Knowledge society/knowledge economy discourse in internationalisation of higher education
- A Case study in governmentality

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Abstract

This paper discusses the ways in which university and national level actors in Finland and the Netherlands articulate the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse in their understandings of internationalisation of higher education. This paper argues that the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse produces a political rationality through which universities are governed and govern themselves. In the context of internationalisation of higher education, this discourse is articulated in terms of the competitiveness of the universities and the international skills of the individuals as being the main aims of internationalisation and as main attributes of internationality. The rationality provided by the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse contributes on the one hand to creating universities as enterprising, autonomous, competing actors in the global labour and education market, and on the other hand continue to tightly connected them to the project of national competitiveness in the era of globalisation. On the other hand, the internal norms, values and practises of the universities contribute to the particular ways in which the discourse is articulated by them.

Introduction

The process of globalisation and the emergence of knowledge economy/knowledge society have been influential to the efforts undertaken by the most European countries and universities to introduce internationalisation policies and strategies over the last decade and a half (Huisman & van der Wende 2004, Kälvemark & van der Wende 1997). Internationalisation in this context is seen as “a systemic, sustained effort at making higher education more responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalisation of societies, economy and labour markets” (Kälvemark & van der Wende, 1997, 19). The current discussion around internationalisation of higher education covers the older notions of student and staff mobility, internationalisation of curricula, new emerging forms in international governance and policy making such as the Bologna process aimed at creating the European Higher Education Area by 2010 but also the growth of the global markets for higher education. (See e.g. Huisman & van der Wende 2004, Teichler 2004, Larsen et al. 2004).

The higher education systems in both countries, Finland and the Netherlands have faced similar type, large scale changes since the mid 1990′s. The dutch higher education system is a binary system consisting of 13 research universities and 50 hogescholen, that is, professional higher education institutions or polytechnics. Additionally the sector includes a limited number of designated, specific higher education institutions such as theological colleges. The 1993 Higher education and research act redefined the relationship between the state and the universities, replacing detailed ex ante control with increased institutional autonomy and ex post control. The government was, however, left with the task to provide the over all policy as well as with means to intervene in order to prevent unacceptable developments. The modernisation of university governance structures in 1997 strengthened the managerial positions vis-à-vis the collegial ones.  The funding of higher education institutions consists of three flows of funding, firstly, the block grant and the other core funds from the ministry of education, secondly research council funding and thirdly funding from contract teaching and research. Tuition fees make up a small percentage of funding. Since 2000, the majority of public funding has been allocated based on a performance-based allocation model consisting of teaching and research component with various indicators. The recent development in the sector include the introduction of the bachelor-master structure and accreditation procedures (Boezerooy 2003). The latest internationalisation policy from 2002 lays down three strategic goals, namely “1) to expand the opportunities for learners to acquire an international outlook, 2) to raise the profile of Dutch higher educational establishmmt on the international market for education and 3) to learn from and cooperate with other countries at central level”. (Ministry of education, culture and science 2002.)

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1 The first draft of this paper was presented at the SRHE Post-graduate student conference 14.12.2004 in Bristol, UK.
The Finnish higher education system is also a binary system consisting of 20 universities and 29 ammattikorkeakoulu, polytechnics, both regulated by their respective legislation. The new university act in 1998 increased the university autonomy by delegating various governance issues for the universities themselves to decide. However, the ministry of education, besides deciding on the general policies, retain the authority to distribute educational responsibilities between universities. Funding of universities is based on state funding allocated by the ministry of education, and external research funding from other governmental as well as non-governmental sources. Between 1998 and 2003 the principles of state funding were gradually changed from an incremental input based mechanism to an output based formula funding. The state funding currently includes lump-sum core funding and funding of national tasks and various policy programmes, and is allocated based on performance target negotiations between the ministry and the universities. Education is free of tuition for both national/EU and non-EU students. (Ministry of Education 2004)

The recent developments in Finland include the introduction of a two tier degree structure and accompanying changes in the funding structures, as well as changes in the university law to allow the universities to grant degree in other languages besides Finnish or Swedish. The latest internationalisation policy of 2001 sets as a target for 2010 for Finland to be “a well-known and influential part of the European education and research area, and a successful player in the global contest for skills. The higher education community will be international and the demands of internationalization will be taken into account in the content of education. Finland will have a community of 10,000 – 15,000 foreign degree students (around 4 per cent of all higher education students) and the annual volume of student exchanges will be around 28,000. At least 15 per cent of graduate school students will be foreigners. The numbers of students with immigrant backgrounds will have increased considerably. The numbers of foreign teachers, experts and researchers working at Finnish institutions of higher education will be double what they were in 2001. Finnish businesses will already be benefiting from the labour input of foreigners who have studied in Finland.” (Ministry of Education 2001)

The development of the European Union has been equally strong. According to the EU legislation, the EU does not have a mandate on education policy and the EU activities have previously concentrated around student mobility programmes such as Erasmus and Tempus programmes. However, the perceived increasing competition between knowledge economies has rendered education increasingly important also on the EU agenda during the past decade, especially since the introduction in 2000 of the so called Lisbon Agenda, aiming at making EU the most competitive knowledge economy by 2010 and the emphasis on education and life-long learning in reaching this objective. The prominent role currently enjoyed by the European Commission as a partner in the Bologna Process and the so called open method of coordination increasing the cooperation of the EU member states in education has contributed to the increasing importance of EU as a higher education policy actor. (see e.g. European Comission 2003)

Due to the lack of official EU competence in the field of education, alternative cooperation schemes have emerged in Europe, the most important of them being the intergovernmental Bologna Process currently including 40 signatories and aiming at creating the European Higher Education Area by 2010, by facilitating transparency and transferability of higher education degrees throughout Europe. Bologna is also a prime example of the shifts in the governance of higher education in Europe, and has been successful in creating a new higher education discourse embraced by the higher education actors. (Kwiek 2003) The discourse of the Lisbon Agenda and the Bologna process will be discussed later on.

The national and international level developments around higher education all share significant similarities, namely the emphasis on increasing the competitiveness of national and regional economies and the increasing convergence of national higher education policies around the new public management measure in governance of higher education. The convergence of the policies
may take place for instance in the form of policy borrowing or learning or imposition of legislation and practises (Dale 1999). This paper argues that the discourses around knowledge economy/knowledge society and the increasing global competition are significant in creating shared understandings and rationalities among higher education actors across national borders. It draws from the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis and is underlined by the principle of language being one of the key mechanisms of constituting social reality and social relations. The paper aims at combining the work of discourse theorists and governmentality theorists in order to understand the way in which discourses work as ways of creating regimes of truth or coherent rationalities, which function as mechanisms of government. (Rose 1999.) Universities are viewed as institutions, that is, as particular configurations of norms, values and practises, and as such relatively resistant to change, but facing internal and external pressures to change. (Scott 2001). The institutional change may be externally imposed through introduction of changing legislative frameworks, but may also come about by means of assuming new identities and selfunderstanding and resulting changes in norms and values, practises and repertoires used by the universities to refer to themselves (Scott 2001, Fairclough 2001, 2003b). The notion of governmentality, that is, a process of initiating and embracing particular rationalities and internalising particular forms of subjectivity of the universities leading them to govern themselves within and in relation to the overall rationality provided by a dominant discourse and related non-discursive - administrative, political and economic - mechanisms of government (Rose 1999), offers us a possibility to understand institutional change. In this paper the discourse of knowledge economy/knowledge society is looked at as an example of such a rationality creating a logical coherent understanding within which the universities evaluate their own activities as actors in the knowledge economy/knowledge society.

Methodology

This paper is related to my ongoing PhD research on discourses of internationalisation of higher education, and focuses on the articulation of the knowledge economy in the “internationalisation talk” of national and university level higher education actors. The specific data used in preparation of this paper is the collection of altogether 12 interviews conducted between summer 2003 and winter 2004 in Finland and the Netherlands with altogether six university rectors and six representatives of the respective ministries of education, national rectors’ councils and national internationalisation agencies. The universities represent wide range of different types of universities, including in both countries a large, multidisciplinary research oriented university, smaller more regionally oriented university and a specialised monodisciplinary university. During the course of the interviews, the respondents were asked their opinions on what they understood by internationalisation of higher education, how they viewed competition and cooperation, what they thought was the value of internationalisation for the universities and for the country, how they saw the role of their own organisation, how the viewed the position of their own country and its higher education institutions in the international field of higher education, how they thought internationalisation was related to the concept of a knowledge-based society and how internationalisation had changed the universities during the past ten years. The aim of this paper is not to present a comprehensive account on the opinions of the interviewees related to the aforementioned questions or the total complexity of internationalisation discourse, but rather to try and account for the deeper understandings and taken-for-grantednesses in what is understood by the interviewees as being international or internationalising in higher education and the ways of articulating the discourse of knowledge economy/knowledge society in this context. Issues not related directly to the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse are left out.

