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ACADEMIC MOBILITY, GLOBALISATION AND COSMOPOLITANISM: VIEWS FROM HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMICS AND PRACTITIONERS**

Abstract. *The article questions whether the fundamental purpose of promoting academic mobility is really to create a modern 'cosmopolitan' or to expand the 'industry' of higher education (HE) in general and considers the distinction between HE in the context of globalisation as a historical process and globalism as an ideology in particular. Based on theoretical research as well as empirical data gathered from academics and practitioners operating in the HE area with the focus group method, we discuss the historical experiences and present controversy over the future of HE, including the changes emerging in the current renationalisation and pandemic measures. The main finding is that the advancement of globalisation has jeopardized and marginalized the possibility that one of the key purposes of academic mobility would be the education of the modern cosmopolitan.*

Keywords: *academic mobility, Europeanisation, globalisation, cosmopolitanism, globalism*

Introduction

Although academic mobility is a centuries-old phenomenon, it has seen profound changes since the late 20th century. It is particularly interesting to follow its transformation with respect to the Europeanisation process. At the beginning, the education sector was jealously guarded under the jurisdiction of nation states and only partly appeared on the European policy agenda in the early 1970s. Since then, it is possible to regard European educational mobility as an idea, a policy and a practice.

Academic mobility (the term is used here to cover the mobility of students, academics and administrative staff) as a specific element of

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educational mobility in a broader sense is fundamentally linked to questions concerned with the aims and objectives of higher education (HE). The emergence and rise of European mobility programmes reflect a combination of economic arguments (mobility as being crucial to students' future careers in the 'knowledge economy') and issues of a shared European culture and identity (Zgaga, 2018).

In this article, we are primarily focusing on internationalisation mobility in the European area, but not without considering global processes since even the global context confronts us with various priorities that have been attributed to academic mobility. As we have analysed elsewhere (Zgaga, 2012, 2018), noticeable differences are seen in the definition of the purposes, objectives and functions that academic mobility should have in the modern world. These are not only differences highlighted in various national or supranational documents, but also some profound conceptual differences. Put simply: should the fundamental purpose of promoting mobility be to create a modern 'cosmopolitan' (Skrbis et al., 2014) or to expand the HE 'industry' (marketisation, commodification and privatisation; Komljenovic and Robertson, 2017)? These and similar questions have become even more acute in the debate on HE in the context of globalisation (as a historical process) and globalism (as an ideology of neoliberalism; Beck, 2000) and in the controversy over the future of HE.

We focus on the following main research question: How does the dichotomy of cosmopolitanisation and globalisation (also of cosmopolitanism and globalism) affect the positioning of academic mobility today? Our main point of departure in answering this question is the understanding that we live in the age of the "risk society" (Beck, 2016: 33). Furthermore, we make a terminological distinction between 'mobility' and 'migration' that is related to the conceptual distinction between 'freedom' and 'necessity' (Zgaga, 2020). The possibility of going to 'another place' generally brings with it the promise of a 'better life' and a 'better future', whether as an Erasmus student or a Syrian refugee, a researcher or a tourist; however, fulfilling this promise is a complex process.

In a detailed consideration of this and related issues, we encounter terminological issues as well as dialectical turns as are inherent to the history of ideas. What actually constitutes a 'cosmopolitan' in this age of 'globalisation'? How does (academic) mobility contribute to this? Do migrations in general also add to this? Is history thus far a process of gradually approaching the ideal of the 'world citizen' or is the very idea of cosmopolitanism internally dichotomous and contradictory?

While exploring the relationship between the concepts of mobility, (modern) cosmopolitanism and globalism and pointing to a related philosophical and social science debate, we focus on the theoretical lens of

Beck's conceptualisations of globalisation, cosmopolitisation, cosmopolitanism and globalism (Beck, 2002, 2016). The novelty of our article lies in the presentation of the views of academics and practitioners in HE on the research question. This is important as the selected academics and practitioners are qualified by relevant personal experience of lived history and, following Fisher (2009: 142), have knowledge that contains the richness of a theoretical argument and the potential to reopen it. More specifically, the empirical part of the article is based on two focus groups (FGs) conducted in autumn 2019. While the methodology and some findings have already been presented in more detail in Fink-Hafner et al. (2019), it is important to emphasise here that the FG participants (FGPs) were academics and HE practitioners with extensive personal international experience in different parts of the world¹.

