

Managing Processes of Globalization: A Spotlight on the University as a Key Institution in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACTS

This article looks at the heightened role of universities in the global knowledge age. Flows of people, ideas, and also capital in the academic realm continue to multiply, propelling global connectedness and contributing to the reshuffling of the hitherto prevailing political orders. Universities are understood as places where these flows are instigated and controlled. The article adds insight to the field of global higher education by emphasizing universities in the Global South, to better understand their role in shaping processes of globalization. Four arguments guide the reader, the first of which explains how universities have been discursively rescaled. The second argument looks at university-state relations and increased institutional power. Differentiation in the higher-education landscape and academic hierarchies are examined in the third part, while section four reveals shortcomings of mobility figures aggregated at national level.

Der Artikel thematisiert die zunehmende Bedeutung von Universitäten im Zeitalter der globalen Wissenslandschaft. Akademische Mobilität, der Austausch von Wissen und die damit verbundenen Kapitalströme tragen erheblich zur globalen Vernetzung und zur Neuordnung der Weltpolitik bei. Universitäten werden als Orte verstanden, an denen diese grenzüberschreitenden Prozesse initiiert und kontrolliert werden. Im Fokus stehen hier Universitäten im globalen Süden, was Diskussionen über deren Rolle in Globalisierungsprozessen anregt und somit das Spektrum der globalen Hochschulforschung erweitert. Der Artikel gliedert sich in vier Teile, wobei sich der erste mit einer diskursiven Neuausrichtung befasst. Zweitens werden die Beziehungen zwischen Universität und Staat vor dem Hintergrund einer Portalperspektive skizziert, bevor im dritten Teil die Relevanz von Differenzierung und akademischen Hierarchien erklärt wird. Das letzte Argument stellt die Aussagekraft von nationalen Mobilitätsstatistiken in Frage.

1. Introduction

*The supreme hall of education, the university is a platform for grooming innovative talents, a cradle for new knowledge, new ideas and new science and technology, and a spiritual home for the survival and development of humanity. In the face of the new tendency in global socio-economic development, of the new tasks for the Chinese modernization drive, and of the new trend in which diverse civilizations seek to live in harmony, our universities haven taken it upon themselves an unprecedented mission that is at once noble and historical. In the next ten years we shall strive to develop world-caliber modern higher education in a distinctly Chinese way.*¹

Liu Yandong, State Councillor, People's Republic of China, 2010

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, the world is awash with institutions that transcend borders: multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations, security and policing bureaux, arts and sports associations, and, most pertinent to the subject of this paper, universities. When one considers the extent to which the aforementioned institutions have been studied as shapers of globalization, however, there has been a comparative dearth of attention devoted to universities. What literature does exist on the subject seems largely content to simply acknowledge that universities are affected by globalization and react rather enforcedly to it.² Going as far as assigning universities an active role in initiating, accelerating, and steering processes of globalization is rather the exception than the rule. This article discusses universities as portals of globalization, showing how they use the latitude afforded to them and influence global flows of people and ideas – often on their own terms.

The article simultaneously integrates aspects about the relationship between the university and the nation state under the “global condition”. It is of paramount importance to include the state which is legally and financially responsible in the still predominantly public higher-education sector and assess what its role in the formation of portals of globalization is. It is not merely a question of supporting or limiting institutional autonomy, but about the way a state can use universities to position itself globally.

This has not been considered sufficiently in particular within the Global South. Relegated to second class through global rankings or persistent imaginaries of academic hierarchies, universities in the Global South are often displayed as poorly financed and lacking quality, obscuring other dimensions such as global connectedness. Universities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are home to most students in the world, a fact which is only going to become more important with the massive expansion of higher education in Africa. They are points of departure for most of the globally mobile students and

1 L. Yandong, Speech on the Fourth Chinese-Foreign University Presidents Forum, Nanjing, 2 May 2010, http://old.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_2862/201008/96836.html (accessed 14 July 2017).

2 See for example J. Knight, *Higher Education in Turmoil. The Changing World of Internationalization*, Rotterdam 2008.

increasingly also a destination for students from both the Global South and North. They are hubs in which the changing directionality of student mobility becomes visible.

Another aspect about universities in the Global South which is masked by Western-centric and ahistorical assumptions about higher education and globalization, is the long-standing experience with global connectivity. Engagement across borders for universities in the Global South might not match the ideas of academic cosmopolitanism or a competitive higher-education market, but include conflicted processes of colonialism, independence, nation-building, or structural-adjustment programmes. Looking at universities as portals of globalization holds huge potential in understanding how the Global South participates in shaping the globalization of higher education and contributes to the reshuffling of the hitherto prevailing political orders.

The first part of this article demonstrates how universities have acquired a symbolic function as portals of globalization in an increasingly interconnected, global higher-education discourse. The second part underlines how universities have experienced a *de facto* growth in institutional power, as they have gained a degree of importance and developed ways in dealing with the “global condition.” In the process, the distribution of power between the universities and the nation state has changed fundamentally. Differentiation and ranking in the higher-education landscape, as laid out in the third part, has led to an unprecedented exposure of individual institutions that no longer can hide behind the relative insulation of national academic systems.

