaction with surrounding society in a Nordic welfare state (Denmark) and a Baltic post-soviet state (Lithuania)’ a proposed post-doc project to be conducted at DPU/Aarhus University (Deivida Vandzinskaite, Siauliai University).

- ‘Academic identities: Exploring the methodological value of collective biography and collaborative writing’ results of a faculty seminar and PhD course on academics’ experience of changing university environments held at DPU/Aarhus University. (Sheila Trahar, University of Bristol).

- Comparative research on academic identity formation, focusing on social arbitrariness, consciousness and alienation, a proposed project. (Dirk Michel-Schertges, DPU/Aarhus University).
Wednesday 8 August 2012

9.30 Coffee, tea, roll

10.00 -11.00 Introductions
    Round the table - Participants introduce themselves
    Sue Wright (DPU/AU) – Overview of URGE project, the aims of this workshop, the themes and research questions
    Discussion

11.00 Session 1
    Chair: Nick Lewis

How are universities being reconceptualised and repositioned as ‘knowledge organisations’ in a ‘knowledge economy’ in Denmark, New Zealand and UK?
    What do the terms ‘knowledge organisations’ and ‘knowledge economy’ mean?
    Who is doing this repositioning?
    How are universities being networked into the new ‘ecology’ of industry, finance capital, government and knowledge producers, on a global scale?
    How are universities envisaged as having new roles in their region?
    What changes to the university are being introduced in the name of equipping universities to fulfil these roles?
    How is this reflected in changes to and contests over ‘autonomy’, governance, strategic leadership, state steering, financing, decision making, and disciplinary groupings and organisation?

11.00-11.25 Sue Wright (DPU/AU) – Universities as knowledge organisations in the competition state
11.25-12.15 Discussion

12.30-13.30 Lunch

**Session 1 continued**

13.30-13.55 Chris Tremewan (UoA) - The Emerging Significance of Research Universities in the International Relations of States
13.55-14.10 Discussion

14.10-14.35 Roger Dale (UNIVBRIS) – The role of reputational risk in redesigning and realigning universities
14.35-14.50 Discussion

14.50-15.30 Round table discussion
Initial questions - ??

15.30-16.00 Break

16.00-17.30 **Planning meetings**
Planning meetings for Work Packages 5 & 6 and Auckland final workshop

19.00 Workshop dinner
Thursday 9 August 2012

9.00     Coffee and roll

9.30     Session 2
Chair ??

How do such reforms envisage workers in knowledge organisations? How are they expected to perform? How do they actually perform and what new academic subjects are being created?

How do these ideas about knowledge workers apply in universities? If academics are, variously, conceived of as in need of strategic leadership, required to produce predetermined (ac)countable outputs, and expected to be self-managing, as well as self-motivated, pro-active and entrepreneurial, what do all these terms mean in policy imaginaries, and how does this change the environment for, and expectations of, academics?

How do academics, like other ‘knowledge workers’, make sense of this complex of ideas and expectations? What new opportunities, advantages and self understandings, as well as tensions, alienation or stress are they finding and experiencing?

Are there emerging new forms of ‘entrepreneurial academics’?


9.55-10.10 Discussion

10.10-10.35 Brigitte Gorm Hansen (Copenhagen University) – Science/industry collaboration: Bugs and project barons managing symbiosis.

10.35-10.50 Discussion

10.50-11.00 Break
11.00-11.25 Sheila Trahar (UNIVBRIS) – Standing on the shoulders of giants: using collaborative writing to explore academic identities

11.25-11.40 Discussion

11.40-12.15 Round table discussion
   Initial questions - Dirk Michel-Schertges

12.30-13.30 Lunch

13.30-16.00 Annual assembly
   Agenda (draft)
   a. Notes of 2011 Annual Assembly, overview of progress and reports sent to EU (Sue Wright)
   b. Discussion of draft for working paper 2? (Cris Shore)
   c. Discussion of draft for working paper 3? (Roger Dale)
   d. Plans for UNIKE project (Sue Wright)
   e. Plans for Erasmus Mundus application (Gritt Nielsen and Sue Wright)
   f. Discussion of how to take forward collaborative work on third mission and academic entrepreneurialism (Nick Lewis, Cris Shore, Deivida Vandzinskaite, Susan Robertson)
   g. Publications plans
   h. Anything else?

16.00-18.00 Walk-and-talk in Copenhagen

18.00 Drink at a cafe

19.00 Dinner
Friday 10 August 2012

9.30 Coffee and roll

10.00 Session 3
   Chair ???

How do universities enact their multiple roles: to transfer knowledge to industry, increase their ‘interaction’ with ‘surrounding society’, be ‘entrepreneurial’, develop civil society and democracy, and be the ‘critic and conscience’ of society?

