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)

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Recent publications


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