The university’s role in facilitating and steering global mobility is probably the most salient and quantifiable feature of the university as a portal, and thus receives attention in the fourth part. As a place of arrival and departure, the university is a place of transit – and in an atmosphere of heightened border regulation, it can also serve as an attractive gateway for migration, global employability, and even a potential route to citizenship. Access to these sites of global promise is limited, however, and decisions on who is granted admission are not taken arbitrarily – a decisive factor in steering global mobility.

2. Discursive Rescaling in Global Higher Education

The quotation by a former state councillor from China headlining this article is an illustrative example of how the university features in contemporary higher-education jargon. Despite the university being in a phase of unprecedented change – some might suggest in crisis, as it struggles for survival in competitive higher-education markets – government officials throughout the world continue to inflate the role of universities to unobtainable heights. Universities, they argue, are expected to remedy a whole gamut of issues, from strengthening the economy, reinvigorating government, fulfilling expectations of social mobility, providing international conflict mediation, healing cultural wounds, and promoting tolerance – all the while fulfilling their traditional objectives of providing an expansive and quality education to each student. It is an accumulation of unrealistic

expectations, which continues unabated and shows no signs of reversing.³ My first argument is that a global higher-education discourse has developed in which universities have acquired a symbolic function and serve as a focal point through which both hopes and fears in managing processes of globalization are articulated. Under the “global condition,” the university is charged with significantly more importance than in earlier times and through a discursive rescaling becomes a portal of globalization.

Talking about higher education in a global context is a form of global interaction constituted by flows of representations, narratives, and discourses.⁴ Analysing the visions, missions, and strategies set out in presidential speeches and official documents of ministries and national agencies, gives an account of the current global higher-education discourse and policies related to it. It shows that there is a hybridization of the discourse of globalization and higher education,⁵ with a distinct vocabulary. The following examples illustrate this point; they show how national and global agendas are strategically realigned by different actors in the context of a global higher-education discourse, and they demonstrate the specific challenges of accessing this realm from a position in the Global South.

Looking at the discourse on a national level in China reveals the beliefs as to how important higher education under the global condition has become. Specific elements are adjusted for a national purpose. Education is portrayed as “the most fundamental cause for a nation.”⁶ The Chinese government in its own perception sees education as a “major strategy for national development and modernization.” Rather than seeing itself as an established global power (in higher education), it shows a process under way in which the country is “rejuvenated and developed.” The response from the Chinese government to the “current trend of global expansion” is “socialist modernization” to “produce high-quality human resources” and “talented citizens with good moral, intellectual, physical and artistic qualities.”⁷ The discourse is influenced by a dichotomy of East and West, essentializing regional differences and modernization theories.⁸ This perspective can be used for a national rationale to legitimize actions such as the accumulation of capital for rapid industrialization⁹ or society-wide reforms in higher education. This perspective can also be found in academia, attesting that Chinese universities have had an internationally peripheral status for more than a century.¹⁰

3 B. R. Clark, *The Problem of Complexity in Modern Higher Education* in: S. Rothblatt and B. Wittrock (eds.), *The European and American University since 1800. Historical and Sociological Essays*, Cambridge 2008, pp. 263–279.

4 N. Fairclough, *Language and Globalization*, London 2006, p. 3.

5 *Ibid.*, 78.

6 Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, *Education as a Long-Term Priority*, http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_2862/201010/109030.html. (accessed 22 May 2017).

7 *Ibid.*

8 L. Jie-Hyun, *Historizing the World in North East Asia* in: D. Northrop (ed.), *Companion to World History*, Oxford; Malden 2013, pp. 428–432.

9 *Ibid.*

10 L. Mei and Ch. Qiongqiong, *Globalization, Internationalization and the World-Class University Movement: the China Experience*, in: R. King, S. Marginson and R. Naidoo (eds.) *Handbook on Globalization and Higher Education*, Cheltenham 2011, pp. 242–255.

The discourse in higher education in China is embedded in a long-term context, exemplified by the statement that “the popularization of higher education marks a historical breakthrough in China’s education history” and that foundations for it were laid “thirty-three years ago, when reform and opening-up was introduced in this country, [and] the college entrance examination was restored.”¹¹ In April 2017, when the former state councillor and now vice premier of China Liu Yandong visited the Confucius Institute at the Durban University of Technology in South Africa, which marked the beginning of the “China-South Africa High-Level People-to-People Exchange Mechanism,” she emphasized that the two countries “understand and support each other in the struggle against imperialism, colonialism, and striving for independence and liberation.”¹² Common elements of the past serve as legitimization for cooperation in the present, also in higher education, which is fiercely debated as either South-South cooperation or a soft-power approach.¹³ Regardless of continuously changing bilateral trends, what becomes apparent is that the Chinese government talks about a new kind of diplomacy in which higher education and universities are of paramount importance.¹⁴

The second example is taken from Ethiopia, a country in which the higher-education sector has undergone tremendous changes, growing from just two universities at the beginning of the 1990s to 39 today.¹⁵ The vision of the ministry of education in Ethiopia is to “build an education and training system which assures quality and equity education and produces competent citizens.”¹⁶ It is seen as an “overall capacity building initiative” with a Higher Education Strategy Centre established in 2003, which advises the government “with due consideration to global situations.” It is emphasized that “Ethiopia must move into the knowledge age” and reckons that “academic and research linkage with similar institutions in the rest of the world is of paramount importance.” Despite the all too familiar vocabulary in the higher-education realm, there are specific elements due to what might be called the donor environment. The terminology used, at least when it comes to engagements with the Global North, is characterized by a language of development aid. The idea of “capacity-building” features most prominently, a concept absent from engagements within the Global South.

