



Boundaries Rethought: The Doctorate & the New Figure of the ‘Knowledge Worker’ in the EU



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Main Argument

- ▶ **Boundaries of the doctorat are shifting: new figure of PhD student emerging in the EU policy sphere – ‘knowledge worker:’**
 - How is it depicted?
 - Who are the actors?/ How do they negotiate the boundaries of the figure?
 - What kind of world do they imagine?



Context

- ▶ ‘intellectual risk taking’
- ▶ ‘entrepreneurship’
- ▶ ‘skills demanded by the knowledge based economy’ (EC, 2011)
- ▶ → shift from ‘traditional’ scholar image
 - levels of complexity: elements, contexts, translation, agency
- ▶ → implications for mission of PhD?



Data 2014 – first phase

- ▶ Interviews
 - 6 key stakeholders

- ▶ Documents
 - communications
 - position papers
 - reports
 - press releases

‘Knowledge economy’ imaginary

- ▶ Knowledge – economic resource
- ▶ Universities getting their boundaries stretched – research/ people – ‘fuel’
- ▶ Countries – ideas-driven economies
- ▶ → redefining core values → instrumental
- ▶ PhD education – key position → re-thought
 - Variety across countries, institutions, disciplines



Doctoral Education?

- ▶ Investment in PhDs → ‘overproduction’ → need to retrain people for jobs outside academia
- ▶ Bologna Process (members) – EHEA
- ▶ EC’s Lisbon Strategy (2000) – ERA – industry, economy, universities
- ▶ → overlap in the idea of ‘Europe of knowledge’ → doctoral education



1. The figure

- ▶ Conceptual discussion
- ▶ PhD student – wider than oneself, embodied performance (located, reacting)
- ▶ Dynamic figure: shifting (emerging and residual elements) → the ‘knowledge worker’
 - Power to resist
- ▶ Why entrepreneurial?
 - ‘Because the ultimate goal is to prepare them for the economy, and for their role in the economy’ (EC interview, 2014)



2. The actors

- ▶ WHO? And HOW?
- ▶ Decision-making – levels
- ▶ Figure – boundaries – constructed, contested and negotiated
- ▶ Stakeholders – who sets the trend?
- ▶ EC – privileged position – soft governance
 - ‘You don’t get the grant if you don’t follow the principles’ (former EC official, 2014)



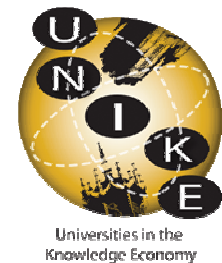
3. The world

- ▶ Neoliberal 'knowledge economy' imaginary
- ▶ Constructing and defining problems
- ▶ Sense of urgency – 'competitiveness'
- ▶ → re-skilling PhDs
- ▶ → agenda around economy, not education
- ▶ Boundaries of terms: 'knowledge economy;' 'industry;' 'training' – contested



Conclusion

- ▶ Boundaries are shifting: doctorate, student, education
- ▶ New figure of the PhD student emerging in EU policy arena
- ▶ Complex phenomenon involving multiple levels, actors
- ▶ Implications for universities: mission?



THANK YOU!

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