In the next section, we first draw the theoretical framework and then present findings from the FGs. In a separate section, we comment on the empirical findings from a theoretical point of view. We conclude with some thoughts on the research findings from the perspective of today's global challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic.

Theoretical framework

Academic mobility is often associated with the formation of 'young cosmopolitans', yet we must ask what is actually meant by this. This term can hold very different, even contradictory meanings. This leads us to ask together with Beck (2002: 25): Should we approach today's academic mobility on the horizon of *cosmopolitanisation* ("globalisation *from within*, globalisation *internalised*") or *cosmopolitanism* (a "set of political ideas, philosophies and ideologies")? To borrow concepts from his earlier, very influential book (Beck, 2000: 9, 11): Should we observe it on the horizon of *globalism* ("the view that the world market eliminates or supplants political action - that is the ideology of rule by the world market, the ideology of neoliberalism") or *globalisation* (which "denotes the *processes* through which sovereign national-states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors")?

¹ The FGs were gender-balanced, with participants coming from younger, middle and senior generations involved in teaching and/or research in the HE area in institutions of various kinds - national and also one very globalised institution, 10 countries of the FGPs' residency at the time of holding the FGs (Ethiopia, Finland, Hong Kong, Mexico, Portugal, UK/Scotland, Slovenia, Sweden, UK/England and USA). The participants also felt that a variety of disciplines were their 'main' one, even while doing research in the HE area, such as: educational sciences, including HE, science and technology studies, political science, sociology, philosophy, psychology, ethnology, history, public policy and organisational studies.

Cosmopolitanism is a much older concept than globalism. It is important to note that different understandings of the term exist as they have been formed throughout a long history. Rich literature shows that two ideational 'archetypes' can be distinguished: *cynical* and *stoic*. The question therefore has roots extending far back in ancient philosophy. There is a consensus that we owe the concept to the philosopher Diogenes of Sinope (412 BC – 323 BC). After various historical shifts, the concept returned to the forefront of discussions in the Age of Enlightenment, the mid-eighteenth century. The famous French Encyclopedia defines the "Cosmopolitain, ou Cosmopolite" in a purely cynical way: "un homme qui n'a point de demeure fixe, ou bien un homme qui n'est étranger nulle part" (D'Alembert, Diderot, 1751).

Nussbaum (1997: 12) noticed "Kant's debt to Stoic cosmopolitanism". Kant's conception is theoretically thoroughly thought-out and universalistic. On the contrary, another individualistic and unreflected conception can be found in what is today a practically unknown French pamphleteer and passionate traveller called Fougeret de Monbron. These two conceptions offer a framework for defining two understandings of mobility: 'formative' and 'tourist'. Kant often used the term 'cosmopolitanism'; of particular note is his late work *Perpetual Peace* (1795) – according to Nussbaum (*ibid.*) "a profound defense of cosmopolitan values". In this, Kant's concept of cosmopolitanism is the complete opposite of Monbron's. The "double meaning of the concept of cosmopolitanism still exists in our own time, for instance, when one type of cosmopolitanism is considered to be an expression of extreme individualism, while the other is a theoretical system with important links to human rights and contemporary political problems" (Lettevall, 2008: 20). Some kind of legacy of Cynical cosmopolitanism can be found today, for example, in what Zygmund Bauman calls "the tourist syndrome" (Franklin, 2003) while the legacy of Stoic cosmopolitanism may be seen in different contexts, such as the expansion and deepening of the concept of human rights, the idea of a responsible global citizen, the idea of a united Europe, environmental equity etc. However, it is evident that we are still far from 'perpetual peace'. In recent decades, while the concept of cosmopolitanism has become relatively marginalised in discussions, a new concept closely linked to it has appeared at the forefront of discussions over the last 30 years: globalisation (Giddens, 1990; Robertson, 1992; Beck, 2000).

In framing of the empirical research presented in this article, we rely on Beck whose work allows us to consider the above noted conceptual differentiations as well as an additional one. He points out that the "philosophical debates on cosmopolitanism have tended to neglect actual existing cosmopolitanism or cosmopolitanization" (Beck, 2016: 26). Philosophical cosmopolitanism "may be an elite concept, cosmopolitanization is *not* an elite concept"; "the cosmopolitan philosophy is about free choice, the cosmopolitan

perspective informs us about a *forced* cosmopolitanization, a passive cosmopolitanism produced by side effects from radicalized modernization” (ibid.: 27–28). In this context, Beck continues, the distinction between globalism and cosmopolitanization is very important: “The cosmopolitan perspective is an alternative imagination, an imagination of alternative ways of life and rationalities, which include the otherness of the other. It puts the negotiation of contradictory cultural experiences into the centre of activities: in the political, the economic, the scientific and the social” (Beck, 2002: 18).

