

13 Scenarios and Metaphors for (Un)thinking Change in Higher Education

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I shall conclude these comments by turning to Geertz' claim that 'we have come to such a point in the moral history of the world that we are obliged to think about (cultural) diversity rather differently than we have been used to thinking about it'. He develops this point by saying that 'we are living more and more in the midst of an enormous collage', that 'the world is coming at each of its local points to look more like a Kuwaiti bazaar than like an English gentlemen's club'. These latter descriptions seem right to me...

Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (1995)

On the CHEPS Scenarios

Do the three scenarios presented by CHEPS in 2004 celebrate what Fukuyama (1992) has termed the 'end of history'? This is the first thought that occurs to us as we begin writing our contribution. Why? Because the three scenarios presented appear to take for granted that present forms of political regulation and economic development will still be dominant as separate and independent configurations in 15 years time. That is, in the first scenario, the dominant form of regulation will reproduce the logic of the nation-state in the form of Centralia, City of the Sun, a European mega-nation. In a similar way the logic of the 'network society', whose emergence we are now witnessing, will reproduce itself at the European level as Octavia, the Spider-Web City. Finally, *Vitis Vinifera* appears as the crystallisation of market (de)regulation, whose 'hand is sighted on the occasional clear day'. In other words, as heuristic models the three scenarios appear to echo more what is currently happening than that which will occur in the near future.

At the same time, these scenarios appear to ignore other potential ways to conceive the regulation of the European space. For example, in recent work (Magalhães and Stoer, 2003; Stoer and Magalhães, 2004), we pointed out the way in which *with, against and through* the nation-state, the network society and the market might develop. We have attempted to conceptualise this new form of regulation and its development by using the metaphor of the *bazaar* (hence the notion of *Europe as a bazaar*). Using this as a basis we will develop our thoughts on the CHEPS scenarios.

The starting point for this requires reference to the fact that the nation-state, the network and the market are, at present, part of the process of the reconfiguration of capitalism. Up to the 1970s, capitalism was organised in strict accordance with state regulations. Some economists refer to this harmonious relationship between accumulation and regulation as a 'virtuous circle': mass production was articulated

with mass consumption, the latter being guaranteed by the welfare action of the state. As part of the 'virtuous circle', the state generously funded universities which, in turn, supplied the state, firms and industry with qualified human resources.

The oil crisis of the 1970s was the first to dent this circle. Production ceased being resource-driven and became demand-driven, leading to the now famous forms of 'just-in-time' and 'just-for-you' production. In turn welfare regulation, based on universal rights and duties, gave way to a form of regulation increasingly based on individualisation and the privatisation of social needs. Even citizenship, as it was known under modernity, suffered from these processes, leading to what one may term the ongoing reconfiguration of the social contract (Magalhães and Stoer, 2003). Individuals condemned to remain as such, have increasingly come to demand the return of the sovereignty that they exchanged for state protection. It is in this situation of both 'hard' ('you are nothing but an individual') and 'soft' ('if I am nothing but an individual then I want my sovereignty back') capitalism that economic determination simultaneously becomes more severe and more open to other forms of social action.¹ It is crucial to understand this situation if one wishes to explain why, as the state rolls back, individuals and groups seek university education in order to write their own life stories (as suggested by Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994), rather than having the state or market write it for them.

These are the developments in capitalism and state regulation that the CHEPS scenarios appear to underestimate. Indeed, the scenarios seem to separate things which are currently developing simultaneously: attributed citizenship, the process of individualisation/individuation and the process of identity construction of individuals and groups mediated through consumption. The Octavia scenario characterises society as 'the blurring of boundaries between previously functionally differentiated subsystems'. However, this scenario does not appear to take seriously the implications of such blurring. It is as if the web were the centre of the social link, but in delegating the structuring elements of citizenship and the fluidity of identity construction to the other two scenarios, it empties this scenario of that which is most central to it, the idea that 'society is not characterised by the triumph of one rationality over others'.

