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## Reframing European Knowledge Policies:

## Reconciling the (post-)Soviet with the Global

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## Abstract

Globalization is bringing about a redefinition to the mission of higher education and research; however, the insertion of post-Soviet universities in the global higher education arena poses specific challenges. The interplay between the Soviet higher education legacy and the pressures of globalization reveal a dual framework whereby adaptive responses and entrenched management logics run parallel (and often in conflict) with one another. Against this context, institutional change in universities across the former Soviet space is occurring within a framework of increased hybridity and contextual adaptation, thereby requiring innovative approaches to educational practice and reflexive responses to the imperatives of global science.

## Keywords

Bologna Process, Europe of Knowledge, globalization, internationalization, knowledge society, post-Soviet higher education.

# Introduction

This paper was developed as part of a seminar presented at the UNIVIA (Development and Improvement of the University Administration on International Affairs) workshop, a TEMPUS structural measurement framework program hosted at the University of Bologna in June 2016. The UNIVIA project, in association with partner universities in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine, aims at building capacity in higher education internationalization efforts, develop best practices and support the integration of Eastern Neighbouring partner institutions into a globally-connected network of universities.[1]

It is fitting that the University of Bologna provided the venue for the UNIVIA workshop, considering that the internationalization of higher education can be traced back to the *Alma Mater*, where travelling scholars from across Europe would convene to study, exchange ideas, develop networks of learning and ultimately – create new knowledge which would be exported, adapted and applied in their respective countries of origin. From this perspective, the University of Bologna not only represents the oldest university in the Western world, which trained such historical figures as Copernicus and Marconi, it is also one of the founding universities of the Europe of Knowledge – a tradition which continues to this day and now takes on a *global* character. In the early twenty-first century we find ourselves part that time-honored tradition, as the flows of ideas and innovation transcend borders in an unprecedented manner.

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[1] For project updates, see http://univia-tempus.az/

It is argued that universities in former Soviet space face the dual challenge of ‘simultaneous transitions’ – from adapting to the multifaceted challenges of globalization and post-socialism – to institutional (re)positioning strategies, knowledge alliances and redefining the role of higher education role in society. Yet, questions remain as to the extent to which knowledge policies are being converted into workable modalities and tangible outcomes.

In order to unpack these multifaceted issues, the paper will begin with an overview of key concepts which will establish a segue for further analysis. The analysis will then turn to a discussion of macro-policy shifts in post-Soviet higher education brought about by globalization and accelerated European knowledge mobilization. Focus will then turn to the related topic of the knowledge society and the knowledge economy. Next, the theoretical tenets of neo-institutionalism will be explored as they relate to the phenomenon of internationalization. The article will conclude with reflections on ongoing challenges and potential future research areas.

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## Globalized knowledge in context

Globalization has caused a *Copernican* shift to the mission of higher education and research. It is a term used all too frequently and has become ubiquitous in our vocabulary over the last 20 years. The complexity of globalization was captured by an anonymous writer responding to an online call to define the concept. The writer noted:

> Globalization is the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, beamed to billions of viewers simultaneously, a young Christian lady who was having an affair with an Afro-Arabian Muslim man, who died in the French capital of Paris, crushed in a German made car with a Dutch engine, driven by a Belgian driver who had drunk a few glasses of whisky made in Scotland, hotly pursued by Italian paparazzi riding on Japanese scooters made in Malaysia using underpaid labour from Afghanistan (cited in Maringe and Foskett 2010, 19).

This quote illustrates the highly complex and fluid phenomenon that begins to define the contours of globalization. Although there is no set definition, globalization is generally perceived as the ‘compression of time and space’, the ‘death of distance’ and the ‘end of geography’, which has made borders increasingly porous, enabling the flow of people, goods, capital and information to travel freely (Appadurai 1990). Globalization has also led to the intensification of human interactions, especially in the last two decades. In a similar vein, globalization exerts pressure on various levels of higher education systems and performs an ‘icebreaker’ function for national higher education agendas (Enders 2002, 1-2).

Globalization represents a complex and dynamic process occurring at different levels in higher education worldwide. Breton (2003, 26) posits that globalization has radically redefined spaces

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and forms of action in accordance with three structural factors. First, a shift in the traditional means of conceptualizing higher education which loosens territorial attachments; second, the creation of [global] space in which new issues manifest; and third, the construction of new [intellectual] space which facilitates a forum for the collective negotiation over the definition of spatial action. From this perspective, a 'new geography of action' is taking shape whereby higher education systems are *driving* and are being *driven* by the forces of globalization (Breton 2014, 19; Scott 1998, 122). In this regard, a self-reinforcing pattern emerges as universities are *objects* as well as *subjects* of globalization – they are affected, and at the same time, influence these processes (Enders 2004).

In the early 21st century, knowledge production has taken on an undeniably global character. The changing academic and research environment necessitates even closer collaboration between scholars, disciplines and regions. This has made the idea of the timely production, adaptation and application of knowledge even more salient. The phenomenon of globalization is also linked with the emergence of the so-called 'knowledge society' whereby exchanges of information, technology and immaterial goods play an ever increasing role and act as a key driver of the economy and motor of new knowledge (Nowotny, Scott & Gibbons 2003). Correspondingly, the worldwide network of universities is in a phase of dynamic transformation.