11 Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, Education as a Long-Term Priority, http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_2862/201010/109030.html. (accessed 22 May 2017).

12 Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban), Hanban News, 28 April 2017, http://english.hanban.org/article/2017-04/28/content_682699.htm (accessed 27 July 2017).

13 P. Kragelund and G. Hampwaye, The Confucius Institute at the University of Zambia: a new direction in the internationalisation of African higher education?, in: H.K. Adriansen, L. Møller Madsen and S. Jensen (eds.), *Higher Education and Capacity Building in Africa: The geography and power of knowledge under changing conditions*, Routledge Studies in African Development, New York 2016, pp. 94–96.

14 Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Tanzania, Universities’ role hailed in China-US Cultural Exchange, <http://tz.chineseembassy.org/eng/chinanews/t1100862.htm> (accessed 1 March 2015).

15 Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Ethiopia, <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/18871.html> (accessed 29 July 2017).

16 Ethiopian Government, Ministry of Education, Vision, Mission and Values, <http://www.moe.gov.et/English/Information/Pages/VisionMissionandValues.aspx> (accessed 28 January 2014).

Another thread that the discourse includes is the idea that Ethiopia can be transformed into a middle-income country by a “conscious application of science, technology and innovation,” which is seen as a major instrument to create wealth.¹⁷ In 2008, the Ethiopian government initiated a reform towards a more science-and-technology-oriented system, in which universities (except Addis Ababa University [AAU]) are required to change their intake by enrolling 70 per cent of students in science and technology and 30 per cent in the humanities and social sciences. While this policy caused outcry in the academic Global North, the Africa Youth Report nominated it as one of the six best initiatives in the education sector in Africa in 2011.¹⁸

There are many more examples like these, demonstrating how universities have come to be regarded with almost mythical, curative properties whose powers can address all societal ailments. The examples above demonstrate how government officials employ the university as a platform to construct self-serving narratives addressed to both internal and external audiences. Reconciling “the national” and “the global” fulfils a dual function: in more inward-looking perspectives, it becalms the fears of those who see themselves at risk of being changed or absorbed by globalization, while in other strains of thought, it helps to orient or assert a position in the reconfiguration of the global political order.

That, however, is only one perspective of the higher-education discourse, a convenient and comparatively uncontroversial platform from which politicians pontificate. On the opposite side of the rhetoric spectrum is the harsh criticism by students and members of faculty, denouncing what they see as a violation of fundamental values in higher education, pointedly referring to the university as in crisis. Student protests against the economization of universities in many parts of the world are an expression of this discontent. For universities in the Global South, there are additional layers of crisis, including colonial legacies and neo-imperial aspirations. Particularly visible are these conflicted processes in South Africa and India, for example. The protest movement #RhodesMustFall in South Africa, which was originally directed against the statue of Cecil Rhodes at the University of Cape Town in 2015, set off heated debates about the “decolonization” (or what some coin “Africanization”¹⁹) of the curriculum. In India, debates revolve around further privatization and increased access for foreign education providers. Critics disapprove of education becoming a commodity and service, accelerating “marketization, commercialization and privatization.”²⁰ The vice chancellor of Chitkara University

17 Ethiopian Government, Education Sector Development Program IV (ESDP IV), last modified August 2010, <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/574e244af3e39b830d278a2c367304af5b603109.pdf>, 11 (accessed 18 March 2015).

18 Economic Commission for Africa, Africa Youth Report 2011. Addressing the Youth Education and Employment Nexus in the New Global Economy, 50, https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/african_youth_report_2011_final.pdf (accessed 15 September 2011).

19 S. Jensen et al., Do ‘African’ Universities exist? Setting the Scene, in: H.K. Adriansen, L.M. Madsen and S. Jensen (eds.), Higher Education and Capacity Building in Africa: The Geography and Power of Knowledge under changing Conditions. London; New York 2016, pp. 12–32.

20 A. Kumar, Challenges Facing Indian Universities, in: Collection of Papers Based on a Seminar Organized by JUNTA in Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi 2004, p. 3.

