



University Reform, Globalisation and Europeanisation (URGE)

URGE was a multidisciplinary programme of knowledge exchange that examined how processes of regionalization and globalization are redefining the nature, mission and scope of universities.

The Partners:

1. Department of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark (Project Coordinator Prof. Sue Wright)
2. Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, UK (Coordinator Prof. Susan Robertson)
3. Dept of Anthropology & European Institute, Auckland University (Coordinator Prof. Cris Shore).

From 2010-2013, URGE involved 25 staff from the three universities in a programme of international exchange visits, workshops and publications aimed at developing research training, knowledge transfer and future research. The long-term aim was to create enduring partnerships between three established research centres specialising on different aspects of university reform.

URGE was funded by the EU's FP7 Marie Curie 'International Research Staff Exchange Scheme', the Erasmus mobility scheme, and New Zealand's Ministry of Research, Science and Technology (MORST).

URGE's Objectives

Denmark, Britain and New Zealand have extensively reformed their universities with the aim of increasing their competitiveness in the knowledge economy. The project asked: What is *actually* going on in apparently similar processes of university reform? Are processes of creating an EHEA not only preparing Europe for global competition but also acting as a model and motor for globalisation in other regions? How does New Zealand position itself between several competing strategies for regional and global advantage in the trade in higher education? How do academics engage with such processes of university reform? How are these processes affecting their conduct, their work, and their ideas of the very purpose of universities?

Work programme

URGE's programme was organised in 6 paired Work Packages:

Theory and Methodology. Work Packages 1 & 2 developed a new conceptual framework and associated research strategies to gain deeper theoretical and empirical understandings of how university practices interact with processes of globalisation.

Policies. Work Package 3 compared how higher education is being 'coordinated' across Europe and in other global regions and Work Package 4 explored how universities are being reshaped as knowledge organisations.

Impact. Work packages 5 & 6 developed extended case studies to examine how all of the above processes are reshaping academics' research practices and conduct (Work Package 5) and the mission and social purpose of the university (Work Package 6).

Achievements

The work packages were carried out through 40 highly successful visits lasting 1-6 months. Visitors gave 24 research seminars, 5 PhD courses and contributed to 11 major conferences and workshops, resulting in 9 working papers, over 40 published articles, and a book proposal sent to an international publisher.

The work packages yielded the following scientific achievements:

1. Work Package 1 developed a new framework for conceptualising how universities are being transformed through participation in strategies for regional and global competitiveness. This includes new ways to map the higher education sectors, to analyse the creation of higher education regions, and three takes on processes of globalisation: studying down, studying up; studying through.

2. Work Package 2 turned this conceptual framework into research methodologies which combine the strengths of macro-level political economy with micro-level ethnographic and interpretive approaches to empirical data. New methodologies have been tried out in research projects spawned by this programme.
3. Work Package 3 identified a major shift in the formation of Europe as a region. Whereas most studies of the Bologna Process treat 'Europe' as an external context with the potential to affect national policies, since 2000, European Commission communications on 'the Europe of Knowledge' 'thicken' the idea of 'Europe' itself. They assert 'Europe' as a dynamic actor, shaping and framing a new concept of 'knowledge' and a parallel higher educational sector.
4. Work Package 4 explored the multiple roles of universities as 'knowledge organisations' in international relations, economic development and critical contributions to the development of society. It coined the term 'academic entrepreneurialism' and generated synergies in the design of two new studies of this phenomenon in UK and New Zealand.
5. Work Package 5 made a fine-grained analysis of research assessment regimes in New Zealand, Denmark and the UK to identify how their detailed designs systematically disadvantage certain categories of academics and academic fields, and affect individuals' work. This work package generated three new projects on the conduct and identities of researchers.
6. Work Package 6 examined how reform processes are transforming the social purpose of the university. A conference, the 'Death of the Public University?', analysed student and academic campaigns over the future of the university. Symposiums at Copenhagen and Auckland elaborated critiques of current trends developed in the previous work packages and outlined alternative models for the organisation and governance of universities.

Benefits

URGE's visits, seminars, workshops and collaborative writing have created multiple links between academics in the three centres of expertise on university reform. Participants have gained deep knowledge and appreciation of each other's research and of the ways in which universities are engaging with the challenges of regionalisation and globalisation. The three universities' research support administrators engaged in a parallel programme of visits. They learnt from each other, helped academics create new international cross-disciplinary collaborative projects and furthered knowledge transfer between EU and 3rd Country partners.

The knowledge generated gives policy makers an empirically based understanding of how reforms impact on universities and their research capacities from the points of view of academics, administrators and students. The results give them a new way of mapping the sector, a new concept of academic entrepreneurialism and point towards alternative models for relating the university to society.

URGE's knowledge exchange and networking is the basis for a successful EU FP7 PEOPLE ITN project, Universities in the Knowledge Economy (UNIKE). 10 socio-economic actors have joined the consortium and 17 Asia-Pacific universities, in order to compare the new roles and organisation of universities in European and the Asia-Pacific Rim. URGE's nurturing of early stage researchers has been developed into an ambitious training programme, with secondments and international exchanges for 15 fellows. URGE has also resulted in six other new collaborative research projects, continuing beyond the end of the project.

Keywords: Universities, re-sectoralisation, knowledge organisations, academic entrepreneurialism, innovation, third mission, academic identity, university governance, Europe, UK, Denmark, New Zealand.

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