

Project Summary

If the “wind of freedom blew” in German when Stanford University was founded in 1891 – as is clear from the university’s motto “Die Luft der Freiheit weht” – the “wind of reform” that blows on German universities could be said to speak with an American accent. While as many as 45 European countries have decided to participate in the reforms to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) since 1999, Germany specifically has received a lot of attention by scholars of higher education. Indeed, the once world-renowned German universities who inspired others such as the Stanfords have been pointed at for their anachronistic and sclerotic structures that are maladapted to the “Knowledge Society”.

In the literature on the German “institutional crisis”, we read about massive institutional change, acute crisis, or fundamental ambivalence towards contradictory goals. We read about the tensions that arise when emergent global models of academia meet national traditions, or about the inertia and path dependency of universities. In line with the American scholarly discourse on the corporatization or rationalization of higher education, scholars who study Germany use terms like market forces, new managerialism, competition, leadership and audit culture to describe the wind of reform that sweeps German institutions of higher learning.

At the same time, however, there is a wealth of literature that argues for a greater valuation of diversity at the European level, and that emphasizes the much needed democratization of higher education in Germany – which has been a laggard in terms of enrolment among OECD countries. The pressures for change that come both from within and from without ask for a redefinition of the terms of access and inclusion in higher education, while presenting serious challenges for higher education in Germany. The “conservative” approach of the past, where merit and natural ability was the key to access, is wailing, and German society – especially the elite – is resisting change.

At this point in time, there are very few accounts of the impact of the higher ed reforms that come “from below” and, to my knowledge, there are no studies that

document how “lay” actors in the reforms – those who are not higher education specialists but yet are deeply affected by the changes – live through their implementation¹. The time seems right to conduct a comparative, longitudinal study that would be sensitive to the two main trends in the literature briefly described above, i.e. the corporatization / rationalization image and the diversity / inclusion debates, and would try to answer some questions that can’t be addressed by accounts “from above”.

I see my research project tackling two main lines of inquiry. On the one hand, one that pertains to perception of the reforms: How do lay actors describe the nature, origins, and consequences of the reforms at the individual, organizational, national and global levels? How do they discuss the different elements of the current reforms in higher education? What language do they use to discuss the contents of the reforms? How is socio-historical context mobilized to discuss the reforms, and what does this tell us about what they think matters or take for granted?

On the other hand, I want to investigate the actual organizational consequences of the reform at the university level, the trickle-down mechanisms by which changes at the institutional level – in terms of what makes a great university, who should have access to higher education, who is accountable, etc. – are translated into the organization. To answer this question, I conceptualize reform as a social technology, and its introduction as potentially disruptive exogenous change that could affect the social fabric of the organization. This conceptualization affords a richer reading of the impact of reform that goes beyond a simple administrative redefinition, and turns analytical attention to the internal characteristics of the organization that make implementation context-dependent. As such, the final outcomes of the implementation of the reforms will be dependent on many social factors at the organizational level. Who is in charge of the implementation, what level of reform buy-in or resistance is present in the organization, what incentives to change are developed, and the structure of formal and informal social networks in the

¹ The one study that comes closest to this is Krücken’s (2007) cross-sectional interview study of administrators in 28 German higher ed institutions.

organization, etc., will all impact the way the organization will adapt to the prescriptions of the reforms.

Why does this matter? Because despite institutional change that pushes for diversity and equality, inequality remains. Organization theorists have studied organizational responses to institutional change, and feminist scholars have studied the mechanisms that reinforce the current inequality in organizations in "stable" institutional contexts. What I propose to do is to combine both approaches to see whether, as reforms are implemented, different organizational contexts yield different outcomes in terms of equality. Through a comparative case study of four different science research groups in Germany as they undergo massive reform imposed from above, I hope to document another mechanism that maintains gender inequality.

Literature Review

Trends and Themes in Contemporary Higher Education Research: The Highly Embedded University

Since the late 1990s, higher education researchers worldwide seem to have agreed to conceptualize the university as a highly embedded organization that is subject to environmental constraints. Where they disagree is on both the *contents* (or message) of the current environmental pressures exerted on the university, and the *outcomes* (or consequences) of these pressures on university structures and knowledge. In what follows, I discuss the main trends in the literature in terms of both contents and outcomes of the university's embeddedness into its environment.