(in Himachal Pradesh) adds what many fear: “India has seen numerous invaders who came and exploited our national ethos of infighting. Now the foreign universities are knocking at our doors.”²¹ This exemplifies what some scholars such as Rajani Naidoo have prompted readers to think about: cultural imperialism in academia and the fact that through border-crossing activities in higher education, power is exerted more subtly than through political and military means.²²

In assessing the discursive rescaling of universities as portals of globalization in the Global South, it is vital to look at the debates that were already led in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Much of what was debated is similar to the debates today, raising the question how much of the presumably new global discourse is actually novel in postcolonial contexts. The disputed and elevated role of universities as central actors in society has a long tradition in India, which is steeped in colonial and postcolonial history. In the light of independence, for example, literature about education in the first decades after 1947 was imbued with a high degree of pathos and introspection. The former professor and vice chancellor at Andhra University K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar wrote: “With our re-birth as a free nation, our education too should undergo the baptism of a re-birth in the spirit.”²³ He saw education as the foundation of the state that needed to be renewed and universities as “castles of indolence at their best” and “hotbeds of political action (or reaction) at their worst.” He reckoned that they were a “costly luxury, a piece of glittering foreign matter [...] that you can easily do without.” However, the same author equally passionately advocated that no education system can be imagined without universities and “rising like Phoenix from the ashes they shall grow in puissance and usefulness [...] being the state’s need more than its gift, the light of the nation and its many-chambered armory.” Reassessing the role of universities was particularly important in a postcolonial context. While elsewhere in the world, universities continued to indulge in centuries-old historical narratives and academic traditions, independence in India marked a sharp caesura that required considerable reflection about origins of academia and one’s own position. Universities were seen, on the one hand, as tools of the former oppressors and, on the other hand, as vital for reinventing the country.

Nested within global higher-education rhetoric is a wide array of perspectives. Some see universities as a key institution for boosting innovation and competition; others prefer to emphasize its conflicted role as an independent research institution with universal values, while others still point to it as a place where social conflicts and frictions are negotiated. What all of these discursive strands have in common is that the institution of the university stands at its centre, and active measures in contesting and managing its role are expected to continue from all sides. Global higher-education discourses contribute significantly to the rise of the university as a central institution in managing processes of

21 R. S. Grewal, *Bolster Higher Education*, in: *EDUTEch*, 3 (2012) 2, http://issuu.com/eduindia/docs/edu_issue-02_vol-03_february_2012/13 (accessed 18 June 2013).

22 R. Naidoo, *Rethinking Development: Higher Education and the New Imperialism* in: *Handbook on Globalization and Higher Education*, R. King, S. Marginson and R. Naidoo (eds.), Cheltenham 2011, pp. 41–42.

23 K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *A New Deal for Our Universities*, Calcutta 1951, pp. 2–4.

globalization. They are a constitutive element in the assessment of universities as portals of globalization.

3. The Empowered University

The question of whether a university has more power than in earlier times is subject of controversial debates. On the one hand, there are those arguing that the national level renders universities a vehicle for its goals – hence, not powerful per se but subject to power. Conversely, others emphasize that universities have learned to use their “wiggle room” to assert their preferred degree of implementation.

The notion of the empowered university is rooted in the complex landscape of changes in the 1980s and 1990s, when the growing financial constraints of public funding and the associated need for investment created new dynamics in higher education. Public-sector reforms aimed at boosting efficiency and effectiveness, provoking the emergence of the “responsive” and “entrepreneurial” university in higher education.²⁴ Barbara Sporn, for example, speaks of a new distribution of power and responsibility between the state and the university, in which universities gained considerable autonomy and capacity for self-steering; she adds that this included greater independence in decision-making over budgets and personnel, and more freedom to design and position the institution internationally, but it was, however, accompanied by more responsibility and accountability.²⁵ Burton R. Clark describes the developments in higher education as a curious mix of centralizing and decentralizing imperatives.²⁶ He argues that states take a greater interest in higher education and intend to shape their international involvement through universities. He reckons that in growing institutional complexity, the university level has become a place of interest for the state through which budgets can be allocated and foreign affairs be conducted. Simon Marginson adds more of a philosophical, place-based approach in emphasizing the paradoxical combination of place-bound concentrations of power, localized resources, and identity, with mobile and universal knowledge and discourse. This “antinomy between place and mobility,” he contends, was always an integral part of the university, but has moved to a more prominent position in contemporary globalization.²⁷ Anthony Welch describes the development for the Asia-Pacific region, where states retain a strong interest in higher education, but simultaneously move towards “devolution” at the institutional level.²⁸ He adds that accountability and rule by performance – “centralized decentralization” – might create only the illusion of institu-

24 B. Sporn, *Governance and Administration: Organizational and Structural Trends*, in: J. J. F. Forest and P. G. Altbach (eds.), *International Handbook of Higher Education: Part One: Global Themes and Contemporary Challenges*, Dordrecht 2011, pp. 144–145.

25 B. Sporn, *Governance and Administration* (fn. 24), pp. 147–153.

26 B. R. Clark, *The Problem of Complexity in Modern Higher Education* (fn. 3), p. 269.

27 S. Marginson, *Handbook of Globalization and Higher Education*, Cheltenham 2011, pp. 4–5.

28 A. Welch, *Higher Education in Southeast Asia: Blurring Borders, Changing Balance*, Abingdon 2011, p. 14.

tional freedom. Less developed is the debate about universities in countries that do not match the definition of a classic democracy. In these contexts, it is important to assess the relationships between universities and states under different conditions. Universities might simply be centralized and represent the state, which does not preclude them from being globally involved.

