EDUCATIONAL FUTURES: RETHINKING THEORY AND PRACTICE

Education and the Knowledge-Based Economy in Europe

Bob Jessop, Norman Fairclough
and Ruth Wodak (Eds.)

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Education and the Knowledge-Based Economy in Europe

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Boxes, Figures, and Tables ix
List of Abbreviations xi

Foreword xiii

Introduction 1
Bob Jessop

Part I The Knowledge-Based Economy in Context

1 A Cultural Political Economy of Competitiveness and its Implications for Higher Education
Bob Jessop 13
2 From 'Humboldt' to 'Bologna': history as discourse in higher education reform debates in German-speaking Europe
Mitchell G. Ash 41
3 The EU as an emerging normative power in the global knowledge-based economy? Recognition Regimes for higher education qualifications
Eva Hartmann 63

Part II The European Union and the Knowledge-Based Economy

4 Embracing the global: crisis and the creation of a new semiotic order to secure Europe's knowledge-based economy
Susan L. Robertson 89
5 The Bologna Process and the knowledge-based economy: a critical discourse analysis approach
Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak 109
6 'Requisite irony' and 'the knowledge-based economy': a critical discourse analysis of the drafting of education policy in the European Union
Peter D. Jones 127

Part III Discourses of the Knowledge Society and Knowledge Economy

7 Using keywords analysis in CDA: evolving discourses of the knowledge economy in education
Jane Mulderrig 149

8 ‘Finland is a small country’ narrative construction of the internationalisation of higher education
Terhi Nokkala 171

Conclusion: shifting discourses and mediating structures in the co-construction of Europe, knowledge and universities
Roger Dale 193

Notes on Contributors 207

Index 213

LIST OF BOXES, FIGURES, AND TABLES

Box

1.1 Six social-epistemic functions of transdiscursive terms 24

Figure

4.1 Tuning Latino Americana – and Beyond 103

Tables

4.1 GDP Growth: Europe vs World 95

6.1 Assessment of Progress 133
6.2 Funding Implications 134
6.3 Addressing the Member States 135
6.4 Managing the OMC for Education and Training 136
6.6 Knowledge-Based Economy Discourses of Education 137

7.1 Keywords Emerging (under B, C, or D) and retained 152
7.2 Keywords Dropped 152

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AACSB	American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business
ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
BFUG	Bologna Follow-Up Group
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEC	Commission of the European Community
CEPES	European Centre for Higher Education/le Centre Européen pour l'Enseignement Supérieur
CPE	Cultural Political Economy
DMAU	*Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities*
EC	European Council
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EEC	European Economic Commission
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Network of Quality Assurances
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMD	Institute for Management Development
KBE	Knowledge-based economy
MBE	*Mobilising the Brainpower of Europe*
MC	Marie Curie
MS	Member State(s)
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NII	National Information Infrastructure
NIS	National Innovation System
NSI	National System of Innovation
OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
R&D	Research and Development
RUEK	*Role of Universities in a Europe of Knowledge*
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization

FOREWORD

The contributions to the present volume are revised versions of papers presented at a conference on 30 November – 1 December 2005 in the context of the first Annual Research Programme of the Institute for Advanced Studies (IAS) at Lancaster University. The Institute was established in 2001 to promote inter-, trans- and post-disciplinary research, a hallmark of the University since its foundation in 1964, and it currently does so through a mix of externally funded research projects and internally funded research programmes, lecture series, and incubation projects within and across the arts, humanities, economics and management, and social sciences. The topic of the first Annual Research Programme, the Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE), was selected because of its inherently trans-disciplinary nature. The whole programme was ably directed from its inception through to its closing international conference by Steve Fleetwood of the Department of Organization, Work and Technology in Lancaster University Management School and the conference on Critical Semiotic Analysis of the KBE was co-organized by Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, two of the co-editors of this volume. I am grateful to Steve for his hard work throughout the programme year and to Norman and Ruth for their skilful organization of the conference, the marshalling of contributors, and their role in the editorial work. Anne-Marie Mumford helped me in the first stages of turning chapters into camera-ready copy and Dr Christos Boukalas is largely responsible for the index.

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1st May 2008

BOB JESSOP

INTRODUCTION

The knowledge-based economy (or KBE) is a topical theme that is well-suited to trans- and post-disciplinary analysis because it is particularly complex and multifaceted. Not only can it be analysed productively from many different disciplinary perspectives but its contextualisation, interpretation, and, where relevant, explanation can be enhanced through dialogue among scholars with a view to identifying overlaps, intersections, anomalies, and blind spots. In addition, the KBE's development is actually producing new sub-disciplines and trans-disciplines as knowledge is applied reflexively to produce new knowledge (e.g., nanotechnology, life sciences, entrepreneurialism, creativity) and as its dynamic throws up new problems and/or solutions. Knowledge is a topic for pure and applied philosophers; knowledge creation for engineers and 'imagineers'; knowledge management for business schools, knowledge transfer for knowledge brokers, knowledge transfer partnerships, and the 'triple helix' formed by business, research institutes and universities, and political authorities; the monetary valuation of knowledge and intellectual property is a task for accountants; the extension and protection of intellectual property is grist to the mill for lawyers; traditional knowledge is of growing interest to anthropologists and knowledge prospectors (and pirates); knowledge work is a matter for sociologists; discourses about knowledge and the KBE are key topics for discourse analysts of diverse stripes; education and lifelong learning for educational researchers; smart weapons and the revolution in military affairs for security analysts; international regimes governing the KBE, such as the World Intellectual Property Organization, the World Trade Organization, or the OECD, for international relations specialists; and so forth. Each of these topics can be illuminated by combining approaches from those (sometimes arbitrarily) mentioned as their 'home' discipline with those from other disciplines and, in and through such inter-disciplinary conversations, a more complex account of the multi-faceted character of the knowledge-based economy should emerge. This, at least, was the aim of the Annual Research Programme on the KBE at Lancaster University, from which the contributions in this volume are drawn, and which tackled many of these issues and was itself organised on the principle of 'patient intellectual capital', i.e., the belief that the results of trans-disciplinary interactions take time to mature.

The particular workshop from which the papers in this volume are drawn (Critical Semiotic Analysis of the KBE) was co-organised by Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak and combined established scholars and young researchers as part of the IAS commitment to capacity-building. As the notes on contributors indicate,

B, Jessop, N. Fairclough, & R. Wodak (eds.), Education and the Knowledge-Based Economy in Europe, 1–9.

the latter come from several disciplinary backgrounds. Moreover, while they all share an interest in discourse and the KBE in its implications for skill formation, education, and, in particular, higher education, they bring different theoretical approaches, methodologies, techniques, and concerns to the analysis. This was even truer of the conference itself. Contributions were therefore chosen to illustrate the range of approaches to discourse analysis (or, in the cases of Hartmann and Nokkala, narrative policy analysis) and their capacity to contextualise, interpret, and explain the significance of the KBE as an ensemble of economic imaginaries and/or as a set of real economic developments and their repercussions within education, especially higher education, at national, European Union, and international scales. The methodologies and techniques range from software-based keyword-focused corpus linguistics (Mulderrig) through close textual comparison of successive drafts of official documents (Jones) and transdisciplinary dialectical discourse analysis and historical discourse analysis (Fairclough and Wodak) to the historical deconstruction of myths and critical interrogation of keywords (Ash). The most comprehensive approach, introduced in the introductory chapter and subsequently taken up by Fairclough and Wodak, Robertson, and, to some extent, Jones, is cultural political economy, which combines a broad understanding of critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA), inspired by many of the above analytical methods, with arguments from critical political economy. The topics analysed also vary widely – from the alleged spread of the Humboldtian myth of the German research-based teaching university, to successive White Papers on school reform in England and Wales. But the majority are concerned in whole or in part with the discursive articulation and substantive construction of linkages between the knowledge-based economy and higher education within the European Union and their connection to changing forms of international competitiveness in an increasingly integrated world market in services, goods, and 'talents'.

Having mentioned the discourse-analytical approach, I now comment briefly on its field of application – the knowledge-based economy. All the contributions start from the assumption that, whether or not the knowledge-based economy provides the most adequate description of current trends in contemporary economic development, the discourse of the 'KBE' has become a powerful economic imaginary in the last 20 years or so and, as such, has been influential in shaping policy paradigms, strategies, and policies in and across many different fields of social practice. Some reasons for this are explored in the opening chapter; and other chapters examine its implications for educational policy and the associated transformation of educational institutions and practices. In other words, this volume starts from a specifically discourse-analytical claim – not one about the'real' economic world but about the hegemonic framing of the KBE as the key theoretical and, even more, policy paradigm for the institutional design and strategic reorientation of education, skill formation, and higher education. This poses three interesting questions about the KBE as an economic imaginary: its origins, selection, and hegemonic stabilisation; its translation into and/or articulation with other discourses; and the manner and extent of its actualisation in specific policy initiatives in different arenas and their ongoing implementation. Most of the contributions address the first two questions and, insofar as their

authors share the pessimistic conclusion of the High Level Group chaired by Wim Kok (2004) that the ambition of the EU's Lisbon Agenda to make the European Union the most competitive KBE in the world by 2010 was not on course to realisation, they also comment on its effectivity. Some contributions also discuss alternative discourses, such as the knowledge society (Nokkala) and national systems of innovation or the learning economy (Jessop, Jones).

The book has three main parts. The first provides a general introduction by Bob Jessop to the theme of the knowledge-based economy from a cultural political economy perspective and also includes two further chapters that give essential background to the current restructuring of higher education. Mitchell Ash provides a critical historical review of the Humboldtian myth and its continuing influence in higher education reform debates and policy measures in Germany and Austria, and Eva Hartmann gives a broad contemporary overview of various attempts to redesign and harmonise education to facilitate the international mobility of knowledge and to secure mutual recognition of qualifications and credentials. Part II provides more detailed analyses of the role of the European Union in this regard, focusing on different aspects of the Bologna Process, i.e., the series of steps coordinated by ministers of education to bring about harmonisation of the structure of higher education cycles inside the European Union and other signatories to the process. Susan Robertson focuses on a broad range of official policy documents to provide a cultural political economy perspective on the increased urgency being attached, thanks to an officially endorsed discourse on the 'crisis' of the Lisbon agenda, to the reorganisation of higher education as a key factor in enhancing the European Union's economic competitiveness. Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak provide a broader discourse-analytical critique of key Bologna Process documents concerned with the formation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). And Peter Jones also examines official documents, this time through a detailed account of the drafting of one eventual policy statement through its successive versions to reveal the dynamics of official narratives and policy-making. Finally, Part III comprises two case studies that explore the translation of discourses about the knowledge society and knowledge-based economy into national narratives and policies. These cases focus respectively on 'knowledge society' narratives as a key context for making sense of – and giving form to – Finland's emergence as one of the most competitive knowledge-based economies in the world (Terhi Nokkala) and on the emergence of skill formation and KBE-related targets in education policy in England and Wales (Jane Mulderrig). The book concludes with a sympathetic and synthetic overview of the contributions by Roger Dale that provides additional contextualisation, identifies some important common themes, and sketches a future research agenda in this area.

PART I

In Part One, Bob **Jessop** provides an initial framing for the other contributions by introducing a cultural political economy (CPE) approach to the role of economic imaginaries in simplifying the complexities of actually existing economies, providing a strategic orientation for economic and political strategies, and, in part,

helping to constitute that which is being imagined. The 'knowledge-based economy' is just such an economic imaginary and Jessop seeks to explain why and how it became hegemonic compared with earlier, less successful imaginaries that had been proposed to make sense of, and orient strategies to move beyond, the crisis of the post-war economic model based on Atlantic Fordism. In this context he identifies both the discursive and the material factors behind the hegemonic ascendancy of the KBE imaginary and its crucial role in the constitution of that which some commentators purport merely to describe rather than giving it a prescriptive, ethico-political force. This is related to the important distinction between theoretical and policy paradigms and Jessop argues that the KBE figures prominently in both – albeit it with different discursive connotations and practical implications in each case. Finally, he traces the implications of the newly hegemonic imaginary for changes in the role of education at different levels and their connection to the competitiveness and social exclusion agendas.

Mitchell **Ash**, who describes himself as an historian rather than linguist but nonetheless embraces the 'linguistic turn' in historical research, explores recent discourses on higher education reform proposals in Germany and Austria from the perspective of two widely-prevalent and complementary myths, one of which has a long history while the other is more recent. The first is that the Humboldtian University is under threat, the second that this threat takes the form of Americanisation. Ash shows that, while these myths lack solid historical foundations, they nonetheless have a powerful rhetorical appeal and formative influence on policy debates by shaping corporate and professional identities. He first explores the narrative construction of the 'Humboldt Myth', showing its limited relevance to German history and its implementation in the USA in the early 20th century. He then argues that the US Model drew on various European traditions as well as having novel US features – implying, paradoxically, that the much-criticised process of 'Americanisation' is in part a return of European institutions and practices to their roots. Next he identifies some 'key words' in contemporary higher education discourse, noting their distinctive meaning and resonance in German and Austrian reform discourses. Also notable for our purposes is Ash's critique of the simplistic reading of the distinctive features of the American model, especially the fixation on Harvard and Stanford rather than the top state universities, which provide much better benchmarks for European reform. He concludes that the likely outcome of current reforms will be a hybrid model that satisfies the majority of students in mass higher education, who are not interested in research careers but do want appropriate credentials to enter the knowledge labour market.

Eva **Hartmann** addresses competing national, regional, and international initiatives by various economic and political forces to facilitate the mobility of knowledge workers in an increasingly integrated world market and to enhance competitiveness in (knowledge-intensive) globally tradeable services. She focuses on quality assurance, accreditation and recognition in higher education and, besides examining the roles of UNESCO, the WTO, and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), explores the EU as a regional and global power centre concerned to shape international norms on the recognition of credentials. The EU

aims thereby to shape the global 'war for talent', to complete the internal EU market in services as part of the broader neo-liberal European project, and to win support from poorer or smaller EU countries as well as from professional classes by enabling labour market mobility. Hartmann relates these cases to struggles among national states and/or transnational fractions of capital to shape the emerging international economic order and support it through what Gill calls a 'new constitutional' framework. In the latter regard, the recognition arrangements proposed by the EU, UNESCO, and the GATS are marked by specific couplings of hard and soft law whose implementation requires a range of additional market-based, hierarchical, and partnership-based governance mechanisms. Different proposals reflect the rival interests of different fractions of capital and/or national and regional states over the form, content, and aims of quality assurance, accreditation, and recognition. This explains key differences between the UNESCO and EU frameworks and attempts to use the EU model (also backed by the USA) both as a benchmark and a political lever to reshape UNESCO's proposals. Hartmann also notes resistance to these changes at various scales, including efforts to strengthen national quality controls and accreditation systems and to support best practice and harmonisation rather than a single system, of whatever kind.

