

Working Papers on University Reform

Working Paper 20:

Globalisation and Regionalisation in Higher Education: Toward a New Conceptual Framework

Summative Working Paper for Work Package 1

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Summative Working Paper for URGE Work Package 1

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Preface

This Working Paper is from the FP7 (PEOPLE) IRSES project called ‘University Reform, Globalisation and Europeanisation’ (URGE). It is the final output from Work Package 1 – *Globalisation and Higher Education – Toward a New Conceptual Framework*. Authored by partners from across the three core participating institutions, Aarhus, Bristol and Auckland, the purpose of this Working Paper is both to reflect the rich conversations and contributions of differently located and positioned expertise on these issues, and to generate the basis for our continuing enquiries and debates. That this has generated what we believe are innovative and fresh eyes on the issues is testament to the importance of collaboration and knowledge exchange, and the genuine added-value this process can generate. It was not simply a case of knowledge transfer, or knowledge exchange, but mutual learning and new knowledge creation.

The purpose of Work Package 1 was to generate a new conceptual framework for analysing the globalisation and regionalisation of higher education. This was done by research visits to each other’s institutions, informal discussions, lectures and symposia, co-teaching, including a PhD course and finally a workshop for all participants held at Bristol University. Work Package 2 builds on this framework to develop associated methodologies and methods.

Four key tasks were used as entry points into this activity: first, to map and develop an account of actors and institutions involved in processes of globalisation and regionalisation, including their interests, scales of influence, and temporal horizons; second, to examine the role of higher education policy in globalisation processes, and their potential to act as models for other parts of the world; third, to identify the role of key transnational actors in policy travel; and fourth, to analyse processes of transformation.

What is clear from our work is that there are multiple and competing explanations as to how best to understand these processes. Yet, are they as mutually exclusive as we sometimes think? What new possibilities emerge in this kind of approach for how we see and think our social worlds? The challenges of bringing different approaches, together we hope will enable us to see higher education processes, their politics and practices, in a new light.

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1. 'Placing' the Modern University in Contemporary Societies

Over the past thirty years, universities have faced significant challenges and undergone major transformations in the nature and scope of their mission, their governance as institutions, the knowledges they produce, the perceived values of university knowledge, and their relations with the wider economy and society (Bolton and Lucas, 2008; Barnett, 2009). These kinds of developments have led Santos (2010: 1) to argue that they are also part of a wider 'paradigmatic transition' facing all societies and their universities around the world, as knowledge itself becomes more central to economic development (Santos, 2010: 1).

A growing body of research has emerged aimed at making sense of these changes. Works range over a number of important issues for universities: greatly expanded access to new kinds of students along with new forms of differentiation regarding institutional/qualification status (Goastellic, 2010; Eggin, 2010; Reay, 2011); the changing nature of knowledge creation and its use (cf. Gibbons et al., 1994; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997); the shift away from knowledge as a public good (Calhoun, 2006); the intensification of entrepreneurialism (Clarke, 1998); greater degrees of institutional complexity (Barnett, 2000); the trade-off between local responsibilities and global markets and image-making (Robertson, 2010b); changing academic values (Henkel, 1997; 2005); the growing role of international organizations in shaping national higher education policy (Wright and Ørberg, 2012), and the growth in new forms of higher education regionalism (Dale and Robertson, 2009b). From an institution seen as '...standing at arm's length from commerce, and never doing all that well in the race to pucker up to power' (Marginson and Considine, 2000: 1), universities are described as nowadays eager to reinvent themselves '...not just in marketing terms, but in terms of their day-to-day lives, their very identities' (ibid: 2). Bill Readings (1996: 3) goes as far as to argue that the contemporary university is

‘...becoming a transnational bureaucratic corporation, either tied to transnational instances of government, such as the European Union, or functioning independently, by analogy with a transnational corporation’. These are strong words indeed, but it is a view shared by others.

Slaughter and Rhoades (2004: 1), for example, in their influential book *Academic Capitalism*, detail how universities are being integrated into the wider economy through the creation of new knowledge circuits. These, they argue, involve very different kinds of knowledge creation and exchange activities; from selling courses to engaging with private patrons, creating marketable intellectual property, and the development of new economy start-ups. They also point out the ways in which new actors have emerged, along with differently regulated spaces within the university, which play important boundary – spanning roles between the academy and the wider economy, as new channels are created through which knowledge and market-making activity are expected to flow.

Yet, as Calhoun (2006) observes, the reinvention of the university is not simply a wilful institutional makeover. Rather it is being driven by multiple and competing pressures: increased access to groups formerly excluded, the creation of human capital, the development of economically-useful knowledge, greater levels of efficiency and public accountability, and demands for excellence.

Whilst we agree with these writers, in our view what is missing from these accounts are the multiple ways in which new scales are being invoked and involved in the governance of universities, for instance at the level of Europe (Dale and Robertson, 2009) with the creation of the European Higher Education Area; within the Asia Pacific, with the role of higher education in shaping the activities of the South East Asia Forum; or in Latin America, with the ways in which higher education is central to the construction of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA).

Nor do the above accounts dwell sufficiently on the ways in which trade agreements, such as the World Trade Organization's General Agreement on Trade in Services, or a proliferation of bi-lateral agreements, have promoted higher education as an important area for regional and global trade (Robertson et al., 2002). Trade in education services, however, is a huge revenue generator for many western economies, and also increasingly those who once were net importers of education services, such as China. In Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade noted international students generated 83,000 jobs, created C\$291m (£166m) in government revenue, and contributed C\$6.5bn (£3.7bn) to the Canadian economy. The last figure is higher than Canada's earnings for coniferous lumber (\$5bn/£2.8) and coal (\$6bn/£3.4bn). Recently NAFSA, the US-based Association of International Educators, noted that international students and their dependants contributed approximately \$17.6bn (£10.5bn) to the US economy in the 2008-09 academic year. It is little wonder that universities are being put to work for the economy, particularly in the so called 'developed' world, as they themselves search for the basis of on-going accumulation (Robertson, 2010).

2. Conceptual Challenges in Studying the Modern University

How are we to understand these developments, particularly with the conceptual tools we have used to generate accounts of the modern university and its relationship to society? In Slaughter and Rhoades' (2004) view, the dominant approach to the study of the university tends to see it as an individual organization within a national or sub-national setting, with clearly defined mission (research, teaching, and more recently, business linkages) and a distinct set of boundaries.

Whilst at one level this is true – that the university *is* a sub/nationally-located organization, the problem with this kind of framing is that there is little regard to the different sub-units within the university and how they might be similar or different to each other. Nor are we alert to new kinds of arrangements many universities are engaging in, such as joint ventures with for-profit firms, the creation of branch campuses in other parts of the world (Becker, 2009), or academic content being delivered by a consortium of universities who come together and collaborate in a range of ways (Robertson, 2010b). How might we understand the multiple connections that link the university with a complex range of outside interests and spaces, including those that are regionally and globally anchored? Equally important, an organizational approach is unable to detect the crisscrossing and overlapping relationships between the sub-units within the university and the wider communities in which it is situated, or between the university and the wider higher education sector nationally, regionally and globally. And what of the new and different ways in which the higher education sector is creating sets of relationships with other sectors, such as trade, immigration and foreign affairs? Finally, an organizational approach tends to anthropomorphize it (as in ‘*the* university’), and in so doing we fail to see the multiple identities and purposes of the university. Who, and where is the university, we might ask? And, what is the higher education sector, and how is it being ‘reshaped’, geographically?

3. This Working Paper – A Conceptual and Methodological Agenda

This working paper engages with these challenges. It argues that not only are universities and higher education changing their *raison d’être*, but a range of economic, political and cultural transformations are under way – locally, nationally, regionally and globally – of which higher education is a key part, and which in turn is

constituting the sector in new ways. These shifts require not only rather different kinds of analyses, but a set of conceptual and methodological tools able to grasp their nature, form and consequences. To this end, in this working paper we lay out a set of intellectual challenges we believe researchers face in analysing and understanding transformations in the higher education sector. It will do that in the following ways.

First, we identify the assumptions built into the conceptual frameworks we have tended to use to study universities and the higher education sector. We argue here that not only do these concepts mean something different because the world itself has changed, but many of our assumptions about the purposes, mission, and governance of the university in a world that is simultaneously more global, more regional and less national, need to be revealed, reviewed and revised.

Second, we outline our understanding of globalisation and regionalisation as two interconnected processes that are radically transforming the sector. At the regional level, we focus particularly on the emergence of the European Higher Education Area, and how this is generating new regional and global higher education spatialities. At the global level we explore the agenda for the emerging trade in education, and show how this has influenced the development of the European higher education space, as a destination, on the one hand, and as a model to be emulated or mediated, on the other. Taken together, these global and regional processes are involved in the reworking of higher education institutions and sectors within national territorial boundaries.

Third, we offer two, theoretically different, mappings of higher education as a sector which reflect particular understandings of actors, linkages, and (asymmetrical) social relations (power and governance). The first presents a ‘scalar’ mapping of higher education as a sector – from the local to the global – and identifies their different interests and temporal logics. The second presents a ‘network’ mapping – in this case pointing to the ways new sets of linkages are created to allow power to flow along

new channels, in turn constituting the European Higher Education Area. We also reflect on mapping as a political process with its own politics of representation.

Fourth, we examine what these developments mean for how we think about globalising and regionalising higher education policies involving movements over national territorial boundaries. Using the Bologna Process as an entry point into the debate, we argue that narrow linear models of policy transfer are unable to explain the rapid expansion of, and engagement with, the Bologna Process within and beyond Europe. We propose an alternative account; a critical grammar of *policy mobility* which is attentive to a series of structuring contexts at the point of origin and the point of reception.

Fifth, we look at current attempts to theorize *transformations* in higher education that are being driven by global and regional processes. We introduce two competing accounts; a *top-down*, structural account, on the one hand, and a *bottom-up* cultural/agency account, on the other. We argue for a more processual, ‘follow that’, and ‘studying through’ approach that aims to bring together both structural and cultural accounts.