This raises many specific questions in different areas, including HE, and we shall focus on some of them below. We base this on analysis of the discussions in our FGs and on the theoretical framework outlined above. We add a few more clarifications in this regard.

According to Beck (2016: 28), globalism “involves the idea of the world market”, while cosmopolitanization “includes the proliferation of multiple cultures” and “the growth of many transnational forms of life, the emergence of various non-state political actors”. These actors include, as the analysis of the FG discussions shows, international academic (un)formal networks, institutions and organisations. Further, Beck (ibid.: 26) points to “the growing interdependence and interconnection of social actors across national boundaries” and to the specific side effects of their actions, which “are not meant to be ‘cosmopolitan’ in a normative sense; this is ‘real existing cosmopolitanism’ or the ‘cosmopolitanization of reality’”. The results of our analysis show that this is also true in HE.

It is important that Beck (2016: 27–28) distinguishes between a cosmopolitan philosophy (which could otherwise be an aspect of the discussion on the purposes of HE) and a *forced* cosmopolitanisation, a passive cosmopolitanism. Here, the debate about the cosmopolitan potential of today’s HE is linked to the debate on globalisation and globalism. Beck continues: “Cosmopolitanization, for example, derives from the dynamics of global risks, of mobility and migration or from cultural consumption (music, dress styles, food)”, etc., all of which are bringing us “to a shift of perspective, however fragile [...]. And it leads to a growing awareness of relativity of one’s own social position and culture in a global arena”. Moreover, “actually existing cosmopolitanisms involve individuals with limited choices”.

Beck (2002: 37) points to methodological nationalism which, among other things, maintains the still predominant view of cultures as “homogeneous unities of language, origin and political identity”. The consequences of such a view also have strong impacts in HE. Beck (ibid.: 28–29) reveals that “the experiential framework of national societies, shut off from one another by a unified language, identity and politics, is increasingly nothing more than a scam. What appears as and is proclaimed as national is, in

essence, increasingly transnational or cosmopolitan". This is ever more confirmed in HE. At the same time, he asks: "[I]s there a *single* cosmopolitanism or *several* cosmopolitanisms" and answers: "There is not one language of cosmopolitanism, but many languages, tongues, grammars" (ibid.: 35). As the FG discussions reveal, this is also confirmed in HE and especially by academic mobility and encounters between different academic cultures.

In considering mobility from a cosmopolitan perspective, Beck (2016: 31–32) draws attention to the difference between the concept of a 'cosmopolitan place' and the concept of 'cosmopolitanization of places' and between 'being cosmopolitan' and 'being national'. "If the nation is fundamentally about belonging to an abstract community, then the cosmopolitan place or space is about immersion in a world of multiplicity and implicates us in the dimension of embodied cultural experience". The nation is "a space of identification and identity whilst a cosmopolitan place is an existential and experimental space of difference" and opens up "spaces to invent and amalgamate in crucial experimentation the combination of human rights and citizenship, legal status, social identity and political-democratic participation". This is particularly evident in today's academic mobility.

We applied this theoretical framework to analyse the views of the FGPs in the form of a summary and using selected direct quotes to illustrate their thoughts.

Views of the focus group participants

The focus group participants (FGPs) looked at the current state of the art in the HE area from a critical distance. Without pointing them to Beck's theorising, the FGPs prioritised the key themes as summarised in the following subtitles.

Globalisation, Europeanisation

The FGPs (whose country of residence at the time of the FGs is shown in brackets) recognise "the speed and the depth at which some of these processes are moving" (Sweden), but have doubts when using the term globalisation, which is widely used. They are more interested in the social construction of terms. "How are the relations, the conceptualisations related with social phenomena? So, if we use a certain conceptualisation, what part of the reality is highlighted, what is left out? Do these globalisation, Europeanisation and internationalisation actually try to understand the same basic idea? HE is changing. How to understand what is changing? What are important things there?" (Finland). From the anthropological point of view, "globalisation is all about the lived experience of our students and our

faculty. And these are influenced by the technological, financial, ideological, and ... the massive movement of people from one part of the world into the other. Now all of this is having a direct effect on HE and to me that's what globalisation is" (USA). While on "the discursive level, on the level of policy talk, globalisation does include convergence, the reality might not go in the same direction" (Slovenia 1).

