

UNIKE Conference

UNIVERSITY FUTURES

DPU, Aarhus University, Copenhagen
15 - 17 June 2016

Post Conference Report

The conference was jointly supported by the EU-funded project UNIKE (Universities in the Knowledge Economy) and Aarhus University.



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DANISH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION





THE EVENT

On June 15-17 2016, the UNIKE project held the University Futures conference with the aim of creating collective thinking about the future university. The conference was held at the Danish School of Education (DPU) at Campus Emdrup in Copenhagen, Aarhus University with participants from 45 universities and colleges in more than 20 countries.

The conference explored future directions for universities in Europe and the Asia-Pacific Rim. One of the key goals was to discuss alternative ways of organising the university in the future.

Exploring future directions for universities

What are the future directions of universities in Europe and the Asia-Pacific Rim? - This was the opening question for the University Futures conference, formulated by the organising committee. The conference included three keynote speeches and six scientific themes, each divided into a plenary and parallel session.

About the UNIKE project

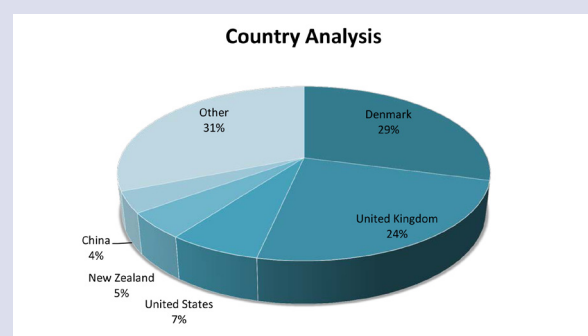
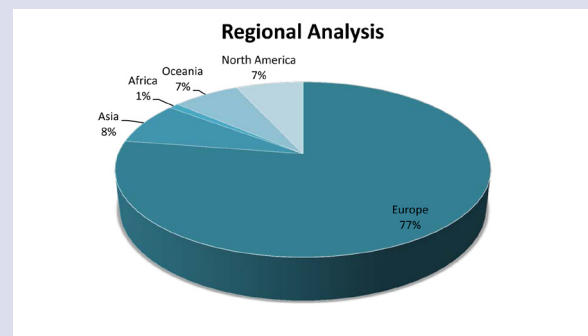
UNIKE (Universities in the Knowledge Economy) is an EU-funded Marie Curie Initial Training Programme for 15 PhD and Post-doc fellows and five Associated PhD fellows at six partner universities: Aarhus University, ENS Lyon, Ljubljana University, Roehampton University, the University of Bristol, and Porto University.

The fellows involved in UNIKE have conducted original research on the dynamic relationships between universities and knowledge economies in Europe and in the Asia-Pacific Rim. At the same time, they have engaged in a training programme aimed to generate a networked group of critical researchers to be future research leaders. As a part of UNIKE's four-year collaborative research project, the University Futures conference was the summative event in the project.

Following the three conference days, a two-day workshop was held internally in UNIKE to summarise and conclude on the conference and develop future plans around the scientific themes of the conference beyond the timeframe of the UNIKE project.

Fact box

The total number of attendees at the conference was 104. The participants came from 23 countries and represented 45 different university institutions and colleges as well as 5 institutions from the private sector and other types of organisations.



Other: Malaysia, Portugal, Austria, France, Germany, Russia, Hungary, Finland, Belgium, Australia, Spain, Sweden, South Africa, Turkey, Norway, Slovenia, Ukraine, Japan.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

PHOTO FROM COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL



Why the Welfare State was transformed into a Competition State and how it changed the role of Education and Knowledge

Professor Ove Kaj Pedersen from Copenhagen Business School showed historically how four types of university systems had emerged and in the current period formed different kinds of knowledge regimes. He argued that European universities are losing their monopoly over research, but gaining responsibility for training PhDs who are prepared for employment in the private sector.

[Click to see the keynote speech by Ove Kaj Pedersen.](#)

PHOTO FROM RESEARCHGATE



Doctoral education – a mirror for the future of higher education?

Professor Rosemary Deem, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College University of London, traced recent development in doctoral education and set out future challenges facing PhDs in changing universities and changing economies.

