

# UNIKE Conference

## Universities in the Knowledge Economy: Perspectives from the Asia-Pacific and Europe

University of Auckland, New Zealand  
10-13 February 2015

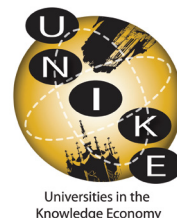
## Post Conference Report



The conference was jointly supported by the EU-funded project UNIKE (Universities in the Knowledge Economy), the University of Auckland and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment..



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**  
HIKINA WHAKATUTUKI





## THE EVENT

On February 10-13 2015, the UNIKE project held the conference titled **Universities in the Knowledge Economy: Perspectives from the Asia-Pacific and Europe**. The aim of the conference was to create collective thinking about the future university. The conference was held at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Auckland in New Zealand with 200 participants.

### **Great transformation processes within universities**

Universities seemingly everywhere are undergoing major processes of transformation. In New Zealand and the United Kingdom, declining public expenditure on research and teaching is bringing intense pressure on universities to commercialise their intellectual property and other assets. Elsewhere the notion that universities should be the engines of the new knowledge economy has also become a key feature of the landscape of higher education reform.

This conference asked:

What is the place of universities in the emerging 'ecology' of higher education systems that straddle industry, government and the public sphere? How are universities negotiating the demands placed upon them to compete in the global knowledge economy? What new subjects and spaces are emerging under the new conditions of existence for universities? How do academics, students, managers and policy makers make sense of these changes? Are there alternative ways of organising the university and its relations with society and if so, where are these being developed?

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### **Objectives of conference**

The first objective of the conference was to give PhD and postdoctoral students experience in presenting academic papers in a public context and receiving feedback. The second objective was to bring together academics, researchers and experts from Europe and the Asia-Pacific in a structured knowledge exchange on the topic of the global knowledge economy.

### **About the UNIKE project**

UNIKE (Universities in the Knowledge Economy) is an EU-funded Marie Curie Initial Training Programme for 14 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.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



### **Universities in the Knowledge Economy: Mapping, Managing, Gendering and Contesting Boundaries in the New University-Industrial Complex**

Professor of Educational Anthropology Susan Wright, Aarhus University, Denmark.

[Click to see the keynote speech by Susan Wright.](#)



### **From Unbundling to rebundling: A case for a 'more than oppositional' politics of university restructuring**

Dr. Nicolas Lewis from the School of Environment at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

[Click to see the keynote speech by Nicolas Lewis.](#)



### **Leadership, gender and 'scaled up' higher education**

Professor Jill Blackmore, School of Education, Deakin University, Australia.

[Click to see the keynote speech by Jill Blackmore.](#)



### **Zombie Universities**

Professor Stefano Harney, Business Management, Singapore Management University.

[Click to see the keynote speech from Stefano Harney.](#)



## ATTENDANCE

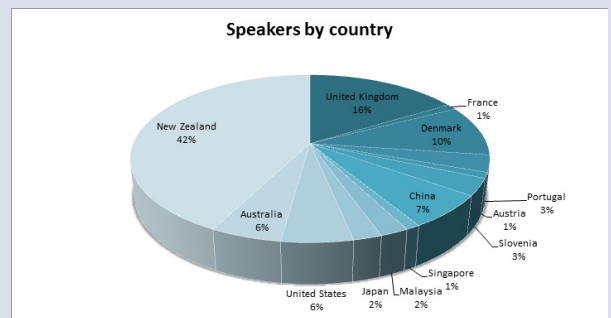
197 attendees participated in the conference, including 102 graduate students, and a total of 88 speakers, around half having travelled from overseas to attend.

The range of speakers on the programme was notable for its:

- International diversity, encompassing 13 countries and 35 universities, including 7 New Zealand universities.
- Cross-disciplinarity, involving speakers from Education, Business, Anthropology, Sociology, Philosophy, English, Ethnic Studies, Law, and Management. We were also privileged to have a number of policy-makers and commercialization managers among our speakers.
- Student participation, including presentations from 28 graduate students.

### Fact box

Conference attendance far exceeded the initial estimates, with a total of 197 registered participants. The speakers came from 13 different countries, mainly from New Zealand, United Kingdom and Denmark. Speakers also came from Australia, the USA, other European countries. Asian speakers came from China, Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore.



## STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

### Structure of conference

The conference was structured to facilitate dialogue on current developments in the university sector across Europe, North America, Australasia and Asia. As research and education become rapidly internationalised, unique institutional configurations are also emerging. In such a landscape, international dialogue is increasingly essential, yet often lacking — particularly with regard to non-English speaking countries.

This conference helped to initiate such dialogue, offering a rare opportunity for European, Asian and Australasian practitioners and scholars to share perspectives, exchange knowledge, and showcase innovative practices.

The conference was organised into 24 panels, four keynote speeches, three workshop sessions and one roundtable event (with time allocated after each session for discussion):

### 24 panels

The 24 panels addressed a diverse range of issues on universities and the knowledge economy. They were designed to put local and international speakers in dialogue with each other, with expert discussants bringing together different disciplinary perspectives. This structure ensured each topic was considered within its broader interdisciplinary context and encouraged an energetic atmosphere of debate. Each session was also chaired by a PhD student or academic, providing them with valuable experience in facilitating academic discussion.

