

Internationalisation or Europeanisation? Capturing Dynamic Concepts in Higher Education Institutions



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Abstract The myriad international crises in recent years have highlighted the importance of responses from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in contending with global challenges. In the European Higher Education Area, HEIs play a core role in implementing the international and European dimensions in higher education. Internationalisation and Europeanisation are shaped by HEIs' structures and individuals, and due to their evolving nature, they are dynamic concepts with contested definitions. Through the institutional logics' perspective, this paper will investigate (1) how international and European dimensions diverge within HEIs in the EHEA, (2) explore the predominant steering mechanisms employed by HEIs to facilitate the inclusion of the international and/or European dimensions, (3) outline the roles that individuals play in fostering international and European dimensions, and (4) what effects do external factors have on HEIs' organisational autonomy. This conceptual analysis will provide researchers and stakeholders with a framework which showcases how internationalisation and Europeanisation, despite their dynamism, can be captured within HEIs, following the logics embedded in their activities.

Keywords Internationalisation · Europeanisation · Higher education · Higher education institutions · Institutional logics

1 Introduction

While provocatively declaring the end of internationalisation over a decade ago, Brandenburg and de Wit advocated for the 'need to reaffirm the core role of universities' (2011, p. 17). Despite trends in internationalisation accelerating unabated in the years that have passed since this assertion, the global landscape has undergone

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profound transformations impacting the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and the operating environments they find themselves in. Today, as international crises such as climate change, pandemics, economic disparities, and conflicts continue to transcend national borders, the quintessential role of HEIs in contending with global challenges has been thrust into the spotlight with manifest implications for higher education and society more broadly.

The challenges of the contemporary era underscore the need for HEIs to go beyond a passive adaptation and actively engage in the intentional shaping of solutions. In this context, HEIs in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)—with EHEA intended as an imagined space transcending geographical borders (Brooks & Rensimer, 2023)—would be understood to interpret impulses from both the international and European perspectives. The persistent and interconnected nature of global issues necessitates a comprehensive re-evaluation of the role HEIs play within the EHEA. Not by chance, the current strategy launched by the European Commission (2022: 16 final) aims to empower HEIs to carry out their European objectives in higher education. HEIs thus play a pivotal role in interpreting and implementing the international and European dimensions of higher education.

Internationalisation and Europeanisation are evolving processes shaped inside the HEIs, and due to their evolving nature, they are dynamic concepts with widely differing interpretations. The exercise of defining these two concepts has been underway for almost three decades (Dagen et al., 2019; de Wit, 2024; de Wit et al., 2015; Heleta & Chasi, 2023; Knight, 2008; Knight & de Wit, 1995; Marginson, 2023). Two observations are worth noting. Firstly, in light of the diversity of views, it should come as no surprise that scant univocal consensus on the definition of the two concepts has yet been reached. Secondly, the definitions often tend to focus on the macro (social, economic, and political factors) and meso (institutional policies) levels of analysis.

As stated by Rumbley et al. (2022), internationalisation in higher education is a ‘multifaceted and evolving phenomenon. It touches on a wide scope of issues and can be defined in a multitude of ways’ (2022, p. 19). The following ostensibly similar definitions are loosely based on the works by Knight and de Wit (1995), de Wit et al. (2015) and Hunter et al. (2023). These definitions do not aim to be ideal and definitive but instead to delineate the directions to navigate through the concepts of internationalisation and Europeanisation within this paper. Internationalisation and Europeanisation in higher education are dynamic processes orchestrated by HEIs, pragmatically implemented in alignment with their organisational practices and identities through strategies and individuals. The primary goal of internationalisation and Europeanisation is to integrate an international or a European dimension into the institutions’ education, research, and social engagement, responding to external factors at social, economic, and political levels. On the one hand, this integration occurs via a modality that is coordinated with national regulatory frameworks in mind. On the other hand, it aligns with the principles, values, standards, and procedures of the EHEA.

This paper thus examines the differences and similarities between internationalisation and Europeanisation from an institutional bottom-up perspective—considering

the strategies and constituent individuals of HEIs. Using institutional logics, this paper will investigate (1) how international and European dimensions diverge within HEIs in the EHEA, (2) explore the predominant steering mechanisms employed by HEIs to facilitate the inclusion of the international and European dimensions, (3) outline the roles that individuals play in fostering international and European dimensions, and (4) what effects do external factors have on HEIs' organisational autonomy.