Sixth, and finally, we draw out a series of *working propositions* which will feed into on-going work on rethinking higher education research that takes wider regional and global dynamics into account. These include:

- The development of a **sectoral** account of higher education which is attentive to processes of the **resectoralising** and **reassembling** of higher education and how this involves vertical and horizontal processes (*study sectoral assemblage*);
- A focus on **processes** at work spatially and over time, which is attentive to the ways in which borders, orders and identities are being both erased *and* new ones constructed (*study and-*);

- The development of a methodology that is neither top-down or bottom-up, but which studies processes and their transformation **across spaces** (trans-local/trans-sectoral/trans-disciplinary) and points in **time** (trans-historical) through the deployment of innovative methodologies, such as figuration, frictional events, ‘follow that’ (**study through**).

Our ‘sectoral assemblage’, ‘and-’, and ‘through-’, conceptual and methodological approaches to the study of globalisation and higher education are intended as guides to inform our on-going work in the URGE project. They are, however, ‘tentative’ guides in that our aim is to ‘put them to the test’, as it were, in terms of their capacity to carry robust explanations of global and regional processes at work in higher education, and which are at the heart of the on-going Work Packages.

4. Ism’s: Researching Higher Education in a Changing World

Elsewhere, we have argued that much of the study of education continues to be shaped by a set of ‘isms’; that is, the tendency to see categories as natural, fixed, necessary and sufficient – or in other words, as ontologically and epistemologically ossified (see Dale and Robertson, 2009a; Robertson and Dale, 2008). In our view, this is a particular danger in researching higher education as it is clear much has changed over the past three decades.

We identify four ‘-isms’ as prominent in the analysis of the higher education sector: ‘methodological nationalism’, ‘methodological statism’, ‘methodological higher educationism’ and ‘spatial fetishism’. By drawing attention to these -isms, our aim is to make explicit the assumptions built into our theoretical frameworks and consequent

methodologies and methods that in turn will place limits on our understanding of the nature and significance of the transformations at work in higher education.

Methodological nationalism

The outstanding, and most relevant, example of methodological nationalism is ‘the nation state’. But most social science is also based on methodological nationalism (Martins, 1974). We can identify four distinct elements of this problem (for an extended critique of the conception of methodological nationalism in comparative education, see Dale 2005). The first, and best known, is the idea that methodological nationalism sees the nation state as the container of ‘society’, so that comparing societies entails comparing nation states (see also Beck, 2002; Beck and Znaider, 2006) and their distinctive economic, cultural and social systems. Invoking the national as an analytical category in a cultural account tends to result in categories, such as Indian or German, with little ground given to the huge differences within each category either at the level of individual identification or at the level of ethnic groupings. The second is the close association between nation states and comparison brought about by the ‘national’ being the level at which statistics have traditionally been gathered. As one of us put it elsewhere, methodological nationalism operates both about and for the nation-state to the point where the only reality we are able to comprehensively describe statistically is a national, or at best an international, one (Dale, 2005: 126). The third element of the problem arises from the tendency to juxtapose an unreconstructed methodological nationalism to underspecified conceptions of ‘globalisation’ in a zero-sum relationship; that is, the global has taken on more functions and power ostensibly at the expense of a new disempowered state. This is far from the case, in that in many cases the national state itself has been a major force in advancing regional and global projects. For instance, it was the French Minister for Education who proposed and promoted the Bologna Process in 1998 (Ravinet, 2005). The final element concerns the extent of the suffusion, or identification, of the concept of the nation state with a particular imaginary of rule.

This has become clearer through recent discussions of conceptions of ‘sovereignty’, ‘territoriality’ and ‘authority’ (see Sassen, 2006). These discussions essentially see the particular combination of responsibilities and activities that nation-states have been assumed to be responsible for as historically contingent rather than functionally necessary, or even optimal. Thus, though the ontology that ‘...a region of physical space... can be conceived of as a corporate personality’, the nature, implications and consequences of this have varied greatly, and it remains the case that ‘...the unity of this public authority has generally been regarded as the hallmark of the so-called Westphalian states’ (Ansell 2004, 6), while ‘...the chief characteristic of the modern system of territorial rule is the consolidation of all parcellized and personalised authority into one public realm’ (Ruggie, 1993: 151). However, while ‘...public authority has been demarcated by discrete boundaries of national territory...so, too, has the articulation of societal interests and identities that both buttress and make demands upon this authority’ (ibid.: 8). The question is then raised about the ‘...implications of a world in which the mutually reinforcing relations of territory, authority and societal interests and identities can no longer be taken for granted’ (ibid.: 9). This is a particularly important issue for higher education as it globalises, in that some forms of rights, such as academic autonomy, as secured at the level of the national state. When university campuses globalise, and form branch campuses in a new territory, whose sovereignty and forms of rule hold? (Olds, 2005)

Methodological statism

If methodological nationalism refers to the tendency to take the nation state as the container of societies, the related, but considerably less recognised term – methodological *statism* – refers to the tendency to assume that there is a particular *form* intrinsic to all states. That is, it is assumed that all polities are ruled, organised and administered in essentially the same way, with the same set of problems and responsibilities, and through the same set of institutions. The problem emerges because the state, as an object of analysis, exists both as a material force and also an

ideological construct (Mitchell, 1999: 76). The ideological construct tends to dominate, and spread – for instance through global interventions like the ‘good governance’ agenda (Weiss, 2000). Added to this problem, as Bourdieu (1999) points out, are the problems for the analyst when categories are produced by the state are also deeply embedded in societies. Thus, ‘...to endeavour to think the state is to take the risk of taking over (or being taken over by) a thought of the state, that is, of applying to the state categories of thought produced and guaranteed by the state and hence to misrecognise it’s most profound truth’ (Bourdieu, 1999:53)

We see this in the way an assumed set of institutions has become taken-for-granted as *the* pattern for the rule of societies and that this pattern is the one found in the West in the 20th century, and in particular the social-democratic welfare state that pervaded Western Europe in the second half of that century (see Zurn and Leibfried, 2005, 11). Similarly, we can see that universities are assumed to take a similar form (Newman, Humboldt), despite ample evidence emerging of very different kinds of higher education institutional formations in the Arab Region, and in countries like Singapore (Olds and Thrift, 2008).

Central – and, we might argue, unique – to this conception of the state was that all four dimensions of the state distinguished by Zurn and Leibfried (resources, law, legitimacy and welfare) converged in national constellations, and national institutions. What Zurn and Leibfried make clear, however, is that ‘...the changes over the past 40 years are not merely creases in the fabric of the nation state, but rather an unravelling of the finely woven national constellation of its Golden Age’ (Ibid.: 1). To put it another way, both the assumption of a common set of responsibilities and means of achieving them, and the assumption that they are necessarily rather than contingently associated with each other, can no longer be sustained, outside a continuing methodological statism.

We can point to two further assumptions of methodological statism in the social sciences in general, and education in particular. The first is the recognition of its locational specificity as the basis of methodological statism. The model of the state that became taken-for-granted in academic discourse across most of the social sciences was not one that was ever established or present in the greater part of what we refer to as developing countries. That model was not only imposed on the majority of post-colonial states that were created after World War II, but formal acceptance of, and attachment to, it became the main basis of membership of the ‘international community’. This politically imposed representation of ruling, and with it sovereignty of rule, has not only distorted attempts at introducing fair, efficient and effective forms of rule in those countries, but its acceptance as a valid and accurate account by academics as well as politicians, on the basis that the same term meant the same thing, irrespective of circumstances, has equally distorted analyses of the governance of developing countries.

The depth of the penetration of these kinds of assumptions on the social sciences, and which is relevant to higher education and international development, is summed up by Ruggie as displaying ‘...an extraordinarily impoverished mind-set...that is able to visualize long term challenges to the system of states only in terms of entities that are institutionally substitutable for the state’ (1993: 143). The point here is not to suggest that the state as an actor is unimportant. It has, and continues to be, a very significant and powerful ensemble of institutions that is able to mobilize power and act. Rather it is to focus upon, first, the way the idea of the state represents itself as a universal form rather than a particular representation that has been universalised, and second, on the way the state itself, as both a project and container of power, has evaded close intellectual scrutiny. In relation to this first point, of the universalisation of the form of the state, this has made investigations into the Europe Union, as also involving a different form of the state, difficult but important (see Shore, 2006).

We can illustrate the points made above about methodological statism by recognizing that the national state is no longer the only most important, or taken-for-granted, actor in the area of higher education. If we look closely at the *governance* of education – that is the combinations and coordination of activities, actors/agents, and scales, through which ‘education’ is constructed and delivered in national societies – we can identify four categories of activity that collectively make up educational governance (that are for the sake of exposition taken to be mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive), *funding; provision or delivery; ownership; and regulation*. These activities may in principle be carried out independently of each other and by a range of agents other than the state – though the state remains a possible agent of educational governance and at a multiple set of scales, from the local to the global.

Methodological higher educationism

Education has been a central project in modernising societies. Since the early nineteenth century, mass education has been a crucial element of the modern nation state in the interests of collective progress and in the interests of equality and justice (Meyer, 1999: 131). In more recent years, greater levels of access to higher education in many countries has also resulted in a rapid expansion in the sector – both in terms of overall student numbers and staff employed to administer or teach, and in terms of a growing number of affiliated services. However, what is understood by the idea of a university, or of what and who the higher education sector comprises, varies enormously. Despite this, ‘education’ tends to be seen as equally fixed, abstract and absolute, similar to methodological nationalism and statism. However ‘education’ requires explanation rather than provides it.

