



The Role of Universities in the Transformation of Societies

An International Research Project

Synthesis Report

by

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Executive Summary

The project

1. The project on which this report is based brought together more than 25 researchers from 15 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa (including South Africa), Central Asia and Latin America. Its aim was to increase understanding of the various ways in which universities and other higher education institutions generate, contribute to or inhibit social, economic and political change. Its focus was on countries and regions that had recently undergone, or were undergoing, major transformation.
2. This report synthesizes the findings reported in a set of more specific national, institutional and thematic reports produced by the project. These consisted of national reports from Bulgaria, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa; overview reports from Brazil and Mexico; institutional reports from private universities in Belarus, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan and Russia; and a set of reports from research fellows supported by the Open Society Institute drawing on experiences from Bangladesh, Estonia, Poland, India and Slovenia and providing additional perspectives on Bulgaria and Russia.
3. The project was co-ordinated jointly by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI) of the UK Open University. It received financial support from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, the Open Society Institute and the Swedish Foundation for International Co-operation in Research and Higher Education (STINT).
4. This report attempts to highlight both the roles universities have played in the orchestration and management of wider social transformations and the ways in which they have themselves been transformed by wider social processes.

Conceptualisation

5. Social transformation lies at the radical end of conceptions of social change. It implies at very least some fundamental changes in society's core institutions, the polity and the economy, with major implications for relationships between social groups or classes, and for the means of the creation and distribution of wealth, power and status.
6. Universities have frequently been regarded as key institutions in processes of social change and development. The most explicit role they have been allocated is the production of highly skilled labour and research output to meet perceived economic needs. But to this role may be added, especially during periods of more radical change, roles in the building of new institutions of civil society, in encouraging and facilitating new cultural values, and in training and socialising members of new social elites.
7. Much of the recent literature on the roles of universities in processes of transformation and modernisation has tended to be normative: focusing on what universities *ought* to be doing and what is *planned* for them to be doing. The hopes and aspirations of politicians and policy strategies are assumed to be achievable realities. The project attempted to gather some empirical evidence to bring to debates about the social roles of universities.

Wider contexts

8. The transformations – of both societies and universities – described in this report can be located in more macro and global processes. These are: globalisation; democratisation; the

rise of 'supra-statism' and the associated growth of modelling on a regional and worldwide scale; the increased economic importance of knowledge, at least in the more advanced economies, in securing national comparative advantage; liberalisation (the introduction of markets, competition and choice); and the growth of formal, transparent, and often juridical regulatory systems, both nationally and internationally.

Transforming societies

9. The project attempted to distinguish between the economic, the political, the social and the cultural aspects of transformation.
10. In general, and certainly in the short term, the role of universities in stimulating *economic* change appears to have been relatively weak, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. However, economic goals were frequently driving higher education reforms and these might be important in longer term social and economic transformation. Also, it was possible in most countries to find examples of pockets of activity in higher education – sometimes in the private sector – that appeared to have an immediate economic relevance. In their economic role, universities were generally responding to external pressures rather than initiating or driving transformation.
11. The role of universities in *political* change appears to be both complex and contradictory. It is necessary to distinguish between the stages of 'removing the old' and 'building the new' in political change. In connection with the former, universities could both be important supporters of old regimes as well as providers of 'protected space' in which critique and opposition could ferment. Alongside the explicitly political contributions of some of their members to regime change, universities could also play important roles in providing personnel for institution-building in the new civil societies under construction after the more dramatic moments of transformation had passed.
12. As far as a *social* role is concerned, universities probably contribute quite as much to social reproduction as they do to social transformation. Differentiation may be important here with roles varying between public and private sectors, between institutions of different types and between capital city and regional institutions. This was an aspect of the project that often suffered from a lack of reliable data – on things such as the social backgrounds of students or their destinations after graduation.
13. The *cultural* role appeared to have been important in many places, with universities providing both a route for the entry of external ideas and experiences into otherwise closed societies and a repository for national sentiments that could come out of 'storage' when time and circumstance permitted. There could be tensions between these 'national' and 'international' elements that could pose contradictions of identity and purpose within individual universities as well as in the broader society.

Transforming universities

14. Changes in universities were examined in terms of curriculum, quality and standards; diversification; access policies, student profiles and experiences; and academic responses to change.
15. Nearly all universities had been under pressure to *reform curricula* and to introduce new forms of academic recognition and quality assurance. International donors often played an important part in speeding these trends. However, there could also be opposition to reform within institutions and an absence of suitably qualified staff in certain curriculum areas presented further obstacles to change in some places.

16. There was a general trend towards *diversification*. This could take many forms and reflected both global and local pressures. It resulted in the creation of local private or public teaching-only institutions alongside larger and more dominant national public universities. Private institutions were sometimes regarded as laboratories of change and innovation in their respective countries. They were often regarded with suspicion by the traditional public universities.
17. Progress in *extending access* had often been hampered by lack of resources and a perceived decline in quality, notwithstanding the introduction of accreditation and other quality procedures. Elite reproduction remained important although the role was increasingly exported through the use of international education by the dominant and privileged social groups. There were large variations between countries in access and participation policies and experiences.
18. In terms of the *impact on academic staff*, tendencies towards ‘brain drains’, worsening conditions for teaching and less time for research were often described. The diversification of institutions – especially the creation of the privates – had provided opportunities for ‘portfolio careers’ as staff sought to build a viable living for themselves by taking jobs at several institutions simultaneously.

Future research agendas

19. We believe that the questions which shaped this international project remain important ones and not only for higher education in developing and transitional societies. Future research will need better descriptions of the ‘who’, ‘what’ and ‘where’ of higher education and its part played in social transformation. The ‘who’ of the student body, the ‘what’ of their curriculum and wider higher education experience, and the ‘where’ of their social and economic futures remain crucial questions for an understanding of the social role of the university.
20. Future research will require detailed empirical inquiry that looks beyond the more cosmopolitan worlds of capital cities to the regional and local settings where historical particulars may count for more than the agendas of international agencies. Universities are of their societies and their histories. They are not ivory towers. They are neither beyond the powerful reach of the global nor above the fray of the local. These present the forces that must be balanced as universities continue to transform and be transformed.

1. Introduction

The four major functions of universities posited by Manuel Castells (2001) as applicable to all societies to a greater or lesser extent provide a suitable starting point for the analysis that follows. First, Castells notes that universities have historically played a major role as ideological apparatuses, expressing the ideological struggles present in all societies. Second, they have always been mechanisms of selection and socialisation of dominant elites. Third, the generation of knowledge, often seen as their most important function, is actually - according to Castells - a relatively minor one, with functions of scientific research often assumed by specialised national institutes (in Europe and many developing countries) or within in-house laboratories of private firms (for example, Japan). Fourth, the most traditional - and today the most frequently emphasised - function of universities is the training of a skilled labour force (what Castells calls the “professional university”).

Castells suggests that universities are also subject to more implicit pressures from the host society, and that this combination - of implicit and explicit pressures and of local and universal functions - generates contradictions in their roles. The distinctive character of each higher education system lies in how these contradictions are managed.

This report looks at how universities handle these contradictory functions in contexts of radical political and economic transformations in their host societies and within a global movement toward a knowledge-driven model of economic liberalism. It seeks to highlight both the roles universities have played in the orchestration and management of wider societal changes as well as the ways in which they have themselves been transformed by these wider processes.

The project on which this report is based commenced in November 2000 and brought together more than 25 researchers and higher education specialists from 15 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa (including South Africa), Central Asia and Latin America. Their purpose was to scrutinize, through national, thematic, and institutional case studies, the experiences of higher education systems and institutions in contexts of socio-political transformation.

The overarching aim of the project was to increase understanding of the various ways in which universities and other higher education institutions generate, contribute or inhibit social, economic and political change. The aim was pursued through the examination of the experiences of universities in countries and regions that had recently undergone, or were undergoing, major transformation. The project sought to provide empirical evidence about the social impact of higher education and the extent and nature of the transformations taking place in universities.

The project was initiated by the UK Open University’s Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI). It arose from the CHERI’s contrasting experiences of working in Central and Eastern Europe and in South Africa, experiences that had stimulated a wider interest in the roles played by universities in societies undergoing radical social transformation. An enthusiastic partner for the project was found in the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) which was involved in a compatible long-term project exploring ways universities engage with their communities. The ACU provided an incomparable international network of institutions and scholars, and co-piloted the project throughout its duration. The project also benefited hugely from the input of the Council for Higher Education (Pretoria), from the project’s initial conceptualisation through to the comparative analysis of the case studies and the completion of this report.

An initial grant by the Rockefeller Foundation in November 2001 to support three case studies in Africa and a grant from the Open University to support a research fellow post within CHERI

allowed the project to expand. Case studies in several Eastern European and Central Asian countries were funded by the Open Society Institute (OSI) in 2002. In the same year, the Swedish Foundation for International Co-operation in Research and Higher Education (STINT Foundation) sponsored two desk-based overview papers of Brazil and Mexico. Funding was subsequently obtained from the Ford Foundation to organise a concluding seminar in South Africa in November 2003 - based on the above set of case studies- and to support the present synthesis.

Thus, the work on which this report is based comes from a set of more specific national, institutional and thematic reports: national reports from Bulgaria, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa; overview reports from Brazil and Mexico; institutional reports from private universities in Belarus, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan and Russia; and a set of reports from research fellows supported by the Open Society Institute provided insights from a further range of countries - Bangladesh, Estonia, Poland, India, Slovenia, and additional reports on Bulgaria and Russia.

All of these countries could lay claim to having experienced some form of social transformation in the not-so-distant past. The concept of social transformation is discussed in the next section of this report. Here we note something of the differences in context between countries and differences in purposes between individual case studies.

The four national case studies were undertaken to a broadly common framework and this is described in an appendix to this report.

The important 'transformation' experienced in Bulgaria had been the ending of communism and the country's re-entry to international life. Geographically on Europe's edge, Bulgarian society and culture has incorporated many different traditions. Transformation, therefore, has been about independence, internationalism and capitalism but from a unique national vantage point. Bulgaria has a well-developed higher education system, based on the Soviet model. It is, however, undergoing a process of westernisation with large state universities joined by an increasing number of newer smaller private universities.

A rather different kind of transformation provided the context for the national case study of South Africa. The ending of the apartheid regime in the early 1990s resulted in a consequent restructuring of the higher education system – previously organised on racial lines. Transformation, therefore, in South Africa has been largely about democracy and equity but within a context of capitalism and development. In particular, it has been about building the institutions of civil society. South Africa's higher education institutions – divided between universities and more vocational technikons (recently renamed universities of technology) – reflect both colonial and apartheid pasts that have provided very different levels of funding and support for different types of institution. To a greater or lesser extent, they are all engaged in a process of becoming 'normal universities' although the recent legacy of ideological struggle remains important. As in Bulgaria, a large number of private universities established themselves in the 1990s.

The other two national case studies are also from Africa but with rather different recent histories. Legacies of colonial rule are present in both cases, British in the case of Nigeria and French in the case of Senegal. The two countries were selected for their specific colonial histories, post-colonial development and current political transitions, as well as for their relatively longstanding higher education histories.

Nigeria is a large multi-ethnic country which attained its independence in 1960. Military rule and civil strife have been a recurring feature of its more recent history. A civilian federal government assumed power from the military in 1999. Oil rich, Nigeria is regarded as having great economic potential. Higher education in Nigeria has expanded dramatically since independence, in part as a result of the internal dynamic of the Nigerian federalism, but also, as in most developing countries, because education was a pillar of the developmental ideology. Following the dramatic

effects on both the society and its public institutions of the structural adjustment policies negotiated in the 1980s with international financial institutions, state universities have been joined by newer private ones (and Christian and Islamic universities have joined their secular sisters). But even with their creation and the general expansion of higher education, demand for places far outstrips their supply.

Independence in Senegal has involved a process of 'Africanisation' of both society and higher education, although French influences have remained strong. Several economic crises have occurred and the development of the economy along with the institutions of civil society have been social priorities. Concepts of 'decentralisation' and 'good governance' have been important to the Senegalese experience of transformation. Universities have faced many pressures and reforms and the public universities have faced growing challenges from a private higher education sector. Unlike the other national case studies, Senegal has a relatively small higher education system with three publicly-supported universities plus a range of more specialist institutes. As in Nigeria the tremendous impact of the structural adjustment policies must be stressed here.

Several other case studies adopted a predominantly national focus, although without the resources to undertake the kinds of detailed analyses provided by the original four. Two of the reports prepared by OSI fellows dealt with higher education and social transformation in Estonia and Russia respectively. Countries of vastly different sizes and complexity, they both shared recent histories as part of the Soviet Union. Unlike Bulgaria, both had been part of the Soviet state rather than just its extended empire. But like Bulgaria, transformation was largely about democracy and capitalism although perhaps with a greater emphasis on national identity. If the recent history of higher education in Russia has been largely about social modernisation, it has also been about growing inequality. The role of higher education in Estonia has been partly a project of building national identity and the socialisation of a national elite.

The remaining national cases took the form of overview papers of Brazil and Mexico. Both countries have experienced fragile democracies and economic difficulties in recent times. Colonial legacies are also still visible in both countries. In the Mexican case, the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and the United States has been a further element of (potential) transformation. In these as in other countries, universities have provided ideological 'space' for the challenge of authoritarian regimes. They have also provided scope for social mobility – in deeply unequal societies – as well as contribution to economic modernisation. Both Brazil and Mexico are large countries with extensive higher education systems which include substantial private sectors. In both countries notions of 'crisis' are frequently applied to both society and university.

The pervasiveness of private universities in virtually all of the countries examined in this study underscored the value of a series of institutional case studies funded by the Open Society Institute. All were relatively recently created private institutions in Eastern Europe or Central Asia and had received at least some of their funding through the Soros Foundation. The contexts for these case studies are broadly similar to the contexts of the national cases described for Bulgaria, Estonia and Russia. Indeed, institutional cases are included for both Bulgaria and Russia – the New Bulgarian University and the Moscow Higher School of Social and Economic Sciences. The other institutional cases were the American University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan and the European Humanities University in Belarus. Both contain interesting accounts of their respective national contexts that contribute to the overall picture of social and university transformations in Central and Eastern Europe and central Asia.

The remaining case studies were undertaken by OSI fellows who adopted more thematic foci, sometimes looking at developments in several countries. However, the focus of one of these studies was again Bulgaria with an examination of the social role of the Bulgarian academic community. The other was a comparative study of the social role of university intelligentsia in Poland, Slovenia, India and Bangladesh. Some of these smaller case studies evolved from their

original conceptions – as described in an appendix to this report. Some of the authors chose to focus more on the role of intellectuals rather than the institutional role of universities in the process of transformation.

The present report can hardly do justice to this wide-ranging set of reports and readers are referred to the original texts, all available on the CHERI and ACU websites¹. Brief background details on the participating countries and their higher education systems are provided in appendix (i) and the reports themselves are listed in appendix (ii). Information on methodology and details of the case studies are provided in appendix (iii).

The next section describes in more detail the conceptual background to the project. Section 3 explores the wider contexts of university change and transformation. Section 4 looks at the parts played by universities in the transformations of the societies examined by the project and section 5 considers the ways in which universities were themselves transformed by wider social, economic and political changes. Section 6 attempts to take stock of what has been learned as a result of the project, considers some of its limitations and makes some suggestions for future work on this important issue of the social role of the university.

¹ www.open.ac.uk/cheri/TRhome.htm

2. Conceptual background

"Stagnant universities are expensive and ineffectual monuments to a status quo which is more likely to be a status quo ante, yesterday's world preserved in aspic"².

Ralph Dahrendorf's harsh words are a salutary reminder that the realities of universities and other higher education institutions do not always measure up to the more enthusiastic accounts of their role in the modern world. It is a role which is increasingly regarded as primarily economic. A whole series of national and international reports have taken as their starting premise the assertion that, in the words of a recent World Bank/UNESCO report: 'As knowledge becomes more important, so does higher education'. Yet the economic cannot be convincingly separated from the political or from the network of institutions which constitutes civil society.

Throughout most of their histories, universities have entered into intimate relationships with other social institutions, sometimes supportive, sometimes critical. In the modern world, calls for universities to adapt and to respond to the changing character and needs of other social and economic institutions are frequently heard. But what is the role of universities *in bringing about* wider changes in society? This is the question that the project sought to address and to do so in an empirical rather than a normative fashion. It was to be addressed primarily in respect of a limited number of societies in which recent social changes had widely been regarded as transformative.

The project arose from our experiences of working with universities in countries which had recently undergone radical systemic change, in particular South Africa and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. At first sight, the roles played by universities in the changes taking place in these two parts of the world had been very different. These apparent differences raised general questions about the circumstances under which universities and other higher education institutions contributed conservative or transformative influences to the societal changes taking place around them. These are questions equally applicable to societies which are undergoing more evolutionary, if no less radical, changes, as illustrated here with examples from Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The policy implications of the study are immense. Higher education consumes vast resources and affects the lives of many. In societies where its contribution can be described by expert commentators as 'stagnation', the implications for those societies may be considerable. The reciprocal relationship between change in society and change in universities needs to be better understood in order that it may be better managed, to the benefit of both society and university.

Key concepts: universities and social transformations

Social transformation lies at the radical end of conceptions of social change. It implies at the very least some fundamental changes in society's core institutions, the polity and the economy, with major implications for relationships between social groups or classes, and for the means of the creation and distribution of wealth, power and status. Within these broad features of social transformation, it is possible to discern dramatic moments of transformation in particular societies or regions. The collapse of communism in the late eighties in Central and Eastern Europe and the demise of the apartheid regime in South Africa a few years later are two such cases. There are others, for example, when dictatorial or colonial powers fall. At more local

² Dahrendorf R, 2000, p106

levels, the collapse of a traditional industry and employment may have equally dramatic and transformative effects.

In this conceptualisation, it is possible to see two distinct periods of transformation. There is firstly the period of ‘removing the old’: of regime overthrow and the events leading up to it. This phase can be divided between the crisis events immediately prior to regime change and a generally much longer period of disillusion, critique and probably repression by the agents of the old order. The second period is of ‘building the new’: of reconstruction, of institution-building, of forming new social relationships at home and new alliances abroad, of (attempted) economic regeneration and redistribution. The second period is of uncertain length because the initial dramatic changes of transformation will gradually merge into more evolutionary processes.