The assessment of scholars regarding the university's institutional role in shaping processes of globalization is hence not unanimous. Some argue that university autonomy has increased under the global condition, while others emphasize a continuous or even heightened national oversight. These discussions can easily drift into equal and mutually antagonistic ideological camps, overlooking the actual important issue: a university can be a portal acting on its own account, and it can be a portal if the government wants it to be one. In both scenarios, connectivity to the world can be strategically steered; it might just be a different set of actors with a different set of interests. In both scenarios, the university has gained significant importance and can be considered empowered under the global condition.

4. Global Rankings and Academic Hierarchy

Apart from the dynamics of state and university relations, there is another relevant vantage point from which the ascendance of the institution of the university in a global context can be analysed. With the emergence of the “entrepreneurial” and “responsive university” came the need for differentiation and, thus, a system for measuring result and output. Acting as a single institution in a competitive environment has changed the dynamics of higher education all over the world. It goes widely unnoticed that this process of globalization was instigated in East Asia. First was the central committee of the Communist Party of China, which launched Project 211 in 1995 to strengthen about 100 institutions of higher education and key disciplinary areas, with the aim of raising the international profile of Chinese higher education.²⁹ In South Korea, Brain Korea 21 was launched in 1999, while the 21st Century Centre of Excellence Programme in Japan was launched in 2002. Similar approaches such as the Exzellenzinitiative (Excellence Initiative) in Germany or the Pôle de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur (research and higher-education centres) in France followed in 2005/2006. These policies marked a significant shift from the traditional emphasis on egalitarianism among universities towards a hierarchical competition. Although it might not have been explicitly intended as such, the list of universities included for funding became a ranking method for international students, who based their decision on which university they should attend on these lists.³⁰ Today, examples can be found all over the world in which governments

29 L. Mei and Ch. Qiongqiong, *Globalization* (fn. 10), pp. 244–245.

30 Cf. E. Fernández Darraz, *Hochschulprivatisierung und akademische Freiheit. Jenseits von Markt und Staat: Hochschulen in der Weltgesellschaft*, Bielefeld 2010.

channel funds to particular institutions, aiming to make them research or world-class universities.

Global rankings, too, were instigated first in China, when in 2003 the Shanghai Jiao Tong University's Institute of Higher Education, on behalf of the Chinese government, developed a methodology to measure research universities worldwide. It was intended to better assess the performance of Chinese universities in a global comparison, but triggered a huge response and exponential growth in the field. In 2011, there were ten different global rankings with few corners of the world that "appear to be immune from the frenzy."³¹ Global rankings have become a source of information for students, parents, industrial partners, philanthropic funding, a policy instrument for governments, and a management tool for universities.³² Rankings have contributed to unprecedented exposure for individual universities, creating a situation in which they can no longer hide behind the protective shields of national academic traditions. They propel the politically heightened role of universities further.

What is less talked about is who drives the ranking process. Here, too, is room for debate. Marginson argues that rankings are shifting the power of shaping a university's identity to the ratings agencies and the market, bypassing national governments along the way.³³ While this idea of a "market" might apply to only very specific higher-education contexts, Hazelkorn's perspective of seeing universities as "fixtures" of their state and national policy that have agency and define their own strategies can be applied in a broader context.³⁴

The proliferation of global ranking systems and their corresponding influence is evident by the fervour with which top universities highlight their rankings on websites and other platforms. When the rankings emerged, criticism (especially from European universities, which were largely absent in initial rankings) was much more axiomatic than today. For example, the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) in Paris, France, tore apart the methodology of the Shanghai Ranking when it did not end up in the rankings as expected. A decade later, the website of the ENS displays its position in the QS World University Rankings, the Centre for World University Rankings (CWUR), the Shanghai and Times Higher Education Ranking.³⁵ It deserves highlighting that a prestigious European university advertises its evaluation by a ranking originating in China; it would have been unthinkable some 20 years ago, and it can be seen as change in global academic hierarchies. Individual universities are significantly more exposed than before, and those appearing frequently in global rankings even more so.

31 E. Hazelkorn, *Measuring world-class Excellence and the Global Obsession with Rankings*, in: *Handbook of Globalization and Higher Education*, Cheltenham 2011, p. 497.

32 E. Hazelkorn, *Rankings and the Battle for world-class Excellence: Institutional Strategies and Policy Choices*, in: *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 21 (2009) 1, p. 9.

33 S. Marginson, *Prospects of Higher Education: Globalization, Market Competition, Public Goods and the Future of the University*, Rotterdam: 2007, pp. 80–81; 98.

34 E. Hazelkorn, *Rankings* (fn. 32), pp. 10; 19.

35 École Normale Supérieure, *L'ENS internationalement reconnue*, <http://www.ens.fr/l-ecole-normale-superieure/chiffres-cles-et-classements-internationaux/classements-internationaux> (accessed 1 November 2014).