The term ‘education’ often escapes close analytical scrutiny as it has a dual character; it is both descriptive and normative. It is descriptive in the sense that it tends to refer to the obvious higher education establishments such as ‘the university’. What is ignored in this description are all of the other ‘influences’ – such as home, peer

groups, workplace and so on, that contribute to the learning of a person. It is normative in that it is value-laden, where education is viewed as a good thing (and the more the better). Meyer (1999) points out that most sociology of education accepts the goals of education as unproblematic, and is then devoted to identifying failures and shortcomings in meeting them. This normative move enables us to sidestep the fact that education is about the acquisition of particular knowledges that may or may not empower an individual or group, depending upon their social location (Bourdieu, 1997). It also usefully disguises the role of education in capitalist systems; as a tool for social stratification.

Educationism is also compounded by two self-limiting parochialisms. Disciplinary parochialism restricts the study of education to approaches that share assumptions about the field, often, it seems, to work that contains ‘education’ in its title, as if this lexical equivalence removes the need to problematise basic assumptions (see Dale 1994). Institutional parochialism similarly refers to the tendency within all education studies to take existing education systems, institutions and practices in isolation as self-evidently the appropriate focus for their endeavours without problematising them (see Dale, 2005: 134)

A way forward would be to pose a set of questions, such as we do in the following ‘mapping’ section, that replaces the single terms – ‘university’ or ‘higher education’. The basic idea behind this set of questions is that rather than assuming/accepting that we all mean the same thing when we are talking about education, precise questions should frame a coherent discussion and where necessary, provide a basis for systematic comparison. The questions also prise open the fact that knowledge – its production, circulation, consumption and transformation – is a highly political process and therefore one that demands rigor by researchers because it matters.

Spatial fetishism

Brenner (2003: 38) describes *spatial fetishism* as ‘...a conception of social space that is timeless and static, and thus immune to the possibility of historical change’. The context now is globalisation, yet its causal dynamics – in other words, answers to the question, ‘what difference does space make?’ – are absent. In research on higher education, one common approach is to privilege outcomes that are self-evidently global (such as reference to the expansion of global agencies like the World Trade Organization), ignoring the more nuanced changes, *inside* the national, and *inside* the sector. Examples here include the rise of international trade departments exclusively concerned with trade in education services (as in the case of Australia), the rise of global marketing departments within universities, or consequences for local communities when universities face outward to the globe rather than downward to local issues and concerns.

In the wider literature on globalisation and education, the spatial is binarised – as either global or local. Several problems emerge as a result. One is that ‘...the global appears as a telos on the move in an on-going process called ‘globalisation’’ (Gibson-Graham, 2002: 27) defying transformation. While this might be expected, for instance, when politicians galvanize support for a political project, it is not particularly helpful in research work, for it tends to construct globalisation as a process without a subject (Hay, 1999). The problem that emerges here is that not only do the actors (states, multinational firms, international organizations and so on) escape scrutiny, but we do not have a sense of them as agents, or what interests and politics are at play. This in turn limits action (Robertson, 2006). A second problem in binarising the local-global in this way is that processes we might associate with globalisation are always out there, rather than in here (for instance, inside national boundaries, institutions, subjectivities). However as Sassen (2006) argues:

...these processes take place deep inside national territories and institutional domains that have largely been constructed in national

terms in much of the world. What makes these processes part of globalisation even though they are localized in national, indeed sub-national, settings is that they are oriented toward global agendas and systems. They are multi-sided, trans-boundary networks and frameworks that can include normative orders; they connect subnational or 'national' processes, institutions and actors, but not necessarily through the formal interstate system.

In order to overcome the problem of fetishizing space, it is important we see it as integral to social processes, and that it is produced from social relations (Lefebvre, 1974). It is both the object and outcome of struggles that take place at multiple scales. Insisting on this means insisting that society and space are integral to each other rather than space being an undifferentiated backdrop against which social relations take place. As Massey argues; '...the spatial is social relations stretched out' (1994: 2). She goes on:

The lived reality of our daily lives is utterly dispersed, unlocalised in its sources and in its repercussions. The degree of dispersion, the stretching, may vary across social groups, but the point is that the geography will not be territorial. Where would you draw the line around the lived reality of your daily life?...If we think space relationally, then it is the sum of all our connections, and in that sense utterly grounded, and those connections may go around the world (Massey, 2005: 184-5).

Taking Sassen's and Massey's points together, it is important that our higher education research imaginaries resist ways of thinking about space as either here *or* there, but rather we see processes at work that involve here *and* there. This is a processual account that we will develop further in the conclusion of this Working Paper.

This way of thinking about the spatial in relation to education enables us to see knowledge production, its circulation, consumption and transformation – both in its official (see Apple, 1990) and unofficial forms – as constituting and being constituted spatially, and that this spatial organisation is a particular geometry of power; an assemblage of moving/institutionalised relations that not only have horizontal and vertical reach, but whose processes are dynamic. And, as Massey argues, since ‘...social relations are imbued with power and meaning, the spatial is as an ever shifting geometry of power and signification’ (1994: 2).

5. Further Conceptual Challenges – Globalisation

Whilst almost all opening remarks by researchers on globalisation state it is a complex and contested idea, there is broad agreement that globalisation is an historical process involving the uneven development and contingent transformation of political, economic and cultural structures, practices and social relations (Hobsbawm, 1999; Jessop, 1999; Mittelman, 2004; Scholte, 2005; Harvey, 2006). One distinctive feature of concern to us is that it involves the transformation of the national as a scale of governing (Sassen, 2006: 1). Taken together, the literatures on globalisation and regionalisation tell stories of the ways in which profound changes are taking place in our worlds; changes that are transforming nation states, our social institutions, their constituent relations, and which demand new ways of thinking about what this means and how best to conceptualize them.

Yet, what of other concepts, such as ‘internationalisation’ and ‘transnationalisation’ and how do these relate to globalisation? In political theory, the idea of the international/internationalisation refers to institutions who derive their legal status from *within* their member state (national), but whose authority extends across national

borders (Genschel and Zangl, 2008: 6). Transnational actors, however, are seen to exercise their authority *beyond* the borders of individual state territories – such as non-governmental organisations, transnational firms, and so on. However, in many circles, these ideas are often confused and therefore confusing, and it is also not always clear when actors are acting based on authority derived from their member states, or when they are exercising authority that is derived from beyond the borders of national states upwards. For example, the OECD is an inter-governmental body in that it acts on behalf of its member states. However, the OECD also exercises considerable influence on non-member countries through the ways it shapes agendas which directly affect them. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD has been very influential in shaping the basis of development in low-income countries, though these countries are not members of the OECD. In this case the OECD is simultaneously an international *and* transnational actor, where which of these labels applies is dependent on the nature of the relations between the different actors. For this reason, we prefer to use the term globalisation, as it avoids confusion, and because the global has the potential to be viewed in more relational ways.

Yet as pointed to in the earlier discussion on spatial fetishism, there are particular conceptual dangers in operating with the ‘above’ and ‘below’ metaphor suggested by global-national-local – for it invites us to view what are actually relational concepts as opposed ideas. The most typical juxtaposition is that the global is represented as an ‘outside/exogenous’ force that acts upon, and shapes, those processes described as ‘inside/endogenous’, or ‘local’. This then reinforces the view of the global as abstract, homogeneous, structural, and without agents or agency, whilst the local is regarded as concrete, diverse, agentic and imbued with democratic notions of bottom-up legitimacy.

It is more useful to see the ‘global’ as a meta-narrative or sliding signifier that needs to be picked apart in order to see the work it does in any one moment. For instance, does invoking globalisation refer to a ‘condition of the world’, ‘discourse’, ‘project’,

‘scale’, ‘the reach of actors’ or ‘habitus’? As a *condition of the world*, this signals an ontological shift – a world that has profoundly changed as a result of the advance of political projects, the advance of new technologies, the blurring of boundaries between national territorial states, and so on. As a *discourse*, the global is invoked as a particular imaginary, often tied to ideas like a ‘global knowledge economy’, ‘global village’, ‘global social justice’, and so on. As a *project*, it is to propose, and set into motion by extending out into ‘global’ space, particular ways of framing social problems and their desirable/preferred solutions. Within higher education this might refer to projects concerned with the privatisation of the sector, new forms of governance – such as university autonomy, the development of learning competences, such as the European Commission’s Tuning Project or the OECD’s Assessment Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO), or increasing student access. As *scale*, it is to register the ways in which platforms for action are constructed – in this case the ‘global’ – from which particular actors, as global actors, claim the legitimate right to advance ideas, to represent constituencies, and to rule or govern. The development of the European Higher Education Area, the East Africa Community, or the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) negotiated through the World Trade Organization, are cases in point. Viewing the global as *reach* refers the horizon of action of particular institutions and actors engaged in different aspects of higher education work, and suggests that reach is also a dimension of power (Allen, 2004). Not all projects have the same capacity to extend out into space in the same way, and those that do – such as world university rankings – are particular kinds of framings of the world that have the capacity to limit the frictions caused by contexts, and contestation. Finally, the global as the *habitus* of subjects, as in ‘a global citizen’, ‘cosmopolitan’, ‘global learner’ focuses attention on the cultural dimensions and outcomes of globalising processes – and the ways in which, in interaction with social processes, we create meanings in the worlds we inhabit.

Yet, if we can return to the idea of the global as a relational idea, then we need to remind ourselves not to essentialize *some* actors, such as the World Bank Group,

located in Washington, USA, as *always* global, or the European Commission in Brussels, as *always* regional. There are many activities of the Bank or the Commission as an institution that are local, such as ‘in-house’ organisational policies and practices. Similarly the Bologna Process, as a regional project, is also global when its model is taken up in countries like Brazil. In other words, it is only when these institutions’ policies are promoted in distant locations that we can view their activity as global or regional. This leads us to suggest that rather than see the global and the regional as operating in some stratosphere – up there – that we see them as situated in places that are made up of a range of spatial relationships – some global, some local and so on. In other words, a particular space is:

...a meeting place of a whole series of complex networks and social relations. Its boundedness is understood not as forming a simple enclosure but as being permeated by the multiple relations that stretch across the globe. The specificity of place is not linked to a place-based identity, for places are traversed by unequal relations of power and struggles to contest these relations (Massey, 1994: 155).