Structured into three main sections, the paper unfolds with a brief description of the EHEA context, highlighting the emergence of the international and, especially, of the European dimensions. The following section delineates the institutional logics' perspective, pointing out its relevance for the two dimensions and outlining its principles and main logics. The final section delves into the process of inclusion of international and European dimensions inside HEIs, dedicating the first part to outlining their main characteristics, while the second part serves to deepen the dynamics and implications of the process.

2 International and European Dimensions in the EHEA

Within the EHEA, higher education has followed its own unique developmental trajectory, distinguishing it from other regions (de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Tight, 2021). This distinctive evolution is marked by a concurrent emphasis on fostering international and European dimensions. An international dimension is enabled, for instance, by the development of national strategies for internationalisation of European nation-states (Crăciun, 2018) or by institutions at a national level focused on the internationalisation of higher education, such as the DAAD in Germany (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, 2020) or the UniPID in Finland (UniPID Finnish University Partnership for International Development, 2020). And a European dimension concurrently is enhanced, for example, by EHEA goals and European Union (EU) policy agendas or by supra-national institutions like the European University Association (2020).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, globalisation—distinct from internationalisation and intended 'as a multifaceted phenomenon and an important environmental factor that has multiple effects on education' (Knight, 2003, p. 3)—has been a key development factor for HEIs, building the political, economic and social ground base for the evolution of international and European dimensions of higher education (Crăciun, 2018; Dagen et al., 2019; de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Lee & Stensaker, 2021; Tight, 2021).

In a globalised world, the international and European dimensions found common drivers in knowledge economy (LaFayette et al., 2019) and in knowledge diplomacy, as defined by Knight (2020). Moreover, national governments have been called to respond, in the sphere of higher education, to trends beyond their national borders, such as the growing influences of rankings (Belenkuyu & Karadag, 2023; Brankovic, 2022; Buckner, 2022; Uslu, 2020), the massification of higher education (Rumbley

et al., 2022; The World Bank, 2023; Tight, 2019), migration (Murray et al., 2023), the evolution of technology (Rumbley et al., 2022), and the myriad international crises (Hunter et al., 2023).

The European dimension emerged clearly for the first time from the launch by the EU of the ERASMUS programme (European Economic Communities, 1987: 87). The European dimension, distinctly perceivable through the launch of ERASMUS, represented a pivotal chapter in the evolution of European higher education. ERASMUS became a catalyst for collaboration, mutual understanding, and the integration of diverse educational systems within Europe, also through remarkable solutions such as the European Credit Transfer System. ERASMUS not only facilitated student and staff mobility but also laid the groundwork for the Bologna Process and the broader vision of a unified EHEA (de Wit & Altbach, 2021).

Since the promulgation of the Bologna Declaration (European Ministers of Education, 1999), the Bologna Process has achieved remarkable goals, which have led to the creation and the consequent strengthening of the EHEA. The three-cycle system—bachelor, master's, doctorate—, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, the European Quality Assurance Register, the EHEA Qualification Framework, and the fair recognition of academic qualifications based on Lisbon Recognition Convention (Bergan, 2019) have contributed to the fortification of the European dimension into the daily practices of HEIs.

Contrary to the backdrop evident in times gone by, characterised by a competitive 'ping pong' phase between Bologna Process initiatives and the EU policy agenda (Corbett, 2011), the contemporary landscape sees a shift towards a collaborative and synergistic relationship. Today, the EHEA and the EU are engaged in cooperative efforts aimed at jointly enhancing the integration of the European dimension within higher education. This collaborative spirit is exemplified by initiatives such as the EU's European Qualification Framework, which aligns its descriptors with the three-cycle system of the EHEA Qualification Framework (Europass, 2022). Additionally, the robustness of the quality assurance infrastructure within the EHEA, as highlighted by Grek and Russell (2023), underscores the depth of this collaboration. Noteworthy is the significant impact of Bologna Process instruments on the EU's overarching strategy, as explicitly acknowledged by the Council of the European Union (2021: 66, 2022: 167). These examples are indicative of a meaningful and reciprocal partnership where the EHEA and the EU mutually contribute to the enrichment and advancement of higher education through shared frameworks, common objectives, and strategic alignment.

Favoured by this collaborative setting, the EU is conducting a long-term project for higher education, which embeds the European Education Area (Council of the European Union, 2021: 66, 2022: 160, 2023: 165) and the European Research Area (European Commission. Directorate General for Research and Innovation, 2021). Among the initiatives, the European Education Area agenda includes the capital European Universities Initiative (EUI), which, as argued by Cino Pagliarello (2022), 'incorporates the aims of the EHEA and the ERA into a common European dimension by linking education, research and innovation within a common transnational approach' (2022, p. 150).