PART II

In Part Two, Susan **Robertson** explores the contribution of the European Union 'crisis' discourse by Barosso and Kok to the post-2005 emergence of globally-oriented 'education' policies and programmes shaped by the KBE economic imaginary. These mark a major shift from a social market/'fortress Europe' that would pursue economic competitiveness in ways compatible with the European social model toward a more one-sided neo-liberal strategy that emphasises free and open markets and reduces social policy to the goal of a more socially inclusive economy. Robertson establishes this through a discourse analysis of the main education and policy initiatives (EC, 2007), the mid-term review of the Lisbon strategy chaired by Wim Kok (2004), the new Lisbon strategy (EC, 2005), EU President Barosso's speeches in the period that followed, official policies on Erasmus Mundus, and Zgaga's recent report to the Bologna Follow-up Group on the external dimension of the Bologna Process. She argues that the discursive shifts in these policy texts, which both react to and are enabled by the Lisbon crisis, reflect significant economic changes and the rebalancing of social forces within and beyond Europe that have paradoxically reinforced cultural and economic imperialism as well as neo-liberalism. More specifically, she focuses on the 'why', 'how', and 'with what material and social consequences' of this ideational and representational shift for the role of higher education in the production of the imagined European KBE. In this context she also notes how Member States' resistance to the pursuit of a European level strategy in this and other areas led to the formal adoption of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) as a distinctive governance mechanism. Nonetheless the newly created sense of urgency consequent upon the new crisis discourse has increased pressures on Member

States to conform to the new KBE agenda and to hasten the modernisation of higher education to suit the economic reform agenda.

Norman **Fairclough** and Ruth **Wodak** focus in turn on the Bologna Process as a key driver in the EU's strategy to build a 'knowledge-based economy'. In a critical discourse analysis of this process and its role in the structural transformation and strategic reorientation of higher education, they synthesise two different – but compatible – versions of CDA as developed and applied in their previous theoretical and empirical research: Fairclough's dialectical theory of discourse and transdisciplinary approach to researching social change and Wodak's discourse-historical approach as applied in research on the discursive construction of (European) identities and its many attendant struggles and tensions. More specifically, they discuss the contribution of systematic and detailed textual analysis to further development of cultural political economy, significant textual analytical categories for CPE, and the most productive ways to secure a theoretically consistent articulation between textual analysis and other dimensions of CPE. Their systematic qualitative analysis of extracts from key documents in the Bologna Process provides a detailed illustration of how the macro-theoretical propositions of CPE can be operationalised empirically. In this regard they focus on several partially overlapping analytical categories, including 'interdiscursivity', the 'legitimation' of policy objectives and proposals, the relations of 'equivalence' among items that are fallaciously construed as co-members of a single class, and the distinctive and differential features of the genres characteristic of official policy documents. This enables them to make two major theoretical and methodological contributions to the research on KBE and higher education: first, a theoretically consistent articulation between key CDA categories and techniques for textual analysis and other categories in the CPE approach; and, second, a method for investigating empirically the discursive mediation of crucial macro- and micro-level processes and outcomes in the reproduction and regulation of capital accumulation, using textual analysis as a 'semiotic point of entry'.

Peter **Jones** combines critical discourse analysis with an exploration of 'self-reflexive irony' in his account of the changing of education policy in the EU's efforts to establish a knowledge-based economy. He describes how the iterative production of EU education policy texts manages key conflicts and contradictory strategies to produce a fictitious (or ironic) consensus and is thereby contributing to a relatively stable governance framework for this policy field. Jones focuses on the drafting and redrafting of a key official document from November 2003 to March 2004, i.e., a Joint Report of the European Commission and Council of Ministers on progress to date and next steps in national education reform systems as part of the Lisbon Strategy. His analysis of published and unpublished texts reveals important shifts in the content, language and form of the successive drafts, revealing thereby the important relations among KBE discourses of education, EU-level policy texts, and the strategies of different EU institutions and forces. A series of textual and inter-textual comparisons indicates how (the appearance of) consensus is secured, managing the tension between recognition of difference and pressure for harmonisation and, in addition, preserving the Lisbon Strategy emphasis on the crucial role of training and education in a competitive KBE. The OMC is given a

key role here in sustaining coherent, cooperative efforts by Member States to achieve the KBE objectives for education at all levels as well as to promote social inclusion, European identity formation, and European integration as a whole. Opposition is incorporated into the official texts by recognising oppositional identities and practices while subordinating them to the overall institutional and ideological framework of the Lisbon Agenda. Thus these texts manifest a fictitious consensus thereby stabilising the balance of forces oriented to competitiveness strategies in the education field. In this way they contribute to the ironic maintenance and repair of contradictory social relations at the EU scale that are in some sense a manifestation of the contradictory social relations of the KBE and its discourses for education.

PART III

In Part Three, Jane **Mulderrig** explores changes in educational discourse in the United Kingdom during three decades of crisis and radical change in British capitalism. Combining various approaches in critical discourse analysis with corpus linguistic tools, it examines a corpus of seventeen White Papers spanning five Prime Ministers from Edward Heath to Tony Blair who, between them, led four alternating periods of Conservative and Labour rule. By linking social theory with corpus linguistic 'keywords' tools, she identifies three successive educational policy concerns: a technocratic focus on educational outputs under Thatcher's neo-liberal government; a visionary discourse of competitiveness under Major's caretaker government; and a strategic policy aimed at building an internationally competitive, skills-based, economy under Blair's New Labour Government. As well as discussing the implications of these textual findings for education's role in economic policy, Mulderrig notes the contribution of this methodology to a systematic interdisciplinary investigation of public discourse. Like Robertson, she notes the key role of 'crisis' discourse in shaping and consolidating structural reforms and strategic reorientation in education policy, this time at the primary and secondary levels. This crisis narrative was combined and reinforced through a dramatic centralisation of control over the curriculum, standards, professional training, and the overall degree of audit and accountability. The increasing importance of competitiveness is noted under the premiership of Major as part of UK recontextualisation of EU policy with distinctive managerial bias in presentation. The Blair period also emphasises the skills agenda not only for schools but also for life-long learning. This is part of a workfarist agenda that is presented as essential not only to competitiveness but also to social inclusion and it is reinforced by a range of institutional innovations and strategic governance networks. Overall, then, Mulderrig identifies a shift from an immediate authoritarian response to an alleged 'crisis' of education to a neo-liberal competitiveness agenda concerned to solve social as well as economic problems.

Finland has been at or near the top of several international competitiveness ratings for several years and is an exemplary case of a small, open KBE. Terhi **Nokkala's** chapter explores the background to this economic miracle, based on a transition from an extractive economy to a competitive KBE, in terms of the

broader understanding of Finland as a remote new nation-state facing many serious challenges. The articulation between the primacy of the 'knowledge society' discourse in Finland and the more familiar discourse of the KBE depends on the historically specific construction of the crisis that faces Finland - an existential threat to its survival as a society as much as a problem of structural economic crisis. Moreover, because a successful KBE depends on a range of extra-economic conditions, there is no necessary conflict between the 'knowledge society' and KBE discourses. Thus the knowledge society narrative is significant in terms of moral economy as well as political economy: it concerns both the transformation of individuals as moral agents and the adaptation of economic structures and their supports in the wider society. On the one hand, the development of the knowledge society is seen as contributing to individual growth, the preservation of the Finnish welfare state, and a tolerant society that can attract foreign talents. And, on the other hand, it is closely articulated to the development of a Finnish knowledge economy as the key to overcoming successive structural crises and ensuring Finland's international competitiveness. It is in this dual context that the internationalisation of the university is considered crucial. Thus Nokkala concludes that the Finnish discourse of internationalisation of higher education exemplifies well a specific national 'translation' of the knowledge society narrative (which, it can be added, pre-dates the discourse of the KBE) into a set of policies that also privilege the development of the knowledge economy.

CONCLUSIONS

Finally, in a separate concluding section, Roger **Dale** magisterially summarises the main arguments and common themes of the various contributions and links them to his own account of basic changes in higher education in the context of the part-imagined, part-real transition to the knowledge-based economy in Europe. He argues that: (1) 'Europe' and the KBE are mutually constitutive; (2) 'Europe' is a KBE, the KBE is what 'Europe' makes it; and (3) this co-constitution is framed by the 'mediating structures' that link differing and shifting representations of Europe and competitiveness with their associated governance devices. He suggests that the key question is how 'the University' is being re-framed through the discourses and structures concerned with its modernisation in relation to the emerging KBE. To demonstrate this he proposes a periodisation in three phases revealed by the shifting meanings of key terms from the signing of the Bologna declaration to the present, as both the external pressures on Europe, and the structures through which it addresses them, change. These phases comprise: (1) the Europe and KBE of Maastricht, where the challenge was completing the internal market; (2) the Europe and KBE of Lisbon, where the challenge was ensuring Europe's competitiveness, in an era of technological competition especially with the United States; and (3) the Europe and KBE of 'new', post-Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Lisbon Process, which takes account of the evident challenges to Europe's competitiveness posed by China and India and reorients the Lisbon agenda more closely to 'jobs and growth'. In this way he demonstrates the contribution of critical discourse analysis to the comprehension of changes in economic strategies and structures as well as

the contribution of critical political economy to the contextualisation, interpretation, and explanation of the hegemonic force of particular discourses.

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Part I

THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY IN CONTEXT

BOB JESSOP

1. A CULTURAL POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMPETITIVENESS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

> The target is to establish a knowledge-based society. This is a society where activities and decisions across all domains of life are based on knowledge; a society, where research, focused on the discovery, acquisition, utilisation, and dissemination of knowledge is in harmony with education; a society where research and education are the underpinnings of a national system of innovation that provides the basis for economic growth, and which is a prerequisite for successful competition of Estonian products and labor in European and World Markets. (Eesti Teaduste Akadeemia, 1997: 1)

> Today *the knowledge society* is a central concept for both comprehending contemporary societies and planning their future. In the Baltic Sea region [for example] it has become the tag-mark of development. The whole region seems to understand, and aim towards, a future that, in one way or another, depends on *information*, *knowledge* and *learning*. … The three key-words appear in many different public spaces: researchers attempt to understand the contemporary society with the help of these concepts, politicians build the future on them, and advertisements sell different products and services with them. (Hakapää, 2002: 10)

In his widely-acclaimed book, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (1973), Daniel Bell made three predictions that, if fully realised, would have major implications for the nature and role of universities in the contemporary economic and social order. His first forecast was that, whereas capital had been the dominant factor of production in industrial societies, in post-industrial societies that place would be occupied by knowledge. Second, while industrialism was characterised by the dominance of mechanical technologies and of economic calculation based on cost-reduction and cost-recovery, intellectual technologies and a 'sociologising' orientation concerned with intellectual planning and the public good would prevail in post-industrial societies. Third, he predicted that, whereas the industrial enterprise had been the dominant organisation in industrialism, in post-industrial societies this position would be ceded to the university. These predictions have only been partially confirmed at best – with the first being the most widely, if still erroneously, accepted as having been fulfilled. Considering the nature and reasons for their theoretical inadequacy and/or

B. Jessop, N. Fairclough, & R. Wodak (eds.), Education and the Knowledge-Based Economy in Europe, 13–39.

empirical disconfirmation should tell us much about the contemporary economy and the current role of universities.[1]

The first prediction is certainly part of conventional wisdom as the knowledge-based economy has become the hegemonic representation or self-description of the economy as an emerging reality, an object of calculation, and object of governance in contemporary world society. But this does not mean that it adequately describes the dynamics of today's world market or the role of knowledge in world society. For it misrepresents knowledge as a 'factor of production', understates the extent to which every economy is a knowledge economy, and thereby mistakes one societal self-description for a more complex discursive-material reality.

The second prediction has been stood on its head by the dynamic of the world market. For the production and uses of knowledge have become increasingly subordinate to an 'economising' logic oriented to profit-and-loss calculation in contrast to Bell's optimistic prediction that the organisation and purposes of material production would become subject to a sociologising concern with the public good. Indeed, it is a telling indicator of this inversion that the hegemonic imaginary today is the 'knowledge-based *economy*' (KBE) rather than information *society*, learning *society*, or knowledge *society* (see below). It may also help to explain the drive to 'economics imperialism' in the changing hierarchy of disciplines in the social sciences as the profit-oriented, market-mediated logic of capital extends further in the real world into what had earlier been regarded as in one way or another 'extra-economic'.

The third prediction has been controverted in turn by the extent to which universities are now tending, in different ways and subject to greater or lesser financial, administrative, and ideological pressures, to act more like economic enterprises that aim to maximise revenues, market their education, research, and knowledge transfer capacities, position themselves competitively vis-à-vis other types of supplier of these services at home and abroad, and, additionally, serve the demands of various local, urban, regional, national, or even supranational knowledge-based economies. Thus, challenging, albeit indirectly, Bell's emphasis on the sociologisation of knowledge, Castells and Hall write that universities, as major producers of knowledge, have the same role in the 'information economy' as coal mines had in the industrial economy (1994: 231). We should also note that, while Bell wrote from within a primarily national perspective, universities now aim to meet not only local, urban, regional, or national demand but also to serve supranational knowledge-based economic and political interests. And, while lip service is often paid to 'quality of life' as well – this is generally interpreted in terms of minimising the adverse impact of market-driven economic activities on private, social and cultural life.

This chapter interprets these three predictions and their relative failure from the perspective of the cultural political economy of capitalism and explains why the reality is much closer to the two ideas expressed in the lead quotations, i.e., a subordination of information, knowledge, and learning to the demands of the expanded reproduction of the globalising knowledge economy, than to Bell's expectation that we would see the widening and deepening of a democratic knowledge society. In this way the chapter serves to locate the remaining chapters

in terms of three interrelated sets of economic, political, and socio-cultural changes. The first of these is the nature and dynamic of the contemporary world market as a crucial context for the transformation of universities; the second change is the development of a new logic of governance that links the reorganisation and reorientation of higher education to its changing economic and political environment; and the third concerns the specific aims and objectives of higher education. In addressing these three sets of issues in their interconnection, I use cultural political economy (hereafter CPE) as an innovative evolutionary and institutional approach to the semiotic and material dynamics of contemporary capitalism (see Fairclough et al., 2004; Jessop 2004; Jessop and Sum 2001; Sum and Jessop 2003, forthcoming; and below). I draw heavily on the cultural (or, more accurately, *semiotic*) arguments of CPE in discussing hegemonic economic imaginaries and their role in orienting economic, political, and socio-cultural strategies, especially since the mid-1970s. I draw on its semiotic and material moments in my account of the changing dynamic of competition and competitiveness in the KBE, including the changing articulation of the economic and extra-economic conditions that sustain competitiveness in the world market. And, albeit this time drawing more on its material than its semiotic moment, I use it to consider the implications of contemporary economic change for the nature and purposes of (higher) education.