The focus of this project was upon the second – ‘building the new’ – period of transformation. However, we believe that it is impossible to understand the role of universities in this period without understanding their role in the previous ‘removing the old’ period. The balance of attention to be accorded the two periods differs between national cases and circumstances.

Universities have frequently been regarded as key institutions in processes of social change and development. The most explicit role they have been allocated is the production of highly skilled labour and research output to meet perceived economic needs. But during periods of more radical change – which may certainly have at their heart far-reaching changes in the economy – universities and/or their constituencies have sometimes played no less an important role in helping to build new institutions of civil society, in encouraging and facilitating new cultural values, and in training and socialising members of new social elites.

None of this is new. The idea of the university as an instrument of societal change has found expression in varying ways in earlier modernising societies of both democratic and authoritarian persuasions: the land-grant colleges in the USA, the part played by universities in the modernisation of Japan, the incorporation of the universities into the socialist project of the Soviet Union and the countries which patterned themselves on that model, are just three examples.

The roles played by universities in modernisation projects are varied. It is important to distinguish between examples where the role of the university is largely autonomous and examples where the role is set firmly within state plans and control mechanisms. It is important to distinguish between universities that ‘ignite’ change, those that ‘accelerate’ existing change and those that ‘block’ change. It is important to distinguish between examples of planned and intended changes and examples of the unintended consequences which arise out of university-based activities. And, as we noted above, it is important to be aware of the implications of the role(s) played by the university prior to the period of transformation. .

Much of the recent literature on the roles of universities in processes of transformation and modernisation has tended to be normative: focusing on what universities *ought* to be doing and what is *planned* for them to be doing. The hopes and aspirations of politicians and policy strategies are assumed to be achievable realities.

Where the focus of debate is not normative – and is based on empirical study of the workings of higher education institutions – greater emphasis has been placed upon the internal changes within institutions that have been brought about by broader social changes. There have been a number of recent studies into the changes taking place within universities, e.g. Clark, 1998; Maassen, 1996; Kogan and Hanney, 1999; Sporn, 1999; Kogan et al, 2000. Contradictions abound. Academic work appears to be buffeted by all sorts of external forces. It is subjected to greater managerialism, greater instrumentalism, greater competition, new forms of control and accountability, and so on. And yet institutional autonomy is increasingly celebrated, especially in countries where for long it appeared to have been compromised. Moreover, several studies, e.g. Henkel, 2000, report evidence of the continuing resilience of traditional academic cultures. What

this body of work reveals, above all, is the danger of assuming that policy intentions will become empirical realities without major modification, if not downright subversion, during the implementation process within universities.

Another important strand of work locates the role of universities, not in the transformation of society but in its reproduction. Pierre Bourdieu's work on the transmission of cultural capital is particularly relevant and an important empirical contribution (Bourdieu, 1988; 1996; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Returning to the normative, a lot of debate about universities within this strand has seemed, explicitly or implicitly, to advocate a more conservative role in preserving traditional values and in legitimising existing structures of society.

One way of resolving these apparent contradictions is to acknowledge that universities play multiple roles, both reproductive and transformative. Within individual institutions, even within individual academic departments, roles played may be multiple and contradictory. At system levels, differentiation has become a key characteristic: non-university sectors, distance universities and private universities exist alongside traditional state universities in many countries, each type playing distinctive roles. Martin Trow's well-known distinction between elite and mass higher education (Trow, 1974) saw these states as largely sequential. But Trow also saw the possibility of them as parallel – elite and mass higher education existing side-by-side in the same society. This – and broader questions of system differentiation – become crucial factors to consider in attempting to understand the role of any individual institution.

Roles and products

Consideration of the role of universities in social change and transformation raises questions of who, what and where. *Who* gets higher education? (the access question). *What* do they get (the curriculum question). And *where* does it lead them? (which is frequently seen as a labour market question but is also a political and status question – more generally, a placement question). To these three questions should be added the question of research and the balance to be struck between intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of its development.

The access question is fundamental. If educational credentials are the key legitimate route to adult roles and social status in the knowledge/achievement/democratic society, then the question of who has access to them is central to an understanding of such societies. Nowhere is access to education equal. Whether advantage is based on membership of the nomenklatura, an ethnic group or a social class, some social groups are more likely to participate in higher education than others. Social transformation can come about if the 'disadvantage gap' between social groups is lessened or if the historically advantaged group is replaced by a new group. Resistance to transformation might be demonstrated by a university's non-engagement with this process, and a student profile reflecting historic structures and inequalities.

The curriculum question is related to the question of research. The relationship between the two is often seen to be central to the inner workings of higher education institutions. Of central interest, therefore, are questions of *what* gets taught and researched. The role of universities in labelling particular aspects of knowledge as valuable enough to be investigated, passed on to others, and preserved for future generations may be at the heart of questions about the impact of universities. Certainly, it has profound implications for the contribution of universities to social change.

It is tempting to see the curriculum question as a critical thinking versus competency debate (see Barnett's work – e.g. 1994, 1997 – among others), or as a choice between liberal education and vocational training. But this is of course a false dichotomy, as many courses of study have long claimed to achieve both (e.g. Silver and Brennan, 1988; Boys et al, 1988, among many others). But we do know from a variety of studies that different academic subjects and forms of curriculum organisation produce different kinds of people (Becher, 1989; Pascarella and

Terentzini, 1995). If academic disciplines are essentially 'ways of life' involving distinguishable world views and values (Maassen, 1996), then curriculum questions become essentially questions of the kinds of people educational institutions produce (and, it could be argued, need to produce in order to meet a variety of cultural, economic, political and social needs).

The placement question is central to the long-term impact of higher education. Placement of graduates in 'top' labour market and political positions provides opportunity for the values and world views of these people (formed out of an interaction of social origins and socialisation) to have a powerful effect on the future direction of the society. Depending on the characteristics of the graduates, the economy may be more efficient, the state may be more benevolent, the culture more rich etc. Or at least that is the claim. Of course, some graduates may not occupy 'top' labour market or political positions. Again depending on the characteristics of the graduates, they may be frustrated or content with this situation. Depending on the circumstances and context of their society, they may form a source of opposition and dissent and spearhead the process of societal transformation.

A final role for universities might be added to the above list. It is the role of the university in providing 'protected space' – intellectual, temporal, physical and political – to allow people, individually and collectively, to think the unthinkable, to push the limits of the possible, to reflect and re-assess. Not quite an 'ivory tower' perhaps, but a safe environment set apart from the interests, orthodoxies and pressures of the day.

The global and the local

The above concepts and questions provided the starting point for the project. Frameworks for the various case studies were developed which were based upon them. (They are described in appendix ii.)

A case study approach invites us to seek generalities from a series of particulars. Underlying these particulars lies a broader set of factors reflecting global rather than local forces for change. Universities are situated at the intersection of the global and the local. To understand their contribution to the making of the modern world it is necessary to acknowledge both levels of analysis. Therefore, in the next section we look at some of the global drivers of change in the relationships between universities and society.

3. Wider contexts: six global drivers of transformation

Universities and university systems may be influenced more by what is happening in the wider society – and increasingly in the wider world – than they are direct causes of social change. This is not to deny that universities can generate some of the key elements for successful national transformation, including the provision of ‘protected spaces’ for the knowledgeable discussion of alternative ideas and the representation of new ways of operating organizationally, but it is to recognize that universities are as much the ‘takers’ of change as its agent.

We might therefore question the view found in many national and international reports over the last decade or more that policy-induced changes in higher education can contribute substantially to processes of social transformation. In some countries, the political mandate for change in higher education has been strong. In other countries there is no such articulated rationale for change.

The transformations – of both societies and of universities - described in this report can be located in more macro and global processes. This is not to suggest that local factors are inconsequential but they are inevitably intermingled within wider international processes, sometimes in reaction to them, often reinforced by them. Here we identify six such processes that appear to be driving, or at least underpinning, the country changes that we outline. These are: globalization; democratization; the rise of ‘supra-statism’ and the associated growth of modelling on a regional and worldwide scale; the increased economic importance of knowledge, at least in the more advanced economies, in securing national comparative advantage; liberalization (the introduction of markets, competition and choice); and, finally, the growth of formal, transparent, and often juridical regulatory systems, both nationally and internationally.

Globalization

The term ‘globalization’ is characterized more by its ubiquity than its precision. There is considerable controversy as to its key features and whether it is a set of processes that is inevitable or similar for all countries and spheres of life. For many, globalization is primarily an economic phenomenon – it refers to an increasing worldwide integration of economies over recent decades and is associated with the rapid rise of information and communication technologies and the triumph of liberal capitalism as the dominant economic mode. It is increasingly clear, however, and underlined by our studies, that globalization does not provide standard or similar outcomes across the world, but is shaped and adapted by a variety of local structures and cultures. Individuals and localities are capable of responding differently to the processes of globalization, in some cases by reinforcing their distinctive culture and beliefs, while in others by embracing the newer forms. The population can have strong fears about ‘innovation’ and westernisation, especially where a previous regime built up education and welfare, as in the case of the Soviet Union.

The dynamics of contemporary globalization, nonetheless, involve several of the core forces of social life: rationalist knowledge, capitalist production, automated technology, and bureaucratic governance. Universities, in current periods of social transformation, generally become both progenitors of (usually) and resisters to these forces. Both universities and globalization are sustained by rationalist knowledge, and by encouraging the view that knowledge is more widely gained by seeing the world as a whole. Consequently, both the academy and the global are ‘supra-territorial’ entities and encourage the rationalities associated with the spread of capitalist production, modern technologies, bureaucratic organization, and the law.

Social transformation generally involves the introduction or extension of modernity, and particularly the idea that knowledge is rational and secular and can be tested and built upon. Scientific and humanistic progress involves demonstrating universalism; knowledge is international in its essence and is not confined by the sentiments and territorial constraints of nationalism (although the production of knowledge in particular economies contains indigenous cultural and social determinants, thus generating territorial variability and competition). Perennially this poses problems for increasingly powerful state rulers and consolidators. They need universities to produce such knowledge for military, administrative and economic effectiveness; yet there is a disregard for national ambitions in the very idea of rational and universalistic modernity, which eternally carries ominous implications for those in authority.

This dilemma has been managed frequently (although not everywhere – see South America for exceptions) in the exchange by which universities are granted a critical license and autonomy by the state that is not extended to most other institutions and which is deemed essential for societal development. In turn, however, states keep a weather eye on universities to monitor relative compliance. At some point, as we shall see, increased democratic and revolutionary demands in periods of transformation lead to greater tensions in these relationships. Globalization seems to sit easier with the universal scientism of the academy than the geographical limitations of the territorial state and may exacerbate tensions with the state, especially in periods of transformation.

Nonetheless universities are loosely-coupled organizations in comparison with others, especially business corporations (Becher and Kogan, 1992; Cohen and March, 1986). Compliance with the state at the upper reaches of a university may not be replicated at the level of faculty or student associations, or individuals. Moreover, despite scientific and knowledge universalism, as organizations, universities are not especially globalized in comparison with other organizations or sectors, even in the most advanced countries. In contrast with financial services, or the pharmaceutical industries, for example, they appear rooted in the national state. They lack the reach and co-ordination of worldwide operations found in the activities of multinational corporations in some other sectors, and as a consequence the transformative impact of foreign universities in the countries under analysis have been quite limited, thus allowing local universities the space – if not always taken – to respond to new economic and political circumstances. National states exert considerable regulatory authority over university systems, over fees and quality, for example, and through funding and other policies they can seek wider social access or social exclusivity, and the promotion of particular areas of research, despite the acceleration of globalizing tendencies in recent years.

In some developing countries, too, governments are anxious that they retain the ability to use universities as key instruments to build up national capacities. In South Africa there is suspicion that the increased globalization and commercialisation of university activities as found in the more developed world, if allowed free rein in developing countries, would result in a denuded or undernourished university sector. Higher education institutions consequently require strong state direction in the view of the South African government (Kruss and Kraak, 2003).

It is in the area of knowledge production – of research – where globalization perhaps most affects higher education and exerts considerable pressure in transformational contexts. Global flows of information and data seem to be an inherent feature of the emerging knowledge economy and draw universities into a range of networks and alliances (King, 2004). States face the realization that they will be left further and further behind unless their leading universities gain entry to at least some of the leading edges of research. Consequently, stratification and funding prioritisation policies are engaged in to allow at least some universities the research intensity needed, while newer institutions, including privately-owned ones, may be confined to other functions, especially ‘demand-absorbing’ teaching, often in more ‘vocational’ subjects.

A key issue therefore is the extent to which nation states are in charge of their own destinies and thus relatively free in the approaches they can adopt for their university systems. The willingness

of at least many Eastern and Central European post-Communist states to seek to debilitate newly-gained national sovereignty by joining the European Union highlights the dilemmas that states face in accommodating their more local objectives to wider political, economic and cultural processes. Strong proponents of the globalization thesis also see the worldwide flows of finance, trade and investment, and the operations of large multinational corporations, as 'hollowing out' state authority and making even well-advanced polities highly vulnerable to market sanctions if 'inappropriate' policies are pursued. (Camilleri and Falk, 1992)

Yet a variety of capitalisms and state policies are still possible and national governments are not always cowed by global capital when it comes to social spending and taxes. National states, especially in democratic transformations, retain juridical and other restraints on their citizens and become more dependent on securing their votes at competitive elections. In any case, companies and other investors do not always seek low-cost locations but also look for locations that have available reasonably skilled labour, a good physical infrastructure, an enterprise-oriented political regime, and a host of market supporting facilities and services. There is evidence that national governments can influence the competitive success of firms by improving education and fostering innovation through university systems that possess applied research and other capacities and strong entrepreneurial orientations. Nonetheless, the policy implications of globalization for national governments, including for university systems, need further research.

Democratization

Increasingly the process of social transformation in the contemporary world includes democratization. During the twentieth century liberal forms of democracy spread throughout the world so that, by 1996, 117 or 61% of the world's 191 countries (at that time) were formally democratic (Potter, 2000). The latest 'wave' includes countries affected by the fall of Communism in Eastern and Central Europe and the ending of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Liberal democratic regimes have become prevalent around the globe, in part encouraged by democratic conditions attached to loans and other forms of financial assistance from international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the European Union. The constitutional rule of law, the protection of individual liberties, and the use of free and fair elections to choose and change governments seem to have become very much the norm by the turn into the twenty-first century.

However, while some political administrations might be classified on minimalist grounds as liberal democracies, they may lack a wider practice and respect for basic rights. Often it would appear that while a system may have the state dimensions of liberal democracy it may lack its civil society characteristics as expressed in economic and political rights, and in a range of voluntary associations. It may also lack a free and uncorrupted media and other forms of institutional accountability. Historically it is clear that the route to the democratic world has not been singular but has comprised a number of pathways. An important variable has been the extent to which a nation's state has been quite directly involved in industrial modernization or whether modernization occurred largely outside it, as in the UK or the USA, for example. A further issue is whether democracy is the outcome of economic advance, particularly capitalism, or is at least correlated with it, or whether it is possible for economic and democratic development to occur relatively independently (Gill, 2000; Huntingdon, 1991).

Some of the studies carried out for this project exemplify the impact of democratization in highlighting the role that universities may play in strengthening the forces of civil society, which may be regarded as an important source of social capital and individual rights. Through the provision of 'spaces' for the exercise of political and other association and free speech, universities come to be viewed as 'emblems' for new democratic approaches, as well as contributing to the bases for wider democratization by spreading civil society practices. Most authoritarian regimes have sought to constrain civil society by imposing restraints or prohibitions on autonomous organizations. Thus, in the transition to democracy, a critical factor is whether

civil society has been allowed to develop and has created the fertile soil for independent political organization. In turn this generates a public sphere within which political issues are discussed and interests pressed, activities that, crucially, are recognized as legitimate by existing regimes. Universities have greater transformative potential the more they are situated in such contexts (Gill, 2000; Putnam, 1993).

‘Supra-statism’ and modelling

The future of the nation state came under increasing scrutiny throughout the twentieth century. International functionalists have felt that the idea of national sovereignty has had its day (Brown, 2001; McGrew, 2002). Instead, they argue that the growing array of technical, functionalist or specialist international organizations, such as the IMF or the World Bank, offer more hope of a peaceful and prosperous world. ‘Integrationists’, however, associated particularly with the European Union, have argued more for the greater integration of states. Integrationism and supranationalism are regarded as particularly effective responses to the challenges of a globalizing world, especially the need to manage global economic liberalism and the rise of the multinational companies. The growth of international ‘regimes’ and supra-territorial bodies, which in part have been formed to both regulate and further the processes of free trade and global economic liberalization, are seen as diminishing the freedom to act of nation states (King and Kendall, 2004).

In these circumstances the influence of the university in social transformation may lie in the extent to which it supports rather than opposes the nostrums, solutions and resolutions of supra-state bodies and their pull over national governments. But this is problematical. The World Bank, for example, has stressed in recent years the important function of higher education in economic development but has also emphasised the need for states to introduce more market competition and ‘user pays’ approaches, including the growth of private higher education, which have proved unpalatable to those in the mainly public-sector institutions, but which often have proved enticing to those in government (World Bank, 2002).

The exercise of public authority in nation states, however, is increasingly influenced by what happens elsewhere, especially when legitimated by influential bodies such as the OECD. A process of modelling takes place in which state leaders adopt for their university systems policies that have been tried elsewhere. In part this follows from the high cost and difficulty for state policy-makers of coming up with original or specifically local ideas. We have reached a stage where university reforms are highly predictable in virtually every country, irrespective of domestic conditions. The issue is not that all university systems face common problems – although undoubtedly these exist – but why they appear to adopt common solutions. One set of reasons is that developing and transitional societies often come under formal pressures from global and regional funding bodies, such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, to implement what are regarded as ‘sound’ reforms. Partnerships with universities in more advanced societies are also likely to produce a tendency to reproduce structures and processes that are familiar to leaders in the more mature higher education systems. Moreover, developing societies often simply lack the resources to innovate effectively as opposed to adopting already well-tried approaches. A further answer lies in the ‘epistemic communities’ that operate internationally, and which include networks of experts, interest group representatives, public servants, businesspeople, and politicians. They form relatively common interests, ideas and values that exercise a powerful influence, not least on new rulers in countries adapting quickly to radical change. South Africa, however, is an interesting example of a country that appears more willing than most to forge a more distinct pathway for its university system than that which is more globally fashionable, by introducing strong state and command-and-control regulatory systems, not least for the private sector (Kruss and Kraak, 2003).