Like globalisation, Europeanisation is socially constructed. "Both a system of governance and... some policy definitions are not independent of member states, but they are co-constructed between member states at the European level" (Sweden).

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, the FGPs debated whether people actually need to physically move to be part of internationalisation, globalisation, Europeanisation. Do the benefits of new technology, like the Internet, replace the migration of academics, researchers and staff, or at least substantially impact actual academic international mobility? The use of technology is also critical in searching for ways in which a not-mobile majority may make "use of technologies to embrace intercultural, international experiences" (Mexico).

Actors

While the FGPs recognise that market forces play a role in HE, they particularly stress the numerous levels and varieties of actors involved in the area of HE. Some FGPs specifically pointed out states, international organisations, HE systems, universities, academics, students, and students' families.

Namely, there are international organisations like the OECD which promote frameworks and policies as a very strong international common denominator. Supranational institutions – the European Union or the European Commission – "practically jumped over the nation state and directly into HE institutions (HEIs), and to disciplines through qualifications frameworks etc." (Finland).

Nevertheless, states and the policy coordination of multiple actors in fact do co-create institutionalised processes that steer real-life phenomena. Actors also enter into a variety of relationships, not only hierarchical ones. In the case of the EU, "there is a lot of participation from the member states in constructing processes of learning" (Sweden). It is particularly the Bologna Process which the FGPs recognise as a social construction, as "a way of making Europe more homogeneous", "trying to create social change in Europe. Erasmus students' exchange programmes are the same kind of social engineering, too" (Finland).

However, at the same time actors are not isolated. For example, "there are areas of our endeavour in the university that we control – our own budgets,

our own personnel, our own curricula. And then there are things that we have to negotiate with our state, or our nation, or our bosses, whoever they may be. But then there are the things that we don't have a lot of control over, but that are very significant for us" (USA). Nevertheless, HEIs are not only the objects of social changes but are also making social changes.

Borders and spaces

The FGPs strongly stressed that actors and therefore the dynamics of HE systems vary from country to country. Moreover, regional spaces are (re) forming. One FGP pointed out the "Euro globalisation of people" as well as of "nation states working together at the regional level". "We also find some regionalisation happening in East Asia, or the greater China area. They are forming the regional culture or traditions through multiple regional collaboration... We talk about... student exchange, more student mobility... They get to know the region much better before they jump to the so-called global world" (Hong Kong). Examples like Bologna may serve as a source for lesson-drawing in other parts of the world. "We always looked at the Bologna Process. There isn't just one model (but it is the main model) and I think that has been very important. Good and bad in some ways. But we have also the Alpha project in Latin America and in my opinion it's also good and bad, because it has imposed this single model and we sometimes just narrow the debate based on that model and we don't think outside the box" (Mexico).

Still, the FGPs point to considerable differences among continents as well as countries. On one hand, there is a tendency that big parts of continents are inwardly-oriented – "Africa is interested in Africa, Europe in Europe". On the other hand, some parts of continents are not so interested in their own immediate region. Further, the Netherlands was noted as a country with its own particular list of 'priority countries' and a "developed strategy for being more attractive to certain countries compared to others" (Ethiopia).

The role of borders is re-emerging. "At the same time that globalisation has opened all these borders in so many parts of the world, other borders have been closed and we are also dealing with that" (Mexico). But the FGPs not only highlight various kinds of state borders, but also spaces (chiefly defined by certain social-cultural phenomena) that have also been transforming. "People around the world are connected today in ways that they never were before. That is a part of Appadurai's conception of a technoscape. There is also a finance-scape. Money, and how it moves. And we've gotten better and better or worse and worse, depending on how you want to look at moving money around the world. But there are also things like idioscapes. The flow of ideas around the world... we were talking about the rise of populist movements... But the most important one for me, is what

Appadurai calls ethnoscaapes. And that relates to something that anthropologists have been looking at for quite a long time” (USA).

