

Innovation and Governance in Higher Education and Research

The “Academic Community” as a research concept

Sofia Sousa

CIPES

(Centre for Research in Higher Education Policies)

Porto, Portugal

Abstract

The concept of “Academic Community”, according to several authors¹, is being reconfigured. By whom, how and in which conditions are complex questions that, until now, I couldn’t reach a satisfactory answer. In my master thesis I will try to study those questions, trying to clarify what do we mean, in the context of higher education research, by “Academic Community” and what changes this concept is suffering or/and reclaiming.

In this paper, I will try to address this issue in three steps. First, I intend to define the concept of “Academic Community” and its main dimensions. Then, in a second moment, I will contextualize it within the scope of more global transformations that are occurring under the designations “Knowledge Society” and “Mode 2” knowledge production. Finally, I will focus on the methodological issues, i.e., in the way that I will develop to study the theme in the context of the Portuguese society.

It is essential to understand that the present paper is constituted only by a set of initial approaches of what my master thesis will, hopefully, be. Consequently, it can only be completely interpreted while incomplete and unfinished, as a draft of my future master thesis.

¹ Barnett (1994), Kogan (2000), Becher and Trowler (2001), Jackson and Tinkler (2000) and Magalhães (2001), among others.

Introduction

The idea of the ivory tower, still current in popular discourse, will today elicit a wry smile from almost every faculty member everywhere.

Becher and Trowler (2001: xv)

As a Junior Researcher in higher education policies my main research concern relates with themes that are being reformulated in present time. Therefore, when I start (a year ago) to attend the master course in “education, educational policies and higher education” at University of Porto, almost immediately I decided to dedicate my attention to a concept that, from my point of view, is being strongly reformulated by “Mode 2” knowledge production and the “Knowledge Society”: the concept of “Academic Community”.

In this paper I intend to go deeper into my research question: what is the “Academic Community”? How is it responding to present transformations related with knowledge production? I intend to do that starting by address the concept of “Academic Community”, in an attempt to clarify it, in order to, in a second moment, be able to contextualize it in the “Knowledge Society”. I will finish this paper with methodological elaborations related with the way that I am thinking to articulate the theoretical and conceptual questions with empirical data.

1. The Concept of “Academic Community”

Being my main goal finding a definition for the concept “Academic Community” and, simultaneously, to understand its absence in the publications and research in higher education, I have started my research by consulting several works in higher education, namely a fundamental work about concepts and themes related with higher education: *The Encyclopedia of Higher Education*, edited in 1992 by Burton Clark and Guy Neave. In this work, and to my surprise, as I thought that I will easily reach to a definition of the concept, the expression “Academic Community” doesn’t appear in the index. The section closer to it is Section IV (Volume III) focusing on faculty and students. There, I could find not a definition, but some contours of it, which I will try, in what follows, to connect with some other data.

However, and before starting doing that, it must be emphasized that

“one faces a difficult task when seeking to render an account of the history and current statues of ‘the professoriate’ – or of ‘the faculty’, ‘professors’, ‘academics’ – or whatever generic noun may be used to define and describe all those who lay claim to membership in what is sometimes romantically referred to as ‘the ancient and honourable community of scholars’.”

(Wagner and Kellams 1992: 1674)

Opting by one of those “generics nouns” – “Academic” – let us see which are the main contours that the concept “Academic Community” can assume.

1.1. Begging with the Begin – The “Community”

In this attempt to understand the concept of “Academic Community”, the “Community” could not let be left out without discussion. As Kogan (2000: 207) states, the category “Community” make us enter to the realm of moral philosophy. This, along with the fact, emphasized by the same author, that this category is used in several ways – since a kind of collectivity until a feeling or a social relation – indicates that this objective – of trying to define and understand what the “Academic Community” is – appears as very complex. This complexity becomes even more dense when we become aware that the discussion referred brings to the front stage two major problems:

“First, it is a warm glow word which implies good relations when they may not exist or may not even be necessary for good working. Secondly, it obfuscates the need for close analysis of roles within and beyond education in which the relationships may be that of dependency, or exchange or a hard business of establishing *quids* for *quos*. Its use is no substitute for hard work in stating and making connection.”

(Kogan 2000:208-209)

My research proposal consists in an attempt to escape from the romantic sense of the expression “Community” in the context of higher education (contributing, following Kogan (2000), to the occultation of the necessity of its own analysis) by undertaking the opposite way, that is, when using the term “Community” I will try to understand its use and what dimensions it assumes in higher education.

McInay, following the steps of Kogan (2000) and referring to Mellor (1991), defends that the term “Community” “is one of the key words in sociology that have ‘diffuse meanings because they relate to a set of central values in society, which, if scrutinized, would lose much of their precision and look more like myths’” (2000:4). If I understand correctly what these authors above wish to emphasise – the need of awareness of the lack of scientific knowledge about the concept in question –, it seems to me that is essential to discuss it, even though if it is only to conclude its non existence or its reduction to a myth or a romantic legend.