1. The Contents of Contemporary Environmental Pressures on the University

Trend 1A – Market Forces

A first line of argument among higher education researchers views recent trends in the light of "academic capitalism" (Slaughter and Leslie 1997). Broadly, academic capitalism refers to the rise of market forces and in the decline of state sponsorship in academia, which in turn leads to greater competition among organizations of higher education, among departments within organizations, and among academics within

departments, as all fight for a scarcity of resources. Typically, it is argued that competition for funds pushes faculty and students toward “utilizable” knowledge that is “marketable” or palatable to private grantors or private enterprise – knowledge that has high “exchange” value, to use Marxist terms.

Proponents of this imagery also argue that a culture of accountability is sweeping over the academy, resulting in what is perceived as a loss of academic freedom, bureaucratization of academic work, and even breach or loss of trust (Baert and Shipman 2005). The creeping over of market forces into academia is also often used to explain the growth of applied fields of inquiry (such as engineering, applied sciences, economics, business, etc.), and the relative decline of fields with lower exchange value (such as the humanities, the pure sciences, etc.).² For example, Stromquist (2002) hypothesizes that the “instrumental facet of the university will lead to a preference both by the state (when it funds the university) and the university itself (as it moves to self-sufficiency) to promote research on such topics as new materials, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, robotics, and energy” (Stromquist 2002) 108.

Similarly, based on her own personal experience as higher education consultant, Gumport (2000) claims that “[o]ver the past 25 years, academic knowledge in U.S. public colleges and universities has been reorganized along a utilitarian trajectory such that, at the macro level, the dominant legitimating idea of public higher education has changed from higher education as a social institution to higher education as an industry” (Gumport 2000, 68). She saw this shift towards utilitarianism happen through three main, interrelated mechanisms: the rise of academic management in colleges and universities, the rise of academic consumerism, and the re-stratification of academic subjects and academic personnel, based on their use- and exchange-value in the wider society (Gumport 2000, 68-9).

The academic capitalism argument is also mobilized by scholars to explain and / or lament the growing Americanization, corporatization, convergence, or homogenization of

² Frank and Gabler (2006), and Frank and Meyer (2007), among others, have provided another explanation. Their work will be reviewed below.

higher education or even the loss of the university's soul or legitimacy as a disinterested social actor (Clark 1998; Gumport 2000; Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004; Washburn 2006). As we will see below, this theme is particularly strong in the work of European scholars, who often evoke the figure of von Humboldt to illustrate the university's changing mission.

This approach has been criticized on different grounds. Firstly, its shaky empirical bases have been questioned, specifically when it comes to the consequences of those external pressures. I will return to this in the section on outcomes. Secondly, neo-institutional theorists like Frank and Meyer (2007), and Schofer and Meyer (2005) have discussed through comparative research how the functionalist imagery underpinning academic capitalism is inadequate to explain world expansion of higher education.

Thirdly, convincing alternative explanations have been suggested to explain the curricular make-up of contemporary universities, as well as organizational isomorphism. With respect to changes in curricular emphasis, Frank and Gabler (2006), for instance, have argued that the important cosmological and ontological changes that have occurred over the 20th de-legitimized fields that do not adhere to the new creeds of “modern” society: agency and individualism. As for organizational isomorphism, the mechanisms through which certain models of higher education are diffused were time and again documented by neo-institutional researchers (see, for example, Rhoades and Sporn 2002), thereby undercutting the functionalist imagery of market forces – the invisible hand – shaping universities in the direction of greater efficiency.³

What emerges from these analyses and others like them is important caveats with regard to, on the one hand, the ceremonial nature of institutional processes (Meyer and Rowan 1977) – here of higher education as “rationalized myth”. On the other hand, these accounts warn us against dismissing isomorphic pressures altogether, in favor of a purely “local” account of higher education politics. I will return to this in detail below.

Trend 1B – Diversity

³ For a nice critique of the invisible hand imagery, in historical context, see Teichler (2006).

Few words in the current American lexicon are as ubiquitous and ostensibly uplifting as diversity. The actual meanings and functions of the term, however, are difficult to pinpoint (Bell and Hartmann 2007, 895).