Changing minds and culture, sharing morality

Although the actors involved in internationalisation in HE each come with their own cultural perspectives, some cultures ‘travel’ across state borders. One of these is the audit culture. “Audit culture is the tendency to count everything and to assign economic value to it. There are pockets of resistance, there are disintegrations from time to time, but there is an inexorable movement in this kind of direction. Some people call it neoliberal economics, some people call it hegemony... It doesn’t really matter what you call it, but what is it that is actually happening” (USA).

Another question arose in a debate as to whether the actors involved in internationalisation in HE also change their minds, culture or morality. The FGPs mentioned the evidence in the literature showing that “if you just send your students on mobility experience, the chance that they learn something is like trial and error” (UK/Scotland). There is no straightforward answer to the question of whether the increased mobility of Europeans is leading to homogenisation. “That was never what I saw in it. I saw the opportunity for mobility, because I thought if people can go to different countries (like Fulbright students can go from the United States to different countries) they are far less likely to fight with each other afterwards. And so it’s going to be an integrative thing for people as they’ve spent time with another group of people. And that’s great” (USA).

Nevertheless, the FGPs reflected on their personal perceptions of changing minds and culture through internationalisation. But how can one actually trace such changes? This is also a methodological question. “What I’ve really appreciated in my department with this 20–25 years of Europeanisation... is that the staff have changed their mind. The academic culture at my small department has changed in a positive way... And this is an impact. But you can’t measure in this way – with how many weeks they spend abroad and so on. You need to do maybe interviews and so on and so forth. And this is lacking nowadays” (Slovenia 2).

The question of the role of information technologies “as a social force changing societies and HE” (Finland) was posed, but not debated in very great detail.

What did occur in this context and in several other parts of the debates was the reflection that researchers in the HE area are themselves part of the social phenomena we are investigating.

Changing skills – for jobs, for social and political life

What first arises when people move to another country are the basic life needs – “when you move to another country you don’t think immediately about all the intercultural issues, you think about having a roof over your head (yeah) and a bed to sleep in and to eat and get some money” (UK/Scotland). It is also about “the process of finding yourself in a different place that inspires intense self-reflection... whoever you are, moving, you are saying what’s the same, what’s new? How do I cope with what’s new?” (UK/England). These very personal experiences also contain social dimensions. It is important for one FGP to “understand how the support to poor students to have international mobility will have an impact in terms of reducing the gap of inequality in the country. Because when you give the opportunity to students who normally don’t have the chance, the advancement they can make is really big” (Mexico).

Further, the FGPs discussed the skills that HE offers, including “preparing for citizenships”, for work etc. FGPs were critical of distinguishing among different education levels in relation to these various skills. “We shouldn’t differentiate that much vocational training from other levels on the way to HE, because at the end we are preparing the citizens. We are preparing these future professionals or workers... we are all moving towards this idea of skills... What are really the skills that are needed?” (Mexico). The way we interpret skills generally and skills in terms of job transformation is crucial “because what we don’t want to do is to reinforce HE as cognitive, intellectual, and vocational education as skills to operate a machine” (UK/England). Beyond that, “everyone needs to understand what is ‘fake news’” (UK/Scotland).

Overall, debating the development of skills seemed to be particularly associated with the role of the state, although the FGPs also noted the labour market’s responsibility for training as “most of people won’t have all the elements that they need to develop well in a specific position” (Mexico).

Changing contexts, contextual thinking and difference

The participants referred to a variety of contextual perspectives:

- The history of dominant ideological and policy idea perspectives. “After World War II, in the western world there was a major shift in understanding how society and the public should be run... Social democracy became... the dominant idea..., to ensure greater opportunity for less privileged classes to have a better life in society and education, including HE. Massification was a result of the shift in dominant ideas after the big conflicts and revolutions of the 20th century” (Slovenia 1).