I will start by elaborating on the discussion of the diversifications inside of the own concept of “Community”.

1.2. “Community” and “Communities”

Kogan (2000) and Austin (1992) present several dimensions of the “Academic Community”. While the first author emphasizes the relations of and within the “Academic Community”, the second approaches its dominant cultures. Both perspectives seem essential to understand how the “Academic Community” is built.

For Kogan (2000) there are three modes of relation in the “Academic Community”: (1) between the different communities of “Academics”, (2) with the institutional management and (3) with the wider world. I will focus my attention only in the first mode of relation. I want to focus on the possibility, sustained by the author, of the existence of more than one community of academics. Such communities have in common “the intellectual self-

confidence of the disciplines and subject areas to which the academics belongs” (Kogan 2000: 209). Hence, the possibility of only one “Academic Community” – my starting point for my future Dissertation – wouldn’t be plausible, because, given the specialization and the subsequent fragmentation of the disciplines, it would be extremely difficult to identify something in common to every one of them. Nevertheless, the same author, referring Henkel (forthcoming), emphasizes other dimension: the internal nature of what constitutes the Communities, identifying that nature as the starting point for the constitution of the Academic Communities themselves.

In this way, it seems possible that it resides in the academic internal “nature”, referred above, the common point that allows the use of the concept “Academic Community”. What remains to be clarified is, obviously, that very “nature”. Maybe Austin’s analysis could contribute for that.

For Austin (1992: 1615) there are four dominant cultures that affect the “Academics”: (1) the culture of disciplines – such as for Kogan (2000) – (2) the culture of employment, (3) the culture of national system and (4) the culture of the Academic Profession. I will centre my attention just in this last one. The author identifies – on the basis of Shils (1983), Clark (1985, 1987a, 1987b), Rice (1986) and Kuh and Whitt (1988) – four central values in the culture of the Academic Profession: (1) the purpose of the “Academic”, meaning “to pursue, discover, create, produce, disseminate, and transmit truth, knowledge, and understanding [taking in consideration that] research, writing, publication, and teaching are all vehicles for enacting this value” (Austin 1992: 1620), (2) the compromise of the “Academic” with “intellectual honesty, integrity, and fairness” (Austin 1992: 1620), (3) the freedom in teaching, learning and research as a constant in Academic Work and (4) the “Academic” value of the notion of “Community”. Consequently, perhaps one can defend that the “Academic Community” has its central point in the existence of a common “nature”, shared by all “Academics”, which could reside in the mentioned four values, that is, true, honesty, freedom and community.

Although, I must confess, it might be extremely tempting to finish this chapter with the last paragraph there is something that puzzles me: even if those values were common to all

“Academics”, can they be stronger than the disciplinary logics, remembering Becher (1989)², which gave birth to authentic “Academics Tribes and Territories”?

Although it is not my intention to polarize the discussion, it seems inevitable asking if different disciplinary logics can coexist with such general academic values. The problem can be formulated in question “what is about the “academic’s compromise?” With the disciplinary logic – and in that case we can speak of multiple academic communities – or with a set of shared values accepted by “academics” - and, in that case, one can speak of the “Academic Community”?

In order to understand the centrality of the concept of “Academic Community”, I will elaborate in the next section the issue of the academic profession and its own constitution as such.

1.3. Academic Profession, *Ethos* and “Community”

It seems fair to conclude that the “Academic Community” is a diffuse and broad concept. Is it something about which the higher education research should not focus?³ Is there one based on a “common nature”, or various, related with disciplinary logics – “Academic Communities”? Nevertheless, the set of questions raised apparently need to be completed by another: “who constitutes the “Academic Community”?”

I will try to answer it, first drawing a possible *ethos*⁴ for that and, secondly, trying to understand how it had arise.

1.3.1. *Ethos*

According to Jesuino and Ávila (1995: 75) “it is due to Merton (1942, 1973) the first formulation of the concept that the scientific community⁵ would be doted with a normative

² Becher, in 1989, wrote a work (Becher 1989) in which the central argument consisted in that the modes from which particular groups of academics organize their professional lives are intimately related with the intellectual tasks to which they are committed to. This author interviewed 220 academics, embracing 12 disciplines and 18 institutions in Great Britain and United States of America, trying to relate the social aspects of communities of knowledge (people) - the “tribes” - with the epistemologic proprieties of the knowledge forms (ideas) – the “territories”.

³ Especially if we compare the publications about this concept with those about “Quality”, “Managerialism”, etc.

⁴ Employing the term *ethos* “there is, nevertheless, to recognize, as Zuckerman insists (1988:517), that science *ethos* is, mostly, an ideal, not necessarily translating the real conduct of scientists” (Jesuino and Ávila, 1995:76).