Similar to what Saskia Sassen stated for global cities, one could argue that these elite universities constitute nodal points in the worldwide higher-education landscape, just like global cities do in the financial sector.³⁶ They bundle the production and dissemination of knowledge and educate an elite who is in charge of instigating and controlling processes of globalization. One could suggest that these elite universities are probably best suited to be portals of globalization. In doing so, one does, however, create another Western-centric idea, as the great majority of these elite universities are not located in the Global South (only 6 of the top 100 universities in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings are not in Europe or the United States³⁷). It nourishes world views such as Ben Wildavsky's, who speaks of a widely shared understanding that world-class institutions will be closely modelled on the Western research university (and by "Western," he means the "hugely successful American research university").³⁸ For the rest of the world, he sees "Chinese Ivy Leagues," "India far behind China and other nations," and "academic mediocrity" in Western Europe. Self-centredness and claiming global pre-eminence in academia is not a prerogative of American scholars, which is exemplified also by Thorsten Nybom, who talks about a "golden English triangle" (Cambridge, London, and Oxford).³⁹

Just like in theories about economic globalization, there is the idea of a core in global academia. Higher education on a global scale is often displayed as divided into an "academic west" and an "academic rest," in affirmative as well as critical perspectives. This bipolar imagination of global academia – steeped in histories of colonial and non-colonial spaces, in the East and West of Cold War times, and globalization theories essentializing centre and periphery – obfuscates other linkages and transnational entanglements. Global rankings and the ideas of an academic centre in the West or Global North distract and do not help in understanding processes of globalization in the Global South. Instead of stiffening in reverence for a few hallowed universities, looking at universities in the Global South can reveal a very different topography of higher education.

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), for example, is an intellectual powerhouse and centre of area studies in India. The campus of the university is located in the capital, New Delhi, where the proximity to decision makers, as well as its reputation and institutional history after its foundation in 1969, has effectively rendered JNU a steering wheel for the greater higher-education and political sector in India. The JNU historian Rakesh Batabyal called it "perhaps India's grandest nationalist institution."⁴⁰ Graduates of this university go on to become leaders in politics, teachers throughout the country, and

36 S. Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, Thousand Oaks, CA 2007, p. 196.

37 Times Higher Education: World University Ranking 2015/2016, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2016> (accessed 20 July 2017).

38 B. Wildavsky, *The Great Brain Race. How Global Universities Are Reshaping the World*, Princeton: 2010, pp. 70–75.

39 T. Nybom, *Creative Intellectual Destruction of Destructive Political Creativity? Critical Reflections on the Future of European 'Knowledge Production'*, in: *The European Research University. A Historical Parenthesis?*, New York 2006, p. 9.

40 R. Batabyal, *JNU: The Making of a University*, Delhi 2014.

faculty in universities. This is similar to Addis Ababa University (AAU), to name another example of a highly important university, which was founded initially as a college in 1950 and became the first university in Ethiopia; it maintains its central role until today. AAU, like JNU, is a hub for the humanities, and the social and political sciences. It enjoys an exceptional reputation within Ethiopia and increasingly throughout the East African region. AAU and JNU are both elite universities within their countries and the wider region, and central in the dissemination and production of knowledge. Trying to understand Ethiopian and Indian higher education in a global context cannot be achieved without taking a closer look at those specific universities that educate their elite and provide them with knowledge about the world and their role in it.

Academic hierarchies praising American and English higher education start crumbling as rankings reveal the inequality of institutions within a country. Throughout the world, differentiation and funding of excellence and world-class universities change higher-education systems, making some universities more important than others. This requires other perspectives from which higher education can be analysed. Portals of globalization can capture this development and provides impetus for debates. Here, too, it might be particularly insightful to look at the experience in the Global South, as there are many countries in which a few or even a singular university have been remarkably central in higher education for decades.

5. The University as Mobility Hub

Migration is a key topic in globalization research, and its magnitude is reflected in the numerous theories and focus groups that have emerged. While migration has often been conceptualized as border-transgressing movements, a focus on those institutions steering and managing the flows of people is often missing but highly relevant for the portals of globalization framework. To this end, this section discusses universities and their role in student mobility.

The mobility of international students increased from 0.8 million in 1975 to 1.7 million in 1995 and 4.1 million in 2013.⁴¹ Asia has a particularly important role in this context: in 2012, 694,400 Chinese students studied abroad, meaning that one in every six internationally mobile students is now from China.⁴² China, India, and South Korea are the world's leading sources of international students, and together they account for more than a quarter of all students studying outside their home countries.⁴³ Student mobility is a process largely driven by students from non-western countries, a fact that is often overlooked by assessing impacts on host institutions or debates about brain drain.

41 UNESCO, Long-term growth of tertiary-level international students worldwide 1975-2013, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/1-4_growth_international_students.pdf (accessed 18 May 2017).

42 UNESCO Science Report, Towards 2030, Paris 2015, p. 80.

43 ICEF Monitor, The State of International Student Mobility in 2015, <http://monitor.icef.com/2015/11/the-state-of-international-student-mobility-in-2015/> (accessed 18 May 2017).

Students from Africa are less mobile because of the lower overall enrolment in tertiary education. In 2015, 373,000 students from Africa studied abroad, with Nigeria and Morocco being the biggest “sending” countries.⁴⁴ Most students from sub-Saharan countries study in France and the United Kingdom, reflecting long-term trends, yet a shifting pattern of African student mobility can be observed: the percentage of those favouring a traditional European destination declined in favour of options in the Middle East and Africa itself; Saudi Arabia and Ghana had the biggest growth rates in 2015.⁴⁵ Student mobility has increased significantly, and there are no signs of abating. Universities have been brought to the fore as the institution in charge of hosting and sending these 4 million students across the globe. The role of the Global South and in particular Africa in the foreseeable future needs to be highlighted.