- The global-local perspective. The FGPs stressed that “the definition of globalisation in HE... should be also defining a relation to what is local, what’s pointing out internal processes in opposition to globalisation, exacerbate what is local. There are globalisms and localisms. The definition is always contingent to the contexts... So, the contingency in relation to... national contexts, local contexts, is relevant for the understanding of what is globalisation” (Portugal). The local perspective may be about ‘following’, namely: “I am thinking about Latin America... we follow a lot what has been produced in the US or in Europe regarding universities..., where you have to chase all the time the best universities... There is this anxiety to feel that if we don’t copy, we don’t follow what these people have done, and then there is our own capacity building to do that” (Mexico).
- The national policy perspective. This is especially important for certain countries: “Both marketisation and competition are concepts that do not particularly apply to a very large number of HE systems. These are very American, British, Australian... processes, but in the Nordic countries, for example, HE does not really compete for students in a way that British universities would... The fact is that HE is not part of a national industry in a way that it is in some other countries makes a huge difference” (Sweden). Hence, national systems matter.
- The rationale perspective. The FGPs referred to several very different rationales also known in the literature – such as academic, political, economic. While they are all considered to be present at the same time, the particular balance involved might vary in different countries: “for example, if you look at the case of Ethiopia, the key reason why they want to be international is to attract foreign academics to improve the quality. They don’t care about foreign students... it’s not so much a commercial or money-making perspective... but it’s really about the quality of HE... the key reason is an academic reason” (Ethiopia).
- The HEIs’ perspective. The FGPs stressed that, while HEIs may be generally globally, internationally and locally oriented, they all have these three levels: international, national, and local. “But the importance of each of these connections is different. So, typically polytechnics or ‘Fachhochschule’ or universities of applied sciences have a strong local orientation – but they also have national and international orientation. Whereas... quite often the capital city, metropolitan area university is the most international... but they also have a local importance. Without local importance, you cannot build your parking places at your buildings. You need to have all of these connections simultaneously” (Finland).
- Individual HEI historical, geographical and economic perspectives. Historical, geographical and economic contexts vary greatly

among HEIs even within the same country. “It’s not a one size fits all. Internationalisation is an internal university decision... One university might decide to privilege research arrangements with one country or another, but another university would do it completely differently” (USA).

- Intra-HEI perspectives. There are different realities within universities: “It’s not just about geography and economics, it’s also about research interests on the part of the faculty. So, our university, which is a major research university, has very specific research networks with China, with Toulouse in France because of the aircraft industry, and with Germany because of the engineering” (USA). There are also differences among disciplines and departments. “Physicists have always been international. Sciences have always been very international... Social policy has never been international. And they are all in the same university which aims to be international” (Finland).

Language cosmopolitanism? Western-centric use of the English language and beyond

At a time of globalisation, the issue of language has become quite controversial. The FGPs dealt with the use of English in a complex way. Language was described as an important factor, but from different angles: 1) as a means for non-English-speaking nations to gain international visibility; 2) as not simply a ‘western’ language, but a *lingua franca*, the world’s ‘Latin’ of the 21st century; 3) as the language which in some parts of the world is used to “*keep translating theories, approaches, methodologies... because it is hard when you are also embedded in this globalised world*” (Mexico); and 4) as the language that enables international competition in HE: “you have an entire continent, Europe, which is able, willing, and is actually providing a high level education of enormously good quality to people in English from around the world. That is now perceived by most American institutions as competition. Up until that point, if you wanted HE and you wanted to speak the world’s lingua-franca, you came to us or you came to the Australians or the British, and that was it. Not anymore. And so, we are constantly talking in the United States about what are we going to do in the face of competition from high level European institutions” (USA).

Conclusion

FGPs as individuals with particular knowledge and professional (life) experience debated globalisation, Europeanisation and internationalisation. While the formal nationality of all is tied to a certain country (several

had dual citizenship), they reflected on issues of academic mobility from complex multiple personal and academic identities beyond the scope of ethnicity. In that sense, their contributions may be seen as adding to the building of “cosmopolitan social sciences” in Beck’s terms (Beck, 2002: 19). They thereby also call for the development of methodology that moves beyond methodological nationalism (Beck, 2002: 21; Fink-Hafner et al., under review).

The FGPs showed a strong sense of the real-life dynamic of the phenomena being debated, taking both historical and spatial perspectives into account. Indeed, they illustrated “a global mobility of risks where people, ideas and things travel from one side of the world to the other and infect or effect at any place in ways that no one can predict” (Beck (2016: 27–28). This might now also be said to apply to the Covid-19 pandemic. They indicated that the enlightenment (cosmopolitan) promise turns into a post-modern menace; free mobility transforms into an immigration threat or even danger (Zgaga, 2020). The era of potentiated globalisation and the radical ideology of globalism have reinforced the characteristics of the risk society, brought security issues to the fore, and pushed aside the demands for (extended) freedom.