⁵ I will use, in this paper, the concept “Scientific Community” as equivalent to “Academic Community” because it is coherent with Portuguese reality, since, and according to Nunes and Gonçalves (2001: 22), more than 80% of the Portuguese researchers work in universities.

structure, an *ethos*, to use the expression of the authors. Such *ethos* would found itself around four fundamental norms. They are (1) the norm of the *universalism*, (2) the norm of the *communalism*, (3) the norm of the *disinterest*, and (4) the norm of the *organized skepticism*. On the other hand, Polany (1958), cited by Jesuino and Ávila (1995:76), had developed

“An antimertonian vision, underlying the influence of the *personal character* of the science (and not an impersonal one as proposed by Merton), on its structure. To Polany (...) the rationality of science results, in sum, from the interaction between personal and impersonal forces. The norm of universalism is opposed, therefore, to the norm of the *particularism* (...). In the same sense, the norm of communalism opposes the norm of *isolation*, (...), as so as to the norm of disinterest is opposed to the norm of *interest* (...) and to the norm of organized skepticism, the norm of *organized dogmatism* (...)”.

(Jesuino and Ávila 1995:76)

Is the interaction between personal forces – a possible academic “nature” – and impersonal forces - the disciplinary culture – what characterizes the academic *ethos*?

1.3.2. Academic Profession

According to Wagner and Kellams, the “term ‘*universitas*’, which in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries signified any group of people united by common interests and independent legal status, did not begin to acquire its more restricted and exclusive definition until the fourteenth century.” (1992: 1675) This definition was related with “power” and that could be different depending of its geographic local: “At Bologna and other universities in Italy and the South of France, power initially rested with the student guilds. (...) The University of Paris followed a different line of development. Here [the power rested with] masters” (Wagner and Kellams 1992:1675-1676). Therefore, we have two groups that can be building blocks of the “Academic Community”: The students and the masters that,

“Embraced and enhanced the authority of knowledge that through the centuries has been used both to support and to challenge the legitimacy, power, and conventional wisdom of popes and kings and of church and state. As it matured,

the university, and especially the professoriate, its heart and soul – pumped life and spirit into Bacon’s dictum, ‘Knowledge is power’.

(Wagner and Kellams 1992:1675-1676)

Coherently, “Academics” seem to be built as something - not homogeneous - but sharing some dimensions. However, the same authors point to other transformation, the one occurred in the conscience that occurred in the medieval university. This transformation “was the growing sense of awareness among medieval masters that in many ways they shared a common identity and mutuality of interests (...). In this initial sense of recognition of collegueship and shared identity and fate, the academic profession can be said to have been born.” (Wagner and Kellams 1992:1675-1676)

Consequently, and in spite of the fact that it was notorious that the power initially detained by students begin to disappear, between the masters or professors arose a notion of “identity”, of an *ethos*, of a life in community. That life in community was, at least in its medieval roots, and due to its close relation to knowledge, clearly modern and related to the research ideal of the German university. This model, in which research and education are interpedently related, is indeed important, even nowadays, given that it seems to be the content of the “nature” that brings together “Academics”, allowing, in that way, the utilization of the concept “Academic Community”:

“Once accepted into the ‘ancient and honourable community of scholars’, the symbols, traditions, and routine of everyday academic life serve to remind modern academics of their common connection to a shared past. Above all, perhaps, is the recognition that now, as in medieval Europe, the professoriate exists to discover and share knowledge. For all the variations in form and function, substance and style the quest remains the same.”

(Wagner and Kellams 1992:1684)

Hence, the quest for knowledge is something that, apparently “Academics” have in common and structures several aspects of academic life. The question that urges to be raised now is about the nature of the knowledge itself: what knowledge do we want to conquer? It seems very clear to me that only if the knowledge to be acquired has the same basic contours, we can speak about an “Academic Community”. That is what I will try to discuss in the second part of this.

1.4. Knowledge, Pedagogy and Research

Although higher education includes distinct professional groups, it seems that the “Academic Community” is composed only by one of them: the professors. This is because “more than any other group, faculty are the holders and producers of the world’s knowledge. They are bound together by an interest in ideas and their expression and by shared and powerful ideologies regarding the community of scholars and academic freedom” (Morey 1992: 1515).

Nevertheless, one can argue that students, especially post-graduation students, are equally related with knowledge. I am referring to Kogan and his own experience:

“I should mention, if only in passing, the place of students within the concepts attributed to community. At least one former colleague and some, if a minority, of those interviewed in a recent evaluative project would maintain that ‘There is no difference between faculty and students. All are learners.’ Well, we all hope that we will enable students to acquire the knowledge and intellectual skills that we should have. We may well learn from student’s life experiences. But do not we have a different starting point in our acquired knowledge and capacity to handle it and are our obligations not quite different?” (2000: 210),

I think that the answer to that question is positive and I sustain that the difference can be found in the way those two groups handle the task of conquering knowledge. I will, then, present two of the modes that, essentially, translate the two principal tasks of the higher education professors and, consequently, of the “Academic Community”⁶.