As Bell and Hartmann (2007) argue in the quote above, “diversity” is both the feel-good word *par excellence* in contemporary American society and a term looking for a specific meaning and function. It is omnipresent in the literature on higher education, and takes on multiple meanings. Two main strands are predominant in discussions of diversity: a first one discusses the forces that push for a diversification of the student body; the other those that push for the diversity of organizational structures, curricula, and educational experiences.

Diversifying the Student Body and Faculty The 20th century was the century of the expansion of education systems, at all levels: primary, secondary and tertiary (Baker and LeTendre 2005; Benavot, Cha, Kamens, Meyer, and Wong 1991; Frank and Meyer 2007). At the tertiary level, specifically, the growth has been fantastic: it outpaced the growth rate of other education levels, and the number of universities created before World War II is smaller than the number of universities created post-1945 (Schofer and Meyer 2005). The university has become a necessary ingredient of nation-state legitimacy (Meyer, Boli, Thomas, and Ramirez 1997; Ramirez 2006b): just like a “true” nation state must have a flag, a “true” nation-state must have its university, even if the university is “real” only on paper. And some scholars argue that, increasingly, the “legitimate” university is one that has a diverse body of students.

While most Westerners now take it for granted that women and people of color should be allowed (and even encouraged and sponsored!) to participate in higher education, their inclusion is a very recent development, and has been shown to have fueled most of the expansion of the higher education system over the past decades (Ramirez and Wotipka 2001). Specifically, the fight for the inclusion of women into higher education went through three main phases. A first phase began in the middle of the 19th century, when American women were provided with women-specific colleges after lengthy debates. A second happened when women started requesting and later obtained to be accepted to universities previously restricted to men, c. 1910 in Germany (Mazón

2003), and starting in the 1920s in the United States, although universal access for women (and black students) had to wait for the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

A third, contemporaneous phase is not fighting for inclusion anymore, but has been requesting greater transparency and equality in the “terms of inclusion”. As Ramirez (2006b) has argued, an elitist higher education system that explicitly restricts access to particular subsets of the population is now seen as “morally suspect” in a world society where discrimination is not tolerated (Ramirez 2006b), or more generally thought to be a wasteful usage of the nation’s human capital (Baker, Köhler, and Stock 2007; Schofer and Meyer 2005; Schultz 1961; Wotipka and Ramirez 2003). While at the world society level there might be general agreement on the necessity to be inclusive, not all nation states welcome the idea of a more inclusive, more transparent and more equitable access to higher education, and there is no agreement what, specifically, is meant by inclusion, and how it should be measured. In the case of Germany, which will be discussed at length later, contradictory forces are fighting over the terms of inclusion.

Structural Diversity A number of organizational scholars use the phrases “diversity of higher education” or “diversification of higher education” not to indicate the diversity or diversification of the student body, nor the extension of education to previously under-served groups. Rather, they use it to hint at the multiplication of legitimate fields of inquiry and / or of organizational forms both at the *university level* – what Frank and Meyer (2007) have called respectively “objects of study” and “elaborated organizational structures” (Frank and Meyer 2007, 290) –, but also across universities and within *higher education systems* (Krücken 2007; Teichler 2006).

Teichler’s (2006) account is a good example of the type of literature I am referring to here, and I consequently quote him at length:

Over recent decades, substantial attention was paid to a select number of formal dimensions of diversity: (a) types of institutions and programmes (e.g. universities vs *Fachhochschulen*); and (b) levels of programmes and degrees (e.g. Bachelor, Master and doctoral programmes). Moreover, debates on diversity address informal dimensions, that is dimensions not visible in legal documents and official system descriptions, whereby we disentangle: (a) vertical attributes of informal diversity, such as ‘quality’, ‘excellence’, ‘elite’

or ‘reputation’; and (b) horizontal attributes, such as ‘profile’ of a higher education institution (Teichler 2006, 452).

For Teichler, diversity is either formal – when it is on paper, official – or informal – when it is unofficial, yet known and acknowledged. As such, his understanding of diversity seems to align with Meyer’s (1977) idea of “chartering” – the effort by organizations to find their own niche in a field, and to consequently define themselves and their goals in light of this charter – especially as it pertains to diversification and legitimization. *Fachhochschulen* are legitimate as long as they formally define themselves as technical (or applied) schools, and as long as they are informally understood to be different from universities in terms of either ‘quality’ or ‘profile’.