Knowledge economies

In recent years governments around the world have come to regard a substantial or growing higher education system as essential for economic development. Although the established public goods that universities generally provide for countries, such as the formation of national and cultural identity, enhanced individual opportunity, and democratic commitment, are regarded as important by political leaders, it is the economic pay-off increasingly that counts. There is widespread acceptance that a nation's human capital, and the new ideas and innovations generated by that human capital, are the major drivers of economic growth.

The problem that governments face, however, is paying for this investment in human capital. In most advanced countries the growth of higher education traditionally has been largely publicly funded. But rising alternative claims on public expenditure (such as health) within the relatively low direct personal taxation regimes that global economic competitiveness apparently requires has reduced units of state funding for university systems. Overall levels of public funding for universities have generally risen as governments seek to expand and even massify their higher education systems, but this has led to the average spend per student to drop while still placing considerable burdens on national treasuries (Kogan and Hanney, 2000). Moreover, the Keynesian public ownership and expenditure model, along with more socialist forms, has fallen into disrepute in recent years. 'Market-competitive' states are more disposed to find ideological as well as financial virtue in increased private funding of higher education institutions. The prevailing global dominance of economic liberalism offers a rationale for private rather than solely state provision. In the developing and transitional societies under consideration in this report, however, governments also simply lack the resources to expand higher education systems predominantly through the public purse. The result generally is two-fold: increased liberalization and marketisation in existing public institutions, and encouragement of more private models of higher education.

Liberalization

Liberalization generally refers to the introduction of freer and stronger markets and the raised levels of choice and competition that this entails. While the introduction of more market-like processes into higher education has resulted in many universities relying more on private than public funding, it is the growth of private higher education that may be the most noteworthy feature of liberalization in the developing and transitional countries under discussion here. In many countries the fastest-growing part of the higher education system is the private sector. Private institutions educate up to 30% of the overall student population in Eastern and Central Europe which has experienced large recent annual growth rates. Many people are prepared to make considerable financial sacrifice to attend private higher education institutions, in part to undertake qualifications in subjects such as business and computing that the expanding number of private employers increasingly require and which the traditional universities have been slow to provide, and in part because the falling level of public funding also raises concerns in the wider population about the provision in state universities and whether standards are being maintained. At the same time, the quality of many private institutions is often questioned, not least by those within the traditional state universities on whom, ironically, many private providers are dependent for their academic staff. (Low wage levels in many countries require academics to take on two or three jobs in order to achieve a living wage.)

In South America, over half university enrolments are now in private universities; in parts of Asia private universities are growing faster than public ones, while in sub-Saharan African countries the World Bank estimates that the number of private sector institutions grew from around 30 in 1990 to over 85 in 1999. For-profit private higher education (as opposed to charitable, religious or 'elite' forms) is the fastest-growing model, including in the USA where corporations such as Apollo and Sylvan offer a systematizing approach to the standardization of the curriculum, and its delivery in a range of localities, increasingly abroad and with growing success with on-line

methods. One result is that the boundaries between higher and other forms of post-secondary education seem increasingly blurred.

The growth of private higher education is being encouraged by international organisations as part of a more general ideology of promoting more liberal and private organizational forms in transforming societies. However, particularly in Eastern and Central Europe, many providers are small-scale, owner-dependent, and operate with thin reserves. Undoubtedly some private providers have been bogus and of questionable probity. The result can be to undermine wider market-based reforms, including in the traditional universities, and to reinforce the hankering in parts of the population for the state welfare support of previous regimes and bitterness with private business forms.

As might be expected of market-based provision, where the policy framework often lags, there is opportunity for both the respectable and the 'fly-by-night' to establish businesses relatively unhindered by governmental restrictions, and this has made governments wary of private providers.

Regulation and accountability

Increased liberalization and private forms of higher education does not equal 'de-regulation'. Considerable confusion attends these terms and it is often supposed that stronger markets imply fewer rules and weaker governments. This is far from being the case. Rather, with more markets we are more likely to find 're-regulation' rather than 'de-regulation'. Governments of the advanced industrial nations have reorganized their control of private sector behaviour, but not substantially reduced the level of regulation (Vogel, 1996). This is not likely to change in transforming societies either, including for universities. Rather than the introduction of more competition within a sector or the market (liberalization) leading to the elimination or reduction of government regulations (de-regulation), we find rather the reformulation of old rules and the creation of new ones.

Moreover, the countries under discussion exemplify the tendency for various governments to achieve different degrees of liberalization and types and styles of regulation. Nor do states, in the context of globalization and liberalization, take a back seat or become weak 'enablers'. They drive the reform process more than private groups, not least because private sector groups can often be hopelessly divided over, or not interested in, regulatory reform. Nonetheless, globalization may produce a competitive dynamic between national regulators as organizations seek regulatory arbitrage, which may lead to new rules or, in some cases, even fewer ones (de-regulation).

An overriding aim of regulation is to formally generate processes of accountability and transparency that produce trust. Intellectual and social criticism of both professional and business 'insider' forms of control have grown around the world, not least as a consequence of some high-profile scandals exposed by an ever more inquiring mass media. The state is increasingly looked upon to either encourage tighter, legally-enforceable forms of private regulation, or to more directly regulate itself to ensure consumer protection, standards, lower costs and value for public money. Not only are markets and producers becoming more globalized, but so are regulatory principles, especially the regulatory norm of transparency, and transforming societies are not immune from such processes (Braithwaite and Drahos, 2000).

The state remains as at least a background safeguard for the public interest in these approaches (often defined in consumer protection terms). It does this by insisting on greater public accountability from professional bodies, including higher education, and this tends to generate greater information and data for consumers. Transparency and openness, not intimacy and professional 'closure', become the basis of public confidence and trust, and the notion of what constitutes a service shifts from the exercise of professional judgement to satisfying customers.

It would be an interesting part of a follow-up project to examine the impact of global regulatory norms on states in transforming societies and the extent to which juridical formality, transparency, codification and openness, replacing elite intimacy, come to characterize their approaches to both business and higher education.

Summary

The rest of this report is based more on the particulars of individual countries, and indeed, individual universities. In considering the various examples that have been provided by the case study authors, the balance between local and global factors needs to be borne in mind. The latter as summarised above – globalisation, democratisation, supra-statism, knowledge economies, liberalisation, regulation and accountability – provide a context but a context whose effects are open to challenge by the particulars of individual cases.

We look now at some of the features of the processes of transformation that were occurring in the countries participating in the project.

4. What is being transformed in society?

The transformative potential of universities

The case studies undertaken as part of the project were asked to consider what was being transformed in societies that had experienced some kind of profound economic, social or political transformation in their recent history, and what part universities were playing in the transformation process. It was envisaged that ‘transformation’ could be considered along the following dimensions:

- *the economy*: the formation of human capital;
- *the polity*: the creation and sustenance of state and civil institutions; the selection and socialisation of political and social elites;
- *the social structure*: the basis of social stratification, the extent and mechanisms of mobility for different groups;
- *the culture*: the production and dissemination of ideas, exerting influence upon and providing critique of the above.

There was no prior assumption that universities were indeed playing important roles in any of these respects. The project was looking for evidence for or against the many assertions that have been made about the transformative potential of universities and the social benefits of investment in them. In practice, it was frequently necessary to make a distinction between universities as institutions and some of the constituencies – both staff and students – within them.

Many of the recent claims about the social importance of universities have been set within frameworks of ‘knowledge societies’, the demise of the welfare state and the consequences of global capitalism³. With the demise of communism, it appears that there is now only one ‘show in town’, one social model for all to aspire to, and one that is summed up in phrases such as ‘knowledge-driven development’ employed in recent reports of international organisations.

According to the Task Force on Higher Education⁴ the achievement of such development requires sound economic and institutional regimes, information infrastructures, national innovation systems, and high quality human resources (TFHE, 2000). It sees higher education as making a *vital* contribution to all four of these requirements and emphasises the ‘public interest’ case for investment in higher education as lying in higher education’s ability to:

- unlock potential at all levels of society, helping talented people to gain advanced training whatever their background;
- create a pool of highly trained individuals that attains a critical size and becomes a key national resource;
- address topics whose long term value to society is thought to exceed their current value to students and employers;
- provide space for the free and open discussion of ideas and values (TFHE, 2000).

³ Although as Peter Scott notes “today universities are more dependent than ever on national governments for their budget” (Scott, 2001:110).

⁴ Convened by the World Bank and UNESCO to explore the state of higher education in developing countries.

A subsequent World Bank report in 2002 identified four essential functions of higher education in supporting knowledge-driven economic growth:

- the capacity to train a qualified and adaptable labour force – including high level scientists, professionals, technicians, teachers for basic and secondary education, as well as future government;
- the capacity to generate new knowledge;
- the capacity to access existing stores of global knowledge and adapt it to local use;
- the transmission of norms, values, attitudes and ethics as the foundation of the social capital necessary to construct healthy civil societies and cohesive cultures, ‘the very bedrock of good governance and democratic political systems’ (Harrison et al, cited in World Bank, 2002).

The idea that the reduction of inequalities, at global and national levels, turns in no small measure on the state of universities and higher education systems is a remarkable inversion of global policy thrusts of less than a generation ago. At that time higher education was more often discussed as an elitist luxury and national and international investment priorities were focussed on primary and secondary education in order to address issues of growth and inequality (Sall, Lebeau and Kasimir, 2003).

However, despite a recent inclusion of a social role for higher education in its policy - mainly in response to critics claiming that the Bank’s agenda did not take the public good dimension of higher education into account - the World Bank made clear that higher education was just one element in the building of a new kind of knowledge society. It drew attention to the interconnectedness of factors such as macroeconomic and regulatory frameworks, innovative firms and networks of enterprises, adequate communications infrastructures and ‘knowledge-producing organisations’. All of these factors are said to be necessary to produce the desired economic transformation (World Bank, 2002, p13).

The World Bank policy is a key contextual element in our project, because of our focus on developing and transition societies where the Bank is generally said to exercise considerable influence on policy making and where it is often the largest single source of external finance for education (Hunter and Brown, 2000). The “desired economic transformation” referred to in the Bank’s documents refers to homogenising pressures for conformity of developing and transition economies to particular economic principles. All the countries under focus are therefore - officially at least - reforming their higher education systems towards successful inclusion in the so-called globalised knowledge society. In Central and Eastern Europe, there is a more regionalised agenda for at least some countries with entry into the European Union as an important policy goal. But the political and economic imperatives are broadly the same even if models for the future may differ in some details.

This agenda of economic modernisation is, however, not the only imperative of modernisation as Mala Singh reminds us when she stresses that

“Transformation has been used as much to denote the repositioning of higher education to serve more efficiently as the ‘handmaiden’ of the economy as to signify the drive to align higher education with the democracy and social justice agenda of a new polity as in South Africa.” (Singh, 2001: 7)

South Africa is however the only case in this project where current higher education policy formation and implementation can really be said to have been

“framed by the overall social goal of transcending the contemporary social structure and institutionalising a new social order”. (Badat, 2001)

The settings for the case studies were distinctive and required diverse and non-normative approaches to the notion of transformation. The project's conception of transformation as involving 'the existence of a discernable moment of regime change that would bring with it a remodelling of political institutions and social and economic relationships' therefore entailed a broad assumption of building something 'new' but not necessarily everywhere the same 'thing'. The timing of moments of 'regime change' differed between cases but was at least within living memory, if not always in recent memory.

In the case studies, and more generally, two different senses of social transformation need to be distinguished. First, the 'dramatic moment' captured by the collapse of communism, the ending of apartheid, the fall of a dictatorship or the departure of a colonial ruler – essentially the ending of one political 'system' and its replacement by another. This may or may not be accompanied by structural changes in the social and economic spheres. Second, a 'creeping transformation' whereby structures and relationships are gradually but fundamentally changed over a period. In practice the two kinds of transformation are usually found in combination. The seeds may be sown for the 'dramatic moment' by a process of creeping change over a long period. And after the dramatic moment has occurred, a 'creeping transformation' of social and economic institutions may be necessary for transformation to be consolidated and 'rolled out' over all parts of society. 'Residues' from old regimes will always remain – in ideas, structures and people – but they may not always be recognised (although sometimes they are and they can constitute sources of explicit conflict).

Transformation in this project is not necessarily synonymous with social progress and modernisation. The impact of structural adjustment policies in sub-Saharan Africa is a well documented illustration of the dramatic and quite sudden deterioration of educational institutions in situations of forced commitment of public services to free market values (Banya and Elu, 2001), even in the context of the democratization of political institutions.

In the project's initial conceptualisation, quite a sharp distinction was drawn between the two stages of 'removing the old' and the 'building of the new'. The intended focus of the project was upon the latter: the reconstruction, the institution building, the forming of new alliances abroad, the attempted economic regeneration and redistribution. Not all of the case study authors adopted this emphasis, not least because it was not possible to understand the role of universities in this 'building the new' stage without understanding their role in the previous 'removing the old' period. This was particularly the case where regime change was recent: the period before the change was still very vivid and the period after too uncertain and fuzzy for it to be fully comprehended.

If international organisations have offered a template for the direction of transformation and the part to be played by universities in it, the realities pointed to by the case studies suggested a more complex and differentiated reality. While international models hovered in the background of more local dynamics of change, local politics and histories appeared more to the fore. 'Internationalisation' might be a desirable goal for many individual academics – never to return in some cases! – and the concept entered the rhetoric of many institutional debates. But there was also much resistance to some of the more recent developments of 'academic capitalism', to use Slaughter and Leslie's useful phrase (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). In Eastern Europe in particular, international models seemed to hark back to some half-remembered notion of the Humboldtian university of the period between the two world wars. It should also be remembered that the case studies were conducted within very different types of society, not least in respect of the nature of their higher education systems. While some of the countries had achieved enrolment rates comparable to those in western countries, others possessed small elite systems.

Thus, the project's case studies presented a series of stories rather than a single overriding narrative. We consider some of them below within the four headings of economic, political, social and cultural transformations.

Economic transformation

Universities' roles in generating economic transformations are classically embraced by human capital theories of economic growth. However, while noting the 'global supremacy of the market concept' the economic role for the university was generally not elaborated in the case studies. Many of them assumed there was such a role without investigating it in any detail. Thus, the universities' roles in producing a professionally-educated class – the lawyers, businessmen and teachers etc – was duly noted, but we have little to tell us whether and how such production was transforming society. After all, such a role would have been played in previous regimes and contexts. Were universities now performing it in new ways? Had curricula been revised? Were different kinds of graduates being produced? And what was happening to them? In some cases, for example Bulgaria, the answer was partly in terms of large-scale emigration with higher education playing the role of an 'escape route' for individuals rather than a force for social and economic transformation.

A lack of data may be part of the problem here. Few of the participating countries appear to possess reliable statistics on graduate employment. Moreover, the impact of graduates in the labour market will be long term over forty years or so of working life. The existence of new kinds of graduates – with new skills and aspirations – may provide a potential for 'creeping transformation' in the long-term rather than visible change in the short-term. However, it may also be the case, at least in some countries, that essentially 'black market' or 'informal' economies had resulted in fewer opportunities for economic and social advancement through possession of educational qualifications than international models of the 'knowledge economy' would suggest.

The case of Russia provides a good example, according to Fedotova, who quotes recent surveys of public opinion to the effect that higher education qualifications (apart from the "big 3": economics, informatics and law) do not guarantee access to the middle class (by western standards), or even by former Soviet ones, where intellectual activity was well regarded and paid. She goes on to suggest that in the current context (though less than in the early days of the transition), social prestige is linked primarily to financial capabilities in a new system of social stratification that "has combined all the worst from capitalism and communism", and has created huge discrepancies in the distribution of income between rich "new Russians" and the rest of the population (Fedotova: 18).

In her case study, Fedotova points to the "decreasing the role of education (mainly higher education) as a factor in forming Russian middle-class" and believes that higher education was not prestigious in the immediate aftermath of the transition because "capitalism in Russia was not built on a rational ethos (as Weber described it in the West), but on adventurism, looking for immediate profit which does not require higher education" (Fedotova: 19).

The situation is very different in countries of Africa, despite the increasing level of informalisation of their economy in structural adjustment policy contexts. Studies have shown that demand for higher education has continued to rise throughout the continent, even in contexts of civil wars (DR Congo) or extreme restriction on the employment market (Nigeria), which suggests only a loose connection between the social and economic benefits of being a graduate⁵.

Rate of return analysis might point the individual towards the establishment of a small business or to emigration rather than enrolment in higher education. And, indeed, while higher education

⁵ This is imperfectly reflected in enrolment figures because of the material incapacity of universities to meet the demand (in Nigeria each year, only 10% of the successful candidates to the national entrance examination are actually enrolled).

enrolments were rising in some of the case study countries, this was by no means universal. The relationship between higher education and employment is complex, particularly in economies relying largely on the informal sector. In the structure of the new global economy, King and McGrath foresee a growth of small and medium over larger enterprises. In developing countries, they believe that “the graduates of public training institutes will enter the informal economy” because of the “severe limitations to formal sector employment opportunities” (King and Mcgrath, 2002: 145).

It may be largely to the new private higher education institutions that we must look for examples of universities contributing to economic transformation. Many of these specialised in (cheap-to-provide) courses in business-related subjects and were producing specialists in these fields who would have been in short supply previously. It should be noted though that there are actually few private for-profit ‘real’ universities (i.e. offering degree programmes and combining research and teaching) and that, as illustrated in the case of Russia, while private institutions are plentiful in former European communist countries they actually account for a low percentage of student enrolment. Having said that, we found elsewhere, notably in the Senegal case, that there is now evidence that graduates from private institutions are doing better in the labour market than other graduates.

“In less than ten years, the number of private higher education institutions grew from eight to nearly a hundred providing courses in management, financial and commercial engineering, and in information and communication technology (ICT). Furthermore, two private Senegalese universities and one American university campus offer North American programmes. In other words, the new private higher education institutions appear as signs of a breakaway from the classical university category for the benefit of a more open and more professionally oriented model... The overpopulated campus, the increasing figures of unemployed graduates, the recurrent social movements on campus pose the problem of socio-economic benefit of public university outputs when graduates of private institutions find more easily their way, even in public sector.” (Niane, Ndiaye and Sougou: 41)

In Russia, the non-state sector has developed rapidly as shown in the following table extracted from Gorbunova and Zabaev’s case study.