According to Gellert (1992: 1634-1637), research while systematic production of knowledge is a recent phenomenon, arising only in the XVIII century and, in most of the cases, outside of the universities that “had degenerated into rigid, denominationally controlled organizations with extremely limited intellectual and innovative capacities” (Gellert 1992: 1634). In spite of the fact that in the end of the XVIII century Universities had become centres of critical thinking and intellectual discourse, at the beginning of the

⁶ “Among the university functions which exist in practically all university systems, those of professional training and research are clearly the most important ones. While in terms of the time which faculty members spend professionally, teaching is often named as the most absorbing activity, faculty research is what clearly determines the individual esteem of a faculty member as well as the prestige and quality assessment of a department and even an entire institution of higher education. (Gellert 1992:1640-1641)

XIX century “much of the empirical contents of lectures and published work consisted of speculative interpretation of reality” (Gellert 1992: 1635). The German University, and specially Wilhelm von Humboldt concept of a ‘unity of research and teaching,’ that is, the “idea that academic teaching should be closely intertwined with and directly based on the ongoing process of research of the individual academic” (Gellert 1992: 1635) is what makes higher education really *higher*. Therefore, it seems that those two modes of Knowledge conquest – teaching and research - can’t be thought separately and, in spite of that, must stay allied one to another. Such seem truly impracticable (see footnote 7), because they present distinct values and status.

Jackson and Tinkler identify the PhD as a privileged way to gain access to the “Academic Community”, through three ways: the institutional way – “the PhD, and in particular the doctoral examination, can be seen as one of the ways in which universities are tied into a broader community of higher education institutions with common aims, interests and relation of interdependence” -, the professional way – “doctoral examination process plays an increasingly important part in the constitution and monitoring of a professional academic community” - and the epistemologic way – “the PhD examination serves, specific knowledge communities in that it monitors standards within a particular field and is increasingly a prerequisite and preparation for acceptance into that field of knowledge” (2000:39).

1.5. An unknown concept: the “Academic Community” fading away as a concept

Taking into consideration my argument in this paper, one can conclude that there is, in fact, something that can be called “Academic Community”, defined by the group of higher education Professors (who holds a PhD), showing as its common feature the search for knowledge through teaching and research. Nevertheless, it is important now to understand its present definition. Some authors refer – though they not define the concept – the loss of the concept of “Academic Community”.

Barnett (1994), for instance, defends that the “Academic Community” seems to be diluting and, with it, the own term “Community” in the wider society. Kogan (2000) sustains that communitarian values are being at stake. Becher and Trowler (2001) refer some change in the characteristics of “Academic Community”, such as the deprofessionalisation of academic career, the loosening of the bounds that gather the

“Academic Community”, the stratification, the internal hierarquization and divisions, the “Academic” schizoid identity, the loose of control and autonomy over academic work, the obsession with intellectual propriety and accountability. Jackson and Tinkler (2000) mention the loss of an academic community. Magalhães (2001), based in Santos (1994), refer a hegemonic crises of the University – and of the “Academic Community”, I allow myself to add - : “Much of the university’s prestige was (and still is) derived from the assumption that it is a place in which knowledge is produced and also as the ultimate instance for deciding what is to be considered as knowledge” (Magalhães 2001: 153).

Therefore, and in a time in which the “conquest of knowledge” – one of the characteristics that define the “Academic Community” – is not something that one can speak about consensually, it does not seem surprising that the concept of “Academic Community” seems to fade away without being truly discussed. For that dilution to be clarified, I propose, in the next chapter, try to understand what is this knowledge that is, nowadays, so much (des)valued.

2. The Transformation of Knowledge Production

Why is “Knowledge Society” so much spoken⁷? What is this concept about? Before trying to reach an answer to it, it seems essential to note that knowledge production is changing as Gibbons *et. al.* (1994), Magalhães (2001) and Becher and Trowler (2001) defend. Essentially, the knowledge production, to use the terminology of the first author, changing from Mode 1 to Mode 2, whose differences can be noted in Figure 1.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION	CONTEXT	KNOWLEDGE BASE	INTEGRATION	ORGANIZATION	QUALITY CONTROL
MODE 1	ACADEMIC COMMUNITY	DISCIPLINAR	HOMOGENEOUS	HIERARCHICAL	PEER REVIEW
MODE 2	APPLICATION	TRANSDISCIPLINARY	HETEROGENEOUS	HETERARCHICAL	PEER REVIEW + ACCOUNTABILITY