ON ECONOMIC IMAGINARIES

The approach to these interrelated issues suggested here is based on the concept of economic imaginaries that is central to recent work on cultural political economy. This is a broad post-disciplinary current in institutional and evolutionary political economy that makes a 'cultural turn' in economic and political studies to enhance their interpretive and explanatory power. The cultural turn is used here as an 'umbrella' concept for the wide range of (re-)discoveries in the humanities and social sciences of the role of semiosis in social life: the cultural turn, the narrative turn, the rhetorical turn, the discursive turn, the argumentative turn, the performative turn, the reflexive turn, the visual turn, etc. *Semiosis* is the most comprehensive term to cover all of these cultural turns because it refers to all forms of social production of intersubjective meaning (which includes oral, textual, visual, musical, practical performance, etc). In this sense, CPE might perhaps have been better termed Semiotic Political Economy. This would at least avoid the mistaken view that CPE involves no more than adding an interest in a separate realm of 'culture' to existing concerns with politics and economics that are also considered in turn as distinct spheres of social life with the result that CPE is held to comprise a simple, mechanical addition of arguments drawn from the disciplines corresponding to these fields. Yet, as discourse theorists have long recognised, semiosis cannot be confined to some arbitrarily abstracted or isolated sphere of 'culture' but is a universal and critical dimension of all social life. Previous work in CPE by the present author and his colleagues has drawn mostly on the dialectical-relational discourse approach associated with Norman Fairclough (e.g., 1992; 2003; for other approaches to discourse analysis, see Blommaert and Bulcaen

2000; Wodak and Meyer 2001; Wodak 2004). But its evolutionary and institutional orientation also means that CPE can be linked to conceptual history in its German variants (*Begriffsgeschichte*, historical semantics) concerned with the selective coevolution of discursive and structural changes over long periods as well as its Cambridge (Skinnerian) variant concerned with the use of concepts in specific historical contexts to achieve particular purposes (Edling and Mörkenstam 1995; Ekland 2007; Koselleck 1982; Luhmann 1995a; Palonen 1999). In addition, the Vienna School's 'discourse-historical approach' with its emphasis on eclectic 'thick' historical contextualisation as well as strategies of argumentation has some similarities – as well as some major differences – with CPE, especially as the Viennese approach has been applied to such issues in political economy as international competitiveness, unemployment policy, and the entrepreneurial university (see Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Wodak and Puntscher-Riekmann 2003; Wodak 2004; and, for relevant applications, Mautner 2005; Muntigl et al., 2000).

Turning to CPE as currently understood, in previous work, Fairclough, Jessop, and Sayer (2004) have approached the cultural turn in the social sciences from the viewpoint of critical semiosis. They argue that semiosis is causally effective as well as meaningful. Events and processes and their emergent effects can be interpreted *and*, at least in part, *explained* by semiosis. Thus it is important to study the role of semiosis in the *construal* and *construction* of economic and political realities, hence in making and remaking the social world. A key feature of CPE in this context is its application of the evolutionary mechanisms of variation, selection, and retention to the analysis of economic imaginaries, in regard to theoretical paradigms, policy paradigms, and their interaction as well as its concern with the form-determined, socially-mediated institutional dynamics of (different stages and varieties of) capitalism in a changing world market (see also Jessop 2004; Sum and Jessop 2003).

Informing this approach is recognition of the *hypercomplexity* of the natural and social worlds and the impossibility of observing and explaining these worlds (and their interaction) in real time. This requires continuing processes of *complexity reduction* as a condition of 'going on in the world' – with each process entailing a focus on selected aspects of the world, leading to different kinds of lived experience, and entailing different chances of ignoring other aspects of reality that are crucial to the success of specific strategies, projects, or policies (on complexity and, especially, complexity reduction, see Jessop 2007b; Luhmann 1995b; Rescher 1998). Applied to economic analysis, for example, at what orthodox economics misleadingly describes as the macro-level, CPE distinguishes the 'actually existing economy' as the chaotic sum of all economic activities (broadly defined as concerned with the social appropriation and transformation of nature for the purposes of material provisioning) from the 'economy' (or, better, 'economies' in the plural) as an imaginatively narrated, more or less coherent subset of these activities. The totality of economic activities is so unstructured and complex that it cannot be an object of calculation, management, governance, or guidance. Instead such practices are always oriented to subsets of economic relations (economic systems or subsystems) that have been discursively and, perhaps organisationally and institutionally, fixed as objects of intervention. This involves 'economic

imaginaries' that rely on semiosis to constitute these subsets. Moreover, if they are to prove more than 'arbitrary, rationalistic, and willed' (Gramsci 1971: 376-7), these imaginaries must have some significant, albeit necessarily partial, correspondence to real material interdependencies in the actually existing economy and/or in relations between economic and extra-economic activities. These subsets are always selectively defined – due both to limited cognitive capacities and to the discursive and material biases of specific epistemes and economic paradigms. They typically exclude elements – usually unintentionally – that are vital to the overall performance of the subset of economic (and extra-economic) relations that have been identified. Such exclusions limit in turn the efficacy of economic forecasting, management, planning, guidance, governance, etc., because such practices do not (indeed, cannot) take account of excluded elements and their impact. Similar arguments would apply, with appropriate changes, to so-called meso- or micro-level economic phenomena, such as industrial districts or individual enterprises.

Imagined economies are discursively constituted and materially reproduced on many sites and scales, in different spatio-temporal contexts, and over various spatio-temporal horizons. They extend from one-off transactions through stable economic organisations, networks, and clusters to 'macro-economic' regimes. While massive scope for variation typically exists at an individual transactional level, the medium- to long-term semiotic and material reproduction requirements of meso-complexes and macro-economic regimes narrow this scope considerably. The recursive selection of semiotic practices and extra-semiotic processes at these scales tends to reduce inappropriate variation and to secure thereby the 'requisite variety' (constrained heterogeneity rather than simple uniformity) that supports the always relative structural coherence of economic activities. Indeed stable semiotic orders, discursive selectivities, social learning, path-dependencies, power relations, patterned complementarities, and material selectivities all become more significant, the more that material interdependencies and/or issues of spatial and intertemporal articulation tend to increase within and across diverse functional systems and the lifeworld. Yet this growing set of constraints also reveals the fragility and, indeed, improbability of the smooth reproduction of complex social orders. This highlights the importance of retaining an appropriate repertoire of semiotic and material resources and practices that can be flexibly and reflexively deployed in response to emerging disturbances and crises (cf. Grabher 1994; Jessop 2003).

Economic imaginaries at the meso- and macro-levels emerge as economic, political, and intellectual forces seek to (re)define specific subsets of economic activities as subjects, sites, and stakes of competition and/or as objects of regulation and to articulate strategies, projects and visions oriented to these imagined economies. Among the main forces involved in such efforts are political parties, think tanks, bodies such as the OECD and World Bank, organised interests such as business associations and trade unions, and social movements; the mass media are also crucial intermediaries in mobilising elite and/or popular support behind competing imaginaries.[2] These forces tend to manipulate power and knowledge to secure recognition of the boundaries, geometries, temporalities, typical economic agents, tendencies and counter-tendencies, distinctive overall dynamic, and reproduction requirements of different imagined economies (Daly

1991; Miller and Rose 1993). They also seek to establish new structural and organisational forms that will help to institutionalise these boundaries, geometries, and temporalities in an appropriate spatio-temporal fix that can displace and/or defer capital's inherent contradictions and crisis-tendencies. However, because of rival economic imaginaries, competing efforts to institute them materially, and an inevitable incompleteness in specifying and securing their respective economic and extra-economic preconditions, each 'imagined economy' is only ever partially constituted. There are always interstitial, residual, marginal, irrelevant, recalcitrant and plain contradictory elements that escape any attempt to identify, govern, and stabilise a given 'economic arrangement' or broader 'economic order' (Malpas and Wickham 1995; Jessop 2002).

Nonetheless, relatively successful economic imaginaries have a performative, constitutive force.[3] On the one hand, their operation presupposes a substratum of substantive economic relations and instrumentalities as their elements; on the other, where an imaginary is successfully operationalised and institutionalised, it transforms and naturalises these elements and instrumentalities into the moments of a specific economy with specific emergent properties. For economic imaginaries identify, privilege, and seek to stabilise some economic activities from the totality of economic relations and transform them into objects of observation, calculation, and governance. Technologies of economic governance, operating sometimes more semiotically, sometimes more materially,[4] constitute their own objects of governance rather than emerging in order to, or operating with the effect that, they govern already pre-constituted object. This chapter focuses on the hegemonic economic imaginary in contemporary capitalism – the knowledge-based economy – and explores its implications for theoretical and policy paradigms, especially its translation into policies for skills and higher education.

THEORETICAL AND POLICY PARADIGMS

Discussion of the knowledge-based economy as an economic imaginary and/or economic reality is complicated by two theoretical and practical issues. First, different disciplines draw on different theoretical paradigms to discuss it. This is reflected, for example, in the contrasting concepts of knowledge economy and knowledge society, which draw respectively on economics and sociology. Each of these two concepts is associated with a broader set of cognate concepts that produce distinctive types of imaginary. The former considers knowledge in terms of factors of production, intellectual property, the skills-based economy, national systems of innovation, the knowledge base, the knowledge-driven economy, knowledge management, knowledge transfer, the learning economy, the learning organisation, the learning region, etc. The latter sees it in terms of a collective social resource, the intellectual commons, the division of manual and mental labour, technical and organic intellectuals, the information society, post-industrial society, lifelong learning, the learning society, etc. (cf. Jessop 2002, 2007a; and, for a general survey that contains 57 definitions of knowledge economy, knowledge based economy, knowledge society, and cognate terms, see Carlaw et al., 2006).

Second, cross-cutting the distinction between knowledge economy and knowledge society is that between theoretical and policy paradigms. Wallis and Dollery differentiate them as follows:

> [p]olicy paradigms derive from theoretical paradigms but possess much less sophisticated and rigorous evaluations of the intellectual underpinnings of their conceptual frameworks. In essence, policy advisers differentiate policy paradigms from theoretical paradigms by screening out the ambiguities and blurring the fine distinctions characteristic of theoretical paradigms. In a Lakatosian sense, policy paradigms can be likened to the positive heuristics surrounding theoretical paradigms. Accordingly, shifts between policy paradigms will be discontinuous, follow theoretical paradigm shifts, but occur more frequently than theoretical paradigms since they do not require fundamental changes in a negative heuristic[5] (1999: 5)

That this distinction is recognised by persons situated at the interface of the academic and policy worlds is evident from the complaint of a key independent scholar and OECD policy adviser, Bengt-Åke Lundvall, lamenting, in relation to his concept of 'national innovation system, 'how it has "degenerated", how it has been "abused" and "distorted" while travelling from the academic to the policy world, compared with the connotations he originally intended for it' (2006: 2, 10, 14; as cited by Ekland, 2007: 17).

This distinction (and its conflation) helps us to situate and understand the explosive interest in the KBE. For this theme is not just a matter of theoretical and empirical curiosity for disinterested observers but is being actively translated into a wide range of policies and this, in turn, affects the ways in which the contemporary economy is described, examined, and explained. Indeed, as Godin (2006) shows, the concept of the KBE, as developed above all by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (hereafter OECD), has suggested that:

> [t]he concept of a knowledge-based economy is simply [one] that serves to direct the attention of policy-makers to science and technology issues and to their role in the economy and, to this end, a concept that allows one to talk about any issue of science and technology and generate a large set of statistics under one roof. This kind of concept I will call an umbrella concept. A related, but less controversial, thesis … is that the (resurgence of the) concept of a knowledge-based economy in the 1990s owes a large debt to the OECD – and to the consultants it supported. … [Indeed,] viewing the OECD as a think-tank is the key to understanding the popularity of the concept among member countries (2006: 17-18; cf. Miettinen 2002, Eklund 2007; and Jones, this volume).

These remarks on the transfer of ideas and arguments between theoretical and policy paradigms reinforce the importance of distinguishing between them in order to avoid misunderstandings about the nature and role of discourses about the knowledge based economy. Indeed, in the absence of this distinction, two complementary fallacies can arise. The first is that the theoretical status of the

concept of the KBE, when viewed largely from the perspective of the ideas that inform the policy paradigm, will be dismissed on the grounds that it is merely a political concept or, worse still, an essentially incoherent buzzword (cf. Godin 2006) The second is that, when assessed in terms of the demands for analytical rigour appropriate to a scientific concept, the policies proposed to promote the KBE will be dismissed as inconsistent efforts at 'muddling through' and as bound to fail on these grounds alone. What gets missed here is the constitutive or performative force of the policy paradigm in helping to shape the emergence, provisional stabilisation, and eventual consolidation (if any) of the knowledge-based economy as an actually existing phenomenon. This confirms the overall importance of the potential disjunction, mutual influence, and, indeed, interpenetration of theoretical and policy paradigms – a topic that is particularly suited to a cultural political economy analysis.

The significance of this distinction for present purposes is seen in a recent paper by Peters, who noting that concepts have histories and family resemblances, argues that this also applies to the 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge economy':

> These twin concepts while displaying similar characteristics – among them the attempt to describe society or economy in terms of dominant axial principle from which other societal or economic trends can be inferred – belong to different disciplines and discourses. To all intents and purposes these are separate and parallel discourses that are not cross-threading – in each case the trajectories of the disciplines seem to be powered by their own problematics, by the set of problems thrown up by the discipline rather than any external pressures, and they seem particularly impervious to radical cross-disciplinary borrowing or analysis. Where they do come together is in the area of policy, in policy studies, in actual policies or policy discourse, where the master concepts borrowed from the sociology and economics of knowledge have come to help shape and define policy templates for economic and social development and well being. At the level of policy the same demands for theoretical consistency or disciplinary rigor or internal consistency do not seem to operate; rather the easy dualism of the knowledge society and the knowledge economy is embraced without difficulty or contradiction. While there is, of course, some analysis of trends and even the collection of relevant data, these twin concepts are empirically underdetermined. They operate more like performative ideologies with constitutive effects at the level of public policy. And there are a whole series of self-legitimating sibling concepts spawned by policy analysts and think-tanks that now roll off the tongue of any sociology undergraduate: 'information society', 'learning society', 'information economy', and, more recently, 'learning economy' (Peters, 2006: 1).

Three interrelated conclusions follow from the above discussion. First, having accepted the *prima facie* usefulness of the distinction between the two types of paradigm, it is important not to conflate them or reduce one to the other but to explore their changing articulation in different contexts. Second, we must resist the

temptation to derive immediate policy lessons from theoretical paradigms and/or to subject policy paradigms to a purely theoretical critique. Third, from a CPE perspective, the distinction poses interesting questions about (a) the relative hegemony or dominance of different paradigms (or, as I call them here, economic imaginaries); (b) the discursive and material factors and forces that introduce variation, shape the selection, and consolidate the retention of hegemonic, sub-hegemonic, counter-hegemonic, or marginal accounts of the economy, its dynamic, and its conditions of existence; and (c) the performative force of economic imaginaries in shaping the actually existing economic realm. Together these issues will affect the changing discursive and material boundaries of the economic and extra-economic and their changing implications for economic performance. This could well be reflected in turn in changes in the scope, scale, and relative primacy of different policy fields. This has particular significance, as we will see, for the role of education, knowledge creation, and knowledge transfer to competitiveness.

THREE EXAMPLES

The idea of the 'information economy' as a distinct stage in economic development may well have emerged first in Japan. The term was introduced there by Tadeo Umesao in the 1960s but did not really take off until the late 1970s, by which time 'information economy' and analogous ideas had also been firmly established elsewhere in East Asia and in many advanced western capitalist societies (cf. Dordick and Wang 1993; Masuda 1981; May 2002). The use of such terms was based largely on the *speculative extrapolation* of contemporary trends into the future, focusing on trends in the most advanced national economies as if other economies would simply follow their path with a greater or lesser time lag. So we find references to the information economy, post-industrial economy, knowledge economy, and so forth (for a comprehensive list of 75 such terms, which were introduced at various times from 1950 to 1984, see Beniger 1986; cf. Carlaw et al., 2006). In turn the first wave of information economy strategies were mainly focused on investment in information and communication technologies (ICTs) rather than the move to a knowledge-driven or knowledge-based economy. Typical of these was the American National Information Infrastructure programme launched in 1991, which was rapidly followed by many Western European economies and the European Union.