Despite the rapid process of convergence brought on by globalization over the past two decades, higher education systems are rooted in national frameworks, although some universities are more globalized than others. Zgaga, Teichler and Brennan (2013) point to persistent tensions between European convergence and national diversity, as well as academic 'centres' and 'peripheries'. These observations further underscore that the new 'academic world order' is far from being egalitarian (Hazelkorn 2012). European national higher education systems look much more convergent than ever before, but new challenges have emerged; specifically around the potential of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the emergent European Research Area (ERA). This point is particularly salient insofar as their constructs have the ability to impact reforms beyond European Union (EU) member states.

The EHEA and ERA are pillars of the 'Europe of Knowledge', a supranational project envisaged as the "gradual construction of an open dynamic European educational area" (European Commission 1997, 3). The Europe of Knowledge is defined as "encompassing all policy and coordination efforts concerning the establishment of the EHEA" (Chou 2016, 1). It has subsequently evolved into a powerful knowledge 'brand'. Yet, challenges remain in terms of where European knowledge policies intersect with the post-Soviet higher education space and the ongoing efforts to construct a 'Single Market of Knowledge' (Ibid, 6).

The drive to construct the Europe of Knowledge provides a window of critical reflection on higher education legacies, rationales and institutional approaches. These constructs often draw upon opposing projects (Soviet and global), frequently resulting in mutations at the policy level. This point is fundamental to the analysis, as the EHEA and the ERA are being built upon existing national higher education systems. This is particularly salient for understanding the internal and external drivers of national higher education settings insofar as the region faces a dual transition which needs to take the post-socialist *and* global contexts into account (Kwiek 2001, 401).

The Bologna Process is a particularly interesting example of globalization on a regional scale, since its influence extends well beyond Europe's borders (Bologna Declaration 1999). By the same token, it is applied to Western and Eastern European countries across different national settings, cultures and political frames (Silova 2009). From this perspective, the Bologna Process and its associated protocols have accelerated and reinforced convergence trends in higher education systems through a series of normative discourses and frameworks. Originally designed as a Western European innovation to the increasing challenges of global competitiveness, the Bologna Process laid the architecture for the alignment of tertiary systems under a *single* European higher education space. At the core of the Bologna Process is the central concept of a knowledge-based society which perceives "the creation, application and proliferation of knowledge as a desired outcome for economic growth and prosperity" (Berlin Communiqué 2003, 2).

The Bologna Process is considered to be one of the most comprehensive developments related to the knowledge society discourse, since it provides an "empirical window into the globalization of higher education, as it is playing out in Europe" (Välimaa & Hoffman 2008, 276). It is the clearest example of international engagement at the European and regional level, drawing over 45 countries into a voluntary process and a reference for higher education efforts around the globe.

Questions surrounding 'Bologna compatibility' have become an important factor as the process itself impacts higher education systems with significantly different socio-economic and political contexts than those core members of the European Union. Moreover, each of its signatories have progressed at a different pace. For post-socialist states, the Bologna Process has a different meaning than in the rest of Europe, considering different starting points and the broader political project aimed toward systemic change (Kozma 2014, 13). Implementation challenges stemming from institutional resistance and structural misalignment have raised questions over Bologna's compatibility with post-Soviet higher education systems, which remain influenced by centralized planning tendencies and state-centered logics.

The reform course consolidated under the Bologna Process and its protocols has been defined as a 'springboard' to move post-socialist states closer to Europe and lend legitimacy to its higher education systems (Dobbins & Knill 2009, 416). Similarly, the Bologna Process is often perceived as a means of changing the functioning of universities and bringing them in line with the demands of globalization and the knowledge-based economy and society.

Against this backdrop, Bologna has evolved into much more than a framework for structural reforms. The subsequent protocols designed to maximize the competitiveness, quality and relevance of participating higher education systems have redefined the policy landscape (Berlin Communiqué 2003; Lisbon Strategy 2000; Prague Communiqué 2001). Market-based logics extend to the Bologna Process and the Berlin Communiqué narrative which are aimed at making Europe "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion and call for further action and closer co-operation in the context of the Bologna Process" (Berlin Communiqué 2003, 2; Bologna Declaration 1999). As a result of this supra-national framework, a platform for higher education policy exchange, as well as policy 'lending' and 'borrowing' has transpired, leading to greater inter-linkages and systemic coordination.

From this perspective, higher education systems in post-Soviet states are strongly conditioned a by a discursive space which promotes the reproduction of Western political and economic models, 'catching up' and a 'return to Europe' (Dobbins 2011). In tandem with the transition process itself, higher education policy convergence does not necessarily translate into a linear process with uniform outcomes; but rather, the context varies substantially from country to country (see Dobbins & Knill 2009; Silova 2009). Similarly, the newly independent states have experienced the effects of globalization on a more compressed timescale than Western counterparts, making adaptive responses to external factors and internal realities an even greater institutional imperative.

Therefore, "globalization affects each country in a different way due to a nation's individual history, traditions, culture and priorities" (Knight & deWit, 1997, 6). Residual tensions, resistance and mutations may occur at the national, institutional or policy levels as a result of the negotiation process and tensions between Soviet and global knowledge production models.