The EUI is currently generating growing scholarly debate in the higher education field, which focuses not only on the Initiative itself but also provides new insights to interpret the changing environment of European higher education, as well as European HEIs (Brooks & Rensimer, 2023; Cino Pagliarello, 2022; Frame & Curyło, 2022; Gunn, 2020; Hartzell et al., 2023; Kanninen & Pekkola, 2023; Maassen et al., 2022). EUI opened the door to a comprehensive re-evaluation of internationalisation and Europeanisation in higher education, paving the way to new means of capturing these two dynamic concepts.

The above description of the unique context of the EHEA highlights the intricate interplay between the international and European dimensions. Essentially, the EHEA relies on a complex system of organisations, policies, and tools to ensure that the European dimension is seamlessly reflected in individual HEIs. This setup promotes a unified approach, emphasising common values and standards across participating institutions. HEIs, in alignment with the broader European space, embrace not only the European dimension but also respond to global dynamics by actively incorporating the international dimension, navigating through national strategies and legal frameworks, as well as HEIs' missions and strategies. This dual commitment underscores the adaptability of HEIs to international and European influences, showcasing their ability to orient themselves in a dynamic and interconnected higher education landscape.

3 Focusing on HEIs: The Institutional Logics Perspective

HEIs develop their strategies by interpreting, with varying priorities and viewpoints, the international and European external factors at social, economic, and political levels (Buckner, 2022; de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Stensaker et al., 2019; Wihlborg & Robson, 2018). Moreover, as pointed out by Alexiadiou and Rönnberg (2023), the manner in which individuals inside institutions interpret HEIs' strategies highly influences how HEIs respond to international and European impulses.

In the EHEA, during the past decades, HEIs have become strategically-driven organisations benefiting from greater autonomy (Gunn, 2020) in a context, as described above, which favoured the access of HEIs to international and European influences. Aware of those changes, the EU responded by re-evaluating the role of HEIs in the EHEA, bestowing upon them a pivotal role in higher education. In the *Communication on a European strategies for universities*, the European Commission (2022) stated that:

Universities have a unique position at the crossroads of education, research, innovation, serving society and economy: they play a critical role in achieving the European Education Area (EEA) and the European Research Area (ERA), in synergy with the European Higher Education Area.

In the context of the EHEA and its underlying principles of communication, two critical aspects merit attention. Firstly, HEIs have the potential to concurrently incorporate the international and European dimensions across the spectrum of education (de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Jones, 2022; Mittelmeier et al., 2021), research (de Wit, 2020), and societal engagement (Brandenburg et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2021) the three core missions of universities. Moreover, HEIs are fundamental in achieving broader goals in higher education, and thus, a HEI-centred approach should be adopted to understand the EHEA context.

Despite the use of institutional logics in higher education research being seen as a relatively novel approach (Cai & Mehari, 2015), it has nonetheless witnessed rapid growth in several spheres of higher education in the last decade (Cai & Mountford, 2022), and it allows for the definition of a HEI-centred perspective for internationalisation and Europeanisation. Institutional logics possess the capability to investigate how different processes could happen simultaneously in HEIs, highlighting multiple and contrasting logics intervening (Pietilä & Pinheiro, 2021). They allow us to understand how the dual commitment of HEIs, international and European, is possible, driven by logics sometimes overlapping, sometimes diverging. Essentially, it allows for the definition of similarities and differences between the international and European dimensions, starting from the HEIs.

3.1 The Institutional Logics Theory

The institutional logics perspective found its origin in the paper by Friedland and Alford (1991), where the two authors argued against the absence of agency in neo-institutionalist theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). They argued, first, that society and social relationships diffuse both material structure and cultural elements and, second, that society is constituted by multiple institutional orders influencing organisations and the actors that inhabit them (Friedland & Alford, 1991).

In the first formulation by Friedland and Alford (1991), the analysis focused on a macro-level. Further developments in institutional logics studies (Rao et al., 2003; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999) investigated within the micro-level how the different logics influence organisations and individuals. Thornton and Ocasio (1999) defined institutional logics as ‘the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality’ (1999, p. 804). Following this definition, it is possible to argue that institutional logics shape internationalisation and Europeanisation.