A broader notion of information economy developed in Japan and other East Asian economies. This was linked to the exhaustion of export-led growth based on catch-up dynamics, which prompted various intellectuals, think tanks, business leaders, and policy-makers[6] to search for new bases for competition. The solution was not only to invest in information and communication technologies but also to upgrade to an innovative, information-based economy; in later discourses and strategies, this idea would be expanded to the more encompassing notion of the knowledge economy. The first explicit information economy and/or KBE strategies in East Asia were the 'Intelligent Island' strategy in Singapore and Malaysia's '2020 Vision' – both of which were presented in 1991. Other East Asian countries

followed, including Japan's High Performance National Information Infrastructure [NII] Plan (1994), Taiwan's NII 2005 (1994), South Korea's NII 2003 (1994), Vietnam's IT 2000 plan (1995), and Smart Philippines (2000). Despite the similar timing in East and West, Asian models and strategies tended to be more comprehensive, going beyond ICTs to broader economic and, even more importantly, extra-economic dimensions of innovation-led growth (for an outline of information economy strategies in this period, see Ducatel, Webster, and Herrmann 2000). Nonetheless, the overriding conclusion to be drawn from this period is the key role of economic narratives and associated imaginaries in identifying turning points and/or crises and in reorienting technology, industrial, and wider-ranging economic policies.

To illustrate this conclusion and the earlier arguments about economic imaginaries, I present three brief case studies drawn from Western experience. The first concerns the growing sensitivity of US policy-makers and stakeholders to the importance of innovation and knowledge as strategic assets. The second is the 'national system of innovation', which was the precursor of the KBE as the dominant economic imaginary in the OECD and its transfer to member states and other economies. Its significance for our purposes is that, although 'the OECD always looked for conceptual frameworks to catch the attention of policy-makers' (Godin 2006: 18), the national system of innovation failed in this regard. So the third case turns to the knowledge economy and knowledge-based economy, which has proved very successful as an economic imaginary.

From Industrial Competitiveness to Knowledge-Based Economy

Almost as soon as it became the undisputed hegemonic power in the capitalist world following the Second World War, the United States has experienced agitated and ongoing debates about its alleged lack of economic competitiveness. These have co-existed with equally angst-ridden concerns about threats to its national military security, whether from the Soviet Bloc, China, or, most recently, asymmetric warfare waged by terrorist networks (on the role of these twin myths in legitimating government support for industry in a regime officially opposed to 'socialistic' or 'communistic' state intervention in the market economy, see Belabes 1999). Worries about competitiveness prompted Congress to establish in 1978 the Office of Technology Assessment to monitor the competitiveness of American industries. Its remit covered industry and market structures, the nature of work forces, availability of materials and components, supporting infrastructures, the environment for innovation and technology diffusion, business and economic conditions, government policies and interactions with the private sector, and international trade relations. In 1983, in response to the perceived threat of 'Japan as Number One' and other indicators of technological, industrial, and financial decline, President Reagan set up the President's Commission on Industrial Competitiveness Commission. Two key outcomes were the Young Report (President's Commission 1986, see also Young 1988) and a 'Council of Competitiveness' to act as a national 'forum for elevating national competitiveness

to the forefront of national consciousness' (Council on Competitiveness 2007). Commissions on competitiveness have continued to report regularly since 1983, with the most recent at the time of writing being the Palmisano Report, 2007). The Council is also very active, focusing on national innovation and identifying the importance of action to promote this in three main fields: talent, investment, and infrastructure. Regarding talent, the focus is on education and training to enable 'talented people' to acquire 'cutting-edge skills' so that they can create 'new ideas and innovative technologies' and 'keep the economy strong and growing stronger'. A particular concern has been lack of competitiveness in 'such critical fields as science, engineering, math and technical skills' and hence on measures to build 'a world-class workforce by initiating programs to encourage diversity in the S&E [i.e., science and engineering] pipelines and excellence in math and science education in America's schools at all levels' (Council on Competitiveness 2001). This in turn is reflected in a whole series of policy recommendations concerning the reorganisation of grade school education, further and higher education, and life-long learning (see below). In addition, at all levels from the North American Free Trade Area down through the federal state, regional blocs of states, states, metropolitan regions, and cities to towns and neighbourhoods, we find concerted efforts to promote competitiveness in these and other areas.

National System of Innovation

'National System of Innovation' (or, sometimes, 'National Innovation System') is a paradigm that is actively promoted internationally by, even if it did not originate in, the OECD (cf. Albert and Laberge 2007; Ekland 2007; Freeman 1995). It refers to the flow of technology and information among people, enterprises and institutions that is held to be central to continuing innovation on the national level. The concept emphasises the contribution of a complex web of relations among private, public, and third sector actors in the NSI, including enterprises, universities and government research institutes at national, regional, and local level that contribute to the production and, even more importantly, diffusion of new technologies and the wider knowledge base that supports their adoption in economically useful ways (cf. Freeman 1995; Lundvall 1992; Nelson 1992; OECD 1997). It has been closely linked in the work of the OECD with the concepts of learning economy and learning region (Foray and Lundvall, 1996; Lundvall, 1992; Lundvall and Johnson, 1994; Maillat and Kebir, 1999).

In a study of Finland in the OECD context with implications extending beyond the Finnish case, Miettinen (2002) has explored 'national system of innovation' as a metaphor performing several rhetorical functions. He argues that it simplifies, persuades and reorients thinking about the interrelationships between science and society; it incorporates tacit value schemes and promotes a vision; helps forge consensus, mobilises various actors in particular ways; and it contributes to shaping events along lines prescribed by model. He adds that these functions can be performed in part because the definition of the NIS is loose, allowing different actors to impute different meanings to the term. At the same time, the associated

vision of increasing the country's economic competitiveness, often resonates with broader political trends in society. After presenting the Finnish case, Miettinen develops an 'epistemology of transdiscursive terms', i.e., terms with significant rhetorical functions that flourish at the interface between science, public discourse, and politics and thereby provide the basis for textual interlacing and circulation of self-referentiality. In the language deployed above, these are terms that have a key bridging role in linking theoretical and policy paradigms, facilitating the translation between them but also disguising important differences in their form and function. In particular, he identifies six key functions that they perform (see Box 1.1).

- They must have a minimal traditional epistemic function in the sense of providing a representation or empirically anchored account of aspects of reality
- They serve as epistemic organisers, synthesising earlier accounts and providing a new angle on things. Suitable terms and metaphors are used in organising one's perspective, integrating various themes that formerly were separated. They provide a sense of inter-connection or holism.
- They supply a world-view or a diagnosis of an era, a function that is also central to the integrative power of the conceptual framework.
- They serve as boundary-crossers by engaging various social groups and institutions in shared discussion. That is why they are called transdiscursive (they cross between and link different discourses).
- They serve ideological and consensus-creating (or vision-carrying) functions.
- They help mobilise and empower a multiplicity of actors under what the participants themselves come to perceive as a common banner.

Box 1.1 Six social-epistemic functions of transdiscursive terms. Source: Adapted and expanded from Miettinen (2002: 137)

Having framed the problem in this manner, Miettinen argues that transdiscursive terms must be loose to provide the interpretative flexibility needed to accommodate different interests expressed by actors across different domains, such as government, university and industry. The credibility of a term will in part depend on linkages with scientific communities because political viability derives from the semblance of scientific credibility. It follows that the tension between the epistemic reality-representing function of the term and its future-oriented rhetorical and discursive organising functions has to be contained to prevent the puncturing and consequent collapse of the metaphor. This risk is illustrated from the OECD's

recent admission in a review paper, that 'there are still concerns in the policy making community that the NIS [sic] approach has too little operational value and is difficult to implement' (OECD 2002: 11, cited in Godin 2006: 19). This failure is one factor behind the rise of the KBE as an alternative concept. Thus Dominique Foray, one of the OECD consultants behind the new term, criticised the concept of National System of Innovation as 'neither strikingly original, nor rhetorically stirring' (David and Foray 1995: 14) and for placing too much stress on national institutions and economic growth and not enough on the distribution of knowledge.

Knowledge-Based Economy

Every economy is a knowledge economy but not every economy has been called a knowledge economy, let alone finds itself so labelled by its most prominent spokespersons as one of its most significant contemporary self-descriptions (on the polyvocal nature of self-descriptions of society, see Luhmann, 1987, 1990, 1995b). Indeed, as indicated above, this label is relatively new. In many cases, especially early on, emphasis fell more on the role of information than of knowledge. More recent uses of the terms 'knowledge economy' and 'knowledge-based economy' (plus related abbreviations and acronyms such as the K-economy and KBE) are less concerned with forecasting the future than with the *empirical description* and *quasi-prescriptive benchmarking* of central features of actually existing economies. Related theoretical paradigms seek to establish the novelty of the KBE by identifying its distinguishing features in terms of some combination of the reflexive application of knowledge to the production of knowledge, the key role of innovation, learning, and knowledge transfer in economic performance, and the increasing importance of the intellectual commons and/or intellectual property rights in contemporary competition. In turn the hegemonic policy paradigm is especially concerned to establish the reality of the KBE through the compilation and repetition of statistical indicators, through the development of benchmarks and league tables, and through the elaboration of an interwoven set of useful concepts, slogans, and buzzwords. These can then be applied to generate a relatively simple set of policy prescriptions and legitimations to be applied to many sectors, many scales, and many countries.

The key document was published by the OECD in 1996 under the title *The Knowledge-Based Economy*. This was followed in 1997 by guidelines for competitiveness in the form of *National Innovation Systems*. This prompted institution-building within and across the public and private sectors at many scales and in regard to many spheres bearing more or less directly on competitiveness in a knowledge-based economy. Within larger firms, knowledge management became a key discipline and knowledge audits were conducted regularly to identify strategic knowledge assets (Malhotra, 2000); governments established knowledge ministries, departments and agencies; national states began to map their 'national innovation systems' (NIS) and take measures to strengthen them; standardised vocabularies were promoted to guide public and private sector debate (cf. American National Standards Institute and Global Knowledge Economics Council

2001). This was taken further with the production of competitiveness indexes, such as the Global Competitiveness Report (World Economic Forum) from 1979 onwards and the *World* C*ompetitiveness Yearbook* (published by the Institute for Management Development in Geneva from 1989 onwards.[7] This highlighted 'the softer side of competition' in a KBE, i.e., the role of value-adding through the creation, the management and the transfer of information (ibid. 4). There is now a global growth industry that produces multiple competitiveness rankings for countries, regions, cities, and so on, each of which employs different statistical and other sources, directed at economic actors and policy-makers around the world (for discussion, see Lall, 2001; Bristow, 2005; Oxley et al., 2007).

Godin has identified the leading role of the OECD in promoting the KBE as the key site of competition and the key focus of competitive strategies. He explains this in terms of the OECD's efforts to respond to the inadequate rhetorical appeal of 'national system of innovation' and 'learning economy' by reviving and consolidating the idea of the knowledge-based economy and, on this basis, identifying the importance of knowledge management and knowledge transfer. He notes above all the OECD's enrolment of the promoters of the KBE concept (e.g., Lundvall and Foray) as consultants and, even more importantly, the production of statistics to give the concept some empirical content and plausibility (Godin 2006: 19). He emphasises that a new approach was needed in order that the OECD could influence the policy process and notes that the rhetorical appeal of the KBE concept depends on its 'easy translation of readily available academic fads into keywords (or buzzwords), then into slogans in order to catch the attention of policy-makers'. In addition, the OECD and policy-makers in its member states are under continuing pressure to publish.

> The OECD publishes biannual, yearly and biennial reports, among them those for ministers' conferences, where timeframes are very tight. Umbrella concepts are very fertile for producing documents. They synthesise what is already available, what comes from day-to-day work conducted in other contexts and, above all, what is fashionable, often at the price of original work (Godin, 2006: 19, 24).

A key factor in reinforcing the ability of memorable buzzwords and slogans to sell ideas is their association with 'a plethora of figures and graphs' (Godin, 2004: 684). These have a spurious scientific authority as well as intuitive persuasive force even though the OECD itself occasionally concedes that its indicators did not adequately capture the complex, dynamic nature of knowledge development and acquisition (e.g., OECD 1995). For, as Godin notes, this presentational strategy appeals to the typical OECD readership: ministers, policy-makers, journalists etc. Thus, writing on the OECD's promotion of the idea of the 'New Economy', Godin argues that

> [t]he strategy developed at the DSTI [i.e., Directorate for Science, Technology, and Industry] to integrate productivity into its statistics and reports was three-fold. First, digest all available academic work in order to imitate their methodology. Second, internationalise the (academic and

> national) statistics to make a convincing case for its member countries. Third, organise the discourse into a policy-oriented framework, using buzzwords. In the present case, it was new growth theories and the New Economy that were the buzzwords. But over the OECD history the latter also shared their popularity with others: high technology, national system of innovation, globalisation, knowledge-based economy, and information economy (Godin, 2004: 688).

These three studies, illustrative of many other economic imaginaries, suggest four key conclusions on the power of economic imaginaries in the emergence, selection, and retention of theoretical and policy paradigms. First, during any period of economic discontinuity, many alternative economic imaginaries may be proposed, each based on a specific ensemble of economic categories linked in turn to wider vocabularies. Second, some of these economic imaginaries may be more resonant than others in a given conjuncture. This will depend in part on the ease of any interchange between theoretical and policy paradigms – reflecting the need both for scientific authority and for easy communicability to lay decision-makers – and in part on the centrality of the organisations and institutions that mediate between these worlds and undertake the necessary translation. Only when the theoretical and policy paradigms promoted by central organisations and institutions lack resonance and/or are held to have manifestly failed when pursued for significant periods does it become possible for marginal or counter-hegemonic forces to provide alternative economic imaginaries. Even here, if the central organisations and institutions are sufficiently powerful, they may persist in their error(s) and seek to repress or, at least, marginalise alternative imaginaries and policy proposals.[8] Third, where, as in the case of the KBE, theoretical and policy paradigms tend to reinforce each other because theoretically-justified policy paradigms are widely adopted and, more importantly, acquire a performative and constitutive character, then the relevant economic imaginary will be retained through normalisation and institutionalisation. But this will depend on the capacity of the economic imaginary to envisage potentialities in a relatively fluid conjuncture, to orient the actions of critical social forces towards their realisation, and to provide means to consolidate this movement once it is initiated. And, fourth, from the viewpoint of a critical cultural political economy, this depends in turn on the capacity of the economic imaginary, once translated into economic strategies and appropriate economic and extra-economic policies, to regularise and stabilise the course of capital accumulation within specific spatio-temporal fixes, including their facilitation of the displacement and/or deferral of associated contradictions, conflicts, and crisis-tendencies elsewhere and/or into the future (cf. Jessop, 2002, 2004).