Universities have become strategic actors which increasingly play a decisive role in determining where they are "located in a world structural map of higher education" (Teichler 2004, 21). However, universities are strongest when they form a 'cluster' – a geographic concentration of *competing* and *cooperating* institutions (Jessop & Sum 2013, 29). As such, it has become necessary to reassess the normative and institutional patterns shaping national internationalization discourses, as well as the factors informing higher education systems. Hence, the powerful drive for higher education systems in post-socialist states to become full-fledged members of the Bologna Process, which links the members of the European Union and its periphery into the EHEA. Consequently, the external pressures exerted by the demands of Bologna compliance, achieving competitive advantage in the [global] knowledge economy/society, and reconciling the Soviet higher education legacy with contemporary global imperatives are powerful stimulants of educational change.

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## Globalization, Internationalization, Europeanization: Definitions and pathways

The meanings of 'globalization', 'internationalization' and 'Europeanization' are frequently used interchangeably to identify the international activities and outreach of higher education. However, important differences remain. 'Globalization' is frequently related to the process of increasing convergence and interdependence of economies and to the liberalization of trade and markets. In line with these observations, Giddens (1990, 64) posits that globalization is essentially a 'stretching process' in so far as "the modes of connection between different social context or regions become networked across the earth's surface as a whole."

In recent decades, dramatic changes have taken place in the higher education sector as a whole, whereby globalization is now considered "the most important contextual factor shaping the internationalization of higher education" (International Association of Universities 2012, 1). Against this context, universities across the post-Soviet space have become part of a broader set of macro-level shifts, as they (re) negotiate their positions within regional and global higher education frameworks. Similarly, universities across the EHEA and its 'periphery' are in a period of redefining their respective roles and contributions to economies and societies which are increasingly knowledge-based.

Globalization is producing new spatial formations between universities which are linked globally while bound locally. In this regard, higher education has increasingly become positioned at the intersection of global, regional and local interests and influences. Marginson and Rhoades (2002, 281) refer to this convergence as the '*glonacal* agency heuristic' which fuses global, national and local perspectives through a

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spatial 'fix'. In other words, this concept represents "global encounters in local contexts" (Bain 2010, 40). The *glonacal* agency heuristic is also a useful means of understanding how policy discourses emerge and diffuse around the globe, and how concepts are transplanted and adapted locally. This frame is particularly helpful for understanding the internal and external drivers of higher education in post-socialist higher education settings, as the region faces dual challenges which need to take the post-1991 local and global contexts into account (Kwiek 2001, 401).

Globalization comprises numerous discourses making any discussion around it a complex and multifaceted undertaking. The new drivers of higher education comprise a diversity of perspectives which cannot be explained by neoliberalism alone, since market forces represent one dimension of globalization. The globalization discourse is positioned as part of an environment in which the international dimension of higher education is becoming increasingly important and continues to evolve. Although universities have long been more open to international exposure and influences than most institutions; scholars, knowledge and ideas have become increasingly mobile and are able to transcend national borders in an unprecedented manner. Internationalization initiatives are no longer considered marginal or *ad hoc* activities, but instead have become mainstreamed and institutionalized whereby global comparison, institutional benchmarking, university rankings and institutional prestige have become a permanent feature of the higher education landscape. In this regard, the last two decades have witnessed an unprecedented expansion in both scope and scale of international activity in higher education worldwide.

The simultaneous practice of cooperation and competition *(coopetition)* among institutions has also manifested itself within this frame as university leaders and governments alike have become preoccupied with optimizing strategies and competitive advantage (Breton 2014, 20). Global research networks have rewired the playing field by linking academic 'centres' and 'peripheries' in knowledge production efforts, expanding academic horizons and bringing new players in line with the imperatives of global science.

Globalization has brought about greater collusion among the academic and research communities not only in narrow terms of market forces, but for the advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of excellence. Wagner (2008) posits that the processes taking place within the 'virtual geography of knowledge' otherwise known as the 'new invisible college', a global network of academics and researchers which override national borders, has made operational the process whereby global collaboration takes place in an 'organic', unplanned manner and whose attraction to one another is based on the complementarity of their work. The new invisible college approaches globalization from a rather different perspective, giving primacy to *cooperation* over *competition* and associates the advancement of science to the 'self-organization' of global networks, identified as a 'complex adaptive system' (Wagner 2008, 35-36).

A network is defined as a "way of describing any set of interconnected relationships among actors or things. Networks are constructed from components that stand alone but can be made interdependent" (Wagner 2008, 36). They are often channels for engaging in highly specialized forms of knowledge, embedded in a dense global web of researchers and institutions that supersede nation-state boundaries. Fostering institutional knowledge capacity is also a means of gaining access to and reaping the benefits from an expanding range of knowledge producing networks across the globe (Mrinska 2013, 329). Similarly, networks are redefining the spatial context in which academics, researchers, universities and higher education stakeholders coexist.

The forces of globalization have exerted enormous pressures on higher education institutions, and 'internationalization' has emerged as the primary response to this phenomenon. From this perspective, globalization can be thought of as the *catalyst* while internationalization is the *response*, albeit a response in a proactive way" (Ibid, 14). In support of this statement, van der Wende (1996, 193-194) highlights internationalization as an 'educational innovation' and a 'process of educational change.'

In order to unpack the dynamics of internationalization, the analysis needs to consider global and regional contexts, political conditions, historical backgrounds and potential future trajectories. Equally important are institutional-level rationales, strategies and outcomes. The phenomenon of internationalization cannot be examined in isolation from the wider political and economic transformations occurring at the global, regional and national levels. Furthermore, competing academic frameworks, organizational cultures, and path dependencies are variables which come into play. A conceptual framework to this effect is set out in the later part of this article.