How can universities speak to a global higher education community and market – and overcome a methodological nationalist view?

How are the tensions that arise negotiated? With what outcomes?

10.00-10.25 Susan Robertson (UNIVBRIS) – Role of universities in the Bristol region: enterprise, entrepreneurialism and social innovation
10.25-10.40 Discussion

10.40-11.05 Nick Lewis and Cris Shore (UoA) – Academic entrepreneurialism and university commercialization: the rise of the Third Mission in New Zealand
11.05-11.20 Discussion

11.20-12.30 Roundtable discussion
   Initial questions - Deivida Vandzinskaite

12.30-13.30 Lunch and workshop ends.
Abstracts

The role of reputational risk in redesigning and realigning universities
Roger Dale (UNIVBRIS)

This paper will argue that the most pervasive influence on the operation of Universities at present is the development of techniques of risk management as the main response to the degree and nature of the uncertainties and the size and significance of the stakes confronting them. RM was introduced by UK HEFCE as a more or less mandatory tool that leads Universities to become strategic entrepreneurial actors which must ‘engage in practices like competition and strategy development formerly exclusive to the private sector’. (Huber)

So the rationale behind risk management becomes a dominant one as it is reproduced through internalisation (Power, Scheytt, Soin, & Sahlin, 2009). The lens of risk management becomes the dominant means through which the organisation represents and responds to its environment.

At the basis of this, ‘Reputation’ has emerged as the key and dominant currency of risk to Universities world wide. This has been enabled and fuelled through a process where agencies external to the organisation, and initially possibly peripheral to, and even parasitic on, the field, not only collect information from institutions within the field, but combine and produce it in new forms, typically aggregate rankings

Reputational rankings generate ‘self-reinforcing behaviours and shifting cognitive frames and values over time…and have the potential to shift motivations and missions by constructing self-reinforcing circuits of performance’, so that ‘organizational performance indicators for internal purposes come to be reactively aligned with those which inform an evaluation or ranking system’ (Espeland and Sauder 2007’) (312)---and also vice versa.

Science/industry collaboration: Bugs and project barons managing symbiosis.
Birgitte Gorm Hansen (Copenhagen University)

This paper is based on a study of highly successful scientists in Denmark, who have been subject to a range of policy and funding reforms geared to getting them to focus their activities on government priorities and especially collaboration with industry. Their research on how insects adapt their environments to their needs
provides an extended metaphor for the management of their own research environment. Drawing on interviews with the head of a research centre in plant biology, this paper argues that biology and biotech are *symbionts*. In order to be viable and productive, symbiosis needs to be carefully managed and given room for divergence within mutual dependence. This process does not take place as the negotiation of a pre-existing science-industry boundary. Rather, viability is obtained through a strategy of *circumventing* the science-industry food chain and *sequestering* biotech components within the research centre. Symbiosis allows academic scientists to do biology while at the same time demonstrating entrepreneurial spirit. This exploration of symbiosis yields a very different way of understanding science/industry collaboration to that imagined by policy makers. It contrasts the (governmental) logic of the parasite with the (academic) logic of the symbiont.

**Restructuring public sector service— reimagining proactive selves.**
Jakob Krause Jensen and Kirsten Marie Bovbjerg

In the wake of public sector reform a record number of employees suffer from work-related stress. Our material from Danish public sector institutions suggests that a large part of the problem is the cross-pressure experienced by employees, who have seen growing demands on their service at the same time as they are measured and held accountable for meeting specific targets in a situation, where they find it increasingly difficult to do so because of tight public sector budgets. Furthermore, stress-intervention and management strategies from the private sector (e.g., Lean, Mindfulness, coaching) and notions of 'self-esteem' introduced to help workers thrive and work more effectively imply specific ideals about the *proactive worker*, which threaten professional understandings.

**Academic entrepreneurialism and university commercialization: the rise of the Third Mission in New Zealand**
Nick Lewis and Cris Shore (UoA)

One crucial yet still largely under-theorised development within contemporary higher education has been the rise of the university ‘third mission’. ‘Third mission’ refers to activities such as commercialization of research and the establishment of externally referenced research institutes that bring external actors including business and government more directly into the routine activities of universities.
Current literature suggests that these trends are having a major impact not only on research and the work of academics and their relations to each other, but also on universities as knowledge organizations. This paper is set in three parts. First, we examine debates about the rise of the third mission and its significance for the idea of the public university. Second, we map the rise of the third mission in New Zealand universities and illustrate how they are organising themselves to engage with technology transfer and commercialisation. Finally, we reflect on the wider implications of these developments. We ask how are universities being reconfigured as a result of the third mission? How are the boundaries of the university being re-defined? What new kinds of subjectivities and knowledge spaces are these activities creating? What new forms of management and governance are being created?

