Keynote Speeches

Lecture Hall 6, Room 2113, Campus Center, Moritzstraße 18
Wednesday, August 28th, 2019
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm Networks and Topics of Higher Education Intermediaries on the WWW
Achim Oberg

Thursday, August 29th, 2019
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm  Theory and Higher Education Research: Are They Just Loosely Coupled?
Anna Kosmützky

Friday, August 30th, 2019
9:00 am – 10:00 am Methodological Progress in Higher Education Research?
Jeroen Huisman
### Lecture Hall 6, Room 2113, Campus Center, Moritzstraße 18

**Keynote Speech**

**Networks and Topics of Higher Education Intermediaries on the WWW**  
**Achim Oberg**

Intermediary organizations, such as university networks, student associations, rating agencies, and research funding organizations, participate in international debates on higher education and research. By advocating for their constituencies, they have the potential to affect how governments regulate, finance, aim to govern, and evaluate universities and research institutions. In addition, by drawing attention to topics, such organizations can stimulate or impede the diffusion of new practices among their members. In a current research project on transnational intermediaries in higher education, we archive the websites of hundreds of such organizations over the course of several years. As in other big data research projects, our material contains large amounts of relational and textual data. To utilize these qualities, a conceptual lens that combines social network and institutional analysis is quite helpful. Social network analysis enables us to capture larger structures and the positions of individual organizations within these structures; institutional analysis provides concepts to interpret these structures and the diffusion of topics. In combination, methods and theoretical concepts facilitate the study of ongoing debates about higher education governance on a large scale in unprecedented detail.

### Speaker

**Achim Oberg** (Institute of Organization Studies, Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria/Institute for SME Research at the University of Mannheim, Germany)

ACHIM OBERG is assistant professor at the Institute of Organization Studies at the Vienna University of Economics and Business, Austria, and a senior researcher at the Institute for SME Research at the University of Mannheim, Germany. After obtaining a degree in business administration and computer science at the University of Mannheim, he held positions at RWTH Aachen University and KIT Karlsruhe in Germany. His digital social science research focuses on organizational fields on the World Wide Web and on relational connections among concepts. To capture and analyze these phenomena, he combines network analysis methods with institutional theory.

#### Recent publications


Contact: achim.oberg@wu.ac.at
The development of research fields and debates about theory and theoretical controversies as well as theoretical developments and new conceptualizations are closely related (just as, of course, methods). In my talk, I will focus on the relationship between higher education research and theory, and will ask how loosely (or tightly) coupled they are. I will examine the question on three levels: individual studies in higher education research, thematic sub-fields of higher education research, and theories on the role of higher education in society. Although a loose coupling of theory and higher education research has particular advantages (looseness entails openness and flexibility), a tighter coupling can be beneficial: Without a reference to theory, empirical results might remain incoherent and disconnected, and methodological questions tend to stay on the surface. Without theoretical discussions and controversies, the field might neglect its potential for development and innovation, and without a foundation in societal theory, we might lack an understanding of the social dynamics in and of higher education and waste the opportunity to generate legitimacy for higher education (research). I will explore the potential for a tighter coupling of theory and higher education research across the three levels.

**Speaker**

Anna Kosmützky

Anna Kosmützky is a sociologist and holds a Ph.D. from habilitation (post-doc qualification) from University of Kassel. Before becoming a professor for the “Methodology of Higher Education and Science Research” at the Leibniz Center of Science and Society (LCSS) at the Leibniz Universität Hannover she worked at the International Center for Higher Education Research (INCHER-Kassel) and was head of a Bielefeld University and a research area that comprises research and research projects related to the knowledge production of universities. Her research includes higher education research, science research, and organizational studies and focusses on the methodology of comparative research, in particular, international comparative research (including international collaborative research). Furthermore, she studies globalization processes in higher education (and beyond) as well as the institutional and organizational change of higher education and research organizations.
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Keynote Speech

Methodological Progress in Higher Education Research?
Jeroen Huisman

There are important developments in our field of higher education research that signify its maturity. We have our learned societies, prestigious journals and – by and large – our research findings are picked up by practitioners and policy-makers. Quite often our research findings spark a debate in the media. Furthermore, we see more attempts to stocktaking exercises through solid reviews and meta-reviews and many reflections on the state-of-the-art in our field. That said, it appears there is fairly limited attention to the methodological challenges in our field. On the one hand this may suggest that the quality of our methodologies is top-notch and there is nothing to discuss … On the other hand, it may be that we are fairly complacent, we may be ignorant about methodological advancements in the disciplines or maybe we do not even care that much about methods? The presentation will zoom in on these questions.

Speaker

Jeroen Huisman (Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent (CHEGG), Belgium)
Jeroen Huisman is professor of Higher Education at CHEGG. He holds a Master's degree Educational Studies, University of Groningen, the Netherlands (1991) and a PhD in Public Administration of the University of Twente, the Netherlands (1995). In 2005, he was appointed professor of Higher Education Management at the University of Bath. In 2013, he was granted an FWO Odysseus project at Ghent University.