Indeed, FGPs’ revealed their cosmopolitan perspective also while looking at globalisation holistically – taking account of a big variety of synchronic contexts (Beck, 2002: 22), including a plurality of both non-Western contexts and Western contexts. While debating conceptualisations built on the existing literature and results from Delphi-method research (Fink-Hafner et al., 2019), they pointed to the social construction of meaning – something also recognised in Fisher’s debate on the constructivist theory of contributory expertise (Fisher, 2009: 137–167) – which occurs through the activities of international institutions and associations in the HE area. The glocalisation aspect (Beck, 2002: 23), stressing the interconnectedness within and beyond nation states and transnational sensitivity, emerged quite naturally while discussing the FGPs’ personal experiences that each had gathered in several different parts of the world. In this respect, the participants may be seen as “educated transnationals” (ibid.: 26). Still, they do not follow “the ideology of globalism” (ibid.: 40), but instead point to the current mix of the processes of de-territorialisation, re-emergence of territorial borders as well as re-traditionalisation of the collective national imagination, which resonate with Beck’s thinking (ibid.: 27). Indeed, the participants also point to what Fisher (2009: 168) describes as “public policy as a social construct” in the HE area.

While it is no surprise that the FGPs from EU countries did not discuss the EU as a project of national homogeneity (Beck, 2006: 173) but as a complex, internally heterogeneous entity whose parts are also integrating beyond the

EU's borders, it is interesting that those FGPs who had settled outside of the EU were not very familiar with the EU's peculiarities – whether in general or as concerns the HE area.

Beside the economic and political aspects, they clearly stressed the ethical issues of the area of HE in current history like problems linked to social inequalities within various entities (social communities, countries, world regions) as well as among them. Also, the participants were very well aware of how the language horizon raises complex problems in globalised HE.

Finally, FGPs explicitly challenged the popular claim that academic mobility is undeniably linked to the formation of young cosmopolitans is based on amateurish and naive notions of modern, highly internationalised HE (also see the article by Hafner-Fink and Fink-Hafner concerning this thesis in this special issue). Indeed, several FGPs stressed that in spite of developing a common European cultural identity has featured among the EU's policy goals, little evidence has thus far shown that this goal has actually been met. Further, while one cannot deny that student exchange programmes like Erasmus hold the potential to help to strengthen “an imagination of alternative ways of life and rationalities, which include the otherness of the other” (Beck, 2002: 18), the cosmopolitanism concept has entailed extremely complex and sometimes contradictory dimensions in today's context. So, (with reference to the traditional perspective, which oscillates between a cynical and a stoic archetype) the existing forms of academic mobility may be divided into both formative and touristic forms, i.e. those that assist the emergence of a modern cosmopolitan and those that extend the ‘industry’ of HE.

Last but not least, global restructuring (de-globalisation, ‘slowbalisation’, re-nationalisation, re-arrangements of world powers), populism, chauvinism, ‘Covidism’ etc. – all of these phenomena indicate that mobility as we know it has reached its limits. The problem lies not so much in a cosmopolitan philosophy as in sociological cosmopolitanization, as Beck puts it. This phenomenon calls for thorough research and reflection both within the area of HE and from the viewpoint of a broader role for higher education in society today.

The FGPs were well aware that “if you just send your students on mobility experience, the chance that they learn something is like trial and error”. And yet, as one FGP described, “if people can go to different countries [...] they are far less likely to fight with each other afterwards” (USA). There is a lesson to be learned: If physical mobility is not possible, e.g. now due to the pandemic (or perhaps for some political reason, like when in 2019 the Chinese government, offended by a Canadian politician, called on all Chinese students to return home from Canada), we should not accept the notion that the learning process is merely a technical transfer (i.e. the technical transfer

of what the professor did in the classroom to the Internet). We must do all that is possible to take account of not only the lectures but also the contextual dimensions, such as the socialisation of students – not simply of international and exchange students but home students on the campus as well.

The restriction on physical mobility is temporary and should not in any case become a reason for limiting international academic contacts; HEIs need them now more than ever! Technical means like the Internet allow us to maintain and develop communication, but the real added value lies in the ‘soft’ dimension, in the content of the communication. A proactive approach to the dilemmas in which HEIs currently find themselves can thus provide an opportunity to more comprehensively analyse existing obstacles to mobility, rethink previous international mobility strategies, while also using all of the (still unused) potential of internationalisation at home – in order to prepare for new steps for the future of this area.

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