Growth in number of Russian universities

| Year | Total Number | State, % | Non-state, % |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1991 | 535 | 100,0 | 0 |
| 1993 | 548 | 100,0 | 0 |
| 1994 | 710 | 77,9 | 22,1 |
| 1005 | 759 | 75,0 | 25,0 |
| 1996 | 817 | 70,1 | 29,9 |
| 1997 | 880 | 65,7 | 34,3 |
| 1998 | 914 | 64,0 | 36,0 |
| 1999 | 944 | 63,0 | 37,0 |
| 2000 | 1224 | 45,9 | 54,1 |

The authors estimate that

“Today, the so-called ‘commercial’ universities make up 40% of the total number of universities, with a little over 10% of applicants entering them. When they emerged at the turn of the 90s, they met almost half the demand for paid educational services. However the process of commercialization in state universities started developing, and now state universities and academies have won a victory over commercial universities for the market of paid services. In 2000 the amount of paid vacancies in commercial universities was a little over 20%.” (Gorbunova and Zabaev p.17)

Considerable fluctuations in different years in the numbers of students of non-state universities testify to the fact that

“firstly, non-state universities are still at the stage of searching for their ‘niche’ in the market of training intellectuals, secondly, their specialization fully depends on the changes of the labour force market”. (Shergi, 2001, quoted in Gorbunova and Zabaev, p.17)

There was some suggestion that many graduates were establishing small businesses rather than entering existing enterprises. Although it might be expected that the existence of skilled labour would lead to increased inward investment, little by way of examples were provided of this. Thus, small business solutions might make sense to new graduates in the absence of other options and in the light of the opportunities available in fast-changing and only partially regulated economies.

What is being observed worldwide is a connection between the development of self employment and the increasing precariousness of traditional employment. The 2001 International Labour Organisation (ILO) report noted that in spite of progress in many countries “a new type of poverty has emerged in the transition economies” affecting low wage earners, the unemployed, the elderly and workers whose wages are not paid. It warned that

“Casual work and working without an explicit contract of employment is increasing worldwide and has been noted in many countries which are liberalizing product and labour markets, such as Argentina, Brazil, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Self-employment is growing faster than traditional employment, although its share of total employment remains relatively small, accounting for an average of around 12% of the workforce in most countries. In the US, self-employment occupies only 7% of the workforce, compared to 23% in Italy, 25% in Turkey and the Republic of Korea and 26% in Mexico. Between 1990 and 1999, part-time work increased in the EU from 13% of the workforce to 16%. In Latin America about 25% of all workers are self-employed.” (ILO, 2001)

The relation between employment trends, enrolment figures at higher levels of education and diversification of the higher education system is therefore not a straightforward one. As Totomanova suggests in her national case study of Bulgaria, private and public institutions are more reactive to the changing nature of the market for educational services than to changes in the employment structure or economic needs of the society (Totomanova: 29).

This trend is now well documented in the case of Russia where Smolentseva argues that part of the explanation for the disconnection between the two spheres lies with changes in the higher education sector and lack of state regulation.

“The relationship between higher education and the labour market has been radically transformed in recent years. In the Soviet period, the connection was determined by the centralized planning system, which decreed what kind of specialists and in what numbers should be prepared. Jobs were guaranteed for every graduate. Currently, the lack of coordination between higher education and the labour market is exacerbated by the absence of clear state education policies and of a broader strategic plan for Russian development. The new autonomy of higher education institutions allows them to make their own decisions on programmes. This has resulted in an inappropriate speciality structure - in particular, an excessive quantity of graduates in economics and law.” (Smolentseva, 1999)

This is confirmed by figures throughout Central and Eastern Europe and the Confederation of Independent States (CIS): since 1993, the labour force has been declining at an annual rate of 0.1% for the region as a whole with only a handful of economies exhibiting increases in the

labour force (ILO, 2004). The data indicates that the withdrawal from the labour force adversely affects youth who have lower labour force participation rates and higher unemployment rates than the population as a whole. This, added to higher levels of qualification generates an infomalisation of local skilled labour markets (growing informal entrepreneurship, petty trading...) as well as a tendency towards migration of highly-skilled personnel.

There were however some examples of universities attempting to play an economic role in particular sub-regions, for example in Northern Nigeria and in parts of Mexico, prompting the thought that one might need to look beyond the capital cities and their universities for a better appreciation of the economic role of the university. The example of the development of a Master's degree in Farming Corporation Management at the Gaston Berger University in Senegal is a good example of small local initiatives which might nevertheless have vital regional benefits (see section 5).

A 'privatisation rush' towards 'crude capitalism' was described in one of the European cases. In the main, public universities appeared to have been largely bystanders in such processes. It is not clear that they have contributed to a sceptical critique of such processes any more than they have lent them practical support. University eyes had been averted and attention turned inwards.

If the economic role of universities in transforming societies was emphasised less than we might have expected, economic aspects sometimes lay beneath the surface. For example, the acquisition of English language proficiency while at university could be an extremely marketable skill. It is identified as such by all private institutions studied in this project, where more and more courses are taught in English and where English proficiency features among the key commercial arguments to sell their courses.

The case studies did not suggest that universities were not playing any economic role, rather that the role was not necessarily a matter of major debate and was not often considered to be 'transformative'. Several reasons for this might exist and seem relevant to a number of the case study countries, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. The first is that many of the countries did not possess the steering mechanisms needed to change curriculum and pedagogy in public institutions in directions which would emphasise greater employability. Second, the funding of institutions in relation to staff numbers and other fixed costs meant that there was little pressure to take account of whatever market responsiveness and a concern over student numbers might have required. And third, public institutions could not readily find new staff to teach new subjects – thus curriculum offerings were slower to change than external circumstances might have warranted. In some countries, however, large private sectors of higher education institutions were filling an economic gap created by the lack of responsiveness from the state institutions.

In all of the case study countries, economic transformations were clearly taking place: in Central and Eastern Europe the move from command to market economies was well advanced while in Latin America and Africa economic reforms had led to dramatic destabilisation of the labour markets. In Nigeria, for example, brutal and massive retrenchments in the civil service directly affected the whole purpose of high skills training. What was much less clear from our case studies was the extent to which these were 'knowledge-driven developments' and whether universities were significant players in the transformations.

Political transformation

We have several examples from the case studies – especially in Latin America and Africa – of universities playing a role in the political sphere. This might be before the 'dramatic moment', providing the *protected space* where dissident ideas could grow and social networks develop. It might also take the form of providing a base for resistance to a military regime, perhaps through popular (student) uprisings. It is necessary, however, to distinguish between individual and

collective campus-based actions and institutional roles. In Nigeria and South Africa for example, certain institutions can be said to have played sub-sector roles of potential political impact, through training programmes in peace and conflict resolution/management studies for instance.

The notion of protected space refers to campus based political activism and has been employed in different contexts: where colonial institutions were established in a tradition of university autonomy, academics and students may have often been able to legally preserve (campus = private property) these spaces even under authoritarian regimes (Nigeria) and have sometimes used them to develop an alternative political project. In these countries, academics often occupied the forefront of opposition movements because, while unionism and political parties were usually banned or controlled, academic freedom could not be challenged without closing the universities. But universities were also seen in some cases as protected space in the sense of islands, isolated from their own country for political reasons but connected to the rest of the world through cooperation programmes and research networks.

In Latin America, a similar trend has been observed, dating back, at least, from the 1918 university reform movement in Cordoba, Argentina, which spread to other countries in the region, as the overview paper by Schwartzman states:

“The reformists accused their old professors of incompetence and authoritarianism, and claimed for university autonomy, in which students, teachers and former students would decide, democratically, who the university authorities should be, who should be hired to teach, and the contents of their teaching. Governments had to pay the bill and let the academics take care of themselves.” (Schwartzman, p.15)

In Brazil (which was not reached by the reform movement), opposition voices to the military regime (1964-1984) found their protected space outside the university, before spreading inside:

“After the mid-sixties, under the authoritarian military regime, the Brazilian Association for the Advancement of Science was one of the few platforms where criticism against the government could be raised. The yearly conferences of SBPC would bring together the country’s most prestigious scientists, the meetings received strong press coverage, students flocked to attend the round tables and presentations, and the authorities did not dare to intervene. The sessions covered all subjects, from arcane papers on biology and physics to discussions on education, science and technology, the economy, social conditions and the political regime.”(Schwartzman p.15)

In other contexts (e.g. USSR and its satellites), academics have proved to be (actively or passively) more supportive of the regime and more regularly used by the regime as advisors and mediators. Universities were more infiltrated by the state security apparatus and therefore less suspected of harbouring opposition leaders. Chowdhury’s case study suggests that some opposition movements in Slovenia and Poland emerged from “neutral” university departments (e.g. natural science, literature). But we have fewer accounts of such political activism within universities in communist regimes than we have in apartheid/dictatorial/military regimes in Africa and Latin America, where primarily brutal regimes were in military control of state resources with less need for and means of ideological control (except South Africa to a certain extent). After the even, of course, it is common to find and to emphasise examples of universities playing a ‘noble’ role in overthrowing tyrannies, but overall universities seem to have given as much succour to incumbent regimes as they have provided opposition to them.

The political role of the university might be more important after the ‘moment’ when people, networks and ideas formed in the ‘protected space’ of the university spread into the wider society and provide the human resources to fill new political leadership roles in society and its institutions (the Chowdhury case study considers the examples of Ljubljana and Warsaw universities).

As part of the second phase of transformation, 'building the new', we note in South Africa and elsewhere the role that universities have played in undertaking policy research for new regimes, in providing personnel for the governing and administrative apparatus, and consultancy services to both government and enterprises. Perhaps especially in Africa we find university personnel active in the work of NGOs. (This is probably an unintended role as academics first found in NGOs and international organisations a way of compensating for cuts in research funding and the collapse of their purchasing power under structural adjustment programmes.) It has also been suggested that internal decision-making in universities can provide models of democracy for adoption by other social institutions. Although the counter-claim can also be made, especially in parts of Central and Eastern Europe, that universities are in fact lagging behind other parts of society in their rate of internal reform.

The case studies provide relatively little evidence of how a nation-building role is actually being achieved by universities. And what evidence there exists is double-edged. While higher education is usually said to equip individuals with more liberal and tolerant views, universities that are highly embedded in political spheres (communist Bulgaria and Russia, post-colonial Nigeria) have often proved to be at the forefront of ideological legitimisation of totalitarian regimes, perhaps unintentionally sowing the seeds for new 'dramatic moments'. Universities have frequently been the breeding ground for the politicisation of ethnic hatred (DR Congo and Nigeria during the Katanga and Biafra secessions respectively) resulting in killings of students and staff on-campus. Where their role was seen by the state as incompatible with their institutional status, they have often been closed down or even demolished (Chechen State University in 1996).

Some of the case studies provided examples of universities making important contributions to the promotion of national languages and cultures on the one hand and of universalistic values on the other through their curriculum development. Examples include: the Institute of Area Studies or Kyrgyz ethnographic department at the American University of Central Asia, teaching of and research on national languages in Ibadan, inclusion of Roma language in Bulgarian universities' curriculum, seminar and courses on citizenship and democracy in many Eastern and Central European countries. Such developments remain in most cases externally funded or more or less imposed by international donors.

The language in which tuition is conducted is sometimes an important aspect of this role. In different contexts it can provide either a source of division or a cultural meeting point, both within and outside the country. Fluency in English was sometimes described as necessary in mediating between different worlds and could be a relevant factor in the 'creeping changes' leading up to the 'dramatic moment' of regime change.

The nation-building role of the university may sit uneasily alongside the larger modernising and internationalising role generally ascribed to universities. Excessive concern to preserve or 'create' a national culture may tend towards closure towards regional and international collaboration and groupings. But in general these national and international roles can probably co-exist, often being performed by different institutions. Although the 'privates' are often assigned a large role in economic modernisation, we also find examples of externally-funded private universities playing their part in the preservation and renewal of aspects of national culture (for example, the case of the Kyrgyz ethnographic department mentioned above).

There is, however, at least a strong suggestion that universities are also about 'reproducing the old' and thus preventing change. Universities in Central and Eastern Europe seem to be particularly open to this charge but reproductive elements can probably be seen everywhere. It is also the case that some of the aspects of the political role referred to above, for example in providing research and personnel for governing and administrative elites, have been historically provided for *whatever* regime was in power. Thus, in South Africa, universities had both sustained the apartheid regime and contributed to its overthrow. Universities in Central and Eastern Europe were assigned an important and prestigious role in communist societies, but dissidence was also nurtured in some parts of the university system. The political influence of universities in

these countries today appears to be more marginal, even if politically influential *individuals* may have close ties with universities, especially the capital city *alma mater*.

One question the project sought to explore was whether the universities' political role was largely autonomous or dependent. On balance, we take the view that universities are used by different internal and external groups to attempt to achieve their various political ends. These reflect the particular group's strategic position in their society rather than an institutional strategy. This should be borne in mind in respect of some of the case studies where the political engagement of individual academics may need to be distinguished from the positioning of their institutions.

Social transformation

Political roles clearly interact with the social roles of universities, not least in respect of the part played in elite reproduction. A pre-condition of social transformation may be the provision of educational *opportunities for previously disadvantaged groups* to achieve elite or middle class positions. But we need to distinguish between changes that improve the prospects of specific groups over those of others and changes that affect the general structures of opportunity and inequality present in a society. Thus, while the former has clearly occurred in South Africa, the latter changes may not have taken place to any significant effect.

In general, the case studies provided only limited insights into the university's role in extending social equity. For example, we learn that enrolments in Bulgarian higher education doubled after the ending of the communist regime but we are not told very much about the social consequences. Examples from some countries suggest a continuing role for universities in processes of social reproduction, sometimes involving parts of higher education systems where different segments of the middle class seek reproduction or betterment through higher education. In Mexico, it seems that the most advantaged groups have the greatest access to the elite public universities leaving the privates for the poorer sections of the middle class to use as an inferior and less prestigious product thus preserving their inferior and less prestigious positions in society. In Brazil, where "federal and private institutions have a similar socioeconomic profile, while students in the state institutions have a distinctive lower socioeconomic status" (Paul and Wolf, 1992), the overall record on social equity is at best mixed.

"As the country grew and evolved, higher education provided learning opportunities not only for the children of the old elites, but also to those of foreign and rural immigrants and poor urban dwellers. Brazil's income distribution, however, remains one of the world's worst, and higher education may have contributed to this, by remaining limited to relatively few people and by increasing the weight of formal education and credentialism in the determination of wage levels and working opportunities. A comparison of data from the National Household Surveys of 1992 and 2001 shows that growth in higher education in recent years was not related to a significant reduction in the proportion of students coming from the upper economic brackets. This finding suggests that, although there was more access to higher education, this increase occurred mostly in the upper strata, where enrolment has been and still is particularly low, in comparison with other countries." (Schwartzman: 22)

The regional dimension is one important aspect of the generally neglected treatment of the social role of the university. In Africa and Latin America particularly, we find examples of the university being 'taken to' poor and disadvantaged regions and districts as part of an explicit attempt to address issues of social equity. An example of this is reported by Didou-Aupetit (p.41) with the Chontalpa University in Mexico, established in the early 1990s by four municipalities in the rural part of the state of Tabasco. Community partnership programmes in several South African universities, oriented towards community development, primary health care and service learning should also be mentioned here as viable alternatives to the trend towards the "entrepreneurial university" model (Subotzky, 1999).

In general though, examination of the social role of the university – in terms of providing more equal opportunities for social advancement – was hampered by lack of data. Thus, there are only vague notions of how the social composition of the student body has changed in recent years and even less is known about how it is distributed among the increasingly diversified institutional and curricular forms of higher education to be found in most countries. One important counter-example of course is South Africa where the role of universities in the rise of a black middle class and the prospect of further changes following the implementation of a policy on institutional mergers are being closely monitored (see Subotzky and Cooper, 2001 and publications of The Centre for Higher Education Transformation).

Universities can play a socially differentiating function even in small university systems. Thus, the Senegal case study notes how the elite is increasingly educated abroad and that attendance at a Senegalese public university is today less likely to provide access to elite jobs or social positions (which is the case in most countries in the post structural adjustment era). The Mexican and Brazilian cases show how socially differentiated university systems can serve to bolster and reproduce social differences. And in the Latin American and African cases it should be remembered that the possibilities for large segments of the populations to enter higher education are precisely nil.

As far as Eastern and Central Europe is concerned, we noted that societies were in fact moving from a system of ‘forced equality’ to one of new and substantial inequalities. The movement was accompanied by a ‘disbelief in meritocracy’ and a cynical view of society as a place where the ‘corrupt win’. This should remind us of the considerable achievements of many of the Soviet influenced regimes in extending opportunities in their societies and the important roles played by educational institutions in this process. Many universities were created in those times. The current state of many of these societies appears to weaken this role of the university, with its position and status devalued. There does not appear to be much debate about extending access for minority groups and indeed the rights of some of these groups, e.g. Russian-speaking minorities in some of the Baltic states, may actually be declining. And yet enrolments in higher education have been expanding. What have been the aspirations and perceptions of the students? Where have they gone after leaving university? Unfortunately the student perspective is often absent in the case studies.

In most countries, the expansion of higher education to provide new opportunities for hitherto disadvantaged groups has been accompanied by a differentiation of higher education institutions and programmes that has served to maintain the supremacy of existing elites and both to set limits to the opportunities for mobility for individuals and to the possibilities for social structural change. We might also note in this respect that differentiation also includes the growing internationalisation of higher education as members of elites arrange for their offspring to study at elite universities in Western Europe and North America.

Cultural transformation

The role of universities in ‘nation-building’ has already been noted. Universities situated in capital cities in particular appear often to exert an important symbolic influence – providing opportunities for the celebration of national traditions. They can also serve as a socialising influence on elites to reinforce national values and loyalties. Universities in some countries have had an important role in providing a repository for national sentiments during long periods of foreign occupation or dominance. The preservation of a national language and the influences which universities can play on national school systems can also be noted in this respect.

This nation building or cultural transmission function must also be set alongside consideration of the role of universities in creating democratic multi-ethnic societies. In Central and Eastern Europe, and in Nigeria, the record in this respect appears to be somewhat disappointing. There

appears to have been little debate and action to bring minority ethnic groups into higher education or to adapt higher education to meet the needs of such groups. In some countries, language maintains an important ethnic demarcation with the minority effectively disenfranchised.