These more diverse and complex ways of understanding the global suggest we need to deploy different methodologies. The global as discourse, for instance, suggests we use some form of discourse analysis, whilst the global as reach, or spatial extension, encourages us to develop ways of understanding education policies as they *move* from a point of origin (local), through space, to be fixed/altered/ in a new locality, or place. The regional as habitus demands we look at the ways in which agents make sense of, and give meaning to their worlds, their place in it, and who they are – for instance as a European citizen.

6. Further Conceptual Challenges – Regionalisms/ Regionalisation

In contrast to work on globalisation, the research on regions, regionalism and regionalisation has been under-developed, but dominant theoretical approaches and explanations have been limited by simplistic assumptions, too heavy a focus on what might count as a proper region, and insufficient consideration as to why regions might emerge in the first place (cf. Hettne and Soderbaum 2000; Breslin, Higgott and Rosamund, 2002; Breslin and Higgott, 2003). And despite a large body of research on higher education in Europe, very little work has emerged from this area of scholarship on what higher education studies might contribute to our understanding of regionalisms/regionalisation as a more general process (for exceptions, see Hartmann, 2008; Robertson, 2010a; Jayasuriya, 2010).

Ravenshill defines regionalisation as the formal collaboration of intergovernmental collaboration between two or more states (2005). However, as Hurrell (1995) points out, this is an overly statist view, and there is some mileage in viewing regionalisation as a process of integration that arises from combinations of markets, private trade and investment flows, the policies and decisions of companies or organisations, as well as state-led initiatives. This wider definition opens up the study of regions to include entities such as the European Union. It also enables us to see the way a range of institutions and other actors, such as the higher education sector, might be drawn into the process of promoting and producing inter-regional relations.

In an analytical/operational sense, regionalism and inter-regionalism is viewed as an ideology that in turn shapes the strategies that give rise to formal institution building (Hettne and Soderbaum, 2000: 457). The content of that ideology cannot be known *a priori*; rather, the content of regional projects and strategies will be shaped by political, economic and cultural objectives, or combinations of these. Inter-regionalism refers to

the interactions and relationships between regions; the politics of how, why and with what outcomes, these relationships are mediated, and through what projects, processes and practices.

Writers on regions identify several waves of regionalism. Accounts of first wave regionalism sought to understand the formation of regional blocs that emerged in the post-World War Two period until the 1980s, such as the European Coal and Steel Community (1952), the Organisation for African Unity (1962) and the Association for South East Asian Nations (1967). However, this theoretical terrain was dominated either by politico-normative approaches which gave priority to the desirability of post-national systems, or functional accounts which considered regions to be the logical outcomes of rational decision making (for instance in the work of Haas, see Breslin and Higgott, 2003: 168).

One outcome of this work was the production of theoretical models of integration. However, this work was largely discontinued by the 1970s as the models were discredited. More than this, first wave regionalism was seen as problematic in that it assumed that the quintessential model of regionalism, the European Economic Community, could and would be replicated elsewhere. When this was not the case, for instance when the Latin American Free Trade area and the East African Common Market not only failed to develop along European lines, but in fact, collapsed (Breslin and Higgott, 2003: 169), writers like Haas were forced to concede they had underestimated the power and interests of nation states.

Second wave regionalism is dated to the 1990s. It emerged with the revitalisation of European integration, on the one hand, and the emergence of a new set of regional free trade agreements, on the other. Two factors were important here; one was the collapse of the Cold War which created a new set of geo-strategic alliances. The second was the rapid extension of neo-liberalism, in particular the idea of freer conditions for trade, meaning that national borders were now regarded as impediments to economic

productivity and growth (Held et al., 1999). While processes of economic globalisation served as a catalyst for regionalism, internal factors also tended to condition the form taken by regional collaboration. Breslin and Higgott (2003: 170) note that the spur to regionalism was particularly strong in East Asia and the Pacific. Asian regionalism, based on consensus and negotiation, however, tended to take a rather different form to that of the EU or the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), both of which are particular configurations of legal instruments and institutions (see also Dale and Robertson, 2002).

Ironically, the Asian crisis in the late 1990s, while posing a serious question about the capacity of the existing Asian regional structures and processes to absorb the crisis, at the same time gave rise to some tighter thinking about regionalism within Asia, including monetary union. One of the outcomes was to ‘...to produce a growing regional self-definition of East Asia as a valid economic space with a discernible political voice’ (Breslin and Higgott, 2003: 171). This suggests that regions are not merely a functional spill-over, the result of closer financial integration and trade, but that they depend upon and are created out of an emergent sense of collective identity. Similarly, Europe is not only an economic space, but it has and continues to emerge out of a project of identity construction which goes hand in hand with economic and political integration, and where sectors like higher education have been crucial to advancing and thickening integration.

Furthermore, regional identities are constructed through projects that might include inter-regional relations, while external challenges (crisis, competition with other regional blocks or nations) may have a catalytic effect on shoring up a sense of regional identity. And while it is often suggested that regions and inter-regionalisms emerge as a reaction to globalisation, some forms of regionalism and inter-regionalism (e.g. ASEM, APEC) are intended to facilitate particular forms of economic globalisation, or to ensure continued participation in the global economy, suggesting that regionalism is both a response to, and a dynamic behind, globalisation. This underlines the fact that

theoretical and methodological approaches to regions and inter-regionalisms must take into account a world order in transformation, and the multi-scalar reconstruction of this world order (Delaney and Leitner, 1997).

More recently, Söderbaum and Langenhove (2006: 6-7) have proposed a ‘generations of regionalisms’ rather than a ‘waves’ approach in order to avoid the confusions that come with the idea of ‘old’ and ‘new’ waves of regions. They argue that classifying regions in a generational sense opens up the possibility of the co-existence of patterns of regionalisms with different empirical qualities, whilst acknowledging that some varieties of regionalism build upon previous generations.

This distinction is important for us in considering regionalisation and higher education. For instance, it makes it possible to view a larger project/space, such as Europe, as composed of sub-sectors/sub-units, all of which are likely to be at different points of development or under-development. For instance, it is only since the late 1990s that higher education has rapidly developed a degree of institutional thickness and embeddedness. On the one hand, this is a response to growing competition in the global economy, and on the other, the result of a concerted effort by the European governing institutions and selected Member States to link higher education to national and regional economic development.

A further point that Söderbaum and Langenhove (2006: 6-7) make is that what characterizes the different generations of regionalisms is their growing institutional thickness, greater complexity and comprehensiveness, the integration of what were parallel (sectoral) processes into closer coordination and engagement with other activities, the re/dispersement of governing activity across the different scales, and a growing global focus (such as inter-regionalisms).

We find this helpful for our thinking on higher education, regions and the global, as we can see a functional and scalar redistribution of the labour of higher education

across these vertical scales, on the one hand, together with greater complexity and differentiation horizontally giving rise to new processes, such as interregionalisms. However we also agree with Söderbaum and Langenhove (2006: 9) who argue that what is important is that each sector advances through theoretically-informed empirical work which is also attentive to the importance of developing and refining new categories through which to look at processes of regionalism, inter-regionalisms and higher education.

7. 'Mappings' of the Higher Education Sector

How can we come to 'know' the changing higher education space; one that we have been arguing has been changing as a result of globalisation. One way is to 'map' higher education. Yet, mapping higher education in ways that register global and regional processes at work requires two conceptual moves. First, we need to place the university within the higher education *sector* generally. Second, we need to map the actors and their activities in this sector, attentive to the ways in which mappings at different times and in different spaces will reveal different, and changing, social and political relationships. There are also different *approaches* to 'mapping' which in turn generate different outcomes for how we see, and understand, what is out there, and what is changing.

In the mapping accounts that follow, we present two contrasting approaches – each of which we have been developing in our own work. One is an approach focused on a *vertical* reading of space and power (scale) (Olds and Robertson, 2011). The other is a *horizontal* reading of space and power (network analysis) (Moutsios, 2010). Our argument will be that neither is better than the other, but that they generate different 'readings' of space, governance, and power, and therefore offer different accounts of what is going on.

Placing universities within the ‘sector’

We begin here by unravelling ideas around the notion of *sector*. A sector refers to a set of institutions and actors whose activities are bundled together and given coherence at the level of representation (such as who can practice as a university academic; definition of a student), and at the level of practice (such as norm setting, for instance, academic autonomy) (see Olds, 2005; Robertson, 2011). And it is the boundaries, or boundary setting and their management – or bordering– that defines what is *inside* and what is *outside* that which comes to call itself ‘*the sector*’. Bordering, boundary management, internal norm-setting, and the reproduction of norms, help to make visible who can be counted as a legitimate actor and who is to be excluded. From this first move, we can pose a series of other questions about processes of globalisation and regionalisation which are reshaping the sector:

- What is the spatial geometry of the sector itself, and those actors/institutions/processes that make up the sector?
- Does it involve new and different scales (local, city, regional, national, supranational)?
- Which actors – old and new – are in the sector?
- What are their purposes and interests, and relationships to the university?
- Which scales do they operate on, and what difference does their spatial location make?
- Do different actors have different points of entry into the sector, and what might this mean for the university?
- Are there different temporal logics at work, and how might time act as a dynamic within and on institutions and the sector?

From the questions above, it is clear that sectors are also dynamic, and that their shape and content at any one point in time is both the object and outcome of political and governance projects, and struggles over meaning. Mapping the sector at different points in time will enable us to move away from the idea of ‘the university’ as a fixed set of social relations, toward one where universities and other related actors are placed into a relationship with a range of other actors and their projects – some of whom are located at other scales (such as the global and regional). On-going projects aimed at reworking the boundaries around the sector, and meanings within, we have

called processes of ‘resectoralisation’ (see also Robertson, 2011). We will return to this in the final section of the paper.