Thornton et al. (2012) identified four main principles of institutional logics (2012, p. 6). First, the historical contingency in institutions underscores their fluid and evolving nature, emphasising that they are far from crystallised fixed entities. Consequently, any analysis centred on HEIs remains relevant only temporarily and within specific contextual boundaries. A prime illustration of this principle is evident in

the rapid developments of the international and European dimensions within the EHEA in recent decades. The institutional responses to these developments serve as a clear example of how the dynamic interplay of time and context significantly influences HEIs. As the EHEA has undergone transformative shifts, the strategies, structures, and roles of HEIs within this context have likewise adapted, underscoring the temporal and contextual dimensions integral to understanding internationalisation and Europeanisation dynamics.

Second, HEIs can be interpreted from multiple levels of analysis, adopting the perspective that they assimilate different levels of logics: individual, organisational, field, and societal. For instance, this could be shown in different logics influencing academic professionals, such as the sense of belonging to the HEI and, at the same time, to a global community (Pietilä & Pinheiro, 2021). International and European dimensions are shaped by logics at different levels: not only the organisational logics of HEIs but also the logics of individuals, of higher education, and of society more broadly.

Third, the duality of agency and structure leads to considering the individuals and the strategies as well as the structure of the HEIs, with an interest in how individuals can change HEIs while being collocated in their context. Liu et al. (2023), for example, show how the competing logics between universities and their professors led to an implementation of education of international students that is divergent from national goals. Therefore, the integration of international and European dimensions derives from the synthesis of strategies and individuals and the HEIs' structures. It is the duality of structure and agency of HEIs, perceivable all along a multiple level of analysis—context and HEIs, HEIs and individuals, context and individuals—that, through different cooperating and competing logics, allows and characterises the implementation of the international and European dimensions in higher education.

The last principle, interpreting HEIs as material and symbolic, finds its ground base in the composition of HEIs, in which are intertwined both material elements—structure and practices—and symbolic aspects—ideas, beliefs, values, and culture. International and European dimensions manifest in HEIs through activities, such as the enrolment of international students or the EUI, and are sustained by intangible aspects, such as the belief in a globalised market of higher education or the EU values of mutual collaboration.

Connected to these principles and starting from the seminal article of Friedland and Alford (1991), Thornton et al. (2012) elaborated the interinstitutional system, an analytical framework to understand the main ideal logics impacting the structure and the individuals constituting the institutions. The framework is built on the concept that institutions are composed of subsystems, the main logics, created and perpetrated by individuals and organisations through a set of cultural symbols and material practices (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999; Thornton et al., 2012). As per Thornton et al. (2012), the main institutional logics are family, community, religion, state, market, profession, and corporation. While most of them can be intuitively understood, community logics foster common values, reciprocity and moral responsibility, and corporation logics prioritise the interests of the organisations.

Observing the main logics, it is important to acknowledge that every HEI, as well as the individuals belonging to them, act according to simultaneous and multiple logics (Pietilä & Pinheiro, 2021; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999; Thornton et al., 2012). In contemporary internationalisation and Europeanisation—considering studies such as the rationales driving internationalisation by Knight (2021) family and religion logics are often not impactful, while the other logics can be present to different extents. The logics embedded in the international and European dimensions lead to their differentiation.

On the one hand, the international dimension is fostered strongly by state (e.g., national strategies and regulations), market (e.g., competition for international students' fees), corporation (e.g., HEIs' positions in international rankings) and professional logics (e.g., academic ambitions of each researcher), with community logics having a lower degree of influence on the international dimension. On the other hand, community logics reflect the foundation of the European dimension, which is shared values and goals, such as the ones of EHEA, EEA and ERA, its main constituents. The community is followed by the professional and corporate logics (e.g., the prestige for both academics and their HEIs to receive European research grants). Moreover, market logics—since European initiatives like Erasmus+ are not strictly made to generate profit—and state logics—considering the supra-national nature of the dimension—are usually not the main drivers.

4 Capturing Dynamic Concepts

The international, as well as the European, external factors at social, political, and economic levels influence HEIs, which interpret their impulses according to their institutional priorities. From the lens of institutional logics, these priorities are intricately tied to HEIs' organisational practices and identities cultivated within HEIs. The dynamics are shaped by the recurrent interplay among multiple concurrent logics. These logics, reflective of various guiding principles and normative values, contribute to the formation of organisational identities and practices. Consequently, the decisions and responses of HEIs to external stimuli are deeply rooted in these institutional logics, embodying the nuanced interweaving of internal and external influences.

Logics in HEIs are the result of the interplay between agency and structure. This interplay involves strategies and individuals within the organised framework of HEIs. Logics, rather than being fixed concepts, evolve through the choices and behaviours of individuals working within the structured environment of HEIs. This mutual relationship between agency and structure highlights the two-way influence: individuals contribute to shaping the structure, and, in turn, the structure shapes and influences the agency of individuals. International and European impulses become fortified and distinct dimensions through activities embedded with different institutional logics, stemming from the reciprocal relationship between agency and structure. Embedding how this happens and its implications is the cornerstone to capture the dynamic concepts of internationalisation and Europeanisation.