Internationalization can be interpreted as “a means to an end and the mechanism by which universities are better able to achieve their core objectives in terms of generating, curating and disseminating knowledge, both for its intrinsic value and as a means of improving economic and social well-being” (Ennew and Greenway 2012, 5). In other words, “globalization may be unalterable, but internationalization involves many choices” (Altbach & Knight 2007, 291). Internationalization efforts are also aimed at bringing about greater convergence to international standards and act as a response to an increasingly globalized environment. This operational definition describes how universities become more receptive to globalization, which in turn, encompasses a broad range of activities; including: curricular reform, international courses, joint degrees, academic mobility programs, branch campuses, research networks and capacity-building activities (Egron-Polak 2012, 58). According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2009, 110), university responses to globalization are increasingly shaping institutional policies and setting the agenda for the future of higher education. Against this context, internationalization is increasingly understood to be “as much a process of *outward* engagement as *internal* change” (Sutton & Obst 2011, xiii).

Internationalization rationales are defined by de Witt (2002, 84) as “motivations for integrating an international dimension into higher education. They address the ‘why’ of internationalization. In other words, “different rationales imply different means and ends to internationalization.” The comparative and international higher education literature identifies four overarching rationales for the internationalization of higher education; including: *political rationales* (foreign policy, national security, technical assistance, peace and mutual understanding, national and regional identity); *economic rationales* (economic growth and competitiveness, labour market, financial incentives); *cultural and social rationales* (national cultural identity, intercultural development, community development); and *academic rationales* (extension of academic horizon, institution building, profile and status, enhancement of quality and international academic standards) (Knight 2004, 23; de Witt 2002, 83-101).

Unpacking spatial typologies further, ‘internationalization’ can also be distinguished from ‘Europeanization’ since the two processes are understood to be shaping higher education institutions. Kehm (2003, 110) defines ‘Europeanization’ as ‘internationalization-light’ or in other words, ‘regional globalization’ within a space characterized by a “common and shared history and culture, as well as an economic, political and cultural alliance vis-à-vis the rest of the world.” Within this frame, Europeanization can be characterized as a specific form of ‘regionalism’ in the face of internationalization and globalization (Ibid, 111). The rationale behind Europeanization is multifold, as the phenomenon encompasses a number of discourses related to the European dimension of higher education to include: the achievement of European excellence; facilitating a framework for new governance and steering; strengthening Europe’s position in the knowledge economy; and providing space for policy convergence (Komljenovič & Milavič 2013, 38; Söderqvist 2002, 149).

This shift accompanies a change of structures, norms, practices and identities, resulting over time in a redefinition of national higher education policies. In a similar way, Europeanization has reinforced itself in the economic and political imaginary which impacts not only members of the European Union, but those of its periphery. Silova (2009, 304) observes that the later states have “become a part of another transformation process shared with the rest of the European Union – toward knowledge-based societies.” However, challenges remain in terms of providing a space for the renegotiation of educational policies to occur. In sum, all three spatial constructs – globalization, internationalization and Europeanization – have become interwoven in higher education institutional strategies, indicating an even higher degree of complexity in planning, policy and practice.

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## *The Knowledge Society*

The concepts of globalization, internationalization and Europeanization are closely linked with the emergence of the 'knowledge society', whereby exchanges of technology and immaterial goods play an ever increasing role and a key driver of the economy and motor of knowledge production (Kehm 2003, 110; Nowotny, Scott & Gibbons 2003, 193). UNESCO (2005, 17) broadly defines the concept of the knowledge society as encompassing socio-political and ethical dimensions, fostering diversity and unlocking creativity.

Dubbed the 'third industrial revolution', a corollary process took place whereby industrial productivity no longer constitutes the driving force behind economic output, and the creation and timely application of new knowledge is defining the pace of innovation and national prosperity. These macro-level shifts can be grouped into the term 'knowledge society'. First coined by Drucker in 1969, his praxis asserts that knowledge has become the foundation of the modern economy, manifested in the explosive growth of the knowledge sector (Drucker 1969, 264). The definition has deviated little since its introduction; however, it has undergone a number of bifurcations; including: 'information society', 'learning society', 'higher education network society', 'global knowledge system' (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley 2010, 3), 'knowledge distribution chain' (Altbach 1987, 48), and 'international knowledge network' (Välimaa & Hoffman 2008, 269).

The knowledge society has manifested itself in many ways. Not only does the knowledge society represent an emergent discourse requiring radical reforms to higher education systems, but at its most fundamental level, the knowledge society encompasses major shifts in

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the patterns of production, distribution and application of knowledge, which in turn, influence education, research and innovation policies (UNESCO 2005). Within this frame, higher education becomes a driver of economic growth and prosperity. For this reason, knowledge has become commodified, and as such, has undergone a change in status whereby societies organize themselves around knowledge production and universities redefine their space(s) of action and strategic alliances accordingly (Breton 2003, 27-28).