### Four keynotes

Four keynote speeches were delivered by leading figures in the field of higher education: Professor Sue Wright (De-

partment of Educational Anthropology, Aarhus University, Denmark), Professor Jill Blackmore (School of Education, Deakin University, Australia), Dr. Nick Lewis (School of Environment, University of Auckland), and Professor Stefano Harney (Business Management, Singapore Management University). The speeches traversed the central themes of the conference while offering in-depth insight into the speakers' diverse fields of expertise.

### Three workshops sessions

Three large workshop sessions were focused around central points of debate in the field. The first was titled 'Critic and conscience: A formidable space of academic freedom in Aotearoa New Zealand?' and explored the implications of the university's uniquely legislated social mandate in New Zealand. The second, titled 'Academic freedom in the knowledge economy: Where does it start and where should it end?', was led by academics and PhD students from Slovenia and the UK and broadened the focus on university autonomy to an international context. The final session, titled 'The Liveable University', drew on a collaborative project by five academics at the University of Auckland concerning alternative pedagogies—a unique event that involved full audience participation.

### Roundtable event

A special afternoon roundtable event, titled 'The national research environment: Emerging pressures and new possibilities?', presented the opportunity to hear from a number of policy and commercialisation representatives, including Peter Crabtree (MBIE), Kristiann Allen (Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor) and Andy Shenk (UniServices), with Nigel Haworth (University of Auckland Business School) as a discussant. The session involved de-

Presentation at the final day of the conference



Plenary session at the conference



tailed presentations from the invited speakers around NZ's current science and research policies and was followed by a lively discussion involving a number of the international participants.

### Other activities during the conference

A number of associated activities took place during the four-day schedule: a set of formal interviews conducted

between UNIKE Fellows and Partners, professionally filmed with the generous support of the University of Auckland Television Production Studios ([available on the UNIKE's YouTube channel](#)); a very well-attended Reception in Old Government House open to all participants, sponsored by the Europe Institute; and a conference dinner at the iconic Fale Pasifika, offering a chance to network in a social setting.



Group discussion during the conference and the initiation of what later became the Auckland Declaration

### The Auckland Declaration

During the Auckland conference, a team of researchers initiated the idea of creating a declaration of the principles for a more socially just university. This idea was taken further during the UNIKE University Futures conference in Copenhagen in 2016 where the 'Auckland Declaration' was drafted, named after the original place of the idea.

#### Principles

##### 1. Public Good

Whereas the traditional university offered the highest quality research and education for a society's elite, the challenge of the 21st century is to offer this top quality higher education for all, for the sake of both individual and common development. Educational investments for lower income, first generation, and non-traditional students must be similar in quality and quantity to the investments made in a given society's elites.

##### 2. Social Responsibility

Higher education's primary responsibilities are to the wider society for improving social, cultural, political, ethical, and material welfare. Fulfilling these responsibilities requires that government and business act responsibly towards its higher education sector, and respect its freedom and autonomy, so that higher education can act as "critic and conscience of society."

##### 3. Academic Freedom

Academic freedom, as a right and responsibility of universities, allows permanent and contingent faculty members, researchers, staff, and students of all levels, without fear of sanctions, censorship, or administrative interference,

to establish, shape, perpetuate, and develop their own scholarship, their academic disciplines, and the university's research and teaching missions.

##### 4. Educational Autonomy

The exercise of professional expertise depends on the autonomy of educational personnel from particular interests, whether external or internal to the university. The public value of universities depends on the ability of all members of the academic community to speak openly regardless of their position or the financial and political interests involved. Funding should go primarily to not-for-profit educational activities that support the creation and dissemination of fundamental knowledge.

##### 5. University Independence

Universities' responsibilities to societies must always take precedence over their accountability to their funders. Constraints and conditions on funding must not be used to compromise their educational autonomy, academic freedom, or social responsibility.

##### 6. Humane Workplace

Institutions of higher education must provide working conditions that safeguard epistemic and social diversity, and that respect the human rights and personal dignity of each member of the learning community. These include the right to intellectual and professional self-determination within the context of the organization's welfare, the right not to be fired at will, the right to a workplace that does not tolerate bullying and other abuses of authority, the right to criticise the institution in public, and the right to reject inappropriate forms of assessment. [Read more about the Declaration here.](#)



Group photo of the UNIKE team at the University of Auckland

## DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE CONFERENCE

A UNIKE Summer School at Waiheke provided training of the UNIKE fellows and PhD students from New Zealand in presenting papers, writing and editing for publications. In addition, the project produced a number of direct and indirect outcomes.

### Capacity building and international exchange

The outcome of networking between graduate students and senior academics across thirty-five countries gave rise to a number of partnerships and collaborations:

1. Research visits to European universities by PhD students from New Zealand;
2. The final UNIKE Conference in Copenhagen in 2016 included members of the University of Auckland UNIKE organising team.

### Resource base for knowledge exchange and expertise

The Conference and Summer School created a substantial resource base, ensuring the endurance of the relationships formed and facilitating future collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Find more info about UNIKE (click logos below).



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