



UNIL | Université de Lausanne

Observatoire Science,  
Politique et Société

## CHER 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

Lausanne, 9-11<sup>th</sup> September 2013  
Observatory Science, Policy and Society  
Social Sciences Institute  
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences  
University of Lausanne, Switzerland

### **The roles of higher education and research in the fabric of societies**

#### *Announcement*

Education has long been analysed as the vector through which national identities are diffused (Gellner, 1983). Since the post world war II period, research on higher education underlined its transformation from an instrument of nation building to a tool serving a knowledge society. These changes in the missions of higher education sectors have been accompanied during the last three decades by a complexification of the Higher Education and Research (HER) systems, as they developed both in size and regarding the place they occupy in a large number of societies. These changes have stimulated a growing if somewhat fragmented body of research on HER systems.

To foster the discussion among academics working on HER issues, this CHER conference proposes as an overarching theme to question “**the roles of higher education and research in the fabric of societies**”. Besides nurturing knowledge societies and economies, do higher education and research systems foster individual and collective well-being? What are the societal models being negotiated within higher education? Research has shown that the priority given to merit or worth as values organising higher education reflect different understanding of democracy (Rothblatt, 2007). What are the roles devoted to and played by HE sectors and institutions for societies as well as for individuals? Who are the actors defining the roles and through which processes? Through which historical events are (higher education) structures transformed (Sewell, 1996), and what mediates between higher education and society?

HER sectors and institutions are embedded in wider societal contexts. Changes in the size of these sectors, their internal organisation, their missions, both inform and are informed by the society they are part of. What is the current research portraying about the role attributed to HER, and what is the effective role of HER in different societies? The issue of the HER role is intimately related to the identity question and thus can be dealt with in different ways.

First, it interrogates the transformation of institutional identities. The reinforcement of institutional autonomy and power, changes in governance models and organisations, impinge on the redefinition of institutional identities. By which processes do these transformations occur? Do comparative studies identify common trends such as isomorphic developments reflecting an imagined model of world society (Meyer, Bolo, Thomas, Ramirez, 1997)?

Second, it questions the reshuffling of disciplinary boundaries. For example, economy seems to develop as a strong subfield in other social and human sciences disciplines such as history or sociology. What are the disciplinary trends in research and teaching? By which processes are they structured? Which are the spectrum of knowledge (Kogan, 2007)? What drives the disciplinary orientations of research and teaching and what do the on-going changes tell about the role played by HER sectors both in research and in the student's training? While the orientation of disciplinary research appears to be linked with national politics (Nybom, 1991), a shared trend seems to consist in funding increasingly pushing towards interdisciplinarity, while academics are evaluated on a disciplinary basis. What are the consequences of this tension?

Third, the academic profession is becoming more differentiated, characterised by increased heterogeneity in the statuses and practices and thus regarding professional identities (Teichler, Eds, forthcoming, Kehm, Eds, forthcoming). Who are today's academics? How do disciplinary belongings impinge on their organisation and judgments, on the norming of quality (Musselin, 2005, Lamont, 2009)? Which position does the academic profession occupy in the overall society and what does it say about the contemporary place of HER sectors in their societies? How far are transformed academics' practices by the co-evolution of science and society (Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2001)? How much do academics embrace the call for social responsibility and public engagement?

Fourth, HER appear as a mediating space in which the characterisation of individual identities is operationalized and which in return participates in the definition of the societal identity. How do these processes occur? Who are the main actors? What does analysis of these processes and actors allow understanding of the individual – society relationship?

Research and discussions related to these issues should help stimulating the sociological imagination (Mills, 1959) characterised by the articulation of biographical, historical, and structural approaches by discussing the “nominalist realism” (Lahire, 2012), or, to put it in the words of Michel Grossetti, (2012), the link between the development of theories of the social world, the scales of analysis chosen, and the type of problematisation. Furthermore, research on higher education can be defined as a three tasks process: to identify the social reality of HER systems, by describing and explaining them; to identify the potential dysfunctioning, and the pathology of the HER sectors and institutions; and to intervene in HER systems in order to transform them. Critical research articulates these three objectives (De Munck, 2011). This conference, by bringing together researchers dealing with one or all of the three dimensions in their research, is expected to stimulate the methodological and theoretical debates on the added value of articulating different perspectives in the analysis of HER, including but not only historical, comparative, societal, organisational, institutional, quantitative and qualitative approaches.

## *Conference Tracks*

### **Track One: The fabric of identities**

Within this theme, we expect contributions to discuss processes contributing to the (re)definition of institutional, organizational, professional, individual and societal identities in and by higher education. Research on inequalities as well as on the elite production issue are included in this theme.