STAGES OF CAPITALISM

As part of the general CPE approach, competition is regarded as a complex process that cannot be fully grasped in real time by market actors or economic observers. Indeed, this is implied in the very notion of an ‘invisible hand’. Accordingly, the factors and forces bearing on competitiveness may be construed quite differently

from the viewpoint of different economic imaginaries as may the relations among relevant economic and extra-economic factors. CPE also claims that those economic imaginaries that get selected and retained also have a constitutive power in shaping economic orders and the manner of their embedding in wider ensembles of social relations (or social formations), i.e., that they can involve not only construal but also construction. These claims are especially important for theoretical and policy paradigms concerned with the KBE and the conditions making for competitiveness in this 'new' form of capitalist accumulation regime. For economic competitiveness is an essentially contested, inherently relational, and politically controversial concept. There are many ways to define it, many modalities of competition, and many sites of competition. Definitions of competitiveness and their associated discourses are liable to change. Thus mercantilist notions from the 17th century can be contrasted with 1890s imperialism or recent worries about structural competitiveness or innovation-competitiveness (see Reinert, 1995; Cho and Moon, 2000; Porter, 1990). Indeed, as these examples suggest, different ideas of competitiveness are linked with different economic imaginaries. During the mercantilist period, for example, economics was regarded strongly as a matter of political calculation because it concerned state policies to control trade in order to increase financial reserves and because the economy was not yet seen (rightly or wrongly) as a distinct system with its own economic logic (Magnusson, 1994). In the classical imperialist period, global economic competition was mediated through state enclosure of territory abroad for military-political as well as geo-economic purposes (ten Brink, 2007). The transition from classical imperialism to a more liberal post-war order (in the shadow of US hegemony), competition focused more on domestic growth and multinational foreign investment, leading to conflicts between techno-nationalism and techno-globalism (Ostry and Nelson, 1995; Ruggie, 1982). And, with the rise of the neo-liberal transnational financial order and the reorientation of economic and political strategies to the opportunities and constraints of a globalising knowledge-based economy, competition has been restructured again, this time over innovation policies and how best to subordinate the extra-economic to the 'demands' of economic competition (Jessop, 2002).

The rise of the KBE as the hegemonic economic imaginary was neither a fateful necessity nor an arbitrary act of will. It resulted from the operation of the usual evolutionary mechanisms of variation, selection, and retention as the social forces backing one or another economic imaginary compete for support in a particular, complex conjuncture. This was the crisis of the dominant post-war accumulation regimes, including Atlantic Fordism, East Asian exportism, Latin American import substitution, and, albeit less obviously capitalist, state socialism in the Soviet Bloc and in mainland China. Economic crises normally disorient social forces and lead to great *variation* in discourses addressed to their nature, causes, responsibilities, management, and possible long-term solutions. In some cases this involved efforts to define the crisis in political as well as economic terms, requiring a radical break in the form of political regime in order to radically modify the balance of forces and pursue 'necessary' structural reforms (e.g., Thatcherism); in others, it was sufficient for the economic crisis to be defined in terms of a loss of competitiveness in a changing world market that required new economic strategies supported by

appropriate policy adjustments (e.g., the Nordic economies). These crisis interpretations are subject in turn to both semiotic and material *selection*, in terms of the initial resonance among personal, organisational, and meta-narratives as well as social forces' differential capacity to access and control the key sites and media in and through which competing discourses are communicated. Resonant discourses that are also widely disseminated to key social forces and get translated into effective strategies and policies will eventually be *retained*. This involves even more important material mediation in so far as these strategies and policies must be (seen to be) effective within the spatio-temporal horizons of the social forces who matter in a given social formation. Where economic imaginaries satisfy these semiotic and material tests, they are likely to be retained in three key areas: (a) incorporation in habitus, hexis, personal identity, organisational routines, institutional rules, (b) objectification in built environment, material and intellectual technologies, and (c) continuing expression in economic strategies, state projects, hegemonic visions. In general, the wider the range of sites (horizontal and vertical) where resonant discourses are retained, the greater is the potential for effective institutionalisation. This in turn should lead to relative structured coherence across institutional orders and modes of thought and in relatively durable patterns of social compromise among key actors.

Seen in these terms, three sets of changes have occurred in the transition from the economic imaginaries associated with Atlantic Fordism, Asian exportism, import substitution industrialisation, and state socialism to the currently hegemonic economic imaginaries that are oriented in different ways to a globalising knowledge-based economy.

The first change is a shift from imaginaries that treat macro-economics mainly in national terms to imaginaries that are oriented to multiple, interpenetrating scales of economic organisation up to and including the world market.

– The second change concerns the expansion of the 'economic' to include an increasing array of factors and forces that were previously considered 'economically irrelevant'.
– The third change involves the widening of 'extra-economic' factors and forces that are now considered 'economically relevant'.

The education system figures in all three areas. For it is increasingly construed in post-national terms and is being reorganised on this basis at various scales; it is increasingly construed as a directly economic factor (education is now located within the profit-oriented, market-mediated economic or, at least, subject to commodification and/or evaluation in terms of market proxies); and, where it is located outside the market or quasi-market economy, it is nonetheless increasingly seen as an extra-economic factor that bears directly and ever-more critically on economic competitiveness (cf. Ball, 2007).

The OECD has had a key role in linking and promoting all three sets of changes so that they tend to be mutually reinforcing within the limits of a world market that is still governed in the shadow of sovereign national states, some of which are, of course, more powerful than others. It is primarily concerned with securing an appropriate balance between competition and cooperation between developed capitalist economies in regard to the economic strategies of enterprises as well as

the economic and economically-relevant policies pursued by governments at different scales. Established as part of the post-war international regime of embedded liberalism, the OECD faced problems in the late 1960s and early 1970s around the declining economic performance of advanced capitalist economies and the best ways to insert emerging economies into the world market. Its initial response to the unfolding economic crisis was to call for greater flexibility compared to the rigidities of an Atlantic Fordism based on mass production and mass consumption, big business, powerful unions, and big government; it then called for greater structural and/or systemic competitiveness[9] in terms of extra-economic as well as economic institutional arrangements (although this was framed primarily within the old economic imaginary); it shifted again, this time to recommendations about how to improve national systems of innovation (the start of a shift towards the KBE), to subsequent calls for a learning economy (an even stronger shift in this direction), and, finally, for measures to effect the transition to the knowledge-based economy as the next stage in capitalist development. At each step, the nature, scope, and significance of the extra-economic as well as economic factors making for competitiveness has tended to expand. This holds not only for firms as they seek to identify an ever-widening range of sources of dynamic competitive advantage (and disadvantage) and to capitalise upon the former and eliminate the latter; but also for the economic and extra-economic policies to be pursued by policy-makers and associated stakeholders on all scales from industrial or central business districts through cities and regions to nations and supranational blocs. A key element in all areas is the promotion of entrepreneurialism and an entrepreneurial culture supported, in more recent policy paradigms, by calls for investment in social capital and for the promotion of good governance. The wide range of indicators of competitiveness that are now included in benchmarks for technological, structural, systemic, and future-oriented growth competitiveness is a good index of this transformation in theoretical and policy paradigms.

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

The initial crisis in/of Fordism prompted a critique of education as failing to meet the needs of a changing economy and redefined labour market. This was associated with an increased emphasis on inculcating flexibility and adaptability as a short-term response to the vagaries of the business cycle and greater volatility in the labour market (Robins and Webster, 1989). Flexibility and flexible learning were also linked to organisational change, especially with the rise of open and distance learning enabled by new ICTs and new methods of context-situated and problem-oriented teaching and learning. Later, there was a broader emphasis on the role of education in promoting the globalising, knowledge-based economy through the development of human capital. This was linked to growing concern with the certification of transferable as well as specific skills in schools, post-compulsory education, and on-the-job training. Training and lifelong learning became a central component of economic as well as social policy in all advanced capitalist economies and they were tied to the growing consensus that successful competition depends on building the knowledge base and human capital.

These trends are evident at all levels of education from schools through further and higher education to on-the-job training and career-linked lifelong learning and thence to 'universities of the third age' for older people. A cross-national survey some ten years ago of general discourses and proposals for educational reform identified a new orthodoxy based on:

> (1) improving national economies by tightening the connection between schooling, employment, productivity, and trade; (2) enhancing student outcomes in employment-related skills and competencies; (3) attaining more direct control over curriculum content and assessment; (4) reducing the costs to government of education; and (5) increasing community input to education by more direct involvement in school decision-making and pressure of market choice. (Carter and O'Neill, 1995, summarised by Ball, 1998: 122)

Thus schools were increasingly expected to enable children to become enterprising subjects and develop their personal skills and capacity for team-working. They were also expected to provide the basis for the transition to work and to forge closer links with future employers. As Mulderrig (this volume) indicates for the British case, a growing emphasis was placed on the development of technical, personal, and life skills that would be useful in employment. This is reflected in a proliferation of programmes to integrate education and work through more vocational training, partnerships, work experience, training credits, and so on. Linked to this is the extension of the new managerialism and audit culture into schools (as well as universities) with its emphasis on quasi-markets, internal cost centres, performativity, targets, benchmarking, staff appraisal, etc. (Clarke and Newman, 1997; Fairclough, 1993; Mautner, 2005; Power, 1997).

The tightened connection between schooling, employment, productivity and trade is reflected in a cross-national reorientation of the notion of skill, with increasing emphasis on key skills, lifelong learning and employability, as technology, corporate restructuring and volatile markets are believed to have ended the Fordist fantasy of jobs for life (Lauder et al., 2001). Education has become integrated into the workfarist project that downgrades the Keynesian state's commitment to full employment and now emphasises its contribution to creating conditions for full employability. Thus responsibility for becoming employable is devolved to individual members of the labour force, who should acquire the individual skills, competencies, flexibility, adaptability and personal dispositions to enable them to compete for jobs in national and global labour markets. They may be largely responsible for this as enterprising individuals investing in their own human capital or as equal citizens entitled to support from the state and social partners to improve their skills. In all cases there should be increasing cooperation between colleges, universities and other learning providers and the world of work. Thus employers and practitioners are involved in curriculum development, managers are drawn into educational governance and agenda-setting, mobility between the academy and non-academic worlds is encouraged, and colleges and universities deliver lifelong learning through advanced professional programmes, continuing professional development, part-time, evening, and distance teaching, remedial and second-chance courses, and so on (Teichler, 1999: 85).

Notwithstanding this cross-national policy discourse convergence, there are still marked differences in take-up and implementation. Brown et al. (2001) report, for example, that, where economies were dominated by a belief that the future lay in a post-industrial service economy, there was a polarisation between education and training for high-skilled elites and for a flexible, low-skilled service sector. The latter sector also had relatively low investment and generated output more through long working hours than increasing productivity. Conversely, where manufacturing was still accorded a key role in accumulation strategies, the state emphasised intermediate skills and the need for education and training to link industry and services. This was coupled with high capital investment to harness skills for a high-productivity economy. The USA and UK exemplify the first model; the second is illustrated by Germany.[1]

Turning more directly to further and higher education, there has been a great emphasis on shifting university teaching and research from its ivory-towered intellectual isolation back into closer and more continuous contact with the economy, the state and the community as vital co-producers and consumers of useful knowledge. This is especially clear in technology, the sciences and medicine, and has also penetrated the social sciences so that it is not merely graduates but faculty members themselves who are expected to develop extensive links with users in industry, business, the professions, government and local communities. There is growing emphasis on external fund-raising, patenting, technology transfer, research parks, commercial spin-offs, science and technology parks, incubators, consultancy services – amounting to the emergence of a veritable 'academic capitalism' in liberal economies that encourages entrepreneurial universities and transforms faculty members into enterprising bearers of intellectual capital (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). This change was encouraged in the USA (the principal cheerleader for the knowledge-based economy in the 1990s as a response to the perception of declining industrial competitiveness) through changes in federal funding for research, enabling universities to keep the intellectual property in their discoveries, as well as through the more general extension of the scope and duration of intellectual property rights. Universities are also encouraged to commercialise their research. This was intended to encourage academic entrepreneurialism, to subsidise corporate R&D, and to facilitate regional economic development. Similar patterns can be found in other university systems.

Overall, in the words of Etzkowitz, a leading researcher on the 'triple helix' interface between university, business and the state, writing at an early stage in this transformation:

> Virtually every country that has a university, whether it was founded for reasons of education or prestige, is now attempting to organise knowledge-based economic development. … As the university becomes more dependent upon industry and government, so have industry and government become more dependent upon the university. In the course of the 'second academic revolution' a new social contract is being drawn up between the university and the wider society, in which public funding for the university is made contingent upon a more direct contribution to the economy (Etzkowitz, 1994: 149, 151)

Two apparently contrary but actually complementary strategies are being adopted here. On the one hand, the state is asserting the importance of education in the realisation of national economic interests; and, on the other hand, it is conceding greater autonomy to educational institutions in how they serve these interests (Marginson, 1999). But this autonomy is being exercised in the context of the hegemony of knowledge-based accumulation strategies, the growing participation of the bearers of this strategy in the shaping of education mission statements, the increasing financial dependence of further and higher education on third-party revenues deriving neither from the state nor from students, and the growing dependence of university revenues on student fees, business research contracts, third mission activities, and university branding strategies relative to the share of income as block grants from government agencies. The first strategy 'involves a reaffirmation of the state functions of education as a "public good", while the second subjects education to the disciplines of the market and the methods and values of business and redefines it as a competitive private good' (Marginson, 1999: 122). Together, these strategies serve to reinforce the primacy of accumulation within the organisation of education and to promote differentiation in the higher education sector between top research universities at the cutting-edge of the knowledge-based economy that engage in world-class international research cooperation and others that tend to specialise in cost-effective mass credentialisation and opportunities for life-long learning at a more local or regional scale. At both ends of this increasingly stretched out spectrum, however, there is emphasis on close links to the users of research and education to ensure, as far as possible, that economic needs are being served.

Again, there are different routes to this reconfiguration. In the USA, universities have long been encouraged to operate as business firms and to be entrepreneurial. Pressures in this direction have nonetheless been reinforced from the 1980s onwards with the result that many universities have reoriented their activities from teaching towards research to generate patents and royalties. Moreover, because they must still teach, American universities must resort to continuing efforts to cut costs and boost efficiency by standardising and commoditising education, casualising and flexibilising intellectual labour, and selling on-line lecture courses. In Europe, the European Round Table is promoting a neoliberal agenda that sees education and training as 'strategic investments vital for the future success of industry' and has proposed measures to strengthen the comparatively weak influence of business on the curriculum and adapt it to the needs of industry through the development of private-public partnerships (Levidow, 2001). This has also been encouraged by the EU itself in the hope of increasing the international market share of EU education and to reduce the duration and costs as well as the inefficiencies in mass higher education (Bologna Declaration 1999; see also Fairclough and Wodak, this volume). Overall, there is now a much enhanced global competition for talent – from recruitment of students at all levels through researchers in universities, research centres, and enterprises to skilled knowledge workers, the 'creative class', and high-flying and effective entrepreneurs.

