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Náš institucionální vývoj tak představuje „případovou studii“ vzniku a růstu vědecké disciplíny, jejíž vnitřní dynamika je v tomto případě poháněna úkoly povahy celospolečenské, a naše historie tak klade zajímavé otázky o propojení vědy a politiky, teorie a praxe; v neposlední řadě je i odrazem vývoje české společnosti a příkladem fungování akademických pravidel v jistém limitním (tedy tradicemi ne plně zajištěném) případě. Mnohé z těchto změn a milníků vývoje jsme totiž měli možnost zakusit na vlastní kůži, jelikož především pohyby a změny v obecných vzdělávacích strategiích či univerzitních plánech dopadaly s větší silou na malé pracoviště, nechráněné „buffer“ mechanismy, které se dosud nestačily vyvinout. A tak, kromě vizí a zcela konkrétních představ o budoucnosti, které souvisely s vývojem podobných pracovišť v zahraničí, zde působily

i čistě národně specifické požadavky na kvalitu vědecké práce a výuky, otevírání (či uzavírání) prostoru pro zapojení do akademického prostředí a v neposlední řadě i nutnost financovat činnost z vlastních projektových zdrojů. Záslouhou (někdy těžce držených) akademických svobod se nám daří vyrovnávat nepříznivě působící výkyvy české environmentálně orientované politiky a částečně i prosazovat představy vlastní, a to nejen na půdě univerzity, v mezinárodním společenství vědců našeho oboru, ale i v oblasti politik udržitelného rozvoje. Aktivně tak utváříme nejen scénu odbornou, ale též se snažíme působit na českou společnost ve smyslu pěstování úcty k jistým hodnotám, a to především v zájmu ochrany životodárných přírodních zdrojů a zajištění potřeb budoucích generací.

Jana Dlouhá

CHER 2012 Conference Report

The Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER) held its 25th annual conference in Belgrade on September 10th to 12th. CHER (pronounced like the furniture ‘chair’ not the singer) is an international network of researchers, based in Europe but drawing about a quarter of its membership from outside the region. At twenty five, it is the oldest higher education research organization

in Europe, but the anniversary aspect of the conference remained understated; there was only one session devoted specifically to it, a late afternoon panel, chaired by Christine Musselin, where Ulrich Teichler and Frans van Vught reflected on how the field has developed and discussed where it is headed. A lively discussion followed, with many of those present expressing their own recollections and ideas. The self-reflective spirit of the 25th anniversary carried through to the post-conference symposium *Past,*

Present and Future of Higher Education Research: Between Scholarship and Policy Making, which despite being hosted eight hours away at the University of Ljubljana was attended by many of the conference participants.

The theme of this year's conference was *Higher Education and Social Dynamics*, and papers were divided into three focused tracks with a fourth track addressing ongoing themes and discussions from past conferences. The first two tracks: *The role(s) of higher education institutions in contemporary society* and *The effects of the wider societal dynamics on higher education*, dealt directly with the central theme of the conference. Looking at higher education from the inside out and outside in, these two tracks addressed the complex and changing role of higher education in society, the extent to which higher education institutions accept and adapt to the those roles and external pressures, and what opportunities exist for them to influence their situation. Researchers approached these questions from very different perspectives and methodologies, in some instances by looking at specific universities, for example a management style case study examining the transformation of Aarhus University (AU) in Denmark by Rómulo Pinheiro and Bjørn Stensaker; others used the opportunity to present comparative national research which was part of larger EU or regionally funding research; but it was

not only institutions, organizations and policies that received attention, a number of papers explored national and supranational discourses, such as the paper by Terhi Nokkala *University autonomy, agenda setting and the construction of agency - the case of European University Association in the Bologna Process*. The autonomy of higher education institutions was a recurrent theme in many of the conference panels; however, while there were common issues running throughout, the overall scope of the conference was broad, covering a wide range of topics including: national policies, funding, resource allocation, the academic profession, the third mission, entrepreneurship, access and equity, and internationalization just to name a few. The full set of abstracts can be found on the conference website: www.cher2012.rs/programme/.

The third track, *Higher education at the borders of Europe*, took advantage of the conference being held in Serbia to attempt to redress the disbalance in higher education research within Europe towards Western European countries. While the call for papers sought research on Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe, in fact, the bulk of papers dealt with the Southern-European region. The research which was presented suggests that the region faces many of the same issues and debates as other parts of Europe arguably as a result of globalization, internationalization and Europeanization; however, Pavel

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Zgaga challenged the audience not to blindly accept the idea that peripheral or transitional countries are merely 'policy colonies' which enact proven policy ideas from more central countries. In addition to looking at how these countries are integrating, peripheral and transitional countries with their contrasting historical background and often unique ways of characterizing and resolving higher education issues can provide material for cases and empirical studies that enrich and expand the predominantly Western and Northern European perspective which is found in much of the literature.