The most common narrative of student mobility is the one just presented: students from big “source countries” departing for the big “host countries.” Unjustly forgotten are the other perspectives not aggregated at national level. To illustrate this point, student mobility at a single university, JNU, shall serve as an example. The number of international students annually admitted at JNU is defined through an admission quota: 15%. It needs to be seen as a maximum, as the *de facto* enrolment of international students at JNU is lower and revolves around four per cent.⁴⁶ Half of seats are reserved for international students applying through an entrance examination, and the other half for candidates applying “*in absentia*,” meaning they do not have to take a test but are admitted through exchange agreements.⁴⁷ In order to facilitate entrance examinations abroad, JNU has a centre outside of India, in Kathmandu, Nepal, where applicants can take the test. Admission is granted based on merit and a fixed number of seats in each programme.⁴⁸

This is an example of mechanisms that a university developed to manage the flow of international students. Through a quota and the basis of merit, the inflow of international students is regulated. A second mechanism in steering the flows of students is the existence of a physical representation in Nepal (for entrance examinations), which increases the probability of Nepalese students being admitted, as they do not have to finance a costly trip to New Delhi. There are no such centres in other neighbouring countries. This has an impact on border-transcending mobility and shapes the fabric of the international student body at JNU. A third mechanism is that half of the international students can be admitted “*in absentia*,” which provides leeway to enrol students who join through exchange agreements that JNU signed with cooperation partners; these students do not have to take an entrance exam. The admission mechanisms, therefore, have fixed and

44 La mobilité internationale des étudiants africains, in: Campus France, 16 (2017), http://ressources.campusfrance.org/publi_institu/etude_prospect/mobilite_continent/fr/note_16_hs_fr.pdf (accessed 18 May 2017).

45 ICEF Monitor, New study highlights shifting patterns of African student mobility, 2016, <http://monitor.icef.com/2016/12/new-study-highlights-shifting-patterns-african-student-mobility/> (accessed 18 May 2017).

46 JNU, Annual Reports 2014–2015 and 2015–2016, <https://www.jnu.ac.in/report> (accessed 28 May 2017).

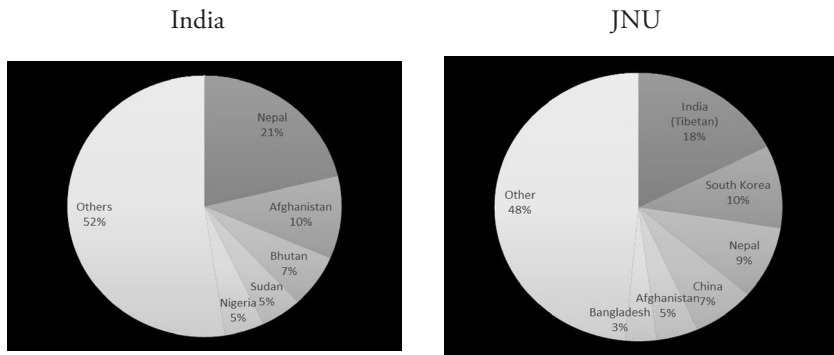
47 JNU, Annual Report, 2015–2016, https://www.jnu.ac.in/sites/default/files/46AnnualReport_Eng_0.pdf, 16 (accessed 28 May 2017).

48 JNU, Annual Report, 2014–2015, https://www.jnu.ac.in/sites/default/files/45AnnualReport_Eng.pdf, 4 (accessed 28 May 2017).

flexible components. Admission to JNU is highly contested, as it is a sought-after elite university, which is why the selection procedures for local and international students had to be clearly defined. Yet, at the same time, they had to remain flexible to ensure a diverse background of international students. These admission mechanisms are continuously negotiated at the university, underlining the role it has in shaping the flow of international students.

Further insight into student mobility can be drawn from a juxtaposition of incoming international students at national and university level. To this end, Figure 1 below illustrates the countries of origin of international students in India and at JNU.

Figure 1: International Students in India and at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Countries of Origin, National vs. University Level, 2015/2016⁴⁹



At national as well as university level, the international student body can be considered diverse, as opposed to universities where students come from predominantly two or three countries. Another similarity that the comparison highlights, is the significance of students from Nepal; they are the largest group of international students in India and third at JNU. India shares a border with Nepal, where higher education at graduate level faces severe challenges. The prevalence of Nepalese students might, therefore, not come as a surprise, given the geographical proximity. JNU, however, located in New Delhi, not far from the border and with a centre for entrance examinations in Kathmandu, could have justified equal or even higher enrolment numbers from Nepal, which is, however, not the case. The major difference in the comparison are students from South Korea and China, who do not register at any significant level in India in general, but form big groups of international students at JNU. This can be explained by the close cooperation that JNU maintains with Chinese and Korean higher-education institutions, a particularity which holds true for JNU but not at national level. Another JNU particularity is the number