Set alongside these differentiating functions of universities – whether in national or ethnic terms – are the universalising effects of international scholarship, opportunities to travel and the like. Universities have been important routes through which formerly closed societies have become open to the external world. This is certainly recognised within these countries and considerable attention is given to staff and student mobility schemes and support for multinational networks and agencies. Inevitably there often exists a tension between these internationalising influences and the desire to preserve and enhance national identity.

We have also noted the function of the university as providing ‘protected space’ for critical thinking and creativity. Examples of this are provided in the case studies primarily in relation to the ‘removing the old’ period. In Central and Eastern Europe in particular, universities appear to have become more inward-looking and concerned with their own inner-worlds and problems in recent years. As these institutions face very real problems, such a reaction is perhaps not so surprising. Several of the case study authors clearly regret the failure of their universities to live up to a bolder and more noble conception of their broader social purpose (for example, Totomanova, p.48 for the case of Bulgaria, Gboyega’s concluding section about Nigeria).

Discussion

Several of the case studies point to tensions in the transformative roles of universities. Thus, as one of the more ‘socially active’ university systems from our case studies, South Africa reveals a tension between a social and democratic ideology that was important during the anti-apartheid struggle and a more market-driven competitive ideology that may be dominant today (Subotzky, 1999). Similar tensions exist in other places and should serve as a reminder that universities contain many contradictions, even at a single point in time. Some aspects of the university may become briefly dominant when external circumstances allow only to become invisible again when external circumstances change.

As the World Bank notes, ‘tertiary education, especially the university sector, generally remains elitist’ (World Bank, 2002). But this is not to deny that there may be benefits to the larger society from the creation and expansion of successful university systems. But clear statements and agreement about what these benefits are and how they are to be achieved were often absent in the case study reports.

In some countries, there appears to be a tension between the need to *standardise* and the need to promote *variation*. The former might follow an agenda set by concepts of knowledge economies and globalisation (although even here the need for diversity is often emphasised) whereas the latter is shaped by local circumstances and needs. Similarly, the lives of many graduates are likely to be part-cosmopolitan and part-local and universities will need to equip them to be both.

Perhaps one of the main messages from the case studies is that geography and history matter equally. The messages from geography are not just about the effects of internationalisation but also about the important regional dimensions and variations in the roles played by universities. The messages from history are that the ‘futures’ to which transformative drivers are directed will be strongly influenced by the ‘remembered past’. Thus, the lack of a ‘European memory’ in large parts of the former USSR differentiates countries of the central Asia region from those more western nations which possess a nostalgia for and a determination to regain a place in the European ‘family’. A related point is whether the past is addressed or denied. Narratives about the ‘removal of the old’ perhaps inevitably tend towards the heroic. Roles in ‘building the new’

may be more mundane and yet in the long run may be more vital in ensuring the 'creeping changes' of transformation.

What the case studies have certainly succeeded in doing is to serve as a reminder that the social role of the universities extends beyond the economic. Whether the universities in these studies have always played such a role with distinction is another and more doubtful matter.

5. What is being transformed in higher education?

The transformation of universities themselves was not the principal focus of this project. But it is important insofar as institutional transformation is often seen as a pre-requisite for the university or its constituencies to perform new roles in society. A general message from the case studies is that, despite a general tendency towards the gradual domination of managerialism in the organisation of both teaching and research and the commercialisation of research and the outsourcing of many services, local and regional situations reveal persistent differences, both in terms of institutional management, curriculum, relations to the state, enrolments and patterns of participation, and academic careers. Beyond similar policy agendas, these realities signal contrasting histories and unequal states of development of higher education. These differences formed the basis of our discussions throughout the project.

In this section, the impact of both local pressures and wider regional and global changes on national higher education policies and institutions will be examined. Four areas of impact, which in most cases resulted in profound transformations of systems and/or institutions, are given particular attention. They are: curriculum, quality and standards, (ii) the differentiation of higher education landscapes (regionalisation, privatisation), (iii) the student identity and experience, and (iv) academic responses to change.

Changes in curriculum, quality and standards

Meeting new external standards

This is an area where the impact of globalisation is acknowledged by all case-study authors. From Mexico to Kyrgyzstan, higher education systems are said to be in processes of restructuring under the combined effects and constraints of local socio-political transformations and global forces associated with the move towards the 'knowledge society'. If, as it is commonly assumed, higher education lies at the heart of the knowledge society, then universities are everywhere faced with challenges and problems "undoubtedly bound to change the nature of the academic enterprise to a degree that today seems almost unimaginable" (Kwiek, 2001: 400). However, evidence from the contrasted environments of this project's case studies seems to call for a degree of relativism. Changes have certainly occurred everywhere, but the impact of global trends on each national landscape and on local institutions has differed significantly from one country to another, without necessarily affecting their very essence and main functions.

Curriculum reform often featured among the first marks of regime change on educational systems around the world. The experience of communist and post-communist European countries also shows how permeable this area is to external influences. It is therefore an interesting angle of approach to a state's capacity for response to - or anticipation of - external demands and pressures.

Organisations such as the Soros Foundation, through the Civic Education Project, have linked their support for such things as curriculum development, faculty training, and improvement of library resources in Central and Eastern Europe to the broader goal of assisting democratic reform. This reflects an assumption that the academic community constitutes a critical part of civil society. As a result, countries in the region have implemented reforms aimed at satisfying the donors or at increasing their chances of meeting EU integration standards, with sometimes little consideration of their existing structures.

As Tomusk pointed out in the case of Russia,

“to overcome suspicion of courses traditionally overloaded with social science studies such as scientific communism, scientific atheism, Marxist-Leninist philosophy, etc, special attention is paid to the academic recognition initiatives of the Council of Europe and UNESCO”. (Tomusk, 1998: 132)

Fedotova further stresses the power of external factors in her case study where she links recent curriculum reforms in Russia to the

“exchange of researchers, students, and the penetration into the Russian educational process of contemporary programs, textbooks and issues”. (p.8)

These flowed from co-operation with western universities and funds provided by foreign foundations (for example, OSI, MacArthur Foundation) and international exchange programmes. This era of reforms and modernisation also saw the institutionalisation of such new disciplines in Russia as political science, sociology, cultural anthropology, management, marketing, public administration...etc. What is also interesting in the Russian case is how curriculum reforms are presented by their advocates and architects. For Adamsky for instance (quoted in Fedotova, p.16), the overall goal of the current modernisation of higher education project is primarily the "entering of Russia in the global market of education". In Belarus too, changes were in no small measure externally initiated and oriented, particularly in newly established private institutions, whose attractiveness is largely determined by the “partial westernization of the curriculum which allows the University’s students and graduates to be easily involved in exchange programs” (Dounaev *et. al.*, about the European Humanities University: 64).

Our institutional case-studies suggest that external accreditation and recognition lie at the heart of most private institutions’ local market strategies, as illustrated here with the case of the New Bulgarian University (NBU):

“The opportunity to receive a British diploma from the Effective Manager Program allowed NBU to attract trainees from business and banking, and therefore, to mediate the transfer of British educational methodology to Bulgarian society. An additional benefit is the mastering of business English in which this program is taught.” (Georgiev: 19)

In most countries of the former communist bloc in Eastern and Central Europe, the most visible and emblematic changes in curriculum content occurred in the social and human sciences, where programmes imposed during the soviet times to develop Marxist-Leninist worldviews and loyalty towards the regime have been scrapped, while new majors and study disciplines were introduced in accordance with ‘international’ standards. The change often happened under considerable political pressure and international scrutiny, and took the form of experimentations supported locally by external donors, before being “pasted” in unprepared public institutions. The case of Estonia is edifying:

“On the one hand, the increased academic freedom, contacts with the western institutions as well as the information technology revolution (expansion of internet) have allowed the university administrators to learn, and in some of the cases also to copy, the curriculum from the West. On the other hand, the change is intangible as the very same academic freedom that allowed these new subjects to be introduced, allows these to be taught as the lecturers see appropriate. Although academic freedom to teach is generally regarded as something good for the quality of education that gets delivered, in post-soviet Estonia it has meant that institutions of higher learning often produce confused graduates. The warning signs seem to be the largest in the social sciences. The fact that many subjects were not taught during the soviet era is still affecting the content (ideas, theories, methodology and authors introduced) and method of instruction in these

science areas. Since program directors do not have academics that would have got (proper) training in sociology, economics, political science, international relations, these subjects are taught by people who have got their training in neighbouring subjects (e.g. philosophy, psychology, history).” (Kroos: 48-49)

External pressures or influences tend to have an impact on curriculum design but this varies according to the priorities of international organisations in each country or region. While it is clear from the above examples that in Eastern Europe the liberal democratic agenda was behind interventions of the World Bank and western organisations in higher education reforms, economic objectives seemed more prominent in the reforms initiated in Africa in the 1980s, even though pressures for democratic transitions were widely felt. In Senegal for instance, the *Université Gaston Berger* of Saint Louis (UGB), established in 1991 with support from international co-operation, was set up along narrowly conceived “developmental” objectives, and offered a number of programmes related to “local needs”:

“Taking into account the milieu surrounding the university seems to be a challenge UGB set out to meet whereas UCAD (Université Cheikh Anta Diop Dakar) has shown hitherto little concern in this regard. Gaston Berger University (UGB) has developed a model of pedagogical management system as a means to penetrate the societal environment and somehow involve the local population. It seeks to be a space that enables the rural communities to acquire complementary knowledge and skills to fertilize and increase their contribution to local development. For example, it initiated a Master’s degree course in Farming Corporation Management in partnership with trainers and specialists coming from its own UFRs (Unité de Formation et de Recherche), UCAD, French universities, and from parastatals, such as the Senegalese Institute of Agricultural Research (ISRA) and the Delta Harnessing and Development Company (SAED). The main objective is to improve and deepen knowledge of the Senegal River Valley by way of hydro-agricultural development project assessment techniques. This opens perspectives to the future for graduates as the region contemplates becoming the “California” of Senegal. Similarly, the course in Land Law explores the land tenure system and legal conditions for access to land in the Valley...”. (Niane et al: 33)

Another case of curriculum change geared to external donors’ interests in local transformation is offered by the development of courses in peace and conflict resolution throughout Africa. Nigeria offers an interesting illustration: while the country’s higher education system has so far been largely overlooked by international programmes aiming to strengthen recently regained democratic institutions, several universities have developed postgraduate programmes in peace and conflict studies with UN support and international accreditation. As Gboyega rightly pointed out during the concluding project seminar in Pretoria, such a curriculum development could be acclaimed as a new move by universities in the direction of being more responsive to their societies’ needs, particularly in the highly volatile ethnic and religious context of the Nigerian Federation. However, it appears that such courses were in most cases introduced to meet donors’ demands or suggestions and tap new funding sources to develop “internationally accredited” fee-paying courses outside the official curriculum. A number of such courses in the area of development, public health, etc. were introduced at Nigerian universities, often in joint ventures with local branches of international NGOs, taking advantage of the broader transformation and openness of the country’s public sphere, and circumventing by the same token the rigidity of national regulations in the area of curriculum design and tuition fees.

Notwithstanding the specificities of their environment, the above examples have in common the direct impact of external influence on university programmes, particularly where external funding is dominant and where the state legitimacy is primarily built on external recognition. Private institutions (Eastern and Central Europe) or private initiatives within public institutions (Nigeria) have played a key role as “intermediaries” in the introduction of such changes.

However, changes in the area have in some cases been ordered by state regulation rather than by trans-national influences, even where they aimed to meet international standards. This is for instance the case of post-apartheid South Africa and its top down reformist agendas for higher education, where curriculum reform was part of a broader set of priorities (participation, responsiveness and governance) defined by the government's White Paper on Higher Education (1997).

Quality assessment and accreditation

Since the collapse of communism, policies and systems for quality assessment, accreditation and evaluation in higher education have become widespread in Central and Eastern Europe. This phenomenon is both local (relaxation of state control and bestowal of greater institutional autonomy) and global, because during the 1990s all higher education systems have been affected by the rise of the "quality industry" and the development of an "audit culture" (Scott, 2000; Brennan and Shah, 2000). As we will see, the issue of accreditation (foreign or local) is a particularly important one for newly established private institutions, whether they find themselves in environments where anything related to the "state" is discredited (Nigeria), or where the state remains the guarantor of minimum standards and of the protection of users' rights (Eastern and Central Europe).

The descriptions of quality assurance implementation in the countries covered by this project shows how contextual higher education is, and therefore how instrumental (and locally oriented) discourses about universal or international standards can be. The transnational references of private institutions' brochures in Senegal for instance, and their constant search for external sources of accreditation and franchise, also aim, according to Niane, to send prospective students and funders images of transparency and of accountability whereas regulatory frameworks in state institutions are perceived as authoritarian, ineffective and corrupt (Niane, Ndiaye and Sougou: 11). The conclusion reached by Tomusk from an overview of quality assurance systems in Central and Eastern Europe points out the multiple purposes of regulatory models:

"Newly established East European quality assurance mechanisms are driven by many concerns including internal and external politics, interests of particular universities and academic groups as well as by the need to secure social stability. However, its connection to education remains relatively weak. In the long term this may become a serious problem. The Western world striving for higher homogeneity may at some point in the future face a similar situation." (Tomusk, 2000: 185)

Quality assessment has almost everywhere been controversial at its debut because it affected the distribution of power within higher education and within institutions (Brennan and Shah, 2000). However, the importance of two of the trends that underpinned the development of the quality assurance industry following the fall of communist regimes in Europe should not be underestimated. First, the diversification of higher education, with the multiplication of regional universities, non-university institutions and private institutions, created problems for the compatibility of awards within national higher education systems. Secondly, comparisons of systems and standards became a vital issue immediately after the E.U. opened the door to new applications for association and subsequently for membership (European Training Foundation, 1998).

Nevertheless, the effects of external quality assurance regimes do not figure prominently in most of the case studies. This may be because most of them were at the early stages of implementation and their consequences for institutions and academic life were not yet clear. If indeed quality assurance is about the distribution of power and status in higher education, it may well be that its overall effects will lie in the direction of the strengthening of conservative tendencies in academe. The memberships of national accreditation councils typically give greater representation to the interests and values of elite and traditional universities.

Responses to local drivers

Even in a presumably increasingly borderless higher education world, not all changes are driven by the strategies of national, regional and international organisations. Our case-studies showed clearly how changes can be generated from within institutions, for example by the agency of student organisations, as the Bulgarian case of the Federation of the Independent Students' Clubs - "one of the most radical groups catalyzing the political processes" - in the immediate aftermath of the regime change.

"For an incredibly short period of time, in the winter months, they achieved two great successes. They forced the abolishment of the so-called 'ideological disciplines' – the sacred five disciplines of the ideological catechism (History of the Bulgarian Communist Party; Dialectical materialism; Historical materialism; Scientific communism; Political economy). They had been obligatory in the curriculum of all the students in all higher education institutions not only in Bulgaria, but also in all our 'former socialist' countries." (Guicheva-Gocheva, b: 2)

In other cases (for example, in Nigeria with new "study-centres" established to meet new demands of mid-career training), the most noticeable changes in course contents and design were initiated in response to the needs of the immediate socio-economic environment of the universities, without prior consent by the state authorities. They reflected uncoordinated attempts by institutions to meet the explosion and diversification of new demands for higher education emanating from employers (notably with the booming IT and banking services), and from the tidal wave of outputs from universal primary education, and their efforts to generate incomes locally in order to compensate for the huge budgetary cuts imposed by the state.

Findings from our case studies on issues of course content, curriculum and quality management revealed that:

- Very similar policies seem to have been attempted in response to external demands for transparency, accountability and harmonisation, but they produced very different institutional effects depending on local factors.
- In Eastern and Central Europe, changes in curriculum have largely been prompted by demands from new external donors, but also by local demands for reforms in curricula and pedagogy.
- The sudden opening and diversification of higher education in the region and the prospect of integration within the European Union imposed massive efforts to regulate the development of the sector through newly established systems of quality assurance and accreditation. This met with some forms of resistance in the institutions inasmuch as they challenged existing working culture.
- Private institutions (Eastern and Central Europe) or private initiatives within public institutions (Nigeria) have played a key role as "intermediaries" in the introduction of changes in curricula.
- Where the regulatory capacities of states have been mostly weakened, public universities were to be seen developing original initiatives, sometimes in breach of the law, to generate funds and respond to local demands for new courses.

The diversification of higher education

A combination of economic and political liberalisation has served to induce changes in the higher education landscape worldwide. The global context is dominated by free market ideas and international trends towards privatisation, reinforced by the influential advisory role of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Transformation processes are everywhere taking place against this backdrop. South Africa, for instance, embarked on an economic strategy in 1996 (labelled “Growth, Employment and Redistribution”) widely seen as:

“a shift away from the Keynesian/welfarist emphasis to a neo-liberal strategy of privatisation, ending government subsidies and a reduction in the fiscal deficits through cuts in public spending, including increased introduction of user fees to subsidise public provision”. (Harber, 2003: 13)

The tension between the social democratic and egalitarian philosophy that dominated the anti-apartheid struggle and a competitive, market driven philosophy resulted in the “skewed” nature, observed by Cooper and Subotzky, of the transformation of the South African higher education field (Cooper and Subotzky, 2001).

One fundamental characteristic of the liberalisation of higher education is the diversification that resulted from the decentralisation of public institutions and the emergence of private providers. In most countries, traditional public universities failed to meet the new demands that resulted from universal primary and secondary education schemes and from the restructuring of the economy. Diversification through the development of post-secondary vocational institutes was therefore seen by governments as a way of increasing access to higher education without compromising the standards of major state universities. Diversification through the encouragement of a growing private sector of higher education was meant to shift the burden of educational costs from the state to the private sector and the families of students.