4.1 *Two Directions and Three Typologies*

HEIs' strategies and individuals foster the inclusion of the international and European dimensions potentially in all three core missions of a university: education, research, and social engagement. The international and European dimensions manifest in a set of activities differentiated by their embodied logics. As an example, an ERASMUS mobility scheme, driven mainly by community logics, will differ from a single mobility scheme between two HEIs, often moved by market or state logics.

The activities have two directions, considering the perspective of the HEI. On the one hand, they can head towards an abroad direction, enclosing all the activities taking place outside HEIs. On the other hand, at home, they can include the actions realised within HEIs (de Wit & Altbach, 2021). Considering the increasing impact of digitalisation that inevitably influences their international and European dimensions, Mittelmeier et al. (2021) proposed the third 'at a distance' category, which embodies all the virtual activities. However, in this paper, this potential category will be embedded in the at home typology, since the digital sphere does not necessitate a physical change of location by the participants and could be thus interpreted as happening inside HEIs.

Following either one or the other direction, three different typologies of activities could be implemented. First is the mobility typology. For example, degree, credit, certificate or staff mobility abroad (de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Kanninen & Pekkola, 2023) or participation in international conferences by researchers. At home, there are Collaborative Online International Learning initiatives (Hackett et al., 2023; Rubin & Guth, 2023; Tuke et al., 2021) or participation of academics in an international webinar. The second typology is cooperation, which manifests abroad, for instance, with the creation of cross-border entities in partnerships with organisations (Kanninen & Pekkola, 2023), such as EUI or a new campus beyond national borders. At home, it could manifest in jointly conducted research projects led by the home university or in new laboratories inside the HEI. The third typology is dissemination, which could be realised abroad in actions such as publishing, co-authoring or organising events involving local communities (de Wit & Altbach, 2021). At home, dissemination can be enhanced by fostering EHEA or global values among the HEIs' members (Jones et al., 2021; Kanninen & Pekkola, 2023) or through internationalisation of the curriculum (Jones, 2022).

It is possible to imagine how HEIs' activities could easily cross more than one typology and transpire in both directions. For instance, a consortium created through the EUI could enhance a mobility scheme, create a platform for dissemination, engage in projects with actors external to higher education, as well as promote EU values for the staff (Cino Pagliarello, 2022; Gunn, 2020; Maassen et al., 2022). Moreover, even if the goal of an action usually aims to contribute mainly to one of the university's core missions, it is often the case that all three missions are impacted in some way. The inclusion of the international and European dimensions in the three university core missions, shown in Fig. 1, could vary from HEI to HEI, according to their unique organisational identities and practices. Analysing the role of institutional strategies

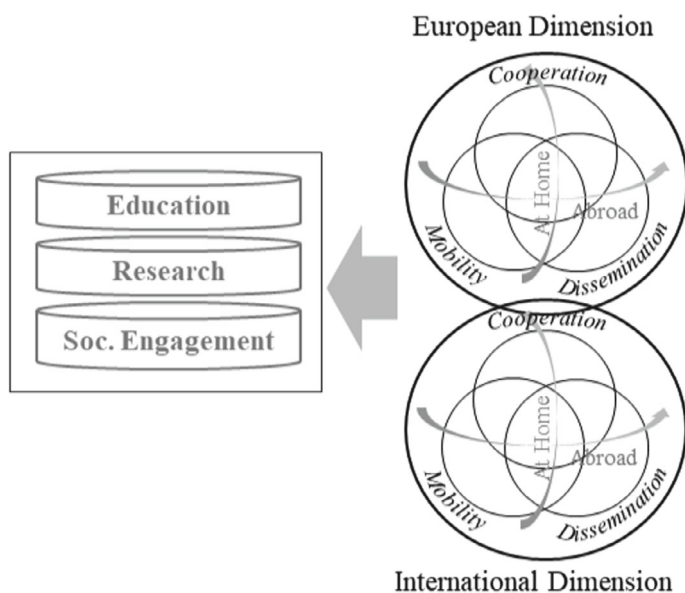


Fig. 1 Two directions & three typologies

and individuals in facilitating and shaping this process becomes, therefore, of primary interest to understanding the process itself.