Within the global knowledge society paradigm, higher education has acquired a pivotal role whereby universities became central institutions (Altbach & Salmi 2011, 11; Delanty 2001, 152). Castells (1994, 15-16) synthesizes the relationship between higher education and the knowledge society, noting that science and technology systems of the new economy are equivalent to the 'factories' of the industrial age: "if knowledge is the electricity of the new informational-international economy, then institutions of higher learning are the power sources." However, unlike most resources, knowledge does not deplete with use – on the contrary it grows through ***application*** and ***networking*** (Olssen & Peters 2005, 332).

Innovation and reflexivity have become crucial elements for maintaining national scientific capacity, as suggested by the term 'knowledge diplomacy' which describe the increased role of science in the establishment of relationships between nation-states (The Royal Society 2010, 9). In light of the aforementioned statement, universities have acquired an increasingly important interlocutory role as organizations that facilitate the development of [new] intellectual space. This suggests that the role of the university itself is changing and that the entire structure of this ancient organization is being recast.

## *The Knowledge Economy*

The knowledge society and the knowledge economy are distinct, yet overlapping terms which complement one another despite frequent conceptual 'layering'. The knowledge economy is defined as "the application of knowledge from any field or source, new or old, to spur economic development" (Guile 2006, 355). It has also been described as a period of rapid change since the inception of the industrial revolution. This rapid change is synonymous with the political and economic changes occurring in higher education systems worldwide. The knowledge economy has become a powerful new *imaginary* in the last 20 years (Jessop, Fairclough & Wodak 2008, 2), and as such, has been influential in shaping policy paradigms, strategies, and policies in and across many different fields of educational practice.

Higher education is a field in which 'globalization', 'competitiveness' and the 'knowledge-based economy' have resonated strongly (Jessop & Sum 2013, 24-25). These elements have particular significance ***vis-à-vis*** universities and higher education systems since contemporary societies are organized around knowledge production; having evolved from *industrial* economies to *knowledge* economies. Consistent with this new developmental paradigm, capital and labour are no longer sufficient inputs to meet the means of production, and therefore, *knowledge* becomes a third [critical] element. The university therefore becomes a 'cognitive engine' and a *milieu* for innovation (Capello, Olechnicka & Gorzelak 2013, 3). The knowledge economy comprises several discourses linked by a common basis; namely, the importance of 'knowledge'. As such, knowledge has acquired new importance as a vital element required by societies for competitive advantage. According to Moulier-Boutang (2007), the world entered a third form of capital accumulation which he refers to as ‘cognitive capitalism’.

Within this paradigm, a ‘soft revolution’ took place whereby knowledge is replacing physical resources as the main driver of economic growth. The resources for production in this system are innovation and collective intelligence, as well as the ability to harness the outcomes of intellectual work. This requires investment in human capital and bridging geographically distant actors through new technologies and ‘connected brains’. The knowledge economy is globally ‘wired’ through international research networks – connecting ideas, innovation and strategic university partnerships. Consequentially, universities play a unique role the knowledge economy.

The knowledge economy challenges the traditional role of universities by introducing market strategies, ‘knowledge branding’ and ‘performativity’. Cowen (1996, 252) defines ‘performativity’ as a social construct in the sense that it is both an “epistemological condition and an explicit political project.” Similarly, Schugurensky (2013, 308) asserts that the nature of academic culture and the role of universities are being recast under these circumstances, and as a result, are becoming less ***resistant*** and more ***receptive*** to these changes. The role of the university in the knowledge economy has been undergoing fundamental changes over the last few decades as tertiary institutions have increasingly encompassed a so-called ‘third mission’ by gravitating towards an ‘entrepreneurial university’ pathway, whereby traditional missions of teaching and research are being supplanted by commercial activities (Chanphirun & van der Sijde 2014, 891).

Slaughter and Leslie (1997) coined the term ‘academic capitalism’ to describe the commercialization of higher education and research, as well as the shifting power relations between the university and the market. These factors are making significant impacts on the mission of higher education across the post-Soviet space, insofar as they have led to competing visions surrounding state-university relations, academic autonomy and fueled debate on whether higher education constitutes a *public* or a *private* good.

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## Post-Soviet higher education dynamics in context

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the newly independent states began a process of [re]defining their respective national higher education systems in order to respond to the challenges of globalization, accelerated regional integration and state building. The newly independent states looked internationally to alternative higher education models at a time when globalization was in the process of making significant impacts on regional and national development.

Universities found themselves in a radically different environment where the state was no longer at the centre of knowledge production and borders no longer represented a strict, impermeable boundary. The demise of the Soviet state-centric system was a turning point which led universities to reassess strategic imperatives and engage in a series of profound transformations.

Higher education was one of the first sectors to undergo a series of reforms, which is believed to be still incomplete, despite a lengthy and ongoing transformation. New importance was assigned to tertiary education as a driver of socio-political change, human development, economic growth and provider of solutions to the complex challenges of post-socialism. Consequently, universities became conduits for a number of cross-cutting themes such as ‘modernization’, ‘democratization’ and ‘nation-building’ efforts. The newly independent states were put to task to develop national higher education systems which could produce and disseminate scientific knowledge not only within the context of the former Soviet higher education area, but be applied and recognized regionally and globally.

