



Call for Papers

14th annual conference of the Society for Higher Education Research (GfHf),

20–22nd March 2019, Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg

Transformation of Society – Transformation of Knowledge

Knowledge production and communication in a changing life environments

Highly developed societies are experiencing a process of transformation towards becoming a knowledge society. Knowledge societies may be characterised by knowledge becoming the most important organisational principle. The creation of societal developments is consciously based upon and guided by knowledge. Scientifically-based knowledge is therefore of key significance as it provides the foundation for rationally-based decision-making and is used to this end.

Higher education institutions (HEIs), or academia in its entirety, are, however, coming under pressure from various sources, some of which are linked to societal developments:

- Digitalisation is alleviating access to science and scientific findings, which are then being used and checked by the general public. We can see a greater participation by the general public in scientific discussions. As a result, we are also witnessing a greater scepticism towards the authority of the science system as a single source of relevant knowledge. Science needs to find new ways of transmitting the relevance of its methods and rules for the generation of knowledge to the wider society.
- With regard to how research and teaching are presently being undertaken, digitalisation may be described as a game changer. New means of gathering and processing data are opening up the disciplines and influencing the scope of research (in the sense of knowledge gain and methods) and are also generating new research questions. Digitalisation is also being used within academic development to help a wider public access R+D.
- The context of knowledge production is also changing. If we look at the grand challenges such as climate change and demography, traditional organisations of science in the form of mainly (mono-)disciplinary discourse or intra-scientific

communication about the relevance of findings are coming under pressure equally. Interdisciplinary research and research which draws upon external expertise outside of academia (transdisciplinarity) are gaining in significance. The science system is being challenged by questions about its mode of conduct.

- Questions about the relevance of scientific methods are becoming all the more pressing, since scientific knowledge, as a result of its underlying transience and its contestability, is being challenged as capable of only supplying limited guidance. The scientific acceptance of contestability and transience is *itself* becoming the main object of criticism and lack of acceptance. So the question arises as to the extent in which “third mission” (e.g. knowledge transfer, social impact of scientific knowledge) is being seen as a reaction to this development.
- Additional changing contexts are increasing competition in academia overall and greater institutional autonomy through the introduction of new forms of governance. Concurrently, greater autonomy also sees actors within academia under greater legitimisation pressures on their output, which affects their actions between profile-making and strategic compliance on the one hand, and “façade management” and opportunistic alignment on the other.

These developmental trends, which have been described above according to both ongoing observation, but also through higher education research, allow a multi-level structure to be created, out of which we can develop concrete questions regarding various areas of academia:

- Societal megatrends such as digitalisation, but also social processes, such as a decreasing public complexity tolerance towards scientific knowledge, may be seen as the contextual **macro-level**, on which the entire academic system is being developed (in both organisational and epistemological regard).
- The institutional contexts for individual HEIs and other academic institutions (e.g. universities, Max-Planck-Institutes) can be seen as the **meso-level**, in which changing governance systems come into effect and influence external development (at macro-level).
- Individual acts by scientists and staff (e.g. those in ‘third space’, but also students) relating to changing (external or institutional) contexts may be understood as the **micro-level**. Individual or organisational learning processes and adaptive achievements in relation to changing contexts are here of interest.

Higher education research reflects the adaptivity of academia in changing contexts at different levels, in addition to the challenges facing existing ways of being within academia in general. The 2019 Annual Conference of the Society of Higher Education Research (GfHf) in Magdeburg wishes to examine the status quo of the relationship of academia to society overall. Conceptual, theoretical and empirical abstracts, which address developments in research, teaching, learning, transfer, science and knowledge management) on any (or all) of the above-named levels, are welcome. The conference will be divided into six tracks:

Track 1: Transformation in research: How is the relationship between society and academia developing? What can academia do to ensure public acceptance of the scientific method? Which requirements are needed to translate scientific results into strategic action? Which forms of communication between academia and society are needed?

Track 2: Transformation in Teaching and Learning: How are societal transformations acting upon the organisation of HE teaching? How are employer expectations regarding qualifications and career paths developing under the impact of the digital revolution? Which challenges are these having upon teaching and learning, for example with regard to constitutive characteristics such as academic development, including discourse, debate and the verifiability of knowledge? Which status do subject expertise, soft skill qualifications and interdisciplinary knowledge occupy and in which ratio to one another in degree programmes?

Track 3: Transformation in third mission and knowledge transfer: How can the knowledge system react to public demands for more participation, access and critical dialogue concerning knowledge production? How can reduced tolerance of complexity and the abusive use of information (“fake news”) be addressed effectively? How can academia maintain its role as a producer of relevant governance knowledge in complex social processes?

Track 4: Transformation of knowledge management (self-governance and governance): How can academia deal with increased public pressure regarding its effectivity and transparency? Are public transformation processes changing discussions and how can academia use relevant developments for itself (e.g. in the sense of improved cooperation and communication?)

Track 5: Open Track: We would also like to welcome abstracts that do not relate to the conference theme, but which are suitable for public debate.

Track 6: English language Track: We welcome contributions by international authors in this English language track. The track is open to contributions from all thematic areas (tracks 1–4).

Contributions may be either as presentations or as academic posters. Please submit abstracts (max. 500 words) via our conference website: www.gfhf2019.ovgu.de by **19th October** stating the proposed track in which your abstract should appear. There is a limit of two abstracts per author. The review process is scheduled to be completed by 14th December. Abstracts should include the following:

Research question(s) and relevance

Theoretical framework

Methods and database(s) (in empirical research)

(expected) results

We look forward to your submissions.

Conference team:

Prof. Dr. Philipp Pohlenz

Claudia Wendt

Sylvia Knobloch

Any questions regarding the call should be addressed to gfhf2019@ovgu.de.

For information about the German Society for Higher Education research please visit their website: www.gfhf.net.