In analysing the textual material, I have first read through the transcripts of the 12 interview, which revealed three primary ways in which the interviewees framed internationalisation or talked about it. I named those three framings as a) internationalisation as a process, by which I mean internationalisation as an active or passive process encountered or produced process but without a
reference to the second framing of internationalisation, namely b) specific set of activities by defined actors. The third framing is c) internationality and internationalisation as an attribute referring e.g. to international university, international competition or international individual. At the next stage I coded the material distinguishing those three categories from the text, after which a more thorough reading ensued, with the specific aim to understand the taken-for-grantednesses and specific evaluations and positive and negative connotations, as well as the chains of causalities built into the texts. After that, a decision to concentrate on the notions of knowledge economy/knowledge society was made, and the third reading was advised by this context. Based on the third reading of the interviews, as well as the revisiting of some of the central international and national level policy documents, I constructed the general narrative of knowledge economy and internationalisation of higher education, which will be discussed further on. Then the specific elements of this narrative and its articulation in the contexts of internationalisation of higher education were analysed. I have used quotes from the interviews to elaborate the discursive elements, so most illustrative quotes are selected for the paper. However, they do not necessarily represent all the variations and internal conflicts of the discourse and the various sub-discourses of internationalisation, nor knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse. For ethical reasons, the quotes are not identified except to the extent of pointing out the country and whether the person in question is a university actor or a state actor. Translation of the Finnish interviews into English is done by myself, so a certain margin of error should be taken into account. The aim of this analysis is to understand the particular way in which the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse and its elements are articulated in the context of internationalisation of higher education by higher education actors, in order to understand what kind of governmental rationality does the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse produce.

2. Globalisation and Knowledge economy/knowledge society discourses

The notion of emergence or shift to a “knowledge economy” or “knowledge society” is undoubtedly one of the most wide spread slogans in the current European political discussions. It is often used to illustrate the shift from an economy based on the low skills industrial production to knowledge intensive production and services as the back bone of the economy, or the shift from a fordist to a post-fordist society, marked by denationalisation and transnationalisation of state regulation, transnational flow of capital and ensuring global competition (see e.g. Frazer 2003, Webster 2002, Castells 2000, Brown & Lauder 1996). The discourse of knowledge economy/knowledge society has emphasized the shift to knowledge intensive high skills labour force, international circulation of brains, emphasis on life long leaning, transferable skills and competences and knowledge management as a key individual and organisational capacity. In the age of globalisation, the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse has become a way to characterize the new relationships between the state, society and economy and many of the national and supranational policies and practices are introduced in the name of knowledge economy/knowledge society. Albeit being contentious, the concept of globalisation is commonly used to refer to a process of disembedding previously national institutions, such as higher education, and is related to a restructuring of the tasks, functions and authority of nation-states which share their power with various international institutions, thereby leading to a restructuring of international activities in territorially different frameworks and by direct networking of global actors (Held et al. 1999; Held & McGrew 2000; Scott 2000; Dicken 2000).

The knowledge economy discourse bundles together different but related features, namely the economics of abundance, referring to knowledge being a non-depletable resource, which can be shared and grows through application; the annihilation of distance refers to geographical distances being less significant in the era of advanced information and communication technologies and virtual market place. The de-territorialisation of the state is the regular feature of the globalisation and knowledge economy discourses, indicating that the economies are no longer territorially bounded rendering the old tools of the nation states, namely laws, tariff barriers and taxes
increasingly obsolete in regulating the global markets as knowledge and information travel easily across borders to “where demand is highest and barriers are lowest” (Peters 2001a, 8). Peters also suggests that the knowledge economy discourse includes a notion of local knowledge, referring to how information and knowledge has different value for different people at different times. Finally, investment in human capital, with focus on competences and transferable skills, is increasingly important for the national competitiveness, and developing those has therefore become one of the most important functions of the society and its institutions. (Peters 2001a, Barnett 1997). In this sense, the knowledge economy/knowledge society marks an intensification and retranslation of old discourses such as the human capital discourse (see e.g. Becker 1993, Schultz 1971) as a new type of configuration of discourses.

The discourse of the knowledge economy/knowledge society has rendered higher education increasingly important for the international competitiveness of the nation states through their central tasks of generation, application and dissemination of knowledge and training high skilled labour force. This is linked to the increasing demands for public accountability of higher education institutions and introduction of the technologies of new public management, such as the performance based funding and quality assurance mechanisms.(Peters 2001a, Braun & Merrien 1999.) Processes previously thought to be outside the boundaries of a market, such as the notions of knowledge and learning are increasingly falling under the category of commodities to be sold and purchased in the global market place. (See e.g Barnett 1996, 1997.) This has had implication for the various aspects of the university organisation and identity. The self-understanding of universities has partly shifted from university being a social institution to university being an industry (Gumport 2000). It is also argued that under the processes of globalisation and neoliberal economy, cutbacks in public funding and changes in the structures of governance of higher education, with capacities of governance shifting from national to sub- and supranational levers, and the emergence of global markets for higher education, universities have become less dependent on states and states have lost their powers to regulate higher education. (see e.g. Carnoy 2001, Moja & Cloete 2001, Välimaa 2001) In this situation, the very discourse of knowledge economy/knowledge society can be seen as a technology of government (Rose1999, Lemke 2002) connecting the universities into the national project of competitiveness.

The robustness and coherence of the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse, as well as the extent to which the European societies have actually moved to a true knowledge economy may be debated. Peters (2001a) criticizes the lack of clear analytical distinction between the concepts of knowledge and information, the concepts of knowledge and learning, and especially those of the knowledge economy and knowledge society, enabling the interpretation of society solely in terms of economy. In the Finnish discussion notable is the usage of the concept “osaaminen” - indicating the capacity acquired by an individual as a result of learning to utilise knowledge - as a characterization of society alternative to the expressions of knowledge society or information society, again having a flavour somewhat different from knowledge, information or even learning. Despite these shortcomings, the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse seems to create a social reality which guides the policies and activities of European Union and its member countries as well as universities towards certain courses of action. In this way it functions as a specific rationality of government, which will be discussed next.

3. Rationality of government

As already referred to above, one of the major questions of modern political science has been to try understand the shift in the role of the state vis-à-vis market and civil society. The neoliberal changes
of the past two and a half decades in many western countries as well the changes brought about by globalisation have rendered the old concepts of political power inadequate to understand the constellations of present day societies and the capacities of the state. New concepts are needed to understand and analyse the new form of power beyond the top down imposition of the rule of the state (Rose 1999).

This need has brought about a burgeoning literature on governance (see e.g. Peters 2000, van Keesbergen & van Waarden 2001, Hooghe & Marks 2001), defined as “the emergent pattern or order of a social system, arising out of complex negotiations and exchanges between ‘intermediate’ social actors, groups, forces, organizations public-and semi-public institutions in which state organizations are only one – and not necessarily the most significant – amongst many others seeking to steer or manage these relations” (Rose 1999, 21). In the case of European societies in general and the European higher education systems specifically, the notion of shifting governance has been utilised to describe how other actors besides traditional state governments have become increasingly important for governing: international market, supranational and international organisations, subnational governments and networks have emerged as governing institutions besides the states. Thus we can say that governance is shifting horizontally from state to other actors, such as semi-public or private actors, and vertically from national to international and subnational/local levels. Besides this change in the location of governance, also the forms and mechanisms, governing capabilities and styles of governance are changing. A whole new array of questions in terms of governability, accountability and legitimacy of governing institutions has emerged. (van Kersbeergen & van Waarden 2001, Hooghe & Marks 2001.) In the field of higher education the shifts in governance include e.g. a shift from state regulation to state supervision (Neave and van Vught 1991) and reconfiguration of governance of higher education between national and local governmental authorities, supranational authorities and higher education institutions and the increasing influence of European Union, international organisations such as World Bank, UNESCO, OECD and WTO and international higher education markets. (see e.g. Enders 2004, Dale 1999, Robertson et al 2002)