[Click to see the keynote speech by Rosemary Deem.](#)

PHOTO FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL



In praise of the University as Public Anticipatory Machine: Stewardship, Praxis and Dissent

Professor Keri Facer from Bristol University, spoke about the university's relationship with society and gave the example of The Connected Communities Programme in which university and community are working together on creating new knowledge and a participatory orientation to the future.

[Click to see Keri Facer's keynote speech.](#)

THE SIX SCIENTIFIC THEMES

The conference was kicked off by Professor of Educational Anthropology Susan Wright, coordinator of the UNIKE project, who held a speech welcoming all the participants. Besides the programme's three keynote speeches, the programme sessions were organised around six scientific themes:

1. Constructing a liveable university using feminist and post-capitalist ideas
2. Reassembling knowledge production with(out) the university
3. How do nation-states mobilize universities to position themselves in the global knowledge economy?
4. How can universities be transformed to center on public goods in teaching, research, and community engagement?
5. Reconsidering "Internationalization" from peripheral perspectives
6. Market-driven or open-ended higher education?

Comment from Twitter:



The scientific themes were asking questions such as:

- How is a wide range of businesses and other stakeholders engaging with and reassembling the university?
- What is meant by internationalisation?
- How are universities mobilised by nations and regions in the global knowledge economy?
- How can ideas from feminism and post-capitalism be used to create a liveable university?
- And are there alternative ways of organising the university and its relations with society?

Participants in each scientific theme discussed existing knowledge and critique of existing practices and institutions of higher education. Following this, participants moved on to think about an ideal future and consider how these ideals could be put into concrete action and how participants could support each other in such an effort.

Paper presentations, roundtable discussions and workshops

The format of each session varied according to how the PhD fellows had organised their sessions. Some groups saw their sessions as a chance to present their work in form of paper presentations followed by discussions and had invited scholars from the call for abstracts to present their papers. Other groups had planned roundtable discussions and panel sessions. Three of the scientific themes arranged workshops and had invited experienced scholars to facilitate discussions about 'transforming universities' and creating a collective map of how to identify, challenge and change institutions that discriminate, marginalise and uphold inequality with the aim of rethinking everyday practices at the university for more inclusive working environments.

Behind developing the six scientific themes

The fellows in UNIKE played a great part in designing this conference. We used a 'search conference' methodology at our previous workshop, held in Oslo in November 2015, to identify six scientific themes emerging across the fellows' individual projects and form groups of around these six themes. Subsequently, each group networked electronically to develop their ideas, and drew in academics from the six European partner universities, members of UNIKE's 30 Associated Partners in Europe and the Asia Pacific as well as other students and academics who responded to the conference's call for abstracts.

Each group developed their own format for discussing their theme and was allocated a plenary session and a parallel session in the conference programme. The groups identified the scientific themes emerging across their individual projects, which were also issues on which the fellows may want to keep working beyond the end of the project – whether they wanted pursue careers in academia, policy making, consultancy or the new knowledge industries.

As these themes were issues on which fellows wanted to bring their research to bear not only to increase academic knowledge but also to achieve change, the idea was that they might want to keep developing a network of colleagues and a plan of activities beyond the end of the conference. Therefore there were two 'development' sessions for each scientific group in the programme for conference participants to work together on these further activities.

Furthermore, an extra session was arranged under the headline 'Thinking about and beyond the current' in which scholars from the call for abstracts presented their work.

THEMES' PLANS AND IMPACT IN THE MAKING

Theme 1: Reclaiming Feminism

Based on a paper session titled "Mapping what we know" and a plenary workshop with the title "Where do we go from here", the central theme was to reclaim feminism and post-capitalist terminology and argumentations from their neoliberal and capitalist co-options and restore the critical potential of their concepts and theories to rethink and reimagine the university.

Theme 2: Reassembling knowledge production

Two interventions in theme 2 examined the value of the "neoliberal university" as an analytical and conceptual basis for exploring the contemporary university. The "neoliberal university" was one of a set of meta-concepts that has underpinned the UNIKE project. The theme challenged the assumption that the university has become a neoliberal institution - an assumption that often becomes its own conclusion and analytical end point.

Comment from Twitter:



With the concern that the concept of neoliberalism (and other related concepts) is obscuring the significantly reformed and "actually existing" university, this theme explored new platforms for engaging with abstract and theoretical ideas and new categories for describing changes in the university and the higher education sector.