Regionalisation and specialisation

The diversification of the public supply of higher education is well illustrated by the case of Mexico where the process occurred during the 1990s:

“The universities lost ground in the percentages of public sector enrolment (from 69.4% to 55% in the 90s). They were gradually challenged by 44 technological universities, 79 decentralized technological institutes and, from 2001, three polytechnic universities. Most of these “new” establishments were located in small cities. They gave rise to a more equitable spatial distribution of higher education opportunities, but did not contribute to lessen the tensions produced by the insufficient enrolment capabilities of the public universities in the large cities. As a rule, they responded to the expectations of students from poor sectors, who were to a very large degree the first generation to have access to higher education. They provided students, whose parents could not afford to send them to other cities, the opportunity to enrol in their own place of residence. To date, however, that enhancement of opportunities has been a costly one.” (Didou-Aupetit: 17)

Similar trends were observed elsewhere, although the objectives of the diversification may not have always been the same. In the South African case study, Reddy reminds us that, after all, diversification and regionalisation of higher education were at the heart of the apartheid ideology right from the mid-1950s:

“The legacy of Apartheid state planning is the racial and ethnically fragmented higher education sector. To speak of a single, homogenous higher education system is to over-generalise, misrepresent, and undervalue the past. At the time of the democratic

transition, the higher education (HE) “system” was composed of 21 universities and 15 technikons.” (Reddy: 14)

In Nigeria too, from the late 1970s the diversification of higher education is said to have primarily served political purposes: the creation of state universities along with the existing federal ones, followed the fragmentation of the Nigerian Federation into 12, 19 and then 36 states, and the particular redistributive nature of a fissiparous model of federalism:

“The federal government too approved the establishment of eight universities of technology in June 1980 to be located in eight states that did not have federal universities. It seemed government had decided that each state should have at least one university. This policy took scant notice of the financial requirements of such a venture and the sustainability of recurrent expenditures on universities. This was quite strange since indications of economic decline were already manifesting in the country.” (Gboyega and Atoyebi: 19)

The process of diversification, observed in all of the case studies, must therefore be understood in reference to both local politics (newly empowered regional elites calling for “their” university) and economic pressures. In Estonia, this led to the creation of “state applied higher education institutions”, alongside the “inherited” more prestigious ones. These institutions were actually:

“former post-secondary vocational educational institutions that amended their by-laws and elevated their status to something that did not formally exist. For socio-economic reasons, these institutions have in addition to their educational function, a social welfare function to fill. As the secondary school graduation grades of the students from economically disadvantaged social classes do not often allow them to compete for a possibility to get free of charge education at public university, and the inherited value system does not push them to purchase the education for a fee either, state applied higher education institutions have become quite popular”. (Kroos: 47)

Because they could not compete with older national institutions in terms of academic standards, these newly created universities often sought some form of recognition and legitimacy *a posteriori*, through regionally-oriented research and teaching programmes, as we have seen above with the example of Saint Louis in Senegal. However, in most cases they are teaching-only institutions whose *raison d'être* is to absorb locally part of the large numbers of candidates to higher education turned away by existing public universities. They therefore enter into direct competition with the private institutions of tertiary education which proliferated in the wake of economic liberalisation.

Privatisation

The growth of private higher education, especially for-profit institutions, is the most striking manifestation of diversification, sometimes seen as the key indicator of the transformation of higher education systems. However there is often confusion as to what is meant by privatisation.

Private education in developing countries has been growing since the 1960s, but not only in the form of for-profit institutions: philanthropic and religious institutions, which had in many places accompanied the colonial expansion from the late nineteenth century, subsequently found their niche within independent higher education systems because their mission and structure had often inspired the shape of public institutions. But the recent booming of the sector is principally due to a rise in for-profit institutions in many parts of Asia and Africa from the 1980s onwards (earlier in Latin America).

“China now has more than 800 private higher education institutions, although the Ministry of Education officially recognizes only a handful of them. Nearly 60% of Brazil's tertiary-level students are currently enrolled in private institutions, which comprise nearly 80% of the country's higher education system. At independence in 1945

Indonesia had only 1000 tertiary-level students. It now has 57 public universities and more than 1200 private universities, with more than 60% of the student body enrolled in private institutions. In South Africa, roughly half of the country's students are enrolled in private institutions.” (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, TFHES, 2000: 29)

This trend seems to persist today, strongly encouraged by international financial institutions in the name of diversification, although it has been shown, notably in Latin America, that a growing private sector does not lead automatically to increased diversity, as new universities may simply imitate the curricular offerings of the public universities. In Mexico, most private universities do not compete with top level public ones.

“They absorb students who were unable to access the public sector. Their objective is lucrative; they offer mainly professional degrees without any guarantee of quality in their pedagogical methods and academic approaches.” (Didou-Aupetit: 18)

This situation is also observed in Brazil, although slight regional differences and strong institutional “distinctions” are now observed within the sector. In most developing countries, the sector grows without support from states, exploiting de-regulation to seek accreditation abroad when local references are devalued. This situation is far from the situation of the few Western European countries that have a high proportion of enrolments in private institutions (for example Belgium and the Netherlands), where higher education continues to be almost entirely financed by the state, which subsidises both public and private higher education institutions (TFHE, 2000).

In Central and Eastern Europe, the development of private higher education is more recent - although non-state universities (notably religious) existed in the pre-communist period. Private higher education benefited from the crisis in funding of public institutions and from a sector deregulation resulting from both deliberate neo-liberal policies and the weakening of policy enforcement mechanisms. In general in this context, new private institutions are said to be somewhat innovative, if only because they do not have institutional history to overcome. This is certainly the case of not-for-profit institutions established throughout the region with the support of international foundations. Everywhere, the emerging private institutions are competing in contexts marked by a general “increase in the proportion of fee-paying students, as compared with those nominally paid for by the state, and the opening of commercial departments in virtually all Universities, including state universities” (Reeves: 9).

The New Bulgarian University, for example, was deliberately set up in 1991 as an alternative to the main state institutions. It claims total economic independence from the state, a deep engagement with its socio-economic environment, and stresses irreproachable quality and accountability control mechanisms:

“In order to operate, NBU receives no funding whatsoever from the state. Its development is carried out in compliance with a five-year strategic plan, which involves financial planning as well. An annual report is published every year on the implementation of the NBU Development Plan. Both the Strategic Plan and the Annual Report are available to the public. The entire set of university statutes, regulations and ordinances is published on the Web. Although NBU is more of a liberal arts university, its strategy states as a priority entrepreneurial development towards providing services to businesses, central and local administration. The state does not encourage the involvement of the university/business environment relationship.” (Georgiev: 10)

Paradoxically though, the NBU and the few other private universities (which in 1999/2000 catered for about 10% of the Bulgarian undergraduate population) have to comply with state standards in order to secure their accreditation. This requirement presented numerous difficulties to the institutions and their different institutional structures, forms of governance, and programmes, as the accreditation process applies the same standards to all (public and private)

institutions of higher education. However, these institutions have generally managed to combine local and international recognition, through teaching and research practices that conform to commonly accepted university standards.

Not all private institutions seek state accreditation, which is no longer a prerequisite to run a higher education institution in countries like Bulgaria or Russia. However, the case studies carried out in these two countries indicate reluctance to consider private higher education institutions as equal to public universities. Referring to Bocharova's work on higher education and mobility in Russia, Gorbunova and Zabaev see the challenge faced by private institutions in post-Soviet Russia in these terms:

“The reputation of commercial universities remains not very high. It is generally believed that the state diploma is valued higher by employers. State universities have made their name in the soviet times or during the ‘perestroika’. When demand for education started growing in mid-90s, the state universities reacted to this by offering paid services of “guaranteed”, from a generally accepted point of view, quality. The underlining factor here was the piety in the minds of the public for everything provided by the state – the presence of the word “state” in the name of a university automatically raises its status in the eyes of the potential applicants and their parents. It legitimizes the education and diploma received there, although not necessarily provides the high quality of education...”. (Gorbunova and Zabaev: 23)

In such a context, it remains risky for an institution to stay away from national accreditation except for specific training institutes recognized in particular employment sectors or linked to professional bodies. What we are witnessing in all these countries is a gradual ascendancy of non-governmental sources of income in the funding of most public or private higher education institutions (e.g. “commercialization” of services to students, establishment of consultancy units, growing importance of international organizations in the funding of research...). As a result, the traditional distinction between private and public institutions tends to be limited to large polyvalent research institutions, while the so-called distinctiveness of private higher education at degree and pre-degree level is progressively surpassed by the overwhelming commercialization of course delivery. This is being observed in South Africa, where the phenomenon could, according to King, produce “a convergence around a kind of ‘third way public/private one’ ” (2003: 8). Hence the necessity of effective national regulatory regimes that few countries from our sample are actually in measure to maintain.

Overall, our study has revealed the following trends on institutional diversity:

- The diversification process is a dual one, resulting from local and global pressures.
- The recently created regional institutions were often found to be under greater control of local authorities.
- The increased participation in higher education resulted in the growth of local private or public teaching-only institutions. Hence the diversification of higher education landscapes has contributed to perpetuate the elitist recruitment of national universities.
- In countries where public institutions are in an advanced state of decline, private higher education offers an alternative and sometimes a more reliable route to employment.
- When backed by international institutions, private higher education institutions claim a role as “laboratories” of pedagogic innovation. They also tend to convey new external standards within national systems of higher education. However, the response of traditional public universities is often one of suspicion.
- The diversification of higher education is marked by a commercialisation of educational services which, in new competitive environments, also affect public institutions.

Access policies, student profiles and experiences

In common with higher education systems more generally, the specific challenges to higher education in contexts of radical transformation are exacerbated by the rise of enrolment figures, often referred to as massification, although the enrolment gap compared to OECD countries has not decreased.

“In 1980 the tertiary enrolment rate in the United States was 55 percent, whereas the average for developing countries was 5 percent. In 1995 the rates were 81 percent for the United States and 9 percent for developing countries. Enrolment rates have even decreased slightly in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, from 36 percent in 1990 to 34 percent in 1997. The regional average masks very different trends. Rapid growth has occurred in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia, where enrolment rates are now in the 20–30 percent range, but the levels are stagnant or decreasing in such Central Asian countries as Tajikistan (9 percent) and Uzbekistan (5 percent). Of the other regions of the world, Latin America and the Middle East have the highest averages (1997 data), with 18 and 15 percent respectively, and South Asia and Africa the lowest (7 and 4 percent, respectively). The East Asian average of 11 percent conceals wide differences, from less than 2 percent in Cambodia to almost 30 percent in the Philippines and 51 percent in Korea, which is on a par with the OECD average. The need to invest in expanding coverage at the tertiary level is nowhere more visible than in the large countries of Asia, such as China (5 percent in 1997), India (6 percent), and Pakistan (3 percent), and of Latin America, where Brazil and Mexico have enrolment rates of less than 15 percent.” (World Bank, 2002: 48)

Nevertheless, numbers have everywhere soared, affecting both the social profile of the student population, the campus life, and the forms of student representation and activism.

While ex-communist countries have diversified their higher education landscapes and in some cases implemented widening participation and access initiatives for ethnic minorities, their student populations cannot be said to have dramatically changed in composition over the past decade. The case of Bulgaria seems to summarise quite well the regional trend:

“The rise in tertiary enrolment can be explained by a rise in both the demand for and the supply of university education. On the demand side, and in the context of high youth unemployment, there was the desire of young people to postpone their entry to the labour market and to increase their chances of finding a good job. On the supply side, the number of students increased not only because of the emergence of new private universities, but also because state universities were allowed to admit students on a paid basis in addition to the limited number of those who were traditionally admitted free of charge after they had passed a competitive examination.” (Totomanova: 8)

Totomanova does not associate the above rise to a real revolution in the social distribution of students by field of studies:

“[Before 1989] the stage was set for a two tier system in which the elite would attend special language schools and go on to elite Bulgarian or Eastern European universities, while the rest would attend general secondary or vocational schools to become the skilled workers of the society. This separation still exists in post-Communist Bulgaria, although the higher education system has opened up to many more of the "working class," students than in the previous era.”(Totomanova: 3)

The case-study of Russia reveals similar trends. Here too, the rise primarily benefited middle class children, although Fedotova suggests that in such a highly polarised society, “social prestige is linked primarily with financial capabilities”. Higher education, she believes, plays a relatively

limited role as a passport to the middle class because, in public opinion, the values attached to higher education and those of business and power tend to be opposed (Fedotova: 19).

Interestingly, a similar trend was observed in Senegal, Nigeria, and Brazil as a result of the state disengagement which followed the adoption of structural adjustment policies. Niane and colleagues consider that in Senegal the combination of a steady rise in student enrolment and a withdrawal of state support to students (scholarships) and to educational infrastructures generated more social inequalities in student intakes and led to the downgrading of local higher education qualifications in processes of upward social mobility:

“If the Senegalese university had been relatively attractive for Baccalauréat holders until the end of the 60s, indications are now that this situation has changed. Individual strategies and other combined national and international forces undermined the will of the Senegalese authorities to plan the training of skilled executives in view of a greater relevance of education to employability.” (Niane et al: 40)

Niane believes that the Senegalese middle class has gradually moved away from local public universities and therefore accelerated the depreciation of the value of degrees offered locally:

“The ever-growing number of Senegalese students abroad confirms this. This means that the value of degrees on the Senegalese job market is determined to a large extent by their being obtained abroad, in the USA or Canada, especially.” (Niane et al: 25)

Didou-Aupetit observes that in Mexico too, the system remains elitist, despite the growth observed from the late 1970s and a certain diversification of the system through decentralisation and privatisation:

“There are groups whose access to higher education is almost nil (rural populations, young migrants, indigenous people), even if a percentage (minimal in relation to other groups) completes the high school level. The problem is that we have no statistical data on the correlations between social origin/cultural capital, rate of success in university entry exams, and study habits. Altogether, the composition of enrolment has changed constantly since the 1970s (...). The ‘duty of equity’ has been a cornerstone of the government’s strategy of action and communication, in the present administration; it has been at the origin of numerous programs aimed to protect the weaker groups most exposed to failure in the elementary and secondary school levels, but not in higher education(...). In fact, the most important attempts made to promote equity in higher education have not come from government (with exception of indigenous universities) but from international organizations (Ford Foundation) and from the PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática- Democratic Revolutionary Party), the main left-wing opposition party.” (Didou-Aupetit, p.35)

In Brazil too, Schwartzman reveals that although there was more access to higher education, the increase “occurred mostly in the upper strata, where enrolment has been and still is particularly low, in comparison with other countries” (Schwartzman, p.21).

The diversification of student profiles mirrored the fragmentation of higher education over the past two decades in the African and Latin American countries examined here. In these countries, diversification has created new social inequalities alongside the new opportunities. Public universities of the first generation, usually located in the oldest urban sectors, turned out to be more elitist from the 1970s under the combination of high entry requirements, the cancellation of scholarship policies and the withdrawal of state support to student services. In effect, prospective students were in many places turned away from these prestigious institutions, either academically (entrance examination, *numerus clausus*) or economically (cancellation of scholarship policies, privatisation of halls of residence, off-campus accommodation policies...), and many ended up in vocational public or private institutions. On the whole, socially determined choices of

institutions in developing and transition economies reveal a strong paradox: the more affordable (generally state) universities - in terms of tuition fees - have a student population from more well-to-do backgrounds than private institutions with relatively high fees (Lebeau, 2000: 153).

Once again, the South African case constitutes a notable exception to these trends although current enrolment patterns also suggest strong socially differentiated attitudes. Differentiation was an already striking feature of higher education during the apartheid regime:

“Instead of denying university education to blacks by relying on the admissions policies of the established white universities, the Apartheid state embarked on a determined policy to create universities for the variously state defined ethnically classified black groups. These new universities, the “bush colleges,” were designed to serve as valuable instruments in the over-arching “grand Apartheid” political project based on the creation of pseudo-independent states in the African “tribal” reserves. By the early 1970s universities were established in the Transkei, Bophutatswana, and Venda Bantustans. For Zulu and Swazi speakers the government created the University of Zululand. The University of the North was created for Sotho, Tswana, Venda, Tsonga speakers and the Transvaal Ndebele. The universities of the Western Cape and Durban-Westville were created for those classified Coloureds and Indians by the state (Horrell, 1968). These institutions were expected to legitimate, reproduce, and constitute, especially among the elites, identities and social relations of race and ethnicity.” (Reddy: 12)

A major challenge for today’s South Africa is to redress the above inequities, while ensuring effectiveness and efficiency of the new higher education system. This is far from being achieved as fine-grained, disaggregated analysis of enrolment patterns shows (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001), despite an unparalleled shift in race and gender patterns of participation in higher education:

“The breakdown of university headcounts by race shows that African headcounts rose dramatically after 1984, both relatively and in absolute numbers, from around 40,000 in 1984 to 90,000 in 1988 and to 182,000 in 1998, although between 1996 and 1998, they dropped by nearly 20,000. This contrasts with white student figures, which fell significantly over the 1988-98 decade from 156,000 to 126,000, reversing the ratio of African to white university students from 21:66 in 1984 to 52:36 by 1998.” (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001: 26)

However, with state support to universities’ welfare functions declining and tuition fees on the rise, the poorest amongst the students remain primarily in remote historically black universities and in private higher education.

“The state’s funding proposals and student aid scheme will in time assist these students, but in sociological terms, as a class, access to universities and movement into the middle classes will remain remote. The students from poor and working class backgrounds in the 1990s did enter universities in significant numbers. However, soon the historically black universities complained that they had to increase fees and monitor fee payment more systematically than previously because they did not receive any additional funding from the state.” (Reddy: 56)

Changes in patterns of student enrolment have around the world been driven by different forces and agendas, but pictures of the student world are everywhere more fragmented. Off-campus accommodation policies, the generalisation of evening classes with the growing importance of part-time students, the introduction of tuition fees and privatisation have impacted on student life and modes of expression.

Student activism

Our project brings evidence of the transformation of student unionism in countries having recently emerged from authoritarian regimes and where students counted among the opposition forces (Nigeria, South Africa). In these countries, regime change almost inevitably induced fundamental changes in the students' modes of action and in the very nature of unionism. A shift from a highly political form of engagement, often resulting in direct confrontation with those in power, to more corporatist modes of action is being observed where the public sphere is strengthened by democratic transition. The South African experience, where the late 1990s were characterized by student participation in university governance structures (Cele and Koen, 2003), epitomises the influence of new managerial ideologies over the student movements.

Changes are also felt at other levels. Religious networks and all kinds of new societies drawing on ethnic or regional identities have been revitalised in Senegal and Nigeria in the vacuum created by the state withdrawal from student support:

“Community-based organisations have been growing steadily on campus since the early 1980s both in students' halls of residence and in the faculties. This corresponds to what might be called the era of corporatism and identity movements after the two other great moments of the Senegalese students' movement: the “revolutionary period” dominated by the Union of Dakar Students (UED) from 1966 to 1979, and the “patriotic” period particularly with UNAPES from 1979 to 1987. The dynamic development of the community-based organisations signals to some extent the debarment of traditional students' unions and a restructuring movement around new values such as religious faith and village solidarity. Village mutual aid gatherings and the *'dabiras'* (Islamic sect-based gatherings) prevail more and more over students' unions and political organisations. The latter although still existing on campus are less visible.” (Niane et al: 32)

The situation is rather different in countries of the ex-communist bloc, where student unions were often instruments of state propaganda. In Poland for instance, the student movement grew largely outside the official student union, and in connection with other segments of the population resisting state authoritarianism. In his report for the project, Chowdhury describes the Polish example of KOR, the Committee for the Defence of People (Chowdhury: 4). In Bulgaria, student political activism seems to have been reactivated during the transition period, seen by Gicheva-Gochava in her report as “a harsh one, much longer and much more painful than what was expected”. In fact, Bulgarian student unions have been much more active in national politics than in addressing the students' immediate needs as reflected by the very poor turn-out at recent student council elections in the University of Sofia (Gicheva-Gocheva, B: 2).