Mapping

In the introduction to this section we noted that mapping is an activity commonly undertaken by researchers where the aim is to find out *what is out there*. ‘Mapping’ is also a common activity in many European Commission-funded projects. The purpose in the European case is both make visible particular activities in member states, and to name these activities in ways that make them subject to the observers gaze (governing, studying etc.). Mapping is thus simultaneously an act of power, *as well as* a means of making power visible: it is concerned with the spatiality of power. However, as Agnew (1999) notes, there are different ways of mapping and representing power in space, which in turn shape our own understandings of what is at work. We pick up Agnew’s observations at the conclusion of this section. For the moment, we want to work with two different kinds of mappings of globalisation, regionalisation, and higher education, to illustrate our point.

A scalar mapping of the higher education sector

We begin here with a scalar mapping of higher education as a sector – placing actors on different scales, from the local to the global – including their goals/interests, temporal logics, and key points of entry. The table below comes from on-going work (cf. Olds, 2010; Olds and Robertson, 2010) aimed at mapping what is going on, and from there, offering a sectoral and spatial reading of higher education as we see it. It is suggestive and not comprehensive. It is also grouping different actors according to what appear to be similar kinds of interests.

What is important in this process is to offer a vertical and horizontal account of actors and their interests that take into account scales, like the global and the regional. In

introducing the vertical dimension, it aims to overcome the view that higher education is pretty much a national affair with some international flavour. In plotting a horizontal account, it aims to identify the ways in which different scales of the sector are also being broken up, in part because of the unbundling of higher education as a largely state monopoly, but also because as higher education becomes commodified, the value chain is extended giving rise to greater and greater degrees of differentiation (of institutions, services, qualifications, statuses) within the sector. However, this largely scalar mapping exercise is not historical in that it does not undertake a plotting of these actors and their logics across time, though there is an implicit assumption that ‘things are changing’. For instance, Olds (2010: 2) argues higher education is a terrain that is now constituted from an assortment of new or substantially transformed stakeholders, many with a global horizon as part of their actions. And as Olds observes:

...this terrain has a different topography, one that *stretches out* more broadly (witness the launch and establishment of the European Higher Education Area, one of the most striking of changes at a global scale), is increasingly riddled with variegated networks and associated epistemic communities, and is tendentially associated with norms that seem to be increasingly valuing concentrations (clustering, categorisation, differentiation, sedimenting, benchmarking) whilst perhaps accepting its corollary (exclusion) (Olds, 2010: 3).

There is also an implicit assumption (see Table 1) that power is organised hierarchically, and that hierarchy is a political arrangement that enables power to be mobilised through formal relations of rule. To some extent, Olds refers to that assumption when he argues that the national scale has ceded considerable power to other scales when he introduces the concept of ‘denationalisation’ (from the work of Sassen, 2006). He states:

Table 1 (from Olds, 2010; Olds and Robertson, 2011)

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
	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

Denationalisation can be broadly defined as the process of reorientation from the national and international to the global. A key element of this concept is that the denationalisation process is initiated from (a) ‘outside’ (e.g. via the activities of transnational corporations), but *also* (b) within the nation-state (e.g. ministry of higher education) and (c) within other national institutions (e.g. a national association of universities) that have traditionally focused on intra-national scale dynamics (Olds, 2010: 8).

However, rather than see the world as hierarchically organised, it is clear Olds treats actors as drawing upon hierarchy as a resource through which to assert their global and regional projects deep inside the national. In other words, national state policies might still be couched in the language of the national, but at least some of them are now oriented to building global systems *inside* the national state. This is the same argument that Wright and Ørberg (2012) make with regard to the OECD/Danish policy interface; that a ‘double shuffle’ strategy was at work – where old national discourses were strategically linked to new global ones, in turn transforming national discourses and structures into global ones.

A network mapping of the higher education sector

A second kind of mapping is undertaken in the work of Moutsios (2010) using a network approach. In Castells’ (2000) well known elaboration, a network is ‘a set of interconnected nodes’ which, by definition, does not have a centre; it is a complex structure of communication, which ensures at the same time unity of purpose and flexibility in its execution (p. 501). It includes (or excludes) nodes around acceptance (or not) of common values, goals and performance standards. Its nodes may differ in size and significance regarding their contribution to the function and goals of the network, expressing unequal, hierarchical relations. However, as long as they are in, all nodes are necessary for the function of the network; that is, it is a structure of asymmetrical interdependence.

In Messner's (1997) theoretisation, networks combine a putative market logic (e.g. decentralisation, flexibility and short-term action) with the traditional logic characteristic of state bureaucracies (e.g. long term strategies, hierarchical relations, homogeneity). Networks combine independence and interdependence; they also ensure participants' authority as well as their commitment in pursuing common goals. With the decisive help of ICT, networks have become a dominant account of organisational form in late capitalism and they include core functions and processes of decision making. Moreover, networks can operate beyond national borders and open parliamentary procedures.

Castells' (2009) latest elaboration on his network society theory produces four categories which Moutsios (2010; 2012) employs in order to present the functioning of the Bologna Process: '*networking power*', '*networked power*', '*network-making power*' and '*network power*', and here we report on work that Moutsios has been developing.

First, *networking power* refers to those actors and organisations included in a network who accumulate valuable resources and exercise gate-keeping strategies towards outsiders, or those who do not follow the network's rules and standards. It is a form of power which establishes relations of inclusion/exclusion and which distributes benefits and costs. Those in the network benefit from its resources, whilst outsiders may see their own substantially devalued.

Viewed in this way, the Bologna Process could be regarded as an illustration of '*networking power*', as both European nation-states and extra-European regions consider the benefits of inclusion, or the costs of exclusion, in terms of their participation in the emerging global competition for knowledge, students and skills. The number of countries that have joined the Bologna Process testifies to this. Launched with the Bologna Declaration of 1999, today the Bologna Process is

implemented in 47 countries (the 27 EU members and 20 non-EU countries located in Europe and Central Asia), which constitute the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Moreover, there are another 23 countries from around the world who participate in the Bologna Process with ‘observer status’, raising the number of all Bologna participant-countries to 70. Why participate? For one, as Robertson and Keeling (2008) point out in their analysis of Australia’s reaction to the Bologna Process, they could not afford to be excluded as it might jeopardise their share of the flow of students from Asia on which their highly lucrative export market depends.

Second, *networked power* refers to the power holders; that is, those who have the ‘relational capacity’ to impose their will on others on the basis of the ‘structural capacity of domination embedded in the institutions of society’ (Castells, 2009, 44). In other words, it refers to the power of selected nodes of the networks to make their own goals into those of the whole network. In the Bologna Process, the strong nodes of the network, the main power holders, are the European Universities Association, the Bologna Follow-Up Group, and the European Commission, as well as ‘consultative members’ such as business interest groups. The role of the European Commission is crucial in actualising the Bologna Process as higher education discourse, and as specific enabling mechanisms and measures to be funded. For instance, the Commission actively supports, financially and institutionally, initiatives such as ‘quality assurance’ through the establishment of ENQA and EQAR (see below for details), the overarching qualifications framework, the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement and Tuning Education Structures.

Third, *networking-making power* refers to programmers and switchers; that is, those who constitute networks and connect and ensure the cooperation of different networks. In Castell’s terms, networking-making power is expressed through: ‘(1) the ability to constitute network(s), and to programme/re-programme the network(s) in terms of the goals assigned to the network; and (2) the ability to connect and ensure the cooperation of different networks by sharing common goals and combining

resources, while fending off competition from other networks by setting up strategic cooperation' (2009, p. 45). The EU/EC's network-making power is manifested in a number of cases. For example, the EU initiated the 'Asia-Europe Meeting' (ASEM) consisting of EU and ASEAN countries, but also other Asian as well as Pacific countries (e.g. China, Japan, S. Korea, Australia and New Zealand). ASEM has developed policy fora in various domains, including education policy. It has established the 'ASEM Education Hub' (AEH) which runs the 'ASEM Rectors' Conference' (RC), promoting cooperation (e.g. scholarships, research and mobility) between European universities and the 'ASEAN University Network'. Some member states of ASEM (Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Australia and New Zealand) also have observer status membership in the Bologna Process.

Fourth, *network power* refers to 'protocols of communication' set by the major nodes of the network; rules that newcomers must abide by once they are given membership. In this regard, power is exercised, not through exclusion, but through the imposition of the rules of inclusion. Rules are negotiable, but once they are set, they are compelling for all nodes. For instance, the Bologna Process sets the rules, criteria and standards about practically all aspects of European universities' functions. We could classify these aspects using Bernstein's (1975) main analytical categories for the 'message systems' of educational provision: a) what counts as valid knowledge (curriculum), b) what counts as valid transmission of this knowledge (pedagogy); c) what counts as a valid realisation of this knowledge (evaluation or 'quality control'); and, we could add, d) what counts as valid institutional organisation (management). The Bologna Process is attempting to define all message systems – a remarkable project indeed, both in its transnational or global reach, as well as in its isomorphic intent. This is being pursued through a number of standard-setting mechanisms.

Taken together, these different modalities of network power provide an account of how regional and global projects of rule have been able to materialise and institutionalise themselves. What is often missing in accounts of networks and nodal

power is the basis on which power, authority, and rule are mobilised. This is an important issue in the study of higher education policy and practice. Our network account suggests how different flows of power strategically enable higher education to become a regional and global project in the absence of a formal state authority. Does the emerging regional and global sphere mobilise new modalities (and spatialities) of power in order to advance a set of interests that might well be thwarted in the face of nationally-organised and institutionalised state power? Are some manifestations of nodal power also forms of nascent state power? And if this is the case, how is legitimacy established? In the following paragraphs, we explore these shifts in how power is organised spatially, with the hope that we can see these different modalities as historically-situated and politically charged.