49 Institute of International Education, Project Atlas, Association of Indian Universities, <https://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Insights/Project-Atlas/Explore-Data/India> (accessed 18 May 2017).

of students from Tibet, which form the biggest group of international students; they have been among the biggest groups of international students at JNU for years. These students are the progeny of the Tibetan diaspora, who followed the Dalai Lama into exile during the first wave of emigration in 1959. They are members of the second and third generation, who were born and grew up in the north of India without Chinese or Indian citizenship. A member of the diaspora, who was once a student at JNU, explained in an interview that the enrolment of students with this background caused political frictions on campus, when the question first came up about ten years ago.⁵⁰ Administrators and professors discussed the political ramifications of the inclusion of these students. Once a precedent was created, more students from the diaspora joined JNU, which makes this university probably the single most important institution in educating the Tibetan elite in India, an insight that could not have been revealed by looking solely at the national level of student mobility.

The annual reports at JNU list the countries of origin of international students. In previous years, Tibet was mentioned as one of them, which is no longer the case. According to the former representative of the International Students Association⁵¹, this is a sign of how admission is continuously contested. The unclarified citizenship of Tibetan students created difficulties as to which category these students belong: should they count as Indian or international students? Given that not all seats of international students could be filled with qualified candidates, the Tibetan students were counted as international students, leaving sought-after seats in the other category to Indian students. This explains how the category “Tibet” came into existence among the countries of origin, even though it is not a country. In 2015, however, this category, which existed for about ten years, was renamed and is now called “Indian” – within the international-student category.

Three conclusions can be derived from the juxtaposition of mobility data on national and university level. First, mobility figures for entire countries can hide university-specific global connectedness. Exemplified by JNU is the concentration of students from South Korea, China, and the Tibetan diaspora, which gives insights as to which universities and regions the university is most connected to in terms of student mobility. Secondly, the mechanisms of admission and statistics about countries of origin, show how universities influence the quantity and directionality of international-student mobility, showing that they strategically steer global flows and are, thus, functioning as portals of globalization. Thirdly, universities might have to deal with the fallouts from global political conflicts, exemplified here by the conflicts about enrolling students from the Tibetan community. This is nothing less than the manifestation and negotiation of a global political conflict. Unresolved by states, the university had to deal with the matter, taking on yet another function in actively shaping globalization processes.

50 Interview conducted in spring 2011 with a former Tibetan student at JNU.

51 Information acquired through e-mail exchange in summer 2017.

6. Conclusion

This article argued that a perspective on universities as portals of globalization and a special emphasis on the Global South can be useful to uncover complex re-spatialization and rescaling processes in global higher education. The first point showed how universities receive greater attention through discursive rescaling. A discourse in higher education has developed in which the same set of ideas and keywords can be found all over the world. Universities have ascended in the hierarchy of institutions that are expected to master the challenges of globalization. This is the essence of my first argument: universities are portals of globalization because governments all over the world charge higher-education institutions with monumental importance and expect them to ensure the competitiveness of their nations in the knowledge age. However, this does not necessarily mean that all of what is said turns into reality. Moreover, in this discourse of newness lies the danger of overlooking historical experience, as much of what is argued today resembles the debates from the independence and postcolonial era in the Global South.

The second argument revolves around a new distribution of power and responsibility between the state and the university. Newly gained institutional power in combination with increased competition put universities at the centre of the political agenda, enabling them to shape processes of globalization more than ever before, and in some respects rendering the national level less influential. While universities acquired new agency on the global stage, nation states developed new strategies of making use of them as portals of globalization.

A third argument looked at the role of global rankings and how they created greater exposure and awareness of individual universities. Propelled by governmental funding of high-calibre institutes, differentiation in higher education continues, raising questions as to how useful aggregated data on the national level still is. Understanding universities and their role in shaping processes of globalization requires institution-specific research. Global rankings and conventional imaginations of academic hierarchies continue to exist, leaving portals of the Global South unexplored. This is a missed opportunity, as there are many universities that are highly relevant in shaping national as well as global developments. Particularly rich is the history of universities in the Global South, as they had to continuously manage global involvement in imperial, colonial, postcolonial, Cold War, and Washington Consensus times.

The fourth argument concerns student mobility which has increased significantly, and universities have been brought to the fore as the institution in charge of hosting and sending. The portal is actively used to steer the quantity and directionality of student mobility. Some of the processes are instigated by the universities that strategically shape their international profiles, by focusing on specific regions or disciplines through establishing and negotiating quotas and terms of admission, and by actively looking for cooperation partners. Some processes emerge from the outside, might be connected to greater political affairs, and are forced upon the university, which then has to deal with it. Universities have always facilitated border-transcending mobility, but the significant

increase in quantity has made the university one of the most important institutions in channelling and shaping the flow of people.

The four arguments of this article provide grounds to see the university as a vital part in shaping processes of globalization. Depending on the university, there might be limitations, and going as far as calling every university a portal of globalization is probably too absolute. One might be more inclined to see it as a methodological lens rather than a static definition in globalization theory. The benefits of this place-based approach are, however, obvious: there is no getting around the university in understanding how globalization works in the knowledge age.