Even though democratisation transition processes and radical economic reforms have rarely shaken up social structures through curriculum reforms and access to higher education policies, the diversification of student populations is everywhere pointed out as a sign of a greater openness of societies. A geographically, culturally, socially and demographically more diverse student population is gradually emerging in reshaped higher education landscapes (e.g. new institutions and courses on offer, etc). We have seen in section 4 that the extent to which this new category of actors generates - once trained - new opportunities, ideas and values is far from clear and cannot be generalised⁶. But the impact of changing student identities on institutional cultures, for bad or for good, is acknowledged by all case study authors.

⁶ In the case of Estonia, Karmo Kroos notes that despite the breakdown of the Soviet Union, elite reproduction (through a process of conversion, i.e. changes of position within the elite) has continued and will only be seriously challenged when the generation of new outputs of the university (i.e. those who graduated from 1995) will be able to access power positions within the political or economic spheres. (Kroos: 46)

In conclusion:

- It appears that access of formerly disadvantaged groups to higher education (racial, social, linguistic groups in specific societies, or women) has improved in the countries under focus in this project, although these groups' access and retention remain largely dependent on government welfare policies.
- In the poorest countries, the balance between excellence and equity in public institutions is being threatened by the withdrawal of state support to public universities and to student welfare.
- In these countries, responses to the growth of intakes at the higher level often take the forms of deregulation and fragmentation processes.

Academic responses to change

As we have seen above, a key influence on the reshaping of the higher education curriculum has been the rapid expansion of student numbers. However, the implication of such changes for university staff, particularly academic staff, differed significantly from one context to another, depending on the nature of the transformation of their society, and the role they played in it. As a result, attitudes to reforms varied. According to our case studies in Central and Eastern Europe, many staff members, particularly those of the older generation, regard expansion as a threat to quality, or use the “quality argument” to resist broader changes likely to threaten their own status. The trend was already observed by Scott in an earlier review of the transformation of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe:

“Their [staff members] anxiety has been compounded by the changing fortunes of academic disciplines. Those who teach the natural sciences, which may have enjoyed greater prestige and patronage during the communist era but which now attract fewer well-qualified students, seem to have particularly negative attitudes.” (Scott, 2000: 393)

This conservatism is pointed out in most of our European case studies. Beyond the issue of loyalty or resistance to previous political regimes and how this affects relationships within departments, academics are in all countries among the segments of the population relatively ‘pauperised’ by the adoption of neo-liberal reforms. They are resisting this process in different ways depending on the positioning of their institutions in the redesigned higher education landscapes. In Nigeria for instance, university lecturers have engaged in an arm-wrestling match with the government over the rehabilitation of their status through pay rise and infrastructural investments. Strikes, report Gboyega and Atoyebi, have become the normal means of resolving staff disputes and “a major concern to students and parents as duration of courses are no longer predictable” (p.21). Where national unions are weaker and where private institutions have already started to challenge the supremacy of older public universities, resistance takes the form of much more individualised strategies. Many scholars in the poorer countries engage in extra-curricular activities (or ‘moonlighting’) only remotely related to their principal intellectual interests and capacities. In most developing countries, however, the expansion of the consultancy industry in recent years, particularly with the rise of policy-related aid, has created opportunities to make a decent living without being totally disconnected from the world of learning. They sometimes include travelling to the donor country or to workshops where researchers meet up with western colleagues who might hire them on comparative projects as “knowledgeable informers”.

The consultancy industry has been perceived as a way of containing the brain drain and its damaging effects on local developing economies. However, a closer look at the impact of these

lucrative but academically unrewarding⁷ activities on institutional cultures shows that they rarely help to rebuild local research capacities and that they tend to generate distrust and acrimony in already fragile communities. In the case of Africa, Mkandawira considers that:

“‘Institution building’ is widely considered an important preoccupation in addressing the many problems of research in Africa. However, although many organisations funding consultancy work in Africa claim they are contributing to this process, few critically examine their own activities in the light of this objective (...) Usually consultancies create enclaves within the university and remove from university oversight a whole range of disciplines through the sheer weight of their financial resources (...) Some senior scholars have complained about problems of “discipline” among their juniors whose financial well-being is conspicuously improved by consultancy contracts. These problems are not only at the departmental level, but at the level of the university system as a whole, although not all individuals or disciplines participate in the consultancy industry.” (Mkandawira, 1998: 7)

In their case-study of Senegal, Niane and colleagues looked at the destination of the 240 lecturers who left temporarily or finally the University of Dakar (UCAD) between 1985 and 2003, and found that access to the consultancy industry and to opportunities outside the educational sector remains the privilege of a minority. 12% went to Senegal-based international institutions and NGOs and 10% joined universities in Europe or North America, while the biggest numbers moved to new local private or public institutions.

In Estonia and Kyrgyzstan, as in most former soviet republics, the diversification of higher education provision offered similar alternatives to those affected by the changes in public universities’ staff structures and the declining standard of living of the faculty. In Estonia:

“While the nominal faculty teaching loads were reduced from the late 1980s, to allow transition towards what was perceived as the ‘western model’, extremely low faculty pay and shortage of research funds allowed only a small part of the faculty to continue being what are sometimes called in the UK ‘portfolio academics’. The rest – 80-85% of the faculty - became the assembly workers in the knowledge industry....To survive economically, that segment of the staff had to undertake multiple part-time teaching positions at several private universities and vocational schools, filling their days with rote lecturing and commuting between the schools.” (Tomusk, 2003: 84)

In Kyrgyzstan:

“A dramatic decline in real salaries for university teachers and administrators, together with a decline in stipends for *budzhbetnye* students to levels that barely meet the costs of a monthly bus-pass. Salaries for university teachers in state institutions currently average less than £20 per month, even for those with several years’ experience, and represent considerably less than salaries in businesses and foreign NGOs requiring comparable skills. There has therefore been a tendency for University teachers to hold down several jobs simultaneously, often combining lecturing with employment in the commercial sector, or offering private tuition to school-leavers keen to pass the university entrance exams.” (Reeves, p.11)

The relegation of university careers in socio-economic terms and a shift in load balance between research and teaching in favour of the latter seems to be a common characteristic of all transitional contexts described in this project. The uncertainty of transition causes massive brain

⁷ Niane and colleagues reveal in the case of Senegal how academics need to produce a minimum of “acceptable” reports and articles alongside their “service expertise” as the latter are not recognised in promotion criteria. (Niane, Ndiaye and Sougou: 31)

drain among the highly qualified fringes of the population while economic liberalisation squeezes public sector resources.

6. Conclusion

This project has asked some significant and difficult questions. It has not been possible to provide a simple narrative with which to answer them. Alongside larger global forces have been important and complex contextual factors. What we have discovered about the role of universities in processes of social transformation has been mediated very much by time and place. The global, the national, the regional and the institutional have all provided distinctive perspectives. These are set out in some detail in the fifteen case study and other reports produced by the project.

The scope for more general conclusions has also been limited by the methodological complexities of the project. Many of the case study authors were confronted by a lack of data to address many of the questions posed by the project's conceptual framework. This difficulty was compounded by the problem of timescales of transformation. Elsewhere in this report, we distinguish between 'dramatic' and 'creeping' transformation. But even where transformations are dramatic, they do not necessarily occur quickly and the longer term effects of some of the changes and transformations described in the case studies can only be surmised at the present time. A further problem of method was the difficulty of distinguishing contingency from causality. Always a problem for social research, the complexities and multiple levels of the phenomena under investigation posed particular challenges. A final aspect of method that should be mentioned is the self-study approach of most of the case studies. While there were clear advantages from adopting this approach in terms of local knowledge and insights, it was an approach that strengthened our understanding of the particular perhaps more than it illustrated the general.

In this synthesis report we have attempted to draw together some of the immensely rich material from the individual case studies in order to revisit the project's main themes. This final section provides a summary of the main conclusions reached.

Transforming societies

The project attempted to distinguish between the economic, the political, the social and the cultural impact of universities in societies experiencing transformation.

In general, and certainly in the short term, the role of universities in stimulating economic change appears to have been relatively weak, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Here, we saw what was described as a 'disconnection of spheres' where the emergence of 'black economies' and private entrepreneurship had relatively little need for formal qualifications. Indeed, for the individual graduate wanting to get some economic return on his or her higher education, 'escape' through emigration appears to have been 'the best' and a rather common solution. Yet here and elsewhere, economic goals were frequently driving higher education reforms which might be important in longer term social and economic transformation. In most countries it was also possible to find pockets of activity in higher education – sometimes in the private sector – that appeared to be having an immediate economic relevance. As far as its economic role was concerned, higher education was generally responding – with varying degrees of enthusiasm – to pressures from outside, partly the state but sometimes the labour market itself. In our study there was little or no evidence that the higher education sector was a major force in initiating or driving transformation.

The role of universities in political change appears to be both complex and contradictory. The distinction between 'removing the old' and 'building the new' should be remembered here. In respect of the latter, the 'protected space' provided by universities may have been important in

allowing both individuals and groups freedom to associate and debate. In some cases, the political effect of this protected space had been evident at the time of regime change, especially where students were involved. In other cases, the protected space of the university had permitted a preparation for the 'building of the new' that was only now becoming apparent. It must also be pointed out, however, that protected space can be invaded and the role of universities in supporting the old regime may also have been important. This was particularly the case in Central and Eastern Europe where many universities were well connected to the communist regimes from whom they, on the whole, received better support than they were getting in the post-communist world. In considering the political, a distinction between the university as institution and the individual academic as an 'intellectual' should be made. Even where universities may have played a political role, it generally involved relatively small numbers of people acting as individuals rather than a formal institutional involvement. However, alongside the explicitly political contributions of some of its members to regime change, universities may also have been important in providing personnel for institution-building in the new civil societies under construction after the more 'dramatic moments' of transformation had passed.

The social role of the university in processes of transformation is also a mixed and complex phenomenon. In general, it could be argued that universities contribute as much to social *reproduction* as they do to social *transformation*. Differentiation may be important here with roles varying between public and private sectors, between institutions of different types and between capital city and regional institutions. South Africa provided the strongest example of social equity being high on the agenda of higher education with some impressive achievements as well as policy initiatives to report. In Central and Eastern Europe, social equity issues appeared to be lower on the agenda with universities possibly playing a less important part than they had under the old regimes. However, this was an aspect of many of the case studies that was relatively under-explored due to a lack of data. Reliable data on changes in the social backgrounds of students or in their destinations after graduation were in short supply.

The cultural role of the university appears to have been important in many places. First, it had over the years provided at least a half open door for external ideas and experiences to enter into otherwise closed societies. Second, in some places it had provided something of a repository for national sentiments that could come out of 'storage' when the time and circumstances permitted. Third, there were tensions between the 'international' and the 'national' elements implicit in the first two points above and, for example, in the balance between social democratic and market-driven forces. Of course, these are tensions existing throughout most of these societies. They can pose contradictions of identity and purpose within institutions as well as in the broader society.

The economic, political, social and cultural roles of the university are all connected. Also connected to the question of social transformation is the question of transforming the university itself.

Transforming universities

In considering how universities had been changed by transformative events in their societies, we have distinguished between

- changes in curriculum, quality and standards;
- diversification;
- changes in access policies, student profiles and experiences; and
- academic responses to change.

There appear to have been near universal pressures across the case studies and reports to reform curricula and to introduce new forms of academic recognition and quality assurance. These are trends which themselves reflect the *social* uses of a university education. Ensuring that learning is recognised both within and across national boundaries is of course a major issue for a globalising

world. In addition, for some countries curriculum reform and international benchmarking were seen as ways of ‘catching up’ and preparing society for the competition of international trade. International donors have also played an important part in speeding these trends in many places. All of that said, local circumstances are again important in mediating these apparently universal trends. These could take many forms. For example, the reputational power of certain institutions could act as a powerful force *against* curriculum reform and renewal, marginalizing it to private institutions or non-university sectors. In addition, several of the case studies point to severe limitations deriving from the absence of qualified staff to teach new courses in new fields or to draw on the latest international research and scholarship in their teaching.

Diversification has taken many forms and has reflected both global and local pressures. It has often resulted in the creation of local private or public teaching-only institutions alongside the larger and more dominant national public universities. There are, however, examples of places where private higher education institutions appear to be successfully occupying important niche areas and providing reliable routes to new high-skilled areas of employment. Such institutions are sometimes regarded – at least – as laboratories of change and innovation in higher education in their respective countries. Traditional public universities tend to regard the ‘privates’ with suspicion. The regulation of diversity and its commercial aspects continue to pose considerable challenges in many places.

We have already noted a general lack of data on access policies, student profiles and experiences. What we can say, however, is that in several countries routes to social mobility and enhanced life chances seemed to be more apparent outside the university and that, consequently, access issues were less to the fore in policy debate than they might otherwise have been. Again, there were large variations between countries. In African countries, regional and racial inequalities remained important areas of concern and important progress was reported in extending access and widening participation. However, in many places elite reproduction remained an important role for universities although a role increasingly exported through the use of international education by the more dominant and privileged social groups. Progress in extending access has often been hampered by lack of resources and a perceived decline in quality, notwithstanding the introduction of accreditation and other quality procedures.

On academic responses to change, we can note general tendencies towards ‘brain drain’, worsening conditions for teaching and less time for research. These affect subjects differentially with a growing ‘political economy’ of academic knowledge. In Central and Eastern Europe in particular, the social standing and influence of academics is perceived to be in decline. Various forms of academic resistance to change are noted in the case studies. Also, the diversification of institutions – especially the creation of the privates – has provided opportunities for ‘portfolio careers’ as staff seek to build a viable living for themselves by taking jobs at several institutions simultaneously.

Discussion

Higher education reforms have, in most of the cases examined in this project, been driven by a combination of both international and national factors. This is not a real surprise given the impact of multilateral agencies on funding, structuring and regulating higher education systems, particularly but not exclusively in developing and transitional societies. A set of diversely understood goals (to support research for the advance of the knowledge society, to expand and differentiate higher education systems, to guarantee equity in supply and equality of opportunities, to develop links between higher education and other parts of society, to strengthen autonomy and enhance the efficacy of university governance, etc) is at the heart of the higher education policy documents of the UNESCO, the World Bank, bi-lateral development agencies, regional co-operation agencies and international foundations. Set in the context of globalization, these goals are meant to transform higher education systems as well as to give the systems the capacity to further influence their socio-economic environment.

National higher education policies worldwide cannot be said to be framed as in South Africa by “the overall social goal of transcending the contemporary social structure and institutionalising a new social order” (Badat, 2001). Yet the governments who are funding generally expanding higher education systems and the international bodies encouraging them to do so are, on the whole, not doing it because of a belief in the intrinsic good of education. They have more instrumental purposes to do with economic development, social cohesion, national identity and so on.

We had hoped that the various case studies that constituted this project would provide evidence on whether such purposes were being achieved. This probably over-ambitious aim was only partly achieved. Examples of university involvement in the various phases and aspects of social transformation – both pre- and post- regime change – were provided but, on the whole, it seemed to be forces outside the academy that were driving change, at least in the short term. In the longer term, it may be that new generations of graduates with new expectations, knowledge and skills will make critical contributions to the development of their societies. It is too early to be sure and some of the best are leaving.

One of the main lessons of the project is that national and regional differences remain important. They reflect a deep embeddedness of universities in their environments, even where they are perceived as ivory towers. Because they remain primarily public institutions, universities in all the countries covered by the project reflect national administrative and political cultures. For the same reason, universities were found to play contradictory roles in key periods of transformation. Authoritarian regimes are generally keen to rely on the voices of senior academics to propagate official ideologies while, as relatively “protected spaces”, their university campuses may be – sometimes simultaneously – harbouring the embryo of the movements that would eventually overthrow them.

Future research agendas

We believe that the questions which shaped this international project remain important ones and not only for higher education in developing and transitional societies. If we were to modify the phrasing of those questions based on our experiences of this project, we would probably want to put more emphasis on ‘creeping’ change rather than the dramatic, to reconsider the kinds of timescales within which the effects of change might become apparent, and also to consider more explicitly the ‘blocks’ to change, both within and outside the university.

Future research will need better descriptions than were available to us about the ‘who’, ‘what’ and ‘where’ of higher education and its part in social transformation. The ‘who’ of the student body, the ‘what’ of their curriculum and wider higher education experience, and the ‘where’ of their social and economic futures remain crucial questions for an understanding of the social role of the university. This is equally true for universities in the more developed economies and we have been struck many times during this project at how close the project’s themes have been to ongoing debates closer to home: both about the role of universities in regional regeneration and about their contribution to the creation of knowledge economies and fairer more socially inclusive societies.

In pursuing questions about the social role of universities, it is important that the claims of the academy are themselves challenged. Politicians and others may sometimes question the capacity of university-based researchers to mount such challenges. We, after all, have strong interests in the answers. This, in a sense, was the starting point for this project: to submit to critical empirical scrutiny some of the claims that were being made about the importance of universities in processes of social, political and economic transformation.

Future research – and policy – will need to avoid the dangers of ‘global dogmatism’. To do so will frequently entail detailed empirical enquiry that looks beyond the cosmopolitan worlds of capital cities to the (in some places) still quite remote, regional and local settings where historical particulars may still count for more than the agendas of international agencies. Universities are of their societies and their histories. They are not ivory towers and they are neither beyond the powerful reach of the global nor above the fray of the local. These present the forces that must be balanced as universities continue to transform and be transformed.