But to understand the changing social power relations, Rose (1999) suggests focusing on the rationalities of government, or political rationalities as he also calls them, instead of the arrangements and institutions of governance. Instead the familiar narrow political concept of government is here used in a broad Foucaultian notion of conduct of conducts, ranging from governing the self to governing others. (Lemke 2002). Rationality of government, or governmentality according to Foucault (1991), constructs the space, scope and subjects of government and focuses attention to those techniques that are used to guide the subjects, be they individuals or organisations, to act in a way desired by the authorities. This governing does not, however, take place in the form of imposition but through emergence of rationalities or “regimes of truth” (Rose 1999, 19) or “hegemonic discourses” (Fairclough 2003a, 218) which legitimise certain activities and delegitimise others, constituting and constraining the activities of actors as subjects of government. This implies that at a specific time and place, at a specific context, a specific rationality of government emerges, bringing together various discourses, practices, laws and institutions underpinned by a coherent system of though, making them seem a coherent whole. (Rose 1999, 24-27). “Political rationalities are discursive fields characterised by a shared vocabulary within which disputes can be organised, by ethical principles that can communicate with one another, by mutually intelligible explanatory logics, by commonly accepted facts by significant agreement on key political problems.” (Rose 1999, 28) The rationalities, or the regimes of truth are acted out in the discourse of those governing and governed, institutionalised in texts, policy programmes and laws, but also in the everyday parlance of those governed, such as local authorities, universities or individual people. The knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse creates a political rationality, legitimising certain policies, practices and laws, and setting certain tasks and duties for the various institutions of the society and economy.
The process by which the governed, in this case the universities assume the tasks set out for them in a policy plan is therefore not just a case of imposition or implementation, but rather a complex process of translation, an alignment of “the objectives of authorities wishing to govern and the personal projects of those organisations, groups and individuals who are the subjects of government” (Rose 1999, 48). This process of translation depends on the compatibility of the sets of values of those governing and governed, construction of mutual interests and interdependence in the discursive and non-discursive practices of government. Universities as social institutions can be seen as particular configurations of normalised practices, values and symbolic systems and are resistant to change (Scott 2001, 48). Yet they they have changed and continue to do so. The notion of governmentality as a mechanism of governing by external authorities and self-governing of institutions themselves, combined with the social constitutive role of discourses allows us to make sense of the change process. Rose (1999, 50-51) quotes the projects of “efficiency” of nation-states, national economies, organisations or individuals as an example of a value translated to the practices of various organisations and individuals, and the internationality and competitiveness can been seen as similar translations penetrating the universities and forming a coherent rationality for their functions.

The subjects of government, or their subjectivities are formed through a process of hailing or interpellation (Althusser 1971), subjects being hailed by the discourses and thereby creating their subjectivities. The ideal subject of a knowledge economy/knowledge society is a self-governing, entrepreneurial subjects, be they individuals (Peters 2001a) or organisations (see e.g. Clark 1998). In the knowledge economy discourse universities are presented as key producers of knowledge and knowledgeable labour force, geared towards reaching the common good, namely, competitiveness of the nation and society in the globalised world. “Subjectification is simultaneously individualising and collectivising — in identifying with one’s proper name as a subject one is simultaneously identifying oneself with a collectivised identity and differentiating oneself from the kind of being one is not” (Rose 1999, 46) It is evident from the articulation of internationalisation of higher education discourse that the universities are keen to identify themselves as international top universities or as research universities, or universities giving master level education rather than bachelor level education, as opposed to being parochial or “loosing out” in the competition, being international rather than “just” national. In the internationalisation discourse the individual subjects of knowledge economy are internationally oriented students possessing skills needed in an international labour market.

4. The discourse of knowledge economy/knowledge society in articulation of internationalisation

In the European context, the discourse of knowledge economy/knowledge society is articulated by linking the elements of competitive knowledge economy with the discourse of social cohesion and increased quality of life, which is evident in a brief analysis of the main European policy documents, such as the Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council Meeting (2000) and the Communiques of the Berlin Ministerial Meeting (2003), as well as the Dutch and Finnish higher education policy plans (2004 and 2003 respectively) and internationalisation of higher education policies (2002 and 2001 respectively)\(^3\). The opening paragraphs of the documents, which can be seen as setting the stage for the latter discussion on the specific aims of higher education and internationalisation, invariable referred to the emergence of competitive knowledge economy or knowledge society. The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council meeting have achieved a prominent status achieved a position of a primary document to be referred to: it was mentioned directly in the opening paragraphs of two out

\(^3\) Extracts from the aforementioned documents in the appendix 1.
of the other five documents, and indirectly in other two, by setting the objectives of the policies in the context of the year 2010, the timeline set for achieving the Lisbon targets, but also for the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area. The Lisbon process also featured more prominently later on in the documents. Thereby the Lisbon process and it’s target of Europe by 2010 “to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” frames the talk of the higher education actors. It creates a taken for granted social reality and provides a rationality for the activities of the governments and universities alike (Rose 1999).

The dominant discourse may be called “competitive knowledge society in the age of globalisation” and features the following story line, presented more or less extensively in all of the interviews:

“We are living in a global world where countries are competing for the knowledge workers and the labour markets have become global. Therefore graduates need international skills for the labour market, and to teach these skills and educate internationally oriented people, we need to internationalise higher education and our universities. There is a global market for higher education on which countries and higher education institutions compete for best students and staff, as well as strive to generate much needed revenue. Therefore we need to be attractive for international students and staff, otherwise we stand to lose in the competition and run the risk of losing our relevance.”

This story is illustrated in its purest form by the following two extracts:

*I think that without internationalisation the knowledge based society eh, cannot be further developed. Ah, what do we need for the knowledge based society, knowledge and especially the application of knowledge to create creative products and processes. What we need for that, we need for that smart people, good minds, we could, we could adicate (?, unclear), and for this we would like to recruit from the largest possible talent pool, which is the global talent pool. So therefore the best minds are to be found anywhere in the world, try to bring them in, try to, to have the, the best teachers and researchers in your university, again the best minds, that’s all very expensive eh, and eh therefore it’s a costly operation. But only by doing that, again because it’s it’s all about competition also here, it’s competition between the European knowledge society and the American knowledge society and the Japanese knowledge society, it’s competition within Europe between various systems or count- nation states there, it’s competition between eh, companies, multinationals, it’s all about minds. People who can create knowledge, create added value and eventually create economic growth and prosperity. So yes, it can only be done if, if internationalisation is very high on the agenda. (DUA3)*

*Internationalisation, I would see that it now is this, kind of a new challenge of universities so that universities could respond to the new challenges of education and research. I suppose on the other hand in education, through this internationalisation a person should acquire skills and abilities to function in the global world. In my opinion it does start from from this general globalisation, this need to change to change education, contents of education and people’s abilities so that then they can can can get such a job in this internationalising world, directly in these international companies or then companies cooperating internationally. And in research I think, there in research it has always been a question of race of science for new things and in that sense the researchers must of course be well aware of what is being done elsewhere. So that one can compare one’s own own standard, progress with international standards and international development and the direct the research efforts so that we are in the forefront of science. (FSA2)*

Next, we can start the analysis by looking at the specific elements this story and how they are articulated in the interviews. A specific attention is paid to the elements of the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse which are taken-for-granted or contested, as well as the contingent translations of the dominant knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse within the framework of the traditional values of university as a scientific and social institution. Attention

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* For explanation of abbreviations, see appendix 2.
will also be paid to the extent to which the university and state actors present contrasting or parallel narratives.

**We are living in a global world …**

The discourse on the rationalisation behind internationalisation of higher education is essentially related to the discourse of globalisation, be that the notion of global economy and interconnectedness of national economies or the notion of a global village where the development of information and communication technologies and development of fast means of transportation facilitate communication of people from around the world, and on the other hand common concerns such as the inequality of development or environmental hazards unite people around the world. The existence of globalisation and knowledge economy, as well as the contributions of higher education in the knowledge economy/knowledge society are taken for granted, including the need to engage with the surrounding society to a greater degree in the era of increasing interconnectesness of national economies and higher education systems. As already witnessed in the aforementioned policy documents, the internationalisation discourse as presented by both the university and state actors, is articulating together the economic and social rationalisations of internationalisation, producing an image of higher education in general and internationalisation specifically as activities contributing both to the economic development of individuals, countries and regions, and to the international peace, friendship and understanding between individuals and nations.