Of course we recognise the scenario's authors separated these characteristics in order to explore their heuristic value. However for the sake of our argument, it is vital to be able to distinguish the articulations, or lack thereof, between the political (the reconfiguration of citizenship), the economic (the growth of the individualised and privatised society) and the cultural (identity affirmation and construction). In our argument, Europe develops through the web (in the words of Castells, (2001) 'Europe as a network state') in the context of the reconfiguration of production, distribution and consumption articulating, in the process, cultural identities, both individual and group. In other words, the impact of globalisation and the coinciding 'revolution' in information and communication technologies appears to be leading towards a situation

¹ It is this process of 'individualisation' and 'individuation' that is referred to by Beck in *Risk Society* (1992).

where political, economic and cultural processes intertwine to the extent that it is often difficult to distinguish between them (for example, can one separate today the act of consumption – e.g., buying a shirt – from the construction of identity – what kind of shirt should I buy?). It is for this reason that our logic, as opposed to the logic which led to the construction of the three CHEPS scenarios, places more emphasis on that which frames higher education and less on higher education itself. To us it is the framework within which higher education evolves that is central to understanding the nature of higher education itself, including its development and the implications this may have for individuals, groups and society as a whole.

On the Kuwaiti bazaar

With reference to the citation above we agree with both Rorty and Geertz that the world, let alone Europe, is increasingly resembling a *Kuwaiti bazaar* rather than an *exclusive English club*. The latter represents the ultimate incommensurability of local and cultural differences: the 'Portugueseness' of the Portuguese, the 'Englishness' of the English, the 'Arabian character' of the Arabs. In fact, cultural differences affirmed by groups and individuals appear to be reconfiguring the concept of citizenship, to the extent that citizenship is reclaimed not on the basis of that which people hold in common (territory, language, religion, ethnic belonging, etc.) but rather on that which makes them different (also language, religion, ethnic belonging, sexual identity, life style, etc.). It is the network society, as both a medium and mediator, in the context of a reconfigured capitalism where knowledge is increasingly central to the production process and where the needs of individuals and groups are simultaneously privatised and reflexively articulated in new forms of production, distribution and consumption, that provides the web of social relations promoting the exercise and development of new citizenship forms.

In this sense the metaphor of the *bazaar* arises as an interesting way of (un)thinking both the context of the development of higher education and the different models of higher education being proposed. If the *bazaar* were to be defined as a scenario, it would have, at a minimum, the following characteristics:

1. a public space (political, economic, social, cultural) that as such is susceptible to being regulated;
2. a public space that enables a variety of configurations in different parts of the world, but whose dominant configuration results from it being configured by the state (which, although suffering reconfiguration, shows no sign of losing its strength over the next fifteen years) and the market (via the private nature of commodities and the public nature of consumption);
3. a public space that accepts the legitimacy of individuals regulating their own lives ('I pay my taxes (duty), but I want to educate my children (right) as I think they ought to be educated');
4. a public space that constitutes a variable geometry (at the same time consensual and arbitrary and, therefore, fragile) whose degree of variation depends upon the degree of power and conflict that exists between social, cultural and economic differences.

On Higher Education in the Bazaar

In former work (Stoer, Magalhães and Rodrigues, 2004; Magalhães and Stoer, 2005), and on the basis of what has been said previously, we have developed four metaphors for thinking about European construction: the flag, the association, the network and the bazaar. These metaphors when related to higher education translate into the following table.

Metaphors	Political and Economic Indicators	Form of Higher Education
Flag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territory-based • National identity 	Modern University
Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deterritorialised • Cosmopolitan causes 	University of ideas as World Heritage
Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulation/production of information/knowledge 	Entrepreneurial University
Bazaar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge producer • Celebration of cultural diversity; • World presence on the web of informational capitalism (Castells, 1996); • Meeting place for differences, in all their incommensurability, and negotiation among them 	University of the Europe of Knowledge

On the basis of this framework, we will attempt a dialogue with the three CHEPS scenarios for higher education in 2020, confronting them with the metaphors developed and discussing the consequences for higher educational institutions with regard to each: from the scenario that conceives of the university as central, both at the national and European levels, to the scenario where the concepts of both the university and of higher education itself are dissolved into multiple institutions.