Mapping and the spatiality of power

The work of John Agnew (1999: 504-7) is particularly helpful regarding mapping actors and interests, as he pays attention to the ways in which power is represented spatially, and how these representations change over time. In other words, when we map, we are drawn into a politics of representation of socio-spatial relations. Agnew draws on the work of French geographers, Durand, Lévy and Retailié (1992), who identify four different idealised models they argue represent shifting historical patterns of political power. The first model represents power in space as ‘an ensemble of worlds’ – with groups more or less discrete from each other, and where power is internally-oriented. Applied to higher education, it suggests that the sector is made up of autonomous islands of activity. The second model – of a ‘field of forces’ – is largely used to explain states as territorial units – with one unit gaining power at the expense of the others. Applied to higher education, we would see universities now placed inside a sector, that itself is viewed as a field of power relations. Bourdieu’s writing on higher education is in this tradition (Bourdieu, 1984). The third is that of ‘a hierarchical network’ – this is the spatial structure of the world economy, in which cores, peripheries and semi-peripheries are linked together by flows. Here we might

plot different universities around the world as sitting in relationship to each other, linked by different sets of formal and informal relations, and having very different statuses. The fourth is that of an ‘integrated world society’ – where political identity and economic integration are structured on a global scale. This latter, more utopian, model also tends to privilege networks that are relatively un-hierarchical. As Agnew argues:

Historically...there has been a hegemonic or directed movement from one to another model. In this spirit, a theoretical scheme can be suggested in which, first of all, the ensemble of worlds model slowly gave way to the field of forces model around 1500 AD... As this was establishing its dominance, the hierarchical network began its rise in and around the framework provided by the state system....Since 1945, the hierarchical network model has become more and more central to the distribution of political power as a result of the increased penetration of state territories by global trade, population and investment flows. With the end of the Cold War which produced an important reinstatement of the field of forces model among the most powerful states, the hierarchical network model is in the ascendancy with signs of the beginning of a trend toward an integrated world model. But this is as yet very much in its infancy (Agnew, 1999: 507).

Applied to universities, we might view this more integrated representation as illustrating the ways in which universities are being linked together around a common set of agendas and goals, with important differences between them being minimised. This may well be the case with the closer integration of universities through aspects of research, student mobility and exchange. However, it underplays the very significant ways in which there are major, and growing, differences between universities globally. Nevertheless, Agnew’s insights are important for they help us recognize the shifting geometries of political power and the ways in which transformations in the

wider social and political realms play themselves out in, on, and through, higher education as a sector and the university as an institution. They are also valuable in a reflexive way; that the models that we choose to illustrate social and political relations are also constitutive of those relations. Choosing different points of entry so that one does not reproduce hegemonic social relations is likely to reveal other kinds of processes at work.

8. Universities, Policy Mobility and Sectoral Transformation

Paralleling the expansion of global and regional processes in education has been an exponential growth in research papers aimed at theorising the *movement* of policy ideas and practices (such as New Public Management, global competence, Bologna Process, quality, research excellence) across national territorial boundaries, and the implications this has for the contexts into which it enters. Here we draw upon some of our own work (Dale and Robertson, 2012) as a basis for thinking about what this means for understanding transformations within the university and across the higher education sector.

A series of different terms is used to describe this phenomenon, ranging from policy transfer to policy borrowing, policy learning, policy mobility and policy travel (see Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). All have as a common concern an attempt to understand the mobilisation, movement, and spread, of education policy and practice across global space. In our view, the movement of policy, largely from central governments into specific localities, is not a new concern in policy studies. However this movement has tended to be viewed as an issue for policy as product and policy as practice – or a question of implementation.

Yet, the movement of policies *across* national territories – making it *trans-boundary* in a more significant way – has stimulated a fresh wave of interrogations, reflections and outputs on this topic. In other words, the globalisation of higher education policy and practice, as transfer, borrowing, learning, and so on, creates explanatory and normative burdens that differ from, and go beyond, those generated by analyses of the movement of policy in a national context. This insight clearly raises the issue of what we might learn about processes of globalisation, regionalisation and higher education that are stimulated by debates over the transfer of policy and practice *across* national borders.

One strategy for opening up a debate about policy transfer is to place centre stage the globalisation of the Bologna Process. This Process, we might argue, is possibly the most extensive and successful example of ‘policy transfer’ in higher education ever. Our strategy will be to consider the picture of the Bologna Process that emerges from the kinds of account based broadly on the policy transfer/borrowing literature and the frameworks it is based on, and to compare that with an alternative, critical political economy approach to understanding globalisation and education.

Our position is that the Bologna Process could not have happened without the changes brought about by globalisation, that it can be seen fundamentally as a response to globalisation in higher education, and that understanding it entails revising the assumptions on which studies of policy transfer draw. Those assumptions were developed in a context dominated by conceptions of *international* transfer (hence methodological nationalist). We suggest a different approach to the understanding of Bologna, drawing on conceptions of the transnational framing of policy, on the one hand, and on critical policy studies, on the other, can provide a different picture and account of the movement of the Bologna Process and its current move to parts of Latin America. In essence this involves us in ‘problematizing the problematic’ of policy transfer in the fullest sense of what this implies – as an approach to framing,

naming and explaining the duality of motion *and* fixity of higher education policy in a globalising world.

There has been a lively and continuing debate about the nature, purposes and outcomes of policy borrowing more generally which enables us to consider the phenomenon and its conceptualisation across wider canvases. Two reasons underlie the basis of the distinction between the policy transfer literature and the approach we will try to advance, and in particular, the way they represent and account for phenomena, such as the Bologna Process. The first is that, since the dominant theme in the transfer literature seems to be how ‘successful’ the transfer is, and frequently how ‘effective’ it is, this limits the possibility of seeing other outcomes than those related to the original purpose. The second reason concerns what is to be explained, and how. When the reasons for the ‘success’ of a policy transfer are so prominent, this inevitably frames both the conceptualisation of the problem and the theoretical and methodological tools to be deployed.

A very useful summary of ‘conventional political science understanding of policy transfer’ has recently been provided by Peck and Theodore (2010). They suggest that these accounts:

...typically posit the existence of a relatively unstructured policy market within which producer-innovators and consumer-emulators engage in freely chosen transactions, adopting policy products that maximize reform goals. In this rational-actor environment, policy transfers are stylized as a distinctively conspicuous category of boundary-crossing practice, the occurrence of which is (implicitly or explicitly) traced to superior performance in exporting jurisdictions....(becoming) in effect, success stories, and as such...objects of emulation and learning. (They are)... predominantly concerned with ex post facto evaluations of ‘successful’ transfers, often in situations of observed or alleged convergence, which are

typically judged according to surface similarities in policy designs, scripts, and rationales. (Peck and Theodore, 2010, 169)

One basic difference between the two sets of problematisations is that the ‘orthodox’ literature attempts to address the questions ‘How does Bologna work?’ and ‘What are its domestic effects?’ In contrast, we see the most important questions generated by the Bologna Process as: ‘What work does it do, and for whom?’, and ‘What is the framework through which it realises this?’ There are both ‘internal’ and ‘external’ differences between the ‘orthodox’ approaches and those we are seeking to advance. On the one hand, seeing Bologna as a form of policy transfer is made very difficult in so far as the ‘transferers’ and the ‘recipients’ are essentially the same people – national Ministers and Ministries responsible for higher education. On the other hand, while, of course, both foci are necessary, rather than focusing on the *context of Bologna* (where did it come from and what makes it like it is?’), the orthodox emphasis is very much on ‘*Bologna as context*’ (how does it affect national higher education?’).

The Bologna Process may be seen as possibly the most extensive and effective means of bringing about levels of convergence of education policy so far witnessed, yet it shares few of the elements and mechanisms that are associated with existing studies of policy transfer. This difference is due largely to the changing circumstances – especially those can we short-handedly refer to as globalisation – in which Bologna emerged and developed. We learn a lot from that work about the nature of national higher education systems, of their responses to attempts to ‘modernise’ them on a common basis, and about how conceptions of ‘the University’ are also undergoing sometimes radical changes.

However, such approaches do not enable us to capture what is distinctive about the relationships between globalisation and higher education. They represent, in essence, a ‘stretching’ of previous conceptual frameworks that is ultimately limiting of the

possibilities of analysis. Many of these studies resemble what we have referred to earlier as methodological ‘isms’ in their adherence to a particular set of assumptions whose validity and relevance are taken for granted, even when the political, economic, social and educational conditions that they are analysing have altered in highly significant and relevant ways. Our argument is that for all its sophistication and relevance, this body of work does illustrate clearly what we take to be the under-recognition of the nature and importance of the changes in both the ‘real’ world and in our tools for analysing it in ways outlined above.

Here we outline the basis of what elsewhere (Dale and Robertson, 2012) we have called a critical grammar of education policy movement. First, it is attentive to the ways in which *categories* that are constructed, contain, and order, particular social groups and problems (and not others), making them the object (or not) of education policy interventions and solutions. Naturalising categories enables governing to also take place through the mundane, routine, and commonsensical. The purpose of a critical approach is to reveal the constructed nature of categories. In doing so, it brings into view the *power* of some categories to move more easily over topographies, avoiding the frictions of uneven development and difference. The Bologna Process is a good example here; as a project it has been able to move across diverse cultural, political and economic topographies and be inserted into new spaces, in part because of politics of its particular *context of reception* (Dale and Robertson, 2012).

We also need to see key actors and scales of action, such as the state, and the national, as a nodal platform for advancing education, as themselves undergoing major changes in their geometry, form, and reach, with major implications for the sites, structures and subjects of higher education policy. In other words, we also need to take account of the *context of contexts* which makes some policy problems and their solutions visible and viable, and others not. Jessop (2005) calls this ‘structural selectivity’. If policy is moving over a (global) space involving national territorial borders, who, how, and with what outcomes, are education policy problems and their solutions being

constructed, projected, contested, and materialised? At the current conjuncture, the movement of education policies across national borders, particularly by international agencies, or private actors, reveals a complex set of issues – particularly when these national borders encompass different ways of understanding sovereignty and rule, and entail different education-state-society contracts.