### **Track Two: The territories of science and knowledge and the fabric of societies**

The issue of territories is multiform: it can be approached regarding the place allocated to the disciplines, the higher education and research geography as well as the production of knowledge. It questions both the influxes and boundaries of individuals, knowledge and policies. This track aims to analyse the dynamics at play in the definition of the territories of science and knowledge and what they tell us about the fabric of society. When we observe the relationship between science and society, do we assist to the emergence of contextualised science or to the maintenance of a “line” between science and society? Does the answer depend on disciplines?

### **Track Three: Theoretical and Methodological Developments in Higher Education Research**

How can we reinforce the theoretical and methodological foundations of higher education and research? This track is especially aimed at fostering the discussion between researchers from different disciplines, theoretical backgrounds, and methodological approaches. It calls for a reflexive questioning on the link between scale of analysis, theory and problematic, as well as the influence of the lenses chosen for analysis on the vision of the social world produced.

### **Track four: Open Track**

For those who would like to submit a paper proposal but cannot fit their research into any of the above themes, we will provide an open track. However, proposals should be connected to the overall theme of the conference.

Additionally, a *Fulbright New Century Scholars* follow up session is planned: 8 years after the end of the research program “Higher Education in the 21st Century: Global Challenge and National Response», what are the fellow’s current research portraying about changes in the global-national dynamic?

Another additional event will be the 20-years’ reunion of alumni and teaching staff involved in the “European Higher Education Advanced Training Course” (EHEATC), organised by CHER in 1992-1993, to reflect on how this course, organised by CHER, affected higher education research across Europe, as well as the transformation of the HER sector in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe.

## *Format of the Conference*

We intend to invite a small number of keynote speakers to make initial presentations related to the overall theme. The backbone of the Conference will be the tracks. We encourage researchers from various disciplines and with different scholarly perspectives to submit proposals for a presentation. In addition to established researchers we would also like to encourage both newcomers and doctoral students to participate in the 26th Annual CHER Conference and submit a proposal for a presentation. The organisers of the Conference plan to publish selected papers from the conference in a book in its Higher Education and Research in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century series as well as in a special issue of a journal.

## *Submission of proposals*

Participants are invited to submit papers or panel proposals of relevance for the conference theme.

*Paper presentation* refers to a presentation delivered by one to two authors or collaborators on a particular research topic. Each paper presentation accepted will be given 30 minutes for presentation and discussion. Participants should plan to present in no more than two sessions as an author.

*Panel presentation* refers to a series of 3-4 presentations delivered by a group of authors or collaborators on a particular research topic. Each panel presentation accepted will be given 90 minutes for presentation and discussion.

### *Best paper award for PhD paper*

Current or recently graduated PhD students submit papers that they deem especially outstanding and which result from PhD thesis research by **June 30st** and indicate they wish to participate in the competition. To be considered, papers should not be co-authored with a faculty member. The winner[s] will be announced during the conference.

## *Content of the proposals*

Proposals should **include between 1000 and 1500 words** (references, tables and figures not included) and should include:

- Proposal authors' contact information,
- Title and keywords
- Session for which it applies
- Content with the following sections:
  - objectives of the study;
  - theoretical or conceptual frameworks;
  - modes of inquiry;
  - data sources or evidence;
  - expected results, conclusions.
  - references (figures and tables if needed).

### *Proposals' review*

At least two reviewers will review each proposal. They will provide evaluation on

- the importance and originality of the topic to higher education;
- the quality of theoretical or conceptual frameworks
- the quality of the research design (methods, data, analysis);
- the novelty of the expected results
- the quality of writing (organization of ideas, clarity of arguments, etc.).

### *Submission of papers*

Please submit your proposal through the Conference website <http://www.unil.ch/cher2013> following the instructions. Researchers making proposals should indicate to which theme their paper mostly refers. A review panel consisting of the conference organising committee will evaluate the abstracts and notify the authors not later than March 2013. Accepted abstracts should be developed into full papers submitted through the website before Wednesday, 31<sup>st</sup> of July. All papers will be made available to participants before the Conference on the Conference website <http://www.unil.ch/cher2013>

Please name your file as follow: your name + track number: ex: DoeTrack1.docx

### *Important Dates*

Proposals may be submitted before the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2013.

Acceptance of proposals will be announced no later than March 2013.

The deadline of early registration will be 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2013.

Registrations will not be accepted after 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2013

Full papers should be sent no later than on 31 July 2013 (June 30<sup>th</sup> for participation to the PhD best paper award).

### *Conference location and Dates*

The Conference will be held at the University of Lausanne, 9-11 September 2013.

Further details on the conference web site <http://www.unil.ch/cher2013>

#### **Conference Organising Committee**

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