The metaphors are different from the scenarios to the extent that their use is totally heuristic, while the scenarios present alternative visions of reality. The metaphors are an analytical device useful for identifying layers of a complex reality, whereas the scenarios have the tendency to treat each layer as if it were itself a reality. The metaphor of the bazaar attempts to portray all the layers, not in the sense of dissolving the various layers in some overarching synthesis, but rather in the sense of preserving their, and its own, specificities. For this reason, the metaphors constitute a good point of departure for discussing the three CHEPS scenarios.

In the first place, such an approach allows one to recognise that, rather than articulation, there is considerable overlapping, with regard to higher education, of the second and the third scenarios. Even if one recognises that in the third there exists an increase of emphasis on institutional autonomy in the attribution of a central role to the institutions themselves in the development of higher education, as well as an increase in the degree of deregulation of the system and of institutions, it is still evident that the networking process is at the heart of *Vitis Vinifera*. In fact, even when recognising that the triumph of the market coordination system (conceived as 'a far more nuanced analytical appreciation') is clearer in this third scenario, it cannot be denied that this process can only take place via the network. Furthermore, with regard to higher

education, the design proposed for the concept and respective institutions can only be distinguished by degree: the second scenario refers to an accreditation agency (the 'European Accreditation Network') that works directly with the universities to assure the 'smallest common denominator', the third refers to a 'data-warehouse for higher education programmes' that is conceived as 'a body not to be messed with'; the second speaks of 3,500 education providers and the third speaks of 6,000. In addition, the degree of 'fuzziness', although only distinctly referred to in the scenario of *Octavia*, can equally be applied to the *Vitis Vinifera* scenario.

In different ways, both the metaphors and the scenarios take knowledge as central to both higher education and economy. The metaphor of the *flag* underlines that which is normally identified with the perspective of Europe as a mega-nation. The *Centralia* scenario appears to echo this perspective, by implying that *having a possible future* relates to *having a long past*. Both the Humboldtian and the Napoleonic universities, at the same time that they celebrated the universal character of knowledge, were framed by a national level system. The education systems created within the scope of the consolidation of the nation-state were, and, to a certain extent, still are, the disseminating mechanism of this knowledge and of this national character and, as such, are part of the tension between the universality of the former and the particularity of the latter. *Centralia* updates, to a certain extent, this conception of the university. To turn higher education into a central device for making Europe an economically viable zone vis-à-vis other mega-nations a development strategy is outlined centred on knowledge that feeds a process of regulation through deregulation. The use of this metaphor appears to make the key role of the 'European state' as manager more evident, even if via remote control, not only of the privatisation of social needs but also as the preserver of traditional, meaning attributed, citizenship.

In the sequence of work carried out by Beck (1994), it appears that one of the principal problems that knowledge faces is its own management. In other words, after that which he terms a 'first scientisation', the process through which modern science (in its attempt to impose human design on nature) de-codified and transformed (via technology) reality (both social and natural), we are now confronting the task of managing the impact of this process within the scope of a 'second scientisation'. Here, taking into account both the impact and the consequences of the first scientisation (for example, the effects on health of chemical fertilisers, the effects of modern medicine on the increase in life expectancy, etc.), science is constantly obliged to justify not only itself but also to demonstrate its relevance due to the risks it has created for humanity. In this sense, the British sociologist, Anthony Giddens (1990) has referred to the impact of the Chernobyl disaster on the world community as a challenge for science to reflect upon itself. Cosmopolitan causes find here not only a basis for the legitimation of new forms of association ('green causes', 'peace causes', 'the cause of the free movement of peoples and goods', 'causes related to the end of patriarchy', 'the cause of the social economy', and so on) but also place emphasis on the social and cultural relevance of knowledge itself. These forms of association do not arise as absolute alternatives to capitalist development; instead they are articulated by new forms of citizenship that develop in and against such development. This posture of being in and against finds its source of dissemination in the network (web), itself a

product of 'hard' and 'soft' capitalism. It is this sort of articulation that the scenarios of Octavia and Vitis Vinifera apparently underestimate. In these scenarios higher education appears to dissolve in the diversity of the appeals made by the economic, social and cultural worlds. Our metaphor suggests, however, that the dissolution of the idea of higher education is itself an area of conflict and debate, and not only the object of thought of more-or-less-occupied philosophers.