Source: Magalhães (2001:156)

Figure 1 – Differences between the two Modes of Knowledge Production presented by Gibbons *et. al.* (1994)

While in Mode 1 the science and the quest for knowledge *per se* frame the knowledge production, because they were contextualized in the ideal of the equivalence of the academic knowledge with a contribution to the human being emancipation, in Mode 2 the key word is “application” (What is the utility?). Consequently, it seems that we have passed from Pure and Applied Science to Strategic Science, i.e, it is possible to say that Mode 1 corresponds to a direct and privileged relation between “Academic Community” and knowledge, while in Mode 2 this relationship is mediated by other factors. Is it congruent to affirm that this transformation, and its consequences, is framed by the so called “Knowledge Society” (corresponding, if that is the case, the Mode 2 to the “Knowledge Society”)?

I will try to answer this question in two moments. First, trying to define the concept “Knowledge Society” and, secondly, relating this same concept with the nature of capitalism.

2.1 The concept of “Knowledge Society”

Robertson (2003) call our attention to the fact that the concept of “Knowledge Society” can be a “silver bullet”, This is because, at first sight, no one – especially the “Academic

⁷ Just, to verify that, consult any present Government Program.

Community” that tends to present a privileged relation with knowledge – will dare to question it: “Yes, we say, as good followers and in one voice in a kind of religious celebration. Yes, the knowledge work – our work – is indeed important” (Robertson 2003:1). But, it can be, and especially if one looks at what the same author called the “other” of the “Knowledge Society” – the “Knowledge Economy” – that it presents a more dubious character than a first reading could induce.

When the concept of “Knowledge Society” is used is not for promoting *the* Knowledge but, instead, *that* knowledge which can make the economy move:

“Our brains had become more important to the enterprises pursuing a competitive profile, not only because before they did not care about that, but because the demand is becoming higher. Stove talents creating the conditions for the growing of innovation, assuring patents and author rights, codifying tacit knowledge, investing in high technologies, are strategies that are being promoted by ‘competitive states.’”

(Robertson 2003:2)

The definition of “Knowledge Economy”⁸ as a priority in higher education is, according to Robertson and Dale (2001: 118), consequence of the political combination of legitimation with accumulation, inserted in a set of competitiveness strategies. Therefore, we have terms like “Knowledge”, “Society”, “Economy”, “Informational Technologies”, etc. in agglomerate, proclaiming, on the one hand, the valorization of the knowledge but, on the other, trying to value only *the* knowledge that is rentable. To this purpose is important to mention the “Lisbon Strategy”, in 2000, in which there were established the following objectives for Europe – “*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* (paragraph 5)” (Robertson 2002: 2).

Therefore, we assist to the knowledge transformation as something that once was in the possession of “Academics” and is becoming an economical value that, paradoxally, assumes also, social responsibilities. Perhaps, we may compare this process to what Magalhães and Stoer (2003a) named the transformation of knowledge into *throughput*.

But, after all, in what consist this knowledge? How does “Academic Community” refers to?

⁸ It would be interesting to think about who is, in fact, the other, if the “Society” or the “Economy”.

Castells (2000:3) refers to process of searching for identity that all this process gave origin. Ironically, one may affirm that the “Academic Community” – in the scope of the “Knowledge Society” – has gave up to search for knowledge – diluting the shared characteristic among “Academics” – to search for its own identity, while is searching for *some* kind of knowledge: “In a world of global flows of wealth, power, and images, the search for identity, collective or individual, ascribed or constructed, becomes the fundamental source of social meaning. (...) Identity is becoming the main, and sometimes the only, source of meaning” (Castells 2000:3).

2.2. The “Knowledge Society” and the Nature of Capitalism

The nature of capitalism is not something strange to the transformation of knowledge we are referring to. Three are the authors whose work seems to me essential to understand it.

Castells defends an articulation between the capitalistic production mode and the “informational development mode” (contextualized in the “Knowledge Society”): “The network society, in its various institutional expressions, is, for the time being, a capitalist society. Furthermore, for the first time in history the capitalist mode of production shapes social relationships over the entire planet. But this brand of capitalism is profoundly different from its historical predecessors” (2000:502-503).

Magalhães and Stoer sustain the existence of a close relation between Capitalism and Knowledge: “A link was created between knowledge and power that was historically unprecedented. On the one hand, capitalism developed its own apparatus of social regulation while, on the other, it incorporated knowledge into its own processes by rationalising them, in other words, a process of rationalisation was incorporated into the productive process and social organisation” (forthcoming: 4-5).