All of this has important consequences for university governance in relation to internal management, accounting, audit, learning modes, incentives, career tracks,

and so on as well as in relation to external partnerships, knowledge transfer, political guidance, and government controls. Thus the traditional model of university governance, depicted most famously in the Humboldt model (on which, see Ash, this volume), is being challenged by demands for greater accountability to a multi-tiered state system, all manner of business interests from small- and medium-sized firms to national and international champions, and, more generally, to the treadmill of competitiveness across a wide range of scales and in relation to an ever-expanding range of economic and extra-economic factors.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has pursued three main objectives. First, it aimed to introduce a new approach to the political economy of the restructuring and reorientation of universities in advanced capitalist social formations. This approach has been presented as 'cultural political economy' and draws on several variants of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and critical political economy. Its key innovation from the viewpoint of CDA is its emphasis on the variation, selection, and retention over time of alternative economic imaginaries and their contribution to the construction as well as construal of actually existing economies and their extra-economic conditions and supports. Conversely, its key innovation from the viewpoint of political economy is to resist the naturalisation of economic categories, structures, and processes at the same time as showing the continued importance of the historically specific economic logic of an economic order that is primarily organised as a profit-oriented, market-mediated system with all that this implies for the modes of competition, the changing forms of economic competitiveness, and the continuing struggle to secure the extra-economic as well as economic conditions for competitiveness within and between economic spaces. Second, it has applied the cultural political economy approach to the emergence of the knowledge-based economy as the hegemonic economic imaginary of the current stage of capitalism – locating this in relation to the crisis of the main forms of economic growth in the post-war period, not only within the advanced capitalist economies but also in Latin America, East Asia, the Soviet bloc, and Mainland China, as well as in relation to the role of organisations and institutions charged with developing theoretical and policy paradigms that draw on and contribute to new economic imaginaries. And, third, it has indicated some of the implications of this transformation in economic imaginaries and their translation into economic policies and new forms of competitiveness for the education system in general and higher education in particular. However, as the other contributions to this collection are more directly focused on these implications, the third aim has not been presented in such detail. It remains, therefore, to invite readers to consider the implications of the rise of the KBE imaginary and its translation into business strategies, state policies, and 'common sense' for the increasing primacy of economic goals in the education sector. The chapters that follow provide much material for reflection on this question.

NOTES

[1] In writing this paper, I have benefitted from comments by Eva Hartmann, Norman Fairclough, Ngai-Ling Sum, and Ruth Wodak. The usual disclaimers hold.

[2] I am not suggesting here that mass media can be completely disentangled from the broader networks of social relations in which they operate but I do want to highlight the diminished role of an autonomous public sphere in shaping semiosis.

[3] Indeed, there is no economic imaginary without materiality (Bayart, 1994: 20-1). Some commentators have noted a superficial similarity between my notion of economic imaginary and Castoriadis's use of social imaginary. While agreeing with Castoriadis on the creative role of imaginaries in making sense of the social world and, where backed by power, in 'instituting' that world, as well as the critical role of radical imaginaries in opposing the instituted world, the theoretical contexts of our respective accounts mean that they have different ontological, epistemological, and methodological bases and different implications for the relevance of Marx's critique of political economy and the nature of politics (cf. Castoriadis 1979).

[4] Although all practices are semiotic *and* material, the relative causal efficacy of these elements varies.

[5] For Imre Lakatos (1978), a research programme provided rules about what paths of inquiry to pursue (positive heuristic) and which to avoid (negative heuristic). [The clarificatory endnote in this quotation was inserted by Bob Jessop.]

[6] Key figures here, in addition to East Asian intellectuals, think tanks, business strategists, and officials were two Western thinkers, Alvin Toffler (1980) and Daniel Bell (1973, 1989).

[7] The WEF and IMD published a joint report for a time but decided to separate reports because of measurement differences.

[8] Thus Karl Deutsch (1963) notes that one measure of power is the ability not to have to learn from one's mistakes.

[9] On structural competitiveness, see Chesnais 1987; on systemic competitiveness, Messner 1996; Esser et al., 1996. See also STI Review (published by the OECD).

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2. FROM 'HUMBOLDT' TO 'BOLOGNA': HISTORY AS DISCOURSE IN HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM DEBATES IN GERMAN-SPEAKING EUROPE

This chapter addresses contemporary discourse on higher education reform in German-speaking Europe.[1] This discourse has two main dimensions, which are closely related: (a) constructions of the past centred about the magical name of Wilhelm von Humboldt and (b) an alleged 'Americanisation' of higher education in the present. Put linguistically, both dimensions combine narrative and semantic elements (keywords) in interesting ways. As a historian rather linguist, I mainly confine myself to presenting relevant empirical material, and leave theoretical analysis to the experts. However, it is important to stress that any separation of past and present in this context is artificial, since constructions of tradition function primarily in the present and only secondarily as claims about history, and narratives about the present exist primarily in order to shape the future. A central aim below is to explore what constructions of higher education history imply for current policy debates – or at least for public constructions of these debates.

The chapter has two parts. Part I focuses on narrative issues, especially 'The Humboldt Myth'. I describe how it emerged and ask why it remains so powerful, although it has little relation to historical realities, especially in German-speaking Europe. Before moving to the second part, I also briefly discuss the common claim that 'the modern research university' was imported from Germany into the United States around 1900. Part II addresses the semantic dimension and focuses on certain keywords that appear to be formative for current higher education reform discussions in Germany and Austria, and perhaps elsewhere in Europe as well.

'HUMBOLDT' AS MYTH – THE INVENTION OF A TRADITION

Certain highly simplified characterisations of German university history appear with great frequency in current debates about higher education reform in Germany and Austria. These claims have been repeated so often that they have become accepted by most players in the game, not only by politicians or university rectors and presidents seeking convenient, rhetorically persuasive formulae for the addresses they must give at jubilees and other important occasions, but also by many specialists in higher education policy research or in social studies of higher education. Historical research has challenged all of these conventional claims (for details, see Ash, 1997; McClelland, 2005; Rüegg, 2004). However, as discourse

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analysts well know, so far as the political roles of language are concerned, the truth or falsehood of certain historical constructions is not the central issue. In this case, certainly, that discourse centred about references to the magic name 'Humboldt' has a mythical character. In this context, myths are not and indeed cannot be lies. Rather, I view mythical constructions in the same way as cultural anthropologists – as formative for discursive communities that remain powerful in large part because they help constitute corporate (in this case, corporatist) identities of the relevant groups. Thus viewed, acceptance and repetition of a traditional 'origin myth' constitute membership in the discursive community in question, and, at the same time, give deeper meaning to that participation – this is who we are, and where we come from. Regarding the 'Humboldt myth', this seems to be the case regardless of the actors' widely differing political views and of whether the claims made within the framework of that discourse are in any sense correct historically. Nonetheless, it is important to contrast central elements of the 'master narrative' with historians' reconstructions of the events or processes to which it appears to refer, not so much to score points against professors, policy makers or other actors in the current discursive–political game, but to bring out more clearly the mythical character of this particular discursive construction, as defined above.

What are the constitutive elements of the 'Humboldt myth'? One central narrative component, an assumption shared unquestioningly by nearly all participants in this particular discourse, is the claim that Wilhelm von Humboldt personally initiated the 'modern research university' in his vision for the University of Berlin, founded in 1810 (see, for example, Krull, 2005). As historians have made clear, the 'German university model,' as they prefer to call it, had many authors, and the associated claim that a 'modern research university' was actually founded in Berlin according to Humboldt's ideals is also problematic (Anderson, 2000; vom Bruch, 2001).[2] More important here is that the 'German model' of the modern university in the nineteenth century was not linked with Humboldt's name at that time, because his original writings on higher education policy remained unpublished until the 1890s (Paletschek, 2001). The discursive complex associated with his name, and the long-lived tradition based on it, is thus an invention of the period around 1900 – a point to which I will return shortly.

Perhaps more important for current higher education debates than such historians' issues are claims about the nature of the ideal university that Humboldt formulated in his writings from 1809 and 1810. The following four elements appear to be common to all descriptions and thus constitutive for the discursive complex I call the 'Humboldt myth':

– Freedom of teaching and learning (*Lehr-* und *Lernfreiheit*). Central here is that Humboldt was a liberal in the traditional sense. He believed in individual freedom, and therefore argued that students had as much right to choose their instructors and subjects as professors had to decide what and how they teach. This implied a radical break with any form of set curriculum.
– The unity of teaching and research (*Einheit von Lehre und Forschung*). For Humboldt and those who cite him, learning is a collaborative enterprise, in

which 'the professors are not there for the students, but rather both are there for science (and scholarship) (Humboldt, 1809/1990: 274).

– The unity of science and scholarship (*Einheit der Wissenschaft*). For Humboldt and for those who came after him there was no fundamental distinction in principle between the natural sciences and the humanities, because the concept of *Wissenschaft* applies to both. The concrete institutional expression of this ideal was the rise in status of the so-called Philosophical (in America: Arts and Sciences) Faculty, from provider of liberal arts education as a propadeutic to professional training in theology, law and medicine to independent and co-equal status. It was indeed in Berlin that this part of the university first acquired equal standing with the traditional faculties, though this did not occur during Humboldt's brief tenure, but ten years later (Mittelstraß, 1994).
– The primacy of 'pure' science (*Bildung durch Wissenschaft*) over specialised professional training (*Ausbildung, Spezialschulmodell*). Humboldt and those who cite him claim to understand science and scholarship in the modern sense, as processes of inquiry – 'not a finished thing to be found, but something unfinished and perpetually sought after,' as he put it - not the discovery and repetition of things to be learned from textbooks, but an approach to learning, an attitude of mind, a skill and a capacity to think rather than specialised knowledge (Humboldt, 1809/1990: 274).

Each of these principles is problematic in terms of its actual historical realisation (see, for example, Schubring, 1991). More interesting for discourse analysis of contemporary policy debates is, perhaps, that the invention of this discursive complex and its eponymous linkage with Humboldt in the period around 1900 came at a time dominated by a perceived crisis of the very university system Humboldt was later supposed to have created. As contemporaries noted, by the turn of the nineteenth century both the unity of teaching and research and the primacy of 'pure' science were in deep trouble, in the natural sciences and humanities alike. The key slogans of that time seem eerily familiar today. Contemporaries complained about overcrowded lecture halls, seminars and laboratories.[3] They warned against the danger of an 'intellectual proletariat' of unemployable academics, or an 'invasion' of foreigners (and Jews), and they diagnosed an 'exodus of research from the university' (vom Bruch, 1997). Thus, the tension between the mythical 'Humboldtian' ideal and the realities of modern higher education did not first become visible in the 1960s, as many, especially politically conservative critics have assumed, but much earlier. Historians note a profound irony here: just when the 'German model' had come to be viewed as the world standard outside German-speaking Europe, it was perceived to be in crisis at home.

One response to this perceived crisis was to displace the 'Humboldtian' linkage of teaching and research to post-doctoral level by establishing the Kaiser Wilhelm Society for the Advancement of the Sciences in 1911 (Vierhaus and vom Brocke, 1990). This continued a tradition that was already well established in Germany and survives in certain respects to this day – a strategy of institutionalising innovations by founding new institutions, while leaving the institutional structure of the

university more or less the same. In the humanities, however, the name of 'Humboldt' became a symbol for a 'renewal' of the supposedly 'classical' humanistic German university ideal – which meant in practice that the adherents of that (mythical) ideal remained at odds with modernity for the next 100 years. Thus it should come as no surprise when I later note that contemporary complaints about the alleged 'death of Humboldt' most often come from humanists and social scientists, rather than natural or medical scientists.

The tension between the mythical, identity-constituting discourse around 'Humboldt' and the realities of mass higher education still shapes higher education policy debates in German-speaking Europe. After a long period of blockage (called *Reformstau* in German) in the 1980s and early 1990s, genuine university reform appears finally to be under way, both in Germany and in Austria; but the process may be difficult, in part because the discourse surrounding Humboldt's ideals remains constitutive for public discussion and retains much of its attraction today.

How can this be so, given that Humboldt's ideals were created for universities at which at most one per cent of a given age group studied, and thus bear little relation to the realities of present-day mass higher education, especially in German-speaking Europe? In my opinion, the following reasons account to some extent, if not fully, for the continued power of the 'Humboldt myth':

– 'Humboldt' is a symbol for the autonomy and predominance of the professoriate in university affairs.
– 'Humboldt' is a symbol for the primacy of basic over applied research.
– 'Humboldt' is symbolic of ideals in which many university teachers (and even some students) sincerely believe, and try despite enormous obstacles to achieve. This is true in particular of the unity of teaching and research.

This last point supports the view that myths need not be lies, but can instead constitute 'corporate identity,' even if this happens in the form of a 'counter-utopia'.

EXCURSUS I: 'HUMBOLDT' IN AMERICA?

It is often claimed by scholars and policy actors alike in the United States as well as in Germany and Austria that German universities were the models for the American research university, which later went on to dominate the world science system. The irony seems obvious: if 'Humboldt' found his true home in America, then claims of 'Americanisation' advanced in the context of current higher education policy debates would mean that the real 'Humboldt' was being re-imported back to his European homeland - an implication unfamiliar to many of those who wield the accusation of 'Americanisation' like a club. I return to this point in Part Two. Here I want simply to put on the historian's cap again for a moment and ask how far this often-repeated claim, or cliché, is correct.

While many countries indeed looked to Germany as a model for the modernisation of their university systems in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was no longer 'Humboldt's' university by that time – if 'Humboldt's' university ever existed. And what they took from 'the German model' had more to

do with local circumstances than with the German model. That is certainly true for the United States. In this context, the following central points seem important to emphasise here (on these, see, for example, Geiger, 1986; Clark, 1995; Turner, 2001; Shils and Roberts, 2004):

> The American universities which emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were far too diverse to be described as imports from any single country. Rather, they combined elements from the British, German and other European university systems with local inventions. In particular, in so far as 'German' elements entered higher education at all in the United States, they did so in graduate education, which was added onto the first or Bachelor degree, whereas the doctorate was then and remained for many years the only tertiary level degree in Germany and Austria. This fundamental dissimilarity in the structure of degree programmes will concern us again below.

The original cliché is based on an exclusive focus on American elite, mainly privately funded, universities (see, for example, Herget, 1992; Fallon, 2001). The symbolic figures are men like Daniel Coit Gilman of Johns Hopkins or Charles W. Elliott at Harvard. This point, too, will be relevant again in Part Two.

The publicly funded universities in the United States, which arose at the very same time as the famous private institutions expanded from college to university status, only followed the lead of Harvard, Yale, or Johns Hopkins to a limited extent. In the view of state university leaders, the modern university included not only a college of arts and sciences (with its associated graduate school), but also colleges of law, medicine and dentistry, as well as schools of music, library science, pharmacy, and education. Given this structure, it was only logical that they defined the university not as an institution of pure learning and research, but rather, according to one state university president in 1905, as 'the institution which furnishes a special, professional, technical training for some particular calling' – training which, however, should be 'scientific in character and must be based upon adequate preliminary preparation of a liberal sort' (James, 1905: 612). Needless to say, this was precisely the opposite of Humboldt's utopia. The roots of what Clark Kerr would call the 'multiversity' in the 1960s were already in place around 1900 (Kerr, 2001/1964).[4] This was and remains a uniquely American institution serving the needs of multiple constituencies in the same location and quite different from its German counterpart.

POLICY NARRATIVES AND KEYWORDS IN CURRENT REFORM DEBATES

I now address the discursive dimensions of the current higher education reform debate more directly. It is well known that predominant policy narratives in Britain centre on terms such as 'globalisation,' 'marketisation,' or indeed 'knowledge society' (see Lawn, 2001, 2003; Wright, 2004). The narrative dimension in the last case is that this is the sort of society that is emerging not only in Europe, but throughout the world (and indeed, has been emerging since the 1960s), so that policy should be directed toward preparing for the advent of this new society and

perhaps helping in some ways to structure it. As many writers have argued, policy actors are trying to make such narratives hegemonic in the sense that all participants accept the idea that such processes are indeed occurring, and that policymakers must react to them and position their countries in this context.