Vladimir Lenin’s renowned motto *“Study, Study, Study”* took on an entirely new meaning in the post-Soviet, globalized world. The end of the state monopoly on higher education introduced a virtual *renaissance*, not only by breaking with Soviet modes of academic governance, but also initiating varying degrees of academic, organizational and financial freedoms which enabled universities to operate within a broader scope of action, provide new space for knowledge mobilization, and a wider range of manoeuver for global engagement. The role assigned to higher education was to effectively create, disseminate, and apply knowledge in order to build technical and professional capacity and contribute to the market economy (Salmi 2004). Beyond their economic contributions, universities shape societies in which they are embedded. In addition to assuming the traditional function of knowledge producer and knowledge depository, universities secured a pivotal role in national development efforts and as training centers for a new generation of post-Soviet citizen. In a similar vein, post-socialism signalled a broader shift from an 'industrial society' to a 'knowledge society', a project which remains incomplete in many post-Soviet states.

Guided by the premise that universities act as gateways to the global knowledge society, van der Wende (2001, 250) asserts that "internationalization policy at the higher education level aims to promote an internal transformation that strives for global competition and cooperation, which increasingly affect the higher education sector." Universities across the former Soviet space are no exception, considering that reform efforts are aimed at increasing the quality, visibility, relevance and comparability of the higher education sector. Consequently, it has been argued that "the internationalization of higher education is a dynamic process, continuously shaped and reshaped by the international context in which it occurs" (International Association of Universities 2012, 1). This statement has particular salience insofar as post-Soviet higher education systems are concerned.

Yet, once a higher education discourse is transplanted from one context to another it often changes meaning. This observation is analogous to Schriewer's maxim "as they move, they morph" in reference to the 'shape-shifting' pattern of higher education policy as it travels from one region to another (cited in Cowen 2009, 315). In other words, "concepts and discourses go global, but they may play out differently in different political, economic, and cultural contexts and they may resonate for different reasons in different education systems" (Silova, 2009). In a similar vein, a process of 'selective emulation' might take place whereby policies unfold differently than originally intended. Furthermore, even when emulated, policies may face local realities and institutional constraints, therefore causing policy layering, mutations and hybridity.

In post-socialist higher educational settings, internationalization efforts have taken on specific sets of challenges, often leading to unique trajectories. Case in point, the inheritance of Soviet management practices and the subsequent 'layering' of European academic frameworks can often contrast with the highly fluid dynamics of globalization. Consequently, Biddle (2002, 10) warns that "translating the rhetoric of internationalization into reality is a complex enterprise... implementing them entails negotiation, persuasion and compromise. Ultimately, the plan put in place must reflect the university's particular history and culture; failure to respect the institutional context puts the initiative at risk." From this perspective, internationalization has taken on a greater institutional imperative, as Altbach and Teichler (2001, 11) forewarn – a university without a proper international strategy runs the risk of becoming irrelevant.

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## *Conceptual mapping*

Extending theoretic applications of neo-institutional (or new institutional) theory to higher education can provide a useful tool to explain institutional behaviour and gauge trajectories on university systems. North (1990) posits that institutions provide a stable structure of human interaction, and that change is largely incremental. Change is the result of alterations in the evolving perceptions of institutional frameworks. North's model examines cooperation under the more challenging circumstances of non-repeated interactions, incomplete information and large numbers of players. His praxis advances the idea that institutions provide a mechanism for incremental change, because they provide opportunities for new forms of negotiation and compromise. Furthermore, North (1990, 7-8) theorizes on the institutional change matrix which is driven in part by 'network externalities' and 'lock-in'. These forces take the shape of incremental change, formal and informal rules of engagement, and the perception that organizations could improve by altering the existing institutional framework at a given margin.

In the context of the current analysis, North's theory of institutional change provides a useful conceptual framework to understand post-Soviet universities' priorities, management cultures and resistance points; particularly under the conditions of organizational path dependency, which vary according to institution. In its simplest form, path dependency implies that previous choices and entrenched institutional arrangements constrain future alternatives making the cost of reversal very high (North 1990, 94). As Shaw (2013, 10) notes, "path dependence is a relative newcomer in the field of education, and yet one that holds a particular appeal for scholars examining post-socialist transitions."

In the landscape of the post-Soviet university viewed through a neo-institutionalist lens, globalization represents a new challenge of *external* adaptation and *internal* integration with which the organization must cope. This approach is particularly salient for developing a better understanding of internationalization as a process of change and to elucidate *how* different institutional arrangements contributing to the Soviet higher education legacy continue to function despite significant normative, mimetic and legislative transformations.

From a Northian perspective, the university will engage in acquiring skills and knowledge that enhance its survival possibilities. As such, the theory of institutional change examines cooperation under the more challenging circumstances of non-repeated interactions, incomplete information and large numbers of players. The model advances the idea that institutions provide a mechanism for incremental change, because they facilitate opportunities for new forms of negotiation and compromise. Thus, North's model is useful for developing a critical understanding of internationalization as a process of change.

North forewarns that societies that adopt the formal rules of another society will have very different performance characteristics than the original country. Case in point, recent studies addressing Ukraine's adoption of the Bologna Process suggest a fundamental mismatch between the existing logic of university governance rooted in the Soviet model of higher education and the logic presumed in European reforms (Shaw 2013; Shaw, Chapman & Rumyantseva 2013). North (1997, 20) also explores organizational dynamics under the framework of incomplete information, increased specialization, divisions of labour, and transaction costs which shape the direction of long-term change. Subsequently, institutional responses will be strongly affected by the organizational culture and the adopted innovation.