Finally, Amaral and Magalhães (2003: 239-253) propose a triple vision of the university crises, related with the three periods of capitalism⁹. This is relevant to emphasize the influence of capitalism, also, in the knowledge production mode and, more

⁹ According to Santos (1996:163-201), they are: (1) Liberal Capitalism (until the end of XIX century) – The liberal society starts to demand modes of knowledge (for instance, techniques) difficulty incorporated by University, (2) Organized Capitalism (from the end of XIX century until the end of the decade of 60) – The struggles for social rights (the elitist character of the University is in risk) – and (3) Disorganized Capitalism (from the end of the decade of 60 until today) – The Welfare State Crisis and the desacceleration of industrial productivity in central countries.

specifically, in higher education. It's obvious that the present period of Capitalism, and the Welfare State Crises, are related with the emergence of the valorization of concepts such as “Society/Economy of Knowledge”. When the Welfare State enters in fiscal crisis it also enters in legitimacy crisis:

“Simultaneously, it is no wonder that in the rationale for increased access to higher education, the demands of economic competitiveness have replaced the satisfaction of rising social expectations.

In other words ‘neo-liberal and monetarist policies have increasingly considered that government intervention and regulation as excessive, and the mother of all sins of the welfare state (inefficiency, wastage of money, unfair sharing of resources...), the ‘market’ being the solution of all these problems’ (Amaral and Magalhães 2001).”

(Amaral and Magalhães 2003: 244)

Therefore, and according the authors, it seems reasonable to defend that the “silver bullet” that is constituted by the “Society/Economy of Knowledge” has as its main allied the Welfare State Crisis that, in its turn, allowed that a set of characteristics came up in our society (that are appealing to competitiveness and economic decision making criteria). It is this context that makes possible a discussion of the dilution of concepts such as “Academic Community”, much more related, it seems clear to me, with Mode 1 than with Mode 2 or its equivalent “Society/Economy of Knowledge”.

3. Some Methodological Issues

In the previous sections I have tried to give a brief perspective about the main theoretical perspectives I intend to address in the research in master’s thesis question. As I am starting to initiate the data collection, the discussion of some methodological issues is crucial. My intention consists in focusing my research question into the Portuguese case, more specifically interviewing some “key-actors” of the Portuguese “Academic Community”, trying to interpret and analyse what those “key-actors” have to say about the actual situation of the “Academic Community”. I will do that using as a mean of research the Interview and Discourse Analysis.

Four concepts seem to me essential to the methodological process: Meaning, Interpretation, Reflexivity and Critic. What is in question, then, is an attempt to analyse the meanings of the concept of “Academic Community”, through the Discourse of some “key-actors” of the Portuguese “Academic Community”. Therefore, it seems clear that Post-Structuralism will serve as a context for my dissertation, assuming, as I already referred, Interviews and Discourse Analysis as the main methodological devices

Culture interpretation – in this case the culture of Portuguese “Academics” – has been, in the context of Human and Social Sciences, and according to Slater (1998: 234), the goal of two important attempts for the introduction of consistent methods: content Analysis – “as an old and rather positivist-inclined method (...) [which] tends to fairly mechanistic readings and conclusions” (Slater 1998: 234) - and Semiotics – which “seeks to draw out the full complexity of textual meaning, as well as the act of reading texts, but with little rigour in a conventional sense” (Slater 1998: 234). Consequently, in my attempt to interpret the *culture* of Portuguese “Academics”, I think that the most adequate to it is the search for an understanding of complexity and, therefore, having the Semiotic as my starting point.

Still Slater (1998) defends that the most important distinction within Semiotics is the one between Structuralism and Post-Structuralism, being that the latter

“Rests on a critique of several structuralist assumptions. The methodological upshot of this critique is that cultural texts cannot be reduced to single, fixed and unitary (uncontradictory) meanings by either analysts or social subjects. The relational structure of meaning (...) is such that no final meanings are ever arrived at. Moreover, whereas earlier structuralism and semiotics assumed a singular and

coherent reader, post-structuralism focused on the constitution of contradictory subject positions within contradictory texts. Thus there was a shift in aims, from the scientific and objective to the rhetorical and relative.”

(Slater 1998: 241)

This emphasis on the contradiction seems especially important for trying to understand the impact of the transformation of the knowledge production modes in the Portuguese “Academic Community”. This is because this transformation, in itself, is full with contradictions. Therefore, I will choose, within Semiotic approach, the Post-Structuralism as my methodological and epistemological starting point, given that with it I am assuming an interpretative perspective about knowledge construction of reality, which, in turn, will be more easily understood having as base *small* narratives (vs. metanarratives such as subjacent to the concept “Academic Community”), such as those I expect to find with the interviews.

Discourse Analysis is a term closely related with this starting point, for “Discourse” “can refer both to a single utterance or specific speech act (such as private conversation) and to a more systematic ordering of language (such as legal discourse)” (Seale 1998: 247). In my dissertation I will employ the term “Discourse” to mean the conversation that will result from the Interview with the “key-actors”.