On the other hand, the management of knowledge now involves dealing with increasingly plural and contextualised knowledges that claim a place in higher education. This implies, in Santos' (1994) words, the substitution of the 'idea of the university' by the 'university of ideas'. However, if it is true that the university has lost hegemony as knowledge producer and disseminator, this does not mean that the university has totally lost social and political responsibility. On the contrary, its responsibility now depends not only on consolidating national culture but, even more importantly, on promoting the articulation between different forms of culture and knowledge produced. The scenarios, however, appear to function as if, between the entrepreneurialism of individuals and groups and the unbearable weight of the Humboldtian university, nothing else is possible.

The metaphor of the bazaar as a heuristic device for (un)thinking change in higher education suggests the construction of Europe and of higher education as a multiple and heterogeneous process. In the same way that one finds a variety of intense smells, sounds and sights in the bazaar, one also finds in Europe a vast variety of projects, both national and trans-national, trends, with regard to institutional organisation and governance, and different ways of thinking with regard to the very nature of the structure of the system of higher education. Higher education itself is living an identity crisis (Magalhães, 2001) that is reflected in the manner in which the Bologna process is being managed, a process that appears to be divided between an option for post-secondary education and the 'good old' higher education dominant under the metaphor of the flag.

The metaphor of the bazaar assumes this somewhat cacophonous situation not as a development stage that will lead to a better and more tidy future but as a *de facto* situation that expresses the variable political, cultural and economic geometry referred to above. The heterogeneity of higher education and its continuing crisis in the context of an increasingly knowledge-intensive society constitutes, indeed, to paraphrase a prophet of 20th century social change, a 'permanent revolution'. Whether regulation takes place via the market, the state, or even reflexive consumers, higher education will not easily be domesticated in a tidy idea. This does not mean that one takes a position of 'anything goes'. It means, rather, taking on the assumption that privileged forms of higher education are being both dissolved and reinforced. On the one hand, without wishing to deny the positional value of higher education, the demands of the knowledge society, taking into account its different levels and seen from the perspective of what we have termed 'soft' capitalism, require diverse higher education forms. On the other hand, in order to escape from the dilemmas placed by the option between mass higher education and the 'massification' of higher education, traditional

forms of higher education tend to promote the renewal, on the basis of 'hard' capitalism, of distinction strategies and develop into hybrid forms of traditional collegiate institutions and entrepreneurial organisations.

In contrast to the CHEPS scenarios, in the bazaar, the Oxbridge model will flourish in the same space as two- to three-year community college courses, national universities will coincide with higher education institutions based on e-learning, institutions dedicated solely to research will co-exist with institutions whose fundamental emphasis is on teaching, scientific knowledge (both mode 1 and 2) will be confronted with other more contextualised knowledges and biographical projects, both individual and group, that will be interiorised as organisational profiles ('the greening of the universities', 'the inclusive university', 'the non-patriarchal university', 'the non-racist university', 'the entrepreneurial university', 'the indigenous university'), making higher education not only heterogeneous but also a site of conflicts and incommensurabilities.

In summary, our comment on the CHEPS scenarios takes as a starting point the idea that in order to consider what will happen to higher education in the near future, one needs to look at the context within which it will develop. We have summarised this context as one of both 'soft' and 'hard' capitalism where social and individual reflexivity take on an increasingly important role. In this context, higher education is made up of the tension between individuals and groups who insist on writing their own scripts with regard to higher education and top-down political projects that insist on writing these scripts for them.

Our emphasis on the intertwining of 'soft' and 'hard' capitalism leads us to stress the mixed nature of the sociological and economic characteristics of present contexts. It is this mixture that has led us to develop the metaphor of the bazaar. In the bazaar, the scenarios do not arise as alternatives, nor as mere heterogeneity but rather as a relational logic of political, economic and cultural demands and needs. As referred to above, the metaphor of the bazaar does not suggest a better and more tidy future but, rather, a *de facto* situation that expresses the variable political, cultural and economic geometry of both Europe and higher education.

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