> I think that ahh, in this country certainly many of us feel that in order to have more economic development and value, ehhh, better social and and cultural life, ehh, we need further development in the knowledge economy and therefore we need to be stronger higher education and research system. (DUA3)

> We must use all those means of funding that there could be because like I referred to earlier it becomes more and more important that we understand those mental and practical contexts in which people who are coming from different societies or living in them operate so that we..could use all the opportunities of the world and cause as little damage to other people then we have to understand them.(FUA2)

**…where countries are competing for the knowledge workers…**

Although knowledge as such may be a non-depletable resource (Peters 2001), high skilled labour, knowledge workers, certainly are a scarce resource over which there is an increasing competition, especially amongst the countries striving to be knowledge economies and at the same time facing declining birth rates. This discourse focuses on attracting knowledge workers into the country, either as graduates or already as students. Amongst the interviews, however, another narrative can also be detected, namely that of educating foreign students not primarily to stay and get a job in the country, but also for the purpose of gaining revenue. This will be discussed later on. Although competition and cooperation often are contrasted (see e.g. van der Wende 2001) as strategies of internationalisation, this discourse articulates also cooperation much in the framework of competition, cooperation in a way of university networks and consortia or the European cooperation aiming to create the European Higher Education Area, are viewed as a way of increasing the overall competitiveness of a group of universities or countries.

> Then, yeah the last thing is obvious, we need to bring much more, many more skilled researchers, graduate students from outside the EU to the Netherlands, simply, that’s in national interest, and transcends a little bit the institutional interest and student interest but the nation as a whole in the context of the Lisbon, for instance of the Lisbon targets it needs to attract knowledge workers on a structural base for the next ten years or so on a much wider scale than we see at present. And there is a kind of rethinking of terminology also which I think is quite relevant. Personally I would, I come to think more and more of graduate students also in terms on young knowledge workers where knowledge worker is more important fact that they are student. (DSA2)

**…and the labour markets have become global**
The notion of global labour markets creates two related rationalities. The individualistic notion includes the opening up of a wider range of job opportunities for an individual, and emphasises the importance of providing students with skills to find their place at the global labour market, which will be further discussed under the next heading. The macroeconomic notion on the other hand emphasises the process of global companies recruiting from a wider scale of potential employees and the importance therefore of providing the companies the kind of high skilled labour they are looking for. This is important also for preventing the multinational companies from relocating and outsourcing their high skill jobs into other countries.

As far as the goals on internationalisation with respect to teaching is concerned we believe that the main driver for internationalisation is the fact that most of our graduates will be employed in an international environment. We have disciplines in economics and business which is about 45 percent about the total student population and another large faculty is that of social sciences, ehm, and third in size is the faculty of law and for almost all disciplines covered by these eh, schools, maybe excluding to some extent psychology, you can expect that the students are prepared to work after finishing their degree in an international context, either related to a company which is located in the Netherlands which has this contacts in other countries or being employed in an international, ehm, multinational work they are more or less ehm, in an natural way exposed to an international environment. (DUA1)

Therefore graduates need international skills for the labour market …

The discourse of international skills seems to be consisting of two different features. The first, dominant one treats international skills as something specific and separate, either specific practical skills or a general mindset of internationalisation. However, also a counter discourse of the international skills being an outcome of the normal activities of the university, this notion being based on the discourse of internationality of science and on the unity of the two functions, research and education.

Well that kind of production requires highly educated staff and a very big proportion of our population is in higher education, we have even established this applied higher education track, namely polytechnics. So that we would have people who can work in that kind of industry. And then the next point which involves us is that we can’t live just by selling those to each other but we have to be able to operate in the global markets. And then we have to have labour force which can operate on global markets and then we have to get already within education modules which include, bring these international communication skills. -- the knowledge which is being taught and the skills which are being learned are not by content, they are not invented in Finland nor meant to be used only here but it is like an essential need in current world, so that one can live, none of us can live anymore without some kind of internationalisation, for instance in hobbies. (FSA1)

… and to teach these skills and educate internationally oriented people...

The discourse of internationally oriented people also has two sides to it. The first one represents the perspective of the society and its ideal subjects, namely entrepreneurial, active citizens, within whom international mindset is also a desired quality. The counter discourse starts from more of an individuals perspective and features international orientation rather as empowerment and is related to the the notion of universities as educating citizens rather than simply as teaching skills to students. However, these discourses are fairly difficult to tell apart.

It means that our import and export pattern, our structure of our enterprises are international. Therefore international education is so important strictly for this country, because we have to serve the market, that is asking for people that are internationally oriented, that have been abroad.(DUA2)

But of course I think this internationalisation also has intrinsic value and as a matter of fact the only value I think, unless Marijk has come up with something new then the only proven result is this positive change in a person, this empowerment (FSA1)

…we need to internationalise higher education and our universities…
The talk of internationalising higher education in general and the universities especially seems to consist of four specific features, three of which are covered here. The first one is the notion of English as a language of teaching in both of the non-English speaking countries. The second one is the idea that internationalisation requires rethinking of the curriculum, structures and strategies of the universities. The third element is the idea of internationalising the university by bringing in international, that is non-national or foreign, students and staff to create a more international environment for studies and research. However, as this is featured later on under the chapter on attracting foreign students and staff it will not be discussed further here. The final element is a counter-discourse of the eternally international science, untouched by the temporal process of internationalisation.

Language

An interesting feature to be found in the discourse of the Finnish and Dutch higher education actors is the pervasiveness of the notion of the importance of English language as the language of teaching as a characteristic of internationalised university. The spread of English as a global language of communication, business and education can be seen as a “globalised locality” (Santos) Remarks regarding the increasing use of English as the language of teaching, or the importance of English for the internationalisation of the universities, were made by all the representatives of universities and national university organisations as well as the national ministries. In some cases this seems to be even undermining the position of the national languages Finnish and Swedish in Finland, and Dutch in the Netherlands.

Thirdly it’s also the quite intensive finding the capacities for you staff members with respect to command of English in the, in the classroom. Most people of course have some command in English but it is more different story if you have to teach and you to, not loose the quality content of teaching by changing from Dutch to, to English so it also requires quite intensive training of the staff members either by sending them to certain courses in language area or to send them to send them, or by sending them on sabbaticals and to spend some time at, at other universities outside Netherlands. And finally that is more or less the, the last step in the the the process, at the certain moment, and X university is at this moment in this stage, you have to consider whether you should switch to English as language not only of instruction but also as the language of communication within the university, so this will of course require quite large investment with respect to supporting staff both with respect to people who are exposed to the students directly and those people who are in the supporting staff in the faculties and the central administration. (DUA1)

The university college, which we were the first one, is really also international, in a sense that English is compulsory, then one third of the student body comes from abroad. (DUA2)

However, this dominant discourse of English being a prerequisite and attribute of an international university does not go completely uncontested, and also counter discourse can be found, although even in this extract the speaker is reflecting partly the dominant, partly the counter discourse.

We have this idea that if we just more into English language, we are international. And that is not true. It is like in business world when two companies merge, and this has been talked in Finland, then what is the language of the new merged company. And the official language can be English, but is it really the internal language of the company, is it really. And this I think this is important because international university is not one which just teaches or researches in English. And to this I would pay a lot of attention myself, this is maybe the biggest challenge for us. Because we see that for instance now in Finland when a lot of universities move to, or start these foreign language master’s programmes and we here for instance have five English language Master’s programmes and of course in some way it does internationalise, it is one dimension of internationalisation, but it does not, and research has to be international and there of course language is decisive but internationalisation is much deeper than in what language is being spoken. (FUA3)

In terms of the research function of the universities, less explicit references to the language of research were being made, but the notion of internationality of science and research repeated by all interviewees and discussed further on, with references to the importance of international publishing
of results, imply that the language question would be at least as significant, and less of a novelty now being taken-for-granted, than is the case for education.

Well, if I try to start and start maybe from that in a long perspective the universities have maybe been one of the most internationalized institutional in the Finnish society, well of course foreign policy and the organizations dealing with those, but if we don’t [take those into account] and the international cooperation is natural and that has of course started from research which is largely international and publishing has already for a long time, it depends a little bit on the discipline, what is the emphasis, but let’s say natural sciences, medicine, technology those have been already for centuries been meant for international audiences, read by them and [internationally published works] read in Finland. (FUA4)

Change and rethinking

Internationalisation is understood brought about a significant change in the universities, but this change is often described in terms of increased number and proportion of international staff and students and courses taught in English, or as internationalisation becoming part of the everyday life. Most often the chance is conceptualised as progress.