The interventions were sensitised by a number of key questions: Is the university becoming something utterly different? Where are its boundaries?

Plans of knowledge-sharing and joint publications

In the discussion, it became evident that there is need for a dialogue between senior and early career academics. The senior academics know the rules and could help in matters such as how to write a CV and funding applications, writing references, and how to prepare for job interviews and promotions etc. A few journals were identified and the decision was made to approach these journals with the suggestion of a special issue.

Inspired by Latour's notion of 'reassembling', (and actor-network-theory notion of tracing associations in an effort to reconstruct the research object, as opposed to assuming that object exists and looking for its relations), the aim of the theme was to examine how the university and academic knowledge production is re-assembled from the ground up, and finally to get an insight into what this means for the critique of the existing neoliberal, financialised, digitised university and the knowledge it creates.

Entrance poster welcoming participants. Photo by Ib Jensen/AU Communication



Plenary session at the conference. Photo by Ib Jensen/AU Communication





Photos by Ib Jensen/AU Communication

Developing a conceptual grammar and proposals for future publications

Based on interest from several of the authors of the papers in the conference session, the organisers in theme 2 decided to propose a themed issue of the journal *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, aiming for a publication in 2017. The group also stated an interest in continuing to develop a conceptual grammar to help understand the processes of how universities (un)bundle as well as build relationships with new actors in knowledge production such as think tanks, aid agencies, outsourcing service providers, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and publishers.

Theme 3: Mobilising universities

Cases from Europe and the Asia-Pacific highlighted mechanism and instruments that nation states or regions have installed to mobilise higher educational institutions in gaining competitive advantages and further national interests in the global knowledge economy.

This led to discussions on issues such as the processes of region building that aim at enhancing competitiveness of world regions and the construction of frames of reference

such as university rankings to define the space of global excellence and access national universities' position within it;

The intend of the sessions was to depict how the 'global knowledge economy' and the university are constituted in the process, especially how imaginaries of globalisation and global hierarchy shape people's praxis, and how the praxis feeds back into the imaginary at both the national and international level.

Plans of joint publication and communication platform

The group will continue employing Non-Western European and North American cases to problematise the globalisation and its hegemonic/disciplinary effects. In the aftermath after the conference, theme 3 has planned for a joint publication in relation to this theme. The group will furthermore establish a communicative platform, which can enable them to develop qualitative cooperation ties.

#UNIVERSITY FUTURES

Ellie Bothwell @elliebothwell Follow

European universities 'losing monopoly' over research - from @UNIKEhighered's #UniversityFutures conference bit.ly/28IslGB

11:14 AM - 20 Jun 2016





Lisanne W @Lisannestweet Follow

Distinguished panel at #UniversityFutures @AarhusUni

1:03 PM - 17 Jun 2016

1 3



Kris Olds @GlobalHigherEd Follow

#UniversityFutures field trip c: @UNIKEhighered

1:02 PM - 18 Jun 2016

2 3



Kris Olds @GlobalHigherEd Follow

Eva Hartmann on forms of social closure and authoritative knowledge in corporate education #UniversityFutures

11:27 AM - 17 Jun 2016

2 4



Matthew Weait @ProfWeitpant Follow

Eva Hartmann on corporate universities at #UniversityFutures - one consequence is impact on authoritative knowledge

11:25 AM - 17 Jun 2016

1 2



Kris Olds @GlobalHigherEd Follow

Great talk and responses to Qs by @Kerilee of @BisafUta #UniversityFutures

10:02 AM - 16 Jun 2016

3 5



Jana Bacevic @jana_bacevic Follow

Reassembling knowledge production with(out) the university @CMuellerleite @cnewf @GlobalHigherEd #UniversityFutures

3:08 PM - 17 Jun 2016

5 4



168 TWEETS USING THE #UNIVERSITYFUTURES HASHTAG DURING THE CONFERENCE



Keri Facer
@Kerleef

Follow

Berea College - providing the best education that money CAN'T buy - exciting example #UniversityFutures
2:40 PM - 15 Jun 2016

4 5



UNIKE
@UNIKEhighered

Follow

Lots of ideas about alternative ways of organising #UniversityFutures @AarhusUni
4:13 PM - 15 Jun 2016 Copenhagen, Denmark

2 4

Lisanne W
@Lisannestweet

Follow

Thank you @UNIKEhighered for a great conference about #universityfutures
4:31 PM - 17 Jun 2016

1 3

Matthew Weait
@ProfWetpaint

Follow

Excited to be at #UniversityFutures conference @AarhusUni in beautiful Copenhagen :-)

8:12 AM - 15 Jun 2016

5

Keri Facer
@Kerleef

Follow

Interesting discussion on the ideal university #universityfutures
5:02 PM - 15 Jun 2016

3 7



Matthew Weait
@ProfWetpaint

Follow

Fantastic day with the #UniversityFutures crew - so many ideas, so much to do!