Language plays a central role in Discourse Analysis, since “Discourse” refers “to a *system* of language which draws on a particular terminology and encodes specific forms of knowledge” (Seale 1998: 248), being faced as a “topic” of research, that is, Language is “both active and functional in shaping and reproducing social relations, identities and ideas” (Seale 1998: 248). In sum, I think one can state that by using Discourse Analysis it is conferred to Language a central role, being of fundamental interest to understand how its use constructs the social reality. Being more specific: it is through “Academics” Language that I will try to understand what meanings are attributed to the academic culture in the era that we are living.

I intentionally use the plural of the word “meaning”, because is not my intention to find *the* true about the Portuguese “Academic Community”, but, instead, what meanings are attributed to it.

Seale (1998: 250-260) present three principal steps to give in Discourse Analysis. They are (1) Data Selection and Perspective (2) Data Classification, Codification and

Analysis and (3) Analysis Presentation. In my dissertation I will try to understand what are the themes that Academics refer to and in what way they face them (more than quantity, it matters to pay attention to the argumentation and fundamentation of the presented ideas), trying to perspective their “Discourse” in a contextualized, contradictory and, sometimes, silent way.

The interview appears, for my purpose, as a mean to obtain the “Discourse” which will be analysed. I intend to interview some (nearly five) Portuguese “Academics”, that I have been called “key-actors” of the Portuguese “Academic Community”, that is, they were selected in the assumption that they are clearly recognized by their peers as privileged actors in it, as in the scope of their disciplinary matrix as on their own percuse and “nature”.

Following Seale (1998a), I understand the interview as a “topic”, and not as “recourse”, given that what is intended is to understand the meaning that is given by the “key-actors” to the themes that will come up during the Interview – which will be conducted by me without any script; I will only have some themes (with origin in my theoretical perspectives) - and try to listen the “key-actors”.

The choice of such “key-actors” as subjects of the Interviews took me to raise a question that, at least so far, I couldn’t reach an answer: if the intention is to study the Portuguese “Academic Community” is it the most adequate procedure doing that through “key-actors” that belong, clearly, to *elite* of the same? In spite of this paradox situation between “Community” and “Elite”, I defend that is indeed essential to understand the positions of those “key-actors” (by their experience and reconnaissance), even if that means taking the risk of analysing a Discourse coming from *outside* or from one *dimension* of the Portuguese “Academic Community”.

Hence, these are the main themes to be approach:

A. What is to be a Professor and Researcher in higher education? What is the “Academic Community” (common characteristics between higher education Professors and Researchers)? What is its situation in Portugal?

B. What recent changes can be identified in the “Academic Community” and in the process of “knowledge” production? (Namely, in relation to (a) “commodification” of knowledge (b) managerialistic/economicistic concepts such “effectiveness” and

“efficiency”, (c) knowledge development and fragmentation in sub-disciplines, (d) relationship with industry and state and (e) massification phenomena?)

C. By looking into Portuguese higher education what can be seen? The “Academics” in their ivory tower? The inexistence of any kind of tower? The tower, progressively, going down or becoming stronger?

Conclusion

My research question – how is the Portuguese “Academic Community” responding and/or being shaped to the transformation of knowledge production modes – has two central points: the very concept of “Academic Community” and the “Transformation of Knowledge Production”. Consequently, those are the two main dimensions I hope to develop in my master dissertation. Of course, and still in relation to theoretical perspectives, there is much work to be done (that could not be treated here because it would make the paper longer than it is admissible), such as the relations established between the concept of “Academic Community” and “Identity”, the justification and pertinence of the research that I am, and I will, conduct in the scope of the dissertation, the situation of “Academic Community” in Portugal and, obviously, an even deeper analysis of those two central points referred above. Namely in relation to distinct historic, epistemologic and sociological perspectives of the “Academic Community” concept, which has been merely drafted here.

Because I also intend to insert an empiric dimension into the Dissertation, I have also discussed the methodological issues. Nevertheless, I must admit, those are very incomplete because I haven’t started any kind of empiric work. I’m sure that when I start doing so those issues will be much more profound and impregnated with all the reflexivity they deserve.

In a year from now I expect to have my empirical findings discussed and interpreted in relation to theory and concepts that I will continue to study. At length, in a year from now, I expect to have done my Master Dissertation and being initiate the journey of a PhD... One thing, at least, is certain: The contribute of the CHEPS Summer School for this process.

Bibliography

Amaral, Alberto and Magalhães, António (2003) “The Triple Crisis of the University and its Reinvention”, *Higher Education Policy*, 16, 239-253.

Austin, A. E. (1992) “Section IV. Faculty and Students: Teaching, Learning and Research. Faculty Cultures.”. In Clark, Burton R. and Neave, Guy (Eds.) (1992) *The Encyclopedia of Higher Education*, 3, New York: Pergamon Press, 1614-1623.