4.2 *The Internationalisation and Europeanisation Cycle*

Considering the common context of the EHEA, in which they are generated, the institutional strategies of European HEIs share some common general aspects. However, as argued by Hunter et al. (2022), ‘institutions are being required to justify their internationalisation activities not as universally desirable in their own right but in the context of their own missions, histories, institutional cultures, and political and economic contexts’ (2022, p. 144). Due to their multiple institutional logics impacting their organisational identities and practices, every HEI has its own unique institutional way of including the international and European dimensions inside their organisations. HEIs have a considerable number of logics intervening simultaneously within their organisational structure that could relate to each other through dynamics specific to that interaction. As an example, the market logics determining the recruitment of international students could be in contrast with the community logics stimulated by initiatives such as ERASMUS.

As a consequence of this situation, HEIs are called to implement common mechanisms to react to the different institutional logics perpetrated by their strategies and individuals, in an act of transforming logics, originating from the interpretation

of external factors through organisational practices and identities, in organisational logics shared among the strategies and the individuals. The act, from which stem shared logics, can be interpreted as the 'negotiation' described by Thornton et al. (2012, p. 93).

Maassen et al. (2022), in their study about the organisational implications of EUI alliances, pointed out different types of mechanisms to deal with the multiple logics intervening in the new cooperative organisations funded by the EU. Given that the purpose of these mechanisms is to deal with multiple logics, they are not only applicable to the context of EUI but also within European HEIs.

Among this type of mechanism, coordinating the set of standards and schemes that are implemented inside the HEIs is particularly relevant. For example, clear coordination on a mobility strategy, including precise mobility schemes, creates the space for strategies and individuals to operate within the same logics; or institutional incentives to receive research grants funded by the EU orient the professional logics driving academics towards contributing to the organisational strategy, that can be driven more by market logics instead.

Linked to effective coordination, HEIs should have some established conflict resolution practices, which allow the HEIs to find solutions when conflictual logics intervene. Such is the case of the 'high quantity but low quality' of international students in China analysed by Liu et al. (2023), where the state logics pushing for the recruitment of more international students collided with the professional logics of the professor teaching them. The first thoughts about conflict resolution could lead to top-down pushes from institutional governance. However, a study by Maassen et al. (2022) showed the effectiveness of building consensus to enhance collegial decision making over more hierarchical approaches.

Collegial decision making is a manifestation of the fundamental impact that individuals have on institutions. Individuals could be, as argued by Hunter et al. (2022), 'essential enablers' (2022, p. 1) of internationalisation and Europeanisation processes inside HEIs. For instance, the recommendations by Jones et al. (2021) to enable the internationalisation of higher education for society are directed not only to leaders but also, acknowledging their pivotal role, to individuals, such as teachers and researchers.

The commitment of individuals is of paramount importance to the inclusion of international and European dimensions within HEIs. Having high individual engagement creates the soil to nourish a co-creative environment, fostering well-directed institutional initiatives that embed the logics stemming from the implementers as well. Commitment of individuals is a prerequisite for reflective conversation, a practice 'that occurs among professionals and leads to shared understandings and original and synergistic ideas' (Hunter et al., 2022, p. 1). Reflective conversation among individuals is an act of sharing logics that could lead to drastic changes within the HEIs and the ways they shape their strategies (Hunter et al., 2022).

Regardless of specific types of logics intervening between strategies and individuals, these negotiation mechanisms lead to a new set of shared logics inside the HEIs. These logics are the ground base for the two acts that determine the inclusion of international and European dimensions: decision making and sense making.

On the one hand, decision making is the act of choosing *what* to do according to the shared logics derived from negotiation mechanisms, and determining consequentially the practices of the HEI (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 95). On the other hand, sense making is the process of determining *why* to do it through shared logics, embedding them into explicit practices that shape the identities of HEIs (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 96).

Decision making and sense making determine how international and European dimensions are included in the three core missions. The inclusion contributes to produce or re-produce organisational practices and identities, which are the organisational filters of HEIs to interpret international and European impulses deriving from external factors.

With the aim of synthetising all the concepts described Fig. 2, represents the internationalisation and Europeanisation processes as a cycle happening inside every HEI. HEIs interpret international and European impulses from external factors, which influence individuals within the HEI through their organisational identities and practices. The interpretation leads to organisational logics, which are transformed through mechanisms of negation between the HEIs' strategies and individuals. The negotiation outcomes are shared logics, which are the basis for decision making and sense making. These two acts shape the actions to be implemented and what logics these actions should convey while including the international and European dimensions impacting the three university core missions.