5:35 PM - 16 Jun 2016

2 3

Jakob Oerberg
@JakobOerberg

Follow

MLim + KOlds @GlobalHigherEd introduce exciting panel on uni role in global position of nations #UniversityFutures

1:18 PM - 16 Jun 2016

1 4

Maree Conway
@MareeConway

Follow

Day 1 #UniversityFutures conference begins Ove Pederson on Knowledge & Competition, glad I made the trek from Oz

9:06 AM - 15 Jun 2016

3

Theme 4: Alternative pathways

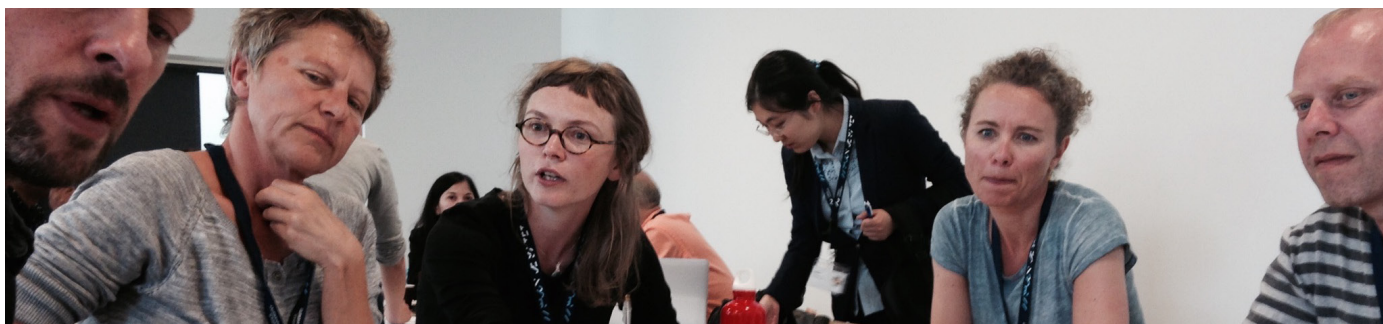
In theme four presenters shared their experiences of running alternative universities, including a cooperate university, as well as experiences with setting up new private universities in Turkey and liberal arts schools in Europe. One of the messages was that there should be a human and educational ethos that endures and sustains the organisation.

In parallel workshops, participants brainstormed principles, issues, and approaches to democracy, social justice, pedagogy, ownership financing, and governance of universities in groups. The aim of the workshop sessions was to recruit interested collaborators and begin planning a developmental process extending beyond the conference.

Establishing a new alternative university

The organisers behind the theme reached the conclusion to seek to initiate the process of establishing a new university, more specifically in England, building on the shared experiences and the ideas brought up in the conference sessions.

As a result, the group developed a list of tasks for their future work of establishing a new university including clarifying the basic principles and aims of this new university, establishing the legal and economic frameworks, defining stakeholder structures and inter-relationships, and initiating the process of developing curricula.



Group discussion during one of the parallel sessions. Photo by Lisbeth Kristine Walakira/UNIKE

Theme 5: De-/Reconstructing internationalisation

Through seven papers, the theme brought different perspectives of what counts as periphery in internationalisation processes in two sub-themes. The first four papers focused on periphery voices of one region and two countries, and the second sub-theme focused on the academics' and students' voices in higher education institutions. A round table discussion of four discussants from the USA, Slovenia, Denmark, and China critically reviewed the papers and connected them with their own practical experiences.

Broadening the network and future publications

It was decided to open the network created in the sessions to both academics and practitioners as well as actors from a variety of geographical regions. The theme organisers furthermore agreed to jointly and individually publish both academic and non-academic works from the theme.