Barnett, Ronald (1994) “Recovering an Academic Community. Above but not Beyond”. In Barnett, Ronald (Ed.) (1994) *Academic Community. Discourse or Discord*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 3-20.

Becher, Tony (1989) *Academic Tribes and Territories*, Bristol: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.

Becher, Tony and Trowler, Paul (2001) *Academic Tribes and Territories. Second Edition*, Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.

Castells, Manuel (2000) *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Volume I: The Rise of the Network Society*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Gellert, C. (1992) “Section IV. Faculty and Students: Teaching, Learning and Research. Faculty Research.”. In Clark, Burton R. and Neave, Guy (Eds.) (1992) *The Encyclopedia of Higher Education*, 3, New York: Pergamon Press, 1634-1641.

Gibbons, Michael *et. al.* (1994) *The New Production of Knowledge*, London: Sage Publications.

Jackson, Carolyne and Tinkler, Penny (2000) “The PhD Examination: An Exercise in Community-building and Gatekeeping?”. In McNay, Ian (Ed.) (2000) *Higher Education and its Communities*, Buckingham: SRHE/OUP, 38-50.

Jesuino, Jorge Correia and Ávila, Patrícia (1995) “Modelos e Representações da Ciência”. In Jesuino, Jorge Correia (Coord.) (1995) *A Comunidade Científica Portuguesa nos Finais do Século XX*, Oeiras: Celta, 75-88.

Kogan, Maurice (2000) “Higher Education Communities and Academic Identity”, *Higher Education Quarterly*, 54, 3, 207-216.

Magalhães, António M. (2001) *Higher Education Dilemmas and the Quest for Identity: Politics, Knowledge and Education in an Era of Transition*, PhD Dissertation, Netherlands: Twente University.

Magalhães, António and Stoer, Stephen (2003a) “Performance, Citizenship and the Knowledge Society: A New Mandate for European Education Policy”, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 1, 41-66.

Magalhães, António and Stoer, Stephen (forthcoming) “Education, Knowledge and the Network Society”.

McNay, Ian (2000) “Community: A Diverse Conceptualization and Realization”. In McNay, Ian (Ed.) (2000) *Higher Education and its Communities*, Buckingham,: SRHE/OUP, 3-9.

Morey, A. (1992) “Section IV. Faculty and Students: Teaching, Learning and Research. Introduction”. In Clark, Burton R. and Neave, Guy (Eds.) (1992) *The Encyclopedia of Higher Education*, 3, New York: Pergamon Press, 1515-1535.

Nunes, João Arriscado and Gonçalves, Maria Eduarda (2001) “Introdução”. In Nunes, João Arriscado and Gonçalves, Maria Eduarda (Orgs.) (2001) *Enteados de Galileu? A Semiperiferia no Sistema Mundial da Ciência*, Porto: Afrontamento, 13-31.

Robertson, Susan (2002) “Changing Governance / Changing Equality? Understanding the Politics of *Public Private Partnership* in Education in Europe”, Paper presented in the Conference *Globalisation, Education Restructuring and Social Cohesion in Europe*, at Barcelona, *extract* from www.genie-tn.net/paper002.htm, at 12-11-2003.

Robertson, Susan (2003) “É o teu Cérebro que nós queremos: A Bala de Prata da Sociedade do Conhecimento”, Journal *A Página da Educação*, year 12, n. 129, p.7, *extract* from <http://www.apagina.pt/arquivo/ImprimirArtigo.asp?ID=2788>, at 13-04-2004.

Robertson, Susan and Dale, Roger (2001) “Regulação e Risco na Governação da Educação. Gestão dos Problemas de Legitimação e Coesão Social em Educação nos Estados Competitivos”, *Educação, Sociedade & Culturas*, 15, 117-147.

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa (1996) *Pela Mão de Alice. O Social e o Político na Pós-Modernidade*, Porto: Afrontamento.

Seale, Clive (1998) “Analysing Discourse”. In Seale, Clive (Ed.) (1998) *Researching Society and Culture*, London: Sage, 245-260.

Seale, Clive (1998a) “Qualitative Interviewing”. In Seale, Clive (Ed.) (1998) *Researching Society and Culture*, London: Sage, 202-216.

Slater, Don (1998) “Analysing Cultural Objects: Content Analysis and Semiotics”. In Seale, Clive (Ed.) (1998) *Researching Society and Culture*, London: Sage, 233-244.

Wagner, J. L. and Kellams, S. E. (1992) “Section IV. Faculty and Students: Teaching, Learning and Research. Professoriate: History and Status.” *In* Clark, Burton R. and Neave, Guy (Eds.) (1992) *The Encyclopedia of Higher Education*, 3, New York: Pergamon Press, 1674-1686.