Another element that seems worthy of note is the *dynamic* nature of “diversification” (as opposed to diversity, for example, which is static), and the fact that it may or may not have an agent. For some, the diversification of higher education structures is something that has to be acted upon; for most, however, it is something that sounds as unavoidable as globalization. Guri-Rosenblit et al. (2007), for instance, argue that an “interplay of complex dimensions” has led to a dramatic increase in the diversity of higher education systems, by which they mostly mean the diversification of higher education into professional schools and academic universities. Similarly, in the text of the Bologna Declaration, we read that “European higher education systems are facing common internal and external challenges related to the growth and diversification of higher education, the employability of graduates, the shortage of skills in key areas, the expansion of private and transnational education, etc.” (C.R.E. 2000).

Trend 1C – Three Models of the “Modern” University

Some authors emphasize the market forces that influence the university; others emphasize the growing push for diversity and diversification of organizational forms. Yet other authors posit the existence of global models for higher education. I look at two such models, as found in the literature. A third one, “University, Inc.” has already been covered briefly earlier.

The Expansive University Baker and Lenhardt’s (2008) “global emergent model” for the “new research university” is one that prescribes the expansion of its enrollment, of the

understanding of what it means to have academic freedom, and of the scope of teaching and research, and that clearly comes from the successful American research universities. Their argument, which is based mostly on the German case, will be explored in more detail later. However, it is interesting to note that they see the prescriptions of their global emergent model as a major break with historical tradition of higher education in Germany. Increased access is a challenge to elitist views of higher education; changing understandings of what it means to have academic freedom ask for a redefinition of the relations in the university-state-enterprise triad; and the increase of the scope of teaching and research means a fundamental shift in the role of the academic. Baker and Lenhardt's model is one of growth and expansion, quite far from the entrepreneurial university, but also less responsive to the environment than the following model.

The Rationalized University Ramirez (2006) argues that there has been a historical “rationalization” of the university worldwide around two main themes (justice and progress), and three main dimensions that stem from them: broad accessibility, social usefulness, and organizational flexibility. His understanding of broad accessibility includes a shift away from elitist conceptions of higher education, and toward the inclusion of previously excluded populations, and a renegotiation of the terms of inclusions of these populations – which I discussed above. Social usefulness captures the utilitarian move toward practical knowledge that gives back to the society in which the university that is embedded, as well as the more global society. The mission of the university, therefore, is not simply self-regarding, and its resources an insider affair; the university has to be outward looking, and be a socially-aware actor. Finally, Ramirez argues that flexibility has become something of an end in itself. Unlike resource contingency theorists who argue that the organization moves in the direction of the flow of resources almost by default, his conception of organizational flexibility is somewhat agentic: the organization actually mobilizes resources that will in turn allow it to access more resources, including a wide range of education management specialists, who are in charge of students' admission, advising, and graduation, but also of accounting, marketing, fundraising, and other purposes that are mostly about chartering and resource management, rather than about education per se. Overall, Ramirez' university is one that

sees itself and sells itself as an agent of greater social justice, and greater social progress. In other words, it is the “modern actor” (Frank and Gabler 2006; Meyer and Jepperson 2000; Thomas and Meyer 1984) *par excellence*.

2. The Outcomes of Contemporary Environmental Pressures on the University

Before I move on to outline main points of dissent in the understanding of the consequences or outcomes of the university’s embeddedness in the environment, I want to underscore again the worldwide expansion of higher education. Expansion is cited right and left, and so much so that those who study “outlier” cases of education *contraction* (such as Eastern Germany) end up concluding that “a transnational cultural model of the expansion of higher education is pervasive and bends only to *extreme state intervention*” (Baker, Köhler, and Stock 2007, 368; my emphasis). As can be seen on the graphs in Appendix 1 – which I took from the oft-quoted Schofer and Meyer (2005) paper on the expansion of higher education – there seems to be little interpretive grounds around the obvious patters: expansion of higher education is happening worldwide, and for both men and women.