Theme 6: Market-driven or open-ended higher education?

Based on vignettes from UNIKE PhD fellows' fieldwork, a discussion on the theme was advanced as the vignettes clarified the meaning of open-ended and market-driven higher education by giving examples from the field.

In the parallel session, a discussion on the contrast between market-driven and open-ended education deepened a more practical view on the topic with concrete examples from the field and personal experiences.

Developing theoretical ideas and planning activities

The group will establish a communicative platform for sharing concrete cases about open-ended education, theoretical ideas and for coordinating future activities such as meeting at conferences. The platform will provide a space where people interested in the theme can stay in touch.

As an outcome of the conference sessions, the group will also be writing a joint publication within the theme for a UNIKE book. The publication will consider current trends in higher education policy and practice and point towards alternative pathways.



CAMPUS EMDRUP, AARHUS UNIVERSITY - SITE OF THE CONFERENCE. PHOTO BY JESPER RAS/AU COMMUNICATION

THE FUTURE: EXTENDING THE WORK OF UNIKE

POST- CONFERENCE EVENT AND WORKSHOP

Social event and excursion

Following the conference, a post-conference event was organised for internal members of the UNIKE group including PhD fellows, postdocs, professors and supervisors, administrators as well as associated partners. The event was organised as a social excursion to the Louisiana Museum and surrounding sites. This was an opportunity for the group to reflect upon the past three years as the last event in the project.

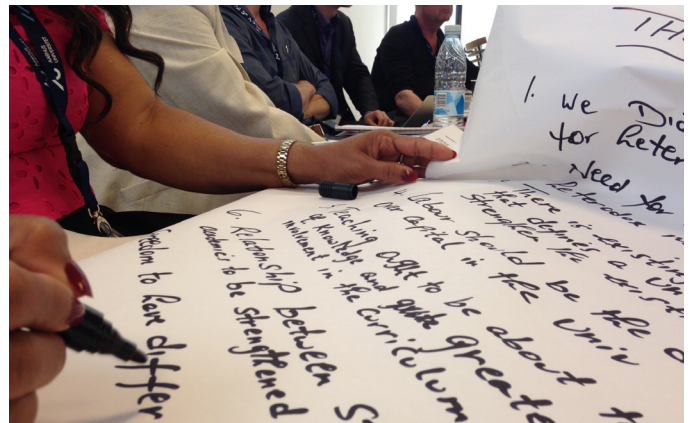
Developing plans of a joint UNIKE book proposal

The social event day was followed by a two-day workshop. The main aim of the workshop was to plan a publication of a book as a joint outcome of the UNIKE project. Discussions in plenum and group discussions of how the six scientific themes could be joined in the publication and the planning of the development of a book proposal was the focal point.

Rachel Douglas-Jones, Associate Professor from the IT University Copenhagen, who has also been part of UNIKE, made drawings as visual summaries of each scientific themes ideas and the links between the different themes (below left).

Since the conference and workshop days, PhD fellows are in the process of submitting their dissertations and several have defended their degrees. The joint UNIKE book is also taking shape and the book proposal has been sent to Berghahn Books. The UNIKE book is expected to be published in 2017.

Group discussions and social trip to Louisiana Museum. Photos by Lisbeth Kristine Walakira/UNIKE



Article by Times Higher Education

Times Higher Education's reporter, Ellie Bothwell, participated in the conference and interviewed keynote speaker Professor in political economy Ove Kaj Pedersen from Copenhagen Business School. Based on the interview, Times Higher Education published an article highlighting Ove kaj Pedersen's point that universities are currently losing monopoly over the production of research as higher education institutions to a greater extent competewith private organisations for resources, attention and political influence around knowledge production.

On the other hand, universities are gaining dominance in training PhD students as the training and education of qualified PhDs for the private sector is becoming a main capital for universities. [Read the article here.](#)

The University Post writes about the utopian university

Present at the conference was also editor in chief, Dennis Christiansen from Uniavisen (the University Post), which is an independant newspaper/news site at Copenhagen University. Dennis Christiansen was interested in featuring an article about alternatively organised universities and interviewed Vice-Rector Jon Altuna from Mondragon University in Spain. Mondragon University is organised as a cooperative university, which is owned, managed, and developed by employees and students themselves.