In German-speaking Europe, though these terms are surely present in public discussion, they appear less prominent than in Britain. Perhaps that is because the economy in Germany and to a lesser extent in Austria already began moving in the direction of science-based industries in the late nineteenth century, and Germany had already begun to devote more than one per cent of GNP to research expenditures as early as 1928, decades before this was true in any other European country (Szöllöszi-Janze, 2004). Be that as it may, I would like to focus on four key words here that are at least as prominent in public discussion as the ones just mentioned, and suggest that they form a semantic cluster, without claiming that they are the only ones on offer. Alongside 'Americanisation' key words such as 'privatisation,' 'autonomy,' and 'elite' also belong to the cluster.

Interestingly enough, such terms appear at first to carry negative connotations; could it be that the critics of reform have the discursive upper hand in Germany and Austria? I want to suggest that such key words acquire power in part because they appear useful to all political players – for conservatives seeking to retain corporatist privileges as well as for those on the left seeking to defend what they take to be fundamental qualities of the European welfare state. The common denominator in this case appears to be the defence of perceived European achievements against a perceived threat from without (Stucke, 2001; Jarausch, 2003).

'Americanisation'[5]

Recent efforts at higher education reform in Germany and Austria have drawn to some extent from elements of the American university system, but they have also looked to certain European models as well as to Australia and other places for guidance. It is thus empirically incorrect to describe the changes now underway in Europe solely as 'Americanisation'. Taking recent changes in German higher education law and the new Austrian university law as examples, it might be more interesting to ask whether the reformers have understood those features of the American system that they think they have imported. Nonetheless, critics of current higher education reform projects in Germany and Austria often claim that 'Americanisation' is going on. Why?

The fundamental point seems clear: the core issue, not only in higher education but all through the ongoing transformation of welfare state regimes, is the relationship of state and civil society, and the correlative question in this field is whether higher education is a private or a public good. For Americans, this is a non-issue. Since it is obviously both, in their minds, the question is whether university legal status, institutional arrangements, and financing should reflect that screamingly obvious fact or not. Apparently there is no such consensus in Europe, though here it might be useful to distinguish the Continent from Britain. Whereas

higher education has been a near monopoly of the state on the Continent since the early modern period, the view that higher education is a public good only came to be widely accepted in Britain after 1945. Terms like 'Americanisation' might well be seen as markers of difference, and stand for the defence of a (dissolving) status quo in both settings, but for different reasons in each location. Such defensive discourse may well be reinforced by negative feelings about the rapidly changing situation in university governance. Increased management flexibility is now permitted in German and Austrian universities (see the section on 'Autonomy' below), and the forms it takes are indeed drawn to some extent on American models. Thus, critics' references to 'Americanisation' might also be markers of difference in this respect as well.

'Privatisation' – 'Humboldt,' 'Darwin,' or neither?

From all the noise being made in public discussion, it would seem as though German and Austrian universities were instituting 'social Darwinist'-style entrepreneurial structures, with wild, free-for-all competition substituting for legally ordered relationships. Serious higher education reform has indeed begun in Germany and Austria; but what is happening there can hardly be described as 'privatisation,' especially not when compared with developments in Britain or the USA.

In Germany, a series of revisions in the Higher Education Framework Law passed since 1998 have had the effect of loosening, though not entirely removing, the restrictive structures that had inhibited change until that time (Welsh, 2004). One of the most important of these is the so called 'Experimentation Clause,' which allows Länder governments to institute reforms without waiting until all Länder have come to a consensus. This contrasts strongly with the original versions of the Framework Law passed in the 1970s, which practically mandated consensus and thus made change an extremely slow and complicated affair. The new provision has released considerable energy and initiative, and is surely partly responsible for the rapid introduction of first-cycle degree programmes as part of the so-called Bologna Process, at least in some universities and subject areas (see Excursus II below). A second change is the possibility – not the obligation! – of establishing so called 'global', that is, flexible, instead of line item budgeting, as well as a large degree of university control over faculty hiring.

But of course budget flexibility does not equal 'privatisation'! The very idea of an 'Experimentation Clause' presupposes that everything not addressed by such provisions is still subject to strict if not rigid regulation by the Länder. In fact, two of the central problems of the German system – the insistence on civil service or government employee status for all teaching staff, with all the associated rigidities; and the legal fiction directly resulting from this, that all universities are to be treated the same, despite obvious qualitative differences among and within them – are still very much in place, though change is beginning in this respect (see below). Nonetheless, even though increased flexibility in internal management is permitted, universities as state institutions still have to be financed and administered

according to similar rules, legal mandates require that places must be provided to all qualified students who seek them, and institutions are as yet unable to institute selective admissions except in specially permitted cases. Salary scales for teaching staff, particularly professors, have recently been altered to make it possible to pay what policy makers call 'achievement-based' salaries no longer based on seniority alone. Nonetheless, both the rules for determining these salaries and the financing that decides whether such salary differentials can be paid at all are still mandated by the Länder. 'Privatisation' thus appears, like 'Americanisation,' to function largely as a marker of difference, according to which any departure from the previous system is labelled as a radical and negative change.

The Austrians have gone much further than the Germans in terms of basic structural change, without being noticed (at least in public) by the Germans until recently (an exception is Nickel, 2002; for Austrian accounts, see Schnedl and Ulrich 2003). The University Law of 2002 releases all Austrian universities from their previous status as subordinate organs of the state and declares them to be 'corporations at public law' (*Universitätsgesetz* 2002). With this change, newly hired teaching staff can no longer be civil servants, but are treated as employees with time-limited contracts; full professors may be granted exceptional status equivalent to permanent tenure, but the law does not mandate this. The law does mandate fundamentally new legal and institutional arrangements at the top of the system, including governing boards and a strong rectorat (not a single person, but a co-equal team of rector and vice-rectors), but leaves internal university structures largely free to be shaped as the local leadership wishes.

For the first time in German-speaking Europe, serious developmental planning can occur, funding and positions can be redistributed among university faculties, and there are clear winners and losers. This is rather like the situation in American state-supported universities, at least on the surface. However, decoupling from civil service affiliation does not equal privatisation! State influence, even predominance, continues in practice, because (in the case of the University of Vienna, by far the largest Austrian university) four representatives selected by the relevant Ministry sit on the nine-person Advisory Board, and because the state still provides most of the budget (the figure at present is 80 per cent) – however flexibly it can now be administered.

Thus, in both the German and Austrian contexts, the term 'privatisation' appears to function, as it does in Britain, not as a descriptor for a change in universities' actual legal or economic status, but rather as a negative marker for efforts to restructure internal university governance on the model of business corporations and away from the corporatist structures formerly in place. The official term used by the non-university actors in the game is 'new public management,' which would appear to indicate that its purveyors know perfectly well that public institutions are not actually the same as business enterprises.

'Autonomy'

In public debate under the rubric of 'Americanisation' the linkage of 'autonomy' with 'privatisation' seems clear at first sight. In this discursive framework, 'autonomy' might appear to British readers to be a code word for 'marketisation'; the latter is the term of choice in British debates, due perhaps to the different legal status of universities there (see Lawn, 2001; Wright, 2004). Ironically, however, opponents of reform in German-speaking Europe also use the word 'autonomy,' but here it refers nostalgically to the supposedly golden days when university teachers were allegedly left alone to do as they wished – with the help of friendly patrons in the Education Ministry, of course! For observers coming from other political cultures, it appears paradoxical in the extreme to use the term 'autonomy' to describe a situation in which such 'autonomy' was in fact guaranteed by the state and therefore implied, both in law and in practice, actual dependence upon ministerial bureaucracies. But of course such usage makes better sense when we remember the formulation 'freedom of teaching and learning,' part of the invented tradition described in Part I. The historical facts that such 'freedom' could be abrogated at any time at the behest of the state, and that this actually occurred with the willing collaboration of teachers and learners under Nazism, are suddenly forgotten in such usages – even or precisely by those on the left who are normally intent, with good reason, on reminding their colleagues of that very Nazi past.

Because both proponents and opponents of change in German-speaking Europe generally ignore the situation in publicly supported institutions in the United States, such polemics often overlook a simple fact about such institutions that is well known to Americans: 'AUTONOMY' MEANS MIXED FINANCING, NOT LESS FINANCING!

In the United States, the states have been withdrawing for decades now from commitments to support higher education institutions. Opponents of the process have castigated state governments for a failure to fulfil commitments of various kinds but, given the civic culture of the United States, which had a weak central government until the 1930s, it has occurred to almost no one there to claim that higher education is a public good *in toto*. And indeed, the gradual or sudden reduction of funding from the states in the United States has led to an extraordinary development: the number of 'state supported' universities of any size that obtain more than fifty per cent of their budgets from the state governments is now ZERO, and yet university budgets have actually INCREASED as a result of mixed financing. And contrary to public polemics or the less informed perceptions of some Europeans, by no means all of that increase comes from big business support for research. Other sources include student fees; research funding from various third parties, including the federal government; sales of services; and third-party gifts from alumni and other, civic-minded individuals (see, for example, Mayer, 2004: 540). Publicly supported universities have responded to the withdrawal of financing by their state governments by moving to increase funding from these other sources. In the process, they have INCREASED rather than decreased their freedom of action, because no single funding source – not even large corporations – is sufficient any longer to ensure the final say in university affairs. Applied to the

use of the term 'autonomy' in German-speaking higher education policy debates, it would seem clear that real autonomy can only mean the freedom to raise funds from multiple sources, and that is hardly visible at present on the German or Austrian scene.

Here we return to the relation of the state and civil society, mentioned above. What is happening in America today is easily understood in historical context as a renewed mobilisation of civil society – and NOT only market forces - in support of higher education. This is part of a long tradition in that country. That is why informed American visitors never cease to be astonished by the constantly repeated question in German and Austrian debates, how many universities or higher education institutions ought to exist in a given place, whether particular programmes of study are too numerous and the like. Simply recalling the number of higher education institutions in Boston, and comparing it with the figures for Berlin or Vienna, shows how strange such discussions can appear to be. In a system that combines state and private, or civil society, financing and control, the 'how many' question is irrelevant; higher education institutions are created and survive in the numbers and to the extent that various sorts of people are willing to pay to support them. The obsessive focus on distributive questions is characteristic of, and perhaps understandable in, a state-centred system with limited budgets.

Seen in this light, higher education policy debates can be seen yet again as a subset of a larger dispute on the future of the welfare state. That is another reason why buzz words like 'Americanisation' carry weight in European discourse. Tuition is finally being introduced in Germany, as it was in Austria in 2001, but it will be a long time before that revenue provides as much of university budgets as it does in the United States, and there is widespread fear that opening up new revenue streams will lead to corresponding reductions in state money. Whether or not that fear is justified, its presence indicates continued dependence on the state, and ambivalence about change. The real issue in Germany, as elsewhere in Europe, is how much dynamism can be achieved in higher education without a radical change of entrenched attitudes of dependence on the welfare, or entitlement, state. Seen in this light, the widespread tendency of critics of reform to reach for labels like 'privatisation' or 'marketisation' (on the left) and 'Americanisation' (on both left and right) in order to portray both autonomy as such and reformed university governance as works of the devil are further signs of ambivalence.

'Elite'

The context that helps make the prominence of this key word understandable is a second ambivalence - uniformity versus competition – that is closely related to the ambivalence about autonomy. In theory, because German professors remain civil servants (as were their Austrian counterparts until 2002) they must be treated alike (for example, paid according to seniority, or more recently according to 'achievement oriented' rules mandated for all). Universities as state institutions must also be financed and administered according to similar rules, and, as stated above, places must be provided to all qualified students who seek them. The result,

according to available measures, is that many German and Austrian universities rank at a pretty good middle level internationally, but none is anywhere near the top. Such relative uniformity has its advantages: degrees from all institutions have the same value, and real differences in quality need not be discussed openly. One reason for the success of American universities, in contrast – both private and state-supported – is their willingness to compete with one another for resources. And for many reasons that cannot be discussed here, Americans have been extraordinarily willing to give money to their institutions. The availability of both government and private financial resources fuels continuous competition among institutions – and leads to huge salary differences among disciplines, as well as among professors in similar fields. The shift to 'achievement oriented' salary scales for teaching staff mentioned above now makes such competition possible in Germany as well, at least in theory.

The 'elite' issue is currently a hot topic in Germany and Austria, whereby the meanings of the terms 'elite' and 'university' sometimes appear to have become rather flexible. In Germany, a so-called 'excellence initiative,' a joint project of the German federal and *Länder* governments, is currently in place (Exzellenz-Initiative 2007). The project is being trumpeted as a new beginning, because universities, for the first time, are being required to compete for support on the basis of specific plans for graduate programmes or research-oriented 'excellence clusters,' evaluated by peer review. Success in two of these competitions leads to award of the 'elite' designation. The short term impact is undeniable: only 74 of the 100 institutions called universities in Germany even applied for the competition in the first round, and only 36 of these were asked to submit full applications (Zechlin, 2006). Thus, winners and losers (or non-winners) are becoming visible, as policy-makers intended. But the total amount of funding in the programme is 1.9 billion Euros, to be spent over five years, between 2006 and 2011; that is less than the budget of even one top American research university for one year. And a basic structural change allowing all graduate programmes, and not only the winners in this competition, to select their own students appears not to be contemplated at present. Given these facts, serious German commentators recognise that politicians' talk of a German Harvard, Stanford, Berkeley or Ann Arbor is whistling in the dark. As long as dependence on state financing continues, real change in Germany will be limited to incremental shifts on the margins. Seen in this light, the current programme is a further example of ambivalence about change; and the use of 'elite' as a scare-word by critics of the programme appears to be an indicator of persisting welfare-state attitudes.

In Austria an effort to establish a new 'university of excellence,' focused primarily on advanced research and post-doctoral training in the natural sciences, excited controversy and polemics during the past two years. The institution actually established, called Institute of Science and Technology Austria (ISTA), is intended to become a high-end research institution that will have the right to grant doctoral degrees, but can hardly be called a 'university' in the ordinary sense. The designation of this entity as an 'elite university' came from the media, not from the policy actors; the use of the term is only possible in a context in which an earlier

measure had already deprived the title 'university' of any clear meaning by awarding it to a vast array of higher education institutions, including academies of music and applied art. The use of the short, punchy term *Elite-Uni* in the media successfully polarised debate for a time, which of course is what the media representatives wished to happen. Participation as moderators in this polarised debate enabled leaders from established higher education institutions to regain some participation in the supervisory board governing the new institution, thus acquiring some measure of influence on its operation.

The term 'elite' in this context definitely has a negative connotation. Though Austrians are proud of their high-ranking scholars and happily vote in popular competitions for the title 'scientist of the year,' public opinion generally appears to be opposed to the sort of competition among institutions cautiously introduced in Germany and in favour of the broadest possible access to higher education. Consistent with such attitudes, the primary focus in Austria remains on training masses of students and defending 'their' places against a feared invasion by hordes of German students, even though the European Union and European courts have made clear that they regard such policies as discrimination against EU citizens. Yet funding per student in both Germany and Austria has long been insufficient to achieve the goal of mass higher education at adequate levels of quality. A choice between considerable funding increases by the state and a mix of increased tuition and selective admissions would appear to be inevitable; polemics against 'elite' universities appear in this context to be a highly effective means of ideologising the discussion and thus avoiding such a choice.

