



Universities in the Knowledge Economy – UNIKE

Overview of the UNIKE project

Aims of UNIKE project

What are the changing roles and scope of universities in emerging global knowledge economies and regions? The first aim of the UNIKE project is to train a networked group of critical researchers who will examine these issues and especially compare developments in Europe and the Asia-Pacific Rim. The second aim of the UNIKE project is to generate potential research leaders who are committed and able to develop doctoral education in their own institutions and internationally.

Description of UNIKE project

In Europe, governments have embraced international agendas for university reform (put forward by the European Union, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, World Economic Forum, UNESCO and the World Bank) on the understanding that the future lies in the development of an ideas-driven competitive global knowledge economy. By arguing that the two ways to compete successfully in this economy are through transfer of research findings into innovative products and through a higher education system that can attract international trade and produce a highly skilled population, universities are placed at the centre of strategies to prosper in this new economic regime. The European approach to competing in the global knowledge economy is to create a European Research Area (ERA) and a European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Other kinds of strategies have formed in other world regions. These strategies have to be understood within a geographic shift in emerging centres of power from Europe to the Asia Pacific, and particularly East Asia. The UNIKE project aims to generate new perspectives on the transformation of an institution central to policy projections of the future.





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Work package 1, 'Concepts and theories'

The above research agenda calls for new theories and methods for comparing and analysing the transformation of universities globally and regionally. Research on coordination among signatories to the Bologna Process, stretching from Europe to the Urals and central Asia, which focuses on the policy's own high order frameworks and abstract concepts, rarely uncovers what similarities and diversities are actually emerging on the ground. How, in what ways, with what outcomes are processes of creating the ERA and EHEA not only preparing Europe for global competition but also acting as a model and motor for globalisation in other regions? How, in what ways, and with what outcomes is this model being projected through inter-regional organisations, such as ASEM (Asia-European Meetings)? What other strategies and visions for the role of universities in the formation of the Asia-Pacific region are emerging? How do alternative models (hubs, networks, learning cities, higher education areas) intend to overcome the rigidities of existing, largely national, universities?

Work Package 2, 'Trends and developments'

Universities can no longer be studied as isolated institutions. Rather, a new ecology of companies, financiers and, government agencies is forming around academic work, whose composition and operations, key concepts, and articulations to the existing sector are poorly understood. Our preliminary investigations indicate that this new ecology is much more complicated than reported to date – involving a range of actors often not visible at first glance. These include firms recruiting students internationally and brokering student mobility, think tanks, incubators which sit on university campuses and science parks, commercial and 'open' organizations experimenting with different ways of publishing research, publishing firms who have become active in developing auditing, citation and ranking technologies, consultants advising universities how to improve their rankings, firms conducting student satisfaction surveys, or companies providing bespoke packages for institutions aimed at developing creative individuals, cities and regions. At the same time, universities which still receive significant investments of public funds are subject to new forms of accountability. They are encouraged to be more outward facing toward their publics and to harness new digital technologies to transform the dissemination of knowledge. Similarly, some academics are responding to the changing environment by creating new roles as academic entrepreneurs engaged in social as well as commercial enterprises.



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Work Package 3, 'Policies and practices'

This work package explores the dynamic relationship between the 're-missioning' of universities and their funding, governance (decision-making for control, accountability and regulation) and management. How is this suite of control technologies making possible and facilitating the trends and developments explored in work package 2? What are the routes to their adoption in differing regions? How have they been embedded in institutions and what effects are they having on organisational forms and ethos, and on academic identities? For instance, the introduction of commercial accounting approaches in a university may lend power to finance professionals at the expense of academic autonomy and also redefine the institution as one with a profit-seeking motive. How do managers, academics and students in their everyday practices adopt, modify or contest such control technologies and associated institutional, national and trans-national policies? Do they take their own alternative initiatives? There is a need to trace out processes of transformation spanning trans-national, national, institutional, departmental and local scales and to grasp a complex mixture of compliance, contestation and transformation to understand how academic practices are changing. Most innovatively, this work package will seek to map possible alternative funding, governance and management regimes of control which might have wholly different, and perhaps more beneficial, impact on the transformation of universities and the working lives of managers, academics and students.

Research training programme

The three work packages run concurrently and organise the research programme and training activities.

Each work package encompasses five doctoral or post doctoral projects, which are named and outlined in the documents **Individual doctoral projects** and **Individual post-doctoral projects**. Each successful candidate will be based at one of the partner universities and individually supervised by the person named in the description of the project. Doctoral researchers may choose a second supervisor from the UNIKE partners.

Many of the projects involve a 3-5 month secondment to an associated partner who is an industrial or 'socio-economic' actor, shaping the environment for universities in Europe or the Asia-Pacific Rim. These include Times Higher Education (World University Rankings), Berghahn Books, Academic Cooperation Association, GHK Consulting, the Association of Pacific Rim Universities, Sino-Danish Centre in Beijing, European Council of Doctoral Students, Magna Charta Observatory, and the Centre for Innovation and Research in Graduate Education, University of Washington. A further 17 universities, with expertise on university reform all around the Asia Pacific Rim are associated partners and are willing to host visiting researchers, participate in workshops and act as a resource for information and contacts.

In addition to their individual doctoral or post-doctoral research project, participants will engage in two UNIKE workshops and one UNIKE summer or winter school per year. Each of these training events has three elements: scientific exploration of 'state of the art' knowledge, theories, concepts and methods; complementary skills needed for a research career, either in academia or in the burgeoning commercial, consulting and policy fields associated with the knowledge economy; and a specific aspect of graduate





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education, drawing on the partners' own practices and international research literature. Many of the associated partners will participate in these workshops, both providing 'state of the art' knowledge and teaching complementary skills that are needed to operate in their field.

The participants in each work package will be encouraged to form a distributed community, using electronic means to hold their own seminars, discuss readings, share fieldwork plans, comment on drafts, and interview partners with expertise relevant to their research concerns. Through this forum, researchers will also be given guidance to write individually or collectively in different genres, e.g. a blog entry, a newspaper feature. The aim of these post/doctoral researcher-led distributed communities and the regular meeting of all participants in workshops and summer schools is to generate a cohort of new researchers with the mutual confidence, friendship and critical encouragement to network and support each other in their careers.

Each doctoral and post-doctoral researcher will be employed at one of the European partners, as specified in the project descriptions in the documents **Individual doctoral projects** and **Individual post-doctoral projects**. They will be required to fulfil the university's own requirements and graduate training, although UNIKE workshops and summer schools will be given recognition so as to ensure researchers are not over-burdened.

Each of the post-doctoral positions has been allocated UNIKE-wide responsibilities, as detailed in the project descriptions, so as to give them organisational skills and management experience.

The aim of this training programme is to generate a network of doctoral and post-doctoral researchers who are able to re-scope the field and critically examine how universities in regions of the world are located in new socio-economic and political complexes; and who can use these highly developed skills in their careers to analyse and act on the future development of institutions – universities, companies, consultancies, think tanks, non-governmental organisations and professional associations - central to the knowledge economy.