Dennis Christiansen furthermore visited Mondragon University in the aftermath after the conference. The interview and field trip led to an article titled "The Utopian University",

shreding light on how Mondragon University functions in practice as an alternative to the national university systems with its focus on member participation and near-democracy development of the university. [Read the article here.](#)

New university to emerge from UNIKE's conference

The conference featured many discussions about contemporary trends of the relationship between the university and society. One of the things discussed was the establishment of a new university system as an alternative to the national systems' structure of universities.

A group of 13 professors and researchers representing Mondragon University (Spain), Sabanci University (Turkey), Akershus University (Norway), Berea College and Cornell University (USA), University of Lincoln, University of Sheffield, University of Bristol, and Roehampton University (UK) grouped together to initiate and formulate alternative ways of organising the internal life of a university and its relations with society.

The group is currently in the stages of formulating the frames of this new university and establishing contacts and decisions of the physical compounds in England.

CLICK TO READ UNIKE'S NEWSLETTER ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

NEWS FROM THE UNIKE PROJECT

JULY 2016



UNIKE HELD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

On June 13-17 UNIKE held the **University Futures** conference with the aim of creating collective thinking about the future university. With representatives from more than 20 countries, the conference explored future directions for universities in Europe and the Asia-Pacific Rim. One of the key goals was to discuss alternative ways of organising the university in the future.

Many participants posted on social media about their experiences at the conference. [See the chronological list of comments and impressions of the conference here.](#)

[Visit the conference website to read more about University Futures.](#)

Times Higher Education's reporter, Ellie Bothwell, has written an article based on her participation in the conference. [Read the article here.](#)



Many thanks to the student helpers who all took part in organising the conference. Photo by Kathrin Gramsch/UNIKE





Poster from the UNIKE post-conference workshop. Photo by Lisbeth Kristine Walakira/UNIKE

THE AUCKLAND DECLARATION

In an earlier UNIKE conference held at the University of Auckland in February 2015, one of the associated partners in UNIKE, Professor Chris Newfield brought up the idea of creating a declaration as a model for principles to ensure a more socially just university.

This idea was taken further during the University Futures conference. The workshop days in Copenhagen concluded by drafting an 'Auckland Declaration', named after the original place where this idea initiated. Susan Wright, Professor at the Danish School of Education and project leader of UNIKE explains about the purpose behind the declaration:

"Universities have been undergoing massive change in the last two decades and are repositioned amidst a vast array of industrial, financial, governmental, and civic interests. It is necessary to revisit and recast the basic principles underpinning the social compact and intellectual purpose of universities in this new context. For this reason, the UNIKE project has collectively drafted the declaration"

In the light of the recent reforms of university systems, in which universities are increasingly expected to be drivers of global knowledge economies, the UNIKE team decided to draft new principles on the purpose of the university. Universities are today evolving their relationships with an array of governmental, public, and private organisations. These changes are modifying the social contract between government, society, and higher education, leading to current reform policies that threaten to reduce the social benefits of universities.

The goal of the declaration is to resituate higher education teaching and research in contemporary society by identifying six principles that form the basis of a new social contract for higher education. The editorial committee behind the declaration has in the fall 2016 refined the outline of the principles and the Auckland Declaration is to be published as a part of the joint UNIKE book.

See the list of principles in the Auckland Declaration [here](#).



Group photo of conference participants at the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University. Photo by Ib Jensen/AU Communication

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE CONFERENCE

The UNIKE project is reaching its end and the PhD fellows are emerging with doctoral degrees from the project. The joint book as an outcome of UNIKE is expected to be published at Berghahn Books in 2017 and the pursuits for establishing a new alternative university are still developing as well as the work of refining the Auckland Declaration as a model for principles underpinning the social compact and intellectual purpose of universities.

Centre for Higher Education Futures

In January 2017 a new research center was established at the Danish School of Education. The center is a research hub in which scientists do research in higher education, university futures and related policies in Denmark and internationally. The work and research of UNIKE will be continued at Aarhus University within the research center as many more initiatives are being taken to explore the future of the university further and build connections with the policy-making community.

[Read more about CHEF at edu.au.dk/chef.](http://edu.au.dk/chef)

Find more info about UNIKE and the University Futures conference online (click logos below).



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UNIKE YouTube Channel



Conference homepage