

Chapter 22

Assembling the Global University: Networks, Interdisciplinarity, and Institutional Change

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter examines the emergence of the global artistic-entrepreneurial university, the increasing importance of interdisciplinary and innovative pedagogies, and how these new emphases are shaping institutional change. The first section analyzes the global university as an “assemblage,” a process that gathers ideas, materialities, digitized platforms, and human beings into a new form of higher education. Because of the impacts on higher education of the flows of capital, technology, people, and cultural practices in both the “East” and the “West,” this form of the university transcends regional and national boundaries as it builds networks of learning around the world. The second section of the chapter focuses on the increasing importance of interdisciplinarity and developing active and integrative pedagogies organized around fundamental skills and questions. In order to ground the discussion in particular sites, the authors use examples from the University of Hong Kong’s new Core Curriculum and from the University of Washington Bothell’s Discovery Core for first-year students. In the final section, the chapter addresses what the next steps might look like as institutions change themselves to fit a globalized context.

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Assembling the Global University

This section returns to the idea of the global university as a “hub of an ecology of studio-labs” (Parks, 2005, p. 57) and suggest that the “managerial” university is transitioning into a more flexible model of the “artistic-entrepreneurial” university in order to prosper in an extremely competitive and generative global environment.

INTRODUCTION

It’s recombinations; it’s random acts of assembling. It’s LEGOs and tinker-toys. Metaphors; academic trainings and disciplines; different floorings in the chemistry and the philosophy building, the architecture of computers, buildings, or of reason. The logic of the dream.

~Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus

The contemporary university is an academetrone, a complex flesh-machine shaped by the planetary accelerator of modernity that tears apart the fabric of the traditional university even as it reconfigures it into new forms of teaching, learning, scholarship, and capitalist productivity. While continuing to maintain extremely important ties with the nation-state, the university is nonetheless now being transformed by globalization into a network of extra-national institutions, each of which is a “hub of an ecology of studio-labs” (Parks, 2005, p. 57). It is this ecology that I will correlate with the “assemblage,” a term, borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, by which I hope to highlight the complex combination of imagination, design capabilities, materialities, human beings, and meanings that are knotted together to form the emerging university, as if it were a collaboratively constructed work of art.

We are all familiar with the proliferating signs of globalization. The University of Hong Kong, for example, offers a joint business degree with the University College of London and Columbia University. New York University and the Sorbonne, among others, are headed for Abu Dhabi. New liberal arts curricula are being developed at Sun Yat-Sen University and United International College in, respectively, Guangzhou and Zhuhai, China. Private colleges and online universities are popping up on every street corner of the physical and digital world, while everyone everywhere is hungry for students from other countries who can bring with them extra cash and additional cultural diversity to the institution.

One condensed example of all of this is the cover of a *Yale Alumni Magazine* that presents the “Singapore Spinoff: Yale’s Plan to Bet its Brand on a New College in Asia” (2010, Nov/Dec). Yale will be partnering with the National University of Singapore to offer degrees that will read “Yale-NUS College” on the diploma. The

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