In the second day's keynote speech Dr. Srbijanka Turajlić, former Serbian Deputy Minister of Education, addressed the rising level of conflict between professors and students in Serbian universities, where professors express frustration at what they perceive as a lack of curiosity and students interpret a lack of interest in preparing them for professional life. With both sides talking past each other she sought to identify where common ground might be found. She pointed towards the underlying of massification of higher education, particularly the new reality that a degree is no longer a guarantee of a job, but merely "a ticket for an interview." This drove home quite clearly the point which was made in the first keynote speech by Hugh Lauder. He challenged the 'myths' of the knowledge

economy, primarily the idea that there is an infinite demand for educated workers and that quality, well-paid 'brain' work, will accrue in developed countries due to those countries' investments in education. Drawing on a widespread empirical study of corporate practices, he suggested that knowledge capitalism would be a better term to characterize the present situation as it would emphasize the presence of a global competition for jobs in which, like a Dutch auction, the lowest bidder wins. The result of this auction is a global reallocation of intellectual work towards developing countries that pay lower wages. He further described how even the overall amount of intellectual work is shrinking with the advent of digital Taylorism, whereby more and more knowledge work is being fragmented into relatively simple tasks which do not require trained academic skills and can even be digitized so as not to require any human involvement at all. With many of the participants focused on policy solutions grounded in the knowledge economy discourse, this was a challenging talk; nevertheless, it was mentioned by many as a highlight of the conference.

Out of the approximately 100 delegates at the conference, three were from the Czech Republic: Petr Pabian from the University of Pardubice and Miroslav Jašurek and Mitchell Young from Charles University. Petr Pabian presented the intriguingly titled paper

Who is “higher education institutions”? How do you recognize “social roles” when you see them? Bringing ethnographic mess to the debate. His presentation sparked a lively debate by introducing uncommon methodologies and theories to higher education studies. His ethnographic study on the protests at Czech universities in 2012 used actor network theory to explore how physical objects like university buildings and even cars had become actors or participants in these protests. He asked whether these were also part of the “who” of higher education institutions. He challenged any simple definition of who truly represents a given university, finding that faculty, administration and students all claim that mantle in various and often conflicting ways, while at the same time demonstrating the lack of a unified position even within those groups. Mitchell Young presented the paper *Coarsely Ground: Developing the Czech System of Research Evaluation* in a session on research quality. The paper traced the development of the Evaluation Methodology from its inception in 2004 through its iterations over the following years to the present, examining how it can be understood as a New Public Management tool and exploring what that can tell us both about the Evaluation Methodology itself but also, perhaps especially considering the high level of controversy it has engendered, the potential problems arising from such an approach.

In addition to the 25th anniversary of CHER, there was also the first anniversary of the ECHER network. ECHER, the Early Career Higher Education Researchers Network, is composed of researchers who have been working in the field for less than 10 years, and provides opportunities to meet, network and collaborate. Membership is free and details can be found on www.echer.org.

ECHER organized a pre-conference workshop, which included discussions, presentations and several dinners. The organizers invited Jussi Välimaa, editor in chief of *Higher Education*, to give a presentation on writing for journals. His talk *On growth and form: academic writing, publishing and the process of writing a paper*, explained in detail the process through which a submission to *Higher Education* passes and where, how and why delays and rejections occur. Peppered throughout were valuable nuggets of advice, and insights into why the process, which takes an average of 226 days for a successful paper to navigate, takes so long. He discussed how to respond to requests for revisions and provided an overview of topics that were of relevance to the journal; in addition to those of permanent relevance, he named several emerging topics which included the nature and social/political consequence of university rankings, the networking of higher education institutions, and

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new pedagogical perspectives and methods.

The ECHER workshop provided an excellent opportunity for early career researcher to get a head start in thinking about the conference themes, as well as starting friendships before getting into the full event. A discussion about academic disciplines and their relation to higher education research ran through both events. While there is no doubt that researchers from the area represent multiple disciplines, the way they associate themselves with those disciplines is an unresolved topic. Is it more beneficial to present a paper at an interdisciplinary higher education conference, or should one rather attend a conference focused on a traditional academic discipline? In ECHER there was broad support for encouraging integration, specifically by establishing higher education related sessions at disciplinary conferences and getting more researchers from a variety of disciplines interested in higher education as an object of study. In the CHER conference an interesting debate arose during the paper of Georg Krücken, who argued that higher education studies papers tended to be more exploitative rather than exploratory based on his empirical research on the papers published in the top 10 journals in the field of higher education. A member of the audience asked whether that truly represented the type of research being

done in the field or whether it isn't possible that more of the exploratory is being published in discipline specific journals? While the answer was not ascertainable given the presented research, the question highlighted the tensions and trade-offs between the (inter)disciplinary loyalties and publishing habits that higher education researchers face.

Overall, the CHER conference ignited mental sparks and provided fodder for new research questions and papers, and as a way to engage with the cutting edge of what's happening in the field proved to be an excellent and rewarding event. This year's conference was jointly organized by the Centre for Education Policy an independent organization based in Belgrade and the Centre for Education Policy Studies of the University of Ljubljana. In addition to extremely smooth organization of the conference itself, they provided a wonderful feel (and taste) of Belgrade.

The 2013 CHER conference is scheduled for September 9th to 11th and will be held in Lausanne, Switzerland. CHER is a membership organization, and is open to receiving new membership applications from higher education researchers. Details for both can be found on their web site: www.uni-kassel.de/incher/CHER/Welcome.html.

Mitchell Young