German-language debates on this issue and on higher education constantly evoke comparisons with famous American private universities, like Harvard, Stanford or Chicago, or Switzerland's Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zürich, though, interestingly enough, not Oxbridge. This goes on as though Harvard or Stanford were the only higher education institutions in the United States, and high-ranking publicly supported universities like Wisconsin, Michigan or the California and Texas systems simply did not exist. And yet these institutions combine multiple-source financing, high levels of access to higher education at the entry level, and world-class research facilities.[6] They, and NOT the elite private universities, are the relevant comparators for serious higher education policy in Europe, but they are almost completely absent from public discourse in this field. Perhaps it is not sexy enough to orient policy toward such real-world models, and more exciting to dream about German-style elite universities without having a hope of finding the cash to pay what they really cost per student! In any case, as Americans also know, neither quality nor access problems are limited there to the 'public' sector – there is a wide range of prices and quality in the private sector too. This only increases Americans' astonishment when confronted with the simple-minded stereotypes that dominate German-language discussion. One is tempted to speak here of a *Mythos Amerika* alongside the 'Humboldt myth,' so immune are the semantic labels to factual discussion (Stucke, 2001).

‘Elite’, like the other keywords in the cluster under discussion, appears also to function as a marker of difference, but with ambiguous valences according to the political views of the speakers. For more traditionalist conservatives, ‘elite’ has stood since the 1950s for opposition to what they have termed ‘massification’ (meaning mass mediocrity) in higher education, and forms part of a nostalgic dream of days when societal and intellectual hierarchies were allegedly congruent with one another. For more business-oriented conservatives, and more recently also for some Social Democrats as well, ‘elite’ means acknowledging differences in quality among individuals and institutions, and openly rewarding superior performance, as a way of competing with ‘world class’ institutions elsewhere.

For many on the left, ‘elite’ is also a marker of difference, this time in defence of the idea that access to higher education should be open to all. It is well known to all involved that access to higher education has never actually been open to all either in Germany or Austria, even after the so-called ‘opening’ of the universities in the 1960s; selectivity begins long before the university level, with admission to Gymnasium at the age of eight to eleven. Thus it is, or ought to be, clear to all concerned that policy debate is actually about ways and degrees of restricting access, but this simple fact appears to be very difficult for actors on the left actually to state openly without being labelled as reactionaries. The notion that democracies cannot function without elites selected by performance is widely accepted in the United States, though it has been challenged repeatedly by populisms of various kinds from left and right. This idea also appears to have been accepted in Britain as well during the early post-war period – many Labour Party leaders, after all, have been Oxbridge graduates. In France, of course, the elite *grandes écoles* remain a nearly exclusive route to high positions in the state or in the business world. In German-speaking Europe, however, discomfort with the idea of elites selected by performance appears to be far greater; this seems particularly ironic in Austria, since the leadership of the Social Democratic Party in that country during the early twentieth century came to an extraordinary extent from the educated classes. Thanks to such seemingly egalitarian ideological commitments, in which the term ‘elite’ is coded as the exact opposite of the term ‘democracy,’ Social Democrats in both Germany and Austria, and Austrians in particular, have difficulty distinguishing in their discourse between equality of access and equality of results. They thus risk, intentionally or not, becoming advocates of mediocrity.

EXCURSUS II: ‘BOLOGNA’, OR: WILL THE RIGHT DEGREE NAMES BE ENOUGH?

I turn now to a semantic dimension not yet considered, one raised by the so-called Bologna Process. Its primary aim is to establish a common European higher education architecture by 2010 and thus to assure more effective mobility of students, researchers and teachers within Europe.[7] An additional claim is that the process will result in a system corresponding to, and therefore degree programmes compatible and competitive with, the so-called Anglo-Saxon model, meaning one

with three rather than two degree cycles. A third claim, expressed at least in later communiqués, is that the Bologna Process will stimulate curriculum reform and thus begin a transformation from research- to student-centred teaching. Let me focus on the second of these aims here.

The Bologna Declaration of 1999 calls for, among other things, 'adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of the first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years' (Bologna Declaration 1999). Missing from this picture is the use of English terms Bachelor and Master for the degree programmes themselves. These were added later – *nomen omen est*, to coin a phrase in bad Latin. Of course, both terms come originally from the Latin, and the irony that degree names from the Medieval European universities are now to be transferred from the Anglo-Saxon world to the continent from which they came has not been lost on historically informed observers. Is the decision to use these names a master stroke (pardon the pun!), or one of the biggest mistakes in the history of higher education policy? Here, as above, to grasp more clearly the ways in which policy discourse functions, it is important to contrast keywords and master narratives with what is actually happening on the ground.

Recent experiences indicate that the first cycle degrees that are now being developed in Germany and – more slowly – in Austria are not compatible with American first cycle degrees, whether with respect to formal or content criteria. In October 2004, German newspapers reported results of a survey carried out by the Educational Credentials Evaluation Agency (a private organisation funded mainly by university associations) and the Institute of International Education in New York (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2004). The survey showed that 71 per cent of respondents believed that a foreign Bachelor degree must certify four years of study in order to be accepted as equivalent to an American Bachelor, if the students in question had 12 years of secondary school. As many as one-half of Bachelor degrees already issued in Europe had therefore not been recognised in the United States at that time, because they are three- rather than four-year degrees.

The report just cited focuses primarily on formal criteria for compatibility. More important, of course, is the content of the programmes themselves. In the United States, individual institutions, and even departments, examine each student's credentials individually, regardless of whether these are students from abroad or students transferring into their institutions from other states in the U.S. Any serious comparison of Continental European and American degree programmes must take note of a fundamental difference in structure, expressed in the quantitative relationship between the number of credit hours in a major field, and the rest (minor field, general education, electives). American first-degree programmes require a carefully distributed mix of these four types of courses, with the 'major' rarely taking up more than half the total credits. Most European and all German and Austrian first degree programmes, in contrast, are focused on training in one or two disciplines or special fields of knowledge, with relatively little space for general education or even the free exploration of other subjects.

This is not an incidental matter, but a fundamental structural difference deeply rooted in history, as indicated in Part One. The architects of the Bologna Process may have thought they could avoid confronting the form and content issues simply by instituting the three-degree system and giving the new degrees the right names. If that is indeed what they thought, they could not have been more mistaken. Given that the Blair government introduced the Foundation Degree in 2001, located below the Bachelor, it seems reasonable to ask, in addition, to what extent the Bologna Process is binding in Britain.

The claim that the three-degree progression of the Bologna Process will establish programmes compatible with those in the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ world will only be accurate if one or more of the following three conditions is met:

– if all European institutions institute four-year first-cycle degrees, and eliminate the three-year programmes;
– if the United States and Great Britain are actually prepared to convert their Bachelor degree programmes in all fields into the sorts of three-year, narrowly specialised first degree programmes envisaged in Germany and Austria and eliminate the very general education components that make them distinctive; or
– if all parties are prepared to structure their Bachelor degrees in the way such degrees are organised in professional areas such as business management, journalism, nursing or social work in the United States (that is, with very small general education components and much larger practice-oriented course work than is the case for degrees in the so called liberal arts).

Obviously, none of these outcomes is likely. In any case, as someone who has already acquired extensive experience in examining transfer or credit applications by foreign students at the University of Vienna, I can attest that American students, at least, will face a rude awakening if they think they can simply transfer into a German or Austrian university once the Bachelor has been established there. The report I just cited indicates that such rude awakenings are already happening to German students seeking to transfer to American institutions.

Whether or not such issues actually get to the heart of the motives driving the Bologna Process from the political side is, of course, another question. It is an open secret that financial concerns also play a role here, at least in German-speaking countries. If state financial assistance to students could be limited to the first degree only, and the duration of the first degree is limited to six semesters rather than the present eight, this would make it possible to cut state support to students by one fourth. From the Master level onward, financing would then be personal or external. In somewhat more optimistic but, for many still frightening, scenarios now in play in some German *Länder*, rigid limits are to be placed on the numbers of students allowed to proceed beyond the first cycle, thus limiting potential claims on state support for second – or third cycle programmes. Whether universities will be allowed to acquire supplementary funding from other sources, including tuition, in order to finance more places in second- and third-cycle programmes is still an open question.

Another claim in support of the Bologna Process is that the new Bachelor degrees will reduce the percentage of early leavers and raise the numbers of nominal 'academics,' thus better equipping Europe for the coming 'knowledge society.' Unfortunately, precisely the American experience suggests that scepticism is appropriate here. In the state supported universities in the USA, the percentage of early departures without a degree is alarmingly high, especially in the first two semesters. It is generally agreed that this is due to inadequate preparation at the secondary level, as well as insufficient emotional maturity, and thus inadequate concentration on studies, among the students. The assumption that the new 'Bachelor' degree programmes can and will actually be completed in six semesters – the basis for the hoped for savings in student assistance – appears equally unrealistic. For years actual time to completion for Bachelor degrees in the USA has been closer to five years, rather than the traditional four years. A serious gap yawns here between the dream of achieving social change by administrative fiat and the realities of student life. Such facts appear to have no place in public discourse in Germany or Austria.

Of course the success of the optimistic version of this policy scenario depends on labour market acceptance of 'Bachelor' degrees. Unfortunately, policy makers appear to be agreed that this is one of the major problems of the Bologna Process thus far. One of the goals stated in the Glasgow Declaration of 2003, for example, is to work on making government employment systems accommodate the new first- and second-cycle degrees (Glasgow Declaration 2003). This suggests that there has been little movement in this area so far, but if the largest single employer of university graduates has not yet changed its standards, then why should other employers do so? This is also why the process is being stoutly resisted in Germany (and Austria) by groups like the associations of technical universities or secondary school teachers, as well as law faculties (see, for example, Herrmann, 2005). These are precisely the fields in which existing degrees (the Diploma for engineers in Germany and Austria) and state examinations (for teachers and lawyers in Germany) are tightly linked with employer requirements, and no such link seems to be given as yet for Bachelor degrees.

CONCLUSION

Let us return to 'Humboldt'. As suggested in the introduction, any separation of past and present in this context is artificial, since constructions of tradition function primarily in the present and only secondarily as claims about history. And indeed, 'Humboldt', too, has its place in the current opposition to reform, alongside 'Americanisation'. The claim – one shared again by conservatives and Social Democratic opponents to reform – is that the Bologna Process will lead to the 'death' of 'Humboldt'. For example, Heike Schmoll writes the following in a lead article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in May 2005:

> What is happening in the context of a politically desired accommodation (*Angleichung*) of the European higher education system is the destruction of

> universities in the Humboldtian mould through Americanisation, as well as the political and economic influence on research and teaching and a general equalisation (*Egalisierung*) of degrees … The issue is neither education (*Bildung*) nor quality, the issue is numbers and graduates (Schmoll, 2005).

Such polemics might well be expected from conservatives, though they do not match well with the claim advanced by those same conservatives that 'Humboldt' already died with the opening of the universities in the 1960s. Less polemical and rather more nostalgic is a 'farewell' to 'Humboldt' recently published in the liberal weekly *Die Zeit* (Soboczynski, 2006). Here, at least, the author appears to be faintly aware that the nostalgia for 'Humboldt', or the dream of 'Humboldt for all', may be limited to humanists and social scientists, while natural and medical scientists are ready to move on – indeed, already have moved on - to the new world of competitive academics and multiple funding sources.

Interestingly enough, fears of the 'death' of 'Humboldt' can also be found on the left, many of whom entered academic life precisely as a result of the opening of higher education and have apparently grown attached to the utopian ideal described in Part One, even though it has almost no relation to the realities of mass higher education (Stölting, 2005). As I noted there, myths need not be lies, but can instead constitute 'corporate identity', even if this happens here in the form of a 'counter-utopia'. This may help to explain why it is no coincidence that resistance to the Bologna Process has been stronger in the humanities and social sciences than in the natural sciences and technical fields. But as two Austrian commentators have recently noted, the 'Humboldt' myth has also been persistent in these disciplines because the ideal of freedom of teaching and learning has become a dignified label for a *laissez-faire* approach to teaching and unwillingness to take responsibility for learning outcomes (Pechar and Pellert, 2004). Correspondingly, efforts to introduce more structured curricula and course work as well as a higher level of responsibility on the part of teachers as part of the Bologna Process are labelled with the untranslatable scare word *Verschulung*; this term embodies the fear, or accusation, that the new Bachelor programmes will be nothing more than glorified secondary school offerings, with regimentation replacing free choice.

Given the multiple pressures involved and issues and interests at stake, what can be expected? Here is my personal opinion, for what it is worth. The creation of a European higher education sphere is a fascinating project, likely to result in something far different from and in many respects more interesting than the 'Anglo-Saxon' system with which it is supposed, erroneously, to be compatible. The division of existing *Diplom* or *Magister* programmes into two degree cycles, with the first for foundational studies and the second for the first steps toward research, fulfils a long-standing demand from within the German system. It has the additional advantage of matching the wishes of the vast majority of students, who have little understanding of or desire to do academic research and are attending university for rather different reasons. Whether European employers will eventually recognise the value of the new Bachelor degrees remains to be seen.

The difficulties in actually achieving a common European structure – and the potential for innovation within that structure – are great enough, given the labour market problems just mentioned, the long-standing differences in the organisation of degree programmes and academic standards within Europe, and institutional inertia. Perhaps it is most worthwhile to focus efforts on this goal, rather than to delude oneself about the degree to which the results will actually be compatible with American (or British) models/systems. It is too late to change the degree names, but it is also illusory to pretend that the content of these wine flasks is or will be comparable with that of American ones. If the Bologna Process actually succeeds, then the results may well show instead just how capacious and varied the meanings of terms such as 'Bachelor' and 'Master' can become. And the further exploration of those varied meanings would offer excellent opportunities for discourse analysis.

NOTES

[1] This chapter builds upon Ash 2006, modifying the presentation in accordance with the issues raised in this volume.

[2] On the central role of the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, see Rüegg, 1997. For a collection of contemporary German texts on university reform, see Müller (ed.) 1990

[3] The claim that science was becoming a matter of large-scale institutionalized knowledge production (*Großbetrieb der Wissenschaft*) rather than individual creativity comes from this period; its author was not a natural scientist, but the theologian Adolf von Harnack (1904), and he was referring not only to large university and industrial laboratories, but also to the great editorial projects and source collections organized by classical philologists and ancient historians at the Prussian Academy of Sciences.

[4] Later Kerr (1991) used the term "pluralistic university."

[5] The following section draws in part from Ash 1999

[6] To give one example: Mayer, 2004, p. 542 lists five public universities among the "top ten" in fundraising for 2002-3. Public universities such as the University of Wisconsin at Madison, the University of Michigan, the University of California at Berkeley and the University of California, Los Angeles also consistently rank among the first ten in third-party research funding.

[7] I note in passing that it is incorrect to present the 'Bologna Process' as a project of the European Union. Participants include all members of the European Cultural Convention, which number more than 40 countries at present. Indeed, it is by participating in the 'Bologna Process' that countries like Georgia or the Ukraine can improve cultural ties with the EU long before they have any chance of becoming members.

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