Yet, institutional change does not occur spontaneously, nor does it transpire on its own. Actors, agents and stakeholders work within and between organizational structures to promote or resist change. In this regard, the comparative higher education literature suggests that internationalization efforts have brought about stronger lines of interplay between academic, research and administrative staff (Rosser 2004; Meyer 2010). Similarly, the rise of 'knowledge brokers' which support internationalization efforts represents another form of institutional adaptation to the changing higher education landscape. Meyer (2010) defines this group of professionals as "people or organizations that move knowledge around and create connections between researchers and their various audiences".

Knowledge brokers have been increasingly integrated into administrative structures in order to develop and enhance collaborative initiatives, as well as serve as interlocutors to a growing numbers of stakeholders engaged in internationalization efforts. In turn, these agents not only operate with specialized forms of knowledge within and outside of academe, but they produce a new kind of knowledge, referred to as 'brokered knowledge' (Meyer 2010, 18). Additional structural change is on the horizon, as the international dimension of higher education matures, the significance of knowledge policies become more salient, considering the ways in which new academic programs, research projects and curricula are designed and managed.

## *Conclusion: Reconciling the (post-)Soviet with the Global*

The Europe of Knowledge is creating new spaces of action by shifting the higher education playing field, linking universities into wider knowledge production efforts, extending academic horizon and drawing new actors into the EHEA and the ERA. Yet, continued tensions arise when differing approaches to knowledge production intersect with European innovations and the Soviet higher education legacy. State-centred management logics have proven resilient, which has raised debate between the forces that seek to preserve elements of the previous system and those which are attempting to reshape it along the lines of the new imperatives of global science (Oleksiyenko 2014, 253).

Despite repositioning strategies designed at bringing higher education systems in line with the imperatives of the EHEA and the ERA, continued challenges persist at the institutional level. Against this context, Tomusk (2014, 22) notes that despite ongoing reform efforts over the last two decades, a process of 'policy drift' could occur whereby universities re-negotiate their respective spaces of action in order to recast the inherited Soviet higher education model into national archetypes.

A guiding assumption of this article maintains that institutional change in universities across the former Soviet space is occurring within the framework of increased hybridity and contextual adaptation. From this perspective, the transition from the 'Soviet higher education area' toward a European or global higher education area should not be perceived as a matter of 'pitting legacies' against one another, but rather "a matter of combining them in a manner that is most expedient in view of national institutional peculiarities" (Dobbins & Knill 2009, 427). A second guiding assumption is that universities across the post-Soviet space are becoming

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increasingly sensitized to the way global strategies are established at the organizational level and how diverse institutional responses can be consolidated in order to enhance (re)positioning strategies, build effective knowledge alliances, augment the quality of teaching and research, and adopt global knowledge to meet national needs.

'Selective emulation' and 'hybridity' are among the organizational realities and institutional responses which post-Soviet universities face in light of an increasingly globalized environment. This suggests that new forms of negotiation and compromise are taking shape to legitimize and implement internationalization strategies into operational models. Case in point, semi-structured interviews conducted by the author at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Ukraine reveal the development of EHEA-compliant structured PhD programs which borrow from "elements of the Soviet higher education legacy that are perceived as being positive, a European model of coursework and a North American model of governance" (Szyszlo FN 9-03-16).

Internationalization represents an organizational construct and a political project. Equally critical to the internationalization discourse is the adoption of corresponding policies and institutional frameworks which facilitate a supportive environment for the efforts of academics, researchers, policymakers and institutional leaders. Combined, this organizational 'package' becomes the guiding principle *driving* innovation and institutional change. Based on these observations, internationalization merits additional scholarly attention in an effort to problematize the phenomenon anew as it plays out in non-linear, post-Soviet higher education settings. Renewed academic rigour could open new fields of scholarly enquiry in order to gauge the interplay and inherent tensions throughout the Eastern borderlands of the EHEA, as well as address *how* or *whether* they are being reconciled in different higher education settings. Greater insights could also be gained on the evolving definition of internationalization in relation to knowledge mobilization strategies, policy innovations and institutional dynamics.

By building upon these discourses, the analysis could contribute towards improving understanding of higher education systems and institutional responses in post-Soviet higher education settings in an attempt to develop comprehensive knowledge of *how* or *whether* universities foster 'coherent ecosystems of innovation' (Jessop & Sum 2013, 29). An 'ecosystem' is a useful metaphor to describe the complex network of actors that are linked together through common goals and/or mutual gains (Chanphirun & van der Sijde 2014, 901; Wagner 2008, viii). It also encompasses linkages between universities and the larger higher education system, the role of the *body politic*, stakeholder agencies, as well as interactions between academic 'centres' and 'peripheries' (Altbach 1987, 63; Altbach 2013, 317; Zgaga, Teichler & Brennan 2013, 14).

Expanding critical reflection along these lines of enquiry could facilitate the process of mapping an enhanced framework to improve understanding of strategic responses of post-Soviet universities from the combined perspectives of globalization, the knowledge society, and macro-policy shifts in higher education. By gathering actor-centered perspectives and reflexive accounts of institutional responses to globalization, a nuanced analysis of university experiences can be achieved. In a similar vein, the emerging patterns could help to gauge the trajectories to which different individual universities and regions are responding to the imperatives of global science.