I now turn to actual debates within higher education research as to the outcomes of the environmental embeddedness of the university. Three main lines of argument can be found: one that discusses convergence or isomorphism, one that stresses differentiation, and one that argues that the university has become increasingly flexible, a sort of chameleon figure, that mutates to meet external expectations.

Debate 2A – Convergence vs. Isomorphism vs. Glocalization

Among those who argue that universities are becoming more and more alike, we can identify two main views: one that argues that universities are *converging* toward a single model of “the university”, and one that argues that universities are growing more and more *similar* or *isomorphic*, and show a similarity of form that needs not be commended by a single, underlying model.

Evaluating Convergence Those who speak of convergence often argue that there is “Americanization” or corporatization of higher education, whereby the university is

becoming a capitalistic enterprise. World systems theorists or dependence theorists, for example, will speak of the coercion of “weaker” states by either the United States or, more generally, by “market forces” that peripheral states can’t escape due to resource shortage. This theme, which has been discussed briefly above, has been contested on both empirical (see discussion below) and theoretical grounds: isomorphism, rather than convergence, seems to fit reality best; mimetic, normative (in other words, institutional) forces, rather than coercive ones, seem to be at play.

Isomorphism To cite at length but one account of such diffusion processes⁴ in higher education, Rhoades and Sporn (2002) address explicitly the diffusion of quality insurance programs in higher education, drawing on both institutional theory and world systems theory. They show how the concept of quality control emerged at the end of the 19th century in the United States, with the proliferation of “accrediting bodies,” and how, by 1991, total quality management had reached the academy, exerting a push to restructure the organization to satisfy the accountability pressures and leading to a vast hiring campaign for “managerial professionals”. Meanwhile, quality control was not introduced in Europe until the mid-1980s, and only in the UK and in the Netherlands at first. With regards to diffusion, Rhoades and Sporn write: “Neave (1997, p. 278) has stated that, ‘Never in the recent history of higher education in Europe have we seen such a frenzy of model *exportation*, from North America to Western Europe and from thence eastwards.’ Others may provide less colorful or critical characterizations, but the pattern of *borrowing* is clear” (Rhoades and Sporn 2002, 368; my emphasis). In this one quote, we see two main ideas: one of export, which implies that American actors are “sending” or “selling” their models to Western European actors; and one of borrowing, Rhoades and Sporn’s preferred term, where the action is not unilateral, but begins in Western Europe.

Nowhere do we see coercion in the examples provided by these scholars. While the United States is prominent in the professional discourse on higher education, Rhoades and Sporn argue that it is partly based on the early experience of the U.S. with quality

⁴ A full review of the literature on diffusion processes is beyond the point here. For a review, see the section on diffusion by Barbara Levitt and J. G. March. 1988. "Organizational Learning." *Annual Reviews in Sociology* 14:319-338.

assurance, and partly due to the abundance of resources in U.S. higher education, which allow U.S. scholars to participate in international conferences – often as keynote speakers –, and partly due to the fact that English is the world language in research, science, and the professions (Rhoades and Sporn 2002, 369). Furthermore, they show how the pattern of “borrowing” is not one of wholesale adoption of American models: the UK and the Netherlands, as early adopters of quality assurance, have developed and distributed models throughout Europe. As they argue, there is an important flow of models “from national system to national system, and from national government to national higher education system” (p. 375). Therefore, in what follows, I focus on accounts that speak to these forces – normative, and mimetic – and describe isomorphism, rather than convergence or coercion.

Frank and Meyer (2007) have argued that the growing embeddedness of university and society is a consequence of massive ontological and epistemological shifts – a changing institutional message – that resulted in the “knowledge society”. This shift, which pushes for the redefinition of society in global and individual terms (rather than national ones), “extends the pool of university beneficiaries and investigators, and empowers the human persons who are understood to root it all,” rationalizes certain structures, meanwhile “yielding great expansions in what can and should be known, and in who can and should know” (Frank and Meyer 2007, 287). As we can see, in this account there is not prescription of what the university should look like, no ideal model, but rather loose, culturally defined descriptions of who and what could and should be known. Consequently, one would expect the co-existence of similarities *and* differences across universities, as the institutionalized understanding of higher education that exists at the world society level is interpreted and translated by national and local actors into a specific organizational form, and into organizational norms.