It is through this process that international and European influences derive their meanings in practice. They are represented through a set of bidirectional and three-folded activities characterised not by a geographical scope but by imagined spaces (Brooks & Rensimer, 2023), embedding distinct logics. Different logics for different dimensions that impact on and contribute to build the starting point of the cycle: organisational practices and identities.

Essentially, this cycle showcases how internationalisation and Europeanisation, despite their dynamicity, can be fully captured following the logics driving their dimensions, which gain their full shape only within HEIs.

4.3 Implications of International and European Dimensions

Despite the international and European dimensions being collectively included in HEIs through the internationalisation and Europeanisation cycle, it can be argued that different degrees of integration of the two dimensions impact HEIs in their organisational identities and practices.

Especially with regard to the European dimension, it has been argued that the standards and steering mechanisms by the EU and EHEA are the 'faceless masters' of European higher education, relying strongly on the Open Method of Coordination (Brøgger, 2019). Moreover, EU can be interpreted as an attempt to bypass the limits of the EU's subsidiarity principle and the national influences, funding directly the HEIs to influence their internationalisation goals (Kanniainen & Pekkola, 2023).

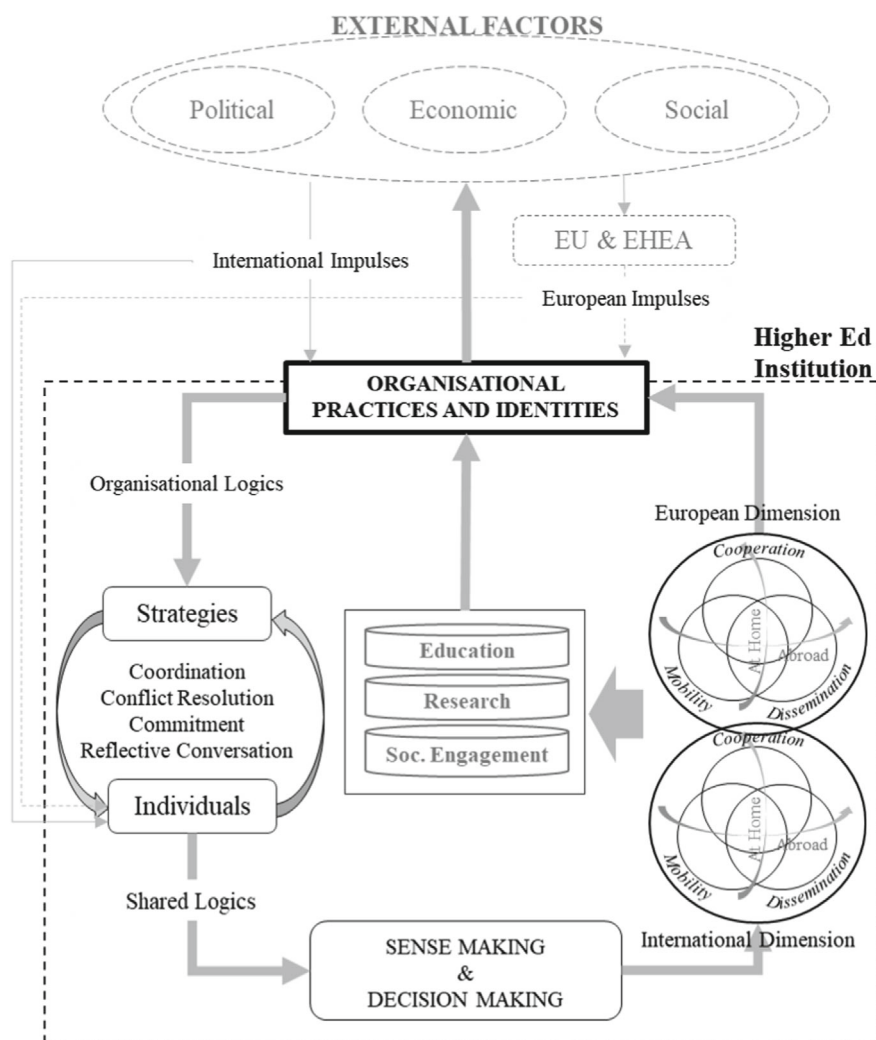


Fig. 2 The internationalisation and europeanisation cycle

Two reflections, which do not contradict these views, can be made. The Open Method of Coordination and the EU and EHEA initiatives have the undeniable potential to steer higher education at a distance; but they do not have the same binding potential as legislation or regulations at the national level for HEIs. Besides, even though HEIs are strongly pulled to pursue European goals by actively engaging in the EUI or other initiatives promoted by the EU agenda, they must contemporaneously consider whether the feasibility and benefits brought by the initiatives match the national legislative framework and incentives. It is not by chance that the new alliances of the EUI will have to face different challenges, such as their legal status,

their governance, the degrees awarded, quality assurance and funding challenges (Claeys-Kulik et al., 2022; Estermann et al., 2021), bound to national constraints.