Second, a critical grammar of higher education policy mobility would focus attention on the *logic of intervention* entailed in any policy problem definition and its solution. At the heart of this is the need to distinguish between *processes*, *outputs* and *outcomes*, though they frequently appear as if they are identical. Very simply, processes are means through which intended or unintended outputs may, or may not, be effectively produced, whilst outcomes are the intended or unintended achievements of outputs. It is the distinction between outputs and outcomes that is crucial here. We could take an output as a specific intended goal of a policy – to increase the numbers of students who are mobile as part of their studies, for instance, or to increase the number of foreign students recruited to local Universities. Outcomes, by contrast, are the wider goals of the policy – the ultimate purpose of the outputs produced. By focusing on the logic of intervention regarding the Bologna Process, we can see that it is about outcomes rather than outputs. It specifies outputs – the action lines, etc. – but they are seen as means towards a set of outcomes – *a stronger Europe*, a bigger share of the international market for students, a global presence for Europe, and so on. Thus the logic of intervention applies essentially to outcomes rather than outputs. So, we may see convergent outputs in Bologna, but they should be seen as not only important in themselves, but much more as a means towards a common outcome.

Third, a critical grammar problematises claims to convergence, precisely because the specificities of historical institutional structures places limits on replication. Convergence is also a trickier concept than is often recognised. Where it becomes the sole, or dominant, measure of the success of a policy like Bologna, it tends to crowd out other possible outputs and accounts of it. This isolation of convergence as an

output is a logical consequence of a linear, means-end logic that is assumed and followed by many studies of policy transfer; it can be seen to be relevant and measurable. Against this, we favour an approach where goals are tendentially generated rather than pre-specified, as in the case of convergence in the linear model. As well as crowding out other possible outputs at a national level, a focus on convergence also distracts us from the recognition that ‘convergence’ can occur at input, output, policy and process levels, as noted above, but needs also to be similarly multiplied when we consider the possible geographical scales of convergence, such as sub-national, national, regional and global.

9. Conceptualising the Transformation of Higher Education

How might we understand the nature of the transformations that are at work both within the higher education sector, in general, and within the university, in particular? How has our own work addressed these issues, and what have we learnt from talking productively across disciplinary, theoretical and methodological divides? What insights might we derive that help us move beyond the ‘always present’ limitations of where we are now?

In this section we outline three, rather different, conceptual and methodological approaches to the study of social and political transformation. The first is a *top-down*, or more structural approach inviting a methodology we call ‘studying down’. A second is a more *bottom-up* agentic, or cultural approach, called ‘studying up’ and this invites a third methodology we call ‘studying through’. This last approach aims to connect cultural and social worlds to larger processes of governance, power and social change.

‘Studying down’

‘Studying downward’ tends to be equated with a more structural, long run, approach to understanding social transformations. An example is our use of Sassen’s (2006) concepts of ‘capability’ and ‘tipping point’ to talk about path-shaping changes in higher education and how new articulations of the higher education environment are taking shape (Robertson and Keeling, 2008). For Sassen, ‘capability’ and ‘tipping points’ are two key elements that enable us to examine foundational transformations in complex systems over time. ‘Capabilities’ are defined by Sassen as:

...collective productions whose development entails time, making, competition, and conflicts, and whose utilities are, in principle, multivalent because they are conditioned in the character of the relational systems within which they function. That is to say, a given capability can contribute to the formation of a very different relational system from the one that it originates in (Sassen, 2006: 7-8).

In applying this concept to the study of the emerging European Higher Education Area, we argue that capabilities are *produced* through discursive and material processes that are anchored in political projects. The production of capabilities involves actors or institutions struggling over ideas, resources, and the embedding of power in institutions and so on, but at the same time they are dynamic, contingent and incomplete processes. As a result they are *fluid*. However, power is *relational* so that a capability has to be seen by others as having some force or possible set of outcomes – even if that capability is amplified in others’ imaginations and used for purposes that were not intended, such as endogenous changes. Its power derives from the fact that it *can have effects* on other systems. Capabilities can also include technological, organisational, and natural resources and, as such, they are *concentrations* of material and discursive power (Cox, 1996: 98). A given capability can also contribute to the

formation of a very different relational system to the one that it originated in. We might argue, therefore, that the EU regionalising project is now contributing to the formation of a very different relational system – one that is both more global and also transforming national logics in other parts of the world.

Sassen introduces a second element for understanding social and political transformations – the idea of a ‘tipping point’ (Sassen, 2006: 7) as:

...identifying the dynamics involved in capability switching relational systems and/or organising logics. That is to say, this type of analysis can accommodate the fact of tipping, or the ‘event’...rather than being confined to an outcome (p. 9).

Sassen’s focus on tipping points enables her to identify the dynamics that shifted or switched the post war logic to another. To identify the ‘tipping point’ means looking closely at the dynamics, the mechanisms, the act, the event, the processes, involved in shifting the register of effect so that there is no easy turning back, so that the new logic is set in train.

In the case of Europe, it could be argued that the tipping point toward a more integrated *assemblage* of global higher education was made up of the following dynamics: an expanded Europe as a result of new accession countries joining; the insertion of a more assertive neo-liberal agenda in Europe following the Mid-Term Review of Lisbon (Kok, 2004); a single architecture for European higher education structured as a tiered system for global competitiveness; Europe’s globalising interests in search of global talent including the return to Europe of researchers; the enmeshment of exporting economies like Australia in multiple world regions, including Europe; the emergence of China and India as potential markets and powers, and the strategic interests of all players in having a stake in Europe; endogenous politics in the USA where Europe’s knowledge economy is amplified for its ‘shock value’ which in turn gives Europe capability; the undiminished dependence of the USA on the steady flow of graduates from Europe as well as other parts of the world.

The tighter a nation is linked into the global economy, the more it will feel pressured to jump track into the new logic which is being produced. However, these switches are not automatic; they are the result of competition and conflict.

Analysis of higher education in ‘Europe’ shows that we are dealing with a highly complex and interlinked set of processes and relations. In all of these geopolitical spaces, higher education has become regarded as a critical ‘motor’ for national and regional competitiveness in the global economy, and a global battle has begun for the minds and markets to support this. It is evident that these national and regional higher education sectors have become more closely woven into the global system, though the precise nature and consequence of that relationship varies as a result of their different histories, the size and shape of their economies, geo-political interests, internal political arrangements, the specific nature of the higher education sector, the kinds of development strategies that are deployed, and so on.

‘Studying up’

In contrast to approaches that study down, Nader (1972) proposed ‘studying up’. This approach, adopted by disciplines such as anthropology or sociology, explores how people’s lives are shaped by, but also themselves shape bureaucratic hierarchies and systems of power. It takes an example of a problem in everyday life and traces the roles and responsibilities of all the layers of departments, agencies and organizations concerned. It asks how people understand, interact with and influence these agencies, and how aspects of systems of governance are also invisible to people and disguise their operations and power. This line of investigation sees human behaviour as based upon the meanings which people attribute to them and which they bring to situations, and that behaviour is not caused in any mechanical way (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). In essence, peoples’ behaviours are continually constructed and reconstructed on the basis of their interpretations of the situations they are in. This approach gives access to the meanings that guide behaviour – such as participant observation. The

concept of culture is thus central in ethnography – that is, the cultural and symbolic aspects of behaviour or a cognitive map of meanings.

The issue facing ethnography in studies of globalisation and higher education is how to ‘study up’ and connect to wider processes and structures. One line of investigation is suggested by James Rosenau (2008), a scholar of globalisation and global governance. In his recent work, Rosenau argues for ‘studying up’ in order to reach the global in the local. In reversing the conventional link between theory and method, so that method comes first to be followed by theory, Rosenau (2008) argues:

...if all of the dimensions of globalization are sustained by individuals at the micro level as well as by diverse organizations at the macro-level, one is faced with the enormous theoretical task of grasping how actors at the two levels shape each other’s orientations and behaviours. The task is enormous because the preponderance of inquiries into globalization focuses almost exclusively on macrophenomena (p. 308).

The way forward, he suggests, is to start work with the micro-level and take it up, and from there to ask: ‘What is this a case of?’ with the key word being ‘this’. This forces us to then engage in generalisation, or theorising – to offer an explanation of clusters of behaviours. From here it is important to be able to draw upon explanations of globalisation – such as flows across (national territorial) borders of ideas, people, institutions, and so on, and to ask about the nature of the relations between things (power, authority). In our case, we would be working with theories of both the global and the regional, as well as identifying specific processes at work on the higher education sector. The aim of this approach is to avoid the temptation of seeing the global as macro and the local as micro. The challenge is to avoid asking ‘what is this a case of?’ making generalisations and leaping to levels of abstraction; instead the focus is on the processes to be explained. If the global is also within, and local, then we need other ways of conceptualising, which avoid this trap.

'Studying through'

Our own conceptual and methodological move is to develop what we are calling 'studying through' (Reinhold 1994 cited in Shore and Wright 1997, Wedel 2004, Wright and Reinhold 2011). This is an approach for studying events and interactions in a process of change that ranges across several scales and through time, and through which to see wider transformation in ordering concepts and forms and mechanisms of governance and rule. Our purpose in proposing this line of thinking is to hold onto the insights that an anthropological/cultural approach generates, in conversation with a political economy of globalisation. Here the work of Shore and Wright (2011: 1) is particularly helpful. They argue that policies are 'domains of meaning' that are themselves part of larger processes at work – in this case – governance, power and social change. By viewing policies as windows onto political processes they avoid seeing these processes as out there, and constraining. Such an approach is interested in the ways in which 'fragments of culture and society are brought into new alignments with each other to create new social and semantic terrains' (ibid: 2). In so doing, '...policies create new social and semantic spaces, new sets of relations, new political subjects and new webs of meaning' (ibid: 1).

In deploying a 'studying through' conceptual and methodological approach, we are particularly interested in how trans-border processes, or those that come to name themselves as 'global', 'regional', 'higher education sector', are given social life and appear, in turn making other possibilities absent. The work of Nielsen (2010) on 'figuration' is potentially helpful here. Nielsen argues for a rather different approach to making sense of global, regional and national policy frames. Using a figuration approach – that is, one that is interested in processes through which social life is made visible – Nielsen (ibid: 17) explores how a figure, such as a student, both embodies and co-produces a particular 'world'.