Glocalization and Path Dependency Other authors are very skeptical of convergence talks, and argue that local dimensions are still extremely important, in the face of global pressures for harmonization (Krücken 2003b; Witte 2004). Deem (2001), for example, is highly suspicious of convergence talk, and stresses the importance of “localised factors” in the adoption by European universities of the new management practices described

above. She identifies, for example, the “cultural factors (new ideas about knowledge) and social factors (new and more diverse student groups) as well as economic factors (the declining unit of public funding) at work in universities” (Deem 2001, 11), but does not show how these have a strong local flavor, nor how or why they differ from the institutionalized norms discussed by the scholars cited above, nor how these local characteristics would challenge pressures coming from above. Furthermore, while she does suggest that more high quality data should be collected to address issues of hybridization of organizational forms (i.e. the transformation of the global into locally specific contents), she does not provide compelling examples of what scholars could and should be looking for. Undoubtedly, there are differences in the way reforms and new standards will be implemented. How they are “glocalized” is not clear from her account.

The European Higher Education Area

While the European Union (EU) has been in the making since after World War II, the European Commission has become active in higher education only late. First steps in the international regulation of higher education were made with the ERASMUS exchange program in 1987, and with the broader SOCRATES program in 1992 (Stromquist 2002). However, it is only in 1993 that member states agreed in the Treaty of Maastricht to make the development of an ‘European space of higher education’ an “official political target” (Lenhardt 2002). Five years later, European education ministers met to set the agenda, and formalized their intentions through declarations. First, they signed the Sorbonne declaration in 1998 (4 signatories); then with the Bologna declaration in 1999 (29 original signatories, 45 currently); and finally, with the Prague declaration in 2001 (32 original signatories). The Bologna Declaration stands out as a watershed: it articulated common goals, and set a deadline for implementation. It is reviewed in length below. The Prague Declaration is then reviewed quickly to stress the new themes put forward in 2001, adding onto the Bologna themes.

The Bologna Declaration

Often called the “3-5-8” or “LMD” system⁵, the Bologna Declaration was signed in 1999, ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, in order to set in motion a process of harmonization of higher education in Europe by 2010. While scholars of higher education readily use “harmonization” or homogenization to talk of the current reforms in Europe, official European documents, including the Bologna Declaration, moved away from the use of such vocabulary after the Sorbonne Declaration, and substituted for them phrases such as “actions which may foster the desired convergence and transparency in qualification structures in Europe” (Rhoades and Sporn 2002, 378; citing DeWit 2000, p. 9). Similarly, Ahola (Ahola 2006), historicized the use of the concept, framing it within the theme of structural diversification discussed above: “In the present firestorm of policy papers and quasi-research that accompanies the gospel of Bologna, the phenomenon of ‘harmonizing European degree structures’ deserves to be placed in a wider theoretical framework — that of academic differentiation” (Ahola 2006, 175).

Obviously, the Bologna Process has had and will continue to have important trickle-down consequences for all actors in the reform: from the European level to the nation-state, down to the universities and the lives of individual students, academics and administrators, the new standards redefine what it means to do higher education in Europe. While plans to harmonize European higher education first emerged in 1971 (Novoa and Lawn 2002), a legislative enterprise of this scale is very likely to have unforeseen effects and lead to loose coupling. Indeed, given the large variation in national and local conditions among signatory countries at every level, social, cultural and economic, the implementation of standards developed at the macro level are unlikely to be uniformly implemented at the micro scale.

The new standards were developed in a context of globalization, and as a hybridization of the American and British systems of higher education: the two models

⁵ Indeed, the plan is to have students do their B.A. in three years, obtain their master’s by five, and get their Ph.D. by eight, 3-5-8. LMD stands for License, Master, Doctorat in French.

deemed to be the most successful worldwide. In what follows, I first briefly analyse the discourse of the Declaration itself, before delving into the actual empirical reality of the implementation of the new standards in Germany, as seen in the literature.