Earlier failed attempts to create something akin to the EUI, which were inhibited by the lack of HEI consensus (Gunn, 2020), led the EU and EHEA to acknowledge the need to empower HEIs to reach their goals (Cino Pagliarello, 2022; Gunn, 2020). HEIs, while including the European dimension, carefully evaluate the potential benefits to their organisations. HEIs pragmatically decide if, how and to what extent to include the dimension in their structure. It is possible to argue that, even though the European dimension demands the implementation of standards and schemes and commitment to its goals, it enhances university autonomy.

With regard to internationalisation, HEIs do not have shared standards and schemes promoted at supra-national level, and they consequently might appear to enjoy greater autonomy. However, in the act of including the international dimension, HEIs have to face the limitations set by national legislation, without having another driver supporting them at supra-national level, like the EHEA space. Neglecting the European dimension means, for European HEIs, losing a potential factor enhancing their autonomy.

Considering both international and European dimensions, the processes including them share a fundamental common trait: the pragmatically informed choice by the HEIs in determining the scale and scope of their implementation within the organisations, based on their unique characteristic organisational identities and practices.

5 Conclusion

This paper has explored how the adaptability of HEIs and their individuals to international and European impulses leads to two concurrent dimensions: international and European. Adopting the institutional logics' perspective, the analysis has highlighted how international and European influences become distinct dimensions within HEIs through activities embedded within institutional logics and stemming from the interplay between agency and structure.

The first aspect to note is that the international and European dimensions are differentiated by their main logics. The first dimension is shaped strongly by state, market, profession logics, and corporation, sometimes embedding community logics. The second dimension, instead, relies mainly on community logics, backed by professional and corporate logics, whereas market and state logics are typically not considered.

Moreover, the two dimensions directly impact the three core university missions, and they get the shape of different sets of bidirectional—abroad and at home—and three-folded—mobility, cooperation, and dissemination—activities. Directions and categories are not mutually exclusive as situations may lead to their overlap, impacting also the three core missions simultaneously.

A further aspect of fundamental importance is that the integration of international and European dimensions in HEIs, namely the realisation of internationalisation and Europeanisation, follows a cyclical dynamic marked by diverse logics. Negotiation mechanisms are employed to reconcile contested logics, originating either from within HEIs or introduced by individuals, into shared logics. The latter ones lead to decision making and sense making, which determine what actions to realise and what logics are conveyed in those actions.

The individuals, in this process, should be regarded as essential enablers (Hunter et al., 2022) inside the HEIs. The unique set of actions, implemented by said individuals, shape the organisational identities and practices, the corner stone of this cyclical process. The agency of individuals within HEIs underscores their crucial contribution to the ongoing development and refinement of organisational strategies, practices, and, ultimately, the successful integration of international and European dimensions.

Internationalisation and Europeanisation also diverge in their influence impacting the organisational autonomy of HEIs. Internationalisation, characterised by a large degree of independence on schemes and actions to implement, can operate within a higher degree of national constraints. In contrast, Europeanisation, despite enclosing a larger set of pre-defined schemes and actions for HEIs, provides them with the opportunity to surpass national limitations by embracing supra-national standards, schemes, and values, which do not have the same binding power of national regulations. In navigating these dynamics, HEIs adopt a pragmatic approach to strike a balance between international and European dimensions.

In conclusion, ‘follow the logics’ could be the way to deepen our knowledge about internationalisation and Europeanisation. The main ideas of this paper could be synthesised in the internationalisation and Europeanisation cycle. This demonstrates how internationalisation and Europeanisation, despite their dynamicity, can be fully captured following the logics driving international and European dimensions, perceivable in their full shape only within HEIs.

At the current stage, the main limitation of this analysis lies on its conceptual nature, and it is currently unfeasible to state its degree of applicability. However, the cycle could be a framework for researchers and policymakers to capture—through analysis, recommendations or foresight exercises originating from HEIs—the concepts of internationalisation and Europeanisation amid challenging global circumstances, marked by constant change.

Further empirical applications of the cycle and the institutional logics approach, possibly in the EUI research context, could integrate and overcome the limitations of this conceptual paper. Moreover, despite the framework’s formulation for a European context, we have no reason to doubt the potential for broader applicability in other supra-national/regional contexts, such as South-East Asia or Latin America.

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