But are there ways of ‘studying through’ that are also attentive to the multiplicity of social worlds that are being made visible. Burawoy et al.’s (2000) work on global ethnographies is one entry point – where they focus on global forces, trans-border movements and transnational connections. However, the more significant insight from their work is to insist that what is important is not to open up studies to the global, but that the global, or we would argue ‘globals’, is the object of investigation, as Nielsen is also arguing above.

10. Toward a Reconceptualisation

We began this working paper by arguing that significant transformations in higher education, and particularly those associated with globalisation and regionalisation, demanded the development of new theoretical and methodological tools. And whilst there is a considerable amount of work underway, we suggested that this was held back in part because much of the research on higher education tends to take an organisational view of ‘the university’. The purpose of this working paper has been to take that challenge face on; by bringing together the collective intellectual resources of a group of scholars who draw from different disciplines (anthropology, sociology, education, geography, political economy) and who are developing new methodological approaches with the intention of reconceptualising the nature of the issues and the resources (conceptual/methodological) necessary to work forward.

This Working Paper enables us to capture what we believe the issues are, and how we might address these. For the moment they take the form of a series of *working propositions* which will feed into the URGE Project’s future work on rethinking higher education research in a way that takes wider regional and global dynamics into account. These are:

1. The need to develop a **sectoral** account of higher education that is also attentive to the **resectoralisation** of higher education, and whose processes involve both vertical and horizontal differentiation (*studying sectoral assemblages*);
2. The need for a focus on **processes** at work spatially, and over time, which are attentive to the ways in which borders, orders and identities are being both erased *and* new ones constructed (*studying and-*);
3. The development of a methodology that is neither top-down or bottom-up, but which studies the ways in which forms of social life are transformed **across spaces** (trans-local/trans-sectoral/trans-disciplinary) and points in **time** (trans-historical) through the deployment of innovative methodologies, such as figuration, frictional events, ‘follow that’ (*studying through*).

This means moving away from an organisational approach to the study of universities, to a *sectoral* approach; one that is attentive to the shifting and re/assembling of social and political projects within the sector, in turn revealing larger processes at work.

Studying ‘sectoral assemblage’

This approach alerts us to the ways in which projects, politics, and processes are advanced that involve the de-and re-shaping of the sector, including the categories and practices that make some forms of social life visible, and give them meaning. It also means going beyond a simple *topographical* account, which implies the study of a terrain to make visible its features – such as its geographical shape, the presence of actors, and cultural artefacts. Rather, we favour an account that sees space in more *topological ways*; the study of a terrain where the focus is on continuity and connectivity, as well as those elements that are being transformed, and those that are made absent. Why do some forms of social life and their meanings endure, despite a radical reworking of the sector, and others do not? Why do some forms of social life come to life, and others are produced as absent? What can we take from this for a critical engagement in studying higher education processes?

Our approach also involves tracing/mapping *processes* at work which are giving rise to the changing actors, interests, projects and sites involved in the re/working of higher education as a sector. Heuristically we might think about this work as re/created or re/distributed in a ‘functional and scalar division of the labour of education’ (Dale, 2003). However, this reworking has, as we have argued earlier, *both* vertical *and* horizontal dimensions.

The idea of a functional and scalar division of the labour of education is intended to indicate the need for, and to provide a means of, going beyond (i) methodological nationalism (the national does it all); (ii) methodological statism (‘the state does it all’); (iii) methodological higher educationism (that the categories through which we know higher education are assumed as fixed) and (iv) spatial fetishism (that the spatial reorganization of higher education is viewed as politically neutral). Throughout this working paper we have shown that all of these *isms* need to be challenged if we are to understand the state of play, and what is at stake. As we argued above, this means national states are no longer (only) barriers to free trade, but can become part of an infrastructure that promotes it, and in which it can flourish. It is important to recognise that this is not a formal or static process, but to a degree contingent on existing arrangements. It works through particular mediating structures – for instance, the Open Method of Coordination guiding European-level governance (Dale and Robertson, 2009), the progressing of the Bologna Process (Keeling, 2006), or the development of the OECD’s global indicators.

This demands a more complex account of power, and how it features in theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of global and regional processes as they give form, and meaning, to higher education as a sector, universities as institutions, and higher education workers (students, teachers, administrators). No process is ever innocent in terms of politics. Mapping, for instance, engages us in ways of looking at the spatiality of power. And as Agnew argues, political power is never exercised equally everywhere, in part because power pools up in centres because of a

concentration of resources (for instance, as a result of finance, expertise, the secondment of power to higher levels of political hierarchies). Political power is also exercised from sites that vary in their geographical reach. This reach can be hierarchical or network based – so that sometimes power flows from one place to another through clients or intermediaries; in other cases it short circuits hierarchies and moves directly. Working both with networks and hierarchies help us to avoid the cul-de-sacs that come with being complicit with hegemonic representations of power. As Allen and Cochrane argue: ‘what is politically at stake...is that such an approach is able to show how the state’s hierarchical powers have not so much been rescaled or redistributed as reassembled in terms of spatial reach’ (2010: 1073). Reach here means those arts of governing that enable the state to permeate and penetrate those spaces that hitherto had been unreachable. They add;

...it is *not* that state hierarchies have transformed themselves into horizontal networking arrangements, but rather that the hierarchies of decision-making that matter are *institutional* and not scalar ones. ...In that sense, the apparatus of state authority is not so much ‘up there’ or indeed ‘over there’ as part of a spatial arrangement within which different elements of government, as well as private agencies, exercise powers of reach that enable them to be more or less present within and across ...political structures (ibid: 1074).

Drawing on Sassen’s (2006) work, and her use of ‘assemblage’ to signal a new geography of state power, they suggest that different bits and pieces of institutional authority are drawn within reach of one another. State hierarchies, together with private agencies, partnerships and supranational institutions may, in that sense, be seen as part of a geographical assemblage of distributed authority in which power is continually being renegotiated. Public private partnerships are one example of this reworking of institutional boundaries, sectors, and the redistribution and reassembling of authority. However future work will need to ensure that assemblages are not simply viewed as coincidental, contingent activities. Rather assemblages will have their own

forms of structural and strategic selectivities that produce and reproduce political projects and social relations.

Studying ‘and’

In arguing for studying ‘*and*’, we want to emphasise the processual nature of social life. That is, we need to be attentive, for example, to new points of fixity in our accounts of flows *and* motion. In other words, processes of making invisible are accompanied by other forms of social life that are given visibility – the point that Nielsen (2010) is arguing with ‘figuring’. In studies of the globalisation of higher education, we can see the collapsing of boundaries being accompanied by new bordering processes, in turn giving rise to new ordering practices and subjectivities (cf. Robertson, 2011). Elsewhere (see Robertson, 2011) and in this paper, we have elaborated four re/bordering and re/ordering processes at play emerging from wider processes of globalisation and regionalisation which are in turn changing the geography and politics of education spaces. These processes include de/re-statisation, de/re-nationalization, de/re-sectoralisation and re/de-politicisation. *De/re-statisation* broadly describes transformations in the structures, strategies and spaces that have defined the modern welfare state in many western societies; broadly the result of neoliberal policies which have reworked the borders between the state, civil society and economy, on the one hand, and scales of governing, on the other. *De-re/nationalisation* involves processes where the activities that were once concentrated at the national scale – including the state’s political and economic capacities – are now being territorially and functionally reconfigured along a series of spatial levels – sub-national, national, supranational, and trans-local, with ‘national territory’ and ‘state authority’ now assuming new meanings. *De-(re) sectoralisation* describes the unbundling of what is conceived of as ‘the higher education sector’. Clearly any sector is a construction; one that is composed of a range of inter-dependent actors, their norms and practices. When the constitution of the sector changes dramatically in terms of actors and meanings, we can say that a process of de and re-sectoralisation is

at work. In seeking to understand these dynamics as a process, we would be attentive to the erasures of some boundaries and identities which had come to define the possibilities and practices within the sector, *as well as* the creation of new ones. *De/re/politicisation* refers to processes that remove from view interests and power, such as the quantification and representation of ‘quality’ (as in league tables and rankings) so that political questions are presented as technical or objective processes), or where the publicness of a policy, programme or practice, is uncontestable, placing politics in the realm of the market. This in turn constructs the political in new ways; as linked to consumption and the market, and not claims against the state.

Studying ‘through’

Finally, in proposing a ‘*study through*’ conceptual and methodological approach, we hope to avoid the cul-de-sacs and confusions that are generated through the conflation of the global with wider structural processes. Our aim is to bring the global into view, not just as a political project, but to attempt to answer the questions: What new forms of social life are constitutive of higher education, and its scaling as regional and global? What are their genealogies and what interests are involved? Where are the new tensions and contradictions in making learning lives, on the one hand, and global and regional (and national) higher education spaces and places, on the other?

URGE members are experimenting with several ways of studying ethnographically the transformation of the idea and the enactment of the university and the emergence of new forms of research, higher education and the sector itself. Some study across sites and through time. For example Wright is following the keywords, concepts and provision of reform policies as they are debated and contested in international and national forums, by university leaderships and among colleagues and teaching groups. Another way (pursued by Shore) is to follow moments of conflict, dispute and contestation where diverse visions of the university and of academic work come to a head. A third approach (developed by Nielsen) also takes its point of departure in

frictional events and negotiations. She explores how actors (in her case, students), in discussing their course and their engagement with their studies and more widely with the university, are not only depicting and enacting particular figures of the student but simultaneously conjuring up a world in which such figures are located. Drawing on Anna Tsing (2011), Nielsen refers to this as ‘worlding’ and this offers a fruitful way of conceptualising how, in the process of transforming universities, actors are not only negotiating their own identity and activities, but shaping their own institutions and the university world. The challenge of developing such methodologies that will connect ethnographic and political-economic perspectives on process of creating new university worlds is taken up in the second work package of the URGE project.

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