The Bologna Discourse

Again, the Bologna Process is a European wide effort to make higher education standards compatible. Rhoades and Sporn (2002) have identified six major objectives of the process: clear and comparable degrees, two main cycles (undergraduate/graduate), credit transfer system, promotion of mobility, promotion of cooperation in quality assurance, and promotion of common European patterns in higher education. Beyond those relatively clear objectives, the discourse surrounding Bologna reflects how policy makers perceive the scope of the reform, but more importantly how much it is rooted in a discourse that is set at the world level. For one, it is written that the “Declaration reflects a search for a common European answer to common European problems” and “common internal and external challenges”. Clearly, the Declaration was not written in a vacuum; it is the product of a globalizing world.

The felt urgency and momentous nature of the Declaration is clear on every page. So is the emphasis on the collaborative, voluntary nature of the Process. We learn that Bologna is “not a reform *imposed* upon national governments or higher education institutions” (my emphasis), and that, as such,

Any pressure individual countries and higher education institutions may feel from the Bologna process could only result from their ignoring increasingly common features or staying outside the mainstream of change (Confederation of EU Rectors’ Conferences and the Association of European Universities, 2000, The Bologna Declaration on the European space for higher education: an explanation).

However, we know from DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) classic account of neo-institutional theory that there are three main mechanisms for organizational change: coercive, mimetic⁶, and normative. While authors of the Declaration argue that there is no

⁶ Mimetic pressure would arise when organizations face a problem and look left and right to try to find solutions that “worked” elsewhere. DiMaggio and Powell’s classic example is with table

political coercion in the case of Bologna, the amount of mimetic and normative pressure is certainly very important. Indeed, in the face of such an appeal not to miss the boat on that “mainstream of change” for fear of being “ignorant” and an “outsider”, the Declaration itself is exerting normative pressure on nation states and institutions to follow the Process.

Three main intertwined themes emerge from the Declaration: diversity and citizenship; global competition; and the Knowledge Society. The tensions between these elements are also discussed. For example, the authors wrote that:

The process originates from the recognition that in spite of their valuable differences, European higher education systems are facing common internal and external challenges related to the growth and diversification of higher education, the employability of graduates, the shortage of skills in key areas, the expansion of private and transnational education, etc. The Declaration recognises the value of coordinated reforms, compatible systems and common action (ibidem, 2000, 3).

In this paragraph readers are told that while differences are valuable, common challenges will require “coordinated” reforms. Similarly, it is written that the European Higher education system should acquire a “**worldwide degree of attractiveness** equal to [Europe’s] extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions” (original emphasis, ibidem, 4), and that Europe has to give “its citizens the necessary competencies to face the challenges of the new millennium” (ibidem, 7). What is constantly repeated here is that Europe faces global competition in the new millennium.

But what exactly are the challenges of the new millennium? They are those of the Knowledge Society. We read, for instance, that a “Europe of Knowledge is now widely recognised as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship” (7), and that “higher education institutions have a unique opportunity to shape their own European future” (6).

Clearly, those who wrote the Declaration felt a sense of urgency about economic growth and the state of European education systems. While the number one goal of the

manners: if you don’t know how to handle yourself, you mimic those around you in the hopes they have it right.

Process is said to be “to create a European space for higher education in order to enhance the employability and mobility of citizens and to increase the international competitiveness of European higher education” (ibidem, 4), the reason why this goal should be seen as important is left unspoken if not through vague hints at the importance of knowledge for growth. Overall, then, the Declaration seems to hinge on taken-for-granted assumptions about the value of university education for economic growth in a globalizing world.

The Prague Declaration

The Prague Declaration served two main purposes: make known the comments that ministers had on the six objectives of the Bologna Declaration; suggest new lines of actions and international preoccupations in the implementation. In their review of the six initial objectives, they expressed satisfaction with all aspects of the declaration and reiterated their commitment. They did, however, feel the need to emphasize (1) the need for greater cooperation with European certification agencies and local and national entities *twice*, (2) that “[p]rogrammes leading to a degree may, and indeed should, have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs as concluded at the Helsinki seminar on bachelor level degrees (February 2001)”, (3) the need for “the higher education sector to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with ‘European’ content, orientation or organization”.