TN ahm, I would like to know your view on, on, do you see that universities have changed let’s say past ten years because of internationalisation.

DUA2 Yes, definitely. I can only speak for my own university, when I, we started 18 years ago, we had only agreements with three universities I think and now we have, I don’t know with how many, and we have created the Utrecht network and we are not an exception, all universities did the same. That means that, what I mentioned in the beginning, we made progress in all these things. Just the traditional exchange and the curriculum, harmonisation, the the points, the credit point system, implementation of bachelor- master’s. And the reason the bachelor masters was so fast and one of thoroughly implemented, and that’s my opinion, I’ve studied a little bit how they did it in France and Germany and they didn’t do it yet. And it’s because we have this long tradition of the last ten years of becoming more international and the, that’s that’s also important, the the bachelor- master’s part of it is important for internationalisation, and I have seen an, a change in that a last ten fifteen years, all universities are becoming really aware countries often need to, to make it international. (DUA2)

Well yeah in my opinion it is an everyday thing to have foreign students ans teachers, it has become quite common and of course also the administration which has been built to take care of these things and it is taken into account in result targets and so. Nut that in the everyday life it is quite natural that there are people from other countries and it is accepted and it has become commonplace, that has happened in the past ten years. (FSA1)

However, despite the changes already introduced, internationalisation is said to require a complete rethinking of the content of curriculum, the organizations structures and institutional strategies. This rethinking often is presented as increasing the flexibility of the institutions in the global competition.

DUA4 I think broadly it forces the institutions to rethink their curricula probably and to restructure non-teaching aspects like housing, like mobility programmes, like social environment where you put your foreign students in and those kind of things. I do think if you’re seriously as an institution considering internationalisation as part of your, part of your core activities, that it has large implications for these two aspects, at least two aspects. In the Netherlands, think we’re at a transition period at the moment whereas internationalisation

TN (checking the recording devise) keep going

DUA4 In a long lines of mobility programmes short periods of stay of Dutch students abroad and the other way around, now with the introduction of the bachelor-master structure you will have students, probably in the master stage, or at least a larger share of foreign students in a master stage, that means that in a broad scale English language programmes are being introduced. That curricula are being developed, not necessarily from the starting point of what the regular students learn to or what kind of competencies do they have in their bachelor’s, bachelor’s programmes, or what kind of courses they have
International science

As a contrast to the new elements of internationalisation, the rethinking of the curriculum, organization and institutional strategy, as well as introducing English as the language of teaching, internationality of research and science as eternally international, untouched by the temporal process of internationalisation. This discourse of characteristic internationality of science and research tends to contrast research and education/teaching, and emphasise their differences both in terms of their essence and their relation to the university. Science and research, by being international by essence, is presented as requiring no internationalisation activities on part of the university, whereas education and teaching are seen as inherently national and therefore requiring specific activities in order to internationalise them. However, also examples of the unity of research and education can be found.

Because the moment you have university with research, then internationalisation is so normal, of course especially in biomedical sciences and har sciences about also in the part of the social sciences. Science is by definition international, global. And there is nothing new on it to go for internationalisation of higher education. Our scholars and your scholars have gone over the world centuries, not only Erasmus did it but everybody did it and therefore that’s not, that’s not new, that’s one. (DUA2)

TN: I would like to hear your ideas on what are we talking about now when we are talking about internationalisation of higher education?

FUA1: Hmm, yes well, we are in a way talking about self-evident things when universities are concerned, but in a way anyway, it is so that when any university which is striving for this traditional university role, that is, research and teaching based on research, the it is of course, research is international and it is international in a way that (laughs) from the perspective of university management, it finds its own channels without it needing to be guided or supported in any way. But what does require measures, and where we should be getting forward, is specifically internationalization of teaching. Because that does not come about spontaneously, that requires measures. (FUA1)

There is a global market for higher education on which countries and HEI’s compete for students, staff and income …

The existence of global market and the ensuing competition is taken for granted throughout the interviews, but it is variably presented either as atemporal or only having emerged in the recent years. The markets themselves are primarily articulated as markets for especially the extremely talented people, as international top, which includes the notion that the education and the research will have to be excellent to attract the top people. This will be discussed later on. On the other hand, markets and competition can be seen being primarily about generating revenue which does not lay an equivalent emphasis on the discourse of quality. Positioning oneself on the market, either as a country, group of institutions or an individual institution is viewed important in both discourses, including the notion of finding one’s niche, be it in terms of focussing on certain disciplines where one considers oneself an expert, or in terms of targeting potential students in specific countries, on which one considers to oneself to have either close ties or other expertise. The competition over staff and students concerns both attracting international staff and students, and being able to retain the best minds in ones own country.

Then internationalisation of HE if we think how Finnish higher education has been exported then in that we are not necessarily very good, if we think, and here I come to this that I actually started from that if if we see education as a line of business, we have education markets, then in Finland we don’t have those mechanisms by which this product, education product can be exported. (FUA3)
They ehh, the universities, especially in the universities in the Netherlands and I think also the same counts for Finland, they’re all research universities and they all want to be excellent in their fields of exercise and ehh, they have a very strong ambition to, to be international and to, to have a good position in the international global competition and that’s an, ehh, that competition is more and more and more strong every year you could say. – I mean, with competition I mean competition ehh competition in students, competition in researchers, universities worldwide competing for the scarce talents that are present in the whole world, that’s what I mean basically with with competition. Also competition for funding, is, is very important. Ehh, but, ehh, cooperation ehh, is, is important in several levels of the system. It’s important at European level, but mainly , I think, or I feel as an, ehh, as a joint, jointly felt need for creating similar systems, similar standards in Europe to be more competitive towards the United States. So making the European higher education and research area more interesting and competitive with the USA needs com- cooperation among the European countries. But it’s the cooperation that is I think mainly focused towards eeh compare- transparency of the system and all the- all these things that ehh Bologna process is about. At the national level cooperation amongst universities is very important, I think. (DSA2)

I am a firm proponent of these international university markets. We must exploit all honest lines of business in this country so that when industry flees from here then we must develop other lines of business instead so that we can live here and we have work here and that we can keep our own form of society and maybe international students do not just exist so that they would come to Finland to work but Finland can simply participate as an actor in this education and start from the idea that Chinese can study in the west also to go back to china to work. And it is like in this world of diminishing public economy, it is one of those few promising opportunities for the university to save itself, so that it can arrange both additional funding and foreign teachers by participating in these international markets. (FUA2)

Well that is of course the idea that through the offering of higher education programmes abroad, through attracting students from abroad you foster your, well, from an organisational perspective, the viability, economic viability of the organisation and from a macro perspective it will have an added value to the economy of the country, of the sector. (DUA4)

Tuition fees

This discourse also involves a discussion on tuition fees, which exist in the Netherlands and are considerably higher for non-EU students than for national and EU students. Tuition fees do not currently exist in Finland but their introduction for national/EU or non-EU students is discussed periodically. In the Finnish rector interviews there seems to be interestingly a certain frustration over the lack of tuition fees, which are viewed as necessary mechanism for importing the Finnish higher education and thereby also a tool for internationalisation of higher education.

My personal point of view is that it is impossible for a higher education system or an institution for that matter, to keep on believing that, eh, higher education is a public good and should be completely paid for by the tax payers’ money . I think that it will simply not allow us to go on in this international competition on the international, global level in terms of creating further reputation for us. (DUA3)

In 2010 papers for instance it rallied all the time that there is too little private money in higher education. Well where else can it come from except from mom and dad, so that there can be a pressure to harmonise European higher education for instance so that all countries would have tuition fee, which at least here in the Nordic countries has been a sacred thing not to have them. So that this fast progress brought about by open coordination in some things can have, I think, also negative effects, as I have been more in favour of this voluntary and little bit slower processes (FSA1)

Therefore we need to be attractive for international students and staff…

The discussion on attracting international students and staff involves the general attractiveness and attracting-activities of both universities themselves as well as the national government. The role of universities in increasing the attractiveness has already aprtly been accounted for under the heading of internationalising universities, an is strongly related to the the notion of high quality as the main factor. Also meaningful work, flexible arrangements, and practical tools such as a common brand for national higher education institutions are mentioned. The role of government in facilitating the
internationalisation is presented as stretching from removing practical obstacles such as unattractive migration and taxation policies, to influencing the general attitude towards foreign people are part of the perceived role.