The manner in which higher education institutions adapt to successfully meet national, regional and global challenges remains a subject of analytical interest and scholarly insight (Dobko 2013; Chou 2016; Gao 2015; Oleksiyenko 2014; Shaw 2013; Shaw, Chapman & Rumyantseva 2013; Szyszlo 2016). Despite the scientific and academic potential of many post-Soviet universities, a challenge for many remains to "convert the baggage of the past into the assets of the future" (see Mrinska 2011). This observation also raises questions surrounding the widening gap between internationalization rhetoric and organizational practice (Maringe and Foskett 2010, 45). Furthermore, outstanding questions remain regarding the role of post-Soviet universities and their potential contributions to regional knowledge production efforts and the [global] knowledge society. These lines of enquiry have particular salience insofar as addressing global challenges are concerned, as currencies of reciprocity, mutually interesting problems and intellectual symmetry have increasingly become institutional imperatives.

As the Europe of Knowledge reaches its 20-year milestone in 2017, it is fitting that academics, researchers and practitioners alike reflect upon the 'next generation' of internationalization strategies that mark a distinctive shift from *transactional* to *transformational* approaches. In a similar vein, it is critical that 'next generation' initiatives make the shift from *mobility* to knowledge *mobilization*. European knowledge policies will undoubtedly continue to make their influences felt beyond EU borders, as universities across the former Soviet space seek to define their position and role in regional knowledge blocs and the global knowledge society. It should also be a renewed call for critical reflection, greater intellectual risk taking and reflexive action for future decades.

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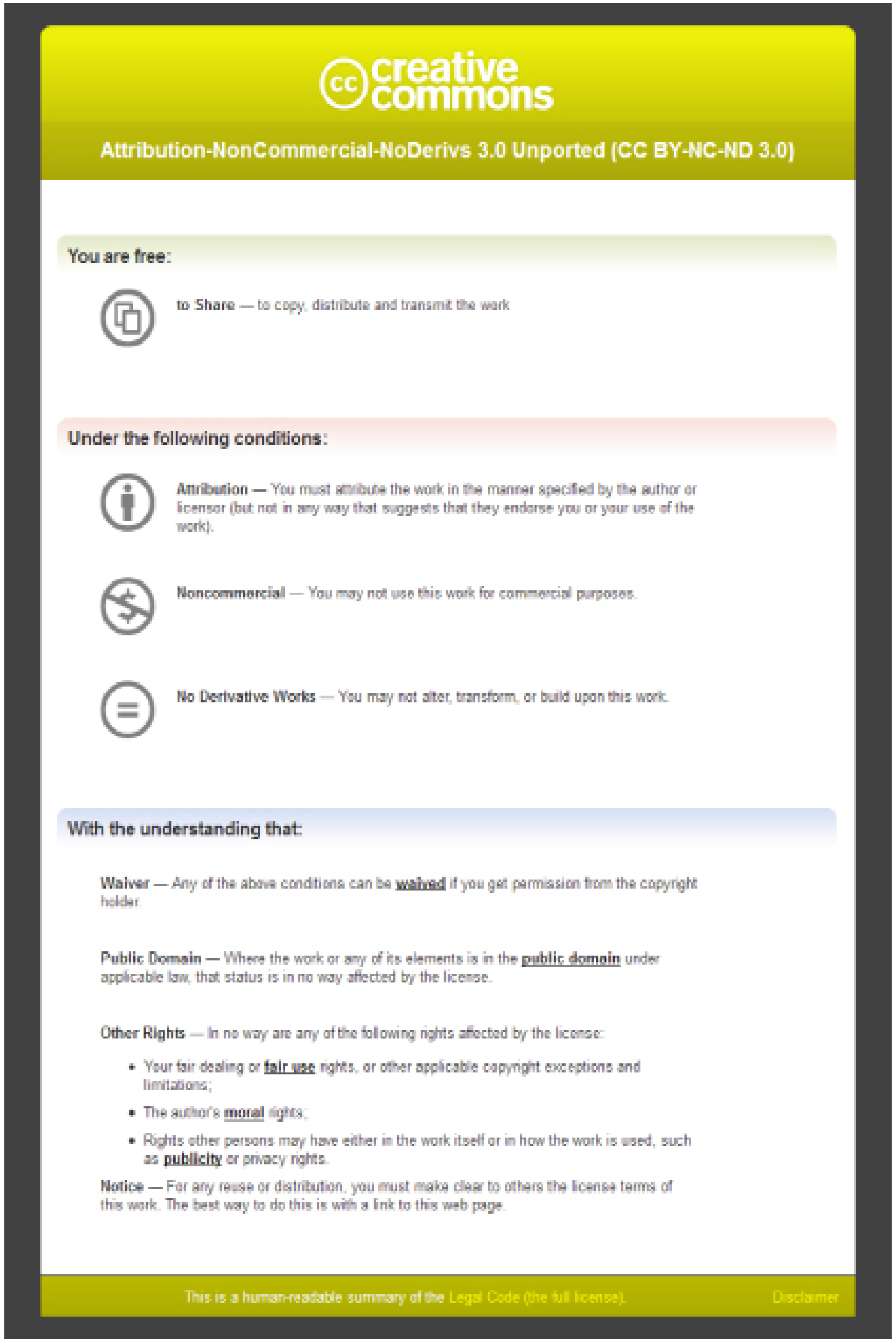

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