**Challenging Hegemonic Conceptions of Enterprise, Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Counter-Cases on the Roles of the Universities in City Regional Development.**
Susan Robertson (UNIVBRIS)

In this paper, first I identify a particular conception of enterprise, entrepreneurship and innovation that dominates contemporary policy and practice around the role of universities in city regional development. Drawing upon three case studies, I then show the complex and multiple ways that universities actually enact their roles. I argue that these often run counter to current discourses and championed 'cases' of the role of universities as engines for the creation of high value-added knowledge economies. For example, the Bristol Bike Project not only works with global refugees but, using voluntary labour – including many university students, aims at being sustainable through the recycling of mechanical parts and the passing on or generation of social knowledge and skills. The FOODCYCLE project, created by university students, has negotiated to acquire surplus food from local supermarkets, and uses student volunteers as labour to make this food available to less-well off members of the community. Finally my research on SETsquared, a high-tech incubator aimed at creating small scalable spin-out firms, shows the way these firms are highly dependent on social, cultural and organisational capital acquired within and beyond the university. Above all, SETsquared challenges conventional theories on the heroic figure at the heart of entrepreneurship. These very different cases highlight the ways in which narrow policy and theoretical conceptions of enterprise and entrepreneurship place limits on what is valued, funded and researched. Critical researchers, by revealing these cases, can
contribute to a counter-hegemonic reading of everyday practices within the contemporary university.

**Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: Using Collaborative Writing to Explore Academic Identities**
Sheila Trahar et al. (UNIVBRIS)

In May 2012, seven people met over 3 days at DPU, to talk and write together on the theme of ‘academic identities’. All of us were connected with the URGE project. We used the work of Bronwyn Davies and Susanne Gannon ‘Doing Collective Biography’ (2006) as a loose framework for our project but deviated from it in several ways. The writing from the 3 days continues.

In this session, we share our reflections on our experiences of those 3 days in May, and the complexities that are emerging as we continue to write together, collaboratively, in particular the ethical issues of ‘editing’ each other’s writing. In addition, we shall discuss collaborative writing as a methodological approach and its potential to explore the construction of academic identities.

**The Emerging Significance of Research Universities in the International Relations of States.**
Chris Tremewan (UoA)

This paper builds on an article currently being written on 'Reimagining internationalization in higher education: international consortia as a transformative space'. Extending this work into international relations will involve understanding international university networks as beginning to comprise part of the international 'architecture' of foreign policy, trade and security. The implications of this for the nature of the university as a knowledge organization will be investigated. It will draw on the cases of NZ and Singapore as well as general references to the UK and the US.

**Universities as knowledge organisations in the competition state**
Sue Wright (DPU/AU)

In a world envisaged as consisting of competing units on every scale - countries, regions, cities and individuals - the role of the competition state is to mobilise all
possible productive resources and deploy them to competitive advantage (Cerny 1990, Pedersen 2011). This entails the state providing the legal, regulatory and financial framework for opening up the new frontiers for capital in the global ‘offshore’, reforming the organisation and steering of educational and other services so that they contributed to economic competitiveness, and enabling every individual to optimise their skills and their position in a global labour market, with the idea that the country, as a result, would prosper.

What was the competition about? By the 1990s, widespread discussions about new forms of industrial and social organisation focused on ‘knowledge’ as a new resource. Competitive advantage was said to lie in the speed at which new knowledge could be generated and converted into innovative products or new ways of organising operations. As the Danish government (2006) said in its globalisation strategy, to retain its position as one of the richest countries in the world, it needed a high skills population and an efficient system of generating knowledge and transferring it to industry and ‘surrounding society’. Universities were thrust centre stage as the agents mobilised by the competition state for the country to succeed in the global knowledge economy.

This paper explores the ways that the Danish government has reformed the public sector, including universities, to turn them into autonomous ‘knowledge organisations’. It will first consider in particular assumptions and contradictions in the state steering system and the institutional management that are intended to make universities network and compete successfully in this new ecology of public and private organizations (Robertson et al. 2012). Second, it will explore assumptions and contradictions about the nature of the ‘worker’ in such knowledge organizations, as exemplified by recent cases in the media.