Three new agenda items emerged out of the Prague Declaration. First, ministers stressed the need to focus on lifelong learning, an agenda that is legitimized based on the assumption that “[i]n the future Europe, built upon a knowledge-based society and economy, lifelong learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life”. Second, they underscored the importance for both students and institutions of higher education to be “proactive actors” in the process to increase the “quality” of the European Higher Education Area. It is not clear exactly how “quality” will be measured, although the third new agenda item sheds some light on what

could be meant by quality: “Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area”.

Interestingly, given the discussion of the main themes in higher education research that I reviewed above, what can be seen in these three new items is a discourse that stresses the EAHE’s need for legitimacy, the “Europeanization” of higher education through the development of European “contents” (Nóvoa and Lawn 2002), the rise of perceived international competition by education ministers, the “marketization” of higher education, as well as the perception of organizations of higher education and of individuals as “extraordinarily agentic social actors” in the sense discussed by Meyer and Jepperson (2000). Notably absent from these are an emphasis on the university’s “third mission” – research – and “social usefulness” in the sense discussed by Ramirez (2006).

German Higher Education in European Context

While as many as 45 European countries have decided to participate in the reforms to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) since 1999, Germany specifically has received a lot of attention by scholars of higher education. The once world-renowned German universities who inspired others such as the Stanfords have been pointed at for their anachronistic and sclerotic structures that are maladapted to the “Knowledge Society”.

In the literature on the German “institutional crisis” (Baker and Lenhardt 2008), we read about mixed feelings about the reform (Krücken 2007), or fundamental ambivalence towards contradictory goals (Weiler 2005). We read about the tensions that arise when emergent global models of academia meet national traditions, or about the inertia and path dependency of universities (Krücken 2003b). Baker and Lenhardt (2008) have argued that “the unique German combination of political control by state (i.e. Länder) authorities and a strong tradition of oligarchic academic self regulation makes for particularly interesting institutional problems to study” (Baker and Lenhardt 2008, 51).

In the work of others, the resistance among German educated elites to the “emergent global model” of the university (Baker and Lenhardt 2008), especially with

respect to its elitist (or conservative) view of higher education prevalent (Baert and Shipman 2005; Baker, Köhler, and Stock 2007; Baker and Lenhardt 2008; Lenhardt 2002; Teichler 2006).

In line with the American scholarly discourse on the corporatization or rationalization of higher education, scholars who study Germany use terms like market forces, new managerialism, competition, leadership and audit culture to describe the wind of reform that sweeps German institutions of higher learning.

Methods

In order to evaluate the impact of higher education reforms in Germany on individuals and organizations with a specific emphasis on diversity, I will conduct cases studies in parallel in three different research groups. Barley (1990), reflecting back on his experience studying the impact of CT scanners on the social structure of two hospitals in Massachusetts (Barley 1986), argued convincingly for research designs that include synchronic, diachronic, and parallel components. By *synchronic* is meant the analysis of multiple components of an organization; in my case, it would mean investigating the implementation of reform across different research groups within a same university. By *diachronic* is meant the analysis of organizational subunits over time; in my case, I suggest to conduct field research over a period of one year. And by *parallel* is meant the study of similar organizational subunits in different organizations; in my case, this would mean comparing more than one research group that does similar types of research in at least two universities.

My personal competencies and social connections push me toward the study of either mathematics or physics, both sciences that I am familiar with academically and through research: I have studied math at the undergraduate level and worked for a professor in mathematics for one summer; I have less knowledge of physics, but I studied history of physics quite a lot, and worked for a year and a half with a quantum optics professor on a book about the philosophical implications of quantum mechanics, and sat on weekly research group meetings over that period. Math and physics would be ideal

subfields of study for other reasons: they comprise of very few women, are high-status fields, and their worldwide prevalence among the “pure sciences” has been growing worldwide over the course of the 20th century (Frank and Gabler 2006). Moreover, gender segregation of these fields has changed very little over time (Bradley 2000; Wotipka and Ramirez 2003), which signals a certain reticence to change.

My field sites will need to have a certain number of minorities (ethnic minorities and / or women) from the onset, so that their experience can be documented longitudinally over the course of the study. Ideally, I would find field sites where attitudes toward different aspects of the reform vary: a group where there is animosity towards the perceived Europeanization or Americanization of German higher education; a group where there is animosity towards the diversity agenda more specifically; and a group where people are highly enthusiastic about the affordances of the new reform.

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