Appendix 1: Key facts and main higher education features of the countries covered by the project

Bangladesh

Key facts

Region: Asia

Population: 136,433,600 September 2002

Capital City: Dhaka. Pop.: 8,539,500 (2002)

Languages: Bangla (official), English

The structure of higher education

Higher education institutions include public and private universities, institutes of technology and colleges. The universities are divided into four categories: general, special, open and affiliating. Chittagong, Dhaka, Rajshahi and Shahjhal University of Science and Technology have affiliated medical colleges. All the other colleges are affiliated with the Bangladesh National University. At present, there are 13 Public Universities and more than 50 Private Universities in Bangladesh.

Belarus

Key facts

Region: Eastern Europe

Population: 10,073,600 September 2002

Capital City: Minsk. Pop: 1,764,700 (2002)

Languages: Byelorussian, Russian

The structure of higher education

At present, there are 44 state higher education institutions including 25 universities, 9 academies, 4 institutes, 5 higher colleges and 1 higher technical school. In addition, there are 13 non-public higher education institutions. In 2001/2002, there were 14 non-state higher education institutions in Belarus, most of which were located in Minsk, with 9 branches located in regional centers, enrolling 13% of the total number of students.

Brazil

Key facts

Region: South America

Population: 179,712,500 August 2003

Capital: Brasilia

Largest city: Sao Paulo. Pop: 10,195,000 (2003)

Languages: Portuguese (official), over 195 indigenous languages, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, and Baltic languages also spoken

The structure of higher education

Higher education is provided in federal, state, municipal, confessional and private universities and other institutions, foundations, federations and independent establishments. The higher education institutions consist of faculties, schools, centres, academies or institutes.

In 1999, there were 1,097 institutions, 60 of which were federal, 72 state, 60 municipal, and 905 private. In 1999, the public sector enrolled over 830,000 students (35% of total enrollment). The federal universities account for half of all public enrollment and approximately one-fifth of the total enrollment. The state and municipal systems together account for an additional one-fifth. The private sector accounts for 65% of total enrollment—over 1.5 million students.

Bulgaria

Key facts

Region: Europe (Balkans)
Population: 7,946,000 September 2002
Capital City: Sofia. Pop: 1,092,600 (2002)
Languages: Bulgarian, various others

The structure of higher education

Higher education is provided by universities, institutes and academies. Higher education is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science. 247,000 students are educated at 42 universities and 46 colleges, 11.3 percent of those enrolled are at private universities.

Estonia

Key facts

Region: Europe
Population: 1,299,000 October 2002
Capital: Tallin. Pop: 386,100 (2002)
Languages: Estonian (official); Latvian, Lithuanian, Finnish, Russian, Ukrainian also spoken

The structure of higher education

The higher education system is divided into two sectors: universities and applied higher education institutions. Some post-secondary vocational schools also have a right to offer vocational higher education. In Estonia, there were in 2003 6 public universities, 9 private universities, 8 state institutions of applied higher education, 10 private applied higher education institutions, 7 state vocational education institutions and 1 private vocational education institution that offers vocational higher education.

Kyrgyzstan

Key facts

Region: Central Asia
Population: 5,117,700 October 2002
Capital City: Bishkek. Pop. 808,900 (2002)
Languages: Kirghiz (Kyrgyz) (official), Russian (official)
Kazakhstan: 1,051 km

The structure of higher education

At present, there are 44 state higher education institutions including 25 universities, 9 academies, 4 institutes, 5 higher colleges and 1 higher technical school. In addition, there are 13 non-public higher education institutions.

Mexico

Key facts

Region: Middle America
Population: 100,124,800 October 2002
Capital City: Mexico City. Pop. 8,656,800 (2002)
Languages: Spanish, Various Mayan dialects

The structure of higher education

In the year 2002, there were 1550 institutions of higher education (these only comprise the central units): 606 public institutions and 944 private institutions. The public subsystem includes 52 institutions, considering the central units which carry out teaching, research and extension services. In this category are included the federal and state universities. Most public universities are autonomous. Private institutions comprise: universities, institutes and centres. There were some 1,660,973 students enrolled in higher education in 2001.

Nigeria

Key facts

Region: West Africa

Population: 130,539,700 August 2003

Capital City: Abuja

Largest City: Lagos. Pop. 8,349,700 (2003)

Languages: English (official), Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo. More than 200 languages and dialects spoken

The structure of higher education

Higher education is provided by universities, polytechnics, institutions of technology, colleges of education (which form part of the universities and polytechnic colleges or are affiliated to these) and professional institutions. Universities can be established either by federal or state governments, or privately owned. In 2004, there are 44 public universities (25 federal and 19 state Universities) and 9 private universities accredited by the National Universities Commission.

Poland

Key facts

Region: Europe

Capital City: Warsaw. Pop.: 1,609,800 (2002)

Population: 38,601,700 October 2002

Languages: Polish

The structure of higher education

The higher education system comprises both state and non-state institutions. The latter are created on the basis of the 1990 Higher Education Act. At present, there are both university-type and non-university type (professional education) institutions in Poland. Most higher education institutions are under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education and Sport. The total number of state higher education institutions is 122 and there are 264 non-state higher education institutions.

Russia

Key facts

Region: Asia/Europe

Population: 142,881,200 October 2002

Capital City: Moscow. Pop: 8,376,000 (2002)

Languages: Russian, other languages also spoken

The structure of higher education

Higher education is provided by state and non-state higher education institutions (HEIs). Higher education is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation. There are three levels of higher education: 1) incomplete higher education (2 years at least); 2) basic higher education (4 years) leading to the Bakalavr's degree, the first university level degree; 3) postgraduate higher education (total number of years of post-secondary education: 5-6 years or more). There are 657 state HEIs and 253 accredited non-state HEIs in Russia; the Ministry of Education finances 330 state HEIs. The rest are financed by other ministries or local authorities.

Senegal

Key facts

Region: West Africa

Population: 10,050,700 October 2002

Capital City: Dakar. Pop: 2,384,000 (2002)

Languages: French (official) Wolof, Pulaar, Diola, Mandingo

The structure of higher education

Access to higher education is based on the Baccalauréat or an equivalent qualification. In addition, each establishment lays down its own requirements. Higher education is provided by universities (which are responsible to the Ministry of Education), and other institutions (e.g. Ecole normale supérieure) founded for the training of scientific, technical, teaching and administrative personnel. There are also research institutes and Grandes Ecoles - entry to which involves a special examination - which offer specialized courses.

Slovenia

Key facts

Region: Europe

Population: 1,948,300 October 2002

Capital City: Ljubljana. Pop: 257,300 (2002)

Languages: Slovenian. Hungarian, Italian, German, Serbo-Croatian, among other languages also spoken

The structure of higher education

After decades of a unified system with colleges, schools, academies and faculties under the umbrella of universities, today higher education displays certain features of a binary structure. Programmes, but not institutions, are divided into academic studies and professionally oriented studies. In addition to teaching, higher education institutions also conduct research and artistic activities. Study is organised at two levels. At the undergraduate level, students obtain a diploma and the first of the degree titles. At the post-graduate level, students obtain either a second degree title, the title of *specialist*, or the academic title of either a *magister znanosti* (*magister umetnosti* in artistic fields) - the title is comparable to a master's degree - or *doktor znanosti* (comparable to a Ph.D.). There were 68,000 students enrolled in 69 tertiary institutions in 2000-2001.

South Africa

Key facts

Region: Southern Africa

Population: 45,129,400 October 2002

Capital City: Pretoria

Languages: Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa are official languages.

The structure of higher education

The higher education system consists of State Universities, a Technikon sector (now renamed Technology Universities) and a College sector. The South African universities offer Bachelor, Bachelor Honours, Master and Doctorate Degrees, as well as Undergraduate and Postgraduate Diplomas. Course work is structured in modules, with students registering in a unit/credit system. Technikons and Universities, as autonomous institutions, are subsidized by the Department of Education, and provide training at the post senior certificate level. South Africa has in 2003 more than a million students enrolled in the country's 21 public universities, 15 Technology universities (ex- technikons) and many colleges.

Sources: Country Watch, *2004 country reviews*.
International Association of universities, *World Higher Education Online Database*. Accessed
February 2004

Appendix 2: Case study and other reports produced by the project

- Didou-Aupetit, S. *Political Democratisation, Social Change and Educational Reform in Mexico*
- Dounaev, V. with S. Sivukha, V.Yermolovich, G.Minenkov, S.Kurochkina, S.Naumova, and V.Usosky *The role of universities in the transformation of societies. The EHU (Minsk, Belarus) case-study.*
- Fedotova, N. *The Role of Universities in Social Transformations (case-study of Russia)*
- Gboyega, A. & Atoyebi Y. *The Role of Universities in the Transformation of Societies: The Nigerian Case-Study*
- Georgiev, L. *The Role of Universities in the Transformation of Societies. Institutional Case-Study – New Bulgarian University*
- Gorbunova, E. & Zabaev, I. *The role of the Moscow Higher School of Social and Economic Sciences in the Russian society being transformed*
- Guicheva-Gocheva D. *The Students' councils – youth political organizations or students' representatives*
- Guicheva-Gocheva, D. *Transition and transformation (in the eyes of a sceptical Bulgarian academic)*
- Kroos, K. *The Role of Universities in Social Transformation: Case of Estonia*
- Niane, B. Ndiaye, F. & O. Sougou *Universities and social Transformations. Case studies of Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar and Université Gaston Berger, Saint-Louis, Senegal*
- Reddy, T. *Higher Education and Social Transformation. Case study of South Africa*
- Reeves, M. *The Case Study of the American University –Central Asia*
- Roy Chowdhury, S. *Mapping Minds, Changing Maps: Universities, Intelligentsia, Nation States (Slovenia, Poland, India and Bangladesh).*
- Schwartzman, S. *Universities and the Transformation of Society in Brazil*
- Totomanova, A.M. *The role of Bulgarian universities in the transformation of society*

All these reports are available for download in PDF format on the project's website at:

<http://www.open.ac.uk/cheri/TRhome.htm>

Appendix 3: Methodology

Case study frameworks

The project comprised a mix of national, institutional and thematic case studies, each carried out by teams or individual researchers, usually from local universities. A standard framework was used for the four national cases and two overview papers and a slightly amended version was used for the institutional cases. The main headings of the national case study framework were as follows:

- A What is being transformed in society?*
- (i) the economy: the formation of human capital;
 - (ii) the polity: the creation and sustenance of civil institutions; the selection and socialisation of political and social elites;
 - (iii) social structure: the creation of pluralistic societies, including the relationships between, and opportunities for, diverse social and ethnic groups;
 - (iv) culture: the production and dissemination of ideas, exerting influence upon and providing critique of (i) to (iii) above.
- B What is being transformed in universities?*
- (i) programme and curriculum changes;
 - (ii) changes in the composition of students;
 - (iii) changes in the composition of staff;
 - (iv) changes in the destinations of graduates;
 - (v) development of or changes in 'outreach' activities;
 - (vi) changes in research policies and funding;
 - (vii) changes in governance and decision-making.

In addition, at the system level, the studies addressed the extent and nature of diversity in each of the above respects.

- C What is driving the transformative process?*
- Case studies considered the incidence and relative importance of the following:
- (i) changes taking place in 'old' universities;
 - (ii) the creation of 'new' universities and other Higher Education Institutions;
 - (iii) the role of 'private' or 'transnational' institutions;
 - (iv) the role of non-university institutions and sectors;
 - (vii) the extent, contents and implementation of new legislation.

D Wider historical and political contexts

Case studies used a combination of data sources, usually including:

- national statistics
- public documents and university record analyses
- interviews with key individuals
- Secondary data such as employers and graduate surveys.

Each case study team submitted a proposal (early 2002), a progress report (autumn 2002) and a final report (autumn 2003), which were discussed during the three workshops held as part of the project.

Some countries that had undergone less radical or less sudden socio-political changes were included in the transnational thematic studies (Bangladesh) or added as national case-studies (Mexico, Senegal) as a result of the association of new sponsors in the course of the project. This made it necessary to re-visit the scope of the project defined in Vienna in November 2000.⁸ The other problem that slightly hindered the progress and the coherence of the project was that the funding of some cases (Brazil, Mexico) was secured when others were on the point of completion (Bulgaria).

Institutional case studies

These are four studies of private institutions, established in the wake of the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.⁹ They were selected by the Open Society Institute (OSI) from among its network of supported HEIs, and the work was undertaken by in-house research teams made up of both researchers and administrators. Representatives of the four institutions came together in January 2002 to design the framework of their studies¹⁰. Each institution was also represented at our final workshop in Magaliesberg (South Africa) in October 2003 by a member of its research team.

National case studies

They were identified at various stages of the project. Because the whole project largely draws on the transformation problematic developed in South Africa as a policy and a research concept, this country was therefore seen from the beginning as a pillar of the project.

The project also stems from various projects carried out by CHERI in Eastern Europe, particularly in Bulgaria where ex-collaborators carried out the first study completed as part of this project. The work in Bulgaria started in 2001 and was completed in March 2002¹¹.

The current interest of American foundations in studies on the state of higher education in Africa and on the "public role" of universities¹² met that of the CHERI/ACU team who was seeking to fund the South African study and to extend its research on the roles and reactions of universities in a wider variety of contexts for social transformation, to highlight the diversity of ways in which they anticipate or respond to local and global aspirations and pressures. CHERI thus secured a Rockefeller grant in 2001 to cover the national case study of South Africa and two additional countries of sub Saharan Africa. Nigeria and Senegal, where the CHERI /ACU team already had collaborators, were selected for their specific colonial history, post-colonial development and

⁸ Present at the meeting were: Saleem Badaat, Svava Bjarnason, John Brennan, Jochen Fried, Patricia Gergieva, Ron Kassimir, Muhammad Mayanja, Pieter de Meijer, Ada Pellert, Alison Rees, Jan Sadlak, Mala Singh, Carla Sutherland, Roger Svensson, Anna Maria Totomanova and Elisabeth Zehetner.

⁹ The institutions are the American University in Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek) founded in 1997 (first established in 1993 as an American School), the Moscow School of Social and Economic Studies established in 1994, the New Bulgarian University (Sofia) established in 1991, and the European Humanities University (Minsk, Belarus), founded in 1992

¹⁰ January 2002 in Vienna: The Workshop gathered the OSI fellows associated to the project, the co-ordinators of institutional case studies from Bulgaria, Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyztan and the ACU/CHERI team.

¹¹ The study was carried out by Anna-Maria Totomanova, head of the Centre for Educational Strategies, Sofia and former Vice-Minister of Education and Science of Bulgaria.

¹² The year 2000 marked a resurgence of interest among development agencies in African higher education. In the course of the year hardly an agency did not signal an intensified interest in tertiary education, by means of a workshop, a policy statement, or a reallocation of funding priorities. Particularly notable among those initiatives, was the launching of a consortium of four American foundations (Ford, Rockefeller, MacArthur, and Carnegie), aimed at increasing financial support to selected universities on the African continent.

current political transition, as well as for their (relatively) long-standing higher education history. The work started in February 2002 in the three countries and was completed by June 2003¹³.

Thematic (national or transnational) studies

These are studies, carried out by individual scholars as part of the project, under the International Policy Fellowship programme of OSI.¹⁴ Five research fellows, most of whom were young lecturers from Russia, Estonia and Bulgaria, were selected on the basis of the following proposals:

- A transnational approach of the role of universities in shaping the minds of ruling and intellectual elites (Bangladesh, Poland, India, Slovenia).
- An analysis of the changes in the legislative basis of higher education in the Balkans since the fall of communist regimes.
- A national survey of how academics got involved or reacted to the political changes that occurred in Estonia following the collapse of the USSR.
- A description of how an old public institution of higher education in Moscow was being transformed by more global socio-political changes and was trying to position itself in a more competitive environment.
- A monograph of a peripheral Russian university (Eastern Siberia Irkutsk State University) with particular interest in its role as agent of democratic socialisation.

The OSI researchers also took part in the January 2002 project workshop in Vienna, which helped them to refine the scope of their project, to elaborate an appropriate research plan and method and to situate their research in the broader conceptual framework of the project. Fieldwork started in March 2002, progress reports were presented in London in November 2002, and final reports discussed at the final project workshop in Magaliesberg.

Overview papers

Initially intended to precede the case studies and to inform the researchers on broader regional and thematic trends, these papers could not be funded in time and were therefore rather seen as an opportunity to extend the geographical coverage of the project. There are two such papers looking at the relation between changes in higher education institutions and broader societal changes in Brazil (Simon Schwartzman) and in Mexico (Sylvie Didou Aupetit), funded by the Stint foundation¹⁵ (Stockholm).

Workshops and website

The seminar held in Vienna in November 2000 helped to design the frameworks of the various case studies, to define what was meant by transformation (from a revolution to the post cold war and post-communist transitions), to clarify what moment of a socio-political transitional process we were interested in, and to discuss the notion of role itself through the differentiation between intended and collateral effects.

¹³ The research teams were led by Mala Singh and Saleem Badaat (Council for Higher education) in South Africa, by Boubacar Niane (University Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar) in Senegal, and by Alex Gboyega (University of Ibadan) in Nigeria.

¹⁴ The International Policy Fellowships (IPF) program was launched in April 1998 as a program of the Open Society Institute-Budapest to "identify and nurture the next generation of open society leaders in the countries of the former Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe, and Mongolia." (from OSI-Budapest web site)

¹⁵ The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education.

A year later in November 2001, OSI fellows and administrators of institutions under focus in East and Central Europe were brought together to refine their proposals and discuss the possible adaptation of their common frameworks.

In March and April 2002, a series of meetings in South Africa, Nigeria and Senegal helped assess the work progress and ensure the coherence of national case studies.

Progress reports on all the case studies were presented at another workshop in November 2002 in London, where guidelines were agreed on for the writing-up of final reports.

A final seminar held in Magaliesberg (South Africa) in October 2003, brought together participants in the project and guests from the higher education research field to identify trends and thrash out ideas from the case studies and envisage possible project extensions.

An important dimension of the general project, repeatedly stressed by the project initiators during the workshops, was its academic nature. Beyond the production of original empirically-based studies, the project aimed to build an international research network of scholars looking at the university/society nexus from different perspectives and across rarely compared contexts. A web page offering information (a monthly updated newsletter) and resources (articles on methods, frameworks, bibliography) was designed in January 2002. Its aim, together with the workshops, was to keep everybody abreast of the work progress, and to ensure that all researchers (some of whom were junior academics) felt that they were a part of a global academic enterprise. In line with this concern, the ACU/CHERI team publicized the project through presentations and reports in newsletters, and efforts were made to link the project to other relevant initiatives.

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References to case study reports carried out as part of the project can be found in appendix 2.

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