To the economic dimension of internationalisation, I think the line of reasoning is the following, the Netherlands adopts the assumption that, that their future economic production relies very much on knowledge intensive sectors and you will need to have a population that is highly educated. More than that, you need many people that have, that are highly educated so that they can add productivity for that you higher productivity, more added value to every product that you produce. Hence, you need to attract people that are able to give that value. You will not get that people only from your own population, you may but I think that you will discover sooner or later particularly in this small country but, that you do not have proper specialists or perhaps you do not have enough knowledge workers, so to say. Internationalisation is seen as a mean to, eh, to attract more people that are highly educated. So that’s the broad way, the the quantitative way, but also gives you the opportunity or gives you a way to attract these people, these specialists, these top players, top people, talented people, that you need for certain areas that you choose as a country to be, you know, to be your priority economic sectors. So that’s more the, one is more broad, quantity, the other is more quality. So that’s, that’s the economic line. (DU4)

And I am not sure if it necessarily is related to this but this, it is very central to this that in order for us to have national education in Finland which fulfils international standards we have to have universities which can attract also foreign international top here, permanently, an this this is the totally different, it includes taxation issues, it includes taxes, it includes immigration law, residence permits and so on, all this is like. So that it is often forgotten when talking about internationalisation that, only research and education is talked about, but one must remember that we are talking about recruiting students but even more important is recruiting teachers and researchers. Because if you can’t create an attractive working conditions here, research environment is talked about a lot, then you can’t attract international top here either. (FUA3)

Of course it is a wider social issue this internationalising this country all in all. And it includes really all these legislative issues and migration policy and migration issues all these things which belong to the sphere of political decision making but as the universities anyway an institution which has an interest in this then we should be lobbying the government to so that there would not be issues which can easily be removed(FUA1)

…otherwise we stand to lose in the competition…

The discourse presents “loosing in the competition as the inevitable outcome of failing to comply with the aforementioned requirements. What this loosing means, is not necessarily very expressively presented. It may refer to remaining parochial or may refer to the loss of potential revenue.

Well again I come back to this chain of ideas that if it didn’t, if university has a role it must be competitive, it must have quality, activities filling the international quality standards and you just can’t do this in a vacuum where, if you only have this national, if you only look at these national markets. So that in a way if you have, if you have, you have to be competitive, you have to be, you just have to be good! (FUA3)

Why, I think that we’re already late, we should have had that, we should have been further now so I say this is definitely the moment but the moment is already for quite a while there so if we, if we wait longer we may lose momentum and marginalise, other higher education institutions particularly from the Anglo-Saxon world, Australia and United Kingdom, America may be so strongly positioned that it’s difficult to, to, to enter that market and the other reason is the introduction of bachelor-master absolutely, we have kind of a relative advantage to other countries because we have already implemented it and we should make use of this momentum as well. (DU4)

Statistics and comparisons

The construction of the position of the country and the “loosing out in the competition” is also partly based on the international statistics and comparisons, which seem to be quite influential in determining the self-understanding of the universities as international institutions. This follows the ideas of Hacking (1991, 181) who has noted that “Statistics has helped determine the form of laws
about society and the character of social facts. It has engendered concepts and classifications within the human sciences. Moreover the collection of statistics has created, at the least, a great bureaucratic machinery. It may think of itself as providing only information, but it is itself part of the technology of power in a modern state.” The international comparisons and statistics are used for the most part strategically, to emphasise the positive standing of ones own country and university. However, also the less favourable examples are regularly mentioned, and ones own country continuously reflected against the benchmark set by well known American and British universities.

TN How would you then describe the position of the Dutch higher education and and higher education institutions in this international field of higher education?

DSA2  Ehh, I think, my opinion is that this position is quite good, for several reasons, I mean ehh, the Dutch universities are very, have excellent research standard, they are amongst the top of the ranks, of the ranking that mister Bu squin made earlier this year, so their research is is quite good. I also think that Dutch students are quite good, ehh, quite good prepared for university studies, especially when you comp-compare it to to some of the, some of the other countries in Southern Europe. So the conditions for higher education in the Netherlands are quite good. I think when it comes to education in the universities in the Netherlands, they still need to make a shift to, to really internationalise ehh , the education in the Netherlands should become much more, ehh, has to become, has to be intensified , has to much more like the education that you can have in the United Kingdom or in a good university in the United States instead of the typical Dutch university. And I mean, the worst example in Europe is of course in German universities which are so crowded, our universities are not that crowded but they are, they don’t offer the same kind of environment as the Europeans, in the universities of the Anglo-Saxon world who offer students. (DSA2)

Finland is a small country, Finland is a small small country but now this education and research policy and then innovation policy and in general these comparisons of skills and different evaluations it has become clear that the education, research and innovation policy in Finland is internationally successful .And this has awoken great interest and respect towards Finnish universities and also towards Finnish university policy. (FSA2)

The only thing that that works well in here is student exchange, that works well compared internationally. But then for instance the number of foreign degree students is relatively speaking the smallest in the Nordic countries, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland are far ahead Norway pretty much ahead. We think that we have some sort of international university system but it isn’t really. (FUA2)

Although for the most part, the interviewees, both the university and the state actors seemed to be embracing the international statistics as taken-for-granted, they are sometimes also contested, if they are perceived to be measuring “wrong things” and giving the university in question an unfavourable image. However, the basic logic of statistics and comparisons are not questioned.

Ministry is setting quantitative targets for student, primarily for student exchange and I think those indicators used in that are not particularly good. How many students go abroad and how many come here. Instead it should be viewed not just as student mobility but also teacher and researcher mobility and instead of counting just heads, how many people have traveled abroad and how many have come here, than what I think should be monitored is how many of our degrees actually include modules completed in some internat- foreign universities. That is a sign of really studying internationally and not just spending time abroad. (FUA1) (counter discourse)

…and run the risk of loosing our relevance

The discourse on the relevance of university is drawing from two separate sources. The first one, and in the context of the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse the dominant discourse, is articulating the relevence of the university as being subject to its international competitiveness. The counter discourse is attributing the relevance of a university to the inherent internationality of science.

Ehm, the Netherlands as a whole, as a society and as an economy and as a government obviously have, have a great interest in being extremely visible and active within and outside the EU and OECD group of
countries because as an element of foreign cultural policy, foreign trade policy, foreign development cooperation policy, eh, as an element of EU related policy, then it has become important. So there is an quite a substantive agenda of sheer national interests. For the Dutch higher education community I mean that’s quite obvious. Be international or die. Higher education institutions that are not internationally active loose their relevance and they know it. (DS2)

Then this internationalisation, perceived in very many ways now, that one can participate in this scientific discussion in the world, to be able to participate in it on the highest scientific level and well the scientific community sets the agenda of science as a result of scientific discussion, what is aspired, what is strived for, where are the challenges, recognising these directs the activities and is quickly reflected in, or should be reflected in what is taught at higher education institutions and how. So that if the basis of this function is not international then one has already lost it. And it is very difficult to bridge that gap. (FUA4)

5. National stories

Although the knowledge economy/knowledge society is a dominant discourse transcending the national and institutional borders, it is also contingent and subject to national and institutional translations. This contextuality is reflected in what I would like to call national stories, articulations of specifically national contexts and beliefs. Although the narratives of internationalisation and knowledge economy/knowledge society were for the most part rather similar for both countries, they are embedded in a specifically national story which sheds light into the generalised discourse.

The Finnish story is a story of opening up and modernisation of a small and previously relatively closed country. Although striving to be part of the western Europe throughout the cold war, eventually the fall of the powerful neighbour Soviet Union whose presence had an effect on Finnish domestic and foreign policy throughout the decades following the second world war, and finally joining of the European Union in 1995 has brought Finland to the mainstream of Western European political and economic sphere. The booming economic growth in the late 1980s was halted at the beginning of the 1990’s with changes in the world economy, and although the Finnish economy grew rapidly in the first part of the decade, the unemployment rate have remained high ever since, still averaging 8% in 2004. Since joining EU, Finland has strived to be what in domestic discussion is often called “the exemplary pupil of EU”, being at the forefront of EU developments, and mediating in the power struggles between larger EU countries. The first internationalisation of higher education programme was prepared by the ministry of education in 1987, and Finland joined the Erasmus scheme in 1991, an outcome of conscious policy since the late 1980’s. The objective of the internationalisation programme and participation in Erasmus and other similar mobility schemes, was closely related to the acknowledged need for education to provide the students with skills needed in international cooperation (Melén-Paaso 1997).

The story of a small country opening up to the world is quite clearly underlining the discourse of internationalisation of higher education in the interviews.

EU is another story altogether, and now in the whole EU, in the Lisbon strategy this knowledge and skills are in a central position and Finland has been there to lobby for a policy for EU so that targets would be set for education and that education has a strong position in the EU agenda and it is being invested in, -- we want to be in this international education and research policy and cooperation a kind of, or at least a proponent, and then we do have a policy that we would like to be there at the top. (FSA2)

We in Finland have had since the mid 1970’s a consensus on how a country the size of Finland can survive, the I think the oil crises woke up the politicians, can survive with this location and temperature and population and political status in the future globalizing world. And it was solved then, like now, that one must invest in knowledge and people. And that is, we have terribly high figures in this research and development activity. -- I had just left the ministry for the Academy [of Finland] when the first internationalization of higher education memos came out and I did not hear the discussions there but I think that besides of course that we were quite a closed country until the Death of [president] Kekkonen [in 1986] that such a strong opening, then in Europe these, we could see it in Finland that these education cooperation programmes had been born, and we wanted in our own way to stay with the developments, nobody would dream then in the end of 1980’s -- that we would join the EU but that in some way we could
stay with the development. -- And then, Research has always been international but that internationalization came also to education I think was, has been a terribly important step. And it was probably lucky that in Finland we had the economic depression and we jumped to these European programmes with huge interest. If we compare with for instance the other new member countries like Sweden and Austria, then our enthusiasm has been a lot bigger and of course even the small extra money available there was attractive and then when it was set politically very high, this international cooperation was given a heavy weight, it was a performance indicator and so on, the enthusiasm to participate was huge. (FSA1)

A feature worthy of a remark in the Finnish interviews was also the unusually stark contrast present in the interviews of the rectors between the international and regional orientation of the universities, projecting a certain antagonism between the universities and the ministry in this regard. This contrast can be attributed to the recent policies emphasising the importance of the regional role of higher education institutions (e.g. Ministry of Education 2003a) and to the recent chances in the University Act, to come into operation in August 2005, which set a new task for the universities to act in cooperation with the surrounding society and to promote the societal impact of their activities. This background is reflected in the interviews by way of the contrast of regional and international tasks of the universities, a feature absent from the Dutch rector interviews.

FUA1: Right now we have an interesting situation in Finland and higher education institutions and universities have been put into in a way a schizophrenic situation when we are, even according to the performance agreements, expected to internationalise but at the same time marked input in regional development.

TN: Are they mutually exclusive?

FUA1: Well you see, not necessarily mutually exclusive but they pull into completely different directions and maybe we have here in Finland thought even too much about what does it, eh, the quite local level impact, how could that be facilitated, and have not realized that if we are internationally good and competitive then also the regional impact come so indirectly through that, without having to emphasise it so much. Maybe in this university we have lately been thinking that we don’t want to commit too much on this regional fuss as the only strategy but we think that only by being internationally competitive in research and teaching we can then think how this region will benefit as well. (FUA1)

Now it is often imagined that one can be regionally, that we can have regionally important, that we can be, university can have regionally important influence, but it is quite clear that unless the university is, university is internationally, it is not known then it has considerably weaker chances also of having an influence in the region, regionally or nationally. So that this, in a way the credibility of the university as an agent comes from it being a internationally respected partner. (FUA3)

This discourse seems to be connoting the fear of the university remaining parochial, as also reflected in the discussions on loosing the relevance of the university. In this narrative, the dominant discourse of competitive internationalisation is used for strategic purposes to contest some of the regional development policies.

The Dutch national story is for the most part rather similar to the Finnish one, and also features prominently the narrative of a small country dependent on its intellectual rather than natural resources. The Dutch history as a “trading nation” is present in the interviews and internationalisation and participation in the higher education market is presented as a continuation of this strategy. Also the Netherlands strives to be active in the EU and an “exemplary pupil” much in the same way as Finland does. The Dutch narrative seems to be more confident as the element of needing “to open up” to the world, which was so prominent in the Finnish narrative, is replaced by the continuation of the tradition of a open economy.

Colonial past and being a merchant economy in the country we don’t’ have natu-natural resources we have trading, a typical service sector country, tertiary sector country and that has characterised Dutch high-higher education really for half a century already. The student mobility came in very late when compared to the development cooperation relations and research cooperation relations, so. When it came in late, although it came in late, it was rather easy to accommodate. Education, higher education as education was much lighter on the agenda here but it had an easy welcome, because of the outward
looking attitude of the Dutch government and the the Dutch higher education institutions which was already for decades accustomed to dealing with other countries and other institutions. So not surprisingly I would say that the Netherlands easily to its national mobility programmes and with the European mobility programmes although technically we had exactly the same problems as the other country had, but when Bologna came in, it fitted easily in a type of political thinking about international higher education.

for the Netherlands as a whole the university sector is very important, because of the fact that the Netherlands, perhaps even more than some of the Scandinavian countries, should focus on the importance of the knowledge economy. We in the Netherlands don't have that many other resources, other than the human capital. All almost all of the Scandinavian countries also have huge natural resources, natural resources, Netherlands hardly has that, it's a very small country, so you, we have some place where to find oil and gas but it's only that, for the rest the nation-natural resources in the Netherlands are very limited, so we, we need a very strong university system as a, as a basis for the knowledge economy. - And the knowledge economy is very important there because you see the old, the old industries are generally fading away a little bit in Europe. So that makes it more special for, for the Netherlands. That is also why it has become one, one of the highest priorities of our new government. You, I'm sure you've heard about that, that our new government is making gigantic budget cuts, that I think are unprecedented not only in Dutch history but also in the history of the whole European community I think but the only economic sector they are making new investments in are, is the innovation sector, higher education and research.

Our, we have a couple of big enterprises in this country that are by nature international. And compared to other countries they are remarkable big. Royal Dutch Shell belong to the top in the world, I suppose Unilever, Phillips, Axxo Nobel, Heineken, DSM, are really, and that means, and they are working in international. But they have people from abroad working here and the Dutchmen are working, it's really international companies, they are not national companies. Eh, It means that our import and export pattern, our structure of our enterprises are international. Therefore international education is so important strictly for this country, because we have to serve the market, that is asking for people that are internationally oriented, that have been abroad. Eh, we need that for our, to help our enterprises but also our government, we have a long tradition of going out, Dutchmen are travelers, you see them all over the world.

6. Discussion

The knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse can be seen as providing a coherent, political rationality, embraced by higher education actors across different scales of policy making and governance. Due to the traditional affiliation of the universities and producers and codifiers of knowledge, the discourse has been effortlessly embraced by universities, although in many cases the concept of knowledge itself has changed: knowledge in a knowledge society is essentially knowledge-in-action, knowledge in a performative role. The essence of knowing is transformed from knowing as contemplation to knowing as performance. These ideas of performativity, linked with economic regeneration, economic competitiveness and skills upgrading are very much assimilated by the universities and thereby able to transform the old foundation of university (Barnett 2000, 40-49), thus forming an important part of the new governance of university.

Although this paper has especially focussed on the role of the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse as a mechanism of government, the governmentality theory embraces also other technologies (see e.g Rose 1999, Gordon 1999). The extent to which the discourse has gained ground in the universities, may have been facilitated by certain material, non-discursive conditions, such as the changes in the governance of higher education including the increased institutional autonomy and ex post state supervision in the form of introduction of performance based funding mechanisms and quality assurance procedures. The discourse can therefore be seen as being materialised in practices of governing universities (see e.g. Fairclough 2001, 2003b). It has also been embraced as particular subjectivities by universities and other higher education actors or "inculcated in particular styles of being" (Fairclough 2001, 2003b), the process whereby the universities have become to "own" the new discourse and to act, talk, think and see themselves as actors of knowledge economy. This constitutes a cycle of the functioning of the discourse as a
mechanism of government and to strengthening of the rationality of the discourse itself. By means of creating particular subjectivities and legitimisation, the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse also contributes to changing the institution of university, namely the configuration of practises, norms and values, styles of being and related discourses, and its relation to the society at large. The rationality provided by the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse contributes on the one hand to creating universities as enterprising, autonomous, competing actors in the global labour and education market, and on the other hand continue to tightly connected them to the project of national competitiveness in the era of globalisation.

The relationship between the new discourses and the traditional internal norms, values and practises of the universities (see e.g. Merton 1973, Clark 1983, Becher 1989) is a complex one. On the one hand, the changes faced by higher education institutions, such as massification of education, increasing demands for accountability, marketisation, changes in knowledge production and increasing performativity of knowledge and education indicate that the configuration of values, norms, practises and discourses making up the social institution of university have changed considerably. (See e.g. Gibbons et al 1994, Smith & Webster 1997, Slaughter & Leslie 1997, Barnett 1996, 1997.) Additionally many of the current policy discourses are good at utilising old notions traditionally related to and internalised by universities, internationalisation and knowledge being good examples of this. However, in the current day context they carry very different meanings and and represent a fundamental discontinuity and challenge to the universities rather than the uncomplicated continuity with the historic conception of university which they seem to represent. (Barnett 1996, 45, 55.)

On the other hand, the traditional values still bear significance in the modern day (see e.g. articles in Smith & Webster 1997) and can contribute to the particular kind of translation of the surrounding knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse which has gained ground in the universities. The interviews around internationalisation provide us with plenty of illustrative examples. The dominant discourse produces competitiveness of universities and international skills of students and graduates as the main aims of internationalisation activities and embraces global competition for students, staff and revenue as the driver but also the context of internationalisation. However, the internationalisation is also articulated in terms of either a clear counter discourse to the hegemonic notions of competitive knowledge economy or as particular types or translations of the discourse in the context of the traditional university values. Examples of these in my opinion include the notion of the internationality of science and research, both in essence and as activities done naturally in and for the international community of scholars. Stemming from this, the relevance of of the university being based on internationality, and the fear of remaining parochial, can also be seen as representations of specifically university centred translations of the knowledge economy/knowledge society discourse. For instance one of Peters’ (2001a) elements of knowledge economy, the importance of local knowledge, hardly featured at all in the discourse of university actors. Instead, the comparison and taking as benchmarks some of the worlds most famous universities, such as Oxford and Cambridge in UK an Harvard and Stanford in US refers to the well established internal hierarchy amongst the universities. Other features include the unity of research and education being seen as the basis of internationalisation and seeing the international skills as empowerment, this referring to seeing the task of the university as a wider notion of educating citizens rather than just as teaching specific skills. These examples indicate that the universities are able to contribute to the discourse and find their specific space in it.

7. References


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Realising The European Higher Education Area: Communiqué Of The Conference Of Ministers Responsible For Higher Education In Berlin On 19 September 2003


Appendix 1

Key policy texts setting the stage for the internationalisation discourse

European Council conclusions in Lisbon 2000 (5th paragraph, the target)

The Union has today set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. Achieving this goal requires an overall strategy aimed at:
preparing the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society by better policies for the information society and R&D, as well as by stepping up the process of structural reform for competitiveness and innovation and by completing the internal market;

- modernising the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion;

- sustaining the healthy economic outlook and favourable growth prospects by applying an appropriate macro-economic policy mix.

Foreword of the communique of Ministers of Education in Bologna follow-up ministerial meeting in Berlin 2003 (2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} paragraph)

Ministers reaffirm the importance of the social dimension of the Bologna Process. The need to increase competitiveness must be balanced with the objective of improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area, aiming at strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and gender inequalities both at national and at European level. In that context, Ministers reaffirm their position that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility. They emphasise that in international academic cooperation and exchanges, academic values should prevail.

Ministers take into due consideration the conclusions of the European Councils in Lisbon (2000) and Barcelona (2002) aimed at making Europe “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” and calling for further action and closer co-operation in the context of the Bologna Process.

Dutch national higher education policy plan 2004 (HOOP) (foreword by the State secretary for education, A.Nijs, first paragraph)

Higher education is facing the challenge of contributing to the ambition of our country to belong to the top international knowledge economies by 2010. This is not an easy assignment, but one that is more than worth the effort. In the end, the people themselves must realize this challenge; people working and studying in universities and hogescholen, in large, medium-size, and small enterprises, in public and semi-public organisations, and in the non-profit sector. From my perspective, I happily cooperate in this. The HOOP not only offers the vision on which higher education will base their plans in the future, but also develops concrete actions to attain the highly desired top position in Europe. In our knowledge society both people and organisations - - hence also higher education - - must change continuously. Not just for them to survive, but moreso to grow and develop. This holds for both hogescholen and universities. (Translation by Vincent Duindam, Liudvika Leisyte and Terhi Nokkala)

Het hoger onderwijs staat voor de uitdaging om een flinke bijdrage te leveren aan de ambitie van ons land om in 2010 te behoren bij de top van de internationale kennis-economieën. Dat is geen geringe opgave, maar wel een die meer dan de moeite waard is. Uiteindelijk is dit mensenwerk. Het zijn de mensen, die werken en studeren op universiteiten en hogescholen, die actief zijn in grote, middelgrote en kleine bedrijven, in overheid- en semi-overheid organisaties en in non-profit sectoren, die deze uitdaging tot werkelijkheid brengen door hun schouders er onder te zetten. Vanuit mijn kant werk ik daar graag aan mee. Dit HOOP biedt niet alleen de visie van waaruit het hoger onderwijs de komende tijd aan de slag gaat, maar het biedt ook concrete acties om de felbegeerde toppositie in Europa te bereiken. In onze kennis-samenleving moeten mensen en organisaties - en dus ook het hoger onderwijs - zich continu veranderen. Niet alleen om zich staande te houden, maar vooral om zichzelf een verdere ontwikkeling te gunnen. Dat geldt ook voor hogescholen en universiteiten.

Dutch internationalisation of higher education policy 2002 (introduction, first two paragraphs)

The Netherlands has always been an open, trade-based economy. This means that good international relations and a strong international knowledge and skills base are factors of great importance to the country. Furthermore, the Netherlands now has a rapidly expanding knowledge economy and considerable ambitions in that respect. At the meeting held in Lisbon in March 2000, EU heads of state and government expressed the desire to make Europe the most dynamic and competitive region in the world. The Dutch government not only endorsed this aim but added that it hoped to make the Netherlands a leading European state in this respect. The foresight study on the economic structure shows that this will require effort. It identifies the shortage of graduate staff as the main obstacle to economic innovation and an inbuilt brake on the growth of
the capacity of the Dutch economy. Demand for knowledge workers is expected to double over the next ten years.

The Lisbon summit also stressed the importance of social cohesion. Education helps people to function within society. It can reduce unemployment and crime and promote social and cultural cohesion. Moreover, a flexible education system is important to prevent mismatches between demand and supply in the labour market.


The economic and social welfare of Finnish society is based on an egalitarian public education system and innovations generated by the production and application of new knowledge. An efficacious education and research system entails a sufficient level of public funding, which secures access to education, and research services and their international competitiveness. The production and utilisation of researched knowledge is gaining more and more importance in safeguarding sustainable economic development in all fields.

Internationalisation strategy for Finnish higher education institutions 2001 (abstract, 1st to 3rd paragraph)

On 7 November 2000 the Ministry of Education appointed a committee to prepare an international strategy for higher education in response to the changed operating environment. The committee was to assess how the competitiveness of Finnish higher education could be best secured especially in the European, but also international, education market and make proposals to this end. The committee was also to propose means of increasing the number of foreign students in Finland; to explore the possibility of providing Finnish higher education abroad; and to address the question of financing and possible fees to be charged for these services. Further, the committee was to investigate the need for new quality assurance systems in the Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs) operating in the internationalising and diversifying education market.

The committee analysed change factors in the international and national environment where HEIs operate. It reviewed the present situation in HIEs' international activities and assessed the chances of Finnish HEIs to succeed in the increasingly stiff international competition. On this basis, the committee outlined a target state for HEIs' international activities for 2010 and measures needed to achieve it. It also estimated the cost of the programme and looked at possible sources of financing.

The vision is that in 2010 Finland will constitute a well-known and influential part of the European education and research area and produce competitive knowledge. Its higher education community will be international, and the demands of internationalisation will have been taken into account in educational content. There will be 10,000 - 15,000 foreign degree students in Finland, and the volume of student exchanges in higher education will be around 28,000 persons annually. In the graduate schools at least 15% of students will be from abroad. The number of students from immigrant families will have risen substantially. The number of foreign teachers, researchers and experts in Finnish HEI will be at least double the 2001 figure.

Appendix 2

Abbreviations used to identify the interviewed

DSA Dutch state actor, including the representatives of the ministry of education and the national internationalisation agency
DUA Dutch university actor, including the university rectors and the representative of the national university association
FSA Finnish state actor, including the representatives of the ministry of education and the national internationalisation agency
FUA Finnish university actor, including the